

Ms Mariya Gabriel  
Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth  
of the European Commission  
Brussels

Brussels, 27 January 2021

In November 2013, a letter signed by 23 EU Member States was addressed to Androulla Vassiliou, the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (2010 – 2014). In the letter, the ministers responsible for sport delivered the following statement:

*“We reaffirm the need to combat discrimination and intolerance where they occur within and outside the sporting context. We recognize the potential of sport as a universal language that contributes to educating people on the values of respect, diversity, tolerance and fairness and as a way of combatting all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion for all. These values should be respected within the context of all sports.*

*We call upon all states that participate in organizing major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, World Championships and other major sporting events to respect the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

*Therefore, we call upon all states to uphold their international commitments to non-discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, in particular in the framework of the Council of Europe, to protect the enjoyment of these rights by all individuals, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or any other status.*

*Human rights are universal and indivisible and we believe that the European Union, as a key player in the area of fundamental rights, is in a unique position to promote human rights through sport and major sporting events, both within and outside of the European Union.”*

This message is as true and important today as it was seven years ago. Some major international sporting events are taking place, or being planned to be organized, in states where human rights violations or abuses have been reported by international monitoring mechanisms, and the physical and moral integrity of athletes is not axiomatic. This is in contradiction with article 18 of the Olympic Charter. A reference can be made especially, but not only, to Belarus where, according to the OSCE Rapporteur, “major human rights abuses” have been found to be “massive, systematic and proven beyond doubt”.

In this context, we, the ministers responsible for sport, wish to reiterate the message of the statement made by the EU sport ministers in 2013. It is crucial that human rights are ensured in all countries organizing major international sporting events both within and outside of the European Union. While fully

respecting the autonomy of sport, international sports organizations should be encouraged to take accountable decisions on the hosts for major sporting events.

We would like to call on the European Commission, within the respective areas of competences of the European Union, to commit to identifying an appropriate policy approach to this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



**Mr Werner Kogler**  
Vice-Chancellor – **Austria**



**Ms Nikolina Brnjac Ph.D.**  
Minister of Tourism and Sport – **Croatia**



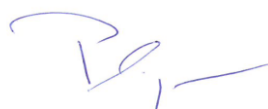
**Ms. Isabelle WEYKMANS**  
Minister for Culture, Sports, Employment and Media (German-speaking Community)



**Mr Prodromos Prodromou**  
Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth – **Cyprus**

*This signature binds the Flemish Community, French Community and German-speaking Community of Belgium  
Also on behalf of.*

**Ms. Valérie GLATIGNY**  
Minister for Higher Education, Adult Education, University hospitals, Youth Welfare, Houses of Justice, Youth, Sport and the Promotion of Brussels (French Community)



**Ing. Robert Plaga Ph.D.**  
Minister of Education, Youth and Sport – **Czech Republic**

**Mr. Ben WEYTS**  
Vice minister-president responsible for Education, Sport, Animal welfare and the Flemish periphery (Flemish Community)



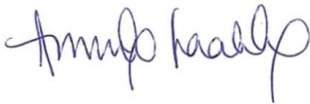
**Ms Joy Mogensen**  
Minister for Culture – **Denmark**



**Mr Krasen Kralev**  
Minister of Youth and Sports – **Bulgaria**



**Ms Anneli Ott**  
Minister of Culture – **Estonia**



**Ms Annika Saarikko**  
Minister of Science and Culture – **Finland**



**Dr Ilga Šuplinska**  
Minister of Education and Science – **Latvia**

  
Roxana MARACINEANU

Minister delegate for Sports – **France**



**Ms Jurgita Šiugždinienė**  
Minister of Education, Science and Sport –  
**Lithuania**



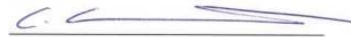
**Mr Stephan Mayer**  
Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal  
Minister of the Interior, Building and Community  
– **Germany**



**Mr Dan Kersch**  
Minister for Sport – **Luxembourg**



**Mr Lefteris Avgenakis**  
Deputy Minister of Culture and Sport – **Greece**



**Hon Dr Clifton Grima**  
Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation  
and Voluntary Organisations – **Malta**



**Ms Tünde Szabó Dr**  
Minister of State for Sport – **Hungary**



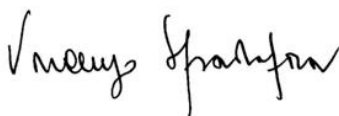
**Ms Tamara van Ark**  
Minister for Medical Care and Sport – **The  
Netherlands**

  
WICZ. SEZNAMY MINISTRÓW  
KULTURY  
DZIAŁ. GOS. NARODOWEGO I SPORTU  
prof. Piotr Gliński

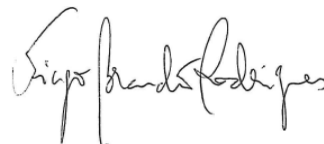
**Prof Piotr Gliński**  
Deputy Prime-Minister, Minister of Culture,  
National Heritage and Sport – **Poland**



**Mr Jack Chambers TD**  
Minister with responsibility for Sport and  
Gaeltacht – **Ireland**



**Mr Vincenzo Spadafora**  
Minister for Youth and Sports – **Italy**



**Mr Tiago Brandão Rodrigues**  
Minister of Education (in charge of Sport) –  
**Portugal**



**Mr Carol-Eduard Novák**  
Minister for Youth and Sports – **Romania**

**Mr Ivan Husár**  
State Secretary for Sport - **Slovak Republic**

**Ms Simona Kustec**  
Minister for Education, Science and Sport of the  
Republic – **Slovenia**

**Ms Irene Lozano**  
Secretary of State for Sport – **Spain**

**Ms Amanda Lind**  
Minister for Culture and Democracy, with  
responsibility for sport – **Sweden**