
Council of Europe: “banning participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games”

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has called on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its constituent sports bodies to “prohibit the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games and all other major sporting events as long as Russia’s war of aggression continues”. PACE asks to maintain the position expressed in 2022. The IOC is currently considering the possibility of allowing athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport to compete in Paris as “neutral athletes”. But, adopting a resolution based on the report of the People’s Party member Linda Hofstad Helleland, PACE states that any participation is “unthinkable, would certainly be used as a tool of propaganda, and would de facto prevent other athletes – not least Ukrainian ones – from participating”. The MEPs point out that Russian and Belarusian athletes, often from military sports teams, receive state salaries: “it seems impossible that they could demonstrate their neutrality and distance from these regimes”. Instead, as to lack of free and safe access to the Lachin corridor for the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, PACE reiterates: “a humanitarian response on its own is not enough and a political solution” and “neutral international involvement are required”. PACE adopted a resolution based on the report of MEP Paul Gavan of the United Left Party. It points out that Azerbaijan is “responsible for protecting and guaranteeing the safety of all those who live within internationally-recognised borders”.

Valentina Bombelli