23 November 2026

António Costa
President of the European Council

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Dear António, dear Ursula,

Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine will soon enter its sixth year. Russia is increasing its indiscriminate attacks on civilians and essential infrastructure ahead of winter. Current international negotiations on ending the war have not led to Russian restraint – quite the opposite.

Moreover, Russia has intensified hybrid attacks, including acts of sabotage and malicious interference in Europe. We take the Russian threat seriously; the EU has developed a strategic approach to counter these actions, including the adoption of restrictive measures, and will continue to act resolutely to address Russia's intensified hybrid campaign.

A central objective of EU policy is to demonstrate to Russia that its invasion of Ukraine will not bring rewards. Europe has taken the lead in supporting Ukraine and raising the cost for Russia. Military aggression cannot be accepted and must not be normalised.

Recent developments in the world of sports now threaten to send the opposite message. If Russian teams and athletes were allowed to participate in European sporting events, this would be counted as a victory by the Kremlin. Allowing the Russian state to field participants in international competitions risks sending a signal of creeping acceptance of Russia's war of aggression. It is simply impossible to separate sports and geopolitics.

This is already part of EU policy. The European Council has concluded that *"as long as there is no just and lasting peace in Ukraine, there should not be a normalisation of Russia's and Belarus' participation in international sports and cultural events, particularly through the display of national symbols"*. The time has come to put this position into practice.

Several member states have urged the Commission to present legislative proposals to this end. A revised Visa Code must contain provisions that address this problem, and the overall problem of non-essential travel. However, the proposal for a revised Code is not expected before the first quarter of 2027, and the matter is too urgent to wait until it enters into force.

Therefore, the upcoming guidelines for visa applications by Russian nationals will, among other measures, be crucial. These guidelines must provide a clear direction on preventing non-essential travel of Russian nationals into the territory of the Member States, including participation in European sporting events, with a view to establishing a common approach that reflects the European Council's position.

While acknowledging national competencies, we also encourage Member States not to grant visas to Russian or Belarusian athletes, as that would enable their participation in sporting events across the European Union.

We intend to make our position on this matter clear at the upcoming European Council.

Yours sincerely,

Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister	Denmark
Kristen Michal, Prime Minister	Estonia
Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister	Finland
Andris Kulbergs, Prime Minister	Latvia
Gitanas Nausėda, President	Lithuania
Donald Tusk, Prime Minister	Poland
Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister	Sweden