Mrs Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth
of the European Commission
Brussels

Brussels, 21 November 2013

Dear Commissioner Vassiliou,

At the Informal Sport Council in Vilnius, on the 1st of October this year, the Finnish Minister of Culture and Sport, Paavo Arhinmäki made an oral statement on behalf of 19 Member States[1] with regard to respect for human rights when participating in organising major sporting events. In view of some upcoming major sporting events, both in and outside of the European Union, we, European Ministers for Sport, would like to invigorate this joint statement and elaborate on this important issue by writing you this joint letter.

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.

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[1] Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Therefore, 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. Gerald Klug**
Minister of Defence and Sports - **Austria**

**Mr. Philippe Muyters**
Flemish Minister for Finance, Budget, Work, Spatial Planning and Sports – **Belgium**

*Also on behalf of:*

**Mr. André Antoine**
Vice-Président, Ministre du Budget, des Finances et des Sports du Gouvernement de la Communauté française – **Belgium**

**Ms Isabelle Weykmans**
Minister of culture, media and tourism of the German speaking Community – **Belgium**

MARIANA GEORGIEVA
MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS

Željko Jovanović Ph.D.

Minister of Science, Education and Sports

Croatia

**Mr. Kyriakos Kenevezos**
Minister of Education and Culture - **Cyprus**

**Mrs. Marianne Jelved**
Minister for Culture – **Denmark**

**Mr. Rein Lang**
Minister of Culture – **Estonia**

**Mr. Paavo Arhinmäki**
Minister of Culture and Sport - **Finland**

**Mme Valérie Fourneyron**
Ministre des Sports, de la Jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative – **France**

**Dr Hans-Peter Friedrich**
Federal Minister of the Interior - **Germany**



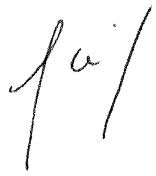
**Mr. Pál Szekeres,**
Deputy state secretary for sport - **Hungary**



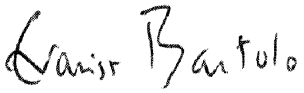
**Mr. Michael Ring**
Minister of State of Transport, Tourism & Sport - **Ireland**



**Mr. Graziano Delrio**
Minister of Regional Affairs, Local Autonomies and Sport – **Italy**



**Mr. Romain Schneider**
Ministre luxembourgeois des Sports - **Luxembourg**

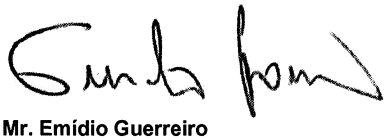


**Mr. Evarist Bartolo**
Minister for Education and Employment - **Malta**

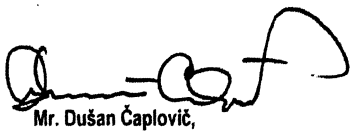


**Mrs. Edith Schippers**
Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport - **The Netherlands**

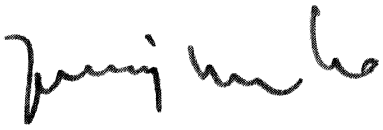
Minister of Sport and Tourism
of the Republic of Poland
Joanna Mucha
Joanna Mucha



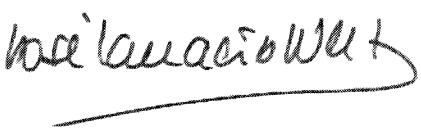
**Mr. Emídio Guerreiro**
Secretary of State for Sports and Youth – **Portugal**



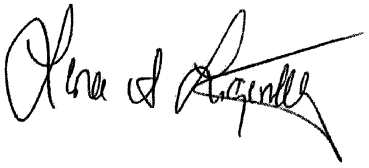
**Mr. Dušan Čaplovič,**
Minister for Education, Science, Research and Sport – Slovak Republic



**dr. Jernej Pikalo**
Minister for Education, Science and Sport - **The Republic of Slovenia**



**Mr. Jose Ignacio Wert Ortega**
Minister on Education, Culture and Sport – **Spain**



**Ms Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth**
Minister for Culture and Sport – **Sweden**



**Helen Grant**
Minister for Sport, Tourism and Equalities - **The United Kingdom**