Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 16392
22 April 2026

The Venice Biennale and a framework for Russia's participation in international cultural events

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Iulian BULAI and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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The recent decision by the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia to allow Russia to reopen its national pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition in 2026 was met with criticism from the cultural world, civil society, national governments, and international organisations such as the European Commission. The decision has sparked debates around several important issues, including the social, political and moral responsibility of artists and the art world, and their adherence to humanist values. It has also raised questions about culture as an instrument of influence and a resource of soft power.

Some have attempted to portray this decision as a defence of artistic freedom against the alleged censorship of Russian culture. However, this framing should be rejected. If the goal were genuinely to support Russian artistic expression, the Biennale would give a platform to the many Russian artists, filmmakers and writers who are currently imprisoned by the Russian State for opposing the war of aggression that Russia is waging against Ukraine.

Moreover, contemporary art could successfully serve the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and never provide legitimacy to a State that is conducting an illegal war of aggression.

Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly should condemn the decision of the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia to allow the Russian State to participate in the exhibition, in light of the democratic values that are expected of cultural institutions of international standing. Furthermore, the Assembly should consider the adoption of a set of principles and good practices to inform the policies of cultural institutions and States regarding the participation of Russian delegations in international cultural events, in line with European values of human rights and the rule of law.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ECPA: European Conservatives, Patriots and Affiliates
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group