



Prague 23.5.2026

Dear members of the rafting community, dear Board of Directors,

The long-term stance of the United of Boaters of the Czech Republic regarding the participation of Russian athletes in international competitions is firm and unwavering. Regrettably, we observe that the creation of the new international rafting organization has not brought the expected developments in this matter. Therefore, we are once again expressing our position, which we believe is essential to state openly under the current circumstances.

It is unacceptable to us that Russian athletes, even under a neutral flag, participate in sporting events where national teams compete against each other.

It was very difficult for us to accept the situation at the recent World Junior Championships in Pau, France, where, due to time constraints, we were unable to respond with sufficient notice. In a few days, the European Championships in Bosnia and Herzegovina will take place. However, we cannot and will not remain silent regarding the participation of Russian crews at this championship, and our presence at the competitions does not imply agreement with this step.

The Czech National Team will, of course, compete in the upcoming event fully in the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play. Nevertheless, we feel it is our duty to express our disagreement with the participation of Russian athletes. We fundamentally reject the principles of collective guilt, as we have already mentioned several times in previous statements; however, we remain consistent in our views since the very beginning of the Russian aggression. We want to believe that Russian athletes, as individuals, do not agree with the war. Nonetheless, we have reasonable concerns that the Russian state apparatus will exploit any sporting success of these athletes for its government propaganda.

These concerns are also confirmed by monitoring the information space during the period surrounding the World Championships in Pau. It is becoming evident that the concept of neutrality reaches its limits in practice. While inside the competition venue the athletes meet the criteria of the AIN (Individual Neutral Athletes) status, in the Russian online environment, on the profiles of local sports clubs, and in statements by regional authorities, these competitors are presented and celebrated immediately



United of Boaters of the Czech Republic

after the races as successful representatives of the Russian Federation. The status of a neutral athlete thus functions at the sports venue, but outside of it, the Russian side effectively uses it for its promotional purposes. We believe that the international federation lacks real tools to prevent this exploitation in the digital space, which fundamentally undermines the entire principle of neutrality.

Libor Polák
President
United of Boaters of the Czech Republic

