



Joint statement from BeNeLux Fencing Federations

The Benelux Fencing Federations regret that the FIE has missed an opportunity to live what they preach: Separate sports from politics.

Ukrainian sabre champion Olga Kharlan fought hard in her country to loosen the boycott against Russian and Belarusian athletes.

When she succeeded last minute, she went to the piste and defeated her “neutral” opponent in a fair match.

After being declared victorious by the referee, she applied the Covid rules that the FIE had never abolished and that some participants are still applying, saluting and replacing the handshake with a beat of the blade.

While Kharlan presented her blade for several seconds, leaving no doubt of her intentions to go as far as her emotions would allow her in light of the illegal, aggressive war against her country, her opponent insisted on shaking hands.

The FIE’s miss consists of not leaving it at that point but applying a rule to the letter - a rule that is still suspended by the Covid protocol.

Far worse, the FIE did not use the discretionary power put forth in t.171, which calls for applying equal treatment and considering the circumstances.

Besides Kharlan, other fencers do not shake hands but beat blades. The FIE, however instead of praising Kharlan for defying a boycott, prefers to selectively apply a rule to the letter.

Benelux fencing federations agree that sports must build bridges, as Thomas Bach has repeatedly called for.

But these bridges will not be sustainable if every single attempt to build one is blown away by stubborn sticking to an obsolete rule instead of stabilizing them by a smart application of the spirit of the game and sports.

Therefore we urge the FIE to correct this soonest possible :

- **Lift the black card against Olga Kharlan**
- **Reserve no consequences, opening the path for her to compete in the team competition**
- **Find a smart way to avoid these situations in the future**

The presidents of the three federations :

Fédération Royale Belge
Des Cercles D'Escrime

Piet Wauters

Koninklijke Nederlandse
Algemene Schermbond

Leon Pijnappel

Fédération Luxembourgeoise
d'Escrime

Gérard Zens