

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002082/26
to the Commission
Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz (PPE)
(20 May 2026)

Subject: Russia's admission to the Biennale Festival and EU funding

The Venice Biennale Foundation's decision to allow a Russian delegation to participate in the International Art Exhibition has been deeply controversial at both diplomatic and political level, with public protests taking place and several other national pavilions refusing to participate. The Commission has concluded that this decision did not align with the common Union response to Russia's aggression. In addition, ministers from 22 EU Member States sent a joint letter to the Biennale Board, requesting that they reconsider their decision. The Commission sought clarification on the arrangements between the foundation and the Russian Government to assess compliance with the EU sanctions regime.

In light of the above:

1. When will the Commission suspend or withdraw EU funding granted to the Venice Biennale Foundation?
2. If a decision has not yet been taken, what factors justify EU financial support continuing despite this potential non-compliance with EU sanctions policy and the broader diplomatic implications of the foundation's decision?
3. Should the Commission not take preventive action at this stage, rather than simply waiting for formal clarification?

Submitted: 20.5.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(16 July 2026)

The Commission does not provide direct funding to the Biennale of Arts. However, the participation of a delegation of artists from the Russian Federation, using a national pavilion and whose participation is funded and promoted by the Russian government at the Biennale of Arts is being assessed for a possible breach of the EU restrictive measures imposed on Russia in the context of its illegal aggression against Ukraine ⁽¹⁾. This could entail consequences for existing contracts signed with the Biennale.

Hence, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), in cooperation with the Commission, is reviewing a grant action funded under the MEDIA strand of Creative Europe ⁽²⁾ that aims to enhance virtual production and provide network opportunities to audiovisual professionals.

The EACEA has formally notified the Biennale Foundation of the Agency's intention to suspend or terminate the grant if grounds of grave professional misconduct and serious breach of contractual obligations are established, in particular in relation to potential non-compliance with EU sanctions against Russia and disrespect for EU fundamental values.

The Biennale Foundation is currently exercising its right to be heard, and a thorough examination of the Foundation's response will be performed before any decision on final measures is taken. Pending this review, grant-related payments remain suspended.

These actions are fully in line with EU law and the principles of sound financial management.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02014R0833-20260424>.

⁽²⁾ <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-media-strand>.