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P-002920/2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen
on behalf of the European Commission
(9.9.2026)

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency has terminated the grant agreement signed with the Biennale on grounds of grave professional misconduct and breach of obligations under Article 14.2 of the grant agreement, in line with the principles of sound financial management¹. The Commission has assessed the Biennale's compliance with the EU restrictive measures (sanctions) imposed on Russia in the context of its illegal aggression against Ukraine², and identified grounds to conclude that breaches of these measures had occurred.

The EU's engagement with Azerbaijan takes place within the broader framework of the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement³, which includes the principle of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. The case of Russia has to be assessed on its own, since the EU has adopted unprecedented sanctions in response to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The EU's external action is guided by the principles set out in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, including democracy, the rule of law, universality and indivisibility of human rights and respect for the principles of the UN Charter and for international law. These principles, further reflected in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy⁴, guide the EU's engagement with and assessment of developments in third countries. A third country's level of gas exports to the EU does not constitute a criterion for assessing its respect for democratic values.

¹ Article 33 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj/eng>.

² Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02014R0833-20260424>.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A01999A0917%2801%29-20091101>.

⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-action-plan-human-rights-and-democracy-0_en.