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## Statement of the Executive Committee of the Sociological Association of Ukraine

### concerning the participation of presenters affiliated with Russian academic institutions

To the Organising Committee of the 17th European Sociological Association Conference

To the Executive Committee of the European Sociological Association

**Dear Colleagues,**

We express our strong protest and profound concern regarding the inclusion in the programme of the 17th European Sociological Association Conference in Warsaw of presentations by participants affiliated with academic institutions located in the Russian Federation, including the European University at St Petersburg and HSE University.

We fully support the Resolution adopted on 17 August 2026 by the Local Organising Committee of the 17th ESA Conference in Warsaw and its request that persons participating under affiliations with Russian scientific institutions should not take part in the conference.

Our objection is strictly focused on **institutional affiliation**. It is not directed against individuals on the basis of nationality, citizenship, origin, or personal political views. We fully support Russian scholars who have opposed the war, suffered persecution, left Russian institutions, and continue their academic work in exile.

At the same time, **academic freedom is inseparable from social responsibility**. Academic freedom protects the autonomy of inquiry, critical thought, and scholarly exchange; it does not require academic institutions to remain neutral toward practices that legitimise or normalise a state conducting a war of aggression. In conditions of war, claims of institutional neutrality may themselves have consequences: they can obscure the fundamental asymmetry between an academic community whose conditions of existence are being violently destroyed and institutions operating within the academic system of the aggressor state.

The defence of academic freedom must therefore include the defence of the conditions that make academic freedom possible for others - their physical security, institutional autonomy, capacity to conduct research and teach, and ability to participate freely in the international academic community. **Academic freedom cannot be credibly defended while the destruction of another national academic community is treated as institutionally irrelevant.**

Institutional affiliation in an international academic programme is not a neutral label. It confers visibility, recognition, and legitimacy. Allowing Russian academic institutions to be represented as ordinary participants in European academic exchange therefore risks normalising the aggressor state's academic system while the aggression itself continues.

This concern is reinforced by the documented institutional involvement of Russian higher education in legitimising the war. Following the full-scale invasion launched on 24 February 2022, rectors and directors of more than 200 Russian universities and academic institutions signed a public statement supporting Vladimir Putin's so-called "special military operation". Meanwhile, Russia's war has caused immense

human and material losses in Ukraine and has profoundly restricted the freedom of Ukrainian scholars to live, teach, conduct research, communicate, and transmit knowledge to younger generations.

This creates a fundamental asymmetry that cannot be resolved through an abstract appeal to institutional neutrality. **There is no ethically neutral position between the destruction of an academic ecosystem and the normalisation of institutions embedded in the state responsible for that destruction.**

The 17th ESA Conference is being hosted in Poland, whose academic community has demonstrated extraordinary solidarity with Ukraine and whose Local Organising Committee has unequivocally stated that it cannot host, within the Warsaw conference, persons participating under affiliations with Russian scientific institutions. For ESA to disregard this position would undermine respect for the hosting academic community and create a false symmetry between scholars whose institutional environment is being destroyed by aggression and institutions operating within the aggressor state.

**We therefore respectfully but firmly call upon the ESA leadership to:**

- respect and support the Resolution adopted by the Local Organising Committee in Warsaw;
- reconsider the participation in the conference programme of presenters affiliated with scientific institutions located in the Russian Federation;
- explicitly distinguish restrictions concerning **institutional affiliation** from discrimination based on nationality, citizenship, origin, or individual political beliefs;
- develop a clear ESA policy integrating **academic freedom with social and institutional responsibility** in situations of military aggression, and recognising the non-legitimisation of aggressor-state institutions as a legitimate form of institutional resistance to the normalisation of aggression.

Such a position does not weaken academic freedom. **It protects its social and institutional foundations.** Non-legitimisation is not collective punishment, nor is it a rejection of scholarly dialogue. It is a form of institutional responsibility that refuses to reproduce “business as usual” while the conditions that make free academic life possible are being systematically destroyed by the aggressor state.

Until Russia's aggression against Ukraine ends and the conditions for a responsible restoration of institutional academic relations are established, participation under the banner of Russian academic institutions should not be treated as business as usual within European academia.

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