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Billionaire Usmanov's Fencing Federation Reinstates Russia and Belarus for Team Events

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Russian fencer Anton Borodachev (right). **Abdullah Firas / ABACA / TACC**

The International Fencing Federation (FIE) has cleared Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete as neutrals in upcoming European and world team championships, state media reported Wednesday.

The FIE, led by Russian-Uzbek billionaire Alisher Usmanov since 2008, was among the first sports federations to lift a blanket ban imposed after Moscow's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Despite the FIE's decision, Russian and Belarusian fencers did not participate in the qualifiers and were absent from the 2024 Paris Olympics.

State-run news agency TASS reported that the athletes will be eligible to compete under the FIE flag at the European Championships in Italy in June and the World Championships in

Georgia in July.

Russian Fencing Federation President Ilgar Mamedov welcomed the move but cautioned that Russia would send a "weakened squad" due to ongoing restrictions.

"We hope the next step will be full admission of all fencers still unable to compete, as well as their coaches," Mamedov told TASS.

The FIE previously allowed Russian junior fencers to compete as neutrals at last month's world junior games.

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