



Solidarity Ukraine –issue 57 - Number 11– Team Europe

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) joins in the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on February 24, 2022. The COVID pandemic has weakened democratic countries. Conspiracy theories and hate speech have exploded. This war in Europe is existential for the European Union. This newsletter is the 11th published in 2026 and the 57th since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. November, 11th month of the year. The number 11 evokes a football team where everyone has their position according to their talent with a captain who breathes spirit into the group. In Russia, the hopes born with the fall of the USSR in 1991

were quickly dashed with the arrival of oligarchs and then a new "tsar" in 2000. Russia is under influence, a secondary player within the BRICS dominated by China. Ukraine has expressed its willingness to join the European Union; and will become a full player in an economic Union with democratic functioning, where the rules of the game are known and accepted by all, and a common agenda that each member is required to respect, based on shared values. Ukrainians have been fighting for nearly thirteen years (Maidan) to join Team Europe. In the concert of nations, an outdated formula given that "noise" has replaced music, the European Union, heckled and attacked, is holding its own. The 27 member states will be joined by other European countries. The EU remains a mobilizing project, a guarantee of peace and economic prosperity. Football is also well organized with clear rules; the "Laws of the Game" issued by the IFAB. The last World Cup in the United States showed that "newcomers" did not hesitate to transgress them. The betrayal of Ukraine by President Trump's team is part of this spirit. All blows are allowed, especially the lowest ones.

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* a logo designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Number eleven- The rules of the Game in football

Football is the most popular sport in the world, with 51% of the world's population declaring themselves fans according to the Nielsen survey institute (1). Its international presence and record audiences make it the most watched sport in the world, with around 270 million amateur players worldwide. Its informal practice is accessible to all, especially in disadvantaged regions. (2). The rules of football are simple to understand - two teams of eleven players each meet on a field and must score the most goals, in a given time, against their opponent, outplaying the goalkeepers' rampart (goals). The International Football Association Board (IFAB) recalled the "Laws of the Game" in 2019. The first "universal" rules appeared in 1863. The IFAB, a world body created in 1886 by the four British football associations, is tasked with developing and preserving these Laws of the Game. They include six points: fairness, integrity, respect, safety, enjoyment of participants and the contribution of technology to football. The IFAB recalls that "The Laws of the Game must also encourage everyone to participate in football, regardless of their origins or abilities." The board adds that "Players, referees and coaches must enjoy playing football, as well as spectators, supporters in general, leaders, etc. The Laws of the Game must help make football attractive so that everyone, regardless of age, origin, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc., wishes to participate and derive pleasure from it.

The sad spectacle of the last World Cup organized by the United States with Canada and Mexico confirmed the lack of team spirit of US President Donald Trump. He does not know football and has blithely freed himself from all the most basic rules of the "Laws of the Game". For French researchers Clara Loïzzo and Kévin Veyssière, "both obtaining and organizing the World Cup are a reflection of the policy pursued by Donald Trump, from the pressure for attribution to the polarization of most matches in the United States, by way of the complacent attitude of FIFA and its president Gianni Infantino, who awarded the American president a "FIFA Peace Prize" during the draw for the competition. During the Cup, Donald Trump also intervened against the exclusion of a player from the US national team, who had received a red card and surprisingly Donald Trump won the case with the president of FIFA. Unsurprisingly, the sports commentators would say, President Trump followed the same logic in his foreign policy with Ukraine. Since his personal attacks on Ukrainian President Zelensky at the White House in February 2025, through the reception with great pomp in Alaska in August 2025 of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was hit by an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court (ICC), Donald Trump has "logically" betrayed Ukraine and the Ukrainians. On October 16, 2026, he exempted Russia from new major sanctions, even though they were provided for in a law adopted in September by the American Congress; he also made a "scoundrel" agreement with Russia to buy diesel oil from it against the general agreement shared by all the supporters of Ukraine (5)

Team Russia – vertical, hierarchical, unequal spirit

The team spirit instilled by the Russian regime since 2000 has nothing to envy in the Soviet era or tsarism - vertical, unequal and hierarchical. Since coming to power in a bloodless Russian Federation, Russian President Vladimir Putin has played the role of the courageous and reckless “team captain,” “rightwing” which robs the oligarchs who brought him to power and takes over the companies they had managed to bring to market economy. Russian President forgets to mention that he distributes the companies to cronies, often from the ranks of the Intelligence, without any entrepreneurial skills. Russian voters, very impoverished and destabilized by major upheavals that occurred after the implosion of the USSR in 1991, agreed to trust him, electing him democratically. Russians, especially entrepreneurs, have become disillusioned since the tightening of the regime and the war in Ukraine. Companies, when they are prosperous, are or will be confiscated by those in power, such as Western companies placed "under temporary administration" by shell companies (6). The structure that manages this temporary administration is LEV management, an entity controlled by Andrey Kraishkin, a former official of the interior ministry with no experience in management. The names circulating to take back the despoiled foreign assets are those close to power, thus creating "a new layer of mini-oligarchs. Dependent, they will be Putin's loyalists."

The strategy of the Russian regime towards Ukraine is similarly unequal: Russia would be at the top of the pyramid of a "Holy Trinity", at the base would be placed Belarus and Ukraine, vassalized while they are sovereign and independent states since the implosion of the USSR in 1991. Vladimir Putin's reference is that of Yalta in 1945, when the United States of Roosevelt, the United Kingdom of Churchill and the USSR of Stalin had organized, after the Second World War, the partition of Europe. In the West, Western democracies have prospered thanks to a market economy, democratic institutions and European integration based on freedom of movement. In the East, countries have become impoverished with a planned economy, authoritarian regimes subservient to Moscow, omnipotent intelligence services restraining any freedom (opinion, expression, movement...). The whim of the Russian president (during an interview with Donald Trump revealed by the American newspaper Wall Street Journal) is to bring together on the sidelines of the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), in November, China, Russia and the United States to settle, without the Ukrainians or the Europeans, the fate of Ukraine (8). Vladimir Putin plays the role of strongman in a Russia impoverished by his wars (in Chechnya, Syria, Ukraine...). Yet Russian president is a weak, second-rate partner to his powerful Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. Within the BRICS, an organization launched in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the South Africa) to "de-dollarize" and "de-westernize" the world order, Russia is not in a position of strength, a small player, a second-tier, as suggested by American President Barack Obama during his presidency, with a clear vision. Russia in 2026 is not USSR in 1945. (9).

Team Ukraine- horizontal, united and democratic spirit horizontal

On the Ukrainian side, President Zelensky has played every role in his team since he was elected in 2019 – a heroic team captain facing a Russian aggression no one saw coming (February 2022), a goalkeeper conceding goals from an American “ally” (since January 2025), but also experienced player playing both in attack (against the bad Russian influence on the American emissaries) and in defence when the Ukrainians expressed their reservations (on the occasion of power struggles and corruption affairs of government officials). First “normal president” in heckled times (since the Maidan Revolution in 2014), President Zelensky knew the immense task of fighting endemic corruption in Ukraine, a legacy of Soviet totalitarianism, which gave way to toxic Russian influence. Puppet leaders, men of straw took their orders in Moscow and fled to Russia when they were challenged by demonstrations or democratic elections (2019). Team captain Zelensky asserted himself as a "war chief" as early as February 2022, with strong support among a united and determined Ukrainian population, an example of resistance, self-sacrifice, and fighting spirit. President Zelensky's strategy with his Western allies has been constructive and fruitful – firstly with President Joe Biden in the United States (2022-2024), an unwavering ally, also with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen always on the front line alongside the Ukrainians, and finally with the immense majority of the leaders of the member states of the European Union, aware that the future of peace in Europe, patiently won and built since 1945, was at stake.

Since the arrival of a new pro-Russian team at the White House, President Donald Trump and his cronies, and a vice-president JD Vance who relies on a deeply isolationist Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement (interested only by America's interests matter), President Zelensky has been a valiant and obstinate 'goalkeeper', a flying goalkeeper who didn't just take low punches but was able to react with intelligence and ingenuity. The Ukrainian president took the initiative with the Trump clan and his special envoys, so "interested" in the "deals" that have been constantly promised to them by businessmen close to Vladimir Putin such as the powerful director general of the Russian sovereign wealth fund, Kirill Dmitriev (8). President Zelensky insisted on the richness of the subsoils of Ukrainian territories in rare metals from which the United States could benefit. More daring and astute, during the war in the Middle East triggered in March 2026 by the American president against Iran, President Zelensky offered his services to American allies in the Gulf, left alone and without the expected American defense. This American war has caused a massive reaction of the Mullah regime against all the Gulf countries, so little supported by the United States, and a global and American economic crisis. Very revealing of the state of mind of "Team Ukraine", the intelligence services have not taken power despite unprecedented freedom and resources because Ukrainian society is a "horizontal, united and mixed society" (10). Intelligence service is quite revealing of the level of democracy of a country.

Team Europe for freedom and democracy

After the "deal" on diesel, concluded by an American president Donald Trump in desperate need, ready to do everything possible to win the midterm elections, on Tuesday, November 3, the spirit of the European team expressed itself loud and clear for Ukraine, the future player, expected and hoped, of the European team. In Team Europe, there are no second-rate players ; same rights for all. Berlin immediately reacted to support President Zelensky through its foreign minister, followed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, or French President Emmanuel Macron, alongside Ukraine and President Zelensky, or the Finnish president, Alexander Stubb, promising ammunition to the Ukrainian population. The Europeans are trying to make up for the shortage of American Patriots, used massively by the US army in the conflict unleashed against Iran in the spring of 2026. All experts in strategy have denounced the agreement negotiated with the Russians by the "special" American emissaries Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff against the promise of participation of close to Donald Trump in the Russian oil company Lukoil

For François Heisbourg, a French specialist on Europe at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (ISS) in London, "we are here in the ignoble and probable conflict of interest on a large scale." The sequence of the 2026 FIFA World Cup is endlessly repeated with the Trump clan in the name of a so-called "national interest" that serves first and foremost private interests. The American press revealed a huge rent (4 million dollars) paid by FIFA for an unoccupied office of Trump Power (12). The EU's foreign ministers have officially added 1,600 Russian individuals and entities to their regime of restrictions, which already includes more than 2,600 names. The head of European diplomacy, Kaja Kallas, said that the European Union would "adopt a huge package of sanctions specifically targeting the military-industrial complex, so that the Russians can no longer assemble these rockets and drones that are killing people in Ukraine" (13). In concrete terms, their assets in Europe will be frozen; they will not be able to travel on European territory, and European citizens or businesses will no longer be able to finance them. It is a powerful means of influence towards third countries, notably in Asia, which do not like to trade with sanctioned organizations, fearing financial reprisals. Countries that openly support Russia, such as North Korea, are already subject to the same sanctions' regime; entities cooperating with them will also be sanctioned.

Team Europe is united and ready to fight back against its opponents. The spirit is good and constructive. Often accused of excessive enthusiasm, and of getting lost in rules and norms that are difficult to apply in times of crisis, the EU was able to bounce back, to defend an ally, Ukraine. The "Laws of the game" are both a strength in calm times and a weakness in turbulent times, which create major emotional disruptions. One thing is certain - the EU and Ukraine are part of the same team, Team Europe to defend Freedom and Democracy, the only possible and sustainable future in Europe. *Slava Ukraini* !-

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- (2) Sport management, 25 août 2026- <https://www.sportsmanagementschool.fr/blog-sms/sport-le-plus-populaire>
- (3) International Football Association Board (IFAB), « Lois du Jeu », Zurich, 1^{er} juin 2019-
<https://media.fff.fr/uploads/document/03d97ac96835f74537bf6837bd65dab3.pdf>
- (4)) Clara Loïzzo, teacher in preparatory classes for the grandes écoles - lycée Masséna, Nice and Kévin Veyssière, founder of the FC Géopolitics website, « Coupe du monde de football 2026 : les Etats Unis et la géopolitique du sport », 8 juin 2026 -
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- (5) Editorial « Ukraine : la trahison de Donald Trump », Le Monde, dimanche 18 et lundi 19 octobre 2026
- (6) Benjamin Quenelle « Comment le Kremlin confisque les actifs étrangers », Le Monde, samedi 10 octobre 2026
- (7) Claire Gatinois et Benjamin Quenelle « Kirill Dmitriev , le VRP de Poutine qui a fait se retourner Poutine», Le Monde mercredi 28 octobre 2026
- (8) Marie Jégo « Le Kremlin rêve d'un nouveau Yalta, avec les Etats Unis et la Chine », Le Monde, 23 octobre 2026
- (9) Sophie Lepault, Chine, Russie, Inde et Co, nouveaux maîtres du monde ? », France, documentaire, 2026- <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/126184-000-A/chine-russie-inde-et-co-nouveaux-maitres-du-monde/>
- (10) Mariana Bezouhla, Ukrainian member of the Parliament quoted by Jacques Follorou « Le poids des services secrets ukrainiens inquiète le pouvoir », Le Monde mardi 20 octobre 2026
- (11) Information published by the New York times , quoted by Claire Gatinois et Thomas d'Istria « Après le deal sur le gazole russe, Europe et Ukraine tentent de faire front commun », Le Monde 13 octobre 2026
- (12) Rémi Dupré , « Un bureau de la FIFA dans la Trump Tower pour 4 millions de dollars de loyer, symbole des liens forts entre Infantino et Trump », Le Monde, 13 octobre 2026
- (13) Philippe Jacqué « Bruxelles ajoute plus de 1600 noms à la liste de sanctions », Le Monde, 13 octobre 2026

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