

EUROPEAN CHESS UNION 2022-2026



EUROPE 2026 #Platform

The Presidential Candidate

GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili is the incumbent European Chess Union President. He was a member of the State Committee and Director of the Organising Committee of the last 43rd World Chess Olympiad. He has served as the First Deputy Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia. Zurab was formerly a chess professional and has been the manager, trainer and second of world-famous players such as Garry Kasparov and Judit Polgar.

In his career as a sportsman, Zurab was at the top of world chess for two decades with highlights including first place at the European Individual Championship in 2003 and the best individual performance at the Elista Olympiad in 1998.

Zurab has gone on to demonstrate his leadership abilities and management skills as president of the Georgian Chess Federation (1998-2004), as a board member

of the ECU (2000-2004), as a Vice President of FIDE (2002-2010), President of ECU (2014-2022) and a founder and first President of the Black Sea Chess Association (1999-2004). He has organised top events, such as the first knockout Women's European Championship (2000), the Europe vs. Asia Match (2001), and the Women World Chess Championship (2004). He also distinguished himself on top board and as Team Captain for Georgia at seven consecutive Olympiads (1992-2004) and as Captain of the neighboring Azerbaijan team for the 2009 European Team Championship that won the gold medal.

Our record at the helm of the ECU

The period from September 2014 until now has been one of the most progressive and creative for the European Chess Union. A period that has seen an improvement in our financial position, stability, and an upgrade of the ECU profile. The two years of Pandemic slowed our progress, but ECU reacted very fast and developed innovative and highly appreciated activities in online and hybrid competitions and seminars.

A summary of some of the recent development and achievements.

Financing

The annual income of the ECU increased progressively to one (1) million euros in 2019 from 200,000 in 2014. In the following years, 2020, 2021 these figure could not be achieved due to the pause of over the board activity and cancellation of our special events. However, from 2022 the budget has begun to rise again significantly. The ECU remains on a sustainable basis with the organization retaining after the Pandemic 500.000 euros in its reserves.

ECU is today a part of major Erasmus+ Chess programs and benefits from this funding. It has secured funding from European Investing Bank which sponsors various events and runs the most efficient program in the FIDE Development fund.

European Championships

Sponsorship and funding for all European Championships was secured in advance while participation increased at all levels. The European Individual Women and Open Championships were integrated with other major European Championships and become a stable part of ECU program.

New innovative European events were established and regulated including the largest and most successful hybrid Chess competitions.

Special high-profile events were developed as the "European Golden Pawn" the "European Women's Gala", CIS conferences and fundraising events

ECU Structure

The ECU Board established and operated permanent commissions, namely; the Educational, Events, Women and the Arbiters Council, which have extended ECU

operations and improved productivity and encouraged innovation. ECU administration & day to day operations have become more efficient and less costly. The material assets of ECU were significantly increased with e-chess sets and anti-cheating equipment.

International position

ECU became a member/partner of major international organizations including: the 'European Fair Play movement' the European Universities Sports Association, the "European Capital & Cities Sports Federation (ACES Europe)". The ECU has also registered in the European Union transparency database.

Chess & Education

ECU organized major Chess Educational Conferences in Batumi Georgia, in the European Parliament in Brussels, in Zurich and online.

The ECU also supported and participated in major CIS Conferences in Europe such as the "London Conference" the "Yerevan CIS Conference" the "Madrid CIS Conference".

The ECU Educational committee developed CIS studies, organized informational meetings, became an active consultant to national chess federations, launched the ECU School Teacher Courses. Today education is an active and autonomous branch of ECU operations, but also develops a number of common projects with FIDE and the FIDE Chess in Education Commission.

The latest major development is the creation of the "Chess in Education Portal"

Transparency

The ECU Board conducted and continues to fight hard against corruption and pursues the case involving the discovery of a parallel shadow organisation called "ECU Delaware". The ECU Board took various actions at the administrative, civil, and criminal levels. The Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) made a historic ruling where all the actions of the ECU were justified and praised by the court. The last court decision came in March 2022 from Bulgaria justifying ECU actions. In 2019 the ECU all the owner(s) of the shadow company in the U.S.A and exposed the shadow bank account in Slovenia which sent a strong message to all involved in its operation, that this criminal activity will not be tolerated.

The ECU Ethics Commission was established as an advisory board while the ECU Fair Play regulations were established.

Women's Chess

The ECU Board took several initiatives to ensure sponsorship was secure for European Women's Chess Championship combined with the organization of the European Youth Chess Championship and there was an increased Prize fund. The fees for the women's chess clubs and players were minimized while players'

restrictions were waived. The ECU Women's Commission was established. The minimum of 25% women arbiters in the European Championships was proposed and approved by the ECU General Assembly. Several special events, seminars and webinars were organized encouraging and motivating female participation in all levels of chess activity (players, trainers, arbiters, organisers, federations, and clubs' managers).

Inclusivity

The doors opened for any person willing to work, the commissions were staffed with significant chess personalities, the establishment of the ECU Board of Trustees and the ECU Educational Advisory Board bring additional value to the organization. Today ECU is a healthy and open organization full of energy and willing to co-operate with any entity or individual who can contribute.

Chess for Persons for Disabilities & Social Responsibility

The ECU was particularly active in the last 3 years. The Workshop "Equal Opportunities" become an annual event with the co-operation of the FIDE Commission for Disabled. The program "A Chess board for all" launched in 2021 aiming to deliver hundreds of special chess sets to visually handicapped young players. An environmental info webinar was launched in 2021 in cooperation with the WWF and the Judit Polgar Chess Foundation.

TARGETS FOR THE NEW TERM:

Financing

1. Increasing the outside sources of funding/sponsoring based on commercial agreements for joint programs.
2. Applying and being part of more EU funding programs.
3. Creating more innovative chess events which can attract sponsorships.

Rebranding

The European Chess Union has made significant progress, but we feel would still benefit from a rebranding of its profile and presentation in the Chess and Sports Market. Ideas will be developed by professionals and will be presented to the ECU members.

Administration

ECU shall reevaluate its day-to-day operations and to continue the process of digitalization to produce faster and better services to its members. Support and strengthen of the ECU Commissions with new ideas and energy.

European Chess Heritage

Scheduling of special chess events in archeological sites, museums, further connecting chess with history and culture.

Chess and Education

Chess education is a top priority for a healthy chess ecosystem. The ECU Educational Commission have already done excellent work. New opportunities are constantly arising which require concrete initiatives and projects: some encouraging innovation and some encouraging standardization. The new term operational programs include:

1. Partnership in more European Programs with Erasmus+
2. Strengthened communication with EU Commission and Parliament and prepare a new CIS conference in EU Parliament for 2023
3. Development of official ECU tutorials (printed and online) for Chess in School Programs and recognition through the EU
4. Consultancy on developing National CIS programs
5. Participation in major CIS festivals in Europe

Professional chess

Main projects:

- A. Developing a European Chess Grand-Prix of round-robin tournaments with top players.
- B. Developing a European circuit of International Opens.

Supporting them with a common marketing strategy and additional prize fund

Public relations, media and marketing strategy

ECU's social media strategy already includes operating accounts in all the main social media, Facebook, Twitter Instagram, Twitch and YouTube

1. Further development of the European Chess TV.
2. Re-introduction with more features of the mobile ECU App
3. Developing its own results and statistic software for the standardization of tournament coverage.
4. The ECU's management will create a portfolio of marketing products and tools to help organizers attract sponsors, players, and audiences to their events.
5. Supporting initiatives of promoting chess, as European Golden Pawn, European Women's Gala, Global Chess Festival.

Social Responsibility

1. Continuation of the Social program launched over the last 3 years
2. Scheduling and organizing of new programs for vulnerable sections of society
3. Supporting European Championship for disabled players

Specific initiatives with ECU member federations

Above all, the ECU is a service provider for its 54 federation members, large and small, enabling cooperation and collaboration. We will continue or launch the following initiatives:

1. Establish and regulate annual ECU Hybrid Championships in Classic and Rapid formats.
2. Provide shared bilateral professional resources for its members in the areas of organization, PR, government relations, and sponsorship sales.
3. Continuation of support for joint events for training and development of arbiters, coaches, commentators, and players.
4. Continuation of support for development projects and CIS programs.
5. Encouraging regional co-operation among federations to develop mutual activities and to share good practices in all chess fields.
6. Develop co-operation with other continental chess associations and stakeholders from other continents.



European Golden Pawn Award Ceremony 2019 – Monte Carlo