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# NATIONAL EXPERIENCES



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*“Chess, like everything else, can be learned to a certain extent, but no further. The rest depends on the nature of the individual”*  
(GM J.R. Capablanca)





## ICARUS

### Including Chess As a Re-education Up-Skilling Tool

## Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership for adults

July 2025

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by partners of ICARUS

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The leading partner of ICARUS. A training company based in Rome, Italy, with strong experience in soft-skills training and Erasmus+ projects.

[skillupsrl.it](https://skillupsrl.it)



UniChess was born from the experience of several chess players, who after high competitive achievements, decided to promote their passion for chess at all levels.

[unichess.it](https://unichess.it)



A Spanish training company from Cordoba specialised in soft-skills and training courses, with great experience in Erasmus+.

[indepcie.com](https://indepcie.com)



A Spanish chess club from Mérida that combines competition and promotion of chess with social and therapeutical chess.

[www.ajedrezmagic.es](https://www.ajedrezmagic.es)



A Latvian education and research centre that focuses on innovative training and eco-sustainability.

[rtuzic.lv](https://rtuzic.lv)



The national federation that gathers all chess players, trainers and enthusiasts in Latvia.

[www.sahafederacija.lv](https://www.sahafederacija.lv)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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• Partnership	05
• Reference contact and support networks	06
• Local experiences in Italy	08
• Local experiences in Spain	18
• Local experiences in Latvia	26







# ICARUS WORKSHOPS IN ITALY

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## OVERVIEW

Originally scheduled to begin in November 2024, the chess course was postponed due to unforeseen administrative challenges. After overcoming critical bureaucratic hurdles—essential for obtaining the necessary documents—the course officially commenced on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, and is set to run until May/June 2025. With a group of approximately 10–12 inmates (all awaiting sentencing), the project is designed not only to improve chess skills but also to foster personal development and support social reintegration. Given that the detention center is a pre-trial facility (with sentences generally under five years), some inmates might complete their sentences before the course concludes, making every lesson particularly valuable.

## PROCESS AND INITIAL CHALLENGES

The early delays provided a valuable opportunity for reflection and preparation. The complex approval process—compounded by the sensitive nature of the penitentiary environment—required a diplomatic approach to resolve. Following the initial start in mid-December, the Christmas break allowed both the inmates and me, as the instructor, to familiarize ourselves with the course structure. This pause was instrumental in identifying potential challenges, standardizing the group's skill levels, and setting the stage for more focused training sessions when the course resumed on Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

## COURSE PROGRESSION AND PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The course resumed on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, with the introduction of evaluation questionnaires and efforts to align the group's skills. The participants come from diverse backgrounds, including Italian inmates (some of Romani origin), a Moroccan, a Romanian, and individuals from regions with a deep chess culture, such as the former Yugoslavia and the former USSR. Their skill levels vary, but all have shown great enthusiasm for the game.

One of the most significant cases is that of a 76-year-old Romanian inmate who initially displayed deep depression and social withdrawal. He had previously undergone extreme hunger strikes, raising serious concerns about his well-being. However, chess has sparked a new sense of purpose in him, and he now shows great enthusiasm for the lessons. Seeing his transformation, we are currently working to obtain a special permit that would allow him to participate in an external tournament in Treviso—an initiative that could have a profound impact on his rehabilitation process.

Another touching story comes from a 32-year-old Italian inmate, who decided to learn chess after discovering that his 8-year-old son had started playing at school. His motivation to improve is deeply personal: he wants to be able to play with his son once he is released. This personal connection has made his engagement in the course particularly engaging.



Facts like this have demonstrated how chess can serve as a bridge between incarcerated individuals and their families.

Given that this is a pre-trial detention facility, where sentences are typically less than five years, some inmates may be released before the program concludes. This makes every lesson particularly valuable, emphasizing the importance of maximizing the impact of each session.

### Observations and practical outcomes

- **Group dynamics and engagement:** Although punctuality was an initial challenge due to logistical issues within the prison, attendance has improved significantly over time, with inmates arriving on time and engaging actively during lessons.
- **Integrated teaching approach:** The lessons balance theoretical instruction (using materials such as **tactical exercises from the Chess Informant Encyclopedia**) with practical play. The incorporation of chess metaphors into broader discussions about life has proven particularly effective in reinforcing key values.
- **Adaptability and maximizing each lesson:** Since some inmates may leave before the course concludes, each session is structured to provide immediate educational and motivational benefits, ensuring that participants can take valuable lessons with them, even if they do not complete the full program

### The importance of chess training

Chess training has been much more than a recreational activity:

- **Cognitive and strategic development:** The sessions have sharpened critical skills such as calculation, observation, and long-term planning—abilities that are equally applicable to everyday life.
- **Life lessons through metaphors:** We actively integrate life lessons into our discussions. Using chess as a metaphor, we emphasize:
  - The importance of avoiding impulsivity and instead taking the time to analyze situations thoroughly.
  - The value of seeing the bigger picture, sacrificing something in the short term for a greater long-term gain.
  - The need to maintain concentration, as one careless mistake can undo all previous efforts.
  - The acceptance of defeat, encouraging players to shake hands and move forward without frustration.
- **Personal growth and social inclusion:** The chess course has promoted dialogue and social interaction, creating an environment where mutual respect and community are paramount.



### The hard work behind the chessboard

The resources needed to excel in chess can be divided into two main categories, identified by studies conducted since the beginning of the last century: innate and acquired.

The former, while innate, can be developed and enhanced through targeted training. The latter, on the other hand, are acquired mainly through formal education and field experience. Both innate and acquired resources require constant and systematic commitment to achieve levels of excellence.

The importance of expert guidance is crucial. A specialised trainer can help the trainee identify his or her specific resources and develop personalised strategies to improve them. Importantly, these resources are typically related to the game of chess and do not transfer directly to other disciplines. For example, an exceptional memory for chess positions is a highly specialised skill.

Inborn chess activities	Achievable chess activities
1) Self-control.	1) Good health condition.
2) Ability to reflect on arguments.	2) The perception of data transmitted by our senses.
3) Intense mental activity.	3) Steady nerves.
4) Obedience of the will.	4) Objective thought process.
5) Correct distribution of attention.	5) Powerful memory.
	6) High mental level.
6) Perception of position dynamics.	7) Self-confidence.
	8) Controlling emotional impulses.
7) Creative combinatorial skills.	9) Feeling for the position (combination of thought and emotion).



## Mens sana in corpore sano

Chess players often overlook the importance of maintaining physical health, thereby exposing themselves to significant risks such as heart problems and chronic stress from rigorous competition preparation. Yet, keeping the body healthy and active is not only essential for overall well-being but also for enhancing chess performance. Scientific research underscores a direct connection between regular physical exercise and improvements in cognitive functions—abilities that are paramount in the game of chess.

Engaging in physical activity triggers a host of positive changes in the brain, including neurogenesis (the generation of new neurons) and synaptic plasticity (the formation of fresh neural connections). These mechanisms enhance memory, concentration, and creativity, all of which are vital for chess excellence. Moreover, exercise boosts blood circulation, ensuring that brain cells receive an increased supply of oxygen and nutrients, thereby improving their overall functionality.

Simple activities, such as walking—which requires no specialized equipment and can be performed almost anywhere and at any physical level—offer tremendous health benefits. Just thirty minutes of walking each day, complemented regularly

by two hours of gym time per week, can effectively set back the biological clock by six to eight years.

This regimen not only aids in weight management and lowers LDL cholesterol levels but also positively influences memory and mental focus through the release of endorphins that alleviate both physical and emotional discomfort.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to physical exercise for chess players, personal preferences and individual objectives should guide the choice of activity. Aerobic exercises such as running, swimming, and cycling—as well as strength training, yoga, and Pilates—can all yield significant benefits. Ultimately, coupling a sharp mind with a healthy body not only elevates one's quality of life but may also be the decisive factor in achieving success in the chess world.

## A customised educational pathway

The design of a chess course within prison settings poses a unique set of challenges that demand both a focused and flexible pedagogical strategy. One major hurdle is the broad spectrum of educational backgrounds



among inmates. Many prisoners have experienced limited or disjointed access to structured education, making it imperative to offer a course that can accommodate diverse learning needs. This entails providing foundational lessons for beginners while also delivering advanced modules for those who possess prior competence in chess.

The primary objective of a chess course in prison transcends the mere transmission of game rules; it is an avenue for cultivating cognitive and social skills that facilitate the rehabilitation process. This holistic approach integrates the fundamentals of chess with wider educational goals, such as enhancing problem-solving abilities, fostering emotional resilience, and nurturing interpersonal skills.

A critical component in the course design is the sequential progression of topics. The curriculum should commence with the basic rules of chess, including piece movements, victory conditions, and elementary strategic principles. This incremental approach ensures that every inmate establishes a robust grasp of the game's fundamentals, serving as a springboard for delving into more complex strategies. Nevertheless, transitioning to advanced concepts must be carefully calibrated to sustain engagement and accommodate varying learning paces.

Beyond technical chess instruction, the course should incorporate activities aimed at developing transferable cognitive skills. For instance, chess inherently strengthens critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities.



Dissemination materials used in the workshops implemented in Italy





Through the analysis of moves and strategic planning, inmates learn to anticipate the consequences of their actions—a skill that extends to everyday decision-making. Such reflective exercises not only enhance chess performance but also promote greater self-awareness and accountability in personal matters.

Simultaneously, the chess course must address the cultivation of social and emotional competencies. The nature of chess demands a high level of emotional regulation, as setbacks and losses are integral to the learning process. Educating prisoners on managing frustration and perceiving defeat as an opportunity for growth can yield positive behavioral changes both inside and outside the prison environment. Moreover, group game sessions and tournaments can encourage the formation of positive relationships among inmates, fostering a sense of cooperation and mutual respect. Integrating these cognitive and social dimensions reflects an educational vision that surpasses conventional game instruction. The goal is to forge a connection between theoretical learning and the practical application of skills, thereby supporting the broader rehabilitation process. The competencies acquired through chess can become indispensable tools for navigating everyday challenges and facilitating a smoother reintegration into society.

The effective implementation of a chess course in a correctional environment needs meticulous planning and collaborative efforts



Mirko Trasciatti, from Unichess, introducing ICARUS.





among various professionals. Training for instructors is a vital step; they must be proficient not only in conveying technical chess knowledge but also in nurturing the cognitive and social skills described above. Instructors may come from the

prison staff, external volunteer organizations, or even be inmates who have earned certification through the program. In any scenario, it is crucial that they are prepared to manage the unique dynamics of education within a prison setting.

# Annexes

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The success of similar chess programs conducted in various prisons has sparked global interest. In Italy, the Italian Chess Federation (FSI) introduced the "Inmate Membership Card," allowing inmates to participate in official FSI/FIDE tournaments at a significantly reduced cost. Numerous organizations and companies within the Italian chess community have shown strong support for the initiative by donating educational materials, providing subscriptions to specialized chess magazines, and offering discounts on relevant products. This support has been instrumental in promoting and expanding the chess-in-prison project.

Italy led the way in prison chess, organizing the first FIDE-rated rapid, blitz, and standard tournaments within correctional facilities. The inaugural event took place in **2016 in Spoleto**, marking the beginning of a new era for prison chess in Italy. These groundbreaking tournaments offered inmates the opportunity to compete with external players at the international level, helping to foster a new inclusive sports culture within prisons.

In **2018**, the Italian Team Championship in Serie C featured a team of inmates competing against an external team, once again in Spoleto. Additionally, an international match took place between a prison team in Italy and one in Chicago. These events have firmly established Italy as a leader in prison chess while providing inmates with the opportunity to develop valuable cognitive and social skills.

These initiatives, have done more than promote chess culture. They have contributed to creating a more constructive environment within Italian prisons, where inmates can develop skills essential for reintegration into society. These programs have also paved the way for the introduction of additional chess courses across correctional facilities throughout Italy.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Blindfold Chess

A variant of chess in which one or both players are not permitted to see the board.

### Blitz Chess

[From German: Blitz, meaning "lightning"] A fast-paced form of chess with a very short time control, typically three or five minutes per player for the entire game. With the introduction of electronic chess clocks, the time remaining is often incremented by one or two seconds per move.

### Bullet Chess

A fast-paced variant where each player has only one minute to make all of their moves.

### Chessboard

The chequered board used in chess, consisting of 64 squares arranged in an 8x8 grid, with alternating light and dark colors.

### Fork

A simultaneous attack by a single piece on two or more of the opponent's pieces (or other direct targets, such as a checkmate threat). When the attacker is a knight, this tactic is often referred to as a "knight fork." Some sources claim that only a knight can deliver a fork, and that the term "double attack" is more appropriate when another piece is involved. However, this distinction is rarely observed.

### Piece

- One of the figures used in the game – namely the king, queen, rook, bishop, knight, or pawn. Each piece type follows its own movement rules on the board and has specific rules for capturing enemy pieces. This definition applies within the context of the rules of chess, such as the "touched piece" rule.
- In chess game notation or discussions, the term "piece" usually refers to any figure other than pawns. It can be used collectively to describe all "non-pawns" – for example, "White's pieces are well-posted." In some contexts, it may specifically refer to a minor piece, as in, "White is up two pieces for a rook."

### Pin

A pin occurs when a piece is attacked but cannot legally move, as doing so would expose the player's own king to the attack. Alternatively, a piece may be attacked and can legally move out of the line of attack, but doing so would leave a more valuable piece (or an unprotected piece) vulnerable to capture. See absolute pin and relative pin for further distinctions.

### Skewer

An attack on a valuable piece that forces it to move to avoid capture, thereby exposing a less valuable piece behind it, which can then be captured. See also X-ray.







# ICARUS WORKSHOPS IN SPAIN

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## OVERVIEW

Although our Icarus course in Spain had a belated start, the chess workshop in both correctional facilities remains active throughout the year thanks to Club Magic's own chess programme at Badajoz and Cáceres penitentiaries in the region of Extremadura, with two sessions held every week in each prison. This has allowed our Spanish partners to dedicate one session per week to Icarus, once the bureaucratic and logistical hurdles were overcome to include our colleagues from Indepcie, the other national partner in the workshops. Our first workshops in both prisons began the 19-20 of March, 2025 and will continue until June. The number of inmates enrolled in these workshops ranges from 15 to 20 in each of the two correctional facilities (around 40 in total).

## PROCESS AND INITIAL CHALLENGES

The programme carried by Club Magic already ran continuously for almost two decades, throughout the year, with the exception of a one-month holiday break in summer.

In addition to being well established among the prison rehabilitation activities within each facility, the main challenge for our partner is to ensure wider dissemination of the programme internally — that is, making sure information about the workshop and its aims truly reaches all inmates within the prison. Regarding the implementation of Icarus, our two Spanish

partners had other bureaucratic problems, they faced delays when trying to include new facilitators from another organisation into the workshops. This has been a major obstacle for the approval process, which takes time. It is also important to point out that our Spanish partners come from different regions of the country adding yet another handicap. Finally after months of preparation, Club Magic and Indepcie managed to get all the clearances and the workshops could start. The willingness of our colleagues at Indepcie to adapt to the needs and schedules proposed by Club Magic was key, as it was not only necessary to travel to another region, but also to move between the different cities where the prisons involved in the project are located.

This has been an example of how, despite our colleagues having spent fifteen years developing their project in these prisons, one must always anticipate administrative difficulties. When setting out a timeline for action in a pilot programme within prisons, it's a good idea to allow for the first month to account for potential delays due to paperwork and logistics.

## COURSE PROGRESSION

Once the course started, the inmates showed significant interest during the sessions, expressing a desire to delve deeper into the experiences and techniques introduced. The combination of chess and soft skills revealed a particularly interesting synergy, further enhanced by the inclusion of cognitive training through chess (the ECAM Method developed



by Club Magic), which is also traditionally delivered in the chess workshops at these prisons.

**The high number of sessions** (two per week, one in each prison) and the duration of each session (two hours) **made it easy to explore the course content in depth.** It also encouraged personal progress and development among the participants, as the facilitators allowed for a degree of individualised task planning and even self-management. As a result, small, homogeneous groups were formed (inmates from the same prison units, women, even male-female couples serving sentences, and inmates of foreign origin) to carry out the proposed activities, always under the supervision of the programme staff.

Although the vast majority of participants are serving long-term sentences, which allows them to take part in the entire project, there are occasional cases in which inmates either complete their sentence or are transferred to another facility for various reasons. In such cases, the waiting list system in place at both prisons enables quick replacement with new participants. The previously mentioned group structure significantly facilitates this process of integration. It is also noteworthy the continuity of the workshops which made possible for a smooth development of the project.

**One female inmate**, with a very low educational background, **initially showed a passive attitude** and frequently expressed feelings of low self-worth and self-esteem ("I'm really bad at chess", "This is really hard for



Rodrigo Pena and Vanesa Delgado, from Club Magic, in the activity carried out in Cáceres







Pena, Delgado and León (INDEPCIE), in the activity implemented in Cáceres Penitentiary Center.

me”, “I’m no good at this kind of thing”, “Don’t ask me too much”, etc.). However, she found in the more participatory techniques a way to build greater confidence in herself and her abilities. She now takes part actively and cheerfully in the various activities, especially those that involve greater participation.

**Another female inmate**, who also had not traditionally taken an active role in the workshop — and who clearly had different motivations for attending (her partner was also participating, which was undoubtedly her main reason for joining) — began to take a genuine interest in the course. She **adopted a much more active and engaged attitude**, pleasantly surprising the team with the quality of her ideas and contributions.

**One of the male inmates**, who is highly respected within the group, intellectually capable, and previously focused almost exclusively on the more competitive aspects of chess — primarily interested in improving his

chess level and largely indifferent to other forms of development — **has discovered a new intellectual motivation through the course**. He has become deeply involved in the tasks and activities, becoming a role model for the rest of the inmates.

**Taking into account the specific circumstances of each inmate regarding possible therapeutic outings, plans are in place to organise a scheduled day release for around five participants**. This outing will last a maximum of eight hours and will include various activities in the city of Mérida — including social gatherings, chess games, talks, and the sharing of personal experiences — all under the supervision of the course leaders and alongside chess club members and other guests. This event is expected to take place during May or early June **and will serve as the closing activity of the Icarus pilot programme in Spain**.



# Annexes

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

During the pilot programme, a range of activities were carried out within the chess workshop that combined learning the game with the development of personal, social and emotional skills.

One of the key activities was a role-playing exercise entitled “Two Chess Players and a Referee”, in which participants acted out a chess match illustrating both appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in relation to respecting rules. The activity was designed to explore values such as coexistence, self-control and empathy through a playful and participatory format. Afterwards, the group engaged in a reflective discussion to identify inappropriate behaviours and consider the relevance of rules both in the game and in everyday life.

A group dynamic focused on soft skills was also carried out, designed by the INDEPCIE team and adapted to the context of the workshop. Participants sat in a circle and passed chess pieces to each other without knowing the underlying rule, which was known only to the facilitator. The aim was for participants to discover the logic behind the activity through observation and trial and error. This exercise promoted attention, tolerance to frustration, cognitive flexibility and non-verbal communication. As the dynamic progressed,

elements such as the type or number of pieces were changed, introducing new challenges and keeping the participants engaged.

In addition to the in-prison sessions, some participants were given the opportunity to leave the facility to take part in external chess-related events. A highlight of the programme was the participation in the international online tournament “Chess for Freedom”, organised by FIDE, which brought together inmates from across Europe. These outings and logistics were fully managed and coordinated by Club Magic, ensuring that the participants could take part safely and meaningfully in these external opportunities. This experience had a significant positive impact on the participants’ self-esteem and their sense of belonging to a broader community.

These activities demonstrated the potential of chess as a tool for social intervention, fostering meaningful learning processes and encouraging personal change among participants.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Cognitive Functions

Core mental processes such as memory, attention, perception, reasoning, and problem-solving that allow us to process information and respond to the world around us.

### Cognitive Training

Exercises or activities designed to improve mental skills such as memory, concentration, and problem-solving.

### Critical Thinking

The ability to objectively analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make reasoned decisions.

### ECAM Method

A structured method for cognitive development through chess, developed by Club Magic, integrating mental exercises with gameplay.

### Emotional Intelligence

The capacity to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions, as well as empathize and interact effectively with others.

### Impulse Control / Emotional Regulation

The ability to manage spontaneous emotional reactions, remain calm, and make considered decisions.

### Personal Growth

The process of improving oneself through reflection, learning, and the development of positive habits and behaviors.

### Personal Responsibility

Accepting accountability for one's actions, understanding their consequences, and acting with integrity.

### Resilience

The capacity to recover from setbacks, adapt to difficult circumstances, and keep moving forward.

### Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Goals

Objectives set for different time horizons—immediate, intermediate, and distant—that help structure planning and decision-making (in this case during a game of chess).



### Social Integration

The process of rejoining and actively participating in society in a constructive and respectful way.

### Strategic Thinking

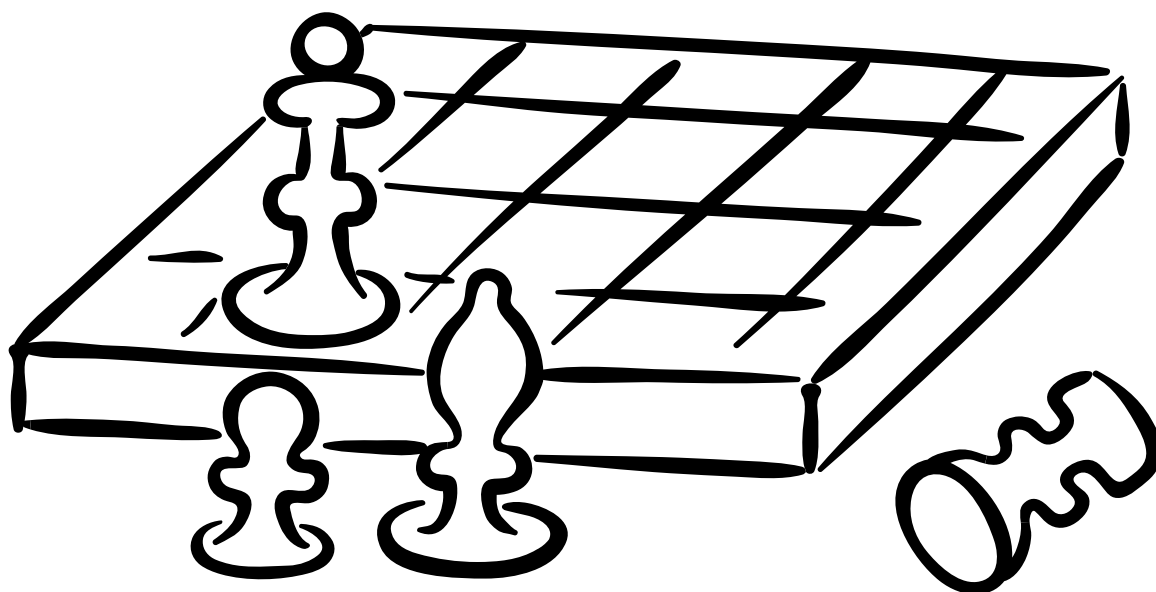
A forward-thinking approach to planning and decision-making that considers both short-term actions and long-term consequences.

### Tactical Thinking

The ability to respond effectively to immediate situations or challenges, often involving precise, short-term decisions.



J. A. Montero, Rodrigo Pena and J. C. León









# ICARUS WORKSHOPS IN LATVIA

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## OVERVIEW

In **Latvia**, chess training within the ICARUS project took place at Cesis Correctional Facility for Juveniles

(<https://www.ievp.gov.lv/en/departement/cesis-correctional-facility-juveniles>) in the period between November 2024 – May 2025. Training was not recommended to continue in the summer period by this Facility administration as some of the trainees were released (that was good news) in summer 2025, some were not available due to different reasons.

The training included in-person and online intensive trainings. In-person trainings were implemented once per month. Online trainings were organized in March and April 2025. Both – in-person and online trainings – sometime lasted for about 3 hours each. The training period was crowned with the trainees' participation in the 1st Continental Online Chess Championships for Prisoners CHESS FOR FREEDOM:

- African Continent - May 13, 2025
- American Continent - May 16, 2025
- European Continent - May 20, 2025
- Asian Continent - May 23, 2025.

## PROCESS AND INITIAL CHALLENGES

Cesis Correctional Facility for Juveniles is the institution for prison inmates who are males between 15-25 years old. It should be pointed that the ICARUS project was the very first initiative for the improvement of social inclusion of the target group at Cesis Correctional Facility for

Juveniles. The institution is located in 100 km from the capital city of Riga in Latvia. Therefore, many trainers prefer to organize chess training in prisons within "Chess in Prisons programme in Latvia" (FIDE, 2022b) in Riga and nearby cities and towns, located in about 20-30 km from Riga.

The trainees' group was composed of 13 male prisoners. However, the number of trainees was decreasing with the training course as one trainee was released, and some were sick. It is worth noting that the trainees arrive to the Facility from all the regions in Latvia. The trainees are not allowed for leaving the Facility.

Among them was also a prisoner who committed a murder and other ones, who committed sex crimes. This information about the trainees was given to the trainers by the Facility administration. One trainee had difficulties with understanding when the trainers spoke Latvian language. Probably, it was not his native language. Several trainees attend school courses, one trainee studied for receiving a higher education degree.

## RESOURCES

For training, chess tables were installed. Chess boards were available for all the trainees. Wall Hanging Chess Demonstration Boards were provided, too. Chess clocks were in use as well. Book "The Art to Win" by Zigurds Lanka for guiding the trainees was consulted. For training, a blackboard, a computer, and a screen were ensured as well.

The goal of the training sessions was to give clear and understandable instructions on how to start playing chess underpinning the importance of soft skills. In addition, introducing the history of



Schess and the history of FIDE to the trainees gives an opportunity to understand the development of the game of chess in different stages of history.

Training was started with the introduction of the history of the chess game. The origins of the game of chess can be traced back to India. Chess may have been invented around the 6th century. The rules of the game were significantly different from the rules of today's game.

In India, chess was called "chatur-anga" or four-part, because in the Indian army, combat units were divided into four parts: pawns (bandinieka), knights (horses), bishops (ladni) and rooks (torņi). There is a popular fable about the game of chess in India. Namely, an Indian maharaja was very excited about the game of chess and allowed its inventor, a Brahmin, to wish for something, which the maharaja was ready to fulfill.

Brahmin expressed the following wish:

Place on the chessboard  
first field one grain (or rice)  
on the second field 2 grains  
on the third - on 4 grains  
on the fourth - 8 grains  
on the fifth - 16 grains  
on each subsequent field - twice as much as on the previous field. How many grains do you think were on the 64 field? A question for the audience.  
Answer : 18 446 744 073 709 551 615 grains!!!!

Moral - chess players are people with their own, special way of thinking, where freedom is part of. The main question is how to play?

A chess player acquires the habit of thinking at the micro and macro level: what will I play today (opening - leaving the opponent) and thinking at least 3 moves and ahead. By thinking 2 steps forward, for example in life, you can avoid mistakes!



Training room and chess boards as well as chess clock



In the 18th century, the idea that a chess game should be based on certain principles, which would be based on the inherent characteristics of the position, matured. The founder of the positional game is the French master Andre Danikans Philidor (The Philidor defense is a chess opener that starts with the moves: 1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. Zg1-f3 d7-d6.) Philidor has his own strategy, and atypically he emphasizes – The pawn is the soul of the chess game. Both offensive and defensive options depend on their successful or unsuccessful placement. Protection of the pawn e5, but the position is compressed (Legal mate) When both sides play incorrectly, the so-called Legal mate is possible:

1. e2-e4 e7-e5
2. Zg1-f3 d7-d6
3. Lf1-c4 Lc8-g4
4. Zb1-c3 Zb8-c6
5. Zf3xe5?? Lg4xd1??
6. Lc4xf7+ Ke8-e7
7. Zc3-d5#T

Morale - the opening of the chess game - the best moves are developed, analyzed. If you don't know openings, you can get mate quickly. Know and learn, otherwise - on the table, the game can end quickly.

#### A little about the history of FIDE.

FIDE currently has its headquarters in Lausanne, but it was initially founded in 1924 in Paris under the motto "Gens una Sumus" (Latin for "We are one Family"). It was one of the very first International Sports Federations, alongside the governing bodies of the sports of Football, Cricket, Swimming, and Auto Racing.



Players preparing pieces during the workshops

It is now one of the largest, encompassing 201 countries as affiliate members, in the form of National Chess Federations. Chess is nowadays a truly global sport, with dozens of millions of players in all the continents, and more than 60 million games on average played every day.

**Morale** - Belonging to such a large and large-scale sport - inspires!

At the beginning, the trainees were explained how to greet each other when being in public. They were told to say their names as they were given by parents (no nicknames were accepted). It was important to look into each other eyes when saying hello or similar. Shaking hand is also an important part of the greeting procedure as was explained to the trainees. The trainees were happy to greet each other.



Afterwards, the trainees were asked if they know how to play chess. Mostly they knew about the chess game. However, two trainees were not acquainted with the chess play.

The chess game presentation started with the introduction of the chess board and chess pieces. Movements of each chess piece were explained in detail. The trainees were asked with what kind of chess piece they associate themselves. Each trainee had to give his answer to this question. The majority of the trainees has selected the Rook.

The rook is characterised that it may move to any square along the file or the rank on which it stands. In other words, the rook moves in a straight line, horizontally and vertically, one or more spaces at a time, unless another piece stands in its way. A rook cannot jump over another figure. If an opponent's piece stands in its way, the rook can capture it by standing in its place. The Rook is associated with self-control as it was pointed by the ICARUS trainers in the training session carried out in June 2024 as demonstrated in Table 3.







Chess piece's name	Image of chess piece	Chess characteristic	A shot description
Pawn		Motivation	Can become a more valuable piece; Moves only forward
Bishop		Self-control	Always in straight line
Knight		Social skills	Ample movement; Sacre value
Rook			
Queen		Empathy	Can move as all the other pieces
King		Self-awareness	Knows its value; Social distance

Table 1: Associative thinking of chess pieces (by the authors)



Self-identification with the Rook reveals that the trainees unconsciously understand that they lack self-control. Conventionally, people say what they really need. For expressing their needs, people might use an association or other types of thought illustration. A non-sufficient level of self-control was a reason of their stay in Cesis Correctional Facility. While the discussion, two trainees did not pay attention to the trainers' instructions and were communicating between themselves. The other trainees asked them to keep silence for better training material absorption. The trainees were given an opportunity to start playing chess. While this short chess playing session, surrounding staff members or security personal, available in the training room for keeping the order, expressed their wish also to learn more about chess game in order to help the trainees to achieve better results.

In order to support the wish of the administration and staff members of Cesis Correctional Facility to enhance the trainees' knowledge about chess game, the trainer from Latvia Chess Federation provided two books "The Art to Win" written by Zigurds Lanka to the library of Cesis Correctional Facility. The trainees who serve the sentence were highly interested in chess training as a means of their integration into society. They receive some points for participating in training. These points impact their stay in prison as well as release from prison.

The training was a success. The trainers have received full support from the administration of Cesis Correctional Facility. The administration of Cesis Correctional Facility is interested in further training on chess game to be delivered to the trainees. More books about chess play will be given to the library of Cesis Correctional Facility.

The trainees learnt soft skills including greetings, hand shaking, eye looking, and name telling, etc.

The trainees learnt chess board, chess pieces and their movements. The trainees are aware part of chess play rules. The trainees were surprised by the rules in the chess play that if you touch the piece, you have to make a move with it! That's the rule.

Both the trainers and also the trainees themselves recognised that the interval of one month between lectures is too long.

A trainee would need help with learning Latvian for the increase of his active participation in chess training.

The trainees who serve the sentence are highly interested in chess training as a means of their integration into society. They receive some points for participating in training. These points impact their stay in prison as well as release from prison.

The most of the trainees expressed their strong wish to continue chess training.





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*"At the end of the game,  
kings and pawns all end  
up in the same box"*

*Italian proverb*

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