

Detailed research and analysis by JPCF and partners on the current state of chess education in the V4 countries

Summary

The teaching of chess is gaining increasing attention around the world, with more and more countries recognising its benefits for children's development. Through a combination of play and learning, chess develops strategic thinking, problem-solving, creativity and analytical skills. Chess is also gaining ground in education in the V4 countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary) and a number of initiatives have been launched to promote and introduce chess into education systems. In this project we have examined in detail the current situation of chess in education in the V4 countries. The research was initiated by the Judit Polgár Chess Foundation, which aims to promote the teaching and practice of chess by providing methods and tools that contribute to the effective integration of chess into educational processes.

The study received responses from 2405 institutions, including kindergartens, schools, chess clubs, academies and leisure centres. Of these, 1375 institutions and organisations confirmed that they were involved in some form of chess education. The exact breakdown is as follows: 148 out of 394 kindergartens and 1033 out of 1783 schools have chess activities. Of the 228 chess clubs/academies that completed the questionnaire, 194 organisations provide opportunities for children under 15. This wide participation allowed us to get a comprehensive picture of the situation of chess in education in the V4 countries. We also invited experts who provided a detailed analysis and assessment of chess education processes, trends and future opportunities. Other partners from the V4 countries are: the Czech Chess Federation, the Bratislava Chess Academy "BCA" and Wasko Hetman GKS Katowice Chess Club

The questions and research topics for the survey were identified in consultation with the partners and with the active participation of education experts. The JPCF was the developer of the procedures and questions for the survey. Each partner managed the research in its own country, led by a designated expert, and was thus involved in the research tasks. This included surveying stakeholders, sending out questionnaires, conducting interviews with selected stakeholders, and analysing the data and providing further information on chess education programmes. The JPCF undertook to produce a final report summarising the findings and conclusions of the research. This ensures that the results of this professional and comprehensive research are coordinated and presented to the V4 countries.

The reason for the strong Hungarian participation in the results is that the JPCF has been in close contact with the institutions for the past 10 years through the "Chess Playground Skills Development" programme for kindergarten children of the Judit Polgár Method and the "Chess Palace Skills Development" and "ChessPE Movement Development" programmes for lower grades of schools. These programmes have enabled Hungarian institutions to actively participate in chess education, which has had a significant impact on the results and the number of chess activities in educational institutions.

Kindergartens:

The survey received responses from 394 kindergartens, of which 7 are Slovak, 12 Czech, 12 Polish and 117 Hungarian, for a total of 148 kindergartens. Based on the data they sent, there are approximately 1745 children involved in chess education in the institutions concerned. In this age group, the main purpose of chess sessions is to develop individual skills and to spend leisure time in a useful way. Competitive preparation is even less emphasised during this period. According to

the unanimous answers of the partners, there are no official programmes in any of the countries which could be recommended for kindergartens. On the Hungarian side, however, more and more kindergartens are introducing the "Chess Playground Skill Development" programme or working on the basis of other chess methodological booklets.

Schools:

A total of 1783 responses were received from schools in the four countries. Of the respondents, 1033 schools (22 Slovak, 29 Polish, 232 Czech and 750 Hungarian) offer some form of chess. According to the data they sent, there are about 34680 children involved in chess education in the institutions concerned. Some schools are able to integrate chess sessions into the morning timetable, while others can only offer chess to children in the afternoon in specialised and talented classes. There are several schools where both forms (morning and afternoon) are implemented.

For the afternoon sessions, the picture is more colourful in terms of weekly hours. Here too, schools predominantly offer 1 session per week, but 2 or more chess sessions per week are not uncommon. Overall, around 12325 children from the schools surveyed attend afternoon sessions.

Skills development and leisure activities are also a priority for school-age children, but a fifth of the institutions surveyed also offer competitive preparation.

Chess clubs/academies/leisure centres:

Of the 228 responding organisations, 5 Polish, 22 Slovak, 113 Czech and 54 Hungarian chess clubs/academies/leisure centres, 194 in total, said that they had a session for children under 15. According to the data they sent, the organisations concerned employ nearly 7000 children.

Results and conclusions:

Based on the opinions of the partners, we see the following opportunities to make chess more motivating and challenging for children:

Online partner schools: an online system could be set up to find partner schools in the V4 countries. Cooperation could include online competitions, inter-school matches, correspondence games, e-mailing, video sharing and conferences. This would not only improve chess, but could also be useful in other areas.

Promoting values: there is a need for campaigns and platforms that promote the values of chess. National and international conferences, exchange of best practices and more sponsorship can help to achieve success.

Easier access to chess: chess should be presented to children in an attractive way. Simple steps, such as placing chess sets in schools or teaching teachers to play chess, can help to promote chess.

School chess programme: schools should provide opportunities for chess education and chess programmes. Under the guidance of teachers or qualified instructors, children can learn the basics of the game and participate in local competitions at a lower level.

Afternoon workshops: chess can be combined with afternoon workshops, where children can improve their game and take part in advanced workshops.

Chess clubs and tournaments: talented players should be given the opportunity to join chess clubs where they can play and train regularly. There should be opportunities for chess players to participate in tournaments and to exchange experiences, which will help them to develop and motivate them.

This three-stage system (school chess programmes-after-school clubs-chess clubs and competitions) allows children to progress gradually in chess, while always facing new challenges. It is important that these systems are coordinated and support each other to ensure children's development and motivation.

Overall, the project needs substantial financial resources, including training of teachers, purchase of equipment and support for competitions. Online chess development should be a priority and international accessibility is important. To implement a successful project, it will need a cohesive team and comprehensive educational material to help children learn the game of chess and develop their skills.

Budapest, 5 July 2023.



V4 Educational Chess Summit