ECU Arbiters' Council Meeting
Slovenia/ Terme Catez – November 12th 2021

Certification Courses for Online Arbiters

In early January 2021, the **FIDE Online Chess Regulations** and the **ECU Annex for Online Chess Competitions** were published.

The ECU Arbiters' Council had a new responsibility:
To train arbiters who would work as officers in online events

Three Certification Courses for Online Arbiters designated for **IAs/FAs** were organised.
Each course included **6 hours of theory and practice** and a **2-hour exam**.

1st Course → January 16-19, 2021
2nd Course → January 27-30, 2021
3rd Course → February 23-26, 2021

All three Courses addressed arbiters who fulfilled the following criteria:
- Valid arbiters license (FA or IA)
- Sufficient knowledge of English (conversational level)
- Sufficient skills to work on a personal computer (advanced user level)
- Sufficient knowledge of at least one platform for online chess
- Deep understanding of fair play principles for online chess
- Attendance at OA workshop
- Successful passing the exam set up by the ECU Arbiter's Council

The topics that were presented and analysed were:
 – **FIDE Online chess Regulations**
 – **Fair Play Regulations**
 – **ECU Annex for Online Chess Competitions**
 – **Demonstration of major platforms (chess.com, lichess, tornelo)**
 – **ZOOM management**
 – **Practice tournament with tornelo**

The exam consisted of two parts:
a) Theoretical questions
b) Practical tasks, such as setting up a zoom call or importing the participants of a tournament on a platform

During the Courses, the participants gained knowledge that is necessary for running an online event, such as monitoring the players through a Video Conferencing Call and interpreting a Fair Play report, and were introduced to the possibilities offered by each one of the major platforms, as well as ZOOM. A 2-hour practice event was dedicated to tornelo, where the attendants alternated in players' and arbiters' roles. It became clear that an advanced level of computer use is essential to any online arbiter as he/she needs to monitor players, communicate with them to give instructions and, at the same time, communicate with the arbiters' team to coordinate, actions that can only be performed digitally, as compared to OTB events.

The material that was presented was mostly new to the attendants. The Regulations were a product of many months of experimentation in online events organised by FIDE and ECU, put together in a formal and systematic way. Some of them had already participated in such events and could add to their knowledge. Nevertheless, everything was presented in great detail, with emphasis on Hybrid events and the new arbiter roles that were introduced (LCA and LTA), deciphering statistics provided by the FIDE Screening Tool and the differences that concern ECU events. Examples were presented on how to set up various tournament formats on chess.com and lichess, whereas on the third day of each Course they were taught how to enter a list of participants on tornelo by means of a CSV file, entering pairings via PGNs, exporting results in TRF format and transferring them to Swiss-Manager and managing a tournament during actual playing conditions.

The participants showed great interest in the practical examples, which were complemented by the tasks that were asked from them at the exam. One of the points that we feel needs to be stressed out is that the arbiter should always prevail over the platform, both in Fair Play matters and in anything that has to do with the course of the game (for example, clock settings and needed adjustments). The analysis on the Fair Play report is another valuable component of absolute necessity in OTB events, as well. Personally, I would add that the Fair Play Annex in the FIDE Regulations for Online Chess should describe better the procedure of gathering evidence by the Fair Play Panel of an event to establish an incident and include a unified approach on how to revise the results of a player who would eventually be disqualified.

Lecturers in the Courses were Marco Biagioli, Jirina Prokopova, Tania Karali and Alex Holowczak. Each course was presented and supervised by the Chairman of the Council, Tomasz Delega, who also prepared the topics of the exam.

After three courses, **66 arbiters from 26 federations** affiliated to ECU were certified (**+5 arbiters from other federations**).
Out of them, **40 have already been appointed** in various European Online events.

Only arbiters with OA certification are proposed by the ECU AC to work as online arbiters during European online and hybrid events.

National Online Arbiter Certification Course

Following the demand of national arbiters to be introduced to online chess, a **National Online Arbiter Certification Course was organised on April 12-13, 2021**.

The topics discussed were:
- **FIDE Laws of Chess (overview)**
- **Online Chess and Fair Play regulations**
- **Introduction to online chess platforms**
- **ZOOM and Slack management**
- **Preparation and running a Hybrid event**

There were **25 attendants, 5 IAs, 4 FAs and 16 NAs, from 13 European federations**.

To be certified, the participants needed to fulfil the following criteria:
- Valid arbiters license (NA at least)
- Sufficient knowledge of English (conversational level)
- Sufficient skills to work on a personal computer (advanced user level)
- Sufficient knowledge of at least one platform for online chess
- Deep understanding of fair play principles for online chess
- Attendance at NOA course

The lecturers were the members of the Council, Geert Bailleul, Marco Biagioli, Tania Karali and Jirina Prokopova.

Conclusion:
After many months of organising Certification Courses and appointing arbiters in online events, we believe that European arbiters have a high level of training and can run online events successfully.