

We are one people

Mark Jordan writes on a research project on equality, diversity and combating discrimination in chess. He needs your help.

Last year, due to the coincidence of the screening of *The Queen's Gambit* and the Covid-19 Coronavirus prompting lockdowns leaving lots of people with time on their hands, there was a boom in interest in chess as evidenced by the huge numbers signing up to chess platforms and purchasing chess sets. This boom, amidst so much chaos and tragedy, has been one positive thing that has occurred and there is value to be had in retaining at least some of these new enthusiasts far beyond the initial impetus. Such an influx of players will invigorate the chess world at a grassroots level. So how do we retain them? Part of the answer may be in a new push to encourage equality and diversity and discourage discrimination, which is currently underway in FIDE.

The motto of FIDE is 'Gens Una Sumus', adopted in 1924 when FIDE was founded with a much smaller membership, and means 'We are One People'. This laudable aspiration was difficult to live up to at the time and remains so in the present when FIDE has 196 member federations and numerous affiliate organisations across the globe.

The ECF draft Strategy Plan Oct 2019 states:

"Our biggest asset is our membership. We will continue to improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future."

This plan to increase membership and find ways to enhance membership services is certainly consistent with the effort to attract and retain all these new chess enthusiasts. As well as this we want to promote equality, celebrate diversity and discourage discrimination, but we do not currently have policies and procedures in place. Since sporting bodies and almost all other organisations, both public and private, have been obliged to develop just such policies to abide by current English law and, not incidentally to access sponsorship and funding, this is an unfortunate deficit.

The ECF is aware of this issue and especially in the light of the current efforts by FIDE to get up to speed on equality, diversity and discrimination, it appears to be a good time to look at these issues with a view to developing practical and acceptable solutions. With this in mind the ECF board recently voted to explore the issues and ascertain what can be done and I have been asked to bring together some proposals which can be used as a basis for developing and then implementing appropriate policies and procedures. This is a smaller mountain to climb than that faced by FIDE as at least ECF has only one legal jurisdiction with which to contend, but it is not a trivial undertaking.

I really need some help in these efforts and so I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can spare some time to lend a hand or who can provide good examples of practical measures that have been used to promote equality and diversity and combat discrimination or examples of situations where these high principles have not been honoured.

If you can help or have any suggestions or comments you can contact me on markjordan25994@gmail.com