

ECF Policy on Transgendered Players

The ECF is an inclusive organisation that welcomes all players of whatever gender identity or none. Chess is not a 'gender-affected activity' as defined in UK equality legislation. However, it is necessary to establish the gender identity of rated players, as some chess events are exclusively for women. The online application process to become a member of the ECF includes a mandatory field for 'Gender', although it includes a 'prefer not to say' option alongside those of female (F), male (M), and non-binary (N). The appropriate gender marker is included in each player's record in the ratings database, available to view from the ECF website.

For the vast majority of chess players this statement of gender is clear-cut and permanent. The ECF accepts the veracity of the statement made, and has never sought any documentary verification. However, for the small minority of players who identify as transgendered and transition to a different gender presentation after first being registered in the ECF database, the need to alter their gender marker arises. For any player in this situation this can be achieved through contacting the ECF office. A request to change a gender marker must include a written statement that the change of gender status reflects the individual's presentation of gender in all aspects of their life, and that they anticipate the change to be permanent. (This does not preclude further changes in the future.)

The main significance of any such change for the ECF or other organisers of chess events is for players transitioning to, or from, female, as this determines their eligibility to enter women-only events. The ECF is not aware of any abuse of this facility to change gender marker having occurred in the past, or anticipate the likelihood of abuse in the future. However, if evidence of any such abuse were brought to our attention, the ECF reserves the right to act appropriately in order to preserve the integrity of women's chess. This might involve withdrawing a gender marker of female, or declining a request to change the marker to female. In reaching such a decision the ECF reserves the right to seek documentary or other evidence.

In summary:

- To be eligible for ECF-organised women's events, or women's prizes in gender-open events, a player must be registered at the point of entry as 'F' with the ECF;

- To be eligible to play in official FIDE events, FIDE regulations will apply. Following transition to female, this will require individual approval by FIDE, as further discussed below.

Additional Considerations for Players with a FIDE Identification Number (FIN):

FIDE has introduced new regulations on transgendered chess players (see <https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/TransgenderRegulations>). The ECF does not support these new regulations, but must recognise their existence. Significant aspects are:

- This regulation only applies to those official FIDE events set out in the regulation. It does not apply across the board to all FIDE-rated events;
- FIDE requires sufficient documentary proof of a change of gender ‘that complies with their national laws and regulations’. As stated previously, the ECF does not require such documents and even knowledge of a change of gender is deemed to be ‘protected information’ as defined in UK legislation. Except with the consent of the individual concerned, such information can only be revealed under very limited circumstances. If the individual wished to have their FIN amended to reflect their change of gender, the player would need to provide copies of such documents to the ECF and their written consent to this information being passed to FIDE. Whether such proof would be limited to a gender recognition certificate, or whether a lesser level, such as a passport, might be accepted has yet to be tested;
- Where the transition is to female, FIDE Council will undertake further analysis, which may take up to two years. During this period the individual concerned will have no right to participate in FIDE events for women. This covers a limited range of high-level events, so is only likely to affect those in the upper echelons of chess players;
- FIDE may include a mark in the player’s database to indicate the gender change. Whilst this may not be visible in the publicly accessible ratings database, FIDE may inform ‘organizers and other relevant parties’ of the gender change. Whilst this may be limited to the high-level events identified in the regulations, it is noted that a number of these are awarded to a national federation to organise. Consequently, over time this information is likely to become widely known.