

# ECU History



In 1924 FIDE was founded in Paris with Pierre Vincent from France as first president. 14 federations were present, twelve from Europe with Argentina and Canada. Step by step the organization grew larger, particularly after World War II when the great champions of the Soviet Union contributed to spreading the interest in the game.

After 1970 President Max Euwe, ex-world champion, opened the doors of FIDE to Africa, Asia and Latin America. In 1982 for the first time the FIDE presidency left Europe to go to Asia. Florencio Campomanes from the Philippines committed himself fully to strengthening and developing chess in the third world.

As Europeans began to feel underrepresented in FIDE, the European Chess Union was founded under Rolf Littorin from Sweden at the FIDE Congress 1985 in Graz. Three principles were clearly defined: ECU was to be an organization within FIDE, it should include the whole of Europe, West and East, and there should not be any new financial obligations for the member federations.

In that era of cold war politics inevitably influenced big sport federations. Therefore except Poland the Soviet block did not join the new union. The FIDE leadership did not trust the European ideas either. At the FIDE congress in Dubai 1986 Littorin withdrew, Kurt Jungwirth from Austria was entrusted with the ECU Presidency for 13 years until 1998. ECU strongly defended European interests in FIDE just as in world football UEFA was doing within FIFA. New events were created: in 1998 the first European Youth championship under 16 took place in Saltsjöbaden, in 1992 the first European Team Championship for women was held in Debrecen, in 1996 Werner Stubenvoll directed the first European Club Cup for women in Smederevska Palanka (Serbia).

After the great political detente of 1990 Eastern Europe countries flocked to the European Chess Union. When in 1996 Kirsan Ilyumzhinov became FIDE's leader, the relationship between World Chess and ECU normalized.

In 1998 Boris Kutin from Slovenia was elected ECU President. A new office was established in Berlin with Horst Metzger as Secretary General. Tournaments were reformed. Individual continental championships in all categories including youth events became high quality mass spectacles.

The periods between European Team Championships were shortened from three to two years. The final breakthrough came after 2000 when ECU obtained financial and administrative autonomy. Today ECU has 54 member federations. The vision of 1985 has come true. Europe is a strong, united chess continent.