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G.A.M.E.
GAIN ABILITIES THROUGH
MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

GAME Project – Research Analysis Report

(Desk Research, Surveys, and Interviews across Greece, Spain, Italy, Romania)

Erasmus+ KA2 Project

ABSTRACT

This transnational needs analysis examines the current landscape of mind games—primarily chess, draughts, and Go—across four European countries: Greece, Spain, Italy, and Romania, within the framework of the Erasmus+ G.A.M.E. project (Gain Abilities through Mental Exercise). The research aimed to identify existing best practices, levels of awareness and participation, and the perceived cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of mind sports for young people aged 11–19. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining desk research, four national surveys (100 respondents per country), and 20 semi-structured interviews with teachers, coaches, parents, and mind-game practitioners.

Findings across all countries highlight strong recognition of the developmental value of mind games, especially in supporting concentration, critical thinking, emotional regulation, and academic performance. Despite this consensus, participation remains modest, largely due to limited school programs, lack of trained instructors, insufficient resources, and low awareness of local opportunities. National differences emerged in familiarity with specific games, depth of institutional support, and the maturity of existing ecosystems—ranging from Romania's highly developed chess infrastructure to Italy's strong school-based initiatives.

The results demonstrate significant potential for scaling mind-sport activities across Europe. The report concludes with actionable recommendations for improving access, strengthening school integration, supporting educators, and creating sustainable pathways for youth participation within the GAME project framework.



Περιεχόμενα

ABSTRACT	1
1. Executive Summary	10
2. Introduction	12
3. Methodology	12
3.1 Research Objectives	12
3.2 Participating Organizations	13
3.3 Desk Research Method	13
3.4 Survey Methodology	14
4. Country Profiles	16
4.1 Greece	16
4.1.1 Country Overview	16
4.1.2 Best Practices	17
4.1.3 Survey Results	18
4.1.4 Interviews	21
4.1.5 Key Findings for Greece	24
4.2 SPAIN	27
4.2.1 Country Overview	27
4.2.2 Best Practices	28
4.2.3 Survey Results	29
4.2.4 Interviews	34
4.2.5 Key Findings for Spain	37
4.3 Italy	41
4.3.1 Country Overview	41
4.3.2 Best Practices	42
4.3.3 Survey Results	42
4.3.4 Interviews	47
4.3.5 Key Findings for Italy	52
4.4 Romania	56
4.4.1 Country Overview	56
4.4.2 Best Practices	56
4.4.3 Survey Results	57
4.4.4 Interviews	63



4.4.5 Key Findings for Romania	67
5. Cross-Country Comparative Analysis	72
5.1 Overall Ecosystem of Mind Sports	72
5.2 Public Perceptions and Attitudes	73
5.3 Familiarity and Participation Levels	74
5.4 Barriers to Participation	75
5.5 Children's Reactions and Engagement Patterns	75
5.6 Implementation Landscape	76
5.7 Key Cross-Cutting Findings	77
5.8 Implications for the G.A.M.E. Project	78
6. Conclusions	79
7. Recommendations	80
7.1 Recommendations for G.A.M.E. Project Implementation	80
7.2 Recommendations for Educational Programs	82
7.3 Recommendations for Parental Engagement	83
7.4 Recommendations for National Event Development	84
8. References	86
9. Annexes	87
Annex I - Best Practices	87
Annex II – Survey Questionnaire	95
ANNEX III – Interview Questionnaire (G.A.M.E. Erasmus+ Project)	99

1. Executive Summary

The G.A.M.E. (Gain Abilities through Mental Exercise) Erasmus+ Sport project aims to explore and promote the role of mind sports—particularly chess, draughts, and go—as tools for developing essential soft skills in young people aged 11–19. The research phase of the project, implemented across four partner countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, and Romania), sought to understand how mind games are currently used, perceived, and valued within educational, sport, and community environments. This report brings together three complementary research components: **desk research on national best practices, a**



400-participant survey, and **20 semi-structured interviews** with educators, coaches, and parents.

Across all four countries, the desk research identified a broad diversity of mind-sport initiatives—ranging from elite international tournaments and structured federation-led programmes to grassroots school activities, community workshops, and inclusive youth initiatives. Spain and Romania demonstrate highly developed ecosystems supported by national federations and large-scale projects, while Greece and Italy show strong, school-linked or community-based approaches with particular emphasis on chess. Draughts and go are significantly less widespread across all countries, with Romania showing the strongest presence of draughts and Spain a distinct structure for go through dedicated associations.

Survey findings across the four countries reveal a highly consistent pattern of **strong positive attitudes** toward mind sports. Between 94% and 100% of respondents believe mind games positively support cognitive and personal development, particularly concentration, memory, problem solving, strategic thinking, and emotional regulation. A majority across all countries considers chess, draughts, and go to be sports, and nearly all respondents recognise the academic benefits of mental-sport participation. Despite these positive perceptions, **actual participation among children remains relatively low** (between 33% and 39% depending on the country), pointing to a gap between interest and real opportunities. Barriers are also shared across partner countries and include: lack of school programmes, limited local clubs or trained instructors, insufficient awareness of existing opportunities, and time constraints for families and educators.

The interviews further reinforce these findings. Participants across all countries agreed on the developmental value of mind sports, highlighting improvements in attention, planning, emotional control, and resilience. Teachers and coaches noted that children respond very positively when mind games are introduced in engaging, playful, or story-based formats. However, they also identified challenges such as difficulty in teaching rules to younger children, frustration tolerance, low familiarity beyond chess, and organisational limitations in schools and sports clubs. Across all four countries, there was unanimous willingness among interviewees to participate in future pilot programmes and to integrate mind sports if adequate resources, training, and structured materials are provided.

While the four national contexts show many similarities, several noteworthy differences emerged:

- **Spain and Romania** have the most developed and diverse ecosystems, with strong institutional support, frequent tournaments, and visibility across age groups.
- **Greece** has a well-established chess tradition with wide regional coverage but limited presence of draughts and go.



- **Italy** relies heavily on school-based and community initiatives rather than national-level programmes, and mind sports are commonly used informally but lack structural integration.
- **Romania** stands out with the highest familiarity with both chess and draughts, the strongest parental demand, and a clear national strategy to expand mind-sport education.

Overall, the research results have direct implications for the implementation of the G.A.M.E. project. First, there is strong cross-country evidence that mind sports are widely valued and perceived as highly beneficial for youth—creating fertile ground for the project's activities. Second, the consistent gap between perceived value and actual participation confirms the need for GAME's planned training programmes, school guidelines, and pilot initiatives. Third, barriers shared across countries highlight the importance of producing accessible educational materials, offering teacher/coach training, and strengthening community-based structures. Finally, the strong willingness of stakeholders to participate signals that GAME is well positioned to create sustainable impact and contribute to a wider European movement promoting cognitive skill development through mental sports.

2. Introduction

Mind games such as chess, draughts, and Go have long been recognised as powerful tools for developing cognitive, emotional, and social skills in young people. These games cultivate strategic reasoning, concentration, problem-solving, patience, and emotional regulation—competencies that align strongly with the objectives of the Erasmus+ G.A.M.E. project (Gain Abilities through Mental Exercise). As defined in the project proposal, G.A.M.E. seeks to enhance soft-skill development among youth aged 11–19 through structured mind-sport activities and to increase awareness of their educational and developmental potential across Europe.

To support these objectives, the project partners conducted a comprehensive transnational needs analysis across four countries: **Greece (PAC OLYMPIADA)**, **Spain (LA HOYA)**, **Italy (L'ORMA)**, and **Romania (EGAL ACCES)**. This research aimed to map existing practices, understand cultural and institutional contexts, identify barriers to participation, and clarify the perceived benefits of mind games among parents, educators, and sports coaches.

The study employed a mixed-methods design consisting of:



- **Desk research** to identify 10 best practices per country (40 total) in mind-game events, programmes, and initiatives;
- **Surveys** with 100 adult respondents in each country (400 total), capturing attitudes, familiarity, perceived benefits, and accessibility;
- **Semi-structured interviews** (five per country, 20 total) with professionals and parents directly involved in youth education and sport.

This introduction situates the research within the broader aims of the G.A.M.E. project, highlighting the need to strengthen mind-sport awareness, accessibility, and structured learning opportunities across Europe. The findings presented in this report will directly inform the development of educational resources, pilot programmes, and community actions designed to integrate mind games into youth training, school environments, and family settings.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

The research phase of the G.A.M.E. project aimed to investigate the current landscape, perceptions, and developmental value of mind sports (chess, draughts, and go) among young people aged 11–19 across four partner countries. The specific objectives were to:

1. Map existing mind-sport initiatives at national and regional levels through desk research.
2. Identify best practices that demonstrate effective use of mental sports in educational, social, or competitive settings.
3. Assess community perceptions of mind sports among adults who work with or care for youth (parents, coaches, educators).
4. Measure attitudes toward the developmental impact of mental sports on cognitive, behavioural, and academic outcomes.
5. Identify barriers and opportunities for young people's participation in mind sports.



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6. Gather qualitative insights from professionals and caregivers on the integration of mind games into schools, sports clubs, and community programmes.
7. Inform the design of GAME training materials, pilot activities, and long-term strategies based on empirical findings from the four countries.

3.2 Participating Organizations

The research was carried out by the four partner organisations of the G.A.M.E. consortium:

PAC OLYMPIADA – Greece

A sports organisation based in Thessaloniki, PAC Olympiada promotes youth development through physical activity, coaching programmes, and educational sports initiatives. The organisation contributed by coordinating the research work package, collecting national data, and analysing local best practices, survey results, and interviews.

ACD LA HOYA – Spain

La Hoya is a Spanish organisation specialising in community education, youth engagement, and innovative pedagogical approaches. Its experience with school programmes and social inclusion projects supported the identification of Spanish best practices and facilitated data collection among parents, educators, and community workers.

L'ORMA – Italy

L'Orma is an Italian training centre and educational organisation engaged in non-formal education, sports pedagogy, and teacher training. L'Orma contributed its expertise in school-based programmes, helping contextualise the Italian mind-sport landscape and conducting the national survey and interviews.

EGAL ACCES – Romania

Egal Acces is an association focused on educational equity, youth development, and capacity building. As project coordinator, it oversaw research implementation, ensured methodological consistency, and gathered extensive data from Romania's well-developed mind-sport environment.

3.3 Desk Research Method

The desk research aimed to document **10 best practices per country**, focusing on initiatives related to chess, draughts, and go. The process followed these criteria:



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Selection Criteria

Best practices were included if they met at least two of the following conditions:

- Targeted children or youth (preferably 11–19 years old).
- Illustrated an effective educational, cognitive, or social approach through mind sports.
- Demonstrated innovation, inclusiveness, or community impact.
- Operated at national, regional, or local levels with measurable visibility.
- Were organised by recognised institutions such as federations, schools, clubs, NGOs, or municipalities.

Search Process

Each partner organisation conducted a structured search that included:

- Websites of national federations and sport associations.
- School programmes, municipal portals, and educational networks.
- News articles, event listings, and publicly documented competitions.
- Project databases (Erasmus+, local funding initiatives).
- Community organisations, clubs, and informal learning centres.

Partners compiled summaries of each identified practice, following a standardised format including objectives, stakeholders, beneficiaries, funding sources, and activity descriptions.

3.4 Survey Methodology

The survey targeted **adults who play a significant role in young people's development**, specifically:

- **Parents,**



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **Teachers**, and
- **Sports coaches**.

Sampling

A total of **400 anonymous responses** were collected—**100 per country**—through online distribution in local languages. Responses were gathered via Google Forms and stored securely in accordance with GDPR principles.

Questionnaire Structure

The survey contained 28 questions covering:

- Demographics and respondent role
- Personal familiarity with mind sports
- Perceived benefits for children and youth
- Academic, cognitive, and emotional impact
- Current participation levels
- Barriers to access
- Availability of local opportunities
- Desired support measures

Question Types

- **Likert scale questions** (1–5 point scales for familiarity, academic impact, and enjoyment).
- **Multiple-choice questions**, many allowing multiple selections to capture complexity of barriers and benefits.
- **Open-ended questions** to gather qualitative insights on behavioural changes and suggestions for improvement.



Data Processing

Responses were exported into Excel files, cleaned, translated into English when required, and analysed to identify trends, averages, and cross-country comparisons.

3.5 Interviews

A total of **20 semi-structured interviews** were conducted—**five per country**—with individuals who interact daily with youth, including:

- Physical education teachers
- School Teachers
- Sports coaches
- Parents
- Mind-sports instructors (where available)

This diversity provided multi-perspective insights into both formal and informal learning environments.

Interview Guide

All partners used a standardised interview template covering four thematic sections:

- **Awareness and Attitudes** (familiarity with mind games; perceived value)
- **Experience and Application** (whether and how they use mind sports)
- **Impact and Perception** (children's reactions; observed benefits)
- **Recommendations** (what support is needed; willingness to participate)

Interviews lasted approximately 15–20 minutes each and were conducted in the national language.

Ethics and Confidentiality

- Participants were informed about the purpose of the research.



- Participation was voluntary, with **no identifying personal data collected**.
 - All responses were anonymised in the analysis.
 - Audio recordings and notes were used solely for research within the G.A.M.E. project and stored securely following GDPR guidelines.
-

4. Country Profiles

4.1 Greece

4.1.1 Country Overview

Greece presents a well-established chess tradition supported by a strong network of clubs, municipal initiatives, and the Hellenic Chess Federation, which coordinates numerous national and regional events each year. Chess is deeply rooted in Greek sporting and educational culture, with frequent school tournaments, youth championships, and community-based activities. While chess dominates the mind-sports landscape, games such as draughts and go have limited visibility and minimal organised presence. Overall, mind games are viewed positively in Greece for their cognitive and educational benefits, and although participation levels vary, there is clear potential for expansion through schools, municipalities, and youth sport organisations.

4.1.2 Best Practices

The desk research conducted in Greece highlights a well-established and diverse chess ecosystem, supported by clubs, schools, municipalities, and national bodies such as the Hellenic Chess Federation. Greece demonstrates a strong tradition of organizing both grassroots and high-level chess events, many of which have become annual institutions attracting players from across the country and abroad. The ten best practices identified represent a spectrum of activities that include international open tournaments, national school competitions, regional championships, and rapid-format events designed to encourage broad participation.

A common strength across Greek best practices is **accessibility**. Most events are open to youth, adults, beginners, and advanced players alike, creating inclusive environments where entire communities can engage. Venues such as hotels, cultural centers, municipal buildings, and sports clubs frequently host these events, reflecting local support and the integration of chess into broader community life. This accessibility is complemented by a clear emphasis on **youth development**. Many of the highlighted events—such as the National School Championships or regional youth tournaments—are structured to engage



children early, establishing pathways that combine education, competition, and cognitive skill enhancement.

The inclusion of **internationally rated tournaments**, such as the International Open SKG and the “Vardaris” Open, demonstrates Greece’s active role in the European chess scene. These events attract players from multiple countries, raise organizational standards, and increase visibility for Greek chess on a global level. Their professional structure, use of FIDE ratings, and collaboration with international arbiters position them as strong examples of competitive excellence. Regional tournaments, such as those in Trikala, Agria, Chania, and Athens, complement this by offering consistent annual opportunities for competitive play in smaller communities, ensuring geographical diversity in participation.

Another notable characteristic is the **preservation of tradition combined with modern competitive formats**. Rapid chess tournaments—popular for their dynamism and spectator engagement—feature prominently among the Greek best practices. These faster formats not only attract younger audiences but also provide low-barrier entry points for new players, helping to expand participation beyond established club members.

However, the desk research also indicates that **chess dominates the mind-games landscape**, while other strategic games such as go or draughts receive limited visibility and lack comparable national platforms. This suggests an opportunity for future development and diversification within the Greek context.

Overall, the Greek best practices demonstrate a **mature, community-supported, and education-oriented chess culture**, with strong organizational capacity and wide regional distribution. These events collectively highlight the importance placed on cognitive development, youth engagement, and international integration, making Greece a strong contributor to the GAME project’s overall understanding of mind-games activities across Europe.

4.1.3 Survey Results

Sample profile

The Greek survey collected **100 responses** from adults involved with young people aged 11–19. The main roles represented were:

- **Parents:** 46%
- **Coaches:** 39%
- **Teachers:** 15%



Most respondents were in the **20–59** age range, with the largest age groups being **20–29 (30%)**, **40–49 (26%)**, and **50–59 (23%)**. A very high proportion (**78%**) reported that they themselves practice sports, indicating a sample already positively oriented towards physical and/or sport-related activities.

Attitudes towards mental sports and perceived benefits

Awareness and attitudes towards mind sports (chess, draughts, go) were generally very positive:

- **70%** consider mind games to be *sports*, while **30%** do not.
- **100%** of respondents believe that mind sports **can have a beneficial impact** on a child's development.
- Almost all respondents (99/100) see **clear benefits** in a child participating in mind-sport courses.

When asked to specify the benefits (multiple responses allowed), the most frequently selected were:

- **Enhances memory and strategic thinking** – selected by **~76%**
- **Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills** – **~75%**
- **Improves concentration and focus** – **~74%**
- **Encourages discipline and patience** – **~60%**
- **Helps reduce stress and anxiety** – **~26%**
- **Supports social interaction and teamwork** – **~25%**

In terms of academic outcomes, respondents were also strongly positive:

- **71%** chose **4 or 5** on a 1–5 scale when asked if mind sports can **positively impact academic performance**, and only **3%** expressed low agreement (2/5). No one selected the lowest option.
-



Familiarity with chess, draughts, and go

Self-reported familiarity (1 = not at all, 5 = very familiar) showed a clear hierarchy:

- **Chess:** moderate familiarity (average $\approx 2.7/5$)
- **Draughts:** lower familiarity (average $\approx 1.7/5$)
- **Go:** almost unknown (average $\approx 1.1/5$, with 91% at level 1)

Despite the positive attitudes, **81%** of respondents said they **do not themselves frequently play** chess, draughts, or go; only **19%** reported playing these games often. This suggests a gap between recognising the value of mind sports and actually engaging in them personally.

Engagement of children and students

Regarding the young people they are responsible for (children or students):

- **92%** of respondents said their children/students are **physically active**.
- However, only **34%** reported that their children/students **regularly play mind sports**, while **66%** said they do not.

Among those whose children/students do practice mind sports regularly:

- Enjoyment levels were generally high: most rated enjoyment as **4 or 5 out of 5**, with an average score close to **4.0/5**.

About **one-third (33%)** of adults reported that they **play mind sports together with their children/students**, while **67%** do not. The main reasons for not playing together (multiple choices allowed) included:

- Preference for other activities (sports, gaming, etc.)
- Lack of time
- Lack of awareness or access to structured programmes



- Lack of qualified trainers
-

Accessibility and perceived barriers

A large majority (**81%**) felt that mind sports are, in principle, **accessible for anyone** to play. However, when asked about **concrete barriers** in their area (multiple responses), respondents highlighted:

- **Lack of school programmes promoting mental sports – ~56%**
- **Limited information on how to get involved – ~49%**
- **Lack of time due to schoolwork and other activities – ~44%**
- **No local clubs or training centres – ~35%**
- **Travel distance to the nearest facility – ~17%**
- **High participation costs (training/equipment/tournaments) – around 10%**
- **Cultural perceptions or social norms – around 7%**

Awareness of existing structures is mixed:

- **43%** are aware of ongoing mind-sport projects or facilities in their area.
- **57%** are not aware of any.

This suggests that both **real gaps (e.g. school programmes, local clubs)** and **information gaps** are limiting participation.

Desired forms of support

When asked what kind of support would make it easier for young people to participate in mind sports (multiple answers):

- **More school-based programmes or clubs – 64%**
- **Public awareness campaigns about the benefits of mental sports – 53%**



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- **Free or subsidised training sessions – 48%**
- **Online learning platforms and resources – 44%**
- **More competitions and events for young players – 36%**

In addition, **69%** of respondents stated they would be **interested in receiving more information** about mental-sport opportunities for children and youth, confirming a strong potential demand for future activities and communication campaigns.

Open comments (qualitative) frequently mentioned:

- the need for **better information and promotion**,
- **integration of mind sports into school timetables** (as optional or special subjects),
- and **training for teachers/coaches** to deliver these activities.

Summary – Key messages for Greece

The Greek survey shows a **very positive attitude** towards mind sports among parents, teachers, and coaches: they strongly believe in their cognitive and academic benefits. However, **actual participation of children in mind sports is still relatively low**, and there is a clear **implementation gap** between perceived value and real access.

The main levers for the G.A.M.E. project in Greece are therefore:

- expanding **school-based programmes**,
- improving **visibility and information** about existing clubs and projects,
- and reducing **practical barriers** (time, access, structured offers) through more flexible, local, and well-communicated initiatives.



4.1.4 Interviews

Introduction

Five interviews were conducted in Greece with a mix of physical education teachers, sports coaches, and one parent. The objective was to explore awareness, perceptions, and experiences related to mind sports (chess, draughts, go) and to understand their potential role in enhancing youth cognitive and emotional development.

Profile of Respondents

Participants included a parent/PE teacher, as well as coaches in basketball, volleyball, swimming, and weightlifting. Their professional experience ranged from 1 to over 30 years, and they worked with children aged 6–18. This diversity provides a multifaceted perspective on the use of mind games in both educational and sports settings.

A. Awareness and Attitudes

Awareness of mind sports varied, but **chess was the only game known universally** among respondents. Draughts was familiar to a few, while **go was entirely unknown**. Overall, participants expressed **highly positive views** on mind sports, consistently highlighting their contribution to children's **strategic thinking, memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills**.

There was unanimous agreement that mind games can support **attention, decision-making, emotional regulation**, and broader cognitive development. Respondents perceived these activities as a strong complement to physical sports training.

B. Experience and Application

Most interviewees had incorporated mind games—primarily chess—into their home or training environments. Coaches described using chess to promote **critical thinking, strategic planning**, and **decision-making under pressure**, while the parent described active participation in a chess club.

Challenges to implementation included:

- children's **short attention spans** or loss of motivation once the novelty fades,



- **limited public awareness** and lack of understanding of rules,
- difficulty in teaching complex games to younger children,
- occasional emotional reactions related to **winning and losing**.

Despite these challenges, one respondent noted **no barriers**, emphasising the adaptability of mind games.

C. Impact and Perception

Children's reactions varied significantly. Some—particularly those already curious or familiar with mind sports—responded with high enthusiasm and engaged frequently. Others showed **limited initial interest** or became disengaged once they encountered difficulty or structured thinking requirements.

Mind games were described as beneficial when introduced in a **playful, non-competitive** manner, especially in sports environments where children are accustomed to physical activity.

D. Recommendations

Participants identified several enablers that would support wider use of mind sports:

- **Raising awareness** through schools, clubs, municipalities, and community events
- Providing **training for coaches and teachers** on how to integrate mind sports effectively
- Increasing children's **familiarity and receptiveness** through engaging activities
- Developing accessible, structured resources and guidance
- Promoting the creation of **dedicated mind-sports clubs** and open tournaments

All respondents expressed willingness to participate in **pilot programmes or training sessions** and stated they would encourage children to take part.



Summary of Emerging Themes

- **Chess dominates** the Greek mind-sports landscape; draughts and go lack visibility.
- Interviewees unanimously recognise the **cognitive and behavioural benefits** of mind sports.
- Barriers relate mainly to **awareness, complexity**, and **children's attention span**.
- Coaches see strong potential for integrating mind sports into their training as a form of mental conditioning.
- There is broad enthusiasm for future G.A.M.E. initiatives.

4.1.5 Key Findings for Greece

The combined desk research, survey responses, and interviews reveal a strong cultural foundation for mind sports in Greece, particularly chess, but also highlight structural limitations, uneven familiarity across different games, and clear opportunities for targeted intervention through the G.A.M.E. project.

1. A mature chess ecosystem but limited diversity in mind sports

Desk research shows that Greece possesses a **well-developed and geographically diverse chess culture**, with numerous annual tournaments, school competitions, municipal events, and internationally rated open championships. These activities demonstrate:

- high organisational capacity,
- strong community engagement,
- and consistent youth participation.

However, **draughts and go remain almost absent** from the Greek landscape. This imbalance is also visible in the survey (familiarity with draughts and go extremely low) and in interviews (coaches and teachers only recognized chess).

This suggests that **Greece has the infrastructure to support mind sports, but not yet the diversity envisioned by the G.A.M.E. project.**

2. Extremely positive attitudes toward mind sports and their benefits



Across both surveys and interviews, the perception of mind sports is overwhelmingly positive:

- **100%** of survey respondents believe mind sports benefit children's development.
- Participants consistently highlighted improvements in:
 - concentration
 - memory
 - strategic thinking
 - problem-solving
 - discipline and patience
 - emotional regulation

Interviewees, especially coaches, emphasized the transferability of these skills to physical sports, where strategic decision-making and mental focus play a key role.

This alignment shows a **high cultural readiness to accept and support mind-sport initiatives**.

3. Significant “implementation gap” between belief and actual participation

Despite strong theoretical support:

- Only **34%** of children/students regularly practice mind sports.
- Only **19%** of adults play these games frequently themselves.
- Chess dominates; other mind sports are nearly invisible in practice.

Interviews confirm this gap: even though teachers and coaches value mind games, most rarely integrate them due to limited time, lack of materials, and low familiarity among children.

This demonstrates a **clear opportunity for intervention**, especially through accessible, structured programs.



4. Key barriers: lack of school programs, low awareness, limited access

Survey data and interviews both highlight several recurring obstacles:

- **Lack of school-based programmes** (56%)
- **Limited information on how to get involved** (49%)
- **Lack of time** due to academic/sport obligations (44%)
- **Lack of local clubs or training centres** (35%)
- **Low familiarity with rules**, especially for games other than chess
- **Children's short attention span** when introduced to more complex games

These barriers reflect both structural gaps (schools, clubs) and cultural gaps (awareness, motivation).

5. Children's responses are highly variable but improve with playful, accessible approaches

Interviews showed two patterns:

- Children already familiar with or curious about chess **show high enthusiasm and regular engagement.**
- Children unfamiliar with mind sports often:
 - lose interest quickly,
 - become frustrated when rules are complex,
 - or find them "too difficult" initially.

However, when games are introduced **playfully, narratively, or in connection with sports training**, children respond positively.

This underscores the need for **age-appropriate, engaging teaching methods.**



6. Strong willingness to participate in future G.A.M.E. initiatives

Survey and interviews show widespread interest in further involvement:

- **69%** want more information about mind-sport opportunities.
- All interviewees (100%) said they would participate in:
 - pilot programmes,
 - training sessions,
 - and activities for youth.

This enthusiasm suggests a **high potential uptake of structured programmes** if barriers are addressed.

Overall Insight for Greece

Greece offers a **solid foundation** for expanding mind sports thanks to its established chess ecosystem, highly positive attitudes, and strong stakeholder interest. However, the country faces a clear implementation gap driven by **limited awareness, lack of structured programmes, insufficient diversity beyond chess, and practical constraints in schools and clubs**.

To maximise impact, the G.A.M.E. project should focus on:

- developing **school-based programmes**,
 - expanding **awareness and accessibility**,
 - providing **training for educators and coaches**,
 - diversifying offers to include go and draughts,
 - and designing **engaging, child-friendly resources**.
-



4.2 SPAIN

4.2.1 Country Overview

Spain has a diverse and vibrant ecosystem of mind games, driven by strong institutional support, innovative educational programmes, and active community organisations. Chess is widely promoted across regions through the Spanish Chess Federation and numerous social, school-based, and competitive initiatives. Spain is also distinguished by its growing Go community, supported by structured associations, clubs, and regional federations. Mind games are used in schools, social inclusion projects, youth centres, and intergenerational programmes, reflecting broad cultural acceptance and integration into both formal and informal learning environments. Spain demonstrates a dynamic and evolving landscape with strong potential for further expansion.

4.2.2 Best Practices

Spain presents a rich and diverse landscape of initiatives promoting mind games such as chess, Go, and draughts. Through the desk research conducted within the G.A.M.E. project, 10 nationally relevant best practices were identified across different regions, each contributing to educational development, social inclusion, cognitive enhancement, and community engagement. The initiatives span from long-standing institutional frameworks led by national federations to localized programs targeting children, seniors, individuals at social risk, and broader educational communities.

Chess has the strongest national presence, with the **Spanish Chess Federation (FEDA)** acting as the primary governing body since 1928. FEDA's ongoing work provides a structural backbone for chess across the country through coordinated regional federations, national competitions, training programmes for referees and coaches, and the promotion of chess as both a competitive and educational tool. Beyond this institutional level, many Spanish regions host innovative and socially impactful projects.

Several projects focus on **social inclusion and community development**. The *Integrative Chess Project* in Alicante and the *Inclusive Chess Project* at IES Virgen del Remedio embed chess within local educational and social frameworks to promote equality, tolerance, emotional development, and cognitive skills among children, youth, and groups at risk of exclusion. Similarly, the program *Playing for the Future* uses chess as a therapeutic tool within the juvenile detention system, improving emotional regulation, resilience, and social reintegration outcomes.

In the educational field, Spain demonstrates strong innovation. The **MiniChess Valencian Community initiative** introduces chess to children aged 3–6, using gamification, large floorboards, storytelling, and teacher training to integrate chess into early childhood education. The internationally-oriented **Castle Project (2014–2017)** linked Spanish, Italian,



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GAIN ABILITIES THROUGH
MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

and German institutions to develop an educational chess curriculum, teacher training resources, and digital tools that support learning in early and primary school settings.

Spain is also notable for its commitment to **active aging and intergenerational learning**, as shown through the *Healthy Chess* project in Seville. This psycho-educational program promotes healthy aging, social connection, and cognitive stimulation for individuals aged 50 and above.

Unlike many European countries where chess dominates, Spain also has a strong and growing **Go community**, represented through structured associations such as *Dansu Baduk (Murcia)* and the *Andalusian Go Association*. These organizations provide regular training, internal and external tournaments, community engagement, and educational outreach, thereby expanding public awareness and participation in Go. Events such as "Lemon Go" in Murcia demonstrate the increasing visibility and competitive spirit of the Go community at regional and national levels.

Finally, long-term educational commitments are evident in the *School Chess Against Social Exclusion* initiative in Catalonia, which uses chess in schools within disadvantaged areas to improve academic performance, foster social skills, and combat exclusion. With a strategic plan extending to 2030, it highlights Spain's sustained dedication to using mind games as tools for community transformation.

Overall, the Spanish best practices collectively demonstrate the versatility of mind games as instruments for education, health, social inclusion, and personal development. They reflect a well-established ecosystem of federations, clubs, associations, and public institutions working collaboratively to promote mind games across all ages and social environments.

4.2.3 Survey Results

Sample profile

The Spanish survey collected **100 responses**, coming from a diverse pool of adults engaged with young people aged 11–19. The distribution by role was:

- **Parents:** 50%
- **Teachers:** 28%
- **Coaches:** 22%

A majority of respondents were between **30–49 years old**, with strong representation from:



- **40–49:** 31%
- **30–39:** 29%
- **50–59:** 16%
- **20–29:** 19%

Most respondents (**79%**) reported practicing sports themselves, indicating a population that values physical and/or structured activity.

Attitudes toward mental sports and perceived benefits

Spanish respondents showed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward mind sports.

- **70%** consider chess, go, and draughts to be *sports*, while **30%** do not.
- **99 out of 100** believe that mental sports have a **beneficial impact** on child development.
- **94%** see clear benefits in enrolling children in mind-sport courses.

When asked to specify benefits (multiple responses allowed), respondents selected:

- **Develops critical thinking & problem-solving skills – 83%**
- **Enhances memory & strategic thinking – 81%**
- **Improves concentration & focus – 78%**
- **Encourages discipline & patience – 60%**
- **Supports social interaction & teamwork – 45%**
- **Helps reduce stress & anxiety – 29%**

Regarding academic performance:

- **62%** selected **4 or 5** on the agreement scale, indicating belief in a positive connection between mental sports and academic success.



Familiarity with chess, draughts, and go

Self-assessed familiarity (1–5 scale):

Chess

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **3.4**
- Spain shows the **highest chess familiarity** among the four project countries.

Draughts

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **2.8**
- Higher than Greece and Italy, reflecting that draughts is more culturally present in Spain.

Go

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **1.4**
- Still considered largely unknown, similar to the pattern across all countries.

Despite good familiarity, **76%** of respondents do *not* frequently play mental sports themselves; only **24%** do.

Engagement of children/students

Respondents reported high levels of physical activity among children:

- **92%** of children/students are physically active.

However, only **38%** regularly play mind sports, while **62%** do not.

Among those who do participate:

- Enjoyment levels are high, averaging **4.1/5**.

Behavioural changes mentioned (open responses):



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- improved focus
- greater calmness
- better planning
- enhanced discipline
- stronger emotional control

33% of adults play mind sports with their children/students, while **67%** do not.

Reasons for not playing together include:

- lack of time
- preference for other activities
- limited awareness
- lack of school programmes
- lack of qualified trainers
- social perception that mind games are “boring”

Accessibility and perceived barriers

73% believe mental sports are generally accessible for anyone.
However, perceived obstacles remain significant.

Main barriers (multiple choice):

- **Lack of school programmes – 54%**
- **Limited information on how to get involved – 47%**
- **No local clubs or training centres – 30%**
- **Lack of time due to school/work obligations – 42%**



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GAIN ABILITIES THROUGH
MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **High participation costs – 15%**
- **Travel distance – 16%**
- **Cultural biases – 10%**

46% of respondents are aware of local mind-sport facilities or projects; **54%** are not.

Among those aware, the most identified were:

- local chess clubs
- school-based optional programs
- community or youth centre activities
- seasonal camps

This indicates existing infrastructure, but limited communication.

Desired forms of support

Most desired support measures:

- **More school-based programs or clubs – 63%**
- **Free or subsidised training sessions – 57%**
- **Public awareness campaigns – 52%**
- **More competitions/events for youth – 44%**
- **Online learning platforms and resources – 40%**

Additionally, **74%** would like to receive more information about opportunities in mental sports.

Open comments pointed to:



- the need for **integration into school curricula**,
 - **better instructor training**,
 - **more community tournaments**, and
 - **visibility for go and draughts**, which remain underrepresented.
-

Summary – Key messages for Spain

The Spanish survey indicates:

- exceptionally strong belief in the **cognitive and educational benefits** of mind sports;
- moderate-to-good familiarity with chess and draughts, but very low familiarity with go;
- high interest from parents/teachers, but **low participation rates** among youth;
- the largest barriers being **lack of school programmes** and **lack of information**;
- high demand for **school-based programs, subsidised training, and awareness campaigns**.

Spain shows significant **potential for growth**, with strong cultural acceptance of chess and readiness to expand structured programs—especially if better promoted and integrated into educational settings.

4.2.4 Interviews

Introduction

Five qualitative interviews were conducted in Spain with educators, parents, and youth professionals to explore their awareness, experience, and perceptions regarding mind sports such as chess, draughts, and go. The purpose was to assess their use in educational and recreational environments and to understand their perceived impact on youth aged 11–19. The interviews were analysed using a thematic framework consistent with the G.A.M.E. project methodology.



Profile of Respondents

Respondents included schoolteachers, community educators, and parents involved in youth programmes. All had direct experience working with children and adolescents in educational, recreational, or family contexts. Their backgrounds provided insights into school-based practices, home settings, and community associations.

A. Awareness and Attitudes

Familiarity with mind games

Participants demonstrated **high familiarity with chess and checkers**, which were widely recognised as part of standard educational or recreational activities. **Go was significantly less known**, mentioned by name but seldom played. Additional references included games such as Battleship, memory-matching activities, Nine Men's Morris, dominoes, and tic-tac-toe, indicating broad awareness of strategic and logic-based games.

Perceived value in child development

Respondents consistently highlighted the **holistic developmental benefits** of mind games. Reported effects included:

- Enhanced **planning, logical reasoning, and strategic thinking**
- Strengthened **memory and cognitive flexibility**
- Improved **emotional management**, including frustration tolerance and humility
- Social development through cooperation and respectful competition

Mind games were widely described as an effective complement to traditional academic learning.

Contribution to attention, decision-making, and emotional regulation

All interviewees agreed that mind sports significantly support:

- **Sustained attention and concentration**
- **Decision-making**, particularly anticipation and evaluation of options



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **Self-control, emotional regulation, and resilience**

These findings reflect recognition of mind sports as tools for both cognitive and socio-emotional development.

B. Experience and Application

Use in schools, homes, and associations

Mind games are **frequently used** across a variety of contexts:

- Teachers integrate them during workshops, enrichment sessions, and recess periods (e.g., "inclusive recess" initiatives and school tournaments).
- Parents use board games at home as alternatives to screen-based entertainment.
- Community groups implement them in organised youth activities.

Although not formally embedded in the curriculum, mind games already have a visible presence in daily educational practice.

Challenges and limitations

Participants identified several structural and cultural barriers:

- **Lack of time within existing school schedules**
- **Absence of formal teacher training** on how to use mind games pedagogically
- **Uneven levels of student motivation**, especially among those preferring digital entertainment
- Perception among some youth that board games are **old-fashioned**



These limitations indicate that successful implementation must be supported by training, structured planning, and adaptation to students' contemporary interests.

C. Impact and Perception

Children's reactions

Respondents reported consistently positive reactions when mind games are introduced in **fun, accessible, and engaging ways**. Common patterns included:

- Initial reluctance followed by rapid engagement once rules were understood
- High levels of enthusiasm and involvement
- Positive response to non-digital activities that differ from typical worksheets or homework
- Viewing mind games as enjoyable "challenges"

The key to sustained interest appeared to be **playfulness, active engagement**, and **clear, simple instruction**.

D. Recommendations

Facilitators for broader integration

Participants highlighted several supports that would enhance adoption:

- **Structured teaching materials**, visual aids, and ready-to-use game sets
- **Teacher training** and awareness-raising around pedagogical uses of mind games
- **Institutional recognition** within school programmes
- **Digital and interactive resources** to appeal to modern learners



These strategies reflect a desire for both analogue and digital tools to maximise accessibility.

Willingness to participate in future initiatives

All interviewees expressed enthusiasm for:

- Taking part in **pilot training sessions**
- Integrating mind games more systematically
- Encouraging children to join mind-sports activities

Participants strongly believed that these games develop critical thinking and essential life skills, with several stressing the importance of preserving and promoting them in modern education.

Summary of Emerging Themes (Spain)

- **Chess dominates** familiarity; checkers is moderately known; go remains unfamiliar.
- Mind games are recognised as supporting **cognitive, emotional, and social skills**, with strong emphasis on planning, reasoning, and emotional regulation.
- Implementation barriers relate to **time constraints, lack of training, and competition with digital entertainment**.
- Children demonstrate **high engagement** when activities are introduced in enjoyable and interactive formats.
- Respondents show **strong willingness** to participate in structured programmes and believe mind sports represent a valuable educational opportunity.

4.2.5 Key Findings for Spain

The synthesis of Spanish best practices, survey data, and interview insights reveals a highly favourable environment for mind sports, characterised by strong institutional structures, widespread cultural acceptance, and significant educational potential—balanced by practical barriers related to time, training, and visibility.



1. A well-developed, diverse ecosystem with strong institutional support

Best practices demonstrate that Spain has one of the richest mind-sports landscapes among the four partner countries. Chess is deeply institutionalised through the Spanish Chess Federation (FEDA), supported by active regional federations and a wide variety of tournaments, training pathways, and development programmes.

Additionally, Spain distinguishes itself through:

- **strong innovation in education** (MiniChess, Castle Project),
- **social inclusion projects** (Integrative Chess Project, Virgen del Remedio),
- **programmes for vulnerable youth** (Playing for the Future),
- **active aging initiatives** (Healthy Chess), and
- **a growing Go community**, unique among the partner countries.

This established ecosystem demonstrates high organisational capacity and significant experience applying mind games across age groups, social contexts, and educational environments.

2. Strong public belief in cognitive, emotional, and social benefits

Survey and interview respondents overwhelmingly value mind sports:

- **99%** believe they benefit child development.
- **94%** believe children should have access to mind-sports courses.
- The most frequently identified benefits were:
 - critical thinking and problem-solving,
 - memory and strategic thinking,
 - concentration and focus,
 - discipline and patience,



- emotional regulation and teamwork.

Interviews reinforced these findings, highlighting mind sports as tools for:

- planning and foresight,
- frustration management and humility,
- cognitive flexibility,
- and social cooperation.

These perceptions create an extremely supportive cultural environment for G.A.M.E. activities.

3. Familiarity is high for chess and draughts, but low for Go

Spanish respondents showed the **highest chess familiarity** of all project countries (average 3.4/5). Draughts (2.8/5) is also more widely known than in Greece or Italy. Go (1.4/5) remains largely unfamiliar.

Despite this awareness:

- **76% of adults do not frequently play mind sports themselves**, indicating a gap between recognition and personal engagement.
- Only **38% of children/students** regularly practice mind sports.

Thus, Spain has strong cultural awareness but inconsistent participation.

4. Children respond positively when activities are engaging and well presented

Interviews consistently reported:

- initial reluctance followed by high engagement,
- enthusiasm when rules are explained clearly,



- strong enjoyment of structured challenges,
- high motivation during school tournaments and inclusive recess activities,
- preference for interactive and playful approaches.

Survey data align with this:

- enjoyment scores averaged **4.1/5**,
- behavioural improvements included calmness, focus, planning, and emotional control.

This confirms that **mind-sport uptake among children is limited mainly by exposure, not interest.**

5. Key barriers: structural limitations, lack of training, and competition with digital entertainment

Survey and interviews identified several recurring obstacles:

- **lack of school programmes** (54%)
- **insufficient information** on available activities (47%)
- **lack of structured teacher training**
- competition with digital games and screen-based habits
- time constraints within school schedules
- limited local clubs in some regions
- cultural perception among some youth that board games are “old-fashioned”

These findings indicate that, despite strong conceptual support, practical implementation lags behind.



6. Strong willingness to participate in future initiatives

Both surveys and interviews revealed exceptionally high openness to engagement:

- **74%** want more information about mind-sport opportunities.
- Interviewees—teachers, educators, parents—all expressed strong interest in:
 - pilot programmes,
 - structured training,
 - using mind games more systematically,
 - encouraging children to participate.

Participants emphasised the need for resources such as:

- ready-to-use teaching materials,
- visual aids,
- digital or interactive versions of games,
- institutional recognition within schools.

Overall Insight for Spain

Spain offers one of the **strongest foundations** for mind-sport expansion across all partner countries. It already benefits from a robust institutional framework, widespread educational use, social-inclusion initiatives, and positive cultural attitudes. However, participation remains inconsistent due to limited school integration, insufficient teacher training, and competition with digital entertainment.

To maximise impact, the G.A.M.E. project should prioritise:

- expanding **school-based programmes**,
- providing **teacher/coach training**,



- increasing visibility of mind-sport opportunities,
- offering **modern, digital-friendly learning tools**,
- strengthening support for alternative games such as Go,
- and promoting local clubs and events across regions.

4.3 Italy

4.3.1 Country Overview

In Italy, mind games—particularly chess and draughts—are primarily embedded within school environments and local community initiatives. Although the volume of large-scale national events is smaller compared to other countries, Italian programmes demonstrate strong educational relevance and consistent integration into primary and secondary school settings. Many initiatives focus on introducing children to mind sports through playful, accessible, and inclusive approaches supported by teachers, municipalities, and cultural associations. While Go has limited recognition, chess maintains a solid presence, and interest in mind games is growing across educational institutions, revealing significant potential for national expansion and more formalised structures.

4.3.2 Best Practices

The desk research conducted in Italy identified four relevant best practices highlighting how mind games—chess, draughts, and Go—are used to promote youth development, educational reinforcement, and community engagement. Even though the number of practices collected is smaller than in other partner countries, the initiatives reflect a strong integration of mind sports into educational and social environments, particularly in northern and central Italy.

A recurring characteristic across the Italian best practices is the connection between mind games and schools. Several initiatives place chess inside formal education, using it as a tool to strengthen concentration, problem-solving skills, and logical reasoning. Many of the practices are implemented with the support of local municipalities, libraries, and cultural or educational associations, helping to create accessible and inclusive opportunities for children and teenagers to engage with mind games.

Italian clubs and organisations also tend to emphasise participation over competition. The practices collected show an emphasis on involving students who may not have been previously exposed to mind sports, using introductory formats, free sessions, and playful tournaments to engage beginners. These programs often involve teachers, volunteers, or



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

club educators, who support students in learning the rules, practising basic strategies, and progressively engaging in more structured games.

While the range of mind sports represented in the collected practices is narrower than in other countries—most Italian initiatives revolve around chess—the programs show strong alignment with GAME's goals: promoting participation in mind games, creating sustainable educational pathways for youth, and expanding community-based opportunities for strategic thinking and cognitive development. Although Italy lacks large-scale national festivals or highly funded competitions, it compensates with grassroots initiatives, school-based programmes, and community-driven events that make mind games accessible and relevant for children and educators.

Overall, the Italian best practices demonstrate how mind games are used as tools for cognitive improvement, community building, and educational innovation within school environments. These findings highlight the potential for further national expansion and stronger institutional coordination, as well as the opportunity for Italy to develop more diversified and larger-scale initiatives in line with other European countries participating in the GAME project.

4.3.3 Survey Results

Sample profile

The Italian survey collected **100 responses**, with the following roles represented:

- **Parents:** 45%
- **Teachers:** 33%
- **Coaches:** 22%

Italy had the **highest proportion of teachers** of all four countries.

Ages were distributed mainly in the adult population:

- **40–49 years:** 30%
- **30–39 years:** 29%
- **20–29 years:** 19%
- **50–59 years:** 13%



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

About **76%** of respondents practice sports themselves, similar to Spain and Greece.

Attitudes toward mental sports and perceived benefits

Awareness and attitudes were overwhelmingly positive:

- **90%** consider mind games to be *sports* (highest of all four countries).
- **100%** believe that mind sports have a **beneficial impact** on child development.
- **94%** believe that enrolling a child in mind-sport courses has clear benefits.

Perceived benefits (multiple choice):

- **Improves concentration and focus – 82%**
- **Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills – 78%**
- **Enhances memory and strategic thinking – 75%**
- **Encourages discipline and patience – 58%**
- **Supports social interaction and teamwork – 31%**
- **Helps reduce stress and anxiety – 22%**

Regarding academic performance:

- **67%** selected **4 or 5**, agreeing that mind sports positively impact school results.
 - Only **3%** selected “1” or “2,” indicating low disagreement.
-

Familiarity with chess, draughts, and go



Self-reported familiarity (1–5 scale):

Chess

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **3.0**
- Higher than Greece, lower than Spain.

Draughts

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **2.3**
- Consistent with moderate cultural presence.

Go

- Average familiarity $\approx$ **1.3**
- Almost completely unfamiliar to the general population.

Only **24%** said they frequently play mental sports; **76%** do not.

Engagement of children/students

Respondents reported:

- **93%** of children/students are physically active.
- Only **33%** regularly practice mind sports; **67%** do not.

Among children who do participate:

- Enjoyment levels are high (average $\approx$ **4.2/5**).

Behavioural changes observed (open-ended responses):

- increased concentration,
- improved emotional regulation,



- more patience,
- better decision-making,
- enhanced memory.

34% of adults play mind sports with their children/students; **66%** do not.

Reasons for not playing together include:

- lack of time,
- lack of structured programmes,
- preference for other activities,
- lack of knowledge or trainers.

Accessibility and perceived barriers

75% consider mental sports accessible for anyone to play.

However, respondents identified several barriers:

- **Lack of school programs – 55%**
- **Limited information – 48%**
- **No local clubs/training centres – 31%**
- **Lack of time – 38%**
- **High participation costs – 16%**
- **Travel distance – 14%**
- **Cultural perceptions – 9%**

These trends closely match Spain and Greece, but Italy shows slightly **higher concern about lack of time**.



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Awareness of local opportunities:

- **42%** aware of clubs/projects
- **58%** not aware

Among those aware, most mentioned:

- local chess clubs,
- seasonal camps,
- community centres,
- Erasmus+ projects in schools.

Desired forms of support

When asked what support would facilitate youth participation:

- **More school-based programs or clubs – 69%** (highest of all countries)
- **Free/subsidised training sessions – 55%**
- **Public awareness campaigns – 52%**
- **More competitions/events – 41%**
- **Online resources/platforms – 39%**

Additionally, **77%** expressed interest in receiving further information about mental sport opportunities.

Open comments stressed:

- the importance of **teacher training**,
- more **local tournaments**,



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- greater **visibility for draughts and go**,
 - integrating mind sports into **formal education**.
-

Summary – Key messages for Italy

The Italian results show:

- the **highest acceptance** of mental sports as legitimate sports,
- strong awareness of cognitive and academic benefits,
- low but enthusiastic participation among children,
- clear and repeated demand for **school-level programs**,
- lack of information and limited infrastructures as major obstacles.

Italy demonstrates strong potential for scaling mind-sports initiatives, especially in collaboration with schools and local educational networks.

4.3.4 Interviews

Introduction

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted in Italy with professionals and parents involved in sport, education, and mind-games instruction. The aim was to understand their familiarity with mind sports (chess, draughts, go), their perceived developmental value, and their experience integrating such games into youth environments. Interviews lasted 15–20 minutes, were conducted in Italian, and followed a shared guide to ensure comparability across countries.

Profile of Respondents

Interviews covered a diverse range of roles with direct experience working with youth:



- **Swimming Coach** (7 years experience; children aged 8–13, occasionally younger or adults)
- **Basketball Coach** (6 years experience; works with 17-year-old athletes)
- **Mind Games Instructor** (certified draughts instructor; 20+ years experience; works with grades 3–12; event organiser)
- **Middle School Teacher** (4 years experience; works with children aged 6–10)
- **Parent** (mother of two girls aged 6 and 8; informal home experience with mind games)

This group provided perspectives from formal education, organised sport, and home environments.

A. Awareness and Attitudes

Familiarity with mind games

All respondents were familiar with at least one mind game, though depth of knowledge varied:

- Chess and draughts were widely known.
- Go was mentioned only by the basketball coach and fully understood only by the mind games instructor.
- Non-specialists associated familiarity with childhood or cultural exposure rather than structured training.

Common themes:

- Chess is culturally dominant.
- Draughts is recognised but less frequently played.
- Go remains largely unknown.

Perceived value in child development



All participants agreed that mind games offer developmental benefits, though their emphasis differed:

- **Swimming Coach:** promotes transversal thinking and reasoning.
- **Basketball Coach:** supports fast decision-making and strategic thinking.
- **Instructor:** value depends on framing; strong link to logical/mathematical reasoning.
- **Teacher:** improves planning, concentration, and focus.
- **Parent:** supports sustained attention and emotional engagement.

Across respondents, the most frequently cited benefits were **strategic thinking, attention control, emotional regulation, and patience**.

Effects on attention, decision-making, and emotional control

All interviewees affirmed positive impact:

- Coaches emphasised **decision-making** under pressure.
- Teacher and parent stressed **emotional self-regulation**, frustration tolerance, and turn-taking.
- Instructor highlighted the importance of context and teacher engagement in determining outcomes.

B. Experience and Application

Use of mind games in practice

Direct implementation varied significantly:

- **Regular use:** Only the Mind Games Instructor had structured, continuous application across multiple age groups.
- **Occasional use:** Parent used chess informally at home.
- **Indirect use:** Basketball coach drew conceptual inspiration from strategic games.



- **Non-use:** Swimming coach and teacher had never used mind games but expressed interest.

Challenges and limitations

Respondents identified several constraints:

- **Time limitations:** Short sports sessions do not allow space for mind games.
- **Environment mismatch:** Swimming sessions cannot include tabletop activities.
- **Age-related difficulty:** Younger children struggle with rules, patience, and frustration.
- **Low familiarity:** Some teenagers perceive mind games as distant from sports or outdated.
- **School coordination issues:** Instructor noted limited involvement from classroom teachers.

Across roles, respondents emphasised the need for **age adaptation**, **simple rules**, and **structured support**.

C. Impact and Perception

How children respond to mind games

Responses varied according to age, temperament, and presentation:

- Children generally show **initial curiosity**, but sustained interest depends on the facilitator.
- Younger children may become frustrated if they do not grasp the rules quickly.
- Older youth unfamiliar with mind games may require stronger motivational framing.
- Narrative, playful explanation, and clear goals were seen as essential to maintain engagement.



Overall, children respond positively when games are **introduced in engaging, interactive, and age-appropriate ways**.

D. Recommendations

Facilitators for integration

Respondents identified several supports that would help implement mind games:

- **Structured programs and ready-to-use materials** (coaches).
- **Hybrid activities combining physical and mental elements** (teacher).
- **Age-appropriate simplified games** (parent).
- **Greater involvement of classroom teachers** during sessions (instructor).
- **Use of special events or themed days** to introduce games (swimming coach).

Willingness to participate

All interviewees expressed willingness to:

- Attend pilot training sessions.
- Introduce mind games in their work or home setting.
- Encourage children to join future initiatives.

Final comments

Key suggestions included:

- Present mind games as **complementary** to sports, not replacements.
- Encourage **cooperative formats**, especially in classrooms.
- Increase the variety of games offered to accommodate different cultural and cognitive profiles.



- Foster more playful, interactive, and socially engaging approaches.
-

Summary of Emerging Themes (Italy)

- **High perceived developmental value:** Cognitive and emotional benefits were recognised universally.
- **Familiarity does not equal implementation:** Most professionals knew mind games but lacked structured methods to integrate them.
- **Engagement depends heavily on facilitation:** Clear explanation, storytelling, and appropriate difficulty levels are essential.
- **Barriers are mostly logistical or developmental:** Time, space, age, and frustration tolerance were major concerns.
- **Strong openness to collaboration:** All respondents are willing to engage in pilot activities if materials and training are provided.

4.3.5 Key Findings for Italy

The combined analysis of Italian best practices, survey responses, and interviews shows a country with **very positive attitudes toward mind sports**, a strong school connection, and high potential for growth—despite limited scale, fragmented infrastructure, and practical barriers to implementation.

1. A school-centred, grassroots ecosystem with limited scale

Desk research highlights **only four best practices**, fewer than in other partner countries, but they share a clear pattern:

mind games—mainly chess and some draughts/other logical games—are **strongly linked to schools and educational projects**.

Key features of Italian best practices include:

- integration of mind games into **formal education** (primary and lower secondary);
- support from municipalities, libraries, and associations;



- emphasis on **participation over competition**, focusing on introductory formats, inclusion and cognitive development rather than elite performance.

Unlike Spain or Romania, Italy does not yet have many large-scale national festivals or heavily funded competitions in mind sports, but it compensates with **small, community-based, school-driven initiatives** that are closely aligned with G.A.M.E.'s educational goals.

2. Exceptionally positive attitudes and strong recognition of educational value

Italy shows **the highest acceptance of mind sports as “sports”** among all four countries:

- **90%** of respondents consider mind games to be sports.
- **100%** believe mind sports benefit child development.
- **94%** see clear value in enrolling children in mind-sport courses.

The most frequently mentioned benefits are:

- improved **concentration and focus**,
- stronger **critical thinking and problem-solving**,
- enhanced **memory and strategic thinking**,
- increased **patience and emotional regulation**,
- some recognition of **social interaction and teamwork**.

Interviewees echoed this, linking mind games to:

- transversal reasoning,
- fast decision-making (especially in sports),
- emotional self-regulation,
- planning and sustained attention.



Attitudinally, Italy is **fully aligned** with the G.A.M.E. project's rationale.

3. Familiarity is moderate–high, but actual practice remains limited

Survey data show:

- chess familiarity $\approx 3.0/5$ (higher than Greece, lower than Spain),
- draughts familiarity $\approx 2.3/5$,
- go $\approx 1.3/5$ (almost unknown).

Yet:

- only **24%** of adults frequently play mind sports;
- only **33%** of children/students regularly practice them.

Interviews confirm this gap:

most professionals *know* chess and draughts, but only the **mind-games instructor** uses them regularly and systematically. Coaches and the teacher rarely integrate them, mainly due to context and time constraints, not lack of interest.

So Italy shows a classic pattern: **high recognition, low structured implementation**.

4. Barriers: lack of school programmes, information, time, and local offers

The Italian barriers are very similar to Greece and Spain, with some nuances:

From the survey:

- **Lack of school programmes** – 55%
- **Limited information** – 48%
- **No local clubs/training centres** – 31%
- **Lack of time** – 38% (slightly higher concern than in other countries)
- plus costs, distance, and some cultural perceptions.



From the interviews:

- short sports sessions can't "host" board games (e.g. swimming),
- environment mismatch between physical settings and table games,
- difficulty teaching complex rules to younger/impulsive children,
- teenagers sometimes see mind games as distant from modern sports or "old-fashioned",
- limited involvement and coordination from school staff.

Together, these show that Italy needs **structural support (programmes, time slots, infrastructure) AND pedagogical support (methods, age adaptation)**.

5. Children's engagement is high when games are well mediated

Across survey and interviews:

- children who participate report **very high enjoyment** ($\approx 4.2/5$),
- observed behavioural changes include better concentration, emotional regulation, patience, decision-making, and memory.

At the same time:

- younger children may get frustrated quickly if they don't understand rules,
- older youth may need strong motivational framing,
- engagement depends heavily on **how the game is introduced**—storytelling, playful explanation, clear goals, appropriate difficulty.

This confirms that **mind games can work very well with Italian youth**, but only if **educators and coaches are supported with suitable tools and methods**.

6. Strong demand for school-based programmes and training



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Italy stands out for its **school-centred demand**:

- **69%** of respondents selected “more school-based programmes or clubs” (highest among all countries).
- **77%** want more information about mind-sport opportunities.

Open comments and interviews converge on the same message:

- teachers need **training** and pedagogical support;
- there is a desire for **local tournaments** and visible events;
- stakeholders want more **recognition for draughts and go**, not just chess;
- integration into **formal education** (curriculum, projects, Erasmus+ activities) is seen as the key scaling route.

All interviewees stated they are willing to take part in **pilot programmes or training** and to involve their students/children.

Overall Insight for Italy

Italy offers **excellent attitudinal conditions** for the G.A.M.E. project: very strong belief in the value of mind sports, a solid base of school-linked best practices, and clear demand from teachers and families for structured, school-based initiatives.

However, practical implementation is still limited by **time constraints, lack of school programmes, insufficient information, and few structured local infrastructures**, especially outside specific clubs or projects.

To have the greatest impact, the G.A.M.E. project in Italy should focus on:

- designing **school-friendly formats** (short, flexible modules),
- providing **teacher and coach training**,
- creating **age-appropriate materials** and simplified approaches,
- promoting **local networks** between schools, municipalities, and clubs,



- and increasing visibility for **draughts and go**, alongside chess.

4.4 Romania

4.4.1 Country Overview

Romania offers one of the most developed and diverse mind-sport ecosystems among the partner countries, characterised by strong institutional leadership, large-scale national and international competitions, and extensive school-based initiatives. Chess is highly popular and culturally valued, supported by the Romanian Chess Federation and major sponsors working to position Romania as a European chess hub. Draughts also has strong cultural presence, and Go is increasingly promoted through camps, clubs, and training programmes. Mind games are widely recognised for their educational value, and Romania shows exceptional readiness for systematic integration of mind sports into schools, youth programmes, and community centres.

4.4.2 Best Practices

Romania provided 10 diverse and comprehensive best practices, showcasing one of the richest ecosystems of mind-sport initiatives among the GAME partner countries. The practices span large-scale national tournaments, international competitions for youth, online competitive structures, educational programmes, summer camps, and community-based initiatives in both chess and Go, with a smaller presence of draughts. Together, they demonstrate a well-developed national framework supported by strong institutions, private sponsors, and governmental bodies.

A standout element in Romania is the strategic push to position the country as a major European hub for chess. Flagship initiatives such as the **Romania Grand Prix**, supported by the Romanian Chess Federation and major private sponsors, attract participants from over 50 countries and involve some of the most beautiful cities in Romania. These high-visibility events are part of a long-term national strategy to increase the number of chess players and elevate Romania's global reputation in mind sports.

Beyond elite competition, Romania has a remarkably strong educational and youth-oriented mind-sport landscape. Programmes such as the **International Chess Festival in Schools** engage more than 700 children from four continents and are accompanied by extensive educational investments: tens of thousands of free chess lessons, textbooks, and chess sets distributed to schools. Similarly, local initiatives like the **“Mihai Burduja” Memorial, Go Initiation Courses**, and various community-led tournaments reinforce the commitment to making mind games accessible to children from diverse regions and backgrounds.



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Romania has also developed innovative formats that broaden participation beyond traditional in-person competitions. The **Grand Prix CSU Online** enables children and teenagers to compete monthly against national and international peers at low cost, promoting inclusiveness and continuity. Other practices focus on adult or senior engagement, such as the **Veterans' Cup**, emphasising socialisation, community cohesion, and lifelong learning.

The Go community in Romania is particularly active, offering structured programmes such as residential summer camps, introductory courses supported by public institutions, and open tournaments combining board games, physical activities, and personal development workshops. This indicates a holistic approach to mind-sport education that blends cognitive, social, and physical components.

Overall, the Romanian best practices illustrate a dynamic and multi-layered ecosystem with strong institutional foundations, significant private sponsorship, and a broad range of beneficiaries. Romania stands out for its balance between elite competition, youth development, community training, and innovation in delivery methods. These findings position Romania as a leading example among the GAME partner countries, offering valuable models for future programme development and cross-national exchange.

4.4.3 Survey Results

Sample profile

The Romanian survey collected **100 responses**, with a balanced representation of roles:

- **Parents:** 48%
- **Teachers:** 34%
- **Coaches:** 18%

Romania has the **highest proportion of parents** and the **lowest proportion of coaches** compared to the other three countries.

Age distribution was concentrated in:

- **40–49 years:** 35%
- **30–39 years:** 27%



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **20–29 years:** 19%
- **50–59 years:** 12%

Romania also had the **highest share of respondents who practice sports:**

- **85%** answered Yes, suggesting a population with strong engagement in physical or structured activity.

Attitudes toward mental sports and perceived benefits

Romania demonstrated some of the strongest positive attitudes in the entire project:

- **90%** consider chess, draughts, and go to be *sports*.
- **100%** believe mental sports have a **beneficial developmental impact** on children.
- **100%** believe children gain benefits from participating in mind-sports courses — identical to Greece and Italy.

Perceived benefits selected (multiple choice):

- **Develops critical thinking & problem-solving skills – 83%**
- **Enhances memory & strategic thinking – 82%**
- **Improves concentration & focus – 78%**
- **Encourages discipline & patience – 62%**
- **Supports social interaction & teamwork – 34%**
- **Helps reduce stress & anxiety – 27%**

These patterns are nearly identical to Spain and Italy, confirming shared cultural perceptions across Europe.

Regarding academic performance:



- **74%** chose **4 or 5** on the agreement scale (strong agreement).
- Only **4%** expressed low agreement (1–2).

Romania shows the **strongest belief** that mental sports improve school performance.

Familiarity with chess, draughts, and go

Self-reported familiarity (1–5 scale):

Chess

- Average $\approx$ **3.5**
- The **highest chess familiarity** of all countries.
- Only 14% rated themselves at “1”.

Draughts

- Average $\approx$ **3.1**
- Significantly higher than Greece, Italy, and Spain — draughts is far more well-known in Romania.

Go

- Average $\approx$ **1.6**
- Slightly better than the other three countries, but still very low.

About **27%** of respondents frequently play mental sports; **73%** do not.

Engagement of children/students

Respondents reported:

- **95%** of children/students are physically active (highest of all countries).



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PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **39%** regularly practice mind sports (similar to Spain; higher than Greece and Italy).

Among those who participate:

- Enjoyment score averages **4.3/5**, one of the highest across the four countries.

Behavioural changes reported in open responses included:

- better focus and attention
- improved behaviour and discipline
- greater emotional regulation
- enhanced problem-solving
- improved patience and sportsmanship

32% of adults play mind sports with their children/students; **68%** do not.

Reasons for not playing included:

- lack of time,
- lack of awareness of local opportunities,
- preference for other activities,
- insufficient school programmes,
- lack of qualified instructors.

Accessibility and perceived barriers

Even though **77%** believe mental sports are accessible to anyone, Romanian respondents still identified substantial barriers:

Main barriers (multiple choice):



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- **Lack of school programs – 59%** (highest of all four countries)
- **Limited information – 54%**
- **No local clubs/training centres – 38%**
- **Lack of time – 40%**
- **High participation costs – 19%**
- **Travel distance – 15%**
- **Cultural perceptions/social norms – 8%**

Romania therefore reflects both **structural barriers** (lack of programmes, lack of clubs) and **information gaps**.

Awareness of local opportunities:

- **48%** aware of clubs/projects
- **52%** unaware

Among those aware, most mentioned:

- chess clubs,
- school chess programs,
- after-school activities,
- local tournaments and youth centres.

Romania also showed the **highest awareness of Erasmus+ projects**, likely due to the country's consistent participation in EU educational initiatives.

Desired forms of support

When asked what would help young people access mind sports:



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- **More school-based programs – 72%** (highest among all countries)
- **Free or subsidised training sessions – 61%**
- **Public awareness campaigns – 55%**
- **More competitions/events – 43%**
- **Online learning platforms – 39%**

79% expressed interest in receiving more information about mental sport opportunities — the highest of all four countries.

Open comments strongly emphasized:

- the need for **mind sports in school curricula**,
- **access to high-quality instructors**,
- **local clubs and community spaces**,
- **integration of draughts**, which is culturally popular but under-promoted.

Summary – Key messages for Romania

Romania shows:

- Extremely high **belief in the cognitive, behavioural, and academic benefits** of mental sports.
- The **highest familiarity** with chess and draughts across all countries.
- Strong parental interest and high youth enjoyment, but **limited participation** due to structural gaps.
- Clear demand for **school integration, greater visibility**, and **affordable training**.
- A population ready and enthusiastic for mind-sports initiatives — if accessible, organised, and well-promoted.



Of all four countries, Romania shows the **strongest readiness** for large-scale mental-sport programmes, especially through schools and local clubs.

4.4.4 Interviews

Introduction

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted in Romania with teachers, coaches, and educators to explore their familiarity with mind sports and their perceived impact on youth development. All interviews were held in person and followed the standard G.A.M.E. interview guide. Respondents were informed about anonymity and the research purpose. The interviews examined awareness, perceived benefits, challenges, and recommendations for integrating mind sports such as chess, draughts, and go into educational environments.

Profile of Respondents

Respondents included:

- Physical education teachers
- Schoolteachers working with children and adolescents
- Coaches involved in extracurricular activities
- Educators with informal experience using mind games in school or leisure settings

Across roles, all interviewees interacted directly with children and youth aged approximately 6–18.

A. Awareness and Attitudes

Familiarity with mind games

All respondents were familiar with **chess**, which was clearly the dominant mind sport in their personal and professional experience. However, most were **not familiar with the rules**



or methods of play for draughts, go, or similar strategy games. Chess was consistently described as culturally recognized and intellectually valued.

Perceived value in child development

Interviewees strongly agreed on the developmental benefits of mind sports, particularly chess. Reported benefits included:

- Improved **attention and sustained focus**
- Enhanced **strategic planning** and anticipation of opponents' moves
- Strengthened **memory and visual intelligence**
- Growth of **calmness, patience, and emotional regulation**
- Development of **reasoning skills** similar to solving a math problem

Some respondents shared personal examples, noting noticeable improvements in students' visual intelligence, problem-solving capacity, and emotional maturity during periods when chess was regularly played.

Attitudes toward emotional and cognitive impact

Respondents highlighted that mind games promote:

- Emotional control: managing frustration, patience, handling defeat
- Personal growth: learning humility in victory and resilience after loss
- Cognitive discipline extending to other academic subjects

Several participants observed that students who played chess appeared more focused and attentive across academic tasks and daily activities.

B. Experience and Application

Use of mind games in practice

While all respondents recognized chess's potential, **actual implementation in classrooms or sport settings was limited**. Reasons included:



- Lack of materials (boards, pieces) in schools
- Limited time during the school day
- Absence of formal training or integration into the curriculum

One respondent stated he had wished to specialise as a chess teacher in university, but such a pathway did not exist—highlighting systemic barriers.

Challenges and limitations

Common challenges included:

- **Insufficient resources:** many schools lack basic chess materials
- **Competition and emotional difficulty:** some children struggle to handle losing or winning appropriately
- **Curricular misalignment:** students expect physical activity during PE classes and may resist chess in that context
- **Lack of school-level promotion or official support**

Some teachers noted that younger children or competitive students can become easily frustrated, leading to disengagement if not properly guided.

C. Impact and Perception

Reactions from children

Children's reactions varied depending on how chess was introduced. When presented in an **engaging, friendly, or narrative way**, students were more willing to participate and showed curiosity. Respondents noted:

- Story-based or digital formats could make chess more appealing
- Students enjoy chess more when it feels connected to familiar worlds (stories, games, apps)
- Clear explanation and playful framing help sustain interest



However, when introduced during physical education classes, some youth showed resistance because they associated PE with movement rather than mental activity.

Overall, respondents agreed that **effective presentation strongly influences engagement**.

D. Recommendations

Facilitators for integration

Participants suggested several approaches to help integrate mind games into school and extracurricular environments:

- Officially **introduce chess into the school curriculum**
- Provide **materials, guides, and structured resources** for teachers
- Offer **teacher training**, as many educators lack the knowledge to teach mind sports
- Present chess in **interactive, enjoyable ways** to avoid frustration
- Use storytelling, digital applications, or playful contexts to increase accessibility

Respondents stressed that both legislation and institutional support are needed to make mind sports widely accessible.

Willingness to participate and final reflections

All interviewees demonstrated enthusiasm for the G.A.M.E. project and expressed interest in participating in the upcoming training sessions. They believed similar projects are needed to promote mind games in schools and support teachers with practical materials.

Chess was seen as a powerful educational tool that can shape students' mindset, ambition, and behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. Lack of time and resources were the primary reasons respondents had not already integrated mind games more frequently.

Summary of Emerging Themes (Romania)

- **Chess dominates** awareness; draughts and go are largely unfamiliar.



- Mind sports are widely seen as beneficial for **cognitive, emotional, and academic development**.
- Implementation is limited due to **lack of materials, insufficient time, and absence of institutional support**.
- Children engage positively when games are introduced in **playful, story-based, or digital formats**.
- Respondents strongly support the **formal introduction of chess in schools** and welcome training opportunities.
- Emotional maturity and sportsmanship (handling winning/losing) are key challenges but also major developmental opportunities.

4.4.5 Key Findings for Romania

Across all components of the needs analysis—desk research, surveys, and interviews—Romania emerges as **the strongest overall ecosystem** for mind sports within the G.A.M.E. project, characterised by exceptional national enthusiasm, high familiarity, strong youth engagement, and a highly developed best-practice landscape. At the same time, structural barriers such as insufficient school integration, lack of resources, and limited teacher training still hinder full implementation.

1. One of the richest national ecosystems for mind sports in Europe

Romania provided **10 highly diverse and robust best practices**, covering:

- national and international chess tournaments,
- long-term school-based programmes,
- online competition structures,
- Go summer camps and training initiatives,
- community events,
- senior programmes and lifelong learning activities.



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Key strengths include:

- **elite-level visibility** (e.g., Romania Grand Prix attracting >50 countries),
- **national strategic investment** in promoting chess,
- **large-scale educational initiatives** distributing textbooks, materials, and free lessons to thousands of children,
- **innovation** (monthly online Grand Prix, hybrid camps combining cognition + physical activity),
- **strong Go community** with structured courses and camps.

Among all partner countries, Romania stands out for its **balance of elite competitions, youth programmes, community engagement, and innovation**, showing a fully mature, multi-layered mind-sports ecosystem.

2. Strongest positive attitudes toward mind sports across all countries

Survey results place Romania at the top in several indicators:

- **90%** consider mind games real sports.
- **100%** believe in developmental benefits.
- **100%** believe children gain concrete advantages from participating in mind-sport courses.
- **74%** strongly believe mind sports improve academic performance (highest of all countries).

These findings reflect:

- long-standing cultural acceptance of chess,
- high parental and teacher engagement,
- strong alignment between national perceptions and G.A.M.E.'s educational objectives.



Interviewees reinforced these perceptions, repeatedly describing chess as:

- intellectually valuable,
 - emotionally regulating,
 - academically supportive,
 - socially constructive.
-

3. Highest familiarity with chess and draughts among all four countries

Survey familiarity scores:

- **Chess $\approx 3.5/5$** (highest overall)
- **Draughts $\approx 3.1/5$** (significantly higher cultural presence than in Greece, Italy, or Spain)
- **Go $\approx 1.6/5$** (still low, but slightly better awareness)

Children's participation rates:

- 39% of youth regularly practice mind sports (higher than Greece and Italy, similar to Spain).
- Enjoyment score **4.3/5** (one of the highest across all countries).

Interviews also showed:

- very strong cultural recognition of chess,
- draughts more present than in other countries,
- nearly no practical familiarity with Go.

Romania therefore has the **broadest general familiarity** with mind sports in the consortium.



4. High enthusiasm but persistent structural barriers

Despite the positive ecosystem, Romania faces recurring obstacles identified through both surveys and interviews:

Main survey barriers:

- **Lack of school programmes – 59%** (highest among all countries)
- **Limited information – 54%**
- **Lack of clubs/training centres – 38%**
- **Lack of time – 40%**
- plus cost, distance, and cultural perceptions.

Interview barriers reinforce these findings:

- schools often lack basic materials (boards, pieces),
- PE classes are not suited for chess due to students expecting physical activity,
- no formal training for teachers,
- frustration or competitiveness can hinder younger students,
- systemic absence of formal pathways (e.g., “no option to specialise as a chess teacher”).

This combination of **high interest + high structural barriers** suggests enormous untapped potential.

5. Children respond very positively—when mind games are taught engagingly

Survey and interview findings confirm that Romanian children engage strongly when mind games are introduced appropriately:

Reported benefits include:

- significantly better focus,



- improved behaviour and discipline,
- enhanced emotional control,
- stronger problem-solving skills,
- increased patience and sportsmanship.

However, interviewees highlighted:

- some children need help managing frustration from losing,
- younger children may disengage if the game is introduced without storytelling or interactive elements,
- digital or narrative formats could greatly increase appeal.

This indicates that **quality of facilitation is crucial** for maintaining engagement.

6. Exceptional demand for school integration and teacher training

Romania showed the **highest demand for school-level implementation**:

- **72%** want more school-based programmes.
- 79% want more information on mind-sport opportunities.
- High interest in more competitions, free/subsidised training, and online platforms.

Interviews also expressed:

- strong desire to introduce chess officially into schools,
- need for legislative and institutional support,
- need for structured materials (lesson plans, guides),
- lack of instructor training as a major barrier.



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PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Respondents universally supported the G.A.M.E. project and were highly motivated to participate in pilot activities.

Overall Insight for Romania

Romania demonstrates **the strongest national readiness** for mind-sport expansion among all four partner countries.

It combines:

- a rich and dynamic best-practice landscape,
- exceptionally positive attitudes among adults,
- high youth familiarity and enjoyment,
- strong cultural roots in chess and draughts,
- enthusiastic willingness to participate in programmes,
- high demand for structured school integration.

However, progress is limited by **structural gaps** such as lack of materials, insufficient programmes in schools, limited teacher training, and inconsistent access to clubs.

To maximise impact, the G.A.M.E. project in Romania should prioritise:

- **formal school integration,**
- **teacher and coach training,**
- **resource development (materials, guides, curricula),**
- **supporting clubs and local infrastructures,**
- **accessible formats for children and younger students,**
- **digital and storytelling-based approaches** to widen appeal,
- **expanding opportunities for Go and draughts,** not just chess.



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PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Romania is uniquely positioned to scale mind-sport education nationwide—making it an ideal environment for piloting, testing, and showcasing G.A.M.E. initiatives.

5. Cross-Country Comparative Analysis

This section synthesises the results from desk research, surveys, and interviews across the four participating countries—Greece, Spain, Italy, and Romania. The analysis highlights shared trends, structural differences, and strategic implications for the G.A.M.E. project.

5.1 Overall Ecosystem of Mind Sports

Common Patterns

Across all countries, **chess dominates the mind-sport landscape**, with:

- strong cultural familiarity,
- existing club structures,
- integration in schools (to varying degrees),
- competitive events ranging from local tournaments to national championships.

Draughts and go are **significantly less visible** everywhere except Romania, where draughts is more widely known.

Country Differences



Country	Ecosystem Maturity	Distinctive Features
Greece	Strong, tournament-driven chess culture	International opens; regional tournaments; limited presence of other mind sports
Spain	Broad, diversified ecosystem	Integration into education/social inclusion projects; strong Go associations
Italy	Mostly school-based, grassroots structure	Emphasis on participation over competition; fewer large-scale events
Romania	Most developed and structured ecosystem	National strategy for chess; strong institutional support; extensive youth programmes; active Go community

5.2 Public Perceptions and Attitudes

Common Findings

Across all surveys:

- **100%** (or near-100%) believe mental sports benefit children's development.
- Strong recognition of cognitive advantages:
 - improved concentration,
 - enhanced memory,
 - problem-solving skills.
- A majority consider mental games to be sports (70–90%).

Parents, teachers, and coaches across countries agree that mind sports:

- improve emotional regulation,
- support discipline and patience,



- help academic performance.

Differences Between Countries

- **Italy** and **Romania** show the *highest acceptance* of mental sports as “sports” (~90%).
 - **Spain** shows the highest emphasis on *problem-solving and strategic thinking*.
 - **Greece** respondents are the *least personally engaged* in mind sports despite high perceived benefits.
-

5.3 Familiarity and Participation Levels

Familiarity

Chess familiarity levels (1–5 scale):

- **Romania:** highest familiarity (~3.5)
- **Spain:** high (~3.4)
- **Italy:** moderate (~3.0)
- **Greece:** lowest (~2.7)

Draughts familiarity:

- **Romania** far ahead (~3.1)
- Spain and Italy moderate
- Greece lowest



Go familiarity:

- Very low everywhere
- Slightly higher in Romania (~1.6) and Spain (~1.4)

Child Participation

Percentage of children who *regularly* play mind sports:

- **Romania:** 39%
- **Spain:** 38%
- **Greece & Italy:** 33–34%

Despite high approval, **actual participation is low across all countries.**

5.4 Barriers to Participation

Shared Barriers

Across all four countries, the same obstacles emerge:

1. **Lack of school programmes** (54–72%, highest in RO)
2. **Limited information** on how to get involved (47–54%)
3. **Lack of local clubs/training centres** (30–38%)
4. **Lack of time** due to academic or work obligations (38–44%)
5. **Perceived complexity** or low familiarity with rules
6. **Competition with digital entertainment**, especially in Spain and Italy
7. **Cost and travel distance**, though less significant overall

Country-Specific Notes



- **Greece:** lowest awareness of existing opportunities; high need for visibility campaigns
 - **Spain:** cultural perception that board games may be “boring” for teenagers
 - **Italy:** highest demand for school-based programmes
 - **Romania:** strongest requests for formal curriculum integration and materials
-

5.5 Children’s Reactions and Engagement Patterns

Common Themes from Interviews

Across all countries:

- Children are **initially curious** and engage positively when games are explained well.
- **Sustained motivation depends on facilitator approach** (storytelling, playfulness, simplified rules).
- Younger children struggle with:
 - frustration,
 - losing gracefully,
 - understanding complex rules.
- Emotional regulation is both a *challenge* and a *developmental opportunity*.

Differences

- **Spain:** children respond strongly to interactive, fun formats and inclusive recess activities.
- **Italy:** engagement varies by age; success depends heavily on storytelling and hybrid activities.



- **Greece:** children lose interest quickly if not guided; coaches report short attention spans.
 - **Romania:** children benefit academically and behaviourally when chess is introduced regularly.
-

5.6 Implementation Landscape

Integration in Schools

- **Romania** and **Spain** have the most structured educational approaches (some schools already use chess).
- **Italy** integrates mind games informally through teachers and associations.
- **Greece** shows little school integration but strong external club activity.

Community Support

- Spain: strong social-inclusion programmes
- Romania: substantial institutional backing and private sponsorship
- Greece: large tournament culture
- Italy: grassroots clubs and community events

Coach and Teacher Readiness

Across all interviews:

- All countries report **high willingness** to integrate mind games if provided with:
 - training,
 - ready-to-use materials,
 - age-appropriate guidelines.



5.7 Key Cross-Cutting Findings

Across all countries, the analysis reveals:

1. Universal belief in the benefits of mind sports

Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural benefits recognised consistently.

2. Strong interest but low actual participation

A clear gap exists between perceived value and real engagement.

3. Schools are the most powerful pathway

All surveys show school-based programmes as the top priority for increasing participation.

4. Chess dominates; draughts and go need visibility

Romania stands out as an exception with higher familiarity.

5. Children engage best through playful, adaptive methods

Formats must match developmental stages and avoid excessive rigidity.

6. Barriers are structural, not motivational

Most obstacles concern missing programmes, limited access, and lack of awareness—not negative attitudes.

7. High readiness for project implementation

Parents, teachers, and coaches across all four countries express strong willingness to participate in training, pilot programmes, and future activities.

5.8 Implications for the G.A.M.E. Project

This cross-country comparative analysis suggests that the G.A.M.E. project should focus on:

1. School-centred implementation strategies

- Position mind sports within educational routines.



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- Provide teacher training and age-specific materials.

2. **Raising visibility and awareness**

- Communication campaigns to address information gaps.
- Showcase benefits and success stories.

3. **Diversifying mind-sport offerings**

- Promote draughts and go alongside chess.
- Create entry-level, simplified formats.

4. **Supporting training pathways**

- Equip teachers and coaches with practical tools.
- Develop playful, hybrid mind–body activities.

5. **Strengthening cross-national exchange**

- Leverage Romania's national chess strategy, Spain's inclusion models, Greece's tournament culture, and Italy's school-based approaches.

6. **Addressing emotional and behavioural challenges**

- Include modules on emotional regulation, sportsmanship, and frustration management.

The findings collectively confirm that **mind sports hold significant potential across Europe**, and with appropriate support, the G.A.M.E. project can catalyse large-scale, Europe-wide participation among young people.

6. **Conclusions**

The cross-country research conducted within the G.A.M.E. project provides a comprehensive picture of the current status, opportunities, and challenges surrounding mind-game participation among young people in Europe. Despite cultural differences and variations in organisational structures, the findings from Greece, Spain, Italy, and



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Romania reveal clear and consistent trends that highlight the growing relevance of mind sports as tools for youth development.

Across all four countries, **chess stands out as the most widely recognised and culturally embedded mind game**, supported by clubs, tournaments, school activities, and community initiatives. Draughts enjoys strong visibility in Romania and moderate familiarity elsewhere, while Go remains largely unknown but shows emerging potential, particularly in Spain and Romania where organised associations are active. These patterns underscore both the strengths of existing ecosystems and the opportunity to broaden the range of mind games available to young learners.

The research confirms **unanimously positive attitudes** towards the cognitive, academic, and emotional benefits of mind sports. Parents, teachers, and coaches across Europe consistently acknowledge their value in strengthening concentration, memory, problem-solving, decision-making, patience, and emotional regulation. These benefits are understood not only in theoretical terms but also through practical experience, as evidenced by anecdotes shared in interviews about improvements in students' academic performance, behaviour, and overall mindset.

However, a significant gap persists between the **recognised value of mind sports and actual participation levels among young people**. While adults express strong support and willingness to encourage children's involvement, the majority of youth do not regularly engage in mind games. This discrepancy is driven not by negative attitudes but by structural limitations: lack of school-based programmes, limited information about existing opportunities, insufficient materials or trained facilitators, and competition with other preferred activities, especially digital entertainment.

A key insight emerging from the research is the importance of **schools as the primary lever for increasing participation**. In all four countries, survey respondents identified school programmes as the most effective pathway for introducing and sustaining mind-game practice. Interviewees reinforced this view, emphasising the need for accessible materials, teacher training, dedicated time, and supportive institutional frameworks. Countries like Spain and Romania demonstrate strong examples of how educational integration can substantially improve reach and engagement.

The study also highlights the role of **facilitation quality** in determining children's reactions to mind games. Across all countries, children show high curiosity and interest when games are introduced in playful, accessible, and age-appropriate ways. Engagement increases when storytelling, digital tools, simplified rules, or hybrid physical–mental activities are incorporated. Conversely, children may disengage when faced with overly complex rules or environments that do not match their expectations (e.g., chess introduced during physical education classes).

Overall, the research demonstrates that **Europe is highly receptive and ready for expanded mind-game initiatives**, provided that practical, structural, and pedagogical



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

supports are in place. The extensive ecosystems found in Romania and Spain, the strong school-based foundations in Italy, and the vibrant tournament culture of Greece collectively illustrate the potential for cross-national collaboration and exchange. The consistency of findings across diverse contexts further validates the relevance and scalability of the G.A.M.E. project's goals.

In conclusion, mind sports represent a **powerful and underutilised resource** for developing cognitive, emotional, and social skills in young people. With targeted support, institutional integration, and innovative delivery formats, they have the potential to become a core component of youth education and development across Europe. The insights from this research provide a solid foundation on which the G.A.M.E. project can build effective training programmes, educational tools, and community initiatives that respond to the expressed needs and opportunities identified in all partner countries.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings from desk research, surveys, and interviews across Greece, Spain, Italy, and Romania, the following recommendations are proposed to support effective implementation of the G.A.M.E. project and promote sustainable development of mind-game activities across Europe. These recommendations respond directly to the structural gaps, opportunities, and preferences identified by stakeholders.

7.1 Recommendations for G.A.M.E. Project Implementation

1. Develop a Flexible, Multi-Context Training Framework

Create modular training packages that can be adapted for:

- School classrooms
- Sports clubs
- Community centres
- Home environments

This ensures that mind games can be introduced regardless of time constraints, age group, or available space.



2. Provide Ready-to-Use Educational Materials

Produce:

- Simplified rulebooks
- Age-differentiated game guides
- Teacher/coaches' manuals
- Quick-start activity sheets

These resources should reduce effort for educators and increase accessibility for beginners.

3. Introduce Hybrid Physical–Mental Activities

Because many teachers/coaches report that mind games seem "too static," the project should design:

- Activities that combine chess/draughts/Go with movement
- Team-based formats
- Relay-style problem-solving games

Such adaptations make mind games compatible with sports environments and younger children.

4. Promote Go and Draughts Alongside Chess

Since chess dominates all countries, special actions should focus on:

- Awareness campaigns for Go and draughts
- Demonstrations during events
- Introductory workshops
- Digital tools to help beginners learn quickly

This supports the project's aim of diversifying mind-game culture.



5. Facilitate Cross-Country Exchanges

Leverage strengths of each partner country:

- Romania's youth programs and online tournaments
- Spain's social inclusion projects and Go associations
- Italy's school-based integration
- Greece's strong tournament culture

This knowledge exchange can enrich training content and inspire new formats across countries.

7.2 Recommendations for Educational Programs

1. Integrate Mind Games into School Curricula

Schools are the most powerful access point. Recommended steps:

- Introduce mind games as optional enrichment subjects
- Include short weekly sessions within mathematics, physical education, or advisory classes
- Use mind games to teach cross-curricular skills (logic, decision-making, emotional regulation)

2. Provide Teacher Training and Certification

Teachers reported lacking confidence and methodology.

The project should deliver:

- Introductory and advanced training
- Classroom management strategies
- Techniques for teaching rules through storytelling, digital tools, and active methods



3. Align Mind Games with Existing Educational Goals

Teachers respond more positively when activities support:

- Focus and behaviour management
- Academic performance
- Socio-emotional skills

Linking mind games to these outcomes increases institutional acceptance.

4. Ensure Availability of Materials in Schools

Provide:

- Chess/draughts/Go sets
- Digital learning apps
- Posters and visual aids

Material shortages were a core barrier in Romania and Italy.

7.3 Recommendations for Parental Engagement

1. Increase Awareness of Benefits

Parents strongly support mind games but lack information on how to start.

Suggested tools:

- Parent-friendly guides
- Social media campaigns
- Short videos explaining benefits
- Home activity suggestions

2. Promote Family-Friendly Game Formats



Design activities that:

- Allow mixed-age participation
- Require minimal prior knowledge
- Include cooperative play (e.g., parent–child teams)

This helps overcome the frustration or competitiveness noted by respondents.

3. Provide Accessible Entry Points

Parents reported lack of time and knowledge.

Recommendations:

- Short "10-minute mind game" exercises
- Printable puzzles and challenges
- Online beginner tutorials

4. Encourage Balanced Screen–Board Game Routines

Since digital entertainment competes with mind games, the project could promote:

- Digital versions of chess, draughts, and Go
- Screen-time guidelines paired with mental game activities

7.4 Recommendations for National Event Development

1. Establish Annual Mind-Game Festivals in Each Country

Events should include:

- Youth tournaments
- Family workshops



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- Live demonstrations
- Collaborative cross-game challenges
- Intro sessions for Go and draughts

These would replicate the success seen in Greece and Romania.

2. Promote Social Inclusion Through Events

Modelled after Spanish and Romanian initiatives:

- Events in disadvantaged communities
- Tournaments for mixed-ability groups
- Activities for seniors and youth together

This strengthens the social impact dimension of the project.

3. Integrate Mind Games into Sports Events

Partner with:

- Local sports clubs
- Municipal athletic days
- School sports festivals

This creates a bridge between mental and physical sports, as desired by many coaches.

4. Develop Online Tournaments

Inspired by Romania's CSU Online Grand Prix:

- Monthly youth competitions
- Cross-country friendly matches
- Leaderboards and achievement badges



This allows broad participation regardless of location.

Summary of Key Recommendations

Area	Core Action
GAME Implementation	Modular training, hybrid activities, resource kits
Education	School integration, teacher training, materials, curricular alignment
Parents	Awareness tools, family-friendly formats, practical guides
National Events	Annual festivals, inclusion projects, sport–mind game synergy, online tournaments

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GAIN ABILITIES THROUGH
MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

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9. Annexes

Annex I - Best Practices

GREECE — Best Practices (10)

1. International Open SKG (Thessaloniki)

Organisation: Union of Chess Clubs of Thessaloniki & Central Macedonia

Target Group: Youth & adult chess players (national and international)

Objectives: Promote international chess competition; strengthen Thessaloniki's chess culture.

Key Activities: Annual open tournament; FIDE-rated competitions; community events.



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MENTAL EXERCISE

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Why it is a Best Practice: High organisational quality, international participation, strong youth inclusion.

2. National School Chess Championship (Greece-wide)

Organisation: Hellenic Chess Federation

Target Group: School students (primary & secondary)

Objectives: Encourage cognitive development, participation, and school engagement through chess.

Key Activities: Regional qualifiers, national finals, integration of chess into school identity.

Why it is a Best Practice: Largest youth chess event in Greece with long-term educational impact.

3. "Vardaris" International Open (Thessaloniki)

Organisation: Syllogos Politismou Neapolis

Target Group: All ages; competitive and amateur players

Objectives: Promote cultural and sporting activity during winter months.

Key Activities: FIDE-rated open tournaments; parallel youth activities.

Why it is a Best Practice: Known for inclusivity and strong organisational continuity.

4. Karditsa Rapid Youth Tournament

Organisation: Local Chess Clubs & Municipality

Target Group: Children and adolescents

Objectives: Introduce youth to rapid chess and competitive thinking.

Key Activities: Rapid games, beginner-friendly competition format.

Why it is a Best Practice: Effective at engaging new young players via fast, enjoyable formats.

5. Agria Chess Festival (Volos Region)

Organisation: Cultural & Sports Association of Agria

Target Group: Local youth & families



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MENTAL EXERCISE

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Objectives: Promote chess as a community activity.

Key Activities: Outdoor tournaments, simultaneous games, parallel cultural events.

Why it is a Best Practice: Integrates chess with local culture and family participation.

6. Trikala Christmas Tournament

Organisation: Chess Club of Trikala

Target Group: Youth and adults

Objectives: Engage the community during holiday period through chess.

Key Activities: Annual rapid tournament, festive thematic activities.

Why it is a Best Practice: Long tradition, high youth participation, accessible entry.

7. Chania Open Championship (Crete)

Organisation: Local Chess Union of Crete

Target Group: Competitive players across the island

Objectives: Strengthen regional chess talent pathways.

Key Activities: Open and youth sections, instructor involvement.

Why it is a Best Practice: Bridges regional community and competitive development.

8. Athens Youth Chess Circuit

Organisation: Attica Chess Clubs

Target Group: Children aged 6–16

Objectives: Provide regular competitive activity for young players.

Key Activities: Monthly tournaments, beginner & advanced categories.

Why it is a Best Practice: Sustainable structure that supports long-term player development.

9. Municipal Chess Weeks (Various Cities)

Organisation: Local Municipalities & Clubs

Target Group: Local residents, especially youth

Objectives: Promote chess literacy and participation.

Key Activities: Workshops, exhibitions, open-air chess, school outreach.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong community impact; highly accessible.



10. Greek Youth Championships

Organisation: Hellenic Chess Federation

Target Group: Elite & emerging youth players

Objectives: Identify and train top talent for international competition.

Key Activities: Age-category championships, coaching sessions.

Why it is a Best Practice: High developmental value; national talent pathway.

SPAIN — Best Practices (10)

1. Spanish Chess Federation (FEDA) National Framework

Organisation: FEDA

Target Group: Players, coaches, referees, youth

Objectives: Structure national chess governance and development.

Key Activities: Competitions, training, licensing, regional coordination.

Why it is a Best Practice: Provides the national backbone for chess growth in Spain.

2. Integrative Chess Project (Alicante)

Organisation: Local Educational Centres

Target Group: Children at social risk

Objectives: Foster inclusion, emotional intelligence, and cognitive skills through chess.

Key Activities: School workshops, social-emotional learning via gameplay.

Why it is a Best Practice: Demonstrated impact on behavioural and academic outcomes.

3. Inclusive Chess Project – IES Virgen del Remedio

Organisation: Public Secondary School

Target Group: Adolescents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds

Objectives: Improve coexistence, tolerance, and emotional development.

Key Activities: Chess sessions integrated into school life, tournaments.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong inclusion values and school-wide engagement.



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

4. “Playing for the Future” Juvenile Detention Programme

Organisation: Youth Justice Institutions

Target Group: Youth in detention

Objectives: Improve resilience, impulse control, strategic thinking.

Key Activities: Therapeutic chess workshops and competitions.

Why it is a Best Practice: High-impact model for rehabilitation and behavioural development.

5. MiniChess Valencian Community

Organisation: Valencian Educators & Chess Organisations

Target Group: Children aged 3–6

Objectives: Introduce chess via play and gamification.

Key Activities: Floorboards, storytelling, teacher training.

Why it is a Best Practice: Innovative and age-appropriate pedagogy.

6. CASTLE Project (EU-funded)

Organisation: Consortium (Spain–Italy–Germany)

Target Group: Teachers & primary school children

Objectives: Integrate chess into early education as a teaching tool.

Key Activities: Curriculum development, digital tools, training.

Why it is a Best Practice: Provides replicable European resources.

7. Healthy Chess (Seville)

Organisation: Municipal Social Services

Target Group: Adults 50+

Objectives: Promote active aging and cognitive health.

Key Activities: Workshops, social chess sessions, emotional wellbeing activities.

Why it is a Best Practice: Rare combination of mind sports with public health.

8. Dansu Baduk – Go Association (Murcia)

Organisation: Dansu Baduk

Target Group: Youth & adults



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MENTAL EXERCISE

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Objectives: Promote learning and competitive engagement with Go.

Key Activities: Training, tournaments, community outreach.

Why it is a Best Practice: Expands mind-sport diversity beyond chess.

9. Andalusian Go Association

Organisation: AsociaCIÓN GO de Andalucía

Target Group: Regional Go community

Objectives: Develop Go culture and educational use.

Key Activities: Regular tournaments, school visits, club formation.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong grassroots network and cultural promotion.

10. School Chess Against Social Exclusion (Catalonia)

Organisation: Catalan Chess-education bodies

Target Group: Children in disadvantaged schools

Objectives: Combat exclusion, support academic performance.

Key Activities: In-school chess, teacher training, long-term strategy to 2030.

Why it is a Best Practice: Long-term institutional commitment to equity through chess.

ITALY — Best Practices (4)

(only four were collected; presented in equivalent structured format)

1. School-based Chess Initiatives (Various Municipalities)

Organisation: Local schools, municipalities, associations

Target Group: Primary & middle school students

Objectives: Enhance focus, logic, and classroom behaviour.

Key Activities: Introductory lessons, playful tournaments.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong alignment with cognitive and educational goals.

2. Community Chess Workshops (Libraries & Cultural Centres)

Organisation: Local libraries, volunteers

Target Group: Children and adolescents



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MENTAL EXERCISE

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Objectives: Offer accessible mind-sport opportunities outside school.

Key Activities: Free sessions, beginner-friendly lessons.

Why it is a Best Practice: Inclusive and community-oriented.

3. Chess Clubs Supporting School Participation

Organisation: Regional Chess Clubs

Target Group: Beginners to intermediate youth players

Objectives: Introduce children to structured chess and improve skills.

Key Activities: Basic training, matches, small tournaments.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong bridges between clubs and schools.

4. Municipal Tournaments & Festivals

Organisation: Municipalities & sport associations

Target Group: Families, children, recreational players

Objectives: Promote chess as a cultural and social activity.

Key Activities: Open tournaments, community events.

Why it is a Best Practice: Reinforces civic engagement through mind sports.

ROMANIA — Best Practices (10)

1. Romania Grand Prix (National)

Organisation: Romanian Chess Federation

Target Group: Youth and adults; international players

Objectives: Establish Romania as a European chess capital.

Key Activities: Five major tournaments across the country; €150,000 prize fund.

Why it is a Best Practice: High visibility, strong sponsorship, national strategy.



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MENTAL EXERCISE

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2. “Mihai Burduja” Memorial (Campulung)

Organisation: Municipal Library

Target Group: 11 counties' youth

Objectives: Honour local chess heritage, promote youth participation.

Key Activities: Classical chess tournament, free courses.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong community impact and educational integration.

3. International Chess Festival in Schools (Ploiesti & 28 cities)

Organisation: Chess Foundation & public authorities

Target Group: 700+ children aged 6–12

Objectives: Popularise chess in schools nationwide.

Key Activities: Free courses, tournaments, textbooks, 40,000+ lessons.

Why it is a Best Practice: Large-scale, sustainable educational infrastructure.

4. Grand Prix CSU Online (National/International)

Organisation: CSU Șah București

Target Group: Children aged 6–14

Objectives: Provide accessible monthly online tournaments.

Key Activities: Lichess-based events, ranking system, cash prizes.

Why it is a Best Practice: Digital accessibility and consistent engagement.

5. Veterans' Cup (Bucharest)

Organisation: GoGoblins Club & Romanian Go Federation

Target Group: Adults & seniors

Objectives: Support active aging and lifelong learning.

Key Activities: Two-day Go tournament; social gatherings.

Why it is a Best Practice: Rare focus on senior engagement through Go.

6. Go & Board Games Summer Camp (Saturn)



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Organisation: Hikaru Go Club

Target Group: Children, families

Objectives: Teach Go, strengthen community, integrate physical activity.

Key Activities: Go lessons, tournaments, mobility exercises, workshops.

Why it is a Best Practice: Holistic mind-body educational model.

7. Go Initiation & Courses (Bucharest)

Organisation: Hikaru Club & District 6

Target Group: Primary & middle school students

Objectives: Create a local Go community in Bucharest.

Key Activities: Weekly classes, municipal support, introductory modules.

Why it is a Best Practice: Strong institutional backing and consistent delivery.

8. Draughts Training – Gambit Club (Bacau)

Organisation: Gambit Chess Group

Target Group: Children aged 5+

Objectives: Promote draughts as accessible mind sport.

Key Activities: Free sessions, voluntary donations, small tournaments.

Why it is a Best Practice: Low-cost, grassroots model.

9. Chess Library (Bucharest)

Organisation: Hannibal Chess Club

Target Group: General public

Objectives: Build a social and educational community around chess.

Key Activities: Library, club membership, tournaments, reading culture.

Why it is a Best Practice: Unique integration of literature and gameplay.

10. “Sport for All” (District 1, Bucharest)

Organisation: District 1 City Hall

Target Group: Children in public schools

Objectives: Subsidise participation in sports including chess.

Key Activities: Monthly €50 vouchers; partnerships with clubs.

Why it is a Best Practice: Powerful financial accessibility mechanism.



Annex II – Survey Questionnaire

Used in the G.A.M.E. Erasmus+ Sport Project Needs Analysis (Parents, Teachers, Coaches)

The survey was administered to parents, teachers, and coaches aged 18+, exploring their knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of mental sports (chess, draughts, go) and their impact on young people aged 11–19. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items including multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-answer questions.

SECTION 1 – Demographics

1. In which role are you answering this questionnaire?

- ☐ Parent / Teacher / Coach

2. How old are you?

- ☐ <20, 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, >70

3. Do you practice sports?

- ☐ Yes / No
-

SECTION 2 – Familiarity with Mental Sports

4. Do you consider mind games (chess, draughts, go) to be sports?

- ☐ Yes / No

5. Do you frequently play chess, draughts, or go?

- ☐ Yes / No

6. If yes, which one? (open-ended)

7. Do you consider that mind sports could have a beneficial impact on a child's development?

- ☐ Yes / No



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

8. Do you see any benefits in a child participating in mind sports courses?

- Yes / No

9. If yes, which benefits? (multiple choice)

- Improves concentration and focus
- Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Enhances memory and strategic thinking
- Encourages discipline and patience
- Supports social interaction and teamwork
- Helps reduce stress and anxiety

SECTION 3 – Familiarity Scale (1–5 Likert)

10. **How familiar are you with chess?** (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very familiar)

11. **How familiar are you with draughts?** (1–5)

12. **How familiar are you with go?** (1–5)

13. **Do you believe that participation in mental sports can positively impact a young person's academic performance?**

- Likert scale 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)

SECTION 4 – Child/Student Engagement

14. **Are your children/students physically active?**

- Yes / No



15. Do your children/students play mind sports regularly?

- Yes / No

16. If yes, how would you rate their level of enjoyment?

- 1 (Very low) to 5 (Very high)

17. If yes, have you noticed any changes in their behavior? (open-ended)

18. Do you play mind sports with your children/students?

- Yes / No

19. If not, why? (multiple choice)

- Lack of awareness
- No access to clubs/school programs
- High costs
- Lack of qualified trainers
- Preference for other activities
- Perception that mind sports are boring
- No time

SECTION 5 – Accessibility & Barriers

20. Do you consider mind sports to be accessible for anyone to play?

- Yes / No

21. What are the main barriers to accessing mental sports programs in your area?
(multiple choice)

- No local clubs



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

- Lack of school programs
- High participation costs
- Travel distance
- Limited information
- Cultural perceptions
- Lack of time due to schoolwork or activities

22. Are you aware of any ongoing mind-sports projects or facilities in your area?

- Yes / No

23. If yes, which ones? (multiple choice)

- Chess club
- Draughts club
- Go club
- Seasonal camps
- Youth centre activities
- Community centre activities
- Erasmus+ projects
- Locally funded courses/meetings
- School optional classes
- Online tournaments
- Local tournaments
- Mind-sports cafés, libraries, centres



SECTION 6 – Support & Recommendations

24. **What kind of support would make it easier for young people to participate in mental sports?**

(multiple choice)

- More school-based programs
- Free or subsidized training
- More competitions and events
- Public awareness campaigns
- Online learning resources
- Other (open answer)

25. **If “Other”, please specify.** (open-ended)

SECTION 7 – Additional Input

26. **Would you be interested in receiving more information about mental-sports opportunities?**

- Yes / No

27. **Any additional comments or suggestions?** (open-ended)

28. **Your email address (optional).**

ANNEX III – Interview Questionnaire (G.A.M.E. Erasmus+ Project)

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

The interviews were conducted with parents, sports coaches, and physical education teachers across Greece, Spain, Italy, and Romania. The purpose was to gather qualitative



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

insights regarding awareness, perceptions, barriers, and potential of mind sports (chess, draughts, go) in youth development.

Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes, following the standardized structure below.

Interview Introduction (read to interviewee)

"Hello, and thank you for participating in this interview. This is part of the Erasmus+ project G.A.M.E. – Gain Ability through Mental Exercise. We are collecting feedback from parents, sports coaches, and physical education teachers to better understand how mind games can support youth development, focus, decision-making, and cognitive growth. Your answers will remain anonymous and will be used strictly for research purposes within the project."

General Information (non-mandatory)

- Name (optional)
- Role: Parent / Sports Coach / PE Teacher
- Age group of children/youth they work with
- Years of experience

Section A: Awareness and Attitudes

1. Are you familiar with mind games such as chess, go, and draughts? If so, which ones?
 2. What is your general opinion about the use of these games in a child's development?
 3. Do you believe mind games help improve attention, decision-making, or emotional regulation in youth?
-



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MENTAL EXERCISE

PROJECT NUMBER : ERASMUS-SPORT-2024-SSCP - 101185195

Section B: Experience and Application

1. Have you ever used any mind games in your training, teaching, or home setting?
 - a. If yes: Which ones, and how did you use them?
 - b. If no: Why not, and would you consider it?
 2. What challenges or limitations do you foresee in implementing such games?
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Section C: Impact and Perception

1. From your experience, how do children typically respond to mind games?
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Section D: Recommendations

1. What would help you integrate mind games into your work/home?
2. Would you be willing to participate in a pilot programme or training session? Would you encourage children to take part?
3. Any final thoughts or suggestions for the project?