



PRESS RELEASE

Thessaloniki, February 23, 2026

9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament 2026

The 9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament was successfully concluded in Thessaloniki, Greece, having taken place from **February 19 to 23, 2026**. The event, which is considered one of the most important chess tournaments in the country, brought together hundreds of players from Greece and abroad.

A total of **388 players** competed over 7 rounds, with participants representing **18 countries**, including 120 foreign players from Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Turkey, North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland, Germany, Armenia, Cyprus, Portugal, Canada, the United States, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Peru, and England.

The Vardaris Journey

Beyond its competitive dimension, the Vardaris International Chess Tournament has established itself over the years as an event that places strong emphasis on people, hospitality, and the overall experience of its participants. Within this framework, the tournament does not focus solely on awarding the winners, but also honors special moments and distinctive presences by presenting MEMENTO commemorative medals to players who, in their own way, gave a unique character to the event.

At the same time, as part of the hospitality offered to the international delegations, an organized city tour was arranged with a bus and professional guide, allowing visiting players to discover key landmarks of Thessaloniki and gain insight into the city's history, culture, and identity.

The successful organization of the 9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament was also made possible thanks to the substantial financial support of the **Municipality of Thessaloniki** and the **Region of Central Macedonia**, whose contribution proved decisive in enhancing both the quality and the international visibility of the tournament.

Excursion

On the day following the opening of the tournament, Friday morning, a short city tour was organized for the international guests of the event. As the competition schedule was particularly demanding and did not allow time for extended activities, the organizing committee arranged a guided excursion by bus, offering participants the opportunity to visit key historical and cultural landmarks of Thessaloniki. This initiative formed part of the tournament's broader hospitality program and contributed significantly to the positive overall experience of the visiting players.



Moments from the organized city tour of international participants in Thessaloniki, held as part of the 9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament.

Twining of S.O. SACH – ADSV

A highlight of the 9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament was the twinning of our club, **S.O. SACH (Skakistikos Omilos SACH)**, with the Italian chess club **Associazione Dilettantistica Scacchistica Vigevanese (ADSV)** from Vigevano, a town in the province of Pavia, Italy.

This twinning continues a tradition of international cooperation aimed at bringing together chess players and clubs from different countries who share a common passion for chess and uphold shared values, viewing the game not only as a competitive sport but also as a means of culture, education, and communication.

During the ceremony, the President of the Italian club, **Gianluca Melino**, exchanged commemorative pennants with the President of S.O. SACH, Vlassis Giorgos, and extended an invitation to chess players to participate in the **Vigevano International Chess Tournament**, scheduled to take place from **May 30 to June 2**. The event offers an excellent opportunity for a unique chess journey, combining competitive play with new experiences and encounters with players from many countries.



Moments from the twinning ceremony between S.O. SACH and the Italian chess club ADSV from Vigevano, held during the 9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament.

MEMENTO Commemorative Medals

Beyond its competitive dimension, the Vardaris International Chess Tournament has, over the years, established itself as an event that honors the people behind the games. Within this spirit, Vardaris does not focus solely on awarding the winners, but also recognizes special presences and meaningful moments of the tournament by presenting **MEMENTO** commemorative medals to participants who, in their own way, added a distinctive character to the event.



The youngest participants of the tournament were the six-year-olds **Sofia Kaliskami** from the Chess Academy of Nafplio and **Konstantinos Lazarou** from Cyprus, alongside the oldest participant, the Italian chess player **Andrea Sanson**



The first players to register for the tournament, as early as September 5, 2025, were the Canadian chess players **Aaron Both** and **Andrew Vlasblom**.



The first confirmed participation in the tournament, dated September 21, 2025, was that of **Lefteris Boutikos**.



Duarte Duarte, the driving force behind the Maia Chess Festival in Portugal



A friend and undoubtedly one of the strongest amateur chess players in Greece, **Christos Zygoris!**

Tournament Results

The awards ceremony was conducted by actor and member of S.O. SACH Thessaloniki, Konstantinos Ravniotopoulos.

Group A — Open Tournament

Positions	Name	Nationality	Points	Title
🥇 1st	Evgenios Ioannidis	Greece	6.5/7	GM
🥈 2nd	Christos Kralis	Greece	6.0/7	IM
🥉 3rd	Stefanou Dimitrios	Greece	6.0/7	FM

The Group A Champion was **GM Evgenios Ioannidis**, who scored 6.5 points out of 7, delivering an impressive performance with a final rating performance of 2648.

Second place was claimed by **IM Christos Kralis**, with 6 points, while **FM Dimitrios Stefanou** secured third place, also with 6 points.

The Best Female Player award went to **WCM Mustu Hatice Asli** from Turkey, who finished with 5 points, while the Best Veteran Player was **Evgeny Melikhov**, also with 5 points.



Group B —

Positions	Name	Nationality	Points	Title
🏆 1st	Fridman Anatoly	FIDE	6.5/7	—
🥈 2nd	Evangelos Polymeras	Greece	6.5/7	—
🥉 3rd	Dimitrios Sarsentos	Greece	5.5/7	—

In Group B, first place was claimed by the Russian chess player **Anatoly Fridman**, who scored 6.5 points. He finished level on points with **Evangelos Polymeras**, with the Russian player prevailing on tie-break criteria.

Third place was secured by **Dimitrios Sarsentos**, with 5.5 points.

The Best Female Player award went to the young player **Myrsini-Maria Dalla**, while the Best Veteran Player was **Isaak Avgitedis**.



Group C — U12 Children's Tournament

Positions	Name	Nationality	Points	Title
🏆 1st	Fejzullahu Jon	North Macedonia	6.0/7	AFM
🥈 2nd	Panagiotis Sidiropoulos	Greece	5.5/7	—
🥉 3rd	Victor Di Giorgio	Greece	5.5/7	—

The winner of Group C (U12) was **Jon Fejzullahu** from North Macedonia, who delivered an impressive performance with 6.0 points out of 7.

Second place was claimed by **Panagiotis Sidiropoulos-Argyrios**, scoring 5.5 points, while **Victor Di Giorgio** secured third place, also with 5.5 points.

The Best Female Player award was won by **Evangelia Rapti**, who tied for second place overall with 5.5 points.

Additional awards were presented in the U10 category to **Giannis Gkountroubis** and **Katerina Paraskevopoulou**, while in the U8 category, awards were given to **Alexios Alexandrakis** and **Sofia Kaliskami**.



The next edition of the Vardaris International Chess Tournament will take place from March 11 to 15, 2027, with the 10th Vardaris International Chess Tournament.

Organizing Committee

9th Vardaris International Chess Tournament

Thessaloniki, February 2026