



Dear Certabo users

We got a request about the allowable use of our chessboards with Lichess.org.

We invested a lot of time and money to develop OTB interface and checked everything before to make things exactly to avoid any problem, and to do not interact at all with the security of internet chess servers. To clarify the point and for the most possible crystalline transparency we sent an official request to Lichess team and we got official answer which we duly and integrally report here, along our enquiry below.

**Hello**

**Online chess has to deal with cheat, where people use chess engines to play for them. One of the forms that cheating takes is automating the moves, using software instead of human interaction to active the lichess UI.**

**Any attempt to do that will be detected as cheat by our systems, and the user will be penalized.**

**However, we do recognize the need for play APIs, so we released this [https://lichess.org/blog/WvDNticAAMu\\_mHKP/welcome-lichess-bots](https://lichess.org/blog/WvDNticAAMu_mHKP/welcome-lichess-bots)**

**It's not only for engine bots, but also for physical boards, and more.**

**You understand that we can't, from our end, know if it's a physical board or a chess engine that is activating the UI through software. Hence why they must be put in the same category.**

**Regards**

CERTABO <[info@certabo.com](mailto:info@certabo.com)> wrote:

*Dear Lichess team*

*I'm Pietro Mandurino from Certabo we are chess lover and we manufacture digital chessboard with piece recognition. Pleased to know you.*

*I'm writing to ask you clarification to a question as we use the input feature via keyboard by mean of browser driver plugin for chrome and firefox. So the user can use our chessboards to move piece on real board then we just interpreter the physical move and we send via keyboard command simply activating the keyboard input function in the Lichess setting menu as alternative to touch screen.*

*To do this we use chrome plugin like chromedriver <https://chromedriver.chromium.org> for Chrome or geckodriver for Firefox.*

*We have been told by an user, but in a very general way and without any solid argumentation, that this is forbidden to use our boards on Lichess but we have not the evidence that this is not allowed by Lichess policy and moreover this is standard function which can be activated as your preference setting. There are several third part extensions or way to do this already used, as well as interaction already available with some software from other third parts as well for other digital chessboards.*

*We kindly ask you to clarify this and we point out*

- our boards are just input devices interpreting position and replacing the texting on keyboard via those above drivers*
- there is delay because user has to move the physical move of the opponent pieces on the board so they cannot be used for fast game like bullet or too rapid to provide any kind of advantage to the user*
- they do not have any intelligence on board but they are simply input device replacing the sliding on screen with keyboard input or actual keyboard input.*
- They are device intended to improve the playing OTB experience enjoying playing on a physical board with lichess rather on the screen. This was our only aim we have to make the lichess experience even better for the chess community and was very high desiderata from our customers platea therefor we invested in that to bring this to real.*
- the boards are not in anyway providing at any time any external assistance to strengthen knowledge and, or, calculation ability to gain an unfair advantage over your opponent like examples would include computer engine assistance, opening books endgame tablebases..or any way they can be seen as cheating which would go in any manner against any fair play.*

*We appreciate your feedback, clarification on the matter and official statement. We remain available to provide any additional info you may need.*

*I thank you very much and I send you our best regards*

*Pietro Mandurino*

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*The Certabo Team* Certabo Chess

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### **Summary**

We have asked for this clarification as there is no explicit limitation <https://lichess.org/terms-of-service> on the use of external input device like chessboard. From our understanding about the answer, it's clear Lichess is not able to detect if move is legally input with an external board or illegally made by an engine activating the GUI so they shall be put in same category.

Said that, our chessboards do not of course provide any engine assistance neither a clear time advantage but rather a penalisation as it's intended to just make game much more comfortable to have pleasant gaming and of course not cheat in any manner, which an unfair chess player can do either with or without board. Frequency of moves on the chessboard cannot be compared anyway to velocity of engines automated software as you need to move opponent piece on physical chessboard. There is nothing more natural than playing on physical board. We want also to tell that we use the keyboard inputting system which is a very standard feature in Lichess setting.

## Action

Nevertheless. *We can't and we clearly state do not want, absolutely at anytime and in any manner, to circumvent Lichess API policy if this is mandatory and required for the use of any external chessboard, because the lack of capability to detect between a legally input and illegally input move or wherever other legitim problem or policy are.*

*So please we invite you to create, activate a bot account and use that if you want eventually to play on Lichess website with our chessboards. Create and activate an account then go to the setting, add new API access token flagging all the wanted options and follow the instructions at the link they reported to play with the bot account only.*

We explicitly disclaim any responsibility for any eventual banning of any user. And we warmly invite you to address other any question directly to Lichess team in case of any doubts and clarification you may need.

It's great pity to see that because, few unfair players, the freedom of many shall be limited but as matter of fact we cannot ignore this and hope world will become soon better place where to play online chess.

All the best

Pietro Mandurino  
CEO