



Minutes to the 15th EHF Conference of Presidents

Date/Time:	25 January 2020 / 09:00 - 11:00hrs
Venue:	Scandic Continental, Sweden
Participants:	National Federation Representatives, Honorary Members, Invited Guests, Executive Committee, and EHF Office

1. Welcome

Opening the Conference with a video montage of the Men's EHF EURO 2020, President Wiederer praised the quality of the current European Championship and mentioned the beginnings of how the expanded EURO event came into being. This was an event that was awarded to one of the three organisers as a 16-team final tournament. With the decision taken that the 'time was right' to expand the competition, meetings and internal consultations took place with the potential organisers Sweden, Austria, and Norway; following the formal agreement to host a 24-team event with three organisers, the Men's EHF EURO 2020 event was presented at the 2014 EHF Ordinary Congress. Wiederer spoke of the additional eight teams and their positive performances, as well as the exceptional spectator and media figures that have supported the overall success of the event on a sporting level, for which Wiederer publicly recognised the leadership of the three organising Federations.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the European Handball Federation, President Wiederer officially opened the 15th EHF Conference of Presidents and welcomed the representatives of the EHF National Federations, honorary members, partners, guests, and IHF President, Dr Hassan Moustafa. Wiederer underlined the significance of the weekend in Stockholm with the climax of the EHF EURO, as well as the 15th Conference of Presidents and the 13th Extraordinary EHF Congress.

Using the analogy of a train driving the sport of handball forward, President Wiederer likened such gatherings of representatives to 'stations' at which stops have to be scheduled with careful precision in order to 'load human resources and competent input'. With major business decisions taken at the 'stations' of the EHF Congresses and Conferences, the schedule still requires a transparent preparation to enable the 'travellers' to see the full picture in order to reach conclusions. Wiederer hoped that the condensed information provided during the two sessions would enable the 'handball train' to move in the right direction towards the next station.

First Vice President, Predrag Bošković assumed the Chairmanship of the meeting as it moved to the next agenda point.

2. Overall Report

Over the past eight months, since the last 'station' in Cologne, the European Handball Federation has undertaken many activities. Wiederer mentioned the various undertakings of the Executive Committee and Technical Commissions; the minutes from the meetings of all EHF bodies were distributed to National Federations; he underlined that the communication channels were, and remain, open.

Providing a colourful picture of the activities on a European level is the 2019 EHF Business Report that was distributed electronically on 18 December 2019 and provided in form of a brochure to attendees at the meeting; Wiederer thanked the contributors i.e. the organisers and officials on a professional and voluntary basis, organising their own activities – simply being active. He underlined the work undertaken to bring



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2019 to a successful conclusion touching upon the implementation process of the new agreement as of the 2020/21 season for club teams, as well as qualification processes for national teams. He also highlighted the progression of the sport in the media realm based on the increase in the number of broadcasters across the beach handball EURO, men's and women's EHF Champions League, as well as the EHF EURO. The presence of handball in the digital realm continues to consistently grow and, in line with the new contract, the organisation is ready to take the necessary developmental steps. Closing the report, Wiederer underlined that the achievements of the organisation are supported in the unity of sport and cemented in the coordination and common work that elicits much time and energy from its protagonists.

No questions were raised to the report.

3. Report on the Marketing Agreement 2020+

Resuming the chairmanship of the meeting, and introducing Secretary General Martin Hausleitner to present the status update, Wiederer spoke of the information exchange surrounding recent activities, which are found in the minutes from the 13th Conference of Presidents in Zagreb, the 2018 EHF Ordinary Congress in Glasgow, and the 14th Conference of Presidents in Cologne, including information provided through the records from the Executive Committee and Board meetings, as well as publishings via EHF media. He also reiterated the importance of coordination that is essential in order to have everyone 'on board' for the next stage of the journey referring to the implementation of the marketing agreement, the brand of handball, as well as the master plan.

Addressing the attendees, Secretary General Hausleitner provided the update picking up where the organisation left off in Cologne underlining the opportunity provided by signing the new agreement and outlining the organisational structures that includes 10 Task Forces, the Steering Board, and the Strategy Committee. Antonio Dominguez - Head of Handball at Infront and Stewart Walker – Vice President Global Rights Partnerships at DAZN were also introduced. An overview of the internal EHF/EHFM management platform – the Hub – was also provided. Hausleitner also spoke of the structure of the meetings that were already carried out, as well as the scheduled meetings that lie ahead in the near future.

In anticipation of the agreement entering into force, Hausleitner informed the attendees on the steps taken in preparation thereof that began with a survey of the fans to record their expectations and accelerating the cooperation surrounding the digital environment with the partners from DAZN. He also described the actions being taken concerning the digital approach that included content, technical environment, and the channel strategy. To reach the fan, Hausleitner also briefed the conference on the associated changes in the area of competitions such as the agreement of the revamped calendar format with four FINAL4 events at the end of the season, designated match days for the European Handball League (new) and the Champions League, as well as the introduction of qualifications aimed towards the targeted professionalisation of beach handball EURO events. The area of production – bringing handball from the court to the screen – remains a detailed and complex matter; cooperation on this level also involves the expertise sourced from EHF Marketing and the I/D Broadcaster Servicing section. Dealing primarily with matters of post-production, the organisation is working towards not only archiving content and other technical solutions, but also work is being undertaken on a global music concept, as well as searching for partners to work commonly on a scouting and accreditation strategy; the EHF will also launch a graphics tender.

In the area of media sales, Hausleitner underlined that now various agreements have been concluded in key regions, special focus would now be targeted on areas and competitions that do not reach the same level of exposure such as women's handball and second tier competitions; the aim is to increase the regularity of broadcasts in the knowledge that market situations are changeable. The marketing sales situation



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surrounding the EHF EURO remains positive with the current event sold out with eight strong partners purchasing all the available packages; these partners (LIDL, Grundfos, Gorenje, etc.) engaged in the activation of the packages that led to additional benefit to the product as well as the organiser and the fans. Hausleitner also mentioned how the organisation is promoting its achievements e.g. the presentation of the new partnership at the major sport business platform SPOBIS, the cooperations with the AIPS, the association of sport journalists, also in conjunction with regular press releases about new contracts.

Moving on, Hausleitner turned to the matter of the financial impact that the new agreement would have on the National Federations. At the previous Conference of Presidents in Cologne the questions was raised as a topic of concern; subsequently, a 'Task Force: Finances' was convened in August 2019 with representatives from the Nations Board Men and the Women's Handball Board where all figures were presented, an overview of these figures, with the distribution of shares, were reproduced in the presentation. The percentages reflect the 2008 Congress decision and at this time, there will be no deviation. However, further discussions on this matter regarding the use of finances within this structure are to take place. Hausleitner noted that the first impact would be seen with the Men's and Women's EHF EURO 2022 Qualifiers. Further information would be given during the 2021/2022 budget report at the 13th Extraordinary EHF Congress.

Continuing, Hausleitner spoke of the tools that have been implemented to propel the beginnings of the new agreement by covering its workload. He began with the introduction of the new business unit 'Business Development' led by JJ Rowland that is to be supported by a new team to be employed. The organisation will also heavily utilise its digital platforms which include a revamped website 'Home of Handball' that is to be launched in July 2020; this is in addition to the scope of social media platforms encompassing the EHF app, ehfTV.com, and OTT platforms supported by DAZN. The EHF will also make more use of automated processes within the transfer system and player lists; this also includes the Digital Match Report (DMR) that was rolled out in summer 2019. Hausleitner also mentioned the current status of the partnerships with Select, Hummel, and Gerflor, as well as the development of the cooperation with Kinexon and Sportradar in connection with the collection and analysis of detailed match data, which is provided to the fan, but also assisting in the areas methodic development and training. Partnerships with Oracle (Fan Database and technical support) and Eventim (ticketing) have also been established.

Bringing his report to a close, Hausleitner mentioned the strategy and plan, as well as the steps taken to facilitate the implementation of the agreement such as the EHF Master Plan, the calendar reschedule, new regulations, IT and Digital strategies, etc. Moving on from the 15th Conference of Presidents, these developments will be further treated in March at the internal stakeholder meetings (NB/EHLB and PHB/WHB), presented to the National Federations representatives during the Conference for Secretaries General and at the EHF EURO Qualifiers Workshop. The EHF will roll out its new design together with the 'Home of Handball' website in July prior to the start of the club competition season 2020/21 in September followed by the EHF EURO Qualifiers, which is to be the first competition within the new cooperation.

4. The Brand of Handball

Underlining that 'brand' was not just about logos, but a coordinated picture of how the EHF and handball is presented and viewed by the outside world and a definition of who we are, First Vice President Bošković introduced Michael Rasmussen, former Chief Marketing Officer for VELUX, and CEO of 'Purpose@Heart', a brand specialist to present the 'The Brand of Handball' to expand the subject.

Thanking the EHF for the opportunity to present the topic, Rasmussen opened by highlighting the reasons why the topic was necessary in the current climate; brand is how an organisation is remembered and recognised. It is also imperative for the retention and attraction of players, growing the sport as well as



increasing the preference for the sport, and strengthening the sport for the future. Last but not least, because the world is changing. Rasmussen stated that there are more than 800 million Europeans living in a digital reality, where Internet is as important as TV; 80% have an internet connection; more than half are regular social media users; and mobile is a way of life. Supported by a study conducted by Populus, he informed the attendees that 4% of Europeans are already loyal followers of handball as their only sport; another 26% consider handball one of their favorite sports; and an additional 34% follow handball as one of many sports. Thus, handball has a very wide reach in the European room.

However, due to young people spending more time online and in fitness centres, training facilities are empty, and the decline in active members, experienced by most team sports, threatens the future of handball. It is clear that players and families and friends of players become fans; but fewer players means less talent, less exciting games, fewer fans, fewer friends, fewer players and so on. Rasmussen likened it to a vicious circle that had to be broken; and this passivity among young people presented a challenge as it generates increasing health problems with solitude and obesity from an isolated, apathetic lifestyle. He indicated that a strong handball brand was an effective tool to overcome the challenge, and that in order to succeed, the sport had to be relevant, different, and attractive. He stressed the fact that it would be crucial to define the different arenas (motives and priorities), as well as the multiple and diverse audiences (building the brand experience), and the key touch points in which the sport engaged with these audiences to be able to reinforce and extend the relations.

Accentuating the need to be different, Rasmussen stated that handball must build on its strengths to take a position of its own and grow the sport stronger. This would require standing out from other pastimes and sports that better positioned or that have already conquered the digital arena. Handball is a sport with deep roots, and today, the game is well organised, exciting, competitive, and entertaining – all of which appeal to the modern sports follower; it is an olympic sport with a wide reach across the European population.

Tackling the subject of relevance, Rasmussen noted that the sport had to handle the orchestration of handball products/tournaments, audience engagement, organisation behaviour, and the role of handball in the community. To this end, he unveiled a model to manage the four key areas that correlated; thus, the handball brand platform was formulated by the EHF. With 'Purpose' in the center, the mission at the bottom and the future vision at the top, this vertical axis will define the strategic direction of handball. With culture (the way we see ourselves) on the left, and perception (the way we would like to be seen by others) on the right, the horizontal axis defines the relationship the organisation aims to have with the handball community. At the core of the handball brand are statements that are to be shared with current and future handball players and fans:

- *“We play handball for fun, friendship and athletic, tough competition. Join, watch and visit!”*
- *“As members of the handball community, the passion for handball is part of all of us, and it is our mission to pass on the sport to future generations in an even better state, then we received it.”*
- *“In the future we will be the most attractive team sport, and grow our community.”*
- *“As part of the handball community, we aim to be active likable ambassadors for our sport; open and honest and fair in our doings, courageous and clever in our ambitions to contribute to the future.”*



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- *“We would like others to see handball as an intense, unique entertainment, performed by outstanding all-around athletes, who work together in an intelligent teamwork and with a sense of social responsibility.”*

Rasmussen intoned that to deliver a consistent brand experience over time and across audiences is a demanding task; however, handball has a strong starting point. The EHF has two well-established assets, the EURO and the Champions League, as well as more positive development on the horizon in the form of the establishment of the European League and the growing interest in beach handball. And through committed engagement, the sport has the opportunity to play an active part in the communities around Europe by addressing the serious health risks of solitude and obesity. Handball can also capitalise on the fact that it exceeds most other sports in terms of gender equality; the sport can also develop a strong online relationship with the handball audiences through consistency.

Rasmussen stated that to be attractive can incorporate several different things, but starts with a clear, consistent visual presence. To facilitate the ideal, the visual appearance of the handball brand needs to be cleaned up starting with the EHF logo and how it is used. The revamped logo was firmed up to present a stronger graphic and more energetic expression; a new variant of the EHF logo without the circle, which is to be used as a part of all other activities to build uniform coherence, was also introduced. The new design system comes with an easy-to-use online toolbox with guidelines and examples of how to use the new elements to express the core and build a more vigorous handball brand, and includes guidelines for tournaments and other activities.

Closing the presentation, Rasmussen encouraged the cooperation of the attendees by way of “empowering their clubs, players and fans to be inspired to pass on our sport to the next generations in an even better state, than we received it”. The presentation ended with a short film that introduced the primary product brands under the handball umbrella.

5. European Handball Master Plan

Introducing the next point on the agenda, EHF President Wiederer underscored that the development of the brand of handball was an important element to the EHF master plan i.e. knowing who we are in order to define where we are going. The ‘EHF Master Plan’ was announced in Cologne at the Conference of Presidents in 2019. With an agreement in place for the next ten years, it can be expected that existing partners will approach the organisation in 2027 to discuss the prolongation of the contract; it will be at that time that the EHF must decide which direction to take. However, it is important over the next years to mould the product handball into an optimal state so that at the end of 2026 the product is well known to the media and marketing world that generates interest both europe wide and globally.

With the signing of a 10-year media and marketing rights deal (2020-2030) it is now possible to define the long-term perspectives for the future. There will be expertise in terms of marketing, promotion, digital, etc. from sports industry, which will be a significant investment in sport. Wiederer also mentioned the challenges e.g. changes in society, decreasing sports participation, health issues, and in the area of business activities fragmentation of the media market, and tough competition with traditional and new sports i.e. eSports. He underlined that in order to preserve the position of handball and also target the long-term goals (more players, fans, etc.), measures have to be taken not only to secure media presence, but also to strengthen the substance of the sport.

Thus, an analysis of the situation was undertaken also considering the valuable information inside the system (i.e. internal stakeholders, contributors) as well as the voices of the external sources. This resulted in a variety of relevant themes and the definition of the follow-up i.e. the “to-do’s”, which were clustered



into seven areas. The project was given the name “Seven Players for the Future” and focused on the period 2020 to 2027. The objective of the master plan is to be the strategic guideline and framework towards achieving the mission and vision, as well as reaching the defined targets of the European Handball Federation. Wiederer underlined that the European handball network needed to be strengthened and the management of the sport also had to be professionalised. Therefore, the EHF will invest in core areas and distribute income generated across the sport to achieve the strategic aims of the 7-year strategy (2020 – 2026) in order to be ready for 2027. Wiederer explained that the organisation tasked itself with developing a realistic picture of the sport in order to develop its own targets and benchmarks by gathering internal and external input which included observing other sports. He underlined that when it comes to handball, i.e. men’s and women’s - indoor and beach - it is about the sport in its totality.

In conclusion, he thanked all those who have contributed, internally and externally, in particular those who were strongly involved in the process on a management level, and invited JJ Rowland, Senior Manager Business Development and Marketing, responsible for the coordination of the project to present the details.

Rowland briefed the attendees that the presentation of the master plan update was the result of a 12-month collaboration with the National Federations, the internal stakeholders, and the EHF leadership; the project was guided by external consultant Michael Naversnik. The plan is targeting European handball as a whole. The update would focus on the insights gleaned from the research and consultation, the presentation of the ‘7 players’ including the priority areas that were identified, and an overview of the next steps. The provides a basis for the activities over the next seven years in cooperation with Infront and DAZN, as well as a framework the new Business Development unit aimed at growing the numbers (players, TV ratings, fans, social media followers, and revenues); upon finalisation, the plan will be submitted to the EHF Executive Committee for approval in June 2020.

Continuing, the importance of the brand platform and the recharacterisation of the European handball brand was underpinned as a basis for the master plan through the definition of the mission, the core values, and the future direction. The research and consultation also encompassed benchmarking measures by exploring other sports organisations and federations, best practice, as well as standards set by international sports bodies i.e. IOC and ASOIF. The analysis was also supported by surveys geared towards getting a complete picture from interested parties (national federations, clubs, stakeholders, professional staff, fans, media, and sponsors), and communicating directly with the members of the EHF boards (NB, PHB, WHB, and EHLB). The insight gained from the stakeholders resulted in knowing where satisfaction was attained (governance, media sales, TV production, etc.) and recommendations on areas to improve (women’s handball, revenues, knowledge transfer, etc.).

The EHF/M I&D Populus Fan Survey 2019 titled “Optimising Growth across Europe” was undertaken in ten markets (France, Germany, Spain, Demark, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Poland, Croatia, and Russia). The four key areas of focus questioned:

- *How do fans see handball?*
- *How do we reach more fans?*
- *How do we reach younger fans?*
- *How do we engage Gen Z?*

Among the fans, the image of handball is positive as it is viewed as fast-paced, social, exciting, and intelligent; the key drivers being the following of the national teams. Handball is the preferred sport for 32% of 16-24-year-olds and 41% had more than one preferred sport; therefore, without alienating older



fans, engaging younger fans (through granting access to social media icons and viral/sharable content) was deemed a priority for the master plan as choice of sports will narrow as the younger generation ages. Promoting handball as a second (to football) sport, as well as free-to-air broadcasts, multi-channel, and differentiated content were identified as ways to reach more fans in general. Offering more opportunities to play handball, but with a focus on the social and fitness benefits of the sport were among the insights on how to engage the next generation of player.

Introducing the ‘starting 7’, Rowland emphasised that the team represented handball in its entirety meaning indoor, beach, street, wheelchair handball, and irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, ability or disability. The plan (summarised for brevity) allocated each player to a specific position:

Position	Player	Purpose	Areas
1. The Game	Centre Back	<i>The brains of the team, directs play; a key player for the success of the team</i>	<i>Player environment, Technology, Rules & Regulations, Competition Structures</i>
<i>Handball is at the heart of everything the organisation does and is the basis for all other elements of the master plan; throughout the master plan it is clear that there are areas that are already known to be strong, areas where there are active projects and programmes already in place, and there are areas that have to be improved.</i>			
2. Highlight Events	Left Back	<i>Powerhouse in the back court, goal-getter and one of the stars of the team</i>	<i>Hosting, Entertainment, TV Production, Legacy, Event Landscape</i>
<i>Events such as EHF EURO and FINAL4 offer an attractive shop window for handball providing the opportunity to showcase our sport, as well as to reach and engage with many more people.</i>			
3. Fan Appeal	Right Back	<i>One of the most valued players in handball - the left-hander - in a key scoring position</i>	<i>Digital Marketing, Content Creation, Channel Strategy, Rights Distribution</i>
<i>The fan base is key for handball at the top level for ticket sales, media & sponsorship deals, etc.; the cooperation with I/D offers many new opportunities through the new digital marketing and post-production team.</i>			
4. Grassroots Growth	Left Wing	<i>Fast, agile and clever</i>	<i>Life-long Handball, Youth Handball, Handball Workforce, Emerging Nations</i>
<i>One of the biggest challenges for our sport going forward and where we must put in the most work; the organisation has to be responsive to the rapidly changing society.</i>			
5. Strengthening Network	Line Player	<i>One of the toughest positions on court, has to wrestle and fight to get the ball and score</i>	<i>Strengthen Clubs & Federations, Knowledge Transfer, Education, Representation</i>
<i>The task of the federations to deliver and promote handball is tough and the EHF sees it as an important role to support national federations and, via them, other handball institutions in their work.</i>			
6. Good Governance	Goalkeeper	<i>A safe pair of hands and a backup for everything that happens on court</i>	<i>Democracy, Integrity, Heritage, Sustainability</i>
<i>The organisation prides itself on leading in the implementation of good governance, the structure and procedures ensure that any issue can be dealt with in a correct and transparent way.</i>			
7. Commercial Success	Right Wing	<i>Dependent on teammates, but if the team plays well together, success will come</i>	<i>Partner Programme, Ticketing, Hospitality, Funding, New Business, Media/Marketing Rights</i>
<i>Commercial success will be the result of teamwork and may serve as a basis for investments.</i>			



The presentation of the master plan will be distributed to the National Federations during the preparatory phase prior to the Conference for Secretaries General in April 2020.

Rowland closed his presentation by taking the attendees through the next phase of the process; with the 'players' and priority areas defined, the organisation will now begin the setting of KPIs, finalising budgets, action plans, etc., and the next update on the progress of the master plan will be given at the Conference for Secretaries General in Bratislava in April. Furthermore, where necessary and prior to the plan being submitted to the Executive Committee, the organisation will arrange for the involvement of technical commissions and other key stakeholders, as well as appoint expert groups to provide the necessary inputs, experience and knowledge for the development of detailed plans.

Addressing the Conference to close the agenda point, Wiederer reiterated that the master plan will be part of the normal budgets and planning when defining the scope of the EHF activities. With the floor opened for comments and input, Rowland responded in the affirmative to enquiry (ENG) as to whether social impacts had been part of the thought process when considering the master plan; taking reference to the CSR campaigns covering sustainability and how handball can bring benefits to the community as a whole i.e. Grundfos engagement. Wiederer responded to the question (ESP) concerning the practical implementation of a process to assist Federations with allowing national federation sponsors and partners to be part of the event experience where the team is participating e.g. ticketing free of charge. This idea meets the interest of the EHF; however, the event hosts have to coordinate the organisation in a timeframe where within the pre-set dates it is possible to meet the requests of the national federations. The matter can be defined on the occasion of the Conference for Secretaries General bearing in mind that event organisation gives preconditions for the rundown, but are open within this scope. IHF President, Dr Hassan Moustafa stated that attention needs to be given in the area of clubs specifically the lack thereof i.e. no presence from Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, etc.; a target (following football) should be to have top handball club teams. Chairman Boškovic confirmed that there have been many conversations in the handball forums trying to find a way to make a connection within the football sphere and underlined that it was not an easy task; he also stated that such a topic was not just for the EHF, but mainly a topic for the national federations, and that attention would be given to the matter in the future.

6. Various Issues

At this time, no topics were raised by the representatives of the National Federations in attendance.

7. Closing Address

Addressing the representatives, President Wiederer closed the first session of scheduled meetings and noted that the work and preparations undertaken provided a picture of the activities and tasks for the future, as well as the additional information necessary for the upcoming Extraordinary EHF Congress. Underlining a key message from the main presentation, Wiederer stressed that the EHF was aware of the aim to pass the sport on to the next generation in a better state than it is now, thus being the underlying reason for such gatherings. The Conference of Presidents remains an important platform for providing information and new ideas, and is a place for discussion. It was hoped that the information provided would be digested by April when the next working session is scheduled to take place and where the matters will be further discussed. The presenters and the participants for their presence and contribution to the event, and the 15th EHF Conference of Presidents was closed.

For the minutes: M. Wiederer / M. Brown

Vienna, 14 February 2020