Minutes to the 12th Meeting of the EHF Nations Board (Men)

Date/Time:	Monday, 7 March 2016/14:30 – 18:00	
Venue:	EHF Office – Conference Room	
Participants:	Morten Stig Christensen	DEN/Chairman
	Philippe Bana	FRA
	Aleksandar Blagojevic	SRB
	Marek Góralczyk	POL
	Stephen Neilson	GBR
EHF Office:	Jean Brihault	EHF President
	Michael Wiederer	EHF Secretary General
	Peter Sichelschmidt	BG National Team Competitions
Excused:	Francisco Sanchez	ESP

1. Welcome

Chairman Christensen welcomed the participants to the meeting and gave a special welcome to Aleksandar Blagojevic (SRB) partaking in the meeting for the first time since replacing H. Brand (GER). Christensen underlined that the objective of the Nations Board is to remain open to the issues and to do the best for the handball family. For the benefit of Blagojevic, the members introduced themselves. Wiederer introduced F. Sanchez, who on this occasion could not be present and underlined that the EHF President and Secretary General were not members of the Nations Board, but upon invitation of the NB, were present at the meetings; Wiederer also explained the scheduling of the meetings (prior to the meetings of the Professional Handball Board and Executive Committee) for the purpose of working with the latest information. Blagojevic thanked the group for his welcome and pledged his commitment to the Nations Board and its works.

Before moving to the next agenda point, the Nations Boards congratulated Polish NB Member, Marek Goralcyzk and the Polish Handball Federation for the excellent Men's EHF EURO 2016, which continues to be praised on many levels.

2. NB Meeting 10/2015 – Minutes / Follow-up Report

The minutes to the meeting that took place in October 2015 were adopted without additional comment or question.

3. EHF Information

3.1. PHB Minutes / EXEC / Commissions

To the minutes of the 10/2015 meeting of the Professional Handball Board, no questions or comment were raised. Wiederer informed that Nations Board that there was nothing specific to be added to the minutes (n°127 Bucharest & n°128 Krakow) of the Executive Committee as the majority

of the topics would be raised during the meeting and the minutes from this meeting would be made available to the Executive Committee in time for their meeting on 15/16 March 2016.

3.2. 2016 Meeting Schedule

The NB was informed of the minor changes to the schedule and the October 2016 meeting would be the last prior to the EHF Congress; it was noted that the 25th Anniversary Gala would take place on 18 November 2016.

3.3. International Calendar (CAL 17/18 Final version)

The version of the calendar approved by the EXEC at the 01/2016 meeting was given to the NB members. Comment was raised concerning a current discussion on the level of the leagues regarding additional competition rounds after the FINAL4; the NB was informed that the FINAL4 has always taken place on the same weekend since its introduction in 2010 and that the placement of the FINAL4 in the calendar allows for the optimum preparation time for the subsequent season.

4. EHF EUROs

4.1. EHF EURO 2016 POL – Report/Follow-Up

EHF Secretary General Wiederer gave a brief report on the status of the event follow-up; the NB was informed that all relevant information is currently being compiled. A comprehensive analysis of the event will follow and will be completed prior to the Men's EHF EURO 2018 CRO.

Concerning the matter of injuries and injury compensation, the fact was underlined that more injuries occurred during the preparatory phase of the EHF EURO 2016 than during the final tournament of the competition; it was noted that the matches during the preparatory phase were also insured. Reference was made to a specific case concerning a Norwegian player. The situation was reiterated for the NB members. The fact that national team delegations are obligated to submit injury reports immediately after matches was emphasised; in this case, no such report was filed with the Tournament Management. The NB was informed that the EHF has initiated a process with the Norwegian federation in this matter. In the brief discussion that ensued, the following points among others were raised:

- In order to have good relation between federation and clubs releasing the players, such conduct cannot be tolerated; the national team delegation in question clearly failed to follow protocol; bearing in mind that the EHF is Federations via the injury fund there has be a follow-up in order to make sure that championship participants understand their responsibilities; National team delegations have to support the system

To the issue of betting advertisements (on player kits) and the varying regulations across Europe, difficulties faced by a few teams during the event were mentioned. It was noted that a similar situation was experienced during EHF EURO 2008 NOR; however this time, individual Federations, and not the EHF, were directly targeted. It was stated that time is of the essence in such situations in regards to whether a team can play a match; the EHF will contact the EOC EU Office to solicit specific

information to the matter. As the discussion progressed the issue of player kits was raised and specific examples given, the NB raised the following points which were not limited to:

- Regulation concerning player kits; IHF Rules of the Game §4:7 concerning equipment, special equipment not covered by regulations; and the differentiation between marketing and medical equipment; temporary tattoos that present sponsors

Upon request of the Nations Board, the EHF will work on the matter of harmonisation of player kits taking medical equipment, sponsor activities, private contracts, etc. under consideration. Moving on, Wiederer also spoke of the tremendous coverage in terms of spectators (>400k), record broadcasts and transmission (final figures expected soon). It was underlined that handball must profit from this success for future events.

4.2. EHF EURO 2018 CRO – Preview

No specific report to organisational matter was given; Sichelschmidt informed the NB on the upcoming EHF EURO 2018 Qualification draw procedure on 14 April 2016 following the conclusion of the Interface Round. Wiederer gave brief information to EURO workshop on 13 April.

4.3. EHF EURO 2020 SWE/AUT/NOR – Preview

4.3.1. Qualification System

Entering the agenda point the group was informed on the EHF EURO 2020 Qualification Conference that took place prior to the NB meeting with representatives from the nations ranked 25 to 50 in attendance. With the exception of Liechtenstein and Monaco, who currently have no senior national team, it was the wish of the nations to be involved in the qualification process for the 2020 event.

The step leading up to the conference were reiterated including the contact with the International Handball Federation, and the EHF desire that the IHF Emerging Nations Tournament can be integrated into the qualification. Based on the proposed system it was noted that the first phase of the EHF EURO 2020 Qualification would start in October 2016 parallel to the rounds 1 and 2 of the Men's EHF EURO 2018 Qualification.

Sichelschmidt expanded upon how the new system, dependant on the number of registrations, would function and how it would provide the opportunity for those nations in favour of playing home and away matches. It was reiterated that the proposed system does fit into the international calendar, and that the best four 3rd ranked teams would be decided though calculation and not play-off matches.

EHF President, Jean Brihault added that there was much interest shown by the conference attendees in the flexible system which would allow them to choose the entry path that best fits their Federation. He also mentioned that work with the IHF would continue in order to define participants based on European ranking. Clarification has to be sought in respect to the participation of non-European teams in such a trophy. An alternative is the organisation of such an event by EHF, and by that, on a European level only.

Taking reference to the origins of a 24-team EHF EURO, Wiederer mentioned that SWE, AUT, and NOR bid for a 16-team event, prior to joining forces to organise and host EHF EURO 2020. Providing the underlying information, he stressed that more than the standard 38 registrations were needed. Wiederer stated that to bring 48 out of 50 nations to the qualification for a 24-team event will be a major success for handball, but compromise would be necessary. In the discussion, the NB members mentioned:

- The proposed system is the result of 18-months' worth of development; favour is shown to using an IHF event as a qualification step for the first edition; naming the qualification event will be challenging, but public branding should be consistent and start immediately.

4.3.2. Final Tournament

Sichelschmidt drew attention to a provisional draft of an EHF EURO 2020 match schedule; it was noted that the organisation of the event is progressing well.

4.4. EHF EUROS in the Future – Input and Discussions

- ***Injury Compensation:*** As described earlier in the meeting, the EHF will revise the regulations prior to the next edition of the event in Croatia in 2018.

- ***Financial Support – Qualifications:*** Introducing the topic, Wiederer said that that in 2016 EUR 560k was spent on the qualifications; EUR 472k covered the costs of flooring, materials, and TV production; EUR 285k covered fees and transport for referees and delegates. The NB is informed that EUR 137k remains in the EHF EURO Qualification 'pot' comprised of EUR 87k from the current event and EUR 50k from previous events. The proposal to use the entire amount to support the qualifications to the EHF EURO 2020 event received the support of the Nations Board. Brihault informs that the funds from the former Men's Challenge Trophy will continue to be used to support. The following comments arose from the ensuing discussion:

  - Funds from the former Men's Challenge Trophy to be used (with clear procedure) for the lower ranked nations in the qualification; a basis of altogether EUR 700k (up to EUR 900k) is available for the qualification process following the current system; the strategy using the funds for referee/delegate compensation and TV production will remain untouched. Though it was noted that different nations face different problems, it was stressed that lower ranked nations must be supported and as well have to develop as everyone has to contribute. It was also stated that official matches are regarded as the only healthy basis for obtaining funding of national authorities and sponsors in the long run.

Returning to the topic of club compensation for the release of players (per day in the IHF vs. per game in the EHF, identical for all players/EHF vs. higher for better ranked teams/IHF), the question of possible harmonisation was raised; it was noted that in some cases medical costs are not taken into consideration when making the calculation of injury compensation. However, the NB agreed that a systematic alignment of injury fund procedure would not be suitable and that other aspects should be considered; thus, the NB would recommend an analysis of the situation in the EHF and IHF.

5. International Competitions

5.1. Olympic qualifications – Information

Brihault gave a short statement and expressed his pleasure that the OG Qualification Tournaments will take place in Europe. In response to the concerns raised about transmission on public vs. pay TV, Brihault conceded that this was a global problem within the sport, and that the topic of how to handle TV rights, as well as an evaluation of the OG Qualification Tournaments, would be brought back to the agenda.

5.2. IHF Rules of the Game

To the IHF information recently received by the handball community to the changes to the IHF Rules of the Game to be implemented as of 1 July 2016, the NB briefly discussed the situation; EHF CSO Glaser informed the NB that the matter would be examined within the Competitions Commission and will be tabled to the Executive Committee for a decision on how to implement this in the European competitions. A detailed discussion took place on the content and possible consequences of the new rules.

5.3. Players Eligibility – Status

Brihault voiced his displeasure on the outright rejection of the EHF motion submitted to the IHF Congress (Sochi 11/2015), which was not in favour of introducing limitation on eligibility and that the handball federations of Europe did not support the EHF in any way though a statement, though they were all made fully aware of the reasoning behind the motion.

5.4. International Transfers – Information

Describing the administration process of transfers, the NB was informed that transfers without fee continue to increase yearly. It was stated that it should be of interest of the national federations to know where their players are located; transfers without an administration process are not supported.

6. Club Competitions

6.1. Status Report

Due to the fact that all competitions are running according to schedule and with no major incidents or cases to be handled, the report was brief. The NB was informed that no changes to the competition system are foreseen for the 2016/17 season; an evaluation of the club will be undertaken as the phase is now concluded. Following the conclusion of the season, an analysis for the market would be useful; input from the C/D clubs is of interest.

6.2. Cross Border Leagues

As the NB was already aware of the current situation of a proposed private league, a brief reiteration of the situation, which included the position of the EHF, was given. Brihault underlined the fact the EHF is a democratic body based on a structural process which involves all the stakeholders and that a private monopoly has completely different targets, while the EHF has to distribute acquired finances to further develop the sport. In the discussion that followed, it was stated that such issues are not confined to handball rather it is a global European sport issue to which the upcoming European Sport Forum in The Hague may have to address. In such situations, the European sports model must be defended as such action affects all member federations. Other comment included, but was not limited to:

- The clubs cannot reject any external proposal until they are fully informed; available information just focuses on open issues, but is not providing any solutions; it remains unclear as to what it will actually mean for leagues and federations as no details are known at this time; there is concern that there would be no time for national team activities and the leagues would have difficulty finding times to play.

Contact with the International Handball Federation and the European Olympic Committees, who are also concerned about such commercial activities without involvement of the sport structures, show support for the Federation.

7. Conference of Presidents / Eo Congress Follow-Up

7.1. Referees / Delegates Compensation

The NB was briefly informed on the history of the topic and the happenings that led to the convention of a working group. The first meeting of the working group convened on the fringes of EHF EURO 2016 in Poland. It was noted that the officiating fees are shared among the stakeholders (NFs, EHF, Clubs) and that there has been no increase, in the compensation paid to officiators, in 10 years. Based on the outcome of the initial meeting, further analysis is ongoing, it is expected that the working group will submit their recommendations to the Executive Committee in June 2016. It was underlined that there would be no changes prior to the 2017/18 season.

7.2. Marketing Situation EHF/EHFM

Taking reference to the presentation at the 12th Conference of Presidents on how to generate more income, the NB was informed that pre-negotiations with EHF partners are currently been undertaken. It was highlighted that at this time, the EHF is free to engage other partners for the time after 2020; however, it was made clear that the EHF would define the marketing strategy in order to start the procedures in 2017. Concerning the already agreed overall partnership, an implementation is planned for the 2020 Qualification for the first time. Though a report could not be given at this time, it was noted that it was a long-term project.

7.3. Communication Strategy

With reference taken to the presentation given by H. Blunck, the NB was informed that the project is ongoing.

8. Information

8.1. Club Manager Seminar / European Handball Manager /MESGO MBA:

Club Manager Seminar: all relevant documents have been distributed.

European Handball Manager: the programme taught in English will commence in the autumn; the current session will be concluded by May 2016. For the upcoming session, the programme has received a number of prominent registrations from the handball community.

MESGO MBA: the top level programme continues to generate interest, and it continues to meet expectations; A. Brencans (LAT) is close to completing the course, this is viewed as a step forward for handball in Latvia.

H. Höritsch is at the disposal of the NB for information on all the programmes.

8.2. Conference for Secretaries General

The first information to the event was made available to the NB members; additional information was given on the draws taking place on the fringes of the event (M20: 13.04./EURO2018 Qual.: 14.04.). Brief information was also given on the EHF EURO 2018 Workshop.

8.3. 2016 EHF Congress

The organisation of the next EHF Congress is running to schedule; no championships will be awarded in 2016, the next awarding for the EHF EURO 2022/2024 will take place in 2018. The Congress will take place on 17/18 November and the EHF 25th Anniversary gala evening will take place on 18 November 2016.

9. Preparation PHB meeting

9.1. Stakeholder Meetings 11/2015 – 03/2016

The minutes from the various meetings were made available to the NB prior to the meeting. The minutes from the upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee will be distributed accordingly upon completion.

9.2. Agenda

Elements of the PHB agenda were briefly discussed.

10. Other Issues

- **Head protection and helmets:** the matter was discussed on different levels; an evaluation had already taken place on the IHF level; according to the IHF Rules of the Game, such head protection is forbidden and there is no room for interpretation. The NB agreed that the matter had to be taken seriously. It was conceded that handball is a contact sport and injury cannot be avoided, but steps could be taken to limit injury; it was also mentioned that such protection could be misused with the example of a player returning to the game too early before recovery is complete.

- **Compulsory place for OZE:** the continent was offered special pathway to the 2017 World Championship via a four-continent tournament, as OZE failed to respond in the allotted time, the IHF decided to award the continent place as a wildcard. It is expected that the announcement from the IHF will take place after the qualification and prior to the draw on 23 June 2016. The procedure used in 2015 was discussed and Brihault mentioned that the places for men QAT and women DEN World Championships were awarded on the basis of performance.

- **Technical development/innovations:** Wiederer described unsolicited contact from various external sources and said that it is clear that the market is interested in such technological developments; he noted that the EHF has integrated such modern technologies in the game where for example it can be seen at the FINAL4 (but not at the EHF EURO). The NB was informed that the EHF will explore what technologies are reasonable for the EHF competitions; Wiederer also spoke of the cost factor which would limit some clubs and federations to implement select technologies; but it would also be impossible for the EHF to implement Europe wide. Brihault noted that in this respect that EHF Media would be activated (interview on eurohandball.com), where it would be stated that the EHF has reached a level of satisfaction in this area, whilst it is possible to implement new technologies in some events, it is not possible in others. The EHF will endeavour to put umbrella structure over this topic. It was also noted that it will be a leading agenda point at the next meeting of the Technical Delegation.

Chairman Christensen closed the meeting and expressed his thanks to the Nations Board for the competent contribution and interesting discussion.

For the Minutes: M. Brown
Vienna, 10 March 2016