

Minutes to the 16th Meeting of the EHF Nations Board (Men)

Date/Time:	Monday, 9 October 2017/14:30 – 19:00		
Venue:	EHF Office – Conference Room		
Participants:	Morten Stig Christensen	DEN	Chairman
	Philippe Bana	FRA	Vice Chairman
	Mark Schober	GER	
	Marek Góralczyk	POL	
	Ingo Meckes	SUI	
	Stephen Neilson	GBR	
EHF Office:	Michael Wiederer	EHF President	
	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General	
	Peter Sichelschmidt	BG National Teams	
	Marsha Brown	Minutes	

1. Welcome and introduction

Chairman Christensen welcomed the participants to the meeting and noted the items of interest on the agenda; NB Member Neilson submitted a request to discuss the topics of the development fund, as well as the harmonisation of phase one in the World and European championship qualification process. It was noted that the items were on the agenda.

2. Previous meetings

2.1. NB Meeting 03/2017

The minutes are adopted without additional comment.

2.2. PHB Meeting 03/2017

The NB took note of the minutes without additional comment.

2.3. EXEC Meeting 03/06/09/2017

With reference to the meeting of the EHF Executive Committee in September 2017, EHF Secretary General Hausleitner informed the Nations Board that following his appointment to the EHF, the internal document 'Rules of Procedure' which contains the working processes of the organisation taking into account aspects on the political, organisational, and professional levels was updated. It was also underlined that the EHF Finance Delegation was not a decision-making body; it is a designated preparation institution for the Executive Committee. The 2017 version of the document (created in 2002 and amended in 2006) was confirmed by the Executive Committee and subsequently distributed to the National Federations.

Additionally, the draft of the Memorandum of Understanding between the EHF and Forum Club Handball was amended and will be signed in Mallorca on 16 October 2017. It was noted that the negotiation process began in 2016 and was briefly suspended before the agreement was finalised in 2017. The Memorandum of Understanding regulates the release of players, basic calendar questions and other issues to the benefit of national team activities. Furthermore, a key benefit to the agreement is the creation of a decision-making structure for the future of the club competitions where all decisions have to be of mutual consent and one party cannot override the other party – externally a united front will be presented. It was underlined that the

financial conditions have not changed and the agreement to be signed gives equal standing to the clubs concerning club competitions. On a political level, a steering board will be incorporated into the EHF Marketing structure as a civil law partnership (Gesellschaft bürgerlichen Recht (GbR)) where all important club competition questions will be discussed. The steering group will consist of the 8 persons: three EHF representatives and three club representatives, the EHF and FCH Managing Directors.

On a service partnership level, the statistics/data collection partner was changed from PluriScout to Sport Radar. With several issues still open, discussions are ongoing with Kinexon and Select for the development of an 'i-ball' which in the future will track the speed of the ball; this is a long-term project.

To the positive doping results of three players at the Women's 19 EURO in Slovenia, it was noted that the proceedings are ongoing and there is no further information at this time. It was noted that the EAU continued to work well and serve its purpose.

The NB took note of the minutes (March, June, and September) without additional comment.

3. EHF/IHF Information

3.1. Information update on structure/personnel

In response to a question on the functionality of an EHF President in a professional position as opposed to a nonprofessional position, President Wiederer gave comprehensive information and underlined the legal safeguards and full transparency. He also reiterated the steps taken following the 2016 EHF Congress and with regard to the ensuing appointment of a new EHF Secretary General.

Further to the EHF structure Secretary General Hausleitner noted a positive start to his tenure; he mentioned the good cooperation between CEO Wiederer, CFO Moser, and CSO Glaser with himself as COO and emphasised that his function is as well to support the EHF President on a strategic level. He mentioned the cooperation with Management Board (MB) and the weekly meetings, as well as the meetings on the level of the General Management (GM). The responsibilities and as well links to the elected bodies are laid down in the working procedures.

3.2. IHF Council/Congress

Giving a brief report, President Wiederer informed the Nations Board that he had already attended two IHF Council meetings. He noted that though brief, the minutes from the IHF meetings are correct. Cooperation with the IHF leadership remains positive and it was underlined its importance.

Taking reference to the minutes dispatched, President Wiederer briefly touched upon the recently updated Player Eligibility Code, competition regulations, and the upcoming IHF Congress.

NB Member Neilson informed the participants on an initiative concerning Commonwealth countries. Based on concern voiced by members regarding the future direction of the group, a meeting of the Commonwealth Handball Federation was requested and will take place on the fringes of the IHF Congress in Antalya.

4. EHF EUROS

4.1. EHF EURO 2018 CRO – Preview

With qualification phase 2 complete and the Final Tournament Draw executed, Secretary General Hausleitner informed the Nations Board on the new replacement system for up to six players during the final tournament and the situation regarding tickets sales for which there is room for improvement. The Head of Delegations Conference commences on 10 October in Zagreb where the matter of players' equipment is an area of focus. In order to avoid misunderstanding it was underlined that the rules will be enforced in accordance with the

stipulated IHF regulations. Furthermore, video playback at the substitution area is to be introduced at the event.

4.2. 2018 Younger Age Categories Events

Peter Sichelschmidt, Senior Manager National Teams, reiterated the locations of the 2018 EURO (M18 CRO, M20 SLO) and Championship (M18 AUT & GEO, M20 MKD & MNE) events. A workshop will be held in Vienna for all the organisers in November. A proposal submitted by AUT to introduce a one-venue, alternate playing days system is to be discussed during the workshop.

A new playing system to be implemented at the 2018 events contains cross matches and more rest days resulting in no team playing more than two consecutive matches. Financial support at EUR 4k per team has been allocated to the teams participating in the M18 and W17 Championships as of 2018. The draws for the Championships took place in July 2017 and the draws for the EUROS will be drawn in the CRO and SLO respectively where the opportunity will be used as the first official promotional activity for the events.

In response to the question as to whether the number of teams a host of a championship could expect was fixed, the basic idea of 24 teams and three organisers was reiterated. In the 2018 cycle only 23 teams registered to participate and two organisers were found, hence the alternative solution with 12/11 teams in one location. In accordance with the 2014 Congress decision, a one court/week plan based on the number of participating teams is foreseen. The registration process for the 2019 YAC events will commence shortly in order to have a clearer picture on the organiser/team situation earlier.

The possibility of the M18 Championship champion succeeding to the MU19 WC through a play-off/qualification was mentioned and briefly discussed; based on input from the National Federations and discussions within the Competitions Commission, the system (age group) will be evaluated following the 2018 men's cycle and information available after the Women's European Open.

4.3. EHF EURO 2020 SWE/AUT/NOR – Qualification/Final Tournament

4.3.1. Draw/Organisation

Sichelschmidt gave a brief overview on the qualification to date (Phase 1 and the IHF Emerging Nations Tournament); 32 teams will be part of Phase 2 beginning October 2018. In light of the ongoing review and development of the current regulation for the qualifications, Secretary General Hausleitner highlighted the potential problems of team pairings in the qualification regarding the geographical and political ramifications. Parallel to the EHF EURO Qualification draw in Norway in April 2018, the EHF will host a EURO 2020 workshop covering media, marketing, regulations, etc. with mandatory attendance for all participating teams.

Hausleitner presented an overview of the EHF EURO Cup, a framework event scheduled to play parallel to the qualification. The topics covered included advertising and TV rights, ticketing, timeline, and schedule. What follows is a summary of the discussion that followed:

- ◆ The concept is integrated into the regulations for EHF EURO 2018 CRO as part of the conditions for participation as confirmed by the Executive Committee.
- ◆ NB members voiced their concern that the tournaments could have a negative impact on larger federations – a loss of income (contractual stipulations, revenues, media, advertising, etc.) from them not being able to organise their own tournaments in periods where this would normally happen. It was noted that a new tournament should not be introduced without the agreement of the National Federations where there would be a direct impact on Federation revenues.

- ◆ The origins of the idea were reiterated. It was noted that the defending champion would not have an opponent in the periods concerned as the other teams would be playing the qualifications. The period in autumn 2019 would not be affected; the focus remained the three scheduled qualification weeks and January. The NB contended that the January period was the most important for the Federations. It was underlined that some Federations are contractually obligated and reference was taken to the final point under AP 5 (Open Discussion) of the NB°15 minutes.
- ◆ EHF input highlighted that the decision to qualify the defending champion directly was linked to the tournament. NB input stressed that the elements of the concept would have to be discussed in detail and that Federations would have to investigate the potential impact on existing agreements.
- ◆ Following the comment that one team would be affected and it would result in two matches in one week (NT Week: Mo – Su), it was noted that in the previous discussion there was nothing against the idea in principle and it was positive that revenue would be flowing back to the participants though questions were raised as to the impact on the teams involved. It was hoped that this matter would not become a situation where the champion would be forced to participate as it would be a negative consequence. It was requested that the dialogue remain open to address the main concerns and questions.
- ◆ It was underlined that should a EURO 2020 host win EURO 2018, the next non-EURO host would take the place of the defending champion. In the future, should a EURO event be hosted by one or two countries, the situation as to the EHF EURO Cup is not defined as it targets three organisers.
- ◆ Concerning advertising rights, it was mentioned that many Federations have sold advertising boards in advance and it was questioned not only how to avoid losing revenue, but also the possibility of using their own sponsors as revenue potential from three home matches could be lost. This was underlined that the situation needed more discussion and as a technical matter, more work needed to be undertaken on advertising rights. EHF input that the concept of a presenting sponsor was about promoting the event.
- ◆ With reference to TV rights it was stated that the Federations would not lose out and there was a potential for gain as production fees would be saved in some cases. The situation with the TV slots is to be taken under consideration and it is to be defined who would make the decision.
- ◆ From a Federation perspective, it was noted that three home matches are preferable to two though it would mean an extension of the tournament to include a rest day. It was noted that it was at the request of the coaches that a tournament should not exceed two days. The structure of the tournament (SF/F) was mentioned and it was countered that an extension of a tournament would 'close' the week. With reference to AP 5.1.3./EXEC°137 minutes, the NB requested that the concept be reconsidered.

In a general statement, it was questioned whether the voice of the NB was being heard within the structure. It was underlined that the National Federations only have three windows (plus EURO) to promote their product and it was contended that as an advisory board it loses track of decisions on the EXEC level. It was determined that the NB had to find new ways to have a clearer focus when covering issues in order to find solutions. Based on the input given by the EHF to the utilisation of sleeve advertising, the NB deemed that the solution lay not in the withdrawal of the sleeve rights, but in the development of the management within the Federations. It was implied that there was too much encroachment on the rights ascribed to the National Federations via the

regulations. With the review of the regulations underway, the NB made it clear that the involvement of the board should be at the process level prior to decisions being made on the level of the Executive Committee.

4.3.2. Marketing set-up

Secretary General Hausleitner expanded on the proposal to open the EHF EURO advertising set-up in the same way as in the EHF Champions League so that the National Federations have the opportunity to use specified spaces in the qualifications that were previously not available in addition to the sleeve advertising and the LED boards. The places shown in the visual are a maximum and the Federations are not obliged to make use of them. To find a balance resulting in the optimum solution for the EHF and the Federations, it was agreed that the marketing set-up plan needed to be discussed further with the input of marketing experts in view of the regulations.

4.3.3. Finances / Support

As part of the discussion (AP 4.3.1) President Wiederer presented an overview of the finances in relation to the EHF EURO Qualifications. In 2016, the EHF invested EUR 560k into the Qualifications that was used for officiating costs, TV support, and other various activities. For the EHF EURO 2020 an agreement with Infront concerning a presenting sponsor and the advertising set-up is in place; from this package the EHF is to receive EUR 600k that is to be used only for the national team qualifications. Further discussion on how to use the funds mentioned is needed.

Additionally, there is the development fund (EUR 600k); a common misconception is that it was a gift from Infront to the EHF; however, it was allocated revenue as contractually agreed and assigned for the specific purpose to improve the qualifications.

It was suggested that the funds from the presenting sponsor package (based on the additional advertising and composite logo) be used for direct payments to the participants, and to use the 'development fund' strictly for development. No additional funding was used during qualification phase one as the tournament was very small in terms of participation and the IHF absorbed all the costs for the IHF Emerging Nations Tournament. Thus, EUR 1.2m is available to be used in a responsible way. Moreover, whatever decision is taken as to how to utilise the funds, a reasonable picture towards Infront has to be presented in order to prove to its Comptrollers appropriate use. Input was requested from the Nations Board. The objective of the EHF remains the development of the product based on the definitive relation concerning the quality of the Qualification Phase 2 i.e. TV picture. It was stated that there was a misunderstanding following the announcement at the 2016 Congress, as some lower-ranked nations believe that the fund would be used also for the improvement of Qualification Phase 1 this is unfortunately not foreseen according to Infront.

Secretary General Hausleitner mentioned areas where the fund could be implemented such as cooperation with the National Federations, improvement of TV standards, implementation of Marketing Supervisors at matches, and a bonus system for Federations based on the evaluation of the concepts covering spectators, venue, social media, and guest team was suggested. It was suggested that a level of flexibility be available to smaller nations in order for them to also possibly achieve a bonus should the system be implemented or a different type of support. SG Hausleitner underlined that though that could be a possibility, the quality of the picture could not be compromised. Hausleitner also suggested that support in the form of absorbing travel costs where necessary could also be given.

Before moving on to the next agenda point, the participants briefly discussed the matter of procedure and process giving relevant examples. The discontent among the members of the Nations Board was duly noted. With many important topics ahead, it was determined that the position of the Nations Board in the decision-making process was to be clearly defined. More clarity was needed in the reporting of NB issues and recommendations to the Executive Committee; the PHB Chairman should not only focus on club matters. The

NB requested to be included as a stakeholder when marketing questions are being discussed in order to ensure that the voice of the NB is being heard as it is in the common interest of the National Federations to develop the element of process. EHF input stated that clarifying the position of the Nations Board in the decision-making process would be a task for the EHF Structure working group.

Returning to the topic of the EHF EURO Cup, the topic will be discussed outside of the meeting framework and the resulting input will be sent to the EHF. It was underlined that the idea in principle is good, however it does contain complications and the Nations Board will evaluate certain aspects (advertising/TV rights) with view of the Executive Committee decision in December 2017; the findings of the Nations Board will submit its findings and recommendation(s) in November following the IHF Congress.

Concerning the regulations, Secretary General Hausleitner has assumed the responsibility of reviewing the regulations. The main task is the harmonisation of the European and world championship qualifications. Member Neilson mentioned there was a need for consistency in this regard as it would assist Federations in their pre-planning of budgets. It was mentioned that some Federations prefer to play the men's team on a home/away basis, but the women's team in a tournament format. Sichelschmidt reiterated that Phase 1 (according to the current regulations) is played based on the tournament format, and Phase 2 is based on H/A matches. Therefore the 3 to 1 majority rule was implemented. Member Neilson argued that this element should be changed. EHF requested a definitive input as to whether H/A matches should be obligatory or is a tournament format still possible. Wiederer emphasised that in order to have a qualitative regulations package by April, ideally such decisions need to be made by the end of January 2018. A sub-group will discuss this issue in November on behalf of the Nations Board, who will again submit their findings and recommendation(s).

It was underlined that upon completion and implementation of the revised regulations (April 2018) there will be a strict management of the obligations and it is hoped that the National Federations will adhere to the regulations.

Taking the current geo-political climate into account, President Wiederer questioned whether the Nations Board was in favour or against avoiding open draws in certain situations (SRB/KOS/RUS/UKR, GRE/MKD, etc.). The NB remained in favour of open draws, but noted that in special circumstances the EHF reserved the right to uphold the integrity of the sport to protect the players and the game with the use of seeding, based on the reality of the situations; the Nations Board would recognise the decision of the Executive Committee.

4.3.4. Final tournament

Agenda point not discussed due to time constraints.

5. TV / Marketing rights perspectives

5.1. General situation

5.2. Tender information

The construction of the rights packages resp. bundles (M/W CL, M/W EURO) created a huge package and led to big players in the media sphere approaching handball for the first time. At this time there is a broad mix of 25 interest groups of varying size including Amazon, Discovery et al. It is the first time that handball has been accepted with the EHF EUROS in the lead and with the Champions Leagues including the FINAL4s; with so much content, it is of major interest to global media houses. At the same time, there was acceptance within the clubs that there was to be packages with the EUROS and the Champions Leagues with an overall approach to the market not granting the partners the same deals, but delivering various options.

During the summer, the EHF/M worked together on presenting a comprehensive document presenting the packages and it was first distributed to select partners who had approached the EHF. After the announcement in Cologne, it was presented to the Executive Committee. Parallel to these developments, the formulation of

the updated Memorandum of Understanding was being finalised to ensure the cooperation of the clubs. Within the framework of a campaign of networking, meetings, etc. the tender documents were distributed in September 2017. The deadline for feedback from the media realm is 15 November 2017, which will be evaluated to determine the best step for handball. Based on market reaction so far, the result is expected to be positive compared to the past, resulting in better income.

Moreover, it was necessary to define basic competition systems as a starting point for potential partners; it was underlined that it referred to the period from 2020 onwards. Understanding that the clubs were already heading in this direction and with the understanding that the EHF was not prepared to lose control of its competitions, the organisation took the proactive step towards the concept of tendering. It was noted that there will be another presentation to the Executive Committee in December where further procedure will be decided. This optionally will be followed by a second round of tender process focusing on negotiations with the individual potential partners. Subsequently, a presentation on the overall situation at the Conference of Presidents in Croatia in January will also take place.

In the ensuing discussion, the NB congratulated the EHF on the work undertaken so far. Concerning the overall package, reference was taken to a previous study undertaken by the EHF, it was underlined that there would not be a common contract between club and national team products in case of a global offer; it was noted that the qualified companies know how to calculate the value of the products. The NB expressed that it was more important that the National Federations have security in specific aspects (social media, etc.) rather than who would eventually win the tender contract. President Wiederer reiterated the final point from NB¹⁵ Minutes (AP5) that the existing relationships between NF partners and sponsors should not be threatened by future EHF agreements within the area of responsibility of the National Federations.

It was noted that the most recent handball media survey highlighted a big difference between national team and club competitions in terms of market value; this element needs consideration during the tender process. The NB offered its support to the EHF and it was noted that the EHF would confer with the NB to establish the best options for the NFs despite the fact that the Executive Committee will make the final decision.

5.3. Competition related issues

Concerning competition related issues, discussions will be held with all stakeholders, but it is expected that the market will determine the direction. Briefly touching on the increased burden on the players, the NB felt that the position of the National Federations could weaken in the future as the NFs do not pay the players, there would be less incentive to participate in NT events. From the perspective of the National Federations it is important to have a balance. President Wiederer informed the NB that a Memorandum of Understanding has been in place for eight years, and their principle objectives of moving/eliminating large championships was not activated due to the factual situation on an internal level and the market situation. The clubs via the FCH also showed their support for the expansion of the men's EURO to 24 teams; reaching the balance continued to be 'give and take'.

6. Future Conferences

6.1. Conference of Presidents/Congress

6.2. Conference for Secretaries General

To the Conference of Presidents (January 2018/CRO) and the EHF Congress (June 2018/SCO), no special report was given. It was noted that due to the rescheduling of the Conference of Presidents, a Conference for Secretaries General would not take place in 2018. The process of the EHF Structure in the Future would be part of the Conference of Presidents.

6.3. Other activities

No special report.

7. Preparation PHB meeting

Agenda point not discussed due to time constraints.

8. Other issues

At the request of Chairman Christensen, a brief status update was given to the topic of EHF EURO 2020 ticketing strategy. Secretary General Hausleitner explained that the initial idea was to have a common ticketing system with one ticket provider with prices at a certain level. However, the organisers faced the issue of three different taxation systems and multiple ticketing companies. The prices are expected to be at the same level in all three host countries, and the process is ongoing.

Based on more recent developments, Bana requested an updated specification document as a multi-host event has raised a lot of questions.

Chairman Christensen thanked the Nations Board for their contribution and closed the meeting.

For the Minutes: M. Brown
Vienna, 19 October 2017