

Minutes to the 19th Meeting of the EHF Nations Board (Men)

Date / Time:	Monday, 11 March 2019 / 15:30 – 18:30	
Venue:	Hilton Garden Inn Hotel, Vienna/AUT – Gloriette 1	
Participants:	Morten Stig Christensen	DEN Chairman
	Philippe Bana	FRA Vice Chairman
	Mark Schober	GER
	Marek Góralczyk	POL
	Ingo Meckes	SUI
	Stephen Neilson	GBR
EHF:	Michael Wiederer	EHF President
	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General
	Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer (CSO)
	Marsha Brown	Office/Minutes

Please note that only the key inferences from the ensuing discussions throughout the meeting are condensed for the minutes.

1. Welcome and introduction

Chairman Christensen welcomed the group to the 19th meeting of the Nations Board and, taking reference to the common meeting with the European Handball League Board (EHLB), expressed his appreciation for the initiative. Christensen noted the high volume of activities aimed at the development of the sport on the European level, and hoped that the NB members would return to their federations and encourage them to give their input on the matter of rules by the deadline of 14 March 2019; he mentioned that the Denmark federation, league, and clubs had worked together to provide input.

2. Previous meetings – Minutes/Reports

2.1. EHLB Meeting 09/2018

The Nations Board took note of the minutes.

2.2. NB Meeting 10/2018

The Nations Board approved the minutes.

2.3. PHB Meeting 10/2018

The Nations Board took note of the minutes.

2.4. EXEC Meeting 12/2018, 01/2019

Secretary General, Martin Hausleitner delivered information on the most recent meetings of the EHF Executive Committee that took place in Paris (12/2018) and Hamburg (01/2019). Over the past months, the international calendar for the 2020/21 season was approved and distributed to the stakeholders; the format for international club competitions were finalised, National Team Weeks (NTW) will now include beach handball. Furthermore, the organisation continued to undertake anti-doping activities in the ongoing efforts to safeguard EHF competitions.

The Executive Committee also approved the final elements that comprise the Women's EHF EURO 2020 Qualifications. An evaluation in the area of officiating was mandated and the working groups that dealt with the topics YAC events in the future and a 24-team Women's EHF EURO event were instigated.

Some of the items mentioned were dealt with during the common meeting of the EHLB and NB. Additionally, in response to comment, the NB was informed that there are no specific regulations in relation to the release of beach handball players from professional clubs (compensation, etc.); the matter will be reviewed accordingly. A meeting dealing with beach handball and other matters with the IHF has been scheduled for July where i.e. player eligibility is on the agenda. Closing the agenda point the change in anti-doping within the EHF office personnel was noted. Furthermore, AD regulations for every EHF competition haven been and will be worked out.

2.5. Meetings – Technical Commissions 02/2019 - Report

- **Competitions Commission (CC):** the registration process for the 2021 WCh Qualification started, and the first phase of EURO 2022 (Q1/1-6 in LUX/MLT) is complete; those teams that did not progress have the option to participate in the IHF Emerging Nations Tournament in GEO. The outcome of the YAC evaluation will be presented in AP4 and the matter of professionalization of the officiating system (also treated by the CC in their meeting) was presented earlier in the common meeting.
- **Methods Commission (MC):** the technical group recently handled three major topics – the RINCK Convention, master coach renewal courses, and several national master coach courses. Work also continued on the coaches licensing system that will be mandatory as of 2020 at all EURO events. The MC through Helmut Höritsch also presented at the European Week of Sport during the EU Presidency in Austria; the opportunity was used to make additional contacts. It was decided that as of April 2020, the EHF Wheelchair Handball Championship will occur on a yearly basis. In the area of development the various SMART programmes are continuing without issues, and the topic 'Handball as a Dual Career' will be a feature of the 5th EHF Scientific Conference.
- **Beach Handball Commission (BC):** the sport will join the EUSA programme for the first time in 2019; maintaining the momentum of activities, the BC presented its master and development plans for the future that aims to have countries involved and to see beach handball presented at world events. The discussion to drive beach handball on the Olympic agenda is ongoing.

3. EHF Information

3.1. EHF Structure – Update

Opening the subject, it was reiterated that one of the outcomes from the last NB meeting centred on what to do with the platform resp. the environment in light of the approaching changes; it was underlined that the Nations Board for men's handball has dealt with and continues to deal with a colourful array of topics. From 2021, a clear picture for the boards is foreseen, and the situation of the WHB will be adapted accordingly. At present, on the one hand, the Nations Board is as such only linked to the Professional Handball Board, but has no direct link to the Executive Committee. On the other hand, the Executive Committee is a representation of the National Federations as all representatives are selected and elected by the Federations – but it remains a sport-political entity. It is envisaged that the restructured Nations Board in the future will bring a more practical element to the EXEC.

3.1.1. Nations Board Platform^{*at the request of Chairman Christensen}

Supported by the visual presentation, President Wiederer recapped the expected changes to the stakeholder groups representing the EHF Member Federations as of 2021.

Nations Committee Men:

- as of 2021 replaces the current Nations Board
- Six (6) representatives; Election procedure: 1-12, 13-24, 25-36, 37-50, plus 2 places
- Two (2) NCM members to the PHB
- Three (3) NCM members to the newly created National Federations Platform

National Federations Platform (Nations Board):

- New - implementation as of 2021
- Fusion of the Men's & Women's Nations Committees
 - Men's & Women's Nations Committee (3 + 3)
 - Chairperson to the Executive Committee

In the discussion that followed various points raised included, but were not limited to the following summary.

The Nations Board was created to represent the Member Federations on the professional level, and over the years, the group has been instrumental in the resolution of many issues; to the future changes, it was queried how should topics be brought to the table in the future? Should additional meetings be scheduled with the focus of discussing tendencies; the dialogue remains crucial.

The new system as of 2021 ensures a good position to men's handball in the structure. The matter of tasks and duties in 2021 will remain on the agenda of the Nations Board. However, it is wished that on the level of the National Federations, the cooperation with the EHF is more akin to that of the relationship with the club stakeholder. Furthermore, based on the successful outcome of the calendar question in early 2018, the idea of having a more strategic working method geared towards working more efficiently at sourcing solutions and co-constructing projects e.g. more working groups, think tanks (expert bodies), cooperative meetings for the specific topics was raised. If it would be possible to work and tackle issues in such a way, would the Competitions Commission in its current form be necessary? The NB requested that the question be treated on the level of the Executive Committee in relation to future structural changes.

In response, it was underlined that the collaboration with the club stakeholder was not a permanent working structure for the field of the marketing for the EHF Club competitions. Furthermore, in relation to dealing with complex issues that may arise, it was about getting the right people in the room; it is imperative that the various topics are actually discussed within the federations in a representative way. Nevertheless, according to the issue at hand, it will be possible in the future to convene a group of experts and specialists for the respective task. Additionally, on the level of boards, commissions, and committees, the positions available have to be utilised by the National Federations. Though much activity proceeds on the level of daily business within the office, it should always be possible to discuss all matters of relevance at a high level. Also the National Federations are encouraged to share information and have discussions and use the forums available to them such as the Conference for Secretaries General (CfSG); at such a meeting of the Federations, the opportunity to discuss (break outs) what should come next in certain matters is provided. The engagement of the National Federations in certain matters was also touched upon, as it was mentioned that some lower ranked/emerging nations are seemingly not involved or are challenged by the complexity of some processes on the level of top competitions; it is vital that all Federations understand the decisions that are being made.

4. EHF EUROS

4.1. Younger Age Categories Events in the Future

Taking reference to the extensive and impactful dialogue that led to the reorganisation of the Younger Age Category competitions in 2015, Peter Sichelschmidt, Senior Manager National Teams, opened the topic by reviewing the years that followed the implementation of the renewed system. A few key points were highlighted: in 2016 registrations topped 43; the Men's 20 events have fewer registrations across the generations (1996, 1998). A comparison between the EHF and IHF youth events from 2012 was also undertaken. Continuing, following the announcement of the expansion of all IHF World Championships (senior, youth, and junior) to 32-team events, the Nations Board was provided with an overview of the place distribution as of 2021. The 32 places have been determined as follows:

- 1 place – organiser
- 12 performance places (based on teams ranked 1 – 12 at the preceding event)
- 18 compulsory places (4 AHF / 4 CAHB / 4 EHF / 2 NACHC / 3 SCAHC / 1 OZE)
- 1 wild card to the winner of the IHF Trophy

It was duly noted that if OZE does not participate, the place would revert to an additional wild card for the IHF to allocate. Moreover, should there be more than one organiser in the future the number of compulsory places for the respective continent would be reduced accordingly.

Returning to European matters, following the 2017 implementation of the adjusted competition format that removed the qualification element, the EHF Executive Committee initiated the evaluation that was part of the original mandate. In February 2019, a working group to handle the matter of Younger Age Categories Events in the Future convened in Vienna. Based on the various experiences and relevant feedback the main issues were identified as followed:

- three categories of teams (*EURO participants, EURO/Championship participants, Championship participants*) – the teams in the second category have reduced chances to progress to other events
- W19/M20 are not attractive both to participants (*lack of progression opportunity*) and organisers (*cost*) – the winners of W19/M20 should directly qualify to the IHF WU20/MU21 events
- Those teams that fail to qualify to the WU18/MU19 have no alternative competition (*lack of opportunity to gain experience, player development stifled*)

The working group proposed the following options for the categories:

- ◆ **W17/M18 YAC Events in the Future:** implement an alternative competition for those teams not qualified to the WU18/MU19 WChs in the year after the W17/M18 EChs; this would be a 1-week tournament in June for eight teams (rank 12 -16 of the EURO and the top three 2nd ranked teams of the Championship).
- ◆ **W19/M20 YAC Events in the Future:** directly qualify the winners of the W19/M20 to the IHF WU20/MU21 events **or** implement an alternative competition to serve as a qualification to the WU20/MU21 events; this would be a 1-week tournament in January (of the WCh year) for eight teams (rank 12 -16 of the EURO and the top three 2nd ranked teams of the Championship) that will provide a second chance to progress to the event.

In the discussion that ensued, it was underlined that the Championships do not serve as a qualification to any event. In order to overcome the issues presented in the report of the YAC working group, the Competitions Commission wishes to implement additional competitions as it was deemed that there is not much difference in the level of the teams that would be part of this extra event. The overall objective of the evaluation is to have more progress in the tournament, the M20 in particular – the new idea will see a team progress to the MU21 World Championship. The Nations Board was informed that the matter was on the agenda of the Conference for Secretaries General in Copenhagen (04/2019) before being submitted to the Executive Committee for a decision.

4.2. EHF EURO 2020 SWE/AUT/NOR – Status Update

With over ten months to go until the event, it was reported that 50.000 tickets have been sold for the event (mostly in SWE). The 24-team event format has meant additional demands for the organisers; therefore, for the teams travelling between venues, charter flights have been secured where necessary.

In the run-up to the event, the timeline has been adjusted and the Heads of Delegation Conference will now take place on 27/28 June in Vienna, and on the fringes of the HoDC and the EHF EURO 2020 Media Workshop, the Men's EHF Champions League season opening draw will provide the first backdrop on 27 June and on 28 June, the draw for the Group Phase of the Men's EHF EURO 2020 will take place. Since this will be two weeks after the conclusion of the qualifiers, the new timeline will allow for the teams to make their respective arrangements.

The final weekend of the event will also see changes to its format. The semi-finals will be on Friday, the bronze and 5/6 matches will play on Saturday, and the final will be the only match on Sunday. It was mentioned that the teams will leave the venue when their participation in the event ends (cost-effective); the days that teams have to travel by plane when changing venue will be accounted as transport days and not rest days – therefore, two days off will be given to the teams in question.

4.3. EHF EUROs 2022/2024 – Status Update

The Nations Board was informed that the events would be the first organised together with Infront/DAZN. The first with the German organiser took place on 11 March in the morning; amongst other items e.g. venues and ticketing, the delegation from Germany discussed options for promotional activities. In order to define the environment for the future events, the first workshop with the HUN/SVK delegation will take place on 20 March in Vienna. Secretary General Hausleitner informed on the new arena with 20.000 spectator capacity being built in the Hungarian capital, Budapest.

As part of the topic, the EHF also noted that due to the rescheduled Congress and accounting for the next two events in 2021 and 2023, a solution as to the awarding of future events in 2026 was needed as event preparation time would be reduced to 2.5 years. Thus, the awarding process has to take place within a proper timeframe.

Additionally, the EHF is evaluating a ticketing system that would see ticket sales for top events be administered via the EHF. It was underlined that there is much to discuss surrounding the topic such as services provided, fees, onsite services/responsibilities, etc. It was made clear that the objective of such a system would be to have more response from the international market, serve larger groups, as well as to collect data for the next organisers.

4.4. EHF EURO Issues – Reference Points

Secretary General Hausleitner informed the Nations Board that the cooperation with Kinexon in the area of the iBall continues to progress, and in a new development, the organisation is in the process of analysing the potential of ‘player tracking’. It was mentioned that this technological tool could be essential to tactical input. At this time, the idea is to track tailored information relevant to statistics, and there is no intention to collect any information deemed irrelevant to the game. Ideas on how to use any data collected included display on the media cube in arenas (information of interest to spectators) and information for coaches. It was made clear that additional exploration on what data to collect was needed.

The EHF emphasised that it was very aware of the sensitive nature of the information, and that the Nations Board was the right forum to discuss such an important topic. It was conceded that input from other fields (legal, players’ stakeholder, etc.) was necessary to take the idea further, and that any potential implementation would only be undertaken in agreement and cooperation with the National Federations e.g. permissions would be requested during the Heads of Delegation Conference. Moreover, looking to the future, optimisation of the substitution area (layout) to accommodate officials as well as the technologies in use also must come under consideration.

4.5. 2019 Beach Handball EURO

The upcoming events that will take place in Stare Jablonki in June/July will be the largest beach handball event in its history. With 40 teams in the senior competition and 29 teams in the younger age categories will see over 1100 players visit Poland over a two-week period. Closing the agenda point, it was noted that all beach handball EURO events would feature on the agenda of the Nations Board meetings in the future.

5. World Championships and Qualifications

Based on the presentation during the common meeting of the European Handball League Board (EHLB) and the Nations Board (NB), no further discussion took place.

6. Preparation PHB meeting

The NB took note of the agenda to the upcoming PHB meeting.

7. Various

- **Olympic Qualification following European Championships (IHF Events):** it was mentioned that the events will be awarded in February 2020 (excl. TV rights). It was noted that as of the end of January, no media contracts can be in place.
- **Video proof:** returning to the topic of video proof, and based on a discussion within Denmark, it was queried how to make the situations more interesting for the spectators, and if the technology could be utilised in additional ways. It was mentioned that in some cases (American Football) the outcome of video proof decisions are transmitted to the spectators, in some cases spectators can hear the deliberations of officials as most referees have microphones. The discussion also raised the matter on how to educate referees on video proof usage. It was agreed that the NB would return to the topic; it was underlined that generally speaking, the sport had to remain focused on innovation and in order to keep the image of the sport attractive to the public.

- **iFloor:** in concerted efforts towards ongoing development, the Chairman spoke of the possibility of intelligent flooring (iFloor); he mentioned that a current problem remains playing halls with multi-sport lines, and therefore would like to explore the idea for the future. Opportunities insofar as the integration of advertising, analysis, etc. were described; it is known that it is an ongoing project for some flooring providers. It was mentioned that such a technology is in use in a German sports hall (not without its problems) and it could be beneficial when working with children.

Thanking the participants for their contribution, Chairman Christensen closed the meeting.

For the Minutes: M. Brown

Vienna, 15 March 2019

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