

## Minutes to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the EHF Nations Board (NB) (Men's Handball)

**Date / Time:** Thursday, 23 April 2020 / 14:00 – 15:30

**Venue:** Video Conference

**Participants NB:**

Morten Stig Christensen	DEN	Chairman
Philippe Bana	FRA	Vice Chairman
Mark Schober		Member - GER
Marek Góralczyk		Member - POL
Ingo Meckes		Member - SUI
Stephen Neilson		Member - GBR

**EHF:**

Michael Wiederer	President
Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General
Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer (CSO)
Peter Sichelschmidt	Senior Manager National Teams
Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison/Minutes

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### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcoming the NB Members, President Wiederer opened the informal meeting by stating its purpose of securing a common position on the level of the National Federations understanding that in the previous weeks input has been received (from clubs and national federations) and treated, but a harmonisation on the level of the Nations Board is required prior to the meeting of the Professional Handball Board. As the meeting was regarded as extraordinary, no formal Chairmanship was facilitated, and the EHF participants presented the information as a basis for the discussions.

Wiederer gave a brief recap of the overall situation, and with Europe facing a 6-month shutdown from March until the end of August, and with each country facing a difficult but different situation, the consequences have to be discussed. With the members obviously aware of the market situation in their own countries, the EHF and EHFEM have been in regular contact with the partners, and their market situation is also known, and the contractual situation is also being monitored. The EHF sought legal expertise to verify what it could decide, as well as what it had to decide. As a result, the EHF is now aware that between the Congresses it has the responsibility to take conclusions and come to decisions.

Finally, the EHF is tending towards an optimistic approach to the situation, it is necessary for the external environment (media, partners, etc.), but also for the motivation of the internal partners i.e. stakeholders, office staff (both in the building and at home).

## 2. Current Situation

As Europe is faced with border closures, travel restrictions, global security recommendations, nothing is happening at this time. The sport is also faced with event bans, some that are already in place and those that are yet to come, this varies in the different countries and has its respective consequences. Federations and clubs are also dealing with budget cuts and, on the side of the players, salary cuts. Though there is a logic to such measures, it also has an impact on the position of the stakeholder groups representing the players and the clubs. Furthermore, with the stoppage of the leagues (even of those that were optimistic) it shows that the proactive approach of the EHF was (unfortunately) correct, and in the coming season, handball will see an increase in the number of teams in the top teams due to legal reasons and, as a consequence, maybe an increase in the number of games (for some, but not for all).

Subsequently, the EHF will have to deal with the complex issues of qualification to the European Cup competitions; the difficulty will arise out of some of the leagues having finished and others having not reached the play-offs, and other league seasons unfinished (null and void); there will be a many different situations and the EHF is preparing for that in the selection process.

The EHF is also monitoring other sports and their events, and the impact of their cancellations; other non-sporting events (both business and cultural) also have to be observed as it is seen that many events are cancelled through the autumn, a time at which the EHF still hopes to be active with competitions. Looking to the existing and new contracts, Wiederer remarked that there must be an understanding that having a contract does not automatically mean that it will work, because the effects on the partners also exist, and it could have effects on our partnerships.

## 3. Information on Competitions

### 3.1. Overall Picture June – August 2020

Presenting the overall picture, Wiederer mentioned the ‘Feasibility Study’ created by the EHF to provide solutions for the current situation (i.e. ‘to play, or not to play’); this document was approved by the Executive Committee in March. Over the past month, the EHF has made use of video conferencing holding many meetings to maintain the exchange of information with the stakeholders and has also engaged with individual contacts on all levels. Logically, for all groups, the main topics of discussion have been competitions and finances. Additionally, with small adaptations, the EHF also defined the crisis management parameters; finally, knowing that the EHF has to take conclusions and see the consequences, it is desired that this is undertaken in a transparent way. Thus, the EHF informed the Nations Board that it would publish a status update following the meeting of the Executive Committee that contains not only the facts, but the reasoning behind the decisions.

### 3.2. National Team Competitions

CSO Glaser noted that the organisation was in a period where it collated a lot of information over the past weeks and tried to reach conclusions. The meetings of the Technical Commissions took place last week, and the Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday (24.04.2020), where it is expected that the decisions will be taken. The EHF has listed all the upcoming competitions just to provide an

overview to serve as a starting position to which additional information will be provided. The two remaining national team competitions of the season are described.

### **3.2.1. EURO Qualifiers NOR/DEN**

Two out of six matches have been played, and due to the situation, the remaining four matches cannot be played in an appropriate way; the group of qualifiers being abandoned at this point.

### **3.2.2. Men's World Championship Qualification EGY**

This event consists of two rounds that are missing (8 + 20 matches) both scheduled to be played in June and the first week of July. Again, it is not feasible to play the matches for the obvious known reasons.

From the ensuing discussion, pertinent comments are compiled and summarised:

- In terms of contractual agreements, the cancellation of the Qualification Europe to the Men's World Championship would have negative effects on the smaller federations. It was proposed that an alternative solution be worked out i.e. to play Qualification Europe in October 2020 and the EURO Qualifiers in June 2021 after the Final4 which was regarded by the problematic media situation in June due to the football EURO and existing contracts.
- The EHF, according to the regulations, is obligated to nominate the teams in the summer (six months prior to World Championship) and as the nomination of the teams to the IHF has to be completed earlier, end of October would be too late. September is blocked by the leagues (who have an enlarged field of participants) and the clubs (who reject the idea of an addition playing week in June 2021). A later date also produces challenges with the TV and timing aspects for the OC and the marketers. Additionally, all the representatives of the other groups will strongly oppose additional matches.
- Contractual obligations have a significant impact with marketers and TV.
- The positions of individual participants regarding their countries was stressed.
- It is better to have the matches decided on the playing court than at the table. However, there is no room in the calendar to play two rounds with four match dates necessary to have the competition decided on court.

The point was left open to be discussed later in the meeting.

### **3.2.3. YAC Events M18/M20**

All the 2020 Younger Age Category events planned for August (some having already been moved from July) will be postponed further; the current situation is too unstable (travel restrictions, parental guidance, preparation time, etc.). A new date (possibly January 2021) is being sought and dialogue

with the organisers and the participants has been initiated. The EHF indicated that there will be flexibility for the teams when reorganising the events. A final decision can be taken at the Executive Committee meeting in June.

#### **3.2.4. IHF W18/W20 Events**

It was indicated by the IHF that these events in August would be postponed, although this information was not officially published yet.

#### **3.2.5. Other Competitions and Activities**

The European Masters Championship and Women's 16 European Open are cancelled in their entirety. There is no option to play these events at another time due to the specificity of the competition structure; the cancellation came via the organisers. The various 2020 beach handball events will not take place. The EHF is working on alternative solutions for some (e.g. YAC EURO - postponed) and not for others (Championships - cancelled). The EUSA Games was postponed by the organiser and the IHF beach handball events will also be postponed.

### **3.3. Club Competitions**

#### **3.3.1. Men's CL/EHFC/CC**

#### **3.3.2. Women's CL/EHFC/CC**

The competitions planned for June and July will not take place. The Final4s of the men's and women's Champions Leagues have been rescheduled (DELO – September; VELUX - December). Resulting from a dialogue with the club stakeholder (and in agreement with the clubs) it was stated that the VELUX EHF Final4 has to be played on the court wherever possible, therefore a date was set in December; the same holds true for the DELO EHF Final4 in Budapest though discussion concerning the quarterfinal phase and whether it can be played or not are ongoing. All club competitions that were part of the Feasibility Study that covered the five-week period (1 June to 7 July) cannot take place; these competitions will return to the agenda of the Executive Committee meeting for a final decision.

### **3.4. Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments (OGQT)**

Wiederer explained that dealing with the topic was not an easy process partly due to the IOC on the one hand and, on the other, its idea to place the OG in April/May 2021, which led to the EHF asking for intervention from the IHF as it would have negatively impacted the European national and international competitions. Eventually with the OG fixed for a summer period, the qualifications remained open. With several talks on a competition level (EHF Sichelschmidt/IHF Strub) there were differing opinions. It was clear that when a date is set for the Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments, the teams will play; thus, the option for the EHF was to open dialogue in view to minimising the impact on European competitions. The EHF held a calendar (video) conference with the IHF on Tuesday, 21 April with the OGQT being in the focus. As no resolution was found as to the men's event, the EHF developed several options, which were described by CSO Glaser.

- To the women's OGQT it was easy to find a solution as the National Team Week (NTW) is planned and the matches can go ahead from 19-21 March 2021. The EHF will present this solution to the IHF as the final decision and confirmation is within their responsibility.

To the men's OGQT, the EHF worked on different proposals that came from different starting points:

- **Alternative 1:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added immediately following from 15-21 March to play Rounds 3/4 of the EURO Qualifiers. *This is an interpretation of the IHF approach – an additional week for seven teams.*
- **Alternative 2:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added after the F4 in June 2021 to play the EURO Qualifiers. *This is not the preferred option of the IHF as it overlaps with the football European Championships and is too close to the start of the rescheduled Olympic Games. This also poses a financial threat as I/D would have a reason to cut guaranteed payments.*
- **Alternative 3:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added to the calendar, specifically 8-12 September 2021. *EURO Qualifiers one month after the OG and three months before the Final Tournament.*
- **Alternative 4:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added to the calendar, specifically 3-7 November 2021.
- **Alternative 5:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021; the existing national team period from 6-9 January 2021 will be used for those EURO Qualifier matches of teams in Pot 1 and Pot 2 that will play OGQT in March.
- **Alternative 6:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021. All other teams will play EURO Qualifiers in this period (4 vs 3 and 3 vs 4). The two matches of the teams in pot 1 and 2 (2 vs 1 and 1 vs 2) will be added to Week 1 (two additional days - Mo/Tu - in November 2020) and Week 3 (two additional days - Mo/Tu - in April/May 2021).

From the ensuing discussion, pertinent comments are compiled and summarised:

- The (5) NB members selected a combination of Alternatives 3 (priority), 5, and (with a stronger preference for option) 6 that were deemed acceptable in the given circumstances.
- Member Neilson abstained from stating an opinion as the topic did not impact the emerging nations and the financial considerations were not the same.
- The draw date for the EURO Qualifiers is fixed at 16 June; this date cannot be changed. External partners are also to be informed on a plan in order to initiate key competition elements i.e.

media sales. The placement of the OGQT and EURO Qualifiers have an impact on the further preparations for the upcoming national and international activities.

#### 4. Other Topics

- **12<sup>th</sup> EHF Conference for Secretaries General (CfSG) / EHF Masterplan**

The event planned for April 2020 is now foreseen in the autumn (October 2020) as the work must continue. The CfSG agenda was intended for discussions on the Masterplan. Based on the current situation, the Masterplan must be adapted over the coming weeks to support the national federations in a more flexible and adaptive way e.g. LUX; the EHF will work with the federations. It was underlined that during these times, the EHF will collect monies not used for activities as it is not in the interest of the EHF to retain funds, rather these monies will be to support national federations where possible.

- **Men's World Championship Qualification EGY**

Overall, no formal position was taken by the NB, rather defining the interest of giving the National Federations enough space for activities, but as well understanding that the options are limited.

It was reiterated that during the PHB meeting the question of the World Championship Qualification will be raised and the topic will not be finalised before taking into consideration the input of some NB members that the matches are of importance.

Furthermore, it was remarked the points for the European Ranking are to be revised (based on the cancellation of the World Championship Play-offs and the EURO Qualifiers); the EHF took note and added that due to this situation, it will become apparent in time that certain points will require revision.

Closing the meeting, after the statements of the NB representatives, President Wiederer thanked the members for their collaboration.

Vienna, 28 April 2020/brm

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