
MINUTES TO THE 23RD MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS BOARD (NB)

(Men's Handball)

Date / Time:	Monday, 12 October 2020 / 15:00 – 18:00	
Venue:	Microsoft Teams Video Conference	
Participants:	Morten Stig Christensen	Chairman / DEN
	Philippe Bana	Vice Chairman / FRA
	Mark Schober	Member / GER
	Marek Góralczyk	Member / POL
	Ingo Meckes	Member / SUI
	Stephen Neilson	Member / GBR
EHF:	Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General
EHF Office:	Peter Sichelschmidt	Senior Director National Team Competitions
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison / Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Christensen welcomed the members to the 23rd working session of the Nations Board and thanked them for their willingness to attend the virtual meeting, taking place in the midst of the Covid-19 situation.

1.1. Current Situation:

The overview was given during the common meeting of the European Handball League Board (EHLB) and the EHF Nations Board (NB); please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

1.2. Overall Picture September – December 2020

The NB Members provided information about the current situation in their respective regions. The briefings included the restart of competitions, the carrying out and cancellation of events, as well as the issues of testing within clubs/national teams and consequences of positive cases. The cooperation between the national federations and the clubs has intensified e.g. release of players; concerns of clubs are reverberating especially with clubs wanting assurances on the safety of players as well as regional restrictions i.e. quarantine. The members spoke of communication with authorities, special dispensations for sport/athletes, cooperation with national federations on the topic of 'bubbles', and the international calendar.

It was commonly agreed that it was imperative that matches continued to be played because the survival of the sport depends on it. Especially now, as the handball community 'is in the same boat', it was important to foster a stronger culture of trust and cooperation between National Federations and clubs. It was also mentioned that if regional situations worsen and/or more local restrictions are enforced that threatened participation of teams in the 2020

EURO or the 2021 World Championship the coming year would be very difficult for many National Federations.

2. Previous meetings – Minutes/Reports

2.1. NB Meeting 03 & 04/2020

With no additional comment or question, the minutes to the NB meetings that took place in March and April 2020 were adopted.

2.2. PHB Meeting 03/2020

2.3. WHB/PHB Common Meeting 04/2020

The Nations Board took note of the minutes.

3. EHF / World Competitions

3.1. EXEC Meetings 04/2020, 06/2020, 09/2020

The Nations Board took note of the minutes.

3.2. 12th Conference for Secretaries General

3.3. European Handball Convention

Documentation from the Conference and the Convention were made available to the National Federations on 1 October 2020, and an overview of both meetings were presented during the common meeting. Chairman Christensen thanked the EHF for the professional way in which the events were handled and praised the organisation for the flexibility that the hybrid (in person & simultaneously online) meeting provided to the National Federations.

3.4. Further Reports

3.4.1. Back-to-Handball Platform

3.4.2. Support Measures for National Federations

Hausleitner stated that the 'Back-to-Handball' platform is regularly updated, and that 'smaller' handball nations are taking advantage of the information available. As the platform is used to provide updates and exchange information, the EHF understood that the current circumstances vary between National Federations and certain Federations need more help and support to stay in the game. Thus, the organisation is 'fighting' to ensure that participants can take part by granting all National Federations access to EHF competitions.

Taking reference to the upcoming Women's EHF EURO 2020 in NOR/DEN, Christensen mentioned that all efforts are being undertaken to resolve issues in the host nations where two different situations currently apply. It was underlined that the National Handball Federations of Europe are all 'in the same boat', and in order to overcome the current challenges there must be a level of trust between all National Federations.

Hausleitner reiterated that within the support measures granted by the EHF to assist in overcoming the challenges faced, financial support was based on a 10-point system. In response to the question on the range of payments, it was mentioned that the monetary disbursements varied as payments were based on the activities undertaken by the Federations. Overall, the support measures are geared at safeguarding the handball environment.

3.4.3. EHF Master Plan

The original outlook of the EHF Master Plan was summarised (7 Players, etc.); it was noted that due to the change in global circumstances the plan was amended based on input from the National Federations. The EHF Master Plan will now primarily focus on grassroots activities, the development of the game, as well as strengthening the handball network. The adjusted plan will be finalised prior to the next presentation at the 15th Ordinary EHF Congress in April 2021.

3.4.4. The Brand of Handball

Since April, further brand implementation took place; the identities of beach handball and the younger age category events have been reformed. The new logos, colour palette, etc. has been made available via the EHF platform making it accessible to all National Federations for immediate use. The accompanying brand booklet will be released next month in time to support the organisers of the upcoming championship events.

3.4.5. Home of Handball

The project launched on 1 July 2020 and now all aspects of the European Handball Federations are covered on one platform. With the new CRM system supporting the platform, all data can now be strategically used for further activities and events. The newly released EHF Newsletter and the upcoming EHF app are also under the same umbrella. The 'Home of Handball' is a powerful tool that will be used to connect with fans and enlarge the player community.

4. EHF / World Competitions

4.1. EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK – Status Update (Qualifications / Final Tournaments)

The overview was given during the common meeting; please refer to the EHLB/NB minutes.

4.2. 2020 YAC Events – Status Update

Sichelschmidt provided a brief overview of the national team events that were either cancelled (W16 European Open) or postponed (M20 & M18 EURO/ECh). Following the withdrawal of the M20 EURO organisers, the event was re-awarded to CRO. Current circumstances led to the event organisation agreements being reviewed for all YAC events. The NB are informed that from the original pool of registered participants, five national teams on the level of the championships will no longer take part in the respective events.

With reference to safety protocols, the organisation has arranged for the implementation of a testing regime (Antigen, 72 hours); acknowledging the risk, it was underlined that the environment must be considered, though at this time there are no confirmations as of yet concerning (rooming, dining, transportation, etc.). The importance of the competition tiers (EURO vs. ECh) because of the Covid-19 situation was called into question by EHF and based on the new complexity of the 2021 international calendar (OG Quals, OG, WCh, etc.), and as the entire situation is still under evaluation, the NB were asked to provide a position on the situation concerning YAC events scheduled in 2021.

In the discussion that followed the points raised included, but were not limited to: income versus guaranteed expenditure, travel/entry restrictions, unpredictability of Covid-19, lack of commercial interest, importance to the development of handball, detriment to the education, progression and motivation of players, and prioritisation/ranking of competitions. Conversely, it was agreed that if the remainder of the YAC events were cancelled, there must be a form of recompense for the registered teams and federations; ideas floated included expanding the number of teams in the next cycle of YAC events. It was emphasised the situation is unique, and a different system will be implemented for the first half of 2021; a final decision on the YAC events is to be taken within the next two weeks. It was agreed that the risk must be weighed against the need of some Federations for a competition; an adaptable solution must be found in order to have a competition. It was also underlined that there must be a clear cooperation with the IHF.

4.3. World Championships and Qualifications

Sichelschmidt provided a brief update on the status of European teams part of current IHF events; he spoke of the upcoming World Championships and the wildcards awarded to POL and RUS, meaning a total of 15 European teams in the 32-team event. At the impressive draw in Gizeh, the IHF announced that the event is ready to go ahead. At the youth and junior level, the MU21 will take place in Hungary (23.6.–4.7.2021); this is the first IHF YAC event with 32 teams; Europe has 14 places including the host nation. The MU19 will be held in Greece; the scheduled period of 2.–13.8.2021 collides with the rescheduled Olympic Games. Including the host team, the MU19 provides 15 places for Europe. Both the MU19 and MU21 impact the European YAC events as regulatory deadlines for nominations potentially cannot be upheld due to the disrupted schedule.

Hausleitner brought the topic of the sale of away TV rights package for the World Championship Qualification to the NB. Due to the environment, these qualifications will be played in the framework of the EHF EURO Qualifiers; thus, the standard will be the same, but in this case without the possibility to steer the TV market e.g. not shown on EHFTV, as the topic was not regulated. As there have been requests for insurance, branding (akin to the EURO Qualifiers), etc., the EHF wanted to start a discussion with the stakeholders to examine the feasibility of marketing an away TV rights package in the future in favour of the National Federations with a share to be invested in the development of the product; an external neutral agency (not Infront) estimated the value of the men's play-off (away matches) rights at EUR 500k.

In the ensuing discussion comments raised included, but were not limited to, ensuring that there was no collision with (NF) agreements already in place, as well as having a clear written offer for home and away rights. A calculation model is to be developed stating the Federation and global share. It was noted that some Federations would not have an issue to sell these rights; however, in order to protect other Federations and develop the product, the idea of progressing in phases was floated. The overall approach was regarded positively by the Nations Board and it was underlined that the intention of the EHF is to fulfil its obligations to its partners, endeavour to keep the environment safe, and uphold the contribution towards the National Federations. In order to deliver the business case and ensure a proper timeline

it is necessary for discussions to begin to allow for implementation in the period following the EURO 2022.

4.4. Beach Handball

Both on the level of the Beach Handball Commission and department within the EHF office, this branch of the sport has been very active. The BC/Office has developed an online forum that hosts regular exchanges of information with its stakeholders, the 2021 Beach Handball EUROS were awarded to Bulgaria and based on the new I&D partnership TV production is assured. Furthermore, promising steps have been made to leverage the European beach tour (ebt) and other competitions in this environment. A registration of clubs and players (transfers) will be implemented from the 2021/22 season onwards. At this time, there is no new information concerning beach handball being added to the list of Olympic disciplines due to the Covid-19 situation - this includes the postponement of the Youth Olympic Games to 2026 - however, the EHF remains optimistic for 2024.

Reflecting on the interest shown by France and Denmark in hosting a beach handball event, it was commented that if the EHF wanted larger nations to consider applying for events, an income stream for the organiser would have to be found. At this point in the development of beach handball, there is no revenue source. It was suggested that the (EHF) absorption of the referee and delegate costs would help the organiser, though it was clearly emphasised that in view of the recently updated professional regulations, there was still no commercial possibilities (ticketing) as it is not possible to have the same count of spectator comparable to indoor handball, no TV rights, etc., though the potential to participate was reiterated. It was agreed that the issues raised had to be discussed on the various levels.

4.5. Wheelchair Handball

The combined World and European Championship after the postponement is now rescheduled for autumn 2021; the joint organisers remain optimistic that the event can be organised due to the importance of joining the Paralympic family. Though this branch of the sport cannot join before 2028, the time must be used to establish the event. Currently, there are approximately five well developed and organised wheelchair handball nations that have their platforms, competitions, and tournaments. The EHF has developed the rules, regulations, and these documents have a sound status in the wheelchair handball community.

4.6. Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments

The playing period for the Olympic Games will be 23.07.-08.08.2021; this led to the Men's OG-QT being postponed to the NTW in March (12.-14.03.2021) running parallel to the EURO 2022 (HUN/SVK) qualifiers round 3 and 4. The OG-QT participants (FRA, GER, POR, SLO, NOR and SWE) will have to play their qualifier matches against their opponents in January 2021. An individual solution for CRO and ESP will have to be sought for the EURO Cup in January. The teams of JPN, DEN; ARG, BHR, ESP, and EGY are all directly qualified to the Olympic Games.

The OG-QT for Women was postponed to the National Team Week in March: 19 to 21 March 2021, as it is currently without any competitive matches.

5. Media and Marketing Agreement 2020+

5.1. Status Update

Hausleitner reported that media sales have reached a good level in both areas of club and national team competitions and most markets are covered. Negotiations are ongoing to find solutions for the BEL, GRE, TUR, and ESP (EURO Cup) regions. For the upcoming EURO in NOR/DEN, all regions are covered apart from CRO, however, the EHF remains optimistic that a deal is close.

In the area of marketing sales, the outlook for EURO events is positive, conversely sales directed at club competitions have mainly been solicited from the EHF network; the discussion on how to deal with these rights is ongoing.

Much success has been attained surrounding the digital product; the accomplished relaunch of the Home of Handball and EHFTV platforms, as well as the involvement of the clipping service (2WSC) has enabled the organisation to provide national federations and clubs with more content, and the reach is increasing. Additionally, the influencer project and other promotional campaigns were initiated; here, everything is moving in the right direction.

The partnership launched as scheduled on 1 July 2020 and the collaboration continues to work well; this is supported by a regular exchange of information that cements the stable cooperation.

5.2. Competition Related Matters

Hausleitner reiterated that the current primary objective is the safeguarding the EHF EURO Qualifiers, the EHF EURO 2020 in NOR/DEN, and proving the organisation to be a reliable partner. The importance of these cornerstone events, especially during these challenging times, was emphasised. It was noted that the only team sports currently playing in Europe on a national team level at this time are football and handball.

6. Various

6.1. Timetable/Meeting CAL 2021

There was no additional comments to the schedule provided prior to the meeting (initially published in September); however, to the topic of possible decisions that may need to be taken in relation to European YAC events, it was noted that any decision has to be made within the next two weeks as event organisers have to be duly informed. In response to a query about IHF-EHF collaboration concerning the YAC events, it was mentioned that the last meeting was two weeks ago; the IHF Council will take a final decision to the IHF events.

6.2. Other Topics

As requested, and in a continuation of the topic opened during the common meeting of the European Handball League Board and the EHF Nations Board (Men), discussion continued on the topics of Education Compensation and Players' Agents. What follows is a summary of those discussions.

Education Compensation: the members provided examples experience within their own federations i.e. steady increase in compensation requests, players paying their own transfer

fees, compensation paid for a second division transfer, all of which (and more) highlight the need for reform at the European level as the situation has been the same for many years. It was underlined that Education Compensation must not hinder the development or movement of players, but many factors should be considered e.g. the receipt of compensation beneficial to amateur clubs; the evaluation of the general situation must also lend balance to the various deviations that can occur.

The various aspects of the topic were emphasised such as compensation being an income source, developing the areas of transfers, the receipt of government support by some National Federations, the aspect of education received in schools resp. academies. Furthermore, it is the wish to also support the integration of players and this is an aspect that varies widely between National Federations, but existing processes could discourage players from continuing with the sport. It was agreed that it would not be easy to simplify this area of the business; solutions must be sought through a detailed evaluation as the current system no longer supplies the answers to the present questions. The NB agreed that a working group should be convened to deal with the matter.

Players' Agents: based on the information provided in the common meeting, the members of the NB added their own experiences with the topic of players' agents. Again, the difficulty of the matter was underlined regarding the respective national and Europewide laws governing this area. It was reaffirmed that players can be represented by anyone they chose i.e. parents, agents, lawyers. The notion of having a group of agents willing to engage in a fair global behaviour with the endorsement of the EHF through registration, education (seminars; ethics), guidelines, and certification, was expressed; this could result in a common understanding and good atmosphere with agents representing handball players.

As the latest initiative was launched by the club stakeholder (FCH), the Nations Board agreed that it would support a working group to continue evaluating the matter if so desired by the club side. From the side of the EHF it was stated that based on the law, such a notion was unlikely as neither agents could be compelled to register, nor could the EHF issue certification, and issuing regulations would be unviable. Furthermore, the topic is wide reaching (e.g. IHF responsibility via the regulations, legal representatives), also it is clear that it is a costly situation for those involved – agents take money out of a system that they do not contribute to. Though the EHF had no concept for a positive solution, the statement of the NB was recognised.

7. Preview PHB Meeting and Closing

Noting that the agenda of the upcoming PHB meeting reflected the topics dealt with by the Nations Board, Chairman Christensen was confident that the position of the National Federations can be duly represented.

Thanking the NB members for taking the time to be part of the virtual session as well as their contribution to the discussion and closed the 23rd meeting of the EHF Nations Board (Men).

Vienna, 16 October 2020

committees & boards\ehf nations board\2020\nb*23\nb*23_minutes_201016e