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## MINUTES TO THE 6<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS BOARD

**Date:** Monday, 16 October 2023  
**Time:** 11:00 – 19:00  
**Venue:** Renaissance Wien Hotel

**Participants NB:** Mark Schober Chairman | GER  
Pirje Orasson Vice Chairwoman | EST  
Nodjialem Myaro Member | FRA  
Leonor Mallozzi Member | POR  
Ingo Meckes Member | SUI

**Participants EHF:** Martin Hausleitner Secretary General  
Markus Glaser Chief Sports Officer  
Marsha Brown Corporate Liaison | Minutes  
Alenka Cuderman Women's Handball Coordinator  
Max Riede YAC Coordinator

**Excused:** Morten Stig Christensen Member | DEN

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### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Schober welcomed the NB Members to the meeting, the final session of the day, and moved directly into the agenda.

### 2. NB Meeting 03/2023 – Minutes & Follow-Up

With no additional comment or questions, the minutes from the spring session (March 2023) were adopted.

### 3. Input Nations Committee Women

Chairwoman Myaro spoke of the diverse topics discussed by the NCW Members in the meeting:

Younger Age Category Events in the Future: the NCW held an in-depth discussion that touched upon many areas including how to have more organisers and how to assist Emerging Nations to become organisers. To this input it was stated that other National Federations would like the chance to organise a YAC event, but it is not financially viable with this ranging from being completely unaffordable for some to recording a net loss for others. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a strategy to have a common understanding regarding the objectives and priorities of a YAC event.

To the playing system unveiled during the common meeting, there was much input from the Nations Board. As stated in the NCM meeting, the matter of how the best 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked teams are decided was of concern. Secretary General Hausleitner reflected upon the journey to bring the YAC events to its current status; he reminded the Nations Board of initial changes when it was still a 16-team event (top 8 promotion, last 8 relegation), the process to expand to a 24-team event, which has allowed for the participation of mid-ranked nations which previously would have faced relegation. The improvement in the financial situation was also raised as, in the new version, there is a package available for the organiser and, as part of the recent update already in place for 2024, the media rights are going to the market to be sold for the first time. Underscoring the point, Hausleitner emphasised how the changes within the system are geared towards the development of the Emerging Nations, as well as moving the YAC EURO product in a direction that mirrors the senior EURO events.

Keeping the question of how to develop the players at the heart of the matter, it was noted that due to the additional participants, there are eight to ten new markets to be explored. To the concerns about the risk of not progressing to the main round, Hausleitner stated that the door is not closed if you are competitive. Chairman Schober underlined the need to have a strategic approach to the YAC competitions which should be documented and distributed. Elements to such a strategy can entail specific KPIs, how the YAC can contribute to the 7 Pillars of the EHF Master Plan, where is the 'Unicorn' within the YAC system, etc.; the EHF position needs to be clear and stated. Secretary General Hausleitner recalled that when the topic was being treated within the framework of the working group, the top nations feared big differences in the results; however, the phase where there are such significant differences can be kept short.

When speaking of transparency and prioritisation, specifically, "what is the focus of the A-group", it was noted that the obligations of an organizer for YAC events have changed e.g., it is the EHF that took over the responsibility for the TV production of the matches. CSO Glaser underlined that there are a limited number of National Federations that can organise an event; however, he would like to talk to those Federations who are interested in hosting a competition but, at the end, do not submit a bid. To discuss the strategy and business case in detail, the matter will be placed on the agenda of the upcoming Conference for Secretaries General.

EHF EURO Qualifiers: referring to the different level between two teams being too high, the NCW discussed workable solutions to even out the competition as such result negatively affect future funding, as well as media & TV interest. The idea of having the top eight teams play a 'EURO Cup' was floated. In the ensuing discussion, CSO Glaser reminded the Nations Board that all options were discussed at the time prior to the system being finalised. It was an agreed objective to have the same system for men and women. Boskovic continued that when looking to the level of the senior events,

it is necessary to look to develop markets, earn money, and improve the product. Giving an example, he highlighted the potential of the Turkish market in both women and men's handball.

As part of the deep discussion on development, many points were emphasised, and it was underlined that elements of importance to some are not so important to others, e.g. the development of the players vs the sporting results of a team. Following the withdrawal of GBR, the event is being played with only 31 teams. This means that 30% of the EHF Member Federations do not participate in the EHF EURO Qualifiers. The extremely limited/non-existent resources of some EHF Member Federations were highlighted. It would be a task of the Nations Board to help these Nations to establish a decent development of players that are not at the level of the EURO, but at the level of 'Grassroots' handball. The discussion ended with a common opinion, that conclusions can be taken only after the full qualification period.

International Calendar: the NCW recommend that the calendar is distributed "as early as possible" to help the stakeholders alleviate the main problem of hall availability which is also affected with the advent of new sports on the market, and with many of those coming from indoor sports. Reflecting on times past, it is noted that currently the calendar is a lot earlier; the 2025/26 Calendar is currently in progress. CSO Glaser reiterated that the matter of an earlier delivery of the international calendar is complex e.g. access to continental/IHF event dates and the ever-present issue of potential changes. Theoretically, it could be done earlier, but there would be consequences (i.e. the process of a motion). Glaser also noted that certain elements of the calendar do not change, for example, the European Cup always begins on the last weekend of August, thus, to this aspect would not influence the delivery of the calendar. Hausleitner noted that the topic would be discussed internally to find a solution.

Closing the agenda point, it was highlighted that the NCM and NCW agree on many points of common interest such as the development of YAC competitions, new age category within the IHF YAC portfolio, the distribution of the calendar.

#### **4. Input Nations Committee Men**

On behalf of the NCM, Chairman Schober briefly reiterated the main points of discussion within the NCM meeting:

- Administrative Sanctions: the documentation is to be produced in detail and transparently placed in the Statutes. To emphasise the need for clearness, it was suggested that the list of penalties and an option to appeal be included into the revised motion.
- U17 WC: the NCM (and NCW) are not in favour of an additional competition at this level due to the potential impact to the European National Federations.

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- FCH Assembly (Mallorca, ESP): key points, as heard in the common meeting, were discussed and NCM raised concerns about the current media and marketing strategy but acknowledged the potential for growth around EHFTV.
  - EURO Qualifiers – Standards: the NCM agreed that a redevelopment of certain aspects is necessary; with any changes, time should be granted to the National Federations to allow them to adapt. It was noted that, where possible and reasonable, steps have already been implemented.
  - EHF EURO 2030/2032 Bidding Process: refer to the minutes of the NCM meeting.
  - Beach Handball: the NCM looks to have beach handball integrated into the National Team Weeks; issues around competitions (player release, combining youth and senior events, lack of information at the continental level, calendar conflicts) were voiced. Looking to the future, NCM deemed it important to know the BH strategy and to involve indoor coaches more so they understand how they can benefit from their players participating in beach handball when they are not engaged in other (indoor) activities. The NCM would like to explore how to work (with both branches of the sport) in harmony in the future.
  - EHF EURO Regulations: NCM recommended that site visits are to be added to the regulations, as well as preferential options allocated to host nations (i.e.: locker/changing rooms).

## 5. Input EHF

In addition to the information imparted at the common meeting, Secretary Hausleitner opened the topic of ranking by asking the NB Members if there was an opinion on the optimum way/time to publish the rankings. Currently, within the EHF there are several ways to present the ranking (based on three years, yearly, after a EURO cycle, etc.). The IHF ranking is historical; and the EHF ranking can either include or exclude WC results. The awarding of ‘Best Nation’ is ranking of all results in all categories. The thought behind the question is how the National Federations can benefit from the presentation of their ranking results e.g., government funding applications, etc. As rankings must be submitted to the Ministry of Sport, the EHF wants to ensure that the presentation of the ranking is not damaging to the National Federation. The EHF identified the matter of ranking as a topic that needs further exploration, and it is to be worked out internally on the level of the Nations Board and the EHF.

## 6. Summary and Follow-up Discussion

The Nations Board summarised the main topics resulting from the common meeting and the Men’s and Women’s Nations Committees where they wished to see a continuation of the discussion respectively, the follow-up to:

- 2030/2032 Bidding Process: too early.

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- YAC events: to return to the agenda at the next Conference for Secretaries General.
  - IHF U16/U17 World Championship: NCM, NCW, NB – all against the implementation.
  - Administrative Sanctions: NCM, NCW, NB – all in favour of the premise of the motion.
  - Future Beach Handball Strategy: no conclusion; follow-up needed.
  - Standards/Regulations: development thereof could be an element of a Master Plan project.
  - Scheduling: preferable to have the calendar three years in advance; this will return to be further discussed at the office level.

## **7. Preparation PHB and WHB**

The NB discussed the topics that they would present at the respective meetings of the Professional Handball Board and the Women's Handball Board; this reflected the individual meetings of the Nations Committee Men and Women, as well as the combined meeting of the Nations Board.

## **8. Miscellaneous**

No further topics.

Chairman Schober thanked the NB Members and the EHF participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.

Vienna, 25 October 2023

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