
MINUTES TO THE 3rd MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN

Vienna, 11 October 2021 | 14:00 – 17:00

Participants

Nations Committee Men (CM)

Ingo Meckes	Chairman / SUI
Jari Henttonen	Vice Chairman /FIN
Bertrand Gille	Member / FRA
Mark Schober	Member / GER
Fintan Lyons	Member / IRL
M. S. Christensen	Member / DEN (<i>Excused</i>)

Nations Committee Women (CM)

Nodjialem Myaro	Chairwoman / FRA
Leonor Mallozzi	Vice Chairwoman / POR
Sarka Drozdova	Member / CZE
Pirje Orasson	Member / EST
Paola Fiorillo	Member / ITA
Cristina Varzaru	Member / ROU

European Handball League Board (CM)

Nikolas Larsson	Chairman / SWE
Patrice Hitz	Member 2/ SUI
Thierry Wagner	Member 3/ LUX
Etienne Capon	Member 5/FRA
Siniša Ostoić	Member 6/CRO
Frank Bohmann	Vice Chairman/GER (<i>Excused</i>)

European Handball Federation

Michael Wiederer	President (<i>In Part</i>)
Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General (<i>In Part</i>)
Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
Mario Kovacic	Director NT Competitions
Alenka Cuderman	Women's HB Coordinator
JJ Rowland	Director BDM

PART 1: COMMON MEETING NCM/NCW/EHLB

1. Welcome and Introduction

President Wiederer welcomed all the members of the stakeholder groups to the meeting that would be led by the EHF representatives on hand to provide information and answer questions.

2. EHF Information

2.1. EHF Executive Committee 06 & 09/2021

The topics contained in the documents sent to the stakeholders reflect the topics to be treated; it was noted that some of the matters raised at the meetings of the Technical Delegations are still being dealt with. A brief overview of the Executive Committee meetings, including information to the circular decisions taken between sessions, was given.

The EHF was pleased to have successfully carried out all the summer YAC events; it was imperative not to 'forget' the upcoming generations. Due to the cancellation of an IHF Youth World Championship, the EHF introduced the M19 EURO – another success that provided teams an opportunity to play. The EHF extended its gratitude once again to the organisers.

2.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

The business year was successfully concluded with all Final4 events being played out, as well as all payments due to the clubs being paid in accordance with the regulations despite the challenges of the pandemic. Currently, the finances are being examined, and the accounting year will be officially closed at the EHF General Assembly on 20 November. Due to a lack of space in Hoffingergasse, the decision was taken to move the offices of the EHF to Europlaza (office complex) for the next three years; the satellite office (Office 2) is within walking distance of the EHF headquarters.

2.3. 15th Ordinary EHF Congress/Follow-up 04/2021

The comprehensive minutes were finalised and distributed in June and reflect the activities of the Congress.

2.4. Preview Congress International Handball Federation

As a formal invitation is yet to be received, it is likely that the IHF Congress in November will be an online event. The IHF Council is expected to be present in Basel; the Continental Meeting Europe will happen via video conference.

2.5. Preview 14th Extraordinary EHF Congress

Underlining the importance of having ambitious candidates, Wiederer reiterated that the focus of the Extraordinary Congress would be the awarding of the Men's and Women's EHF EUROs 2026 & 2028.

2.6. Business Report/Activities

Hausleitner recapped on the EHF House project (space for 120 employees - target 2024), as well as the relocation of the EHF to a satellite office (Europlaza complex) for the next three years. The (internal) Management Board was restructured and the Heads of Media and IT were integrated. The Hygiene Concept continues to be adapted to the changing environment; a version of the document is being prepared for the upcoming EURO and standards are being defined. The EAU has resumed European activities in agreement with the IHF; all clubs and national teams will use the WADA ADAMS system to document 'whereabouts' information. In the area of IT/Digital updates were given to the handball app, the CRM system, data delivery, etc. A major step was the implementation of the accreditation tool that was used for both competitive and administrative events.

2.7. Other Topics

The EHF enjoys an excellent cooperation with Hummel and Select, equipment partners for EHF EURO 2022. The partnership with eventim was extended through 2028. Another prolongation agreement was signed with Gerflor, and since 2017 the EHF has donated 12 flooring systems to Member Federations. Swiss Timing remains the source for statistics that are distributed to coaches

for evaluation of teams, as well as on a scientific level; the project with Kinexon continues to expand.

7 Players

JJ Rowland informed the stakeholders that the project has now reached a ‘hot phase’ where priorities are to be determined. The EHF intends to focus on children, to get them excited about the sport; thus, will concentrate on the Game, Grassroots, and strengthening the handball network. The system implemented to track development and ultimate progress through a ‘traffic light’ approach was shown. Continuing, he spoke of the inputs that led to projects and their subsequent evaluation – some projects can be classified under ‘daily business, and others will be big impact special projects; flagship projects are designed to support the Member Federations in the short term. The Master Plan is also moving ahead with its approach to growing the sport in Europe with ‘Handball4Life’. In keeping with modern developments, there will also be a focus on eSports and technology. The next update will be given at the Extraordinary Congress.

3. National Team Competitions

3.1. Overall Status Report

3.1.1. Beach Handball – Status Update

The matter of BH uniforms has reached resolution; during the Congress, the EHF accepted a motion to elaborate a submission to the IHF. This was undertaken and a discussion on the level of the IHF Council was held. The solution was implemented during the Beach Handball Champions Cup in the previous week. The sport is moving forward and is on the list of disciplines for the 2023 EOC EU Games; thus, a new timeline (for qualifications) was set by the Beach Handball Commission. Participation in the European Games will increase the attractivity of the sport on the market. A beach handball demonstration will be held as part of the 2024 Olympic Games. The department covered by Tobia Pisani and Nancy Johnson, with the support of the new Beach Handball Commission, remains active.

3.1.2. Respect Your Talent (RYT)

The project takes a holistic approach to player development emphasising the career both on and off the court. The latest edition of the RYT activities saw an increase in active ambassadors across ten events having reached over 300 female players and 150 male players with much positive feedback. It is clear that the programme has a place in the activities structures and many players are eager to be on board. The next edition of the RYT Camps will take place for the M18 and W17 age groups over the winter. The RYT App will be launched in January.

3.2. Competition Structure

In an effort to align the international calendar in the upcoming years, the IHF will introduce the YAC IHF Trophy scheduled for Autumn 2022 for the age categories M18 and M20 for Europe; this will serve as a qualification to the Intercontinental IHF Trophy in 2024 and act as a springboard to the

2024 World Championship Qualification in the age categories MU19 and MU21. The date for the 2023 Emerging Nations Tournament has not been set. Corresponding events will be organised for women, but there is no information as of yet.

3.2.1. Emerging Nations

Using the EHF Ranking for men and women as a basis, NCM Member Fintan Lyons highlighted the disparity between the top (A), middle (B) and lower (C) ranked nations for example no competitions in last three years for the 15 women's teams at the bottom of the list. Looking to the information a pattern emerges in the middle of the table with nations that participate 'up and down' and those nations that never get outside of the 'Challenge' level.

Furthermore, the link between sport culture and popularity, as well as popularity and population, was also emphasised using a comparison between the FIFA ranking and the EHF ranking due to the similar construct. Using GBR as an example – based on population, if in keeping with the data, GBR handball should be in a better position following the 2012 OG, but it clearly is not; thus, it raises questions. Group A correlates with population, Groups B and C show a significant lag despite the population. Therefore, it can be seen that the reality of sport popularity, financial, technical or professional availability within the Group C plays a key role. In order to progress away from the stratified structure, it is suggested that the EHF evaluate the possibility of implementing a project akin to the UEFA GROW model and introduce it into the internal structure.

In response, Wiederer reiterated the development of the Men's EHF EURO noting the increased interest from the middle-ranked nations – going from 12 to 16 teams only saw four positions changes, half of the national teams saw no chance to qualify for a EURO. When the competition integrated 24 teams, there was more of a challenge from the teams ranked 25 to 32. It was agreed that the positions 38 to 48 on the current ranking list have to be better integrated underlining that investment in the YAC is imperative.

Hausleitner added that there is no short cut to the top; to get there is a development period of a minimum of ten years (for players starting at 15 years to be in top competitions at the age of 25 years). Many Federations have developed, changed and improved across the fields of grassroots, women's handball, beach handball, academies, etc. bringing players to the professional level from a professional environment. The EHF is able to support YAC and Qualifications, however, is unable to cover the full cost – the Federations do continue to move forward, not as quickly as hoped, but the environment has to be adapted.

3.3. Partner Topics

3.3.1. Marketing – Sponsorwise

Based in the UK, Sponsorwise is able to offer LED advertising time slots to National Federations for the matches of the Qualifiers; this service is specifically aimed at smaller nations playing against

larger nations. This is a potential income stream for Federations where the EHF takes 10%. Sponsorswise also serves clubs and leagues.

3.4. EURO Events

3.4.1. Sleeve Advertising EHF EURO 2022

The space on the left sleeve is marketed by I&D; the National Federations will be informed by the beginning of December if a sponsor is known at that time. The targeted demographic is service providers, and the sleeve will revert back to the Federations, as was in the past, if a partner is not found.

To the qualifiers, it was mentioned that all matches were played within the stipulated timeframe with only minor issues; the basic obligations were fulfilled, and there was development in the media area as the transmission of matches from more stations increased.

3.5. YAC Events: Evaluation & Future Outlook

A brief overview of the results and qualifications was given: there was a significant uptick in transmissions, social media usage, as well as registrations. It was underlined that the YAC events are an asset to be developed. However, based on feedback for the participating Nations, and prior to the new cycle, the structure of the competitions is to be evaluated and changes, if warranted, are to be implemented.

4. Calendar/Meetings

4.1. International Calendar

4.2. Meeting Calendar 2022

4.3. Competitions Calendar 2022/23, 2023/24

The international calendar was harmonised with the IHF; the next steps will follow accordingly. The National Federations have called for the calendar to be fixed in advance for a longer period, though at the moment it is not possible; naturally, due to the activities and scheduling of the other Continental Federations, there is at times an impact on Europe; however, the IHF tries to support the EHF in these matters. Following the latest coordination meeting, the 2022/2023 calendar was confirmed in June, but recently updated with the beach handball events; no other changes were made.

The 2023/2024 was discussed, the major competitions incl. beach handball have been set and the IHF events (dates) are also laid down; the IHF Superglobe is proposed for October. The national team week is scheduled for 04/2024. The European Trophy will be in October; additional information is being gathered and amendments to the calendar are possible. The calendars will be submitted to the stakeholders for evaluation. NCM Member Schober stated that the target is to have a long-term calendar (5+ years) as it would be beneficial for the organisation of events i.e. book arenas (incl. bigger venues) earlier.

The meeting calendar for 2022 was published with the latest minutes of the Executive Committee; it is hope that all the stakeholders will be able to join the two meetings in March and October.

The next draw events are scheduled as followed:

- Men's EHF EURO 2024 GER Qualifiers Draw on 31 March in Berlin, Germany within the framework of the Conference for Secretaries General.
 - Women's EHF EURO 2022 Final Tournament Draw on 28.04. in Ljubljana, Slovenia.
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PART 2: MEETING NCM

5. Follow-up to Common Meeting

Vaccination: Eleven YAC events were carried out successfully and the competitions, from an organisational aspect, happened as expected. However, issues arose around the topic of vaccination; it is clear given the ongoing pandemic that vaccinations remain a challenge to be dealt with; it is important to inform players on the relevant procedures. The EHF is aware that the youngest players in some teams are unvaccinated and, to date, an optimal solution is yet to be found. Moreover, the matter of the validity of vaccination status is an open subject as the time scale of the information varies (6 to 9 months). As to what happens (3rd vaccination – booster shot) after is still an unknown and in terms of competition, again there is no solution at hand.

From the ensuing discussion within the NCM it is suggested that a concrete ruling should not be incorporated into the Hygiene Concept for the EHF EURO, and instead the rulings of the authorities in the host nations should be adhered to. However, at the club level this could pose a problem as the clubs are unwilling to release players due to the obvious risk.

In response the EHF stated that local (host nation) authority regulations supersede those of the EHF; but if there are no local regulations in place then the Hygiene Concept must be followed. It is important for the EHF to retain a level of flexibility when dealing with individual cases. Due to the enormity of the matter and the ever-changing situations, no deadline for a solution was set. The Executive Committee will take decisions for updates and the respective participants will be informed in due time.

6. Men's National Team Competitions

6.1. 2021 YAC Events

Following on from the information given under AP 3.1.2 and 3.5., it is reported that with the exception of the Men's 20 EHF European Championships, all other 2022 YAC events were awarded by the Executive Committee at the meeting in September. For the Men's 20 European Championships, there are 21 registrations and two organisers are needed. It was reiterated that

there is no qualification from the Championships at these events, and therefore probably not so much interest. I was proposed that the announcement of the events shall take place earlier.

6.2. EHF EURO 2022 – Status Update

The final phase of the organisation is running according to schedule and cooperation with the organisers remains at a high level. The EHF office is dealing with ticketing issues (pricing); site inspections were carried out by the EHF delegation who visited the venues in the previous week.

7. Miscellaneous

7.1. LUX Complaint

Referencing the relegation round (8 national teams/Qualification Phase 1 to the 2024 Men's EURO) where multiple organisational issues arose due the delayed scheduling of the matches; the complainants stated that those concerned should have been consulted earlier. The burden placed on the players (5 matches in 8 days incl. travel) was unacceptable; the players had to deal with too many matches in a short period followed by a notable lack of matches in the calendar. The EHF responded that it was aware of the issue and it is been treated at the internal level in a nest step. However, the topic was complex due to the various challenges on an organisational level with the participants and organisers.

7.2. Meeting Structure

The common session was deemed too long and due to the overall situation did not provide room for discussion; such a meeting would be better suited to a smaller group in order to have them better placed and tailored to the groups present. The working structure after this first meeting sessions will be analysed for introducing a suitable system in the March session.

7.3. Feedback to the Presentation by NCM Member F. Lyons

From the discussion held, the key inferences are interconnected and summarised below:

- Handball works in countries with a handball culture.

- Though the team and strategic plan (e.g. targets and measurements) were complimented, it was deemed that the full potential of social media is not being reached i.e. no influencers.

- The connection to the National Federations in this regard is weak, as challenges are presented e.g. rights. Furthermore, from the TV aspect, this could prove difficult to work around as many people are affiliated with Pay-Per-View, and it is difficult to attract people to the sport with 'free-to-air' as the game is too fast, and the rules are too difficult – this is a weakness to the promotion and development of the sport. Handball does not have a 'free pass', it has to be sold, but it is not selling in the most difficult markets; beach handball is easier to understand.

- To the question of how to get people playing the sport, it was suggested: to target migrants, look to the ‘Best Practice’ of other Member Federations in view of generation retention, engage in knowledge and skill transfer by bringing what the EHF has into the Federations, look into potential development options (e.g. in basketball 3-on-3). Look to the UEFA GROW concept for inspiration for the lower ranked nations (last 15) e.g. consultancy – having a professional working structure housed within Federations so that smaller Federations can benefit from professional support.

The Chairman closed the meeting.

Vienna, 18 October 2021

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