
MINUTES TO THE 4TH MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN

Date Monday, 14 March 2022
Time 11:00 – 16:30
Venue Hotel Renaissance Wien | Rooms Paris and Strasbourg I

Participants

Nations Committee Men (CM)

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

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* <i>Excused</i>
Cristina Varzaru	Member / ROU

European Handball League Board (CM)

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

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
JJ Rowland	Director Business Development & Marketing
Alenka Cuderman	Coordinator Women's Handball

PART I:

MINUTES TO THE COMMON MEETING OF THE NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN (NCM), NATIONS COMMITTEE WOMEN (NCW), AND THE EUROPEAN HANDBALL LEAGUE BOARD (EHLB)

1. Welcome and Introduction

The participants were welcomed to the spring session of the stakeholder meetings and a rundown for the two days was given. Based on the feedback from the stakeholders, it was agreed that there is no ideal organisational situation and that the structure is complex. As the various topics need coordination in preparation of the next season, this session follows on the back of the Technical Commission meetings, the EHF board meetings, but are prior to 13th Conference for Secretaries General, as well as the meeting of the EXEC where decisions concerning regulations and competitions are to be taken.

A brief recap of the various activities that had taken place since the October 2021 session was given, this included the IHF Congress, the EHF 30 Year Jubilee and Extraordinary Congress, the World Championship, and the EHF EURO. Despite a successfully completed programme, there

remain open tasks resulting from different activities. The sport acclimatised to the challenges of the pandemic, and play resumed and stabilised; the UKR situation arose and has to be dealt with. It was emphasised that the right steps have to be taken at the right time, but within the existing structures and legal framework.

2. EHF Information

2.1. EHF Executive Committee 11/2021 & 01/2022

The minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. With no questions raised, the stakeholders took note of the minutes.

2.2. EHF

The Comptrollers have been invited to Vienna in April to undertake the scheduled internal examination of the accounts to conclude the business year with 31 December 2021.

2.3. 14th Extraordinary EHF Congress Follow-up 11/2021

The minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. With no questions raised, the stakeholders took note of the minutes. It was mentioned that the EHF was still able to celebrate its Jubilee despite the short notice change of venue due to the pandemic.

2.4. International Handball Federation

Taking reference to the issuance of the latest edition of the IHF Rules of the Game (valid as of 1 July 2022), a brief discussion took place to the amendment concerning the size of the middle circle. In the discussion where the reason for the change was mentioned (IHF CCM, definition of the centre line), concerns were also raised about the specific wording that indicates that the Continental Federations can make its own determination about the implementation of the rule, production costs, and other marketing challenges. It was noted that the effect(s) of the amendment will be seen during the competitions. Prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting in April, this matter will be discussed in the planned IHF-EHF coordination meeting.

During the most recent IHF Council Meeting (online) it was made known that the 32-team IHF YAC WC may see more spaces as some Continental Federations do not have enough teams in the qualifications. Thus, more European teams than usual will have the chance to qualify.

Clothing Regulations - Beach Handball: input received from National Federations: it was reiterated that the IHF decision taken in September (not the original European proposal) is not wanted by many involved as the new rules do not allow for flexibility.

IHF Competitions - Mandatory Vaccination: for the most recent events the vaccination status has been in place and will remain so for the Women's EHF EURO 2022 in November. With regard to the EHF Younger Age Category events, medical expertise will be sought and the vaccination landscape

for minors varies by country; when more information becomes available the EHF will return with a suggestion for the participating Member Federations with a tailored hygiene concept. Due to the changeable nature of the situation, the EHF is aware that decisions have to be taken at the right moment to avoid unnecessary burden on the teams and organisers.

IHF Competition System: during the EHF-IHF coordination meeting (online) the plans for the IHF competitions system were questioned in relation to the still open topic of the emerging nations and their options to compete and enter qualifications. Previously, the system was managed in a good way; however, in the past year playing was not possible. It was agreed that the competition needed to be restarted. The IHF sent information to the Continental Federations; the next IHF Trophy for Men will be organised in October 2022, the winner will gain a place in the Intercontinental Trophy, and the winner of that event will gain a place in the World Championship. The IHF has also started an initiative for the women's competitions, and there is optimism that there will be a similar competition for women.

Despite the distribution of information, discussions will have to continue in order to conclude on how to proceed and combine this event with the Qualifiers; looking to the enlargement of the Women's EHF EURO to 24 teams, participation is lower in comparison to the men's competitions, and it will be necessary to have the right number of teams in the 2024 Qualifiers. Though understandable that not all teams can qualify, so the right system has to be found to make it attractive.

Olympic Games Qualification: the IHF is preparing to send proposals to the International Olympic Committee concerning the qualifications; the EHF President expressed the position of the top nations stating that the current qualification process is not wanted by the European National Federations. However, the IOC is in favour of three pathways that will lead to qualification. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

2.5. Master Plan

The internal platform has been established and the Master Plan Coordinator has been appointed. As presented at the Extraordinary Congress in November, the EHF 360° procedures have been agreed. The National Federations will be requested to send their project applications to masterplan@eurohandball.com. Following the completion of a detailed analysis, a meeting with the Member Federation will be scheduled and the proposal will be evaluated to ensure that they are in line with the vision and objectives of the Masterplan. Project implementation will commence upon approval of the Executive Committee.

Despite delays forced by the pandemic, the next steps are being taken; meetings with representatives from Georgia, Malta, and Latvia are scheduled to take place in March. A status

update presentation will be given in Berlin at the 13th Conference for Secretaries General, and this will be followed-up with the release of the National Federation Survey.

In response, it was suggested that a workshop targeted at the emerging nations be considered as an element to move the project forward in a more tailored way that would make these particular Member Federations part of the process. The idea was deemed useful as the benefits of close cooperation were praised, especially during the pandemic.

2.6. *Respect Your Talent (RYT)*

A summary of the 2021 & 2022 RYT events for young male and female players was given; the objective of the programme remains to support the development of young players, both on and off the court. Active players and leading experts are committed to passing on their experience and knowledge to the younger generation at the camps.

A short description of the RYT mobile application created by the EHF and based upon the input of the RYT Ambassadors and field experts, was given and presented as a ‘pocketful of micro-learning’. The App is designed to assist the personal development of younger players by providing access to relevant information. By actively using the App, the young talents have the opportunity to earn points which can be used to arrange an online group session (1 hour) with a RYT Ambassador to discuss topics of interest. Further developments are to include a ‘Train the Trainer’ application that will be opened to the National Federations, as well as a newsletter.

The enthusiastic engagement of former players as well as the activities targeting the integration and involvement from the next generation of players was taken as an encouraging sign to continue working on the programme. The stakeholders were informed on a newly initiated programme for young players in Denmark; this is a cooperation between the Danish Federation and the Danish Players’ Union. It was mentioned that the players returning from the RYT events are energised to be better and hoped that in the future that the RYT would create the snowball effect of having participants return to their Member Federation and transmit the information and facilitate action on an internal level.

2.7. *13th Conference for Secretaries General*

The event is scheduled to take place in Berlin on 30-31 March; a range of topics will be presented under the umbrella theme of ‘Moving Forward’. Currently, there are over 60 registered representatives of the National Federations as well as guest speakers presenting talks from the areas of the EOC EU Office, Kinexon, and the Special Olympics, as well as beach handball, Respect Your Talent (RYT), as well as the Master Plan. The EHF will use the opportunity to also inform on current business topics such as information on referees and delegates, new IT tools, and the introduction on Younger Age Category (YAC) events in the future. In addition to the planned social activities, the Men’s EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers draw event, as well as the workshop for the

participating Federations on 1 April, will also be held on the fringes of the 13th Conference for Secretaries General.

3. Information Competitions

3.1. Situation UKR / RUS / BLR – Follow-Up, Actual Consequences, Future Competitions, Player Transfers

Due to the expansive discussion, what follows therefore is a summation of the information as well as the input of the stakeholders.

The EHF has approached the matter in a careful and consistent way facing the challenges; in the initial days, it was deemed not in the interest of the organisation to ‘run ahead’ and so opted for close coordination. As information was collected, it became clear that the IOC was readying to release a statement, and to that end, the Executive Committee was called to an extraordinary meeting on Monday, 28 February followed by an official statement released to eurohandball.com.

It was emphasised that the EHF continues a close cooperation with the Ukrainian Handball Federation. Contact has been upheld with the Handball Federation of Russia; naturally, there is a logic in the legal steps that the Federation had, and has, to take. The Federations have been and continue to be contacted accordingly.

Looking to past situations faced, it was mentioned that a Member Federation in the nineties needed three years to re-enter the competitions. The ban that currently applies to Russia and Belarus makes it impossible to national teams of those countries to enter competitions in Europe, not even sideways. Consequently, this is not only a problem for Russia and Belarus, but also for other Federations meeting them in future qualifications at an even earlier stage. Therefore, a re-integration into competition in the future will be procedural and properly communicated. The Federations are still partners and eventually the time will come when activities have to be continued. Therefore, relations will be upheld towards handball partners.

In the coming days, the European Handball Federation will decide how to proceed with matches and the determinations have to be made in a balanced way. In previous situations, a careful strategy has been followed to allow for the continuation of the competitions system; the organisation at the same time had to face the reactions, some negative, and also had to find balanced understanding in a complex situation (marketing, financial, legal consequences) where cooperation with partners is also important. It was intoned that headlines and populist statements are ‘easy’; though behind them lay many consequences on many levels. It is underlined that the two existing marketing contracts which will expire in June are a result of the work within the handball network and were not concluded at a political level.

The legal framework regarding transfers and the termination of player-club contracts is critical and there is a limited period to resolve the situation. Brief examples of different actions undertaken in different countries (i.e.: DEN, GER,) were given, and it was concurred that (arising) situations have

to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. As support is needed due to IHF transfer regulations, the EHF addressed a brief to the IHF the week prior questioning if permission would be granted to EHF to take relevant decisions or if a statement would be issued by IHF (analogous to FIFA) containing information on further procedure. The IHF response stated that it is in conference with legal expertise and would return in due course.

It was agreed that the discussion (existing contracts, qualifiers, transfers, etc.) would continue at the PHB meeting.

3.2. EURO Events

3.2.1. EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK Follow-Up (incl. topics for EHF EURO SLO/MKD/MNE)

The event reached a successful conclusion despite the challenges speaking of the arrival of the Covid-19 Omicron variant at the start of the Championship. Currently under evaluation, it was clear that the event was not 'perfect' and the differences between the event in Denmark to Hungary/Slovakia are evident; however, the current objective is how to avoid difficult situations and keep the teams stable in order to offer a better situation in November for the Women's EHF EURO.

The quality of the venue in Budapest was reiterated, as well as the major improvement on the level of TV picture and production due to the various adaptations including more preparation time for the matches. Also in this area, there was a marked increase in the digital figures i.e.: first information in the presence across 22 channels, over 300 million contacts (40% via content sharing), TikTok (analysis ongoing), as well as 25 minutes of 'behind-the-scenes' footage. Federations also played a role through players sharing now; it is hoped that in the future this potential can be built upon.

Increased market shares also signalled that the cooperation with Infront and DAZN had paid off on this occasion; TV sales reached new heights, 100% partner activation including additional efforts (Gorenje), and the feedback to the 'Partner Day' during the main round was very positive. The onsite Kinexon support proved beneficial for the teams; a number of Federations will use the scientific data to bring improvement to the sport. Despite the host teams leaving the competition early and the ongoing pandemic, the number of spectators was deemed good.

3.2.2. Preview EUROS

The preparation for the Women's EHF EURO 2022 (SMM) is ongoing; this event has a shorter preparation time due to the date in November e.g.: certain elements have to be completed by July. The 'early' EURO has a minor impact on the calendar as the leagues can continue in December. For clarification, it was also stated that in relation to the information collected by EHF Kinexon project, the data is for EHF use only and EHF permission has to expressly granted for any other use; an agreement is in place and the EHF legal department is aware of the GDPR complexities.

3.3. *YAC Events: Evaluation & Future Outlook*

In the light of input concerning previous events e.g.: playing system, preparation time, performance disparity ('easy' matches), and player workload (M20), a 'YAC Think Tank' was held on 21 January 2022 to discuss the topics and formulate possible solutions. A common understanding to enlarge the YAC events from 16 to 24 teams was reached. The EHF continues to work on the development of a playing system covering a 4-year cycle including promotion and relegation; this will be presented to the National Federation representatives in Berlin at the 13th Conference for Secretaries General. Depending on the outcome of the presentation, a formal proposal to adapt the playing system will be put before the Executive Committee either in April (Ljubljana) or June (Cologne). Upon question it was confirmed that should the YAC events be expanded to encompass 24 teams, the incorporated event period would be 11 days maximum.

3.4. *Initiative – Players Project (Player of the Year)*

The initiative started within the Beach Handball Commission (BC) to award a beach handball 'Player of the Year'. The idea was adapted to a general project. Thus, as of next season (2022/23), there will be a broad approach to the topic of 'Best Player'; the project will be developed by the end of the June.

3.5. *Club Competitions: actual / future perspectives*

Referring to the club competitions evaluation in relation to the media and marketing agreement, it was mentioned that the process is cyclical (three seasons/years = one cycle). The logic behind this was to play in year one, undertake a situational analysis in year two, and any decisions/changes to be made in year three. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, the evaluation has not been easy. It was underlined that there would be no changes in the first cycle, and there are no changes planned regarding financial distribution. As a basis to the current evaluation, a Club Competitions Think Tank was held in December 2021. With many topics under deliberation, it was mentioned that when talking of making changes the issues were complex.

The evaluation of the playing systems was made difficult due to Covid-19, the question of weekdays vs. weekends remains a highly delicate issue touching all of the stakeholders (Federations, Clubs, and Leagues) with regard to planning. In a situation where time for changes to the 23/24 season is a factor, theoretically, any changes could be optimal within the next few weeks. On the other hand, the organisation is not in the position to make any decisions until all issues have been satisfied i.e.: does the system require major change, financing, doubling matches, partner relations – all impact the outcome of the evaluation and have to be seen in relation. In case of significant changes (e.g.: the competition calendar) the relevant stakeholders have to be involved in the conversation in order to get all the perspectives.

4. Calendar/Meetings

4.1. Competitions Calendar 2022/23, 2023/24

To the previously published information, it was reiterated that the hosting of the Women's EHF EURO 2022 in November will effect the women's club competitions; they will have to continue in December with approx. 2-3 rounds to be played prior to the seasonal break. Currently, the season is proceeding in a normal way. For the benefit of the stakeholders, to allow for an unimpeded preparation, the calendar for season 2023/24 was published well in advance and created in a way that reflected no changes to the playing system. The ongoing evaluation was mentioned, and it emphasised that though there may be changes in the future, there will not be major adaptations.

4.2. Meeting Calendar 2022

With the document at hand, no additional input was given. The document always developed for the forthcoming year serves as personal help to reserve the dates, but as well shows the rundown of the decision-making processes.

4.3. Preview EHF Events

Information to the large number of events between March and November 2022 was given. The next gathering on the National Federation representatives will be the 13th Conference for Secretaries General in Berlin at the end of the month, where on the fringes of the event, the draw for the EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers will be held. The final tournament draw event for the Women's EHF EURO 2022 will be held in Slovenia at the end of April, and this will be followed by the completion of the 2021/22 club season with the Final4 events in Budapest and Cologne. A total of 9 Younger Age Category EURO and Championship events, including the Beach Handball EURO Qualifiers, will be the summer highlight. In the autumn (23/24 September), the 16th Conference of President will present another opportunity for the Member Federations to gather; the final showcase event of the year will be the Women's EHF EURO 2022 in Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro in November.

5. Other Topics

No further topics.

With no other topics raised, the common meeting was closed.

PART II:

MINUTES TO THE 4TH MEETING OF THE NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN

1. Follow-up to Common Meeting

Chairman Meckes welcomed the participants to the meeting in Vienna. The improved organisation and structure of the meeting was mentioned. However, the topics must be split better to reflect the discussion platform - common and important to all, or more relevant to different stakeholder groups; though the session was better, an optimal solution is to be sought. The information given during the common meeting provided much room for discussion, but the topic of IHF Rules of the Game will be treated in the meeting of the Nations Board.

2. Men's National Team Competitions

2.1. 2022 YAC Events

All nine events were awarded; the bid for one part of the M18 Championship (8-14 August) was reopened to find a new organiser; one possible option is being explored. The M18 events in Israel and Latvia are secure and will proceed without the team of RUS. It was noted that also concerning the non-participation of the team of UKR and the suspension of the team of BLR will not change the playing system. The organisation surrounding the M18 (MNE) and M20 (POR) EURO events is proceeding accordingly – the unresolved elements (training hall, nominations, etc.) are being dealt with.

Concerning future events, a brief overview workshop and the outcome was given; the call for organiser should be distributed earlier by the EHF. The objective to be attained by changing the playing system is to allow teams to play better matches and the participating federations to have better planning possibilities. The value of the competitions was also raised in the discussion and a stakeholder emphasised that the qualification to YAC events have to be close (e.g.: 6 months) to the final tournament, as the federation does not want to select the players too early. Attention was requested when scheduling the qualification into the calendar.

2.2. EHF EURO Events 2022 – 2028

The men's 2022 event was brought to a successful conclusion and the organisation of the women's event in November is ongoing. The cooperation with the hosts for the 2024 events is proceeding accordingly and the next steps i.e.: Qualifiers, workshops, are on schedule. No additional input was given to the events beyond 2026.

2.3. EHF EURO 2024 – Status Update

2.4. EHF EURO 2024 GER Qualifiers

The registration to Phase 2 of the Qualifiers was sent to all Member Federations; as a consequence of outbreak of War, RUS/BLR are suspended and have no opportunity to register. At this time, it was unclear if UKR would register; however, if registered but unable to participate, it would seem likely

that their spot would be replaced with a substitution. The final preparations for the Men's EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers will take place in Hubertshagen Berlin on the fringes of the 13th Conference for Secretaries General (the event period is October 2022 to April 2023).

2.5. Other Competitions

With the brief information on the restart of the IHF Trophy, it was questioned when further information would be released; it was made clear that a discussion to tackle the issues affecting the emerging nations was now a matter of urgency as the chasm between the mid-ranked teams and the emerging nations was increasing, thus raising the question "where is the motivation for the players". It was intoned that in order to have a handball culture among the emerging national, the creation of sustainable clubs is imperative. It was agreed that among the emerging nations there were some that were more ahead than others, but nonetheless, lateral connections were to be created. Therefore, practical support (i.e.: Master Plan Project – organised targeted workshop) from the EHF would be required. It was requested that the topic of the emerging nations be treated on the level of the Nations Board.

3. Miscellaneous

3.1. Development Emerging Nations

The NCM agreed that long-term development plans that create structures that support the future of these Federations (see AP 2.5.)

3.2. Releasing of Players

Reflecting on the current situation, the NCM exchanged information on how Federations are dealing with matters i.e.: no changes to regulations, possibility to play in lower leagues but not division one or division two, possibility to train with club (but not play).

3.3. National Team ranking Men

The NCM requested a publication of the national ranking. The ranking takes three competitions into account, so it cannot be published until the cycle is complete. It was mentioned that there is a strategic element to publication e.g.: how and what to announce/publish. The matter will be discussed on an EHF internal level and the NCM informed accordingly.

The chairman closed the meeting.

Vienna, 25 March 2022

For the Minutes: M. Brown