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## MINUTES | 8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN | NCM

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 8 April 2024	
<b>Time:</b>	11:00 – 13:30	
<b>Venue:</b>	Renaissance Wien Hotel   Strassburg I & II	
<b>Participants:</b>	Ingo Meckes	Chairman   SUI
	Jari Henttonen	Vice Chairman   FIN
	M. S. Christensen	Member   DEN
	Mark Schober	Member   GER
	Bertrand Gille	Member   FRA
	Fintan Lyons	Member   IRL
<b>EHF Office:</b>	Markus Glaser	Chief Sport Officer
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison   Minutes

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### 1. Welcome & Introduction

#### 1.1. NCM Meeting 10/2023 – Minutes and Follow-Up

#### 1.2. Follow-Up to Common Meeting

Opening the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Nations Committee Men (NCM), Chairman Meckes noted that all topics important to the NCM are being followed up accordingly, and though invited, there were no additional comment or question to the minutes of the meeting held in October 2023, which were subsequently adopted. And as all topics will be discussed across the agenda, no additional information was given under this point.

### 2. Men's National Team Competitions

#### 2.1. 2024 Younger Age Category Events

As indicated in the common meeting, the NCM members immediately turned their attention to the matter of the EHF proposed increase in the daily rate in both YAC EURO and Championship events. The proposition would see the EHF EURO rate increase from EUR 130 to EUR 170, and the Championship rate rise from EUR 100 to EUR 130 per person, per day. Schober mentioned that this topic was discussed during the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General held in Copenhagen, Denmark (03/2024) and the representatives of the National Federations understood the need to increase the daily rate to which there was not much dissent.

In the ensuing discussion, Meckes raised the idea of reducing the number of matches by one for the teams ranking 13 to 24, which lead to these teams departing the event 1-2 days earlier and thus

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reducing the cost for these teams. There was concern that smaller nations potentially qualifying for the events could still face financial difficulty when participating in YAC events.

Referring specifically to the development of YAC events in the future, Schober reiterated the point that it needs to be treated on three distinct levels: Strategy (overall objective, targets, benefits to potential organisers, player education, etc.), System (rounds, structure, etc.), and daily rate, which was being given priority due to the upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee (19.04.2024). Gille emphasized that the development of YAC events also needed a defined strategy on promotion and marketing; if the objective of the YAC EURO in particular is to grow it as a premium product there needs to be more investment from the side of the EHF. There also needs to be a way where the OC is not taking a big monetary loss; that is why large nations are currently not interested in organising a YAC EURO. It was also noted that the strategy for the M20 (final education) and M18 (participation/experience) could possibly be different; however, the events should not replace the work done at the club level on a daily basis.

Closing the discussion, the NCM requested that an analysis of the 2024 YAC EURO events follow after the conclusion of the events that would possibly answer the questions and concerns raised therein. Following this evaluation, a 'Round Table' discussion with the participation of members from both the men's and women's Nations Committees could be convened in order to formulate the best way forward for the future.

The matter of daily rates, and other elements, were discussed in depth, the members of the NCM agreed with the increase of daily fees as of 2025 as proposed by the EHF in the knowledge that the motion will be presented to the Executive Committee at the next meeting.

## **2.2. Beach Handball**

To the question on the development of the international calendar, the NCM is informed that no further information is available. Turning to the efforts, both at the European and international level, over the past 12 years to bring the sport into the Olympic family and considering the information delivered at the common meeting, the NCM deliberated on potential ways forward for the sport should it fail to become an Olympic discipline. Ideas included, but were not limited to, highlighting it as a promotional sport (e.g. city summer tours), have it as part of the World Games, and re-envisioning the competitions currently in the framework.

## **2.3. EHF EURO Events 2024 – 2028**

**2.3.1. EHF EURO 2026 Qualifiers | Status Update:** the draw took place on 19 March in Copenhagen; the next phase of the competition commences in November 2024 and resumes in spring 2025.

**2.3.2. EHF EURO 2024 GER | Commentary:** please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

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**2.3.3. EHF EURO 2024 AHS | Preview:** Chairman Meckes mentioned that prior to the draw event, over 5000 tickets had already been sold for the SUI venue.

**2.3.4. EHF EUROS 2026 & Beyond | Information Exchange:** meetings have been scheduled with the objective of moving forward with the preliminary organisational steps. Concerning the events of 2030 and 2032, as stated in the common meeting, the national federations are encouraged to submit bids even if all criteria are not met. The NCM briefly discussed the process/conditions of the current bid books and the potential ramifications for the aspiring host nation(s).

#### **2.3.5. Other Matters**

**Number of playing kits:** based on a written request of DEN addressed to the European and International Handball Federations to review the necessity of the regulatory requirement to have three playing kits (of different colours) at a EURO event. In addition to the cost, DEN noted it also lends to the area of sustainability, as well as the fact that DEN as the example has never needed to use the third kit at any previous EURO events. EHF Chief Sports Officer, Markus Glaser noted he did not have the information to make any determinations on the matter, however, it would be checked at the level of the EHF office. The NCM accepted the action to be taken.

**EHF EUROS | Image (Personality) Rights:** at the core, the EHF experiences difficulties from the side of the sponsors/partners/presenters and the fact that they are not permitted to use images of players from the event for promotion resp. business reasons; the matter also extends to club competitions. It is a question of permissions, money, and the protection of (image) rights. This is a 'hot' topic, especially in Denmark with much pressure coming from the side of the players' union. The NCM members engaged in a discussion presenting examples from their respective countries and the possible options surrounding the issue. In conclusion, the NCM are willing to work with the EHF to find a solution for the promotion of the EHF EURO events, which should be possible if working with the personality rights of the collective, meaning three or more players. A contract between the respective players and the respective EHF sponsor could also be a solution. The discussion will be continued in the NB and the PHB/WHB meetings.

#### **2.4. Other Events & IHF Activities**

**IHF World Championship MU17:** following the IHF announcement in various meetings, the matter was enquired, however, no further/additional information was available.

**EHF Sustainability Board | Future Concepts:** it was questioned if the EHF Sustainability Board were responsible for adding sustainability clauses to the current 2030/2032 Bid Book and how are they referenced. Without the Bid Book at hand, it was noted that the document is to be checked and the information be passed on to the NCM members.

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### 3. Miscellaneous

**3.1. EHF EURO Qualifiers Phase 1 | General Development in the Future:** Glaser briefly recapped the changes to the regulations adopted by the Executive Committee in January 2024, which included different requirements for halls (seating, LED), TV (camera numbers, production, and satellite booking) and marketing (floor stickers, LED/LCD) setup. The NCM took note of the reiteration.

**3.2. Emerging Nations Round Table | Follow-Up:** Member Lyons noted the ongoing work with the smaller nations, as also reflected in the presentations at the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries Generals, and how the Emerging Nations Round Table convention galvanised the participants leading them to take steps towards the ‘Master Plan’; because of this, many emerging nations have already contacted the EHF. It was conceded that there had not been much contact with the representatives from some of the emerging nations on a broader scale; therefore, Lyons informed the NCM on the activities at this level within the United Kingdom and Ireland using the recent developments as a best practice example.

Returning to the Emerging Nations as a whole, it was recommended that another convention take place in 2025 with the objective to regroup and confer on progress. Using the example of venues, Lyons noted that the cost of halls is quite high and is one of the most difficult things to overcome.

In response to the information provided on competition at this level, Chairman Meckes commented that this could be a possible opportunity for the EHF to assist IRL resp. SCO through the Master Plan where the areas of focus could comprise of best practice (from the nations new to the Master Plan), marketing and communication, development and, most importantly, the strengthening of clubs. Gille, using the example of Rugby in France, also added that the development strategy must also reflect the target society, and it also could prove difficult to get people to teach the sport, there must be more engagement within the school system.

Bringing the agenda point to a close, Lyons spoke of an ongoing study by University College Dublin Institute for Sport and Health to the topic of injury prevention and the prevalence of injuries in handball in Ireland. The findings will be presented at ECSS Glasgow 2024, 2–5 July by Giulia Andreottola. He suggested this topic could be enhanced if comparisons were available with similar studies in Europe. The senior director of the Sport & Game Services department will be contacted and if such documentation exists, it will be distributed to the NCM members.

#### ***Best Practice Example | IRL & GBR***

IRL has undertaken a rebranding of the Federation (Olympic Handball Ireland formerly Irish Olympic Handball Association) which now has three full-time employees and has more than doubled funding availability for initiatives across the country including Northern Ireland (which is still in GB). Moreover, it has secured part funding from Sport NI (Northern Ireland) which is a significant step forward in recognising the All-Island status of our NGB (National Governing Body), similar to

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Basketball, Hockey, Rugby, and Cricket. Athletes from Northern Ireland can still opt to play for either jurisdiction at international level.

OHI has now initiated a new marketing plan which is overseen by a Board Member who is a marketing professional, and it is expected to ramp up through the coming year and become embedded within the activities of the sport in Ireland. This initiative is working to build momentum and target specific sectors across the country. Initially for example Ireland intend to reach out to existing players who for some reason or other are no longer playing, or possibly never played in Ireland - estimates of circa 600,000 immigrants in the country, many young people with good jobs in the tech/pharma sector for example, even if only a small percentage can be tempted to play in Ireland it could have a very positive impact on youth & adult participation/membership rates which is deemed vital to the success of the sport. This is an addition to our work in schools etc.

In order to make the sport more competitive regionally (IRL & GB) IRL and SCO continue to collaborate on British-Irish cross-border competition, (currently no agreement on a similar level of participation has been reached with ENG). In the past 2 years a Celtic Cup competition has been inaugurated between the two countries which brings together the top Men's and Women's teams from both countries in two rounds, with the qualifying round and finals alternating between both countries. In the first year the Irish men's and women's won but this was reversed in the 2024 finals which were held in Northern Ireland and the Scottish teams emerged victorious. The Scottish Association streamed the event which ran well, and the clubs were very positive. There are opportunities to build this into a higher profile competition and build additional junior events on the back of this successful collaboration. For example an Intervarsity is being planned in Cork for next year which will include teams from Scottish Universities. The marketing initiative will be targeting these events to generate more activity and excitement. Member Lyons continues to hope that England Handball will become more engaged and looks forward to discussing how to include teams from Wales in the near future.

With thanks for the contributions from the members, Chairman Meckes closed the meeting.