

MINUTES TO THE 10TH MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS COMMITTEES WOMEN

Date | Time: Monday, 3 March 2025 | 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: EHF Office | The Hackathon

Participants:	Nodjialem Myaro	Chair FRA
	Leonor Mallozzi	Vice Chair POR
	Sarka Drozdova	Member CZE
	Pirje Orasson	Member EST
	Cristina Varzaru	Member ROU

EHF Office:	Rima Sypkus	National Team Competitions
	Maximilian Riede	YAC Competition Coordinator
	Anna Lamprecht	Administrative Assistant

Excused:	Attila Heim	Head of National Teams
	Paola Fiorillo	Member ITA

1. Welcome & Formalities

Chair Myaro opened the meeting and welcomed the NCW Members. She excused Fiorelli, who was unable to attend due to illness.

1.1. NCW Meeting 10/2024 | Minutes and Follow-Up

The minutes of the last NCW meeting were approved unanimously, without further additions.

1.2. Common Meeting | Follow-Up

Information was provided prior during the Common Meeting held in conjunction with the NCM. Orasson raised several points for discussion and made requests.

- For the EURO Qualifiers phase, teams are permitted to nominate a squad of 21 people. However, many federations opt to nominate a larger delegation with one to three additional members, which imposes additional cost on the respective national federations. Therefore, Orasson proposed to increase the official number of delegation members. Sypkus emphasised the importance of contacting the EHF competition department in case of individual situations and challenges faced by federations.
- Orasson raised concerns regarding the management of TV rights for Women's Qualifier games. Initially, it was stated that the Estonian national federation had to buy these rights and negotiated with Infront. Consequently, fixed prices for acquiring TV and broadcasting rights for Qualifier phase 1 games were proposed.

Comment: It was subsequently clarified that the rights for Phase 1 and the rights of home matches for Phase 2 lie with the national federations.

Additionally, the involvement of the European Broadcast Union was discussed.

2. Women's National Team Competitions

2.1. EHF EURO 2024 | AHS – Review

Mallozzi reported on discussions with local organisers who expressed disappointment regarding the number of spectators in the venue, especially during the preliminary round and partly during the main round. Hosting federations emphasised that the financial demands of organising a women's EURO tournament are almost equivalent to those of a men's tournament, while the expected revenue cannot be compared. Fans of stronger teams deliberately chose not to attend live games during the preliminary round, confident that their team would be playing in the main round. The meeting also covered a range of other factors, including the fan base for women's handball in the respective organising country, the playing schedule (15.30 games and games scheduled during the week), local and national clubs in proximity to the playing venue, and financial matters. It was emphasised that the games were well balanced and interesting to watch from a spectator perspective, with sufficient attractiveness to the game. The need to intensify cooperation with local organisers, especially in the field of fan communities, fan involvement and fan motivation, was reinforced. Local initiatives, as well as concrete ticketing strategies and venue spectator concepts, including the release of certain areas, are highly supported. Best practice examples were highlighted, including side events involving local communities in Switzerland during the EHF Women's EURO 2024 and particularly handball stakeholders during the EHF Men's EUROS in Germany 2024. The question of how to make the EHF Women's EUROS even more attractive remains a future challenge. The NCW emphasised the necessity for additional promotional initiatives to enhance the visibility of women's handball on the EHF's behalf and to further advance top-tier performances in women's handball, thereby optimising the tournament's appeal.

2.2. EHF EURO 2026 PRCST | Information / Qualifiers

Sypkus provided further information on the status of the event organisation from the EHF side. As this is the first (women's) EURO with five organisers, extensive coordination between host federations is necessary. Therefore, regular meetings are taking place, and the first email regarding the potential organisation of phase 1 has been sent to national federations. Currently, eight teams (five organisers and three best teams from the EHF Women's EURO 2024) will play the EHF EURO Cup. Phase 2 will be played in six groups of four teams each, with the EHF EURO Cup to be played in parallel with the Qualifiers. Orasson commented on the suitability of this system, especially for smaller and lower-level nations, as they will not meet strong nations during the first round, which is perceived as beneficial in terms of team motivation, preparation and development.

2.3. EHF EURO 2028 NDS (Norway, Denmark, Sweden) | Information

Sypkus provided inputs on the organisational work within EHF and explained that the preparations for the Qualifiers round 1 within the EHF will start in at the end of 2026.

2.4. Preview YAC EHF Events 2025

The meeting covered a range of topics related to YAC EHF competitions, venue challenges, registration trends, and structural changes. Orasson noted that many YAC venues lack international

connectivity, leading to costly and complicated travel arrangements. Riede emphasised the challenges in identifying cities with three suitable arenas for YAC EHF EUROs within the current playing system, although this is manageable for championships. Selecting a location for YAC EHF Championships remains a difficult decision.

Riede provided an update on the preparations for the 2027 girl's competitions, emphasising the importance of early planning on the EHF side to allow federations to adapt. He reviewed the 2023 championship formats, mentioning that W17 saw a reduction of teams, while W19 experienced a minor increase. Orasson attributed the decline in participation mainly to financial reasons. Riede emphasised the significance of close monitoring of registrations for YAC EHF events, including the YAC EHF Championships and European Open, to identify any long-term trends. Lamprecht proposed the Masterplan as a valuable tool to support the development of national YAC teams, using GBR as an example.

Riede explained that the primary reason for the decline in sign-ups for the European Open is the age category change to W18, with many European teams participating in the World Championships later in the year. Mallozzi emphasised that the previous age groups were the most effective way to introduce young players to national competitions without the pressure of high-level competition, and that with the age category change, new perspectives for younger players are emerging. Riede explained that the adjustment aimed to better prepare teams for the World Championship while offering a tournament under the EHF umbrella for other teams that might otherwise lack competition opportunities. He provided an explanation of the change in the playing format for the 2025 W17/W19 YAC EHF EURO: all first- and second-round teams will advance to the main round. The new structure includes quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals. Accordingly, crossmatches and placement matches will define the final rankings as it was in the previous system.

2.5. Other Events & IHF Competitions

Sypkus provided a brief overview of the ongoing Women's World Championship qualifying process, while Riede offered further insights into the IHF Younger Age Category competitions. The IHF Women's U16 World Championship is scheduled for 2026, with qualification determined by the relevant EHF 4-Year ranking.

The agenda also encompassed potential youth club competitions for girls in 2026. The objective of this competition format is to provide girls and clubs developing female (youth) players with an international platform within the club context, distinct from the YAC EHF competitions that include national teams. For the boys' edition in 2025, the right to participate was granted to clubs competing in the EHF Champions League, with these clubs securing 13 out of the 16 available places. The remaining three places were filled by clubs playing in the EHF European League. Orasson raised the question of whether clubs that have successfully competed at the senior European level are necessarily the ones with successful youth teams. This led to the suggestion of allowing one or two places per year to be awarded through a wildcard. The method of distribution for these wild cards was not discussed in further detail.

Finally, the topic of the potential for an IHF Emerging Nations Women's Tournament was addressed. Sypkus clarified that the EHF has not received any information on such a tournament for the women's

side. The IHF Men's Emerging Nations Championship will be hosted this year in March in Varna, Bulgaria (11-16 March).

3. Miscellaneous

3.1. Safeguarding in Sport

Lamprecht informed that national federations signing the EHF grassroots charter will have to provide information on the existence of a safeguarding programme for coaches and staff, and that best practice guidelines and examples should also be shared.

Mallozzi asked about the status of the data platform discussed in past meetings. Lamprecht reported on the EHF office's efforts for an extensive IT project establishing a database including quantitative data on players, coaches, referees, staff members within national federations and qualitative information such as strategic efforts and policy existence.

The NCW collectively calls for the topic of safeguarding to become part of the education players receive in the Respect Your Talent programme. The NCW highlighted the need to involve experts in these efforts. The necessity to raise awareness of this topic among young players and to educate them was emphasised, and it was agreed that the topic should remain on the agenda and be discussed further during the next women's handball conference. Finally, the NCW discussed the current status of gender representation among the RYT ambassadors, and it was expressed as a future goal that female ambassadors should be included in RYT boys activities and male ambassadors in RYT girls activities.

3.2. Officiating

Following the previous meeting, the topic of officiating was revisited, with a particular focus on enhancing the visibility of female referees. It was noted that opportunities such as presentations of officials can effectively raise awareness and visibility of female referees within the organisation. Sypkus emphasised the significance of ensuring adequate preparation and development of female referees by allocating them to officiate at YAC EHF events, as well as both girls' and boys' competitions within national federations. Mallozzi reported on the situation in Portugal, noting that after initial challenges to gaining public and spectator respect and tolerance, female referees are now widely accepted. Additionally, the motivation of women to become referees was discussed, with Lamprecht pointing out past financial support from the WHB for the education of female referees and delegates, and the NCW expressing a strong encouragement for similar initiatives in the future.

3.3. Sustainability

Orasson reported on various European Union regulations and governmental regulations impacting handball in Estonia, as well as the newly elected National Olympic Committee's request for sustainability policies from Estonian sports federations. In this regard, Lamprecht reported on the EHF's efforts and the currently distributed survey asking national federations about their respective national situation, including challenges, activities and needs. The national federations are strongly encouraged to provide their needs through this survey so that the EHF can gain an overall picture and determine next steps to support federations in sustainable development and the requirements needed to achieve this. Mallozzi and Myaro added information on current efforts in France and Portugal, where particularly social sustainability, including measures for gender equality, but also good governance and environmental measures, are being promoted.

Myaro concluded the meeting and thanked all those in attendance for their participation.

For the Minutes: A Lamprecht

Date: 05 March, 2025