

Minutes to the 18th Meeting of the Professional Handball Board

Date: Tuesday, 7 March 2017

Time: 08:30 – 13:00

Participants:

Xavier O’Callaghan	Member FCH	Chairman
Frank Bohmann	Member EPHLA	Vice Chairman
Predrag Bošković	Member EXEC	
Stefan Lövgren	Member EXEC	
Morten Stig Christensen	Member NB	
Philippe Bana	Member NB	
Gerd Butzeck	Member FCH	
Peter Gentzel	Member EPHLA	
Marcus Rominger	Member EHPU	
Michael Wiederer	EHF President	
Markus Glaser	EHF Chief Sports Officer	

In Part: Peter Sichelschmidt EHF Senior Manager National Teams

Excused: Michael Sahl Hansen Member EHPU

Administration: Marsha Brown EHF Office

1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman O’Callaghan welcomed the PHB members to the meeting and proceeded with the agenda.

2. PHB Meeting 12/2016 – Minutes and Follow-up

Two small amendments are to be made to the EPHLA report where reference was taken to the meeting attendees in Paris, and the topic of match scheduling.

3. Reports EXEC/NB/MFCH/EPHLA/EHPU (*additional remarks to minutes*)

EXEC: EHF Vice President Bošković reported on the meeting that took place in December and noted that it was the first working meeting following the Congress where many important decisions were made; specifically the decision to determine the further procedure for the selection of a new Secretary General. Bošković underlined that the EHF outsourced this responsibility to a specialist recruitment agency (NGS Global) and informed the PHB that the selection stands at three candidates and a decision will be taken by the Executive Committee at the meeting on 24 March. With the minutes of the meeting at hand, there was no further special report.

NB: Chairman Christensen opened his brief report on the meeting carried out the day before by noting that the PHB/NB meeting agendas shared many common items. He noted that at future meetings of the Nations Board two major issues would be the items of focus: business development within National Federations with focus on the handling of TV- and marketing rights, and the continued development of handball in Europe targeting the emerging nations. Christensen noted that other items of discussion appear later in the agenda and the input from the NB would be reiterated at that time.

MFCH: MD Gerd Butzeck opened his report with a brief mention of the positive development between the IHF and FCH in recent weeks in which there had been a mutual meeting prior to Christmas, a positive exchange of opinion with IHF (Khalifa/Strub), and the receipt of a draft agreement where the content (competition, insurance, good governance) was similar to the MoU between EHF and MFCH. The intention of the MFCH is to continue with this development and signing the agreement in Antalya at the next IHF Congress.

On a European level, meetings regarding the future Men's EHF Champions League have taken place. Furthermore, as previously informed upon, contact between the clubs (independent of the MFCH) and IMG was initiated to the purpose of a long-term EHF CL marketing agreement; though no decisions have been taken, the contact was appreciated, and well received, by the clubs who partook in the discussion. It was mentioned that there is the clear position of the parties to develop the CL together with the EHF.

On the level of WFCH, the branch has initiated a project to unify social media concerning the Champions League; it is the intent of the clubs to discuss questions and ideas on how to become more appealing to potential partners.

EPHLA: the last meeting of the EPHLA took place in November 2016, and no further meetings have taken place since the last PHB meeting in Gothenburg. At this time there is no news from the leagues. It was mentioned that EPHLA President, F. Bohmann had recent contact with the English league representative, which is London-based and wishes to form its own league outside of the Federation, as well as the Portuguese league representative; both leagues have been invited to attend the next meeting of EPHLA.

EHPU: following the 02/2017 meeting in February, the EHPU underwent a massive internal restructure. Michael Sahl Hansen was elected President; the Secretary General was relieved of his duties. With the election of Hansen, the importance of having a person from the related field working in the interest of players on a full-time basis was underlined. A report covering the activities of the EHPU over the past two was recently submitted to the EHF.

EHPU Vice President Rominger informed the PHB that the organisation was currently focused on the topic of protective clothing for players and made reference to a recent case of a Danish player at the WC in France, and prior to that with a female Danish player at the EHF EURO in Sweden. Rominger underlined the need for clarification in order to enable the players to have equipment that they can use. There was an exchange of information between IHF (Strub) and EHPU to this topic.

Giving a brief mention to the IHF Athletes Commission, it was noted that there was no further development and a meeting is yet to take place. EHPU has maintained contact with members of the Athletes Commission though it is still unknown how the commission fits into the main IHF structure.

Additional information was given by President Wiederer on the contact already had with the IHF on the subject. It was agreed that clothing regulations are a major topic that cannot be expected to be resolved expeditiously. The matter will be broached once again at the IHF-EHF mutual meeting in Basel on 13 March 2017. The PHB noted its intent to follow-up on this matter. From the discussion that ensued, the following points were raised:

- ◆ Harmonisation on a continental and international competition level; rules have to be clearly defined and distributed in a timely manner.
- ◆ The importance of differentiating between style (fashion) and protective items.
- ◆ The idea of certification of player's protective items, as well as a specified list of approved items that originates from a medical commission.
- ◆ Consideration of marketing rights and individual agreements signed by players.

4. Further EHF Information

- ◆ **2016 EHF Congress – Follow-up:** Bošković briefly reviewed the constellation of the new Executive Committee; the Congress was carried out in a good way and all follow-up actions, with the exception of the Secretary General appointment, were completed with all processes followed accordingly. With the minutes of the Congress available, there was no additional special report.
- ◆ **EHF Marketing GmbH:** the meeting of the EHF Marketing Advisory Board took place prior to the meeting of the Nations Board on Monday, 7 March. The EHF leadership, as well as the club representative, were present in the meeting with the EHF management. A full report was given including positive reassurance to the current status of the ordinary business (incl. M/W CL, M/W EHFC); a status report to the topic of Champions League in the future was also given (also featured later in the PHB agenda). The PHB members are informed that an agreement with Sportradar was confirmed and signed; and a new partnership for the MCL was already confirmed and will be finalised.
- ◆ **EHF CAL 18/19:** the final draft of the 2018/19 calendar that was sent to all Member Federations and partners on a competition level with the request for input will be presented to the Executive Committee for formal confirmation on 24 March. It was mentioned that input had been received from SUI and GER. Chief Sport Officer, Markus Glaser underlined that the calendar did not offer flexibility due to the number of fixed events and follows the current understanding of

international competitions. It was mentioned that the request to produce the calendar differently cannot be accommodated at a time when the i.e. the playing schedule is still being discussed. However, should any new issues arise, the EHF would re-examine the flexibility of the calendar. Calendar elements were briefly explained and it was noted that for season 2019/20, due to the OG, the calendar has to be tackled in a different way.

What follows is a summary of the ensuing discussion regarding the final phase of the 2018/19 season on a national team level.

The allocation of EHF EURO Qualification 5/6 on the calendar was in response to scheduling of league and CL final dates. Concern was voiced as to the summer gap for the players is getting smaller, and that players needed time to relax; noting the timeframe between the last matches of the club season and the start of national team activities, it was suggested that a possible option would be to move the EHF EURO Qualification 5/6 a half week earlier and play Sunday/Wednesday as opposed to Wednesday/Sunday. It is suggested that input be gathered and a proposal be submitted to the Executive Committee.

Continuing with the topic of scheduling, the opinion was voiced that it would be to the detriment of the sport if the final league matches take place on the same weekend of the CL Final4. It was suggested that the impact of the Champions League on the scheduling of the national league matches and national team activities be taken under consideration. It was stated that the configuration of the Champions League playing schedule would always result in parallel activities as there is currently no possible system where the matches of the leagues and the Champions League could be separated.

- ◆ **IHF Information – Council:** Jean Brihault and Arne Elovsson represented Europe for the final time at the IHF Council meeting in January 2017; Wiederer and Bošković attended the meeting upon invitation of President Moustafa. With the minutes at hand, Bošković briefly informed on the current status of IHF event awarding. At the next meeting, President Wiederer and Vice President Bošković will represent Europe in the official capacity.

5. Men's National Team Competitions – Report/Open issues

5.1. 2017 Men's World Championship (IHF event)

Introducing the agenda point, Chairman O'Callaghan reiterated the highlights of the event; Sichelschmidt added that with over 540k tickets sold and transmissions across 180+ TV stations, it has been deemed as one of the best WCh. To the competition related matters, information was given on the match system, the ticketing system (sold by match), security challenges, etc.

President Wiederer reported on his visit to Lille Stadium (converted to accommodate handball), praised the success of the conversion, and noted that it could be implemented for handball under certain conditions for specific matches.

5.2. EHF EURO 2018 CRO – Preview

The EHF EURO events department continues to work closely with the CRO Organising Committee. Issues concerning the venue Split have been clarified; thus no special report was given to the PHB.

5.3. EHF EURO 2020 SWE/AUT/NOR – Preview

Flixeder informed the PHB on the ‘work in progress’ that is proving very interesting for the professionals involved. It is expected that promotional tournaments will take place prior to the main event with the national teams of the three organisers and the EHF EURO 2018 defending champion under the umbrella of the EHF; and with the promotional events planned to take place during qualification weeks, no extra dates are needed. Qualification Phase One was concluded without incident and Phase Two is scheduled to conclude in June 2017 – an overview of the system (incl. IHF Emerging Nations Tournament) and the current standings was given. As to what concerns the final qualification groups (from October 2018) and the next steps after the EURO in Croatia, dialogue remains ongoing.

5.4. EHF EURO 2022 & 2024

See AP7.

5.5. EHF 2018 YAC Events

Sichelschmidt gave an overview to the current status and based on the registrations received, six events will take place; the Competitions Commission sent a recommendation to the Executive Committee to confirm the following awarding of events: Croatia (M18 EURO), Austria and Georgia (M18 ECh), Slovenia (M20 EURO), FYR Macedonia and Montenegro (M20 ECh). It was mentioned that the YAC events faced the challenge of finding organisers willing to host; the current situation was not fully following the original intent when the system changed in 2014, which aimed to reduce the burden on potential organisers. Thus, it was suggested to reconsider the possible option of combining the organisation of an EHF EURO with the obligation to organise a YAC event in the year prior to the EHF EURO final tournament.

6. Club Competitions

6.1. Champions League Season 2016/2017

The season is running without any major issues, though the usual challenges have been encountered. The planning for the L16 matches have been hindered by the exciting ranking situation of most positions still being open at this point. The interesting situation in groups A/B means all the matches are important; proof that the original thinking surrounding the change in the system was correct.

6.2. Champions League in the Future

The topic was briefly discussed during the EHF AB meeting; it was noted that all existing agreements have been signed until 2020 – agreements that extend beyond 2020 include an option to terminate. The PHB are informed that most of the agreements signed by EHF are agency cooperation agreements. The positive development of the cooperation with MPS was mentioned and a brief history of the partnership was given.

The process of the EHF-MFCH MoU prolongation was halted in October upon information that some clubs had established contact with IMG for an alternative initiative for a better partnership. It was underlined that the initiative did not originate within FCH; MFCH did not feel in the position to sign the MoU. The EHF-MFCH MoU negotiation process was originally foreseen to begin in 2017, the process remains on schedule. The EHF/M met with IMG and exchanged information with the PHB members and stated that no concrete concept was presented by IMG and the EHF/M remained opened to discussion.

The approach of the IMG was explained: the CL has to be 'sold' in a better way and intends to find a different approach to sell the top product within the social media realm with the objective of changing the way that handball is presented to the 'world' i.e. more cameras, etc. and expanding the market (i.e. reaching Generation Y), which is assumed can only be achieved with a big partners.

6.3. EHF Cup / Challenge Cup

The PHB was given an overview of the motions prepared by the Competitions Commission to be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. The motions relate to the EHF European Cup Regulations include qualifications to the Champions League, draw attendance, instant replay, and scheduling. The EHF Cup Finals will take place in Göppingen in May 2017; a site visit was scheduled for 8 March 2017.

7. TV/Marketing Rights in the Future

The PHB members were given a brief introduction to the topic which included the current status of the EHF EURO 2022 & 2024 (AP 5.4.) events and a brief history and update on the current media/marketing partnership. It was underlined that with all relevant agreements ending in 2020, negotiations for TV and marketing rights for the 2022 and 2024 events has begun. President Wiederer reiterated that this topic has been presented and discussed on various platforms (EHF Conference of President 2015 and EHF Congress 2016) and once again underlined that an objective (relevant to all stakeholders) and clear strategy must be defined in order to determine the product that the EHF will offer to the market.

The idea that the media partner has monopolised revenues for a long time was mentioned; moreover, the complexity of the issue was reiterated (who has the rights, sleeve advertising, contractual obligation to other partners and sponsors, etc.) and the potential consequences such could have for the National Federations; it was underlined that the EHF EURO reaches billions of people. The understanding of the Europe media/marketing situation widely varies, it was noted that all stakeholders have to be developed more in this respect, as it is necessary to work together to find the optimum solutions when discussing i.e. coverage vs. finance, open markets vs. new media channels, etc.

Though the conservative approach to marketing media rights proved sustainable to the organisation in the past, the group acknowledged the numerous elements that had to be taken into consideration for the future. The development of the EHF EURO product is imperative and the EHF should retain control of its direction. Concern was also voiced about changes (protecting consumer interest, single market, etc.) within the EU that could greatly influence and impact (legalities) the future and to monitor developments in this direction.

8. Various

- ◆ The 10th Conference for Secretaries General will take place in Paris, France in April. During the course of the event, the qualification draw for the Women's EHF EURO 2018 will also be held.

- ◆ The fourth edition of the EHF Scientific Conference will take place in Vienna in November. The conference will centre on the players with the objective of working towards concrete conclusions surrounding the workload of players. To date, there has no scientific approach has been undertaken to the matter though various analyses do exist; the Conference will present an opportunity for stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the topic. The PHB were presented with an information sheet. Looking to the content, it was mentioned that when exploring the environment of the players, a systematic approach to reduce the number of injuries must be sought, independent from competition systems, etc.

- ◆ The next edition of the European Games (EOG) will take place in Belarus in 2019. There has been no further contact between the EOG and the EHF on this matter.

- ◆ The matter of data was broached, and a harmonisation of game results and statistics, as well as personal statistics was requested, as well as a move towards a comprehensive performance index; as an issue that falls within the scope of the EHF, it was mentioned that it could be tackled within an expert group. It was also mentioned that how scouting is utilised within the EHF is being reassessed; scouts will now be paid.

With thanks to the members for their input, Chairman O'Callaghan closed the meeting.

Vienna, 10 February 2017

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