

Minutes to the 19th Meeting of the Professional Handball Board

Date / Time: Tuesday, 10 October 2017 / 08:30 – 12:30

Venue: EHF Office – Conference Room

Participants:	Xavier O’Callaghan	Chairman / Member FCH
	Frank Bohmann	Deputy Chairman / Member EPHLA
	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
	Michael Sahl Hansen	Member EHPU
	Marcus Rominger	Member EHPU

EHF Office:	Michael Wiederer	EHF President
	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General
	Marsha Brown	EHF Corporate Liaison

1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman O’Callaghan welcomed the members to the meeting, with a special welcome for Secretary General Hausleitner joining the meeting for the first time to the forum that strives for the betterment of professional handball in Europe.

2. PHB Meeting 03/2017 – Minutes and Follow-up

The minutes were adopted without additional comment.

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

EXEC: Taking reference to the meeting in Lisbon Vice President Bošković mentioned of Rules and Procedures – and created in 1992, amended in 2006, and based on the changes in the professional structure it was deemed necessary to amend the document (managing people and concerning the organisation of the office and professional staff. The EXEC approved the document that was several months in the making and it was noted that adaptations would be made if necessary.

Pertaining to the EHF meeting with the clubs concerning the tender process, Bošković noted the positive atmosphere and the productive outcome. Finally, he mentioned the progress concerning the Memorandum of Understanding between the EHF and the Forum Club Handball; the new agreement is to be signed in the coming week. The positive atmosphere and outcome of the meeting was mentioned and Bošković expressed his positive hopes for the future. SG Hausleitner noted the PHB will be provided with a copy of the Rules of Procedure in due course.

NB: Member Christensen mentioned the long discussion about the regulations concerning the EURO/EURO Qualifications with attention to the set-up of the event in particular and trying to find a balance with the EHF as the lower ranked nations are still experiencing difficulties trying to fulfil its obligations, whereas the larger nations are stressed with new proposed regulations. The NB was also trying to look into new possibilities and opportunities for the National Federations for the National Team/EURO periods to maximise revenues. The NB

is focused on the development of the management of each Federation in order to make a better business case in these periods. He underlined that the Federations needed to be more professional than they are today noting the gap between the larger and the smaller nations and the intent to minimise the gap.

NB Chairman Christensen also mentioned the discussion surrounding the EHF EURO Cup, noting that it was a good idea and giving a brief overview of the presented concept though he underlined that some concept elements needed to be reviewed in respect to federation agreements already in place. The NB was informed on Rules of Procedure and the tender process; there was not enough time to discuss the club competitions, this would be discussed during the PHB meeting.

MFCH: Member Butzeck informed the PHB that over the past months the FCH focus has been on finalising the long-term cooperation agreement with the EHF that is to be signed in the coming week. The signing of the document was delayed from 2016 due to the clubs receiving an offer from an agency to create a competition where 14 clubs would have had the opportunity to substantially increase their revenue. This would have had a significant impact on other competitions and the revenue system of the EHF/M. The situation was examined and a common understanding was reached that it is better to work together. The EHF initiated the tender process and the clubs and the EHF shared the opinion that there was much revenue to be had on the market and it was time to find a long-term partner. Documents were distributed in mid-September. The FCH held many meetings with the EHF to discuss the details and noted that many issues still needed to be resolved.

Butzeck underlined the positive work undertaken concerning the tender and expects a positive outcome; the first stage of the process will conclude in mid-November and will be followed by a period of evaluation.

Parallel to this, FCH is currently in negotiations with the International Handball Federation an agreement between the two parties. A document has been drafted and will be discussed at the FCH board meeting next week; the agreement is expected to be signed on the fringes of the next IHF Congress in Antalya.

Due to taxation issues, the FCH headquarters is considering relocating from Germany though no new location has been determined as of yet.

EPHLA: Member Bohmann referred to the last meeting held in Cologne where the main topic was the offer from IMG. EPHLA welcomed the tender process stating that it is the best way to handle the situation and remained confident that the correct service partners have been selected and that it is the right window of opportunity. On the other hand, the EPHLA was concerned about the impact on the leagues and other federations depending on the structure of the competition including more matches (round-robin) which is not possible to settle at this time and there is a need for discussion; Bohmann noted that currently there are too many matches in Germany and that the (CL) clubs are overextended and a common solution must be sought. The PHB is the correct platform to discuss these matters as well as the implications towards the National Federations, which must be taken into consideration before making decisions for 2020 and beyond.

Bohmann also gave an update on the sustainable development emerging from the leagues with new TV contracts in Denmark and Norway, and with France aiming to also extend agreements. It was noted that there is a big movement in Europe where professional structures are in place; where there is no structure; there has been no development in the area of TV/Media.

Bohmann announced the membership of the Polish league to EPHLA; all criteria were met and the application to join was approved.

FCH Member Butzeck commented on the release of players to the national teams and cited an example from basketball noting the potential collision of interests in November as the EURO League have not adapted the

schedule. The new FCH MoU avoids such situations as the windows are determined, thus National Federations can expect for their players to be released without issue in accordance with the EHF/IHF Regulations.

It was questioned how the playing/release windows are defined as these periods will not allow for club competitions to be played. As a result of the EPHLA meeting, Bohmann stated that this definition needed to be discussed. President Wiederer countered that it is a local issue (GER) as the league added additional matches during the week, and then commented on the additional dates in Germany though unwilling to change on the level of the league.

Chairman O'Callaghan mentioned the situation in Spain where the Federation suspended the ASOBAL league matches to make use of a particular space in the calendar in December which resulted in less playing dates for the league, a more compressed calendar and more dates for training – thus the Federation used the tools at their disposal in its own best interest.

EPHLA Member Gentzel mentioned a situation in Sweden where a match has been scheduled for 28.12.2017 and the length of time (15 days) prior to the event when the players have to be released; it was noted that the players could be recalled after 30 days. Noting the potential misunderstanding, FCH Butzeck informed on the wording of the rule amendment:

“7.1.3.1 (08/2014) Olympic Games, World Championships, Continental Championships: releases shall be limited to a period from 15 days prior to the beginning of the competition to one day after the end of the competition, but not more than a maximum of 29 days per abovementioned competition.”

The amendment of this article was unanimously approved by the IHF Council members.

EPHLA Member Gentzel reiterated that the problem lay in the fact that the wording can be misinterpreted based on the length of the event. Following discussion it was noted that the wording of the amendment could be clearer in order avoid misunderstanding.

NB Member Bana informed the PHB that the LNH are considering additional matches in June; NB Member Christensen confirmed that the same situation has occurred in Denmark with more matches within the Danish league. EPHLA Member Bohmann reiterated that this situation was not a German league issue, but one faced by all leagues.

EHF President Wiederer stated the different situations across the European leagues and the decisions taken with the Federations; there must be an adherence to basic rules and regulations. Giving an example from the area of football, he stated that it is the reality the sports world tries to fill every available gap. There is logic to this, but the question remained how to keep it in balance.

EHPU: EHPU Member Hansen informed on the meeting in Cologne which saw the awarding of the Top 7, where the players selected the award recipients. The Top 7 is a pilot project that the EHPU wishes to develop in cooperation with the EHF. The feedback from the players was positive and nearly all the players attended the ceremony. It is hoped that the Top 7 award will be extended to female players in 2018.

EHPU also had contact with South American players based in Europe who expressed their concern about schedule of the Pan American Games that are held in the summer which meant upon return to their clubs training would begin immediately leaving no break/holiday for the players concerned. Thus, the EHPU are attempting to initiate contact with the Federation aiming to assist the players and the European clubs. To date there has been no response from the Federation.

EHPU Member Rominger spoke of the new EHPU structure and the work been undertaken to strengthen the various elements of the organisation. Furthermore, The EHPU has received complaints from players pertaining to the schedule; they are unhappy. It was noted that the matter would be discussed further.

4. Further EHF Information

4.1. 2016 EHF Congress – Follow-up

Welcoming the new Secretary General, President Wiederer gave a brief report on the full recruitment process that was subsequently confirmed (as of 1 August 2017) by the Executive Committee. The arrival of the new Secretary General resulted in the revision of working procedures and confirmed by EXEC. As confirmed at the 2016 Congress the EHF announced that it would revise its structures; the Executive Committee confirmed the process beginning with a working group session in October, the outcome will be presented at the Conference of Presidents in January 2018 and the resulting proposals will be put before the Congress in June 2018 as structural motions. This procedure will give the EHF enough time to prepare for the electoral part of the structure in order to build for the period after 2020. Concerning the tender, in 2015 at the Conference of Presidents information was given on the marketing situation regarding the possibilities after 2020 and also announced at the Congress, therefore, the EHF is following a path already described.

4.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

The EHF business year 2016/17 finished on a positive note on a financial level as well as the first full successful year with the new Managing Director from setting the budget to completing the business year. The external auditors finished their inspection of the books, a verbal report has been received and the written report will follow. Next week the EHF Comptrollers will undertake their examination of the accounts.

It was noted that through three very positive events support has been given to the market. Wiederer noted that it was the first time that the women's FINAL4 was on par with the men's event. The EHF Cup Final was also very successful and on the whole it is very positive for handball.

4.3. EHF Meeting CAL 2018

With the meeting calendar at hand, Wiederer noted the importance of the schedule in order to have a correct decision-making process that the EHF goes through the different instances. It was noted that it was subject to change and any input from the stakeholders was welcome.

4.4. IHF Information – Council/Congress

The PHB are informed that there are two regular meetings of the IHF Council per year. In 2017 there will be additional meetings prior to and after the Congress in Antalya. The PHB were requested to submit their input to the EUR members prior to the council meetings. The August meeting was concerned with the upcoming IHF Congress and there were some motions of interest; it was mentioned that the IHF distributed information concerning Player Eligibility, Rules of the Game, etc. already. The Player Eligibility document was started with a MNE proposal but not introduced in its entirety. The World Championship system was changed after the meeting in March from a KO system in the second phase to a group system.

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

5.1. EHF EURO 2018 CRO – Preview

Secretary General Hausleitner informed the PHB that the qualification is complete and that this would be the last event with 16 teams. Parallel to the PHB meeting, the Heads of Delegation Conference is taking place in Zagreb, and the Referee and Delegates Seminar was held in September.

The replacement procedure was changed, meaning that players can be changed a total of six times during the tournament, this is an opportunity for the Federations to make better changes to reduce the burden on the players. The equipment regulations have been received from the IHF, it is hoped that a common understanding

can be found between the EHF, the Federations and the players. Digital technology will be used for the first time at the support table for the substitution area so that wrong substitutions can be clarified.

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

The first phase of the 24-team event will be drawn in April 2018. A workshop focussed of enhancing the quality of the qualification games will be organised as the EHF is aware that FAR and KOS are participating for the first time. Due to the importance of the home games for the National Federations, the EHF will endeavour to ensure the quality of these matches.

5.3. EHF EUROs 2022/2024

Letters of interest have been received and formal registrations are expected until the beginning of November.

6. Club Competitions

6.1. Review season 2016/2017

Secretary General Hausleitner reported on a positive season in 2016/17 from the marketing perspective concerning the FINAL4s.

6.2. Preview/Status 2017/2018

The current season started well, however there was on withdrawal from a Dutch team which resulted in legal proceedings. Concerning the clubs the question of dates surrounding the GER league/clubs is to be discussed further. The EHF has introduced Sport Radar in the season as the responsible partner for data collection, after a rocky start a positive result is expected.

6.3. Competition perspectives

Deferred to AP7

7. TV/Marketing Rights in the Future: Tender 2020 – 2030

7.1. General report

Opening the agenda point, President Wiederer stated that it is a huge process with many meetings linked to it as well as many steps to be taken. Secretary General Hausleitner was present at all the meetings, whereas President Wiederer and Vice President Bošković attended some meetings; the Executive Committee was informed during their meeting. In 2015, there was an announcement on the situation as of 2020. Wiederer reiterated that all partner contracts expire in 2020 (Infront, MP&Silva, VELUX, Salming, etc.); this situation provides the EHF with chances and the past three years have proved that the EHF is moving in the right direction in terms of development. Using an example of OTT and OTT platforms, it is known that the future of analogue and digital will be completely different. Consequently, the EHF has to deal with the market to understand where the organisation is going in order to avoid losing the market position.

7.2. Tender Information

The basic idea was how to be more attractive to the market; the messages received confirmed that what the EHF could provide was too small in terms of content. It is clear that different matches have a different value; National Team matches reach more viewers globally, club matches are more popular on the local level but taking place more regularly. Something had to be done to combine the interests and this led to the idea of a general tender. Following the recruitment of external expertise, the internal work began and the strategy was announced in June. In July and August, the tender dominated the work within the EHF. President Wiederer served the process in a coordination function and the work resulted in a comprehensive 130-page document that has been regarded as a professional approach to the market. The work undertaken also resulted in several packages. The various packages are a result of the needs of the market i.e. in some markets public channels are needed, meeting the needs of a digital strategy, etc.

The tender is divided in a way that it is not obligatory to bid for full packages; the initial process ends in November and results will be evaluated. The whole process started with a campaign of networking and presentations to establish contacts including a series of meetings prior to the distribution of the documents. The EHF is optimistic that this will change the value of the competition system.

The Memorandum of Understanding with the clubs was a logical step as the EHF did not want to enter the tender process without the support of the clubs. Comparable to Football, the parties want to share the responsibility for the product; thus the EHF structure will be amended to incorporate a steering board that will commonly define future steps in a way that no party can overrule the other. In the joint venture situation, there is the possibility for additional partner for marketing. It was reiterated that neither the clubs nor the EHF can build a majority against the other – this ensures a united front to the external realm.

Regarding the tender information, a brief presentation was given by Secretary General Hausleitner. With reference to the discussions with interested parties, Hausleitner highlighted the key points of the presentations. The EHF confirmed their own figures, as did the entities with whom they met. These qualified companies also searched for an exploitation concept taking into consideration beach handball and the development of women's handball; overall the majority of these companies view handball as a 24/7/365 sport.

The competition packages have been categorised in club competitions (A), national team competitions (B), and club/national team competitions (C). As an example, the Champions League is not available as separate package; the buyer has to take all club competitions. National team events are bundled into public access and pay TV packages or both. Marketing rights are not separate, meaning that a potential buyer can opt for a marketing and audio-visual package or just an audio-visual package. On the whole it is the responsibility of the EHF to present a complete picture that offers the best for handball. The PHB were also informed on the companies currently showing interest in the tender including media houses, agencies, and new media companies. To the outside world handball is viewed as one product. A summary of the ensuing discussion follows:

- ◆ Concerning the 10-year term: the interested parties view it as a chance to develop the product and for creating a business model. The tender includes beach handball, and the Younger Age Category competitions.
- ◆ EHF is negotiating with existing partners to find a special position that would allow for them to be incorporated into the agreements to complete the picture (i.e. VELUX).
- ◆ It was underlined that revenue is only one dimension and that investment in handball and its development was paramount; the utilisation of a tender process was the only way to compete globally.
- ◆ It was noted that the globalisation strategy is positive, but there is a need to be precise regarding amounts and broadcasting systems for each product – a clear detailed offer is needed. It was confirmed that each offer will contain a product breakdown.
- ◆ A discussion took place with the WFCH and it was agreed that the women's sport is better off with a joint solution; the men's clubs are aware that this is part of their contribution to the system. The clubs are of the opinion that potentially more specific revenue could be attained if the Champions League was sold separately, but have compromised in order to support the system to some extent.

The PHB members praised the professional work, process, and approach of the EHF in this matter.

7.3. National Team/Club competitions

In 2015, MP&Silva informed the EHF that they were interested in prolonging the agreement with the men's Champions League, but market analysis showed that in a mid-to-long-term run it was necessary to have a new product on the market and to have a league product on the market.

Returning to the current situation, it is known that all competitions can be legally incorporated in some way, but there could be ramifications (e.g. private league, clash with clubs) and the EHF wanted to avoid this as the consequences could be far-reaching to the National Federations and especially the leagues; the leadership of the clubs were also not interested in a conflict. So when the matter of a private league arose, the question was how it would resemble the situation in basketball. As an institution the EHF had to ensure that they followed the legal and governance principles.

There was an offer from MPS to the EHF, and another offer (IMG) to the clubs that favoured only a small selection of clubs. The EHF was interested in going into a new marketing situation; thus to combine the elements presented the EHF took the steps that it did by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the clubs providing the correct governance situation with the offer to the clubs to share responsibility there was no element of legal bad governance. Secondly, the needs of the market were taken into consideration; the best option was to present a unified approach in order to safeguard the product. The clear signal was that consistency was needed. Thus, a compromise was reached to approach the market with a competition understanding that the system was not final as it was possible that a partner might approach with a different system though somehow the EHF had to communicate its intention and future intentions of the product to the market in the initial three years and in the years to follow.

As a result, a compromise was reached where it was said that in this environment only a league of 12 clubs for men and group system for women (2x8) could be imagined. It is known that it would mean 22 rounds followed by a quarter-finals and FINAL4 system.

The system has to be viewed as a whole, as a working title the Champions League would remain, and the EHF Cup would transform into the European League. The CL Groups C/D would be enlarged to 4x6 groups giving more clubs to enter the competition.

It was noted that the system of the EHF Cup is still desired, but it is not financially viable as the TV presence is not the way it should be. With the tender situation, the EHF wants to cover that aspect as well as giving chances to more clubs, but to keep the financial burden to a minimum. Bearing in mind that in three years the landscape of the clubs could change, it was underlined that the EHF was speaking of the system and not of individual clubs. A summary of the ensuing discussion follows, for relevance and continuity some comments are combined:

- ◆ It was argued that there is no more space in the calendar to add additional matches; in such a situation, the impact on some leagues is greater than it is on the clubs. The need for a top product was agreed, but stated that it should not be at the expense of the leagues. The extension of the matches harms the clubs not participating in the national league; therefore, care has to be taken when preparing the calendar. It is not the number of teams in the proposed CL; it is the number of days blocked out of the calendar.
- ◆ For players in mid-level clubs it is difficult to have 34 matches spread over a season (Sep-Jun) as it is hard to keep the pace when there is a large gap between matches. It results in difficulties for the teams and in the formulation of a calendar. When groups speak of top clubs/product, there is no consideration for those clubs below the ones at the top. A rethink in terms of scheduling is needed to move the matter forward, and it is very important that the players be included in the discussion and cooperation, even though they are aware that ultimately, any decision taken will not be theirs.

- ◆ It was underlined that the number of clubs per nation to enter the top competition would be reduced. The new CL system is offered to the market with fixed dates. However, it was not the 'top product' that determined the dates; it was the leagues with the flexibility of the EHF. After 2020, the CL dates are fixed with two days; this will allow for the leagues to plan better. The objective of the concept is to create something better in order to have a product that people want to buy. The only way to remain competitive is to compete with the best. It would not be easy to fulfil all needs of all stakeholders, but the opportunity should not be missed just to appease the mid-level clubs.
- ◆ The IMG initiative was not driven by FCH, but by several including the German clubs. All the clubs supporting the IMG initiative also supported the round-robin system that allowed for 14 (+/-2) teams.
- ◆ Addressing the concern about the product been hidden behind a pay wall, it was stated that people are used to paying for content on certain markets. The unpredictable nature of sport is what makes the product valuable. Through the tender, handball will be available via public and subscription channels and people will become accustomed to this.
- ◆ Concerning the schedule, it was mentioned that a basis needed to be defined. It was reiterated that the different leagues faced different situations, as well as the different nations having different interests. It was agreed without question that space in the calendar must be available to ensure that players have a summer break. It was also suggested to approach the calendar in an innovative way and also maybe to rethink some ideas that were disregarded in the past. The starting point could be the installation of a think tank that could discuss the ideas and the best way to move forward in relation to the calendar. EHFU raised a concern about the decision regarding the new Champions League structure was already made and the Players have not been involved in this process.
- ◆ Noting that the current situation marks an evolution for handball and referencing key trends in business, it was underlined that the EHF cannot stay where it is forever, whilst considering how and when to adapt to the needs of the market. It had to be careful in adapting to the needs of the market and it is lucky to be in a position to offer a great package. However, it is necessary to await the response of the market as the period being discussed is three years away and in that time there is a lot to be undertaken and implemented. This will not be done without the corresponding consultative meetings.

Bring the discussion on the club competitions to a close, it was suggested that in regards to the innovation element to define further procedure. It is to be undertaken by a group that has time to focus on the task and also have the relevant experience. President Wiederer invited the stakeholder groups to nominate one person to the think tank. A letter will follow.

To the question of how the teams will qualify, it was stated that open access will be granted. As a starting point and according to the current status there will be 8 champions according to the ranking list (to be defined) and four teams to be defined. A starting point was that there would be a maximum of two teams per nation with entry based on an evaluation using a criteria catalogue (to be defined). From the 4 groups x 6 teams, a winner would emerge from the PO receives a granted place for the next season. And if that winner emerged from a nation with two allotted places, it will not be a granted third place, but will take the wildcard place allotted to the competition to ensure a reasonable number of markets in the first tier as there was much interest from countries looking for a promotion chance. It was underlined that it was not fixed, but it was a starting point to put before the steering board for confirmation.

Turning to the National Team system, President Wiederer informed the PHB that the EHF is entering into the next championship phase with 24 teams and no changes are planned. The documents provided to the bidders contain all information relevant at this time. Speaking of the women's event it was stated that the EURO would

not be extended to 24 teams at this time and a 20-team event was not a good system. But, it does remain as perspective.

Based on the information available to the PHB, a short discussion took place where it was mentioned that for future events, when considering the bids of organisers (including multi-host bids), it is imperative that spectator capacity, transportation and logistics (wintertime), and venue size are taken into consideration and integrated into the bid regulations; the suggestion is based on a wish not to repeat the mistakes of other indoor sports. It is also mentioned that for multi-host bids and for bids emerging from smaller nations, an appropriate adaptation to the documents needs to be made.

8. Various

8.1. Clothing regulations

Clarification on the regulations on players clothing and equipment was received in the summer; due to the period in which it was delivered, it had an impact on the players. Though the rules are now clear, some players have voiced their concerns i.e. individual personal contracts with equipment partners; it is better to have clear regulations now in order to avoid further discussions in the future. The EHF has endeavoured to educate persons and clarify the situation concerning the regulations; the next major test will be in Croatia, where the EHF will adhere to the regulations as stipulated to make the top players aware that they as well have to abide by the rules and there is no room for discussion. On the whole the regulations are satisfactory and are liveable; in order to give a clear picture, it was necessary to have these regulations.

Wiederer noted the outcome was a follow-up to the discussions held in March that led to contact being initiated with the IHF. The protection of the players is now guaranteed, and in certain cases there will be certification of equipment. Closing the point, it was underlined that the health of the players was paramount.

8.2. Rules

Concerning the rules and the fact that the interpretation is unclear, the rules have not changed. However, guidelines given to the referees are clearer. Considering what Europe wants in the future regarding rules changes, regulations adaptations, and interpretations it is important that the discussion starts early enough as the chance of success is better if the approach is undertaken in a timely manner. The PHB were requested to consider whether there are rules changes/questions that need to be explored further so that the EHF can create a corresponding structure.

It was noted that since the implementation of the most recent rules, the game is more dynamic; this is appreciated by media and spectators alike as there are fewer interruptions. The handball community initially responded negatively to the 7/6 rule though it has shown that it is used consistently; it was mentioned that implementing the rule is not the same as liking the rule. In many cases the rules are commonly accepted amongst the players and also used as a tactical advantage on the court.

FCH Member Butzeck using the example seen in beach handball mentioned the idea of a working group to deal with the simplification of the Rules of the Game or alternatively a parallel set of simplified rules. It was noted that at this time only experts from the area of refereeing are working on the rules and it was suggested that such a group be expanded to include other specialists, as referees should not be the only group that determine how the game is played. It was also mentioned how TV commentators try to explain the game in a way that is easy to understand. With the upcoming IHF Congress, the PHB were reminded that the IHF referee commission is also to be nominated.

8.3. Anti-Doping measures

Secretary General Hausleitner reported on the first positive cases of doping in the history of the EHF. Three players from the same team at the Women's 19 EURO in Slovenia tested positive in the doping controls undertaken within the framework of the event. The legal process has been opened and all relevant authorities have been informed and the players have been suspended accordingly. The EHF legal department had to postpone the hearing with the players involved until 20 December and cannot continue with the case at this time due to the ongoing police investigation in the country concerned. Doping controls are ongoing and further test have been planned.

8.4. Further points

NB Member Bana raised a concern as to the global handball situation. Following the 2012 Olympic Games, handball was downgraded into Group 3 (lower than volleyball/basketball); the media/activities situation was bad following the event period. With 3/3 basketball as a permanent OG discipline, Bana feared that if beach handball loses the crossroad position in 2018, handball could be the lowest ranked indoor team sport. Bana believed it was the responsibility of the IHF Council to take the matter in hand, but was concerned that not enough was being done at that level. It is not enough to be the best continent in a sport; the sport is facing a dangerous situation.

In the brief discussion that followed the PHB shared the concerns raised, and provided examples of global situations that lend to the presumption of danger for the sport such as the cancellation of the Women's Trophy, unaccepted offers of support, etc. The advancements of other sport were mentioned (i.e. salaried development directors), and the impact of the success of beach handball in 2018 at the YOG. The ways of to becoming an OG discipline were discussed (via IOC, via organiser).

It was suggested that the EHF become more proactive and build relationships within the Olympic family and other relevant circles. It was also suggested that the EHF leadership formulate a strategy to address the threat as it is a core problem that has to be dealt with at the highest level. It was noted that it is a big, but necessary, challenge.

Information on professional beach handball structures around Europe was also given. Areas of weakness in some areas were mentioned, but it was also highlighted that at the Beach Handball EUROs in Croatia, the event was very professional, and moreover, the players took the event very seriously. President Wiederer stated that the EHF continued to administer beach handball, but the organisation was not driving the discipline forward. Despite the introduction of the BH YAC, it was also stated that there are not enough countries participating in beach handball activities, no income generation, and not enough media interest though having beach handball as part of the tender would change the media presence.

Beach handball activity within federations is low, and having a professional tour becomes a question of finance, though it could be predicted that participation interest in such an event would be high. On a positive note, the PHB were informed that the BH EURO was broadcast 17 times and for the first time, a small income was generated via the sale of media rights; however, to develop a comprehensive strategy is needed.

Chairman O'Callaghan noted that as the handball community becomes more global and reaches more unique markets, the approach to the work has had to change and such an approach was seen in the meetings of the PHB; he then closed the meeting by thanking the participants for their cooperation and contribution.