

## Minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the (Men's) Professional Handball Board

<b>Date / Time:</b>	Tuesday, 10 March 2020 / 11:15 – 13:00	
<b>Venue:</b>	Hilton Garden Inn Vienna South – Meeting Room: Schönbrunn	
<b>Participants:</b>	Gerd Butzeck	Chairman / MFCH / GER
	Nikolas Larsson	Vice Chairman / EHLB / SWE
	Morten Stig Christensen	Member NB / DEN
	Gregor Planteu	Member MFCH / SLO
	Frank Bohmann	Member EHLB / GER
	Marcus Rominger	Member EHPU / GER
	Stefan Lövgren	Member EXEC / SWE
	Michael Wiederer	EHF President
	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General
<b>EHF Office:</b>	Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison ( <i>Minutes</i> )
<b>Excused:</b>	Predrag Bošković	Member EXEC / MNE
	Philippe Bana	Member NB / FRA
	Michael Sahl Hansen	Member EHPU / DEN

**Remark:** Please note that the following record (finalised, but not adopted as of 19.03.2020) of the meeting is based on the date and the time the meetings took place on 09/10 March 2020. The COVID-19 situation was developing at a rapid pace; subsequent to, and immediately following, the (common) meetings of the Nations Board, European Handball League Board, Professional Handball Board, and the Women's Handball Board, decisions concerning competitions were taken by the EHF that no longer reflect the outcome of the discussions held at the time.

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Butzeck welcomed the PHB members to the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, and noted that despite the absence of some members, each stakeholder group was represented.

### 2. PHB Meeting 10/2019 – Minutes and Follow-up

The minutes were adopted with no additional remarks.

### 3. EHF/IHF Information

#### 3.1. EHF Executive Committee 11/2019 & 01/2020

The topics discussed in the meeting are reflected in the agenda.

#### 3.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

Since the last PHB meeting, the EHF business year was concluded and at the General Assembly the (financial) success of the company was delivered in the report; no impact was felt from the MP&Silva situation. The information is reflected in various protocols.

### **3.3. General Information:**

#### **15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Presidents**

To the minutes at hand, no additional remarks were added.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary EHF Congress**

The budgets for the years 2021 & 2022 were adopted and in relation to the budget, the topic concerning finances relating to the federations was clarified in the NB meeting. As an ongoing matter, Christensen noted that there had been misunderstandings, but the NB were able to discuss the finances, put forward their proposals, and have solutions tabled. He underlined that the discussion not only revolved around the top federations, but also emerging nations, and taking the '7 Players' system into consideration there is already money in the budget for investment and development that will take the handball towards its target of being the best indoor sport on the small field. He underlined the positive cooperation, and noted that the topic of improving federations is an ongoing one.

#### **3.4. International Handball Federation**

The main topics were discussed in the common meeting; however, returning to the topic of the IHF Working Group on Rules a brief discussion ensued. It was mentioned that the club representatives (as a contractual stakeholder) were not invited to partake in the sessions. A simplification of the rules has to be taken into consideration when a short form of the rules is released. It was noted that the EHF submitted their concerns on this matter and stressed the importance of clarification to specific rules (i.e. offensive foul). The PHB agreed that there remained a distance between the rules and the fans/audience; thus a simplification is necessary, and concerned by the lack of consultation with the stakeholders, it was agreed that the MFCH and EHPU will send letters to the IHF.

The PHB also spoke of lack of consistency in the referee performance across all competitions that vary from country to country to which examples were given. Upon question, it was noted that there is not a system in place to bring together the heads of referees from different countries to discuss such matters; the complexity of arranging such a gathering was highlighted. The PHB took note of the matter.

## **4. Stakeholder Reports: NB/MFCH/EHLB/EHPU**

**NB:** Christensen acknowledged that most of the topics were discussed during the common meeting. Other discussions in the meeting included education compensation, IHF matters, revenue sharing (2020+), bonus catalogue, personality/image rights, etc.

Concerning players' image rights, Christensen expanded on the issues that have been faced and how they have been handled. A new problem has surfaced (e.g. Olympic Spirit campaign, LIDL) that remains an ongoing discussion in DEN; Christensen intimated that the solution lies in finding a balance. The PHB members briefly spoke of issues faced and systems in other countries, but agreed that not many federations have such systems (or agreements) in place. From the EHF viewpoint, it is producing the images and providing the stage for the teams and the players, and as the monies from the EUROs are shared, it is the objective to reach the best possible result. The use of footage for promotional purposes that are outside of the handball 'bubble' must be seen as an additional benefit for the event. Hausleitner acknowledged that there could be conflicts of interests (e.g. insurance companies) that touch personal rights, but match footage (atmosphere, etc.) cannot be deemed personal rights. Thus, it is necessary to find the balance through regulations and boundaries are to be defined; the EHF has had dialogue with the federations on this matter, and it was stressed that it was neither about making somebody famous or impinging the rights of others, but it was underlined

that the EHF must be free to use the footage that it is producing at EHF events. It was agreed that the situation was difficult and complex; the PHB would return to the topic in the presence of Member Sahl Hansen due to his experience with the topic of image and personality rights.

The NB also discussed the revenue sharing system in the coming years. For 2021 and 2022 there is an agreeable and workable system in place, and as reflected in the NB meeting following this period the elements of the system are to be reevaluated to determine whether changes are to be made. Wiederer added that following an in-depth discussion reflected the intricacies of the situation (i.e. clubs, release of players, MoUs, figures, history, etc), it was determined that the system works and should remain as it is. Both the NB members and the EHF representatives appreciated the discussion due to both parties receiving more clarification on the matter.

The Nations Board also presented a case example of compensation requests for the release of national players (i.e. part of the national team delegation, but are not utilised during an event), and a subsequent demand for compensation from the releasing club. It was stated that the topic would have to be treated for the future on how to handle such demands e.g. amount per match or presence in the delegation.

It was remarked by the club representatives that in the EHF system the procedure (which was reiterated) was defined and that the club stakeholders were satisfied with the decision. Recent changes now ensure that significantly more money is distributed to lower ranked clubs; the clubs are also satisfied with the system. It was noted that the IHF system is different; and that it would be an idea to have a defined sum for the national federations, as well as a defined sum for the clubs for the release of players where the club stakeholder could determine how it is distributed among the clubs. It was agreed that although it is not a major issue at this time, it could be at a later point.

**MFCH:** Butzeck reported on various topics:

- **Finances:** during the EHF Men's Club Board and Advisory Board meetings options were discussed as to what measure to take should a team have to leave a competition during the season due to financial problems. As many of the options were unworkable, it was agreed to set up a fund withheld as a reserve and subsidised by the EHF and the clubs totalling EUR 1.35m for men and EUR 650k for women as of the season 2020/21. The PHB are informed that there will be no direct money flow to the clubs and should an issue arise it is to be treated with an individual approach on a case-by-case basis. Based on the examples provided, the core importance of finishing the competition properly was underlined.
- **Player Agents:** a small working group was installed to explore the idea of convincing agents to impose conditions (self-limitations) within their field; it was emphasised that the matter is under discussion and no proposals have been determined.
- **Referees:** taking into consideration changes to the match days, possible options are currently being explored i.e. professional referees, no couples, use of three referees, all leading to the development of a common line (e.g. charging fouls, suspension, etc.). This is being done on the level of a working group, and it is hoped to present some proposals at the end of the process.
- **Minimum Arena Capacity:** it was agreed within the EHF Men's Club Board that the minimum arena capacity for Champions League matches would be set at 4000 as of 2023. However, considering the objectives of the EHF (Master Plan) and also wanting to give the clubs a future

perspective, MFCH with EHF is working on a long-term foresight concept (until 2027) in order to have a good basis in 2027 when the new tender process is scheduled to begin, as well as a long period of stability. Though the MFCH is hesitant to announce the 2023 information as it is at the same time looking towards 2027, the clubs do not view minimum capacities as a major topic; the TV picture and the attendance in the arena is currently of more concern – these elements (incl. hospitality) are under consideration.

- **Seeding/ranking system:** to the proposed new ranking system (European Handball Club Ranking) the clubs want the opportunity to be able to make comparisons, but also insist on transparency. The new ranking system is of great interest of the clubs, as the first 18 are guaranteed a place either in the Champions League or the European League.
- **Equipment Sponsor:** with a new EHF equipment sponsor as of 1 July; the clubs aim to explore the question of if it is necessary for the EHF to have a partner or if it would be better for each club to have an equipment partner as it is assumed that it would be easier for each club to find their own sponsor. As the situation is clear until 2024, it was stressed that this is just a thought process and no action is being taken.
- **Second EHF Managing Director:** a joint solution is currently under discussion and it is hoped that a person will enter the structure as of 1 July 2020.
- **USA and China programme:** the FCH intend to use a significant part of the (I/D) signing fee to continue to support the project. On the USA side, the project is going well and improving fast. The forecasted problems with China have arisen i.e. language barriers, international support coordination, integration, etc.; there is limited activity in Norway (education of female players) and in Zagreb (CRO/SEHA). The FCH will evaluate further procedure in this case and whether to substitute/amend the programme to include other nations (e.g. IND, GBR, ITA etc.). The EHF, as a European institution, would be in support of an FCH recommendation to amend the programme to include nations that would prove beneficial to handball and its value in Europe.

**EHLB:** Larsson informed the PHB that the focus of EHLB activities have been on the newly established SMART project, and working in close cooperation with league representatives.

The group is also trying to arrange a seminar towards the end of the year (10-11/2020) to bring the leagues on the various levels together not only for an exchange of information, but also to share experience and best practice. This would be an important step in strengthening the European league structure.

The EHLB is also discussing the area of beach handball (e.g. structures, league competitions, future path); the EHLB will initiate contact with the Beach Handball Commission regarding its long-term development plan, but is also advised to contact the national federations as well. The EHF stated that the EHLB is welcome to be part of these discussions.

**EHPU:** Rominger reported that Norwegian players had approached the EHPU about the situation at the EURO 2020 SAN that saw the team play four matches in five days; the response of the EHF was acknowledged, and the EHPU offered its support to the EHF in finding solutions.

The group is also working on reopening communication channels with the IHF in view of an improved cooperation on the issues that effect players. In response it was remarked that the letter to be sent

to the IHF, clearly state the proposal that the Athletes' Commission should be open to players that have finished their careers within the last Olympic period.

The EHPU is currently undergoing a restructure in order to strengthen the female side of the organisation; furthermore, it is examining the legal position of potentially including single sports or handball players as members of the EHPU if there are no player organisations available in their own regions.

With the minutes at hand, Rominger briefly mentioned that a summary of the Rugby World Cup (JPN) was presented at the EHPU General Assembly in Frankfurt. It was said that in some respects, Rugby is ahead of other sports especially looking at the subject of refereeing, where only team captains are permitted to talk to the referees. Also the technical video and communication tools implemented into the rugby game means that the communication is live and online, meaning all the players and spectators are informed on what is happening. Though it is not known whether such a system can be implemented in handball, it does provide an improved picture (e.g. not having many players crowded around a referee).

Furthermore, the EHPU also continues to work on the 'Concussion Protocol', which is already implemented in Rugby; Rominger briefly explained how the protocol works ('Zero Line' Test) and underlined that it is in the interest of handball to find an approach to implement it into the handball environment.

Closing his report, he mentioned that other topics were dealt with in the common meeting or at other points in the agenda.

## **5. Men's National Team Competitions**

### **5.1. EHF EURO 2020 SWE/AUT/NOR – Review**

### **5.2. YAC Competitions**

#### **5.2.1. 2020 Men's 20 / Men's 18 EUROS and Championships**

### **5.3. EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK – Status Update**

### **5.4. IHF World Championships 2021 and beyond**

#### **5.4.1. World Championship in Egypt**

#### **5.4.2. 2021 Men's U21 / U19 World Championships**

#### **5.4.3. Organisation/Awarding 2023/2025/2027**

All topics were dealt with in the common meeting.

## **6. Club Competitions**

### **6.1. Season 2019/2020 – Status**

Glaser mentioned the removal of a ROU women's club from a competition due to anti-doping violations and conduct unbecoming; the club was replaced with another ROU club.

Based on the current difficulties with the Covid-19 situation, four matches took place without spectators; all clubs in all competitions have been requested to submit status updates to the EHF, this led to an influx of responses. The situation is constantly changing, and the EHF has coordinated internally; in general it is preferred to play the matches if possible, as it is clear that rescheduling matches will prove difficult. Glaser as well mentioned the elements that are being considered at this time: the maintenance of standards, venue changes, etc.; all situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

### 6.2. Season 2020/2021 – Preview

Glaser underlined that it is imperative that all the teams entering the competitions of the next season are fully informed. Thus, a common meeting is scheduled, an information session prior to the distribution of the regulations will be held. Glaser underlined that all the clubs must realise that the requirements are increasing, especially in the European League.

## 7. Media and Marketing Agreement 2020+ - Status Report

The organisation is in the final preparatory stage prior to the unveiling and activation of the new media and marketing agreement with the new partner Infront and DAZN (I/D). The new website is prepared and working on the presentation tools. In relation to spreading content, the ongoing discussions are covering areas such as influencers, TV production, new types of content, marketing, TV and digital shows, etc. Moving into specific topics, Hausleitner informed as follows:

- **Media Sales:** the sales strategy and the entire team was changed by Infront; a personnel meeting is scheduled for 23 March. In this area, there are many open issues regarding second tier and women's competitions. The complex situation in France is unresolved, as are the media situations in Germany and Poland. Contrary to that, DAZN has launched a platform that has reach in over 200 countries. It is expected that by 1 July, the picture in this area will be incomplete.
- **Marketing Sales:** the prognosis for the upcoming EHF EUROs 2020 and 2022 is positive; the existing team is working well. In relation to club competitions, an update on the partner situation was provided – all interest in the competitions have been sourced via the EHF handball network and efforts on Infront's side will have to be increased.

Hausleitner noted with the many tasks that lie ahead, the EHF/EHFM will focus on how to approach the hospitality market in the future, as well as targeting business customers. Concerning the other task forces, it was reported that the work is ongoing.

Concluding the meeting, Chairman Butzeck thanked the participants for their contribution to the working session.

For the Minutes: M. Brown  
Vienna, 19 March 2020

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