

Minutes to the Common Meeting of the  
**Professional Handball Board (PHB) & Women's Handball Board (WHB)**

**Date / Time:** Thursday, 23 April 2020 / 15:30 – 17:00

**Venue:** Video Conference

<b>Participants PHB:</b>	Gerd Butzeck	Chairman / MFCH / GER
	Nikolas Larsson	Vice Chairman / EHLB / SWE
	Morten Stig Christensen	Member NB / DEN
	Philippe Bana	Member NB / FRA
	Frank Bohmann	Member EHLB / GER
	Michael Sahl Hansen	Member EHPU / DEN
	Marcus Rominger	Member EHPU / GER
	Predrag Bošković	Member EXEC / MNE
	Stefan Lövgren	Member EXEC / SWE
<b>Participants WHB:</b>	Nodjalem Myaro	Chairwoman/ Nations Representative / FRA
	Pirje Orasson	Vice Chair/ Nations Representative / EST
	Leonor Mallozzi	Member/ Nations Representative / POR
	Narcisa Lecusanu	Member/ Leagues/ ROU
	Liudmila Bodnieva	Member/ Players/ RUS
	Deja Ivanovic	Member/ WFCH / SLO
	Henrik La Cour	Member EXEC / DEN
Gabriella Horvath	Member EXEC / HUN	
<b>EHF Office:</b>	Michael Wiederer	EHF President
	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General
	Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
	Alenka Cuderman	WHP Coordinator
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison / Minutes
<b>Excused:</b>	Gregor Planteu	Member MFCH / SLO

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

The video conference cannot be regarded as an ordinary meeting, rather a consultation process coordinated by the EHF.

EHF President Wiederer thanked the WHB and PHB members for their presence and mentioned the NB session that preceded the joint PHB/WHB meeting before presenting a short recap on the overall situation. In order to provide common information, a joint meeting of the PHB and WHB was scheduled and regarding the competitions side, there are crucial parts that mainly target the men's side, but it made sense to have an exchange of information considering that many Board members have various functions within their Federations and in the EHF that overlap the topics. With the members very aware of the current (diverging) situation in Europe as to timetables, political measures, etc., the EHF continues to monitor the situation and must come to decisions that can be realistically put in place. Input from internal and external partners has been received and treated accordingly including as part of the thought process.

Overall, Europe is facing a 6-month shutdown from March until the end of August, and handball cannot compare itself with the likes of football (matches without spectators), and with no statements to that effect, it means that not only June, but July and August as well are closed to the sport. It is understood

that the shutdown has an impact on the upcoming 2021 season, and the organisation is considering how to finish the current season and trying to limit potential consequences on the new season. Wiederer also mentioned the impact resulting from the contracts noting that the same holds true for leagues, clubs, federations, and is affecting the players; there is an overall marketing situation in Europe which is endangering handball and other sports as well. This market situation impacts both the current situation as well as in the upcoming seasons of potential future contracts, therefore all interested parties are called to collaborate on workable solutions.

Furthermore, the EHF sought legal advice to clarify the responsibilities, rights, and duties according to the Statutes and Regulations in the current situation. In the time between Congresses, the Executive Committee has the responsibility to take conclusions and come to decisions in order to uphold the structure. The organisation has opted for the optimistic approach in order to ensure that both the external clients and the internal partners understand that it continues to work for the improvement of the situation and that is complying to the situation in the best possible way in view of moving forward.

## **2. Current Situation**

Difficulties faced include border shutdowns, travels restrictions, event bans (provisionally until 31 August), spectator bans that could be longer than event bans; all these elements have a financial impact on all institutions and consequently on budgets, players (salary cuts), and organisations and their staff. Most of the leagues have stopped and in the coming season this will mean an increase in the number of teams in some national leagues due to legal consequences and the EHF will have to deal the issue on how to qualify teams to the European Club competitions as different leagues ended the season with a different status i.e. finished, abandoned, etc. Other sports and the organisers of events are also being monitored to see in which way organisations are acting. For instance, even non-sporting (i.e. conferences, cultural events, fairs, etc.) activities have to be seen in parallel to handball as it has an impact on the venues and the overall picture. Furthermore, there are existing and new contracts to be followed, and in a first step the organisation has to find its ways through this environment.

## **3. Information on Competitions**

### **3.1. Overall Picture June – August 2020**

Wiederer mentioned the 'Feasibility Study' developed in February/March that served as a look ahead; and explained the steps that would be taken if matches could not go ahead in June. Since then, the decision-making process continued and several video conferences took place on an internal level with the various Committees and Boards, and also externally with the current partners theoretically finishing the season at the end of June, and with new partners coming in i.e. I/D, this has been a permanent discussion process.

The competition structure and the potential consequences arising from that, as well the other activities within the scope of the responsibilities are the main topics; furthermore, existing contracts, and financial consequences are the main topics from which the crisis management parameters were defined. It was reiterated that logically, the matches and the qualifications are better decided on the court than at the table, but if the matches could not be played then sporting factors were to be followed.

As the EHF has to take conclusions and is preparing the decision-making process for the next Executive Committee meeting, it has to take its obligations under consideration and harmonise them with all the stakeholders and the partners. Thus, the information exchange and the positioning of the different stakeholders is of importance for that process. Following the meeting of the Executive Committee, a status update, in a transparent and open form, containing not only the decisions, but also the reasoning behind the choices will be sent foremost to the Member Federations, leagues, and clubs. Afterwards, it will be distributed to the media.

Based on information provided by Member Bohmann concerning activities in Germany, Wiederer responded that it is the task of the organisation to look for possible solutions in the knowledge that all decisions taken at any point are subject to adaptation: what is decided today and may be confirmed tomorrow may not be the end of the road bearing in mind that sport is not in the driver's seat regarding restriction. Due to the challenges faced by the clubs and the players, it was agreed that the organisation must do its utmost to get handball back to the courts as soon as possible.

### **3.2. National Team Competitions**

Moving on to the focus of the meeting, Wiederer explained that some of the points that are to be raised can be viewed as a report, information to be digested, and elements for discussion. He noted that having worked with the IHF (i.e. Calendar Conference), the Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments are of great importance, and although the EHF can negotiate it cannot take the final decision; there is also the factor of the IHF and their parallel activities in various categories that are not easy to integrate and that coordination will be essential. It was reiterated that based on the decision taken at the 03/2020 meeting of the Executive Committee concerning the June activities, it can be confirmed that no competitions will take place in June.

#### **3.2.1. EURO Qualifiers NOR/DEN**

Two out of six matches have been played; matches in June/July are no longer possible.

#### **3.2.2. Men's World Championship Qualification EGY (WC-Qual.)**

This event has not started and has two rounds that are open (8 + 20 matches); matches in June/July are no longer possible.

**Respective decisions concerning the ranking for both competitions were part of the Feasibility Study and a final decision on the June schedule and, by that, the activation of the study will be taken by the Executive Committee at the next meeting scheduled for 24 April 2020.**

The NB representatives requested that it be noted that with the cancellation of the WC-Qual. the National Federations suffer from a lack of matches that may result in monies being refunded to sponsors and partners – hitting some nations hard; it was acknowledged by the NB Representative that due to the current crisis that little could be done. In response, it was reiterated that in the previous EXEC meeting, considering the importance of the WC-Qual., it was stated that if an alternative date could be found it would be worked on and the possibility (September) was explored. However, a statement from the club stakeholder stressed that there would be no acceptance of additional national team weeks and was as well supported by the leagues and players due to the workload in the upcoming season. In addition, the impact of the OG qualification will have to be shouldered.

#### **3.2.3. YAC Events M18/M20**

The events planned originally for the beginning of July were in an initial step, moved to August. Now, it has become apparent that all events (M18 and M20 EUROs and Championships) have to be postponed once again. The situation is no longer feasible and other elements have to be considered: travel restrictions, parental guidance, preparation time, etc. The EHF is exploring the possibility of rescheduling the matches in January; contact with the participants and the organisers was initiated. Following the decisions to be taken at the Executive Committee, and researching of the options, the final decision on the rescheduling or cancelling of the events will take place at the Executive Committee meeting in June.

#### **3.2.4. IHF W18/W20 Events**

Though not officially published by the IHF to date (23.04.2020), it has been indicated that the events will be postponed. According to first information in the coordination meeting, they will be scheduled before/parallel to the Women's EURO.

#### **3.2.5. Other Competitions and Activities**

The European Masters Championship and Women's 16 European Open are cancelled in their entirety; and based on the structure of the competitions, they are not in the position to be replayed. Both events were cancelled by the organisers. The various summer 2020 beach handball events will not take place. The EHF is exploring alternative solutions for some (e.g. YAC EURO - postponed) and not for others (Championships - cancelled).

### **3.3. Club Competitions**

#### **3.3.1. Men's CL/EHFC/CC**

#### **3.3.2. Women's CL/EHF/CC**

Opening the topic, it was mentioned that bearing in mind that the decision was taken that no matches would be held in June and also taking into consideration the start of – and to reduce the impact on – the upcoming season, the decision was made to abandon the men's and women's EHF Cups and Challenge Cups in an effort to keep the top two Final4s (Budapest and Cologne) 'alive'.

CSO Glaser underlined that though to the participants, all the competitions are of major importance; the organisation had to consider that the overall impact on European handball and the on the competitions is different when speaking of the Challenge Cup and the Champions League. The decision was made to go in the direction of keeping the two Champions League Final4 events and maintain the rescheduled dates i.e. September for Budapest and December for Cologne. Thus, the remaining four competitions are abandoned resp. cancelled and no alternative dates are foreseen. With no more matches being played in June and July, the 2019/2020 season is basically over.

Providing feedback to the information, the EHPU representative stated that the players were concerned and sceptical about having matches in a compressed programme after Christmas. Wiederer responded by stating that the retention of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 on the list of activities was in accordance with the wishes of the club representatives. It is expected that the players who expressed concern will address their employers (the Clubs) who sanctioned holding the Final4. The EHPU representative agreed to the procedure.

### **3.4. Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments (OGQT)**

Wiederer swiftly reiterated the steps taken prior to the meeting: the discussion process with the IOC, the Calendar Conference with the IHF (22.04.2020), the discussion process with the Stakeholders, etc. CSO Glaser proceeded to present the options – one for women's OGQT, finding a solution was easier as there are no major conflicting elements, and six options for the men's OGQT as there are many diverging aspects.

- To the women's OGQT the National Team Week (NTW) is planned and the matches can go ahead from 19-21 March 2021. This solution follows the overall schedule.  
*The EHF will present this solution to the IHF who will take the final decision.*

Before continuing, it was questioned by the EHPU representative if the OGQT can be cancelled and an existing ranking of World Championships be used in order to create space for the National Teams. In response it was stated that as to what concerns the women's OGQT, the space is available, and all women's national teams can have activities in this period without affecting any other activities. However, concerning the men's OGQT, the proposal to cancel the OGQT was raised several times by the Federations on the level of the IHF. Due to the existing Qualification process agreed with the IOC,

it seems not to be possible to effect the change. At this time, using a ranking system to replace the qualification would pose issues with the matter of a reigning champion as well as the potential for some federations losing out on their qualification chance, this would also impact on the continental level. However, the interest in the cancellation of the men's and women's OGQT was understood and acknowledged.

To the men's OGQT, the EHF worked on six different proposals that came from different starting points:

- **Alternative 1:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added immediately following from 15-21 March to play Rounds 3/4 of the EURO Qualifiers. *Meaning an additional week for seven teams.*
- **Alternative 2:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added after the F4 in June 2021 to play the EURO Qualifiers. *Originally proposed by the EHF to the IHF; means an additional week at the end of the season; not the preferred option of the IHF as it overlaps with the football European Championships and is too close to the start of the rescheduled Olympic Games, teams known too late.*
- **Alternative 3:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW (in 2021/22 season) to be added to the calendar, specifically 8-12 September 2021. *EURO Qualifiers one month after the OG and three months before the Final Tournament.*
- **Alternative 4:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021 and an additional NTW to be added to the calendar, specifically 3-7 November 2021. *EURO Qualifiers two months before the Final Tournament – too late for the event organisation.*
- **Alternative 5:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021; the existing national team period from 6-9 January 2021 will be used for those EURO Qualifier matches of teams in Pot 1 and Pot 2 that will play OGQT in March. *Does not create additional NTW.*
- **Alternative 6:** Men's OGQT to be played from 12-14 March 2021. All other teams will play EURO Qualifiers in this period (4 vs 3 and 3 vs 4). The two matches of the teams in pot 1 and 2 (2 vs 1 and 1 vs 2) will be added to Week 1 (two additional days - Mo/Tu - in November 2020) and Week 3 (two additional days - Mo/Tu - in April/May 2021). *Only 6 national teams participating in the OGQT in pot one and two of the EURO Qualifiers; does not create additional NTW.*

From the ensuing discussion, pertinent comments are compiled and summarised:

- It was underlined that a position/possible solution that can be taken to the Executive Committee in order to move forward was sought and, based on the fluid situation, made in the knowledge that it was subject to change if required.
- The draw event for the 16 June EURO Qualifiers is fixed and cannot change; a solution to move forward is sought also based on the needs of external partners also (i.e. organisers, partners, media); it is underlined that, with the exception of the OGQT, there are no additional matches. The preparation of the six options were created in the space between the IHF-EHF Calendar Conference (21.04.) and the Stakeholder meetings (23.04.) – the quick turnaround did not allow for the options to be distributed prior to the meeting.

- In all situations there are 'winners and losers'; there is no optimal solution and every stakeholder groups will suffer in different ways and some more than others. The objective in such situations is 'give and take' from all stakeholders.
- Concerning option 5 and the exact scheduling of the matches, it will be up to the National Federations to organise the matches in January 2021; friendly matches will be replaced by official matches and for these teams playing the matches against the 6 OG Qualifier teams, the March week will allow additional activities.
- Having discussed the options in the meeting of the Nations Board prior to the Professional Handball Board, the NB representatives noted that the prioritised preference of the NB being options 3, 6, and 5.
- As the clubs reject the idea of additional NTW and playing dates, the club representative indicated that option 5 (secondary – option 6) would be acceptable to the clubs.
- Concerned about the density of the calendar, the EHLB representatives indicated that option 5 would be acceptable to the leagues in order to be able to carry out national competitions.
- Reiterating concerns about the lack of time to analyse the options and discuss them with its members, the EHPU representatives provisionally indicated that option 5 would be acceptable.

Closing the agenda point, it was understood that there can be no final opinion without analysis, and even then, different decisions can be taken. Nonetheless, it was positive to have the platform to hear the opinions. Wiederer thanked the participants for their contribution and patience to deal with the obvious complexity of the topics.

#### 4. Other Topics

It is expected that during the meeting of the Executive Committee (24 April 2020), the group will discuss the next steps on how to proceed in the current climate going beyond the topic of the competitions and focusing on other activities where impact is foreseen e.g. education, finances, conferences, development, etc. The 12<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General (CfSG) was intended for further discussion and development of the EHF Masterplan together with the National Federations. Despite the postponement of the CfSG to Autumn 2020, at this time, the Masterplan will be adapted accordingly. It was underlined that the EHF does not intend to collect and keep unused funds (i.e. the reduction of expenditure caused by the pandemic due to cancelled and postponed events), rather through a revision of the plans (respectively the budgets) in cooperation with the Member Federations, the funds will be reallocated. Although it is expected that at the year end, there will be losses also on the side of the EHF, it is not in the interest of the organisation to retain funds especially now. Thus, information will be collected, and budgets, plans, and projects (i.e. LUX) will be adapted in order to ensure that the Member Federations are supported.

Concerning the roster of the 2020 Final4s, a motion will be submitted to the Executive Committee to amend the regulations according to ensure that all players with the clubs at the time of the event will have the eligibility to play the Final4s.

At the end of the meeting, President Wiederer reiterated that following the Executive Committee meeting, the decisions taken will be issued together with an information package. It is expected that many questions respectively challenges will arise and will have to be faced. In any case, it will be important to keep the information channels open and to grant transparent processes.

Thanking the participants once again for their inputs, President Wiederer closed the meeting.