
**Minutes to the Common Meeting of the
26th Professional Handball Board (PHB) & 20th Women's Handball Board (WHB)**

Date / Time: Tuesday, 13 October 2020 / 08:30 – 10:00

Venue: Microsoft Teams Video Conference

Participants PHB:	Gerd Butzeck	Chairman / MFCH / GER*
	Nikolas Larsson	Vice Chairman / EHLB / SWE
	Morten Stig Christensen	Member NB / DEN
	Philippe Bana	Member NB / FRA
	Gregor Planteu	Member MFCH / SLO*
	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
	Michael Wiederer	President*
	Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General*
Participants WHB:	Nodjialem 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
EHF Office:	Doru Simion (<i>in part</i>)	Senior Director Sport & Game Services*
	Alenka Cuderman	Women's Handball Coordinator*
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison/Minutes*

**in person, and present in Vienna*

1. Welcome and Introduction

With the consent of the WHB and PHB chairpersons, EHF President Wiederer welcomed the participants to the meeting. The members were invited to provide their input to facilitate a common understanding around the various topics.

1.1. Current Situation

1.2. 'Back-to-Handball' Information

Secretary General Hausleitner gave a brief recap of the period since March 2020; having made the decision of postponing and cancelling numerous events, the mission was to find a common basis to revive the sport. Several steps were taken that included a series of calls with the National Federations, the creation of the Back-to-Handball platform as well as a hygiene concept. An objective of the EHF was to exude a positive attitude and give a clear commitment to restart the competitions.

To enable the start of the competition, the EHF was in close contact with the CL clubs. The first games of the new season took place at the end of August and though inevitable issues arose e.g. travel restrictions, the competitions department endeavoured to find solutions. Through these efforts, it is estimated that almost 90% of all matches are played. The matches of the EHF EURO 2022 Qualifiers scheduled for late October/early November has led to an intensified coordination with the National Federations. Moreover, concerning the Women's EHF EURO 2020 in December, the EHF is working to ensure that it will be a reliable partner to TV stations and deliver an event that is a cornerstone of the sport.

In addition to the EHF hygiene concept developed for club competitions, the living document was subsequently adapted for national team competitions; the EHF also purchased and distributed rapid antigen tests that give a stable and fast result; it is expected that they will be widely accepted in a short time. Furthermore, the EHF continues to work in close cooperation with the other members of the European Team Sports (ETS) association in an approach to the German EU presidency emphasising the point that professional sport participants should be allowed to travel within a 48-hour window. The contact is also targeting coordinated testing regimes. With the initiative set, it is hoped that an answer will be received soon.

2. Information on Competitions - Overall

2.1. National Team Competitions

A brief reiteration was given to the situation i.e. the postponement, respectively cancellation, of several events both on the senior and YAC levels. Though preparation is ongoing for the M20 and M18 EURO/ECh, the events are under analysis. On the senior level, the EHF EURO 2022 Qualifiers are scheduled for the beginning of November, it is expected that all matches will take place and open issues are being dealt with. The 2021 Women's World Championship qualification is scheduled in tournament format during the first week of December.

Reference was taken to the obvious competition 'bottleneck' situation foreseen in January 2021, it was agreed by the attendees that a clear analysis of all events, both IHF and EHF, must take place and coordination with the IHF must ensue.

2.2. Club Competitions

CSO Glaser spoke on the current status of the 2020/21 season that started on schedule and approximately 90% of all matches have been played. Due to Europe-wide restrictions and some positive Covid-19 cases, some matches were postponed. The competitions department

is in contact with the clubs to reschedule matches prior to the end of the year. If there is no chance to play a postponed game, a decision will have to be taken at the administrative level; however, it was underlined that the EHF does not want to move to that level.

Pertaining to the release of players for national team activities, the club stakeholder raised the concern of returning players not being able to fulfil their obligations to their clubs (e.g. quarantine). Although the clubs have been issued with the recommendation to release players, assurances that all safety precautions (i.e. testing regimens) are being taken by the National Federations are requested.

It was emphasised that clubs and national federations are facing the same challenges, and the successful continuation of the season is dependent on the cooperation between clubs and national federations. All stakeholders are suffering because of different conditions being applicable in different regions, thus, unifying the situation is of the utmost importance. The EHF continues in its endeavours to support all activities, nonetheless, balance is needed.

3. EHF Activities

3.1. General Information

3.1.1. 12th EHF Conference for Secretaries General

The 12th EHF Conference for Secretaries General was postponed from 04/2020 and was eventually hosted on 09/2020 and presented as a hybrid meeting with approx. 30 National Federations representatives in attendance in Vienna, and the remainder of the attendees participating via the live stream. On the fringes of the event, the Executive Committee meeting took place with all members in attendance bar one who was restricted from travelling.

The areas of focus centred on the organisation of national team events, status update on the international calendar, the application process for the EUROs 2026 & 2028 for which 14 letters of intent have been received. The Conference also placed a spotlight on beach handball, EHF Sports and Game Services, wheelchair handball, grassroots, and licensing. A deep insight was provided to the Kinexon project that has focused on the scientific approach. The first results of the project proved that a major step forward in the analysis of the sport had taken place.

Infront and DAZN presented the digital concept, the home of handball, the CRM system, brand guidelines, as well as the new YAC and beach handball corporate identities. The presentation of the updated EHF Master Plan included breakout sessions for all '7 Players' where interaction followed both online and in person; the Master Plan will return at the 2021 Congress following the treatment of the input received.

The minutes from the 12th EHF Conference for Secretaries General as well as the presentations and relevant documentation was distributed to the National Federations and uploaded to the 'Back-to-Handball' platform.

3.1.2. Ordinary EHF Congress / Extraordinary EHF Congress in 2021

The 15th Ordinary EHF Congress was a main topic of the European Handball Convention. A full rundown of the event, including the electoral procedure, was given. Wiederer also mentioned the upcoming structural changes to the Men's Nations Board resulting in a new Nations Board, the introduction of the National Team Committees for men and women, and the slight adaptation of the Women's Handball Board. Returning to the elections, it is expected that approximately 60 people will be elected to the various boards and committees. All nominations must be via the National Federations. Though the event in April is primarily focused on the elections, there is currently one motion on the level of the ECA that is being prepared for submission to the Congress.

The awarding process for the EHF EUROs were formally separated from the Ordinary Congress; thus on 19.11.2021, together with the 30-year anniversary celebrations of the EHF, the awarding for the EHF EUROs 2026 and 2028 will take place. As the EHF EUROs are a core business asset, it was essential that the decision is not taken within the political framework.

4. Various

4.1. Meeting CAL 2021

The 2021 meeting overview was mailed to the National Federations and the stakeholders as part of the minutes from the 09/2020 meeting of the Executive Committee. It was noted that following the elections in April 2021 the next electoral period starts right after the congress, thus, the committees and boards will meet to select the chairpersons and decide on the delegations. The meetings on the list that follow the Congress and target the rest of the year are reproduced for orientation and are subject to change.

4.2. Player Agents

Introducing the agenda points 4.2. and 4.3., Wiederer emphasised the players as the common link. Following the overview of the situation and the initial discussions, it is intended that both matters be discussed further in the individual meetings of the PHB and WHB.

Continuing, Wiederer expressed that the EHF had no desire to dive deep into the subject matter of players' agents (PAs) having witnessed the unsuccessful attempts of football to integrate PAs. The International Handball Federation introduced regulations for PAs, therefore the licensing thereof lies with the IHF. However, since then, no further action has taken place. As many of the transfers (including those of amateurs) take place at the European level, the matter of PAs is largely impacted by European activities.

Moreover, an initiative looking at how to regulate PAs started by the club stakeholder (MFCH) was described, as was the subsequent approach of Agents' representative towards the EHF to start a dialogue. The response of the EHF was neutral as it was clear that the matter had to be put to the platforms of the Professional Handball Board (PHB) and Women's Handball Board (WHB) to cement a position.

On behalf of the club stakeholder, Butzeck delivered the opinion of the clubs; he opened by conceding that the matter of PAs is difficult to regulate. However, the clubs face the core issue of having a party requesting a service that they are not paying for as the PAs want to be paid by the clubs. Because of the impact of Covid-19, the FCH recommended to clubs to reduce the commission fees of PAs by the same percentage amount that the players and coaches had their salaries reduced; the players and the coaches agreed to the reductions, but the PAs refused a reduction of their commissions.

In the knowledge that there are systems (licensing) in place for PAs in a few countries, if work were to begin on this topic, it could only be at the level of international transfers. It is not the intention to regulate transfers within the different countries. There is a basic understanding that in the long term, the tax authorities will not allow that the club pays for the agent of the player. A consequence of this is that more taxes will have to be paid if the same net result is to be achieved for the agent and the player.

After internal discussions, FCH concluded that a system be introduced that sees the party (players) requesting the service having to pay for the service. Such a system would also require a mutual agreement on the side of the clubs and the players to agree to certain conditions; this would in turn oblige the clubs and the players. A written agreement between a PA and a player must be in place indicating the remuneration for the agent, and it must have a specified start and end date. PAs should be obligated to inform clubs if they are representing and/or offering a player to the transfer market. The FCH proposes that a list of obliging agents be established and, moreover, be bound by the EHF legal system. Butzeck indicated that a proposal was drafted, but not distributed externally as the FCH Board will meet to discuss the matter further. Subsequently, the document will be sent to the stakeholders. The information provided by Butzeck was supported by FCH President Planteu.

From the side of the EHF having analysed the environment, it was stated that based on the law, such a notion was unlikely as neither agents could be compelled to register, nor could the EHF issue certification or licensing as this was a matter for the Chamber of Commerce in the respective country, and issuing regulations would be unviable as PAs are not members of the EHF, thus not subject to its legal remedies. Any PAs issues are a matter of civil law. Furthermore, the topic is wide reaching (e.g. IHF responsibility via the regulations, legal representatives), also it is clear that it is a costly situation for those involved – agents take money out of a system that they do not contribute to.

EHLB Chairman Larsson supported the direction of the FCH as a step forward in the matter was deemed necessary. However, the matter of jurisdiction needs careful consideration.

EHPU President Hansen expressed curiosity as to why the FCH did not consult with the EHPU on a matter that clearly has the players as a central focus. Being in contact with several agents, the EHPU recognised that any initiative for transparency is positive and agreed that the player requesting the services of an agent should pay the ensuing costs. The question as to who would oversee such a system was raised; Hansen emphasised that when such a

system was implemented in Denmark, it was the clubs that failed to live up to its end of the agreement.

To emphasise the difficulties in regulating the players' agents, the following facts were presented by Doru Simion, Senior Director of Sport and Game Services:

Two separate studies (11/2009 & 10/2019) stated similar conclusions and recommendations:

- ✦ Three totally different “pillars” are acting currently
 - *IHF – as “reigning owner” of transfers and players agents’ regulations*
 - *Legal framework of every single nation*
 - *Legal framework existing and governing within European Union*
- ✦ First and foremost, as a basic common point it needs:
 - *To unify and to harmonise the respective activity in terms of legal framework*
- ✦ No existing EHF legal tools for administrating – no current valid possibility to link and to include the activity of players’ agents into the EHF legal system

Additionally, acting as an agent is a free choice; it is not a profession, but a vocational calling. There is no need for harmonisation, but rather a deliberate need of practical coordination of the parties involved - first and foremost of course, players and clubs; and at the level of the EHF, there are weekly issues born by the procedural mixture of clubs–players–agents, which are mostly not a subject of the transfers, but topics for the civil court in terms of the linked relation: employer–employee–negotiator. Simion continued mentioning the number of transfers in the 2018/2019 season (3774 [1083 Professionals]), and the facility available to National Federations since the 2019/2020 season to directly register their professional players on the EHF family platform; here they can see the status of the players. This system provides a requisite transparency.

In the brief discussion that followed, it was stated that a working group would be a step forward. The EHF is, on the one hand, in favour of dealing with the matter if deemed useful and if so wished, but on the other hand is not in favour of starting a project where no workable result is possible. The EHF committed to broaching and discussing the topic with the IHF, and the stakeholders agreed to discuss the matter further at their respective levels.

4.3. Education Compensation

A brief status update was given to the topic of Education Compensation; this follows a specific process on the level of the IHF in a global context. The IHF gave the Continental Federations the permission to define regulations within their own continents. It is the intent of the organisation to find a solution that is bearable and useful for the producers of the talented players, and it is also to be understood whether a proposal should be prepared in view of a Congress (being a major topic) or should the matter end with the Executive Committee (being a minor topic). Therefore, the matter was placed on the agenda of the upcoming PHB and WHB meetings.

In the ensuing discussion, the WHB Member Lecusanu outlined the situation in Romania and, providing examples, stated that it remained a topic of importance. The group agreed that compensation must be paid, but the system must also be protected as it is important for the survival of the sport. It was reiterated how dated the topic is having first arisen in 2004. When looking to solutions, the matter of equity and balance were emphasised as the concern was raised that clubs might refrain from signing new talents due to the inability to pay large sums of compensation.

Simion added the following points for consideration: at its origins, compensation for education was created and implemented to ease the way for the free movement of players within Europe in accordance with European Law/EU Standards (01.07.2004). Various adaptations and changes have been implemented since the IHF took over the administration of the transfers activity worldwide (01.07.2011). Primarily, Education Compensation targets only professional players aged 16 to 23 years old who are finishing their official agreement (educational included) with the releasing club and gaining the professional status in the receiving club – currently, following an adopted EHF motion, also the amateur players – same age period – becoming professional in the receiving clubs. As the amounts linked to the education compensation are reflecting the ranking of the nations (releasing – receiving) according to the IHF classification(s), which are accounting for global competitions, a fair and correct approach presumes reference to the continental, respectively to the European activities.

Whilst the complexity of the matter was granted, it was agreed that the situation needs reform, and that it was the onus of the EHF to define value considering the differences between the Member Federations. As the topic touched all stakeholder areas, it was agreed that a working group would be important. With the topic identified, the matter would be discussed further in the individual meetings.

It was reiterated that much information had been transported to the PHB and WHB members to serve as basis for further discussion in their separate groups. With no other topics on the agenda, the participants were thanked for their contribution and the common part of the PHB/WHB meetings was closed.

Vienna, 16 October 2020

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