
MEETING TO THE 27TH MEETING OF THE PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD (PHB)

(Parallel to the meeting of the WHB)

Date: Tuesday, 9 March 2021
Time: 14:00 – 16:45
Venue: 27th PHB Meeting via MS Teams

Participants PHB:	Gerd Butzeck	Chairman / MFCH / GER
	Nikolas Larsson	Vice Chairman / EHLB / SWE
	Morten S. Christensen	Member NB / DEN
	Philippe Bana	Member NB / FRA
<i>In Part</i>	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
<i>In Part</i>	Michael Wiederer	President
<i>In Part</i>	Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General
EHF Office:	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison/Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Butzeck welcomed the members to the meeting.

2. PHB Meeting 10/2020 – Minutes and Follow-up

Reference was taken to an amendment to the minutes made immediately following the last meeting [*the correct version was sent to the Member Federations*]. This is reflected in the minutes for transparency. With no additional comment, the minutes were adopted.

3. EHF Information

3.1. EHF Executive Committee 12/2020

With no additional comment, the PHB took note of the minutes.

3.2. EHF Marketing GmbH – General Assembly 11/2020

President Wiederer reported that the complex business year, due to the cancelled competition phase at the end of the 2019/2020 season in addition to the postponed or cancelled Final4s, was completed; overall, it can be viewed as a very good year, the losses were digested, and the EHF was able to provide the originally foreseen financial amounts to the clubs taking part in the Final4 in Cologne at the end of 2020, and even though the year could have been more successful, there were no negative consequences. The rundown of EHF GA took place as normal, and the 2021 budget was presented 6 months previously, so no new information was provided.

3.3. 15th Ordinary EHF Congress/Follow-up

In the common meeting, basic information was provided on the Congress. The PHB was reminded that, in this meeting, it was also possible to discuss points of interests to the stakeholders i.e. the motions, as well as the elections resp. nominations.

3.4. 13th Extraordinary EHF Congress in 2021

This is an awarding Congress; the EUROs are very important for the EHF and European handball, and a lot of interest for the awarding process is expected in November and will be followed by the EHF 30th Anniversary celebrations.

3.5. EHF Masterplan

See AP 2.3 of the Minutes to 1st Common Meeting of the Stakeholders.

4. International Handball Federation

4.1. World Championships 2021

President Wiederer emphasised that the event was a great success for handball especially as it was able to take place with minimal problems. The EHF sent an official congratulatory letter to the IHF highlighting that the support of the stakeholders (as seen through the media reports) was an essential element for the functioning of the event. The Egyptian Handball Federation did a great job and such an investment would not have been possible anywhere else; nonetheless, thanks are owed to the stakeholders, and this will be mentioned at the next meeting between Michael Wiederer and Hassan Moustafa.

Looking to the bigger picture, Member Christensen stated that it was of huge importance to all of the National Federations to execute two championships in December and January, and if it had not been possible, it would have been more difficult for the Federations. Even though there were challenges (Covid-19), the TV (3 million watching the final) and social media figures were enormous and that was due to more people being at home. Member Planteu remarked on the statement made by IOC President Bach who commented on both events recognising both the sport and the organisations.

4.2. Further Information

Rule Changes: it is known that rule tests were conducted, but the results thereof were not provided to the IHF Council. At this time, there is no further information; it is possible that this topic is on hold.

YAC and World Championship events: in 2020 there was no competition activity, at any level, within the other Continental Federations. Thus, all qualifications were based on previous championships and rankings. At this time, Europe is the only CF to continue its activities; however, seeing the situation through the current global lens, it was not possible for other CFs to organise any competitions.

EHF/IHF: the organisations are in dialogue regarding the current anti-doping situation. According to WADA, AD activities are fully under the jurisdiction of the International Federations. The information exchange of the EHF will continue on 10.03.2021. At this time, the EHF holds no mandate from WADA to conduct AD testing in any capacity.

5. Stakeholder Reports and Input to PHB

5.1. EHF Nations' Board (Men)

Noting the similarity to the agenda of the common meeting, NB Chairman Christensen mentioned the negative impact of Covid-19 on young people and children and their psychological development. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to impress upon governments that youngsters have to get back to sport, as many federations are losing their younger players. As the situation continues, it is important to take handball back to the grassroots; despite the low temperatures, Federations are focusing on the outdoor versions of the sport.

NB Vice Chairman Bana mentioned the NB discussion concerning the OG Qualification Tournaments and the challenges faced, as there is no assistance at the international level for organisers. There are many difficult discussions with governments, and many federations still remain against the events, especially under the current circumstances. And during this time, the biggest problem remains cross-border matches, as it is really complicated to resolve the issues, is very expensive, and Federations continue to struggle with this daily.

5.2. Men's Forum Club Handball

Managing Director Butzeck reported on the most recent MFCH General Assembly, which welcomed a participant from USA (New York); the club is not entitled to participate in the decision-making process concerning purely European topics. However, MFCH is exploring ideas on how to grow and add non-European members.

It was underlined that the clubs are facing a critical financial situation; though some clubs have received support from EHF Marketing as it was able to fulfil all its financial obligations that included the lump sum payments distributed ahead of and after the Christmas period (as many clubs had liquidity issues), it was remarked that approx. EUR 900k has been used to cover charter flights, a quarter of which was covered by club funds, but in a move that benefitted some participants, additional marketing rights were passed over to the clubs.

MFCH also discussed the motion submitted to the Ordinary EHF Congress by the Norwegian Handball Federation concerning profit share distribution. It was made clear the MFCH viewed the proposal as unrealistic. The good cooperation with the Men's and Women's Forum Club Handball – the two parties who can determine the profit share distribution - was underlined. The current split was agreed and will be analysed after 18 months.

MFCH continues to support handball in the USA and the cooperation is working well. The United Team Handball Federation recently welcomed a new CEO, and it is hoped that the project will progress. The MFCH project in China is over due to a lack of communication. In another area of development, clubs coming from an emerging nation are encouraged to submit projects that target player retention during the Covid-19 pandemic; if the project is approved, the club can receive EUR 3000 in support funds from MFCH.

The next MFCH GA is planned for June 2021; Butzeck reiterated the voting structure, as it is not one vote per club i.e. current season CL participants have four votes, previous season CL

participants have three votes, European League participants have two votes, and all other clubs have one vote.

5.3. European Handball League Board

EHLB Chairman Larsson opened his report by supporting the sentiments concerning the importance of having held both the Women's EHF EURO and the Men's World Championship.

Turning to the activities at the league level with the current season concluding in June 2021, he underlined that all the leagues are suffering and despite the strain of the pandemic, all the leagues plan to fulfil their obligations. The everyday problems within the leagues concern the difficulties in organising the regular competition due to postponed or cancelled matches; it is clear that this is the same in the Champions and European Leagues; this has resulted in a complex situation where clubs at the bottom of the league demanding a freeze on the relegation procedure. So far, the clubs have made it through this difficult time, but not without damage i.e. loss of players.

At the end of March, there will be a digital follow-up with the top eight leagues, and additionally, the EHLB plans to hold a workshop on the fringes of the Final4 with four keynote speakers who will speak on the structural situation post-Covid-19. The workshop aims to provide a knowledge-based transfer as it will be important going forward. This will be followed by the 2nd General Assembly of the European Handball League Board on 13 June.

5.4. European Handball Players' Union

EHPU President Sahl Hansen took a moment to say a few words on the loss of Alfredo Quintana, the Portuguese & FC Porto goalkeeper who tragically passed away in February.

The EHPU expressed their satisfaction that the Championships in Denmark and Egypt were carried-out without major problems; having been involved in the process with the Minister of Culture in Denmark, it was important open the sport again for the fans and sport in general.

Following a communication exchange with the IHF concerning spectators, Sahl Hansen expressed his thanks to the 14 teams and their National Federations as well as the teams of Brazil and Chile who supported the initiative. The letter not only represented the voice of the players, but also the stakeholders.

In an effort to support their National Federations, many national team players have increased their activities with the commercial partners of the Federation.

Continuing, he briefly mentioned the high workload, giving the example of 7 matches in 14 days or 5 matches in just nine days, being placed on players though the players acknowledge that they also have to deal with the current situation and have to balance the debate; and it was hoped that this did not significantly impact the number of injuries, despite the full picture not yet being available.

Turning specifically to the competitions currently in play, the EHPU positively welcomed the extra rest day scheduled at the Men's EHF EURO 2022 in HUN/SVK as a step in the right

direction. In relation to the OG Qualification Tournaments, the previously stated position was reiterated as Sahl Hansen confirmed that the objective is to eliminate the qualification.

On the level of club competitions, EHPU Vice President Marcus Rominger commented on the lack of communication with the stakeholders regarding recent decisions concerning the Champions League schedule i.e. some decisions being taken administratively. He stated that some players had contacted the EHPU and it did not have any information to even pass on to the players.

Redressing the matter immediately, President Wiederer validated the remarks levelled by the EHPU and stated that the entire season was completely new for the EHF with some people working tirelessly to find solutions. He continued that admittedly that the EHF did not think to inform the EHPU directly in this situation; with the clubs the situation was complex when it came to communications e.g. when to disseminate information to the clubs, what to keep internal, and what to publicise through the media, and from this there were many complications. Wiederer emphasised that the lack of communication was not intentional.

He mentioned that the current situation pays tribute to the challenges that handball has faced, as there has not been so much acceptance found between the stakeholders before, and, in a way, the stakeholder platform has inadvertently created much understanding as work continued to secure the inventory for which he also extended his thanks to the stakeholder groups.

Continuing the report, and in response to the question if feedback had been received by the EHPU from the players regarding the extended squad lists, and although there was no direct feedback, the consequences of having many players on the list, but choosing to use the same players continuously was noted by example. It makes sense to use more players, but that is highly dependent on the coaches who are the tournament to win. It was suggested that the matter of the extended squad list be looked at further to see if it would be both beneficial to players and federations in the future, as it was clearly more expensive, and for the IHF and EHF, the organisers, and the Federations to drive the model at upcoming events as the feedback could prove beneficial to all stakeholders such as are there less injuries when using such a model. Furthermore, the EHPU would evaluate the matter based on input received from its members.

Wiederer stated that such a topic needed a careful analysis (and not a subjective approach) e.g. if you bring 20 players, put 16 on the bench, but then only use nine or even twelve players from the sixteen, it will make no difference if there are 20 players or not. Thus, an analysis of the statistic is called for in this topic. Another element is if such an analysis covers only the best teams there might be a difference, but if there is a disbalance between top and mid-ranked teams then the gap in quality widens as some mid-ranked teams do not have 20 players available at the national squad level. Adding his agreement to the statement of the EHF, Member Bana also noted that, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, clear injury reports (team by team) need to be provided to and by the EHF and IHF; Butzeck added that the reports for 2019 and 2021 need to be provided by the IHF.

Continuing the EHPU report, Rominger mentioned the very good communication with the Leagues and the Federations during the pandemic as it helped to strengthen the communication with the stakeholders in Germany; and in conclusion, the most important factor right now is that the players want to play, but not every second day.

6. National Team Competitions

6.1. Current Season

Hausleitner mentioned the difficulties faced since November due to matches being postponed and cancelled; now in the third round with scheduled matches, it is the intent to have all matches played by the beginning of May to ensure a proper rundown. BEL had to leave the competition as it was not possible to organise, and there are currently no handball activities in the country. The current status remains that there are groups with all matches played and other groups that are behind schedule. Furthermore, a special situation arises around Israel and it is hoped that the national team will play all of its missing games in the last week of the qualification phase. It is expected that all decisive matches will be played by the end of April.

6.2. Preview EUROS 2022 – 2028

Men's EHF EURO 2022: the cooperation remains excellent; site visits have been scheduled and are taking place. The construction of the arena in Budapest is behind schedule but expected to be completed within the foreseen timeframe. Based on the positive interest in the tickets that went on sale earlier in the year, the fans expect a normal tournament.

Men's EHF EURO 2024: the match schedule is ready, and the venues are soon to be announced by the organiser. The opening show and match in an arena that has a 60000-spectator capacity is intended to be the highlight.

EHF EURO 2026 & 2028: 14 letters of intent have been received, and the deadline for application closes in May. There seems to be much interest in these events; the awarding will take place in November prior to the 30-year anniversary celebrations.

7. Club Competitions

7.1. Season 2020/2021 – Status Update

The group phase in both the men's and women's Champions and European Leagues was concluded. This was followed by a period of discussion and decision concerning the matches that could not be played within the timeframe necessary. The current KO Phase is also complicated; however, basis principles have been agreed i.e. 'rule of cause' and the opportunity to have a second away game. It was underlined that there is no opportunity to postpone any matches after the KO Phase in both the men's and women's competitions. Again, the intent remains to have the decisions made on the court. To the Final4 phases, the CL will return to Cologne and options for the EL are being discussed though no decision has been taken as yet.

7.2. Season 2021/2022 – Preview

The competitions department continues to work on registration process as well as the regulations for the next season; motions have been submitted to the Executive Committee

for decision (03/2021); no changes to the playing system during the next two seasons are foreseen, and it is expected that a 'regular' season will be played in 2021/2022. Moving on, the topic of marketing rights is still under discussion; and the matter of if the reigning champions get starting rights in the upcoming season was not discussed and the situation remains the same as last year.

8. I/D Partnership - Status Report

The topic was presented at the common meeting (AP2.1.); reiterations from the common meeting will not be recorded to the minutes of the PHB. Furthermore, the agenda point is summarised to key points and inferences.

A working group to deal with all the technical issues to combine all the various tools i.e. WSC, Sportradar, scouting system will be held in the coming week as the envisaged automatic data flow has not reached a satisfactory level; this will be elaborated through the new task force.

On the level of national team competitions, specifically the EHF EUROs 2022 and 2024, the financial background remains solid. It was able to be proven to the partners that the income covers the cost of the cooperation, the investment is guaranteed, and they benefit.

At the club level, discussions are ongoing regarding marketing sales and TV coverage, therefore it is of the utmost importance to play matches as not to give a reason for payments to be reduced.

Overall, with more content on offer, the figures prove an excellent following across Europe. Additionally, the men's and women's European Leagues are being accepted by the fans, also proving that the implementation was a good idea.

The Clubs are disappointed with the work of Infront and underlined that almost all current partners were sourced by EHF. Thus, the discussion on whether EHF should buy back the right was opened. It was suggested that any buyback come with significant discounts due to the current situation. Further contacts will follow.

9. Follow-up to the Common Meeting – Other Topics

The topic of Players' Agents (PA) was presented at the common meeting (AP5.2.); reiterations from the meeting will not be recorded to the minutes of the PHB. Furthermore, the comprehensive discussion is summarised to key points and inferences. It is to be noted that prior to AP6, MFCH President Planteu had to exit the meeting, but stated that club stakeholders hold a strong line on the topic, which was presented by Butzeck.

Butzeck provided a detailed synopsis of the situation dating back to the foundation of Forum Club Handball in 2006 with the organisation being confronted with the unprofessional behaviour of the PA. In the past year there have been situations where the salary of the player was reduced, but the PA refused to reduce commissions. FCH was requested by its members to find a system, and it contained rules for agents, clubs, and players. It was underlined that the licensing of PA is not possible as a player can be transferred by anyone if legal representation is in place. Following further analysis of the situation by FCH, it was

determined that the party requesting the service shall pay and, from the point of view of the FCH, that is the player. The clubs have decided to apply the new system starting with international transfers; the FCH system has no impact on existing contracts.

MFCH requests the PHB to adopt the system and propose to implement it into the EHF European Cup regulations valid as of 1 July 2021; this request has the full support of the Men's and Women's Forum Club Handball as it was approved during their General Assembly.

EHLB supported the FCH proposal in its entirety; he added that it was necessary to create a governance structure that handles the tax issues as well. Larsson stated that he would raise the matter within the league structure for future discussion. The system, in the long term, could prove more expensive for the players, but it could also weed out unprofessional PA.

EHPU, though in agreement that it is a good proposal, highlighted the grey zone of taxation underlining the difficulty that could be faced when trying to implement a system.

To the general topic is it mentioned that some coaches also act as PA; the legal environment aspect is mentioned i.e. arbitration, as well as the fact that this does not only affect clubs, but also leagues, and Member Federations. Though it covers international transfers, there approximately 200 to 300 per year that would be influenced by the FCH proposal.

The NB discussed the matter in its meeting, and the FCH proposal has a measure of support; but it must go further into the legal environment, as well as the education of the PA, services offered, and its charter. It was emphasised that it would have to be part of the regulations or it would have no standing.

Following the discussion, the members of the PHB agreed to move forward with the topic; however, the EHF stated no position to any potential outcome.

10. Miscellaneous

Transfers and merged ranking list: the club and league representatives raised no objection to the suggestion presented at the common meeting.

Reflecting on the upcoming structural changes following the elections at the EHF Congress in April, and following taking over Member Christensen thanked the PHB, for the journey, the good discussions that were always solution focused.

Chairman Butzeck thanks the members for their participation and contribution to the topics and closed the meeting.

Vienna, 15 March 2021

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