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## Minutes TO THE 29<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE (MEN'S) PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD

(Parallel to the meeting of the WHB)

<b>Date/Time</b>	Monday, 14 March 2022   14:00 – 17:00 Tuesday, 15 March 2022   09:00 – 12:00
<b>Venue</b>	Hotel Renaissance Wien   Room Paris
<b>Participants</b>	
<b>PHB</b>	Mark Schober                      Member NCM / GER Morten S. Christensen          Member NCM / DEN Xavier O’Callaghan              Member MFCH/ESP Gregor Planteu                    Member MFCH / SLO Nikolas Larsson                  Member EHLB / SWE 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
<i>In Part</i>	Martin Hausleitner              Secretary General
<b>EHF Office</b>	Markus Glaser                    Chief Sports Officer Marsha Brown                    Corporate Liaison / Minutes

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### PART I:

## MINUTES TO THE COMMON MEETING OF THE PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD & WOMEN'S HANDBALL BOARD

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

President Wiederer welcomed the participants to the spring session of the stakeholder meetings and a rundown for the two days was given. The importance of the meetings was highlighted as part of the sessions to preparing the upcoming season. As the various topics need coordination, this session follows on the back of the Technical Commission meetings, the EHF board meetings, but are prior to 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General, as well as the meeting of the EXEC in April where decisions concerning regulations and competitions are to be taken. The EHF information corresponds to the presentation delivered at the common meeting of NCM/NCW/NB/EHLB.

## **2. EHF Information**

### *2.1. EHF Executive Committee 11/2021 & 01/2022*

The minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. With no questions raised, the stakeholders took note of the minutes.

### *2.2. EHF Marketing GmbH*

The Comptrollers have been invited to Vienna in April to undertake the scheduled internal examination of the accounts to conclude the business year with 31 December 2021. EHF completed the business year successfully, under the Covid situation, which had strong impact especially on the Final4s, therefore income was missed, however EHF was able to pay the granted amounts to the participating clubs and the share to the EHF and completed the year in a rational way. Since the Advisory Board is working with the I/D contracts, discussions about finances are an ongoing process for 18 months now. Services i.e.: digital marketing are connected to the I/D contract and have to be coordinated with the EHF/EHF.

### *2.3. 14<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary EHF Congress Follow-up 11/2021*

The minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. With no questions raised, the stakeholders took note of the minutes. It was mentioned that the EHF was still able to celebrate its Jubilee despite the short notice change of venue due to the pandemic. The awarding of the EUROs, men and women played, and play, a relevant role in the EHF business regarding the fulfilment of the contracts and partnerships on the markets, the EHF is dealing with. The partners and potential organisers saw attractive presentations of the EUROs 2026/2028 and see their marketing chances, which is important for the whole system.

### *2.4. International Handball Federation*

During the most recent IHF Council Meeting (online) it was made known that the 32-team IHF YAC WC may see more spaces as some Continental Federations do not have enough teams in the qualifications. Thus, more European teams than usual will have the chance to qualify.

Information was given on the IHF adapted referee recruitment system regarding the age, entering conditions and period allowed to stay; Europe has a major task to produce more referees on all levels male and female, starting at the level of National Federations.

IHF Competitions - Mandatory Vaccination: for the most recent events the vaccination status has been in place and will remain so for the Women's EHF EURO 2022 in November. With regard to the EHF Younger Age Category events, medical expertise will be sought and the vaccination landscape for minors varies by country; when more information becomes available the EHF will return with a suggestion for the participating Member Federations with a tailored hygiene concept. Due to the changeable nature of the situation, the EHF is aware

that decisions have to be taken at the right moment to avoid unnecessary burden on the teams and organisers.

IHF Competition System: during the EHF-IHF coordination meeting (online) the plans for the IHF competitions system were questioned in relation to the still open topic of the emerging nations and their options to compete and enter qualifications. Previously, the system was managed in a good way; however, in the past year playing was not possible. It was agreed that the competition needed to be restarted. The IHF sent information to the Continental Federations; the next IHF Trophy for Men will be organised in October 2022, the winner will gain a place in the Intercontinental Trophy, and the winner of that event will gain a place in the World Championship. No information was provided by the IHF to the women's competitions.

Despite the distribution of information, discussions will have to continue in order to conclude on how to proceed and combine this event with the Qualifiers; looking to the enlargement of the Women's EHF EURO to 24 teams, participation is lower in comparison to the men's competitions, and it will be necessary to have the right number of teams in the 2024 Qualifiers. Though understandable that not all teams can qualify, so the right system has to be found to make it attractive.

Olympic Games Qualification: the IHF is preparing to send proposals to the International Olympic Committee concerning the qualifications; the EHF President expressed the position of the top nations stating that the current qualification process is not wanted by the European National Federations. However, the IOC is in favour of three pathways that will lead to qualification. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Taking reference to the issuance of the latest edition of the IHF Rules of the Game (valid as of 1 July 2022), a brief discussion took place to the amendment concerning the size of the middle circle. In the discussion where the reason for the change was mentioned (IHF CCM, definition of the centre line), concerns were also raised about the specific wording that indicates that the Continental Federations can make its own determination about the implementation of the rule, production costs, and other marketing challenges. It was noted that the effect(s) of the amendment will be seen during the competitions. Prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting in April, this matter will be discussed in the planned IHF-EHF coordination meeting.

Clothing Regulations - Beach Handball: input received from National Federations: it was reiterated that the IHF decision taken in September (not the original European proposal) is not wanted by many involved as the new rules do not allow for flexibility.

### *2.5. Master Plan*

The internal platform has been established and the Master Plan Coordinator has been appointed. As presented at the Extraordinary Congress in November, the EHF 360° procedures have been agreed. The National Federations will be requested to send their project applications to [masterplan@eurohandball.com](mailto:masterplan@eurohandball.com). Following the completion of a detailed analysis, a meeting with the Member Federation will be scheduled and the proposal will be evaluated to ensure that they are in line with the vision and objectives of the Masterplan. Project implementation will commence upon approval of the Executive Committee.

Despite delays forced by the pandemic, the next steps are being taken; meetings with representatives from Georgia, Malta, and Latvia are scheduled to take place in March. A status update presentation will be given in Berlin at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General, and this will be followed-up with the release of the National Federation Survey.

In response, it was suggested that a workshop targeted at the emerging nations be considered as an element to move the project forward in a more tailored way that would make these particular Member Federations part of the process. The idea was deemed useful as the benefits of close cooperation were praised, especially during the pandemic.

### **2.6. *Respect Your Talent (RYT)***

A summary of the 2021 & 2022 RYT events for young male and female players was given; the objective of the programme remains to support the development of young players, both on and off the court. Active players and leading experts are committed to passing on their experience and knowledge to the younger generation at the camps.

A short description of the RYT mobile application created by the EHF and based upon the input of the RYT Ambassadors and field experts, was given and presented as a ‘pocketful of micro-learning’. The App is designed to assist the personal development of younger players by providing access to relevant information. By actively using the App, the young talents have the opportunity to earn points which can be used to arrange an online group session (1 hour) with a RYT Ambassador to discuss topics of interest. Further developments are to include a ‘Train the Trainer’ application that will be opened to the National Federations, as well as a newsletter.

The enthusiastic engagement of former players as well as the activities targeting the integration and involvement from the next generation of players was taken as an encouraging sign to continue working on the programme. The stakeholders were informed on a newly initiated programme for young players in Denmark; this is a cooperation between the Danish Federation and the Danish Players’ Union. It was mentioned that the players returning from

the RYT events are energised to be better and hoped that in the future that the RYT would create the snowball effect of having participants return to their Member Federation and transmit the information and facilitate action on an internal level.

### *2.7. 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General*

The event is scheduled to take place in Berlin on 30-31 March; a range of topics will be presented under the umbrella theme of ‘Moving Forward’. Currently, there are over 60 registered representatives of the National Federations as well as guest speakers presenting talks from the areas of the EOC EU Office, Kinexon, and the Special Olympics, as well as beach handball, Respect Your Talent (RYT), as well as the Master Plan. The EHF will use the opportunity to also inform on current business topics such as information on referees and delegates, new IT tools, and the introduction on Younger Age Category (YAC) events in the future. In addition to the planned social activities, the Men’s EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers draw event, as well as the workshop for the participating Federations on 1 April, will also be held on the fringes of the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General.

## **3. Information Competitions**

### *3.1. Situation UKR / RUS / BLR – Follow-Up, Actual Consequences, Future Competitions, Player Transfers*

*Due to the expansive discussion, what follows therefore is a summation of the information as well as the input of the stakeholders.*

The EHF has approached the matter in a careful and consistent way facing the challenges; in the initial days, it was deemed not in the interest of the organisation to ‘run ahead’ and so opted for close coordination. As information was collected, it became clear that the IOC was readying to release a statement, and to that end, the Executive Committee was called to an extraordinary meeting on Monday, 28 February followed by an official statement released to eurohandball.com, suspending the activities of the RUS and BLR clubs and national teams. The EHF used a very systematic and consistent decision-making process regarding the concerned matches as it could have major consequences for the I/D contract.

It was emphasised that the EHF continues a close cooperation with the Ukrainian Handball Federation. Huge support and respect have been expressed for the players in Ukraine. Contact has been upheld with the Handball Federation of Russia; naturally, there is a logic in the legal steps that the Federation had, and has, to take. The Federations have been and continue to be contacted accordingly.

Looking to past situations faced, it was mentioned that a Member Federation in the nineties needed three years to re-enter the competitions. The ban that currently applies to Russia and Belarus makes it impossible to national teams of those countries to enter competitions in Europe, not even sideways. Consequently, this is not only a problem for Russia and Belarus, but also for other Federations meeting them in future qualifications at an even earlier stage.

Therefore, a re-integration into competition in the future will be procedural and properly communicated. The Federations are still partners and eventually the time will come when activities have to be continued. Therefore, relations will be upheld towards handball partners.

In the coming days, the European Handball Federation will decide how to proceed with matches and the determinations have to be made in a balanced way. In previous situations, a careful strategy has been followed to allow for the continuation of the competitions system; the organisation at the same time had to face the reactions, some negative, and also had to find balanced understanding in a complex situation (marketing, financial, legal consequences) where cooperation with partners is also important. It was intoned that headlines and populist statements are ‘easy’; though behind them lay many consequences on many levels. It is underlined that the two existing marketing contracts which will expire in June are a result of the work within the handball network and were not concluded at a political level.

The legal framework regarding transfers and the termination of player-club contracts is critical and there is a limited period to resolve the situation. Brief examples of different actions undertaken in different countries (i.e.: DEN, GER,) were given, and it was concurred that (arising) situations have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. As support is needed due to IHF transfer regulations, the EHF addressed a brief to the IHF the week prior questioning if permission would be granted to EHF to take relevant decisions or if a statement would be issued by IHF (analogous to FIFA) containing information on further procedure. The IHF response stated that it is in conference with legal expertise and would return in due course. The EHPU received an answer from the IHF which was discussed, however the wording didn’t bring full clarity to the topics.

It was agreed that the discussion (existing contracts, qualifiers, transfers, etc.) would continue at the PHB meeting.

### *3.2. EURO Events*

#### *3.2.1. EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK Follow-Up (incl. topics for EHF EURO SLO/MKD/MNE)*

The event reached a successful conclusion despite the challenges speaking of the arrival of the Covid-19 Omicron variant at the start of the Championship. Currently under evaluation, it was clear that the event was not ‘perfect’ and the differences between the event in Denmark to Hungary/Slovakia are evident; however, the current objective is how to avoid difficult situations and keep the teams stable in order to offer a better situation in November for the Women’s EHF EURO.

The quality of the venue in Budapest was reiterated, as well as the major improvement on the level of TV picture and production due to the various adaptations including more preparation

time for the matches. Also in this area, there was a marked increase in the digital figures i.e.: first information in the presence across 22 channels, over 300 million contacts (40% via content sharing), TikTok (analysis ongoing), as well as 25 minutes of ‘behind-the-scenes’ footage. Federations also played a role through players sharing now; it is hoped that in the future this potential can be built upon.

Increased market shares also signalled that the cooperation with Infront and DAZN had paid off on this occasion; TV sales reached new heights, 100% partner activation including additional efforts (Gorenje), and the feedback to the ‘Partner Day’ during the main round was very positive. The onsite Kinexon support proved beneficial for the teams; a number of Federations will use the scientific data to bring improvement to the sport. Despite the host teams leaving the competition early and the ongoing pandemic, the number of spectators was deemed good.

### *3.2.2. Preview EUROs*

The preparation for the Women’s EHF EURO 2022 (SMM) is ongoing; this event has a shorter preparation time due to the date in November e.g.: certain elements have to be completed by July. The ‘early’ EURO has a minor impact on the calendar as the leagues can continue in December. For clarification, it was also stated that in relation to the information collected by EHF Kinexon project, the data is for EHF use only and EHF permission has to expressly granted for any other use; an agreement is in place and the EHF legal department is aware of the GDPR complexities.

### *3.3. YAC Events: Evaluation & Future Outlook*

In the light of input concerning previous events e.g.: playing system, preparation time, performance disparity (‘easy’ matches), and player workload (M20), a ‘YAC Think Tank’ was held on 21 January 2022 to discuss the topics and formulate possible solutions. A common understanding to enlarge the YAC events from 16 to 24 teams was reached. The EHF continues to work on the development of a playing system covering a 4-year cycle including promotion and relegation; this will be presented to the National Federation representatives in Berlin at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General. Depending on the outcome of the presentation, a formal proposal to adapt the playing system will be put before the Executive Committee either in April (Ljubljana) or June (Cologne). Upon question it was confirmed that should the YAC events be expanded to encompass 24 teams, the incorporated event period would be targeted with a maximum of 11-12 days. The implementation of the system will be as fast as possible, also in order to manage with potential organisers to adapt their plans.

### *3.4. Initiative – Players Project (Player of the Year)*

The initiative started within the Beach Handball Commission (BC) to award a beach handball ‘Player of the Year’. The idea was adapted to a general project. Thus, as of next season

(2022/23), there will be a broad approach to the topic of ‘Best Player’; the project will be developed by the end of the June. It was noted that EHPU had an awarding for the player of the year in the past and for the future EHF plans to introduce a common awarding process together with all stakeholders, fans, and experts.

### *3.5. Club Competitions: actual / future perspectives*

Referring to the club competitions evaluation in relation to the media and marketing agreement, it was mentioned that the process is cyclical (three seasons/years = one cycle). The logic behind this was to play in year one, undertake a situational analysis in year two, and any decisions/changes to be made in year three. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, the evaluation has not been easy. It was underlined that there would be no changes in the first cycle, and there are no changes planned regarding financial distribution. As a basis to the current evaluation, a Club Competitions Think Tank was held in December 2021. With many topics under deliberation, it was mentioned that when talking of making changes the issues were complex.

The evaluation of the playing systems was made difficult due to Covid-19, the question of weekdays vs. weekends remains a highly delicate issue touching all of the stakeholders (Federations, Clubs, and Leagues) with regard to planning. In a situation where time for changes to the 23/24 season is a factor, theoretically, any changes could be optimal within the next few weeks. On the other hand, the organisation is not in the position to make any decisions until all issues have been satisfied i.e.: does the system require major change, financing, doubling matches, partner relations – all impact the outcome of the evaluation and have to be seen in relation. In case of significant changes (e.g.: the competition calendar) the relevant stakeholders have to be involved in the conversation in order to get all the perspectives.

## **4. Calendar/Meetings**

### *4.1. Competitions Calendar 2022/23, 2023/24*

To the previously published information, it was reiterated that the hosting of the Women’s EHF EURO 2022 in November will effect the women’s club competitions; they will have to continue in December with approx. 2-3 rounds to be played prior to the seasonal break. Currently, the season is proceeding in a normal way. For the benefit of the stakeholders, to allow for an unimpeded preparation, the calendar for season 2023/24 was published well in advance and created in a way that reflected no changes to the playing system. The ongoing evaluation was mentioned, and it emphasised that though there may be changes in the future, there will not be major adaptations.



#### *4.2. Meeting Calendar 2022*

With the document at hand, no additional input was given. The document always developed for the forthcoming year serves as personal help to reserve the dates, but as well shows the rundown of the decision-making processes.

#### *4.3. Preview EHF Events*

Information to the large number of events between March and November 2022 was given. The next gathering on the National Federation representatives will be the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General in Berlin at the end of the month, where on the fringes of the event, the draw for the EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers will be held. The final tournament draw event for the Women's EHF EURO 2022 will be held in Slovenia at the end of April, and this will be followed by the completion of the 2021/22 club season with the Final4 events in Budapest and Cologne. A total of 9 Younger Age Category EURO and Championship events, including the Beach Handball EURO Qualifiers, will be the summer highlight. In the autumn (23/24 September), the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of President will present another opportunity for the Member Federations to gather; the final showcase event of the year will be the Women's EHF EURO 2022 in Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro in November.

### **5. Other Topics**

No further topics.

With no other topics raised, the common meeting was closed.

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## **PART II:**

### **MINUTES TO THE 29<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD**

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Chairman O'Callaghan welcomed the members to the meeting and thanked them for their presence. The PHB agenda is based on the EHF information given at the common meeting and the floor was opened for questions.

#### **2. PHB Meetings 10/2021– Minutes and Follow-up**

Brief information to the elections that took place in consultation with the members that were not able to be present on that occasion. With no addition input or comment, the minutes were adopted.

#### **3. Stakeholder Reports**

##### *3.1. EHF Nations Committee Men/Nations Board*

Transfers in the current environment: the matter was deemed important for both professional and amateur players; solutions on how to get refugees into competition are to be found. There are to be no exemptions from existing regulations taking into consideration the IHF competence for the worldwide valid regulations. Further information from the IHF/EHF is awaited.

IHF Rules of the Game as of 1 July 2022: the topic of the centre circle is to be prepared for and discussed at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General.

Younger Age Category Competitions in the Future: focus of much discussion; the proposal to enlarge the YAC events to 24 teams is supported. Proposed playing systems do not increase the number of matches but include an additional day. The objective is to develop players; thus, good games are needed. Additionally, to the matter of the date of the qualifications that affect selection and preparation, compromise was requested.

The NB also held a brief discussion on the 2023/2024 season, and the Infront/DAZN situation, which is expected to be raised in the PHB session.

##### *3.2. Men's Forum Club Handball*

MFCH General Assembly: held on the fringes of the EHF EURO in January; 44 clubs (different levels) from 26 countries were in attendance. The situation of player agents (player pays agent) was discussed, it was concluded that coordination on this topic is taking place with the IHF.

FCH Overseas Projects: the USA project is still on going, the long-term objective is to develop a national team that can compete at a World Championship. Players with US passports are being supported within European teams. The CHN project (same objective) was abandoned due to communication issues. An agreement is to be signed with JPN, and collaboration with clubs was requested and the feedback has been positive. This project is undertaken in cooperation with the IHF, and the current agreement (MOU) FCH-IHF will expire at the end of the season. A meeting in Basel has been scheduled and it is hoped that the project will be extended and the efforts to improve handball worldwide can continue.

Club Competitions: the FCH surveyed the clubs to the (sensitive) matter of playing dates; 12 out of 16 Clubs want the change the weekend/weekday Champions League schedule. In the EHL there was a similar result with nine teams looking for change that also related to the format (start with Group Phase). It was underlined that the market requirements are integral part of the discussion.

EHF-FCH MoU: Nina Kernmayer was installed as the second Managing Director of EHF Marketing in line with the conditions as set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Other: the surplus from the Champions League is to be used for a development project; the idea was presented to the Clubs and the topics (including 'Best Practice') will receive further treatment.

### *3.3. European Handball League Board*

Player Agents: the complex matter was also discussed, and the lack of legal tools and first contracts were highlighted.

War in Ukraine: looking to the area of transfers and the integration of refugees into the sport, the application of rules as well as the actions taken that vary from country to country were discussed.

Playing Systems: the EHLB took note of the current evaluation of the playing systems and request they are part of the dialogue in case of changes.

EHLB Activities: a workshop is scheduled to take place in June and on the occasion of the Final4 in Cologne; the objective is to improve contacts and build better relations with leagues outside of the top 12. The preliminary programme is set, and the keynote speakers have been selected.

Other: the EHLB discussed the current situation, meaning the ongoing pandemic as well as the invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, the difficult situation within the SEHA League was

discussed at length; it was mentioned the Champions League and the SEHA League are strongly connect on a sporting level and in the terms of sponsorship. The current contracts that conclude in June were coordinated via the handball network and not through political means.

#### *3.4. European Handball Players' Union*

Competitions: in response to the proposed changes to the YAC events, the EHPU reiterated the call to be aware of the issues with early selection of teams/players. To the current evaluation of playing systems within the club competitions, concern was raised about potential changes to the format and the consequence of increasing the number of matches in a season and the burden on the players.

Covid-19: the pandemic has proven a drawback for many handball organisations, and it has been difficult to reach players, including access to locker rooms due to restrictions. The EHPU conceded that there is a need to rebuild the system and restart processes. It is noted that effects have been broad, and it is important not to forget about the clubs/leagues/teams including those that are lower and mid-ranked that see the situation from a different perspective.

EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK: EHPU commented on the lack of the (expected) 'bubble' at the event specifically mentioning the mix of tourists and national team delegations in some hotels. In response the EHF explained the situation prior to the event, the onset of the Omicron variant that led to adaptations, but also the shortcomings. The organisation was faced with the choice to move forward with the event and despite the challenges, the host did a good job; and positive feedback was also received from external sources (i.e.: EU-EOC press release). It was underlined that in view of the upcoming women's event, the situation is being carefully evaluated.

For the Players: this new project in Denmark is operated in coordination with the Danish Players' Union and the Danish Handball Federation. It targets the dual career and mental health of players e.g.: Covid-19 can be linked to many mental health issues. It is an action that intends to foster strong relations for the benefit of the stakeholders

IHF: it was mentioned that no experts from the side of the players were included in the dialogue concerning the new rules.

## **4. National Team Competitions**

### *4.1. Review Men's EHF EURO 2022 HUN/SVK*

Looking back on the event, the organisation is taking lessons from the situation especially having been confronted with the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus. It was conceded that

elements surrounding the event, and in particular the test regime due to the timetable, did not work respectively needed an adaptation and the feedback from the participating delegation will be part of the evaluation process. On the level of media, the TV concept was good, and the partners were able to produce and distribute additional content. The final weekend took place under a great atmosphere and was an excellent presentation of the sport. The follow-up to the event such as the final accounting is ongoing.

#### *4.2. Preview Men's EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers*

#### *4.3. EHF EURO – Information*

The final preparations for the draw event taking place in Berlin at the end of the month are in progress. Note was taken that RUS/BLR cannot register for the event due to the suspension. The workshop for the teams is planned for 1 April; a presentation by the media partners is foreseen. It was reported that the media sales for the Qualifiers are positive. The preparations for the next men's EURO are going very well. The cooperation restarted last week with meetings, and having discussed the arena, it is expected that the event will deliver the best possible presentation of the sport with the opening match highlight in Dusseldorf. The use of the Merkur-Arena will set a new benchmark for the market. The area of fan engagement is an area of focus. Ticket sales are planned for May 2022.

#### *4.4. YAC Events*

Nine YAC events are planned for summer 2022 and the organisation is proceeding according to schedule; a new organiser is being sought for the M18 Championship planned for UKR and the concerned National Federations will be informed in due course. Educational activities will also take place on the fringes of the events, and the referees nominations are also to be completed. In a positive move, matches will also have TV coverage (ehftv.com). It was noted that the new IHF Rules of the Game will apply to the Women's European Open in June/July and all other events to follow.

On an internal level, the organisation is working to analyse and restructure the YAC events; a proposal is to be presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference for Secretaries General to be discussed in detail. This will provide the opportunity to collect additional feedback and input. Following this, the proposal will be treated by the Competitions Commission where it will be determined if it should be submitted to the Executive Committee in April, or June if more work is needed.

## **5. Club Competitions**

### *5.1. Season 2021/2022 – Status*

The club competitions are proceeding; accordingly, necessary steps have been/are being taken to handle the challenges presented by the war situation.

## 5.2. *Season 2022/2023 – Preview*

No major changes are foreseen, and the registration will continue in a normal way; the development of the current crisis will be followed. The use of video replay is currently under evaluation. The Champions League draws will take place on 1 July.

## **6. Calendar/Meetings**

### 6.1. *International Calendar*

### 6.2. *Competitions Calendar 2022/23 & 2023/24*

The calendars were distributed to all persons mainly via the National Federations; with the exception of an ‘early’ Women’s EHF EURO in November that has expedited the preparation, there is no impact on the season. The availability of the 2023/24 calendar allows for planning within the stakeholder groups based on the current system. It was noted that the 2023 Men’s Final4 would be one week earlier to eliminate a calendar conflict with the football EURO and to provide an additional week of rest prior to the Olympic Games.

### 6.3. *Meeting Calendar 2022*

The PHB will be notified of any changes.

## **7. Follow-up to the Common Meeting – Other Topics**

IHF Rules of the Game as of 1 July 2022: it was stated that for a long time European handball was more concerned about how the product was sold and gave little focus to the rules until situations arose that resulted in complaint from various areas. There was no strategy on the rules, and concern was raised that the situation would return if no focus was given. Thus, concerning the Rules of the Game, the PHB agreed to start the process of evaluating the rules from the European perspective as a strategy for the next period is wanted; it was noted that the latest change concerning the middle circle was a good example of the impact that rule changes can have.

### ***Due to the expansive discussion, what follows therefore is a summation of the information as well as the input of the stakeholders.***

War in Ukraine – Consequences for Handball: across all stakeholder sessions, this was the most discussed point from the professional perspective. The questions raised included, but were not limited to, what to do at a certain point with the club and national team competitions with UKR and RUS/BLR, the difference in the situation of RUS/BLR, the loss of RUS women’s national team in the EHF EURO qualifiers and final tournament, the loss of the RUS/BLR men’s national teams in the play-offs. The teams are out, and without an option to enter competition in any other way e.g.: wild card. The question of UKR registering for competitions could not be answered.

The non-registration of RUS/BLR for the 2024 EURO events will have a long-lasting impact, and it was questioned on how to re-integrate the teams back into competition at a time when the situation allows. It was clear that no answer could be provided and dependant on the development of the situation. The global effect is not to be underestimated, as if the teams are to start at the bottom, this will impact the lower levels within the ranking. With reference to the club competitions, it was agreed that the timetable plays a crucial role.

To the complex issue of transfers, the EHF has exchanged communication with the National Federations, as well as responded to an initiative from the EHPU. Additionally, there was contact on 14.03.2022 with the International Handball Federation with the request for either a mandate or a clear decision from the IHF. In response the IHF stated that it would issue a decision following legal consultation. During the PHB session the decision of the IHF was published clarifying the possibilities for players leaving the countries, and the position taken does not allow for alternative decisions to be taken at the EHF level. For transparency, the opinion of the WHB – no exemptions/exceptions; the rules are to be followed, and undue influence on the final phases of competitions is to be avoided – was also mentioned.

To the matter of player contracts, it was questioned who would bear the future (legal) consequences, especially in the case of UKR players/clubs? The idea of temporary contracts e.g.: until the end of the season, were also discussed.

Taking the human, financial, and legal aspects under consideration, the PHB questioned the possibility of players to transfer without consequence; it was concurred that there should be no ban on returning players (returning to country of origin). It was underlined that there is much to be considered as the situation for players is not the same i.e.: the Russian and Belarusian leagues (per Dato) currently continue. It was also mentioned that the EHF is also in contact with members of the handball family who are experiencing private difficulties and are assisting where possible.

## **8. Miscellaneous**

Due to time constraints, no additional points were raised.

Chairman O’Callaghan thanked the stakeholders for their contribution and closed the meeting.

Vienna, 25 March 2022

For the minutes: M. Brown