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## MINUTES TO THE 31<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE (MEN'S) PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD

*(Parallel to the meeting of the WHB)*

**Date:** Tuesday, 14 March 2023

**Time:** 08:30 – 13:30

**Venue:** Renaissance Wien Hotel

### Participants:

<b>PHB:</b>	Mark Schober	Member NB   GER
	Morten S. Christensen	Member NB   DEN
	Xavier O'Callaghan	Member MFCH   ESP   Chairman
	Gregor Planteu	Member MFCH   SLO
	Nikolas Larsson	Member EHLB   SWE   Vice Chairman
	Frank Bohmann	Member EHLB   GER
	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
	Mario Kovacic	National Team Director
	Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison   Minutes
<b>Excused:</b>	Torben Vinther	Member EHPU   DEN

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### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman O'Callaghan welcomed the participants to the meeting and moved straight into the agenda.

### 2. PHB Meeting 10/2022 – Minutes and Follow-up

With no additional remarks, the minutes were adopted.

### 3. Stakeholder Reports

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

NB Chairman Schober briefly reiterated the main points of focus for the NCM/NB. Beginning with the issue of match-fixing, the group felt it important to make the processes and procedures transparent and visible; it was suggested to place this information on the website.

This was also the case for the topic of sexual harassment, as it is a focus area for many National Federations, it was deemed very important to, again, ensure that procedures (should cases arise) are in place and visible; it was suggested to place this information on the website.

The request of the NCW to have the women's league representatives meet with the men's league representatives was transmitted. It was agreed that EHLB Chairman Larsson would join the meeting of the Women's League Convention on 3 June in Budapest to partake in the exchange of information.

A brief discussion took place on the subject of RUS/BLR national teams competing in international competition; the NB felt that most international federations were in favour of the return of athletes to individual sports under a neutral banner; however, there is no further information in regard to team sports from an official side. Nonetheless, reservations due to organisational and principal reasons were raised by the participants.

The information received to the EHF-Infront partnership confirmed that the recent changes would not impact the National Team agreement regarding finances.

The NCM/NB also dealt with the matter of YAC competitions in the future; an in-depth look to the competition areas highlighted various points of focus and the group explored potential directions in view of workable solutions. The outcome was the request for the presentation of a clear strategy on the organisational and competitive objectives of YAC competitions.

### 3.2. Men's Forum Club Handball

MFCH President O'Callaghan informed on the matters of interest currently being addressed among the club representatives. Beginning with arena capacity and utilisation, the MFCH have moved away from the idea of defining a minimum number of spectators and towards finding the right measures to bring more people into the arenas/halls. The MFCH also explored the matter of throw-off times and match days.

Turning to the business side, O'Callaghan mentioned the departure of DAZN from the Club agreement and the reacquisition of the marketing rights by EHF; he underlined that it posed a great challenge and emphasised the importance of building a strong sales force.

As a result of the EHF tax audit mentioned in the common meeting, O'Callaghan cited the difficulties faced by the clubs as well as getting used to the concept of the certificates.

Returning to the competition aspects, O'Callaghan referred to the positive cooperation on the level of Men's European League.

To the matter of player agents, it is cemented that the player pays for the services of the agent.

Speaking of the MFCH projects, the group prolonged the Memorandum of Understanding with the International Handball Federation until 2026. MFCH also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Japan, and the focus will be on raising a new Japan team. The USA project is a success, and all the players who were part of the project were part of the 2023 Men's World Championship for team USA; at this time, following the departure of Ryan Johnson, USA Team Handball (USATH) is looking for a new CEO.

### 3.3. European Handball League Board

EHLB Chairman Larsson briefly mentioned where the attention of the group is currently focused such as the organisation of the second League Summit in June 2023 in Cologne, the main discussion points will concern presentation of the leagues via OTT platforms to reach wider audiences, the EHF Master Plan presentation, best practice examples, etc. Larsson noted that the agenda of the European Handball Talks was also of interest to the EHLB.

To the topic of player agents, it was noted that in some league contracts there is a check-box option to indicate if a player agent is part of the process; this is to encourage transparency in agreements.

At the competition level, the EHLB were concerned with the challenge that is posed by the junior YAC competitions (longer season for the particular age category) with the ability to be integrated into the club teams, as well as the media space for leagues during the summer. Thus, the EHLB thought of moving the men's M20 to an early January slot and have it run parallel to the Men's EHF EURO in a mid-January slot.

The ensuing discussion briefly considered the benefits and challenges; Rominger emphasised that any option should be in the best interest of the player and the density of the schedule is to be considered; he also stated that it is positive to have quality matches for the age category in view of their development, but they should not be overburdened (especially the young players) with a dense calendar. Schober reiterated the point of having a clear YAC organisational strategy. Hausleitner mentioned the challenges of schools, organisation, the development (and scouting) of the players, the protection of small clubs, expense, etc. The PHB agreed that the future YAC situation needed further review for the benefit of all stakeholders.

### 3.4. European Handball Players' Union

EHPU Vice President, Markus Rominger opened the report with information on the new EHPU President, Torben Vinther, who was elected at the start of the year; it was noted that though he was unable to be present due to other commitments, he would be present in Cologne in June.

Rominger informed that the EHPU was giving attention to various topics such as the resin-free ball, where he reiterated that the stakeholders had to be aware that the project would be continued. With many of the stakeholder topics mirroring each other (RUS/BLR, Sportradar, etc.), Rominger stated that the workload of the players is always priority matter whether on a senior or youth level; to this he added the EHPU appreciation for the incorporation of travel days into the EURO schedule. Looking to the EHF Excellence Awards, Rominger stated that EHPU would reach out to the FCH regarding the contact to players (with some being hard to reach by the EHPU) for support.

Rominger spoke of the conversation in the players sphere and their questioning of the official tasks of the match delegate at the technical table. Players are voicing concern over the perceived unwarranted interference of the delegate in the match i.e., towards the performance of the referees, towards the players, as well as the seemingly self-promotion of the officiators at the expense of the players.

#### **4. National Team Competitions**

Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

#### **5. Club Competitions**

5.1. Season 2022/2023 – Status

5.2. Season 2023/2024 – Preview

Please refer to the common meeting.

#### **6. Other Competition Related Topics**

6.1. Professionalising the EHF Officiating System

The PHB gave full support to the EHF initiative on the basis of the presentation in the common meeting. Referring to the information provided prior to the meeting, it was underlined that in Denmark, the discussion about professional (fully employed referees) also continues, and no suitable solution has been found to date. However, the exchange of ideas is encouraged and has encompassed topics of salary, pensions, conditions (e.g., job security, etc.) and financial disparity in Europe.

6.2. Coaches Challenge

The wider implementation is planned for season 2023/2024 with its potential debut at the Final4. It was commented that in an environment where the initial implementation can be controlled could lead to a good experience as the F4 provides not only the technical framework, but also the sphere of experienced officiators and top clubs.

## **7. Calendar | Meetings | Activities**

### **7.1. Competitions Calendar 2023/24 & 2024/25**

It was noted that, despite objections, the 2023 IHF Superglobe follows the same schedule as the 2022 competitions. Obviously, the position of the organiser RSA resp. all Asian activities have a strong impact on the international calendar.

### **7.2. Meeting Calendar 2023**

With the calendar at hand, it was noted that a meeting of the EHFM Advisory Board and the Club Boards will take place in October 2023 instead of end of August/beginning of September.

### **7.3. EHF Excellence Awards**

Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

### **7.4. 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary EHF Congress**

In addition to the information given during the common meeting, it was reiterated that National Federations still have time to submit their input. The Ordinary EHF Congress takes places eight weeks prior to the IHF Congress, thus, there will be a chance to discuss the IHF Congress agenda that will be in hand.

Furthermore, the date for the 2025 EHF Congress was also announced; therefore, the EHF elections will take place prior to the IHF elections.

### **7.5. XXXIX Ordinary IHF Congress**

Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting with the Congress date set for 1-2 November 2023.

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

### **9. Miscellaneous**

No additional topics raised.

Thanking the participants for their contribution to the discussions, Chairman O’Callaghan closed the meeting.

Vienna, 17 March 2023

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