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## MINUTES TO THE 35<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL BOARD

**Date:** Tuesday, 4 March 2025  
**Time:** 09:00 – 13:00 (*incl. Common Meeting*)  
**Venue:** EHF Office | The Boardroom

<b>Participants PHB:</b>	X. O'Callaghan	Member MFCH   ESP   Chairman
	Nikolas Larsson	Member EHLB   SWE   Vice Chairman
	Mark Schober	Member NB   GER
	Gregor Planteu	Member MFCH   SLO
	Frank Bohmann	Member EHLB   GER
	Torben Vinther	Member EHPU   DEN
	Marcus Rominger	Member EHPU   GER
	Predrag Bošković	Member EXEC   MNE
	Stefan Lövgren	Member EXEC   SWE

**Participants EHF:** Michael Wiederer President

**EHF Office:** Markus Glaser Chief Sports Officer  
Marsha Brown Corporate Liaison | Minutes

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### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman O'Callaghan welcomed the participants to the meeting and moved straight into the agenda. The general report of the EHF Business had been given in the common PHB/WHB by the EHF leadership and therefore, in the PHB meeting specific points will be treated.

### 2. PHB Meeting 10/2024 – Minutes and Follow-up

With no additional comment, the minutes were adopted.

### 3. Stakeholder Reports

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

On behalf of the Nations Committee Men and the Nations Board, Member Schober briefed the PHB on the topics discussed in both meetings.

- **IHF amendments to the Rules of the Game Indoor Handball:** it was underlined that the information must be delivered to the referees.
- **Catalogue of Administrative Sanctions:** the NB sees a paced implementation to aid acclimatisation.
- **Competitions Conference:** the NCM members will be in attendance and view the forum as the start of a dialogue on the future of handball.

- **EHF Youth Club Championship(s):** it would have made sense for the topic to be discussed with other stakeholder groups, as it was an EHF initiative only the clubs have been informed so far. Furthermore, it is unclear to the NCM/NB as to why 1 July was chosen to define the age level and not the calendar. *Comment: FCH rebutted that the decision-making process for this competition laid solely with the EHF.*

### 3.2. Men's Forum Club Handball

Representing the Clubs, Gregor Planteu delivered the report on behalf of the MFCH as follows:

- **MFCH 31<sup>st</sup> General Assembly:** held in Oslo on 1 February; 57 participants from 22 countries were in attendance. The situation regarding members is good and growing. It was noted that there are MFCH members participating in the various EHF bodies; elections are scheduled to take place in Cologne.
- **Contract Signing | IHF 12-Month Rule:** to be discussed later in the meeting.
- **International Calendar:** appears later in the agenda.
- **Player Transfers:** related to fees/payments to the Agent to be paid by the Player, and not by the Club; this is to be seen in relation to the status of players' agents as long as the IHF does not license the agents, there will be no follow-up to cases where we know clubs are not respecting the rule – see next point.
- **Player Agents:** possible licensing via the IHF and there is a request for the IHF to implement a licensing system for agents.

### 3.3. European Handball League Board

On behalf of the Leagues, Nikolas Larsson updated the group on the most recent activities:

- **Player Agents:** conducted discussions with agents and other league/sport institutions about registration of agents in acknowledgement of the recent alignment of FIBA EUR with FIBA.
- **Men's Competitions Conference:** the EHLB representatives have confirmed participation at the conference to discuss the topic of competitions in the future.
- **4<sup>th</sup> EHLB Summit:** the next edition of the EHLB Summit will take place in Cologne; the corresponding invitations to the leagues to be part of this exchange platform will be sent.
- **Cooperation with Leagues:** the contact to League representatives in Europe has significantly improved though 'blind spots' remain.
- **EHLA General Assembly:** the next General Assembly of the European Handball League Association will take place in Vienna in September; nominations from the EHL to the EHLB are to be aligned with the EHF electoral period.
- **EHF Ranking Systems:** existing questions around club competitions i.e. ranking, upgrades (from EC to CL) in the next season, etc., were clarified by Markus Glaser.
- **Cooperation EHLB – WEHLB:** a joint meeting is proposed to be held during the Monday session.

### 3.4. European Handball Players' Union

On behalf of the Players, Torben Vinther informed the PHB on the most recent topics from their specific area:

- **EHPU Membership:** application from GRE Players' Union to join; it was accepted.
- **Burden on Players:** noting the post-Olympic season and the fact, the top players will have surpassed 90+ matches by the end of the season, there has been an increase in the number of injuries (e.g., currently 200 active injuries in DEN), and the representatives call for action to be taken. In response and stating that each serious player injury sustained is a "disaster", the EHF President asked if there was a statistical difference in the injuries i.e., level of competition where injury occurred, injury type, game related or burden related, stress injuries (mental health). The question opened a discussion; data is being collected externally and the trend shows an increase. It was agreed that an overall picture is to be created through the collection and analysis of data (including statistical extrapolation based on the number of matches) with the objective of defining measures; the idea of an extended summer break was floated.
- **Men's Competitions Conference:** the Players representative will be present at the meeting; upon question as to which players are attending the Conference, feedback will be given to EHPU when the confirmation list is available, however the participation of active players is not foreseen due to the running season.

## 4. National Team Competitions

Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

## 5. Club Competitions

### 5.1. Season 2024/2025 | Status

CSO Glaser stated that the season is progressing as scheduled and with no major issues. It was noted that the race in the Maschineseeker Champions League is 'pretty open', which indicates that the system is working. Using the opportunity, Wiederer raised two "critical" points, the first being the issue of bankruptcy within clubs and the second being a current legal case, and both matters started a short discussion.

- **Bankruptcy:** supporting his statement with examples, Wiederer said that due to these situations, vulnerabilities in the system have been highlighted, and the EHF cannot defend its organisation against these bankruptcies. From the discussion, the points raised included that a National Federation (surety) initiative could be necessary, the idea and it is imperative that the best teams are in the best competitions. A solution for the future is to be found, and Member Bohmann stated that not all risk could be eliminated but can be mitigated. The discourse on this matter would remain open due to the complexity of the topic.
- **Personal Injury Claim on the level of a CL Club Home Match:** for reference the situation was reiterated and a status and the viewpoint were provided to the PHB; the information was imparted with the objective of general awareness of the ongoing open situation. O'Callaghan mentioned that the lawsuit was spoken of at the MFCH General Assembly. It was agreed to propose a prolongation of the current situation regarding the venue capacities.

## 5.2. Season 2025/2026 | Focus Points

Currently, there are no new issues but a continuation of existing topics and resumption of open dialogues which includes, among others, the 'Full Hall' initiative, officiating and game technology, as well as venue availability.

## 6. Other Competition Related Topics

### 6.1. EHF Officiating System

In the light of the upcoming Ordinary EHF Congress, the change on the internal structural level was restated. The position of 'CC Member Refereeing' was rescinded and removed from the EHF Statutes; thus, this position will not be elected on 19 September. The removal of the position does not impact daily business in this area, and currently the Technical Refereeing Committee (TRC) are still in its (EXEC) nominated mandate. Following the elections, the Executive Committee will decide if the TRC continues, and if so, if it is to remain in the current form.

### 6.2. Technical Services

Here, the increased use of game technologies by referees was remarked, especially as with the introduction of the VR systems it was rarely used. The increased usage is progressing and supporting the investment. It was stated that this area is moving in the right direction, though there is still room for improvement.

### 6.3. Players' Agents

With the topic still prevalent, the PHB are informed on the situation regarding (licensed) agents in basketball; FIBA EUR has aligned its regulations on the topic; this harmonisation sees clubs no longer involved in the payment modalities of financial compensation between the player and the agent in case of a transfer. This practice has been deemed more transparent and fairer. Based on this, the FCH is of the opinion the IHF shall license agents according to the regulations, as without a license it is difficult to impose sanctions on agents in case of misdoing.

The benefits and disadvantages of the FCH proposal regarding transfer payments were thoroughly discussed; the financial factor as well as the potential for questionable conduct, which would divert from the legitimacy of the practice were voice. In conclusion, the PHB agreed to propose to the EXEC to tackle the issue of a licensing program with the IHF.

### 6.4. IHF 12-Months Rule

Opening the topic, the rule as well as the context was reiterated, and O'Callaghan spoke of the rules not being adhered to and supported his statement with examples. It was made clear that the Club stakeholder was for the implementation of the rule; however, the reality of the situation is different. Thus, the Club stakeholder completely supports the revocation of the rule and requests the PHB (through the EHF) submits a recommendation to the IHF for the overturning of the 12-Month Rule.

An in-depth discussion followed where the stakeholder presented their varying opinions and potential options were presented, the PHB agreed to bring the topic to the Executive Committee with a request the lifting of the regulation; meanwhile it is discussed how to implement a real enforcement of such a regulation.

#### 6.5. Release of Players to National Teams

Following the introduction referring to the regulations for the release of players and the respective timetables and after a detailed discussion, O'Callaghan stated that the Clubs will not release players before 2 January to grant some days of relaxation before the respective Champion. Clubs will release players only after this date and only according until the official (NT) dates as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding and under the conditions that the player concerned is only in training (sessions) and not playing matches before the fixed preparation time. Furthermore, the insurance for the player must be agreed.

### 7. Calendar | Meetings | Activities

#### 7.1. *Competitions Calendars 2025/2026 | International Calendars | Meeting Calendar 2025 | Men's Competitions Conference*

Covering the entire agenda point, CSO Glaser once again underlined the link between the calendars and the (administrative) activities.

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

Please refer to the respective agenda points.

### 9. Miscellaneous

No topics raised.

With the agenda complete, Chair O'Callaghan closed the meeting with his thanks to the participants for their contributions.

For the Minutes | M. Brown

Vienna, 7 March 2025