

---

## MINUTES TO THE COMMON MEETING OF THE EHF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

**Date | Time:** 13 March 2023 | 11:00 – 13:30  
14 March 2023 | 08:30 – 10:45

**Venue:** Renaissance Wien Hotel | Paris

**Participants:** European Handball League Board  
Nations Committee Men  
Nations Committee Women  
Professional Handball Board  
Women's Handball Board  
European Handball Federation

**Excused:** Thierry Wagner EHLB Member | LUX  
Nodjialem Myaro NCW Chairwoman | FRA  
Bertrand Gille NCM Member | FRA

---

*The Common Meeting of the Stakeholder Groups took place over two days, and prior to the meetings the identical agenda was made available to all members present. Therefore, the information and input from all groups has been amalgamated into the record.*

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Wiederer, having welcomed the participants to the spring session of the Stakeholder Meetings, emphasised the responsibility of the EHF to collate and disseminate the available information. Representatives of the National Federations are provided the opportunity to meet on a yearly basis, and the Stakeholders hold their sessions, intended to bring together the different perspectives, prior to these meetings to focus on handball during this period. After the information session, it is expected that further discussion will take place in the individual sessions and clarification sought should any of the matters be unclear.

### 2. EHF Information

#### 2.1. EHF Executive Committee 11/12/2022 & 01/2023

Within the visual presentation, a brief overview of the topics discussed at the three meetings was given. The participants were privy to the minutes of the meetings (held after the autumn stakeholder session - 10/2022), to which there were no additional comments or questions.

## 2.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

The financial year 2021/22 yielded excellent results; it was deemed the most positive year to date including the shares distributed to the clubs. Challenges faced during the season i.e., Covid-19, the exit of DAZN, RUS/BLR/UKR, as well as the (soon-to-be-concluded) complicated and long-lasting extended audit, were also remarked. The success of the four Final4 events (M/WCL – Cologne/Budapest, M/WEL – Lisbon/Viborg) heralded the return of spectators to the arenas; looking to the future, the objective is to secure neutral venues for the M/WEL F4 events. The next editions will be held in Graz (WEL) and Flensburg (MEL). To the MCL event, the agreement with Cologne has been extended.

A status update on the media and marketing agreement was given; following the exit of DAZN from the media and marketing agreement, the transfer of technical services has been completed and assumed by Infront. This means that Infront is now responsible for i.e.: campaigns, clipping, etc. As a result of this change, EHF re-acquired the marketing rights of the EHF Champions League; this means an increase workload in terms of offering and monetising marketing packages. To this end, EHF is currently working on building a sales force. It was underlined, that the agreement relating to EHF EURO events, except for the delivery of technical services, has not changed.

## 2.3. Women's Handball Conference 11/2022

Organised on the fringes of the Women's EHF EURO in Ljubljana, the event covered many important and new topics such as the development and presentation of women's sports, sponsoring in women's sports, the player pathway, as well as branding strategy. Though targeted at national federations, the topics linked through to the leagues and the clubs, and specifically their potential role in strengthening women's handball. As a follow-up to the event the Women's League Convention will be organised on 4 June 2023 within the framework of the Women's Champions League Final4 in Budapest. The EHF EURO 2024 Qualifiers Workshop for those nations participating in Phase 2 is planned and the date will be fixed.

## 2.4. Masterplan | Status Update

An overview of the running projects (CRO, MLT, LAT, GEO, SCO, and TÜR) was given, and it was noted that three other National Federations have entered the application stage. Of the projects initiated, most of them focus on grassroots handball and the strengthening of internal structures within the Federations i.e.: having a designated person to oversee the activities. As several other Federations have contacted the EHF to introduce their ideas, further meetings will be held in the coming days. To aid the success of masterplan projects, it is the intention of the EHF to use major events (e.g., EURO) to motivate, promote, and showcase projects.

The massive amount of work was highlighted, and it was mentioned that to uphold the projects, and due to the involvement of the various internal departments, the structures within the EHF office will be adapted accordingly.

## 2.5. European Handball House

The stakeholders are informed on the finalisation of the planning, and with most of the permissions granted, and the final permissions expected on 15 March, it is expected that construction will begin in the coming weeks. The search for a contractor reached a successful conclusion i.e., fixed price, thus safeguarding the budget. The celebratory opening of the new home of handball is planned for autumn 2024, and the EHF leadership looked forward to welcoming the handball family to the new modern working environment.

## 3. Competitions Information

### 3.1. EHF EURO Events

#### 3.1.1. Women's EHF EURO 2022 SMM | Review

Taking note of the event, the last with 16 teams, the leadership paid tribute to the organisers who delivered a satisfactory rundown of the event despite many challenges. The impact of the FIFA World Cup and the exit of DAZN, a low spectator turnout (due to the non-progression of host nation teams) were illustrated; following the evaluation of the TV figures, the digital figures did manage to compensate for the sharp decline in linear TV viewership.

As with all EHF EURO events, an in-depth analysis of the competition was undertaken, and the information arising therefrom will be utilised to improve the organisational aspects of the next event in 2024 i.e., digital innovations and other measures (sponsorship, marketing) will be developed respectively with the view of developing the product.

#### 3.1.2. Men's EHF EURO 2024 GER | Status Update

With the EHF EURO Qualifiers proceeding, and from the discussion and information exchange surrounding the event, it was vocalised that this event is the most highly anticipated EHF EURO. The EHF leadership was confident that not only the strongest teams would be in play in Germany, but also new teams. The event will host many framework events both prior to and during the EURO.

The preparations are advancing extremely well with many promotional activities in the pipeline; the opening match in Düsseldorf is sold out with more than 40.000 tickets sold, the ticket held in reserve are earmarked for the EHF Member Federations (who were encouraged to contact the organisers with haste). Other venues are also sold out with more than ten months until the event; this is the positive sign to indicate that the spectators are coming back to the arenas. Each venue has a minimum capacity of 10.000 spectators.

The German Handball Federation has ensured that the event will be sustainable having signed a cooperation agreement with Deutsche Bahn (DB) ensuring that all team transport between host cities will be by train; and – with the longest journey being estimated at 5 hours – a special service is organised for this route.

Following the draw event scheduled for 10 May in Düsseldorf, the communication with the participating national federations will intensify.

### 3.1.3. Women's EHF EURO 2024 AHS | Status Update

The organisation agreement was amended at the request of Hungary; thus, Austria will host two Preliminary Round groups (Innsbruck), one Main Round group (Vienna), and the Final Weekend (Vienna). Now, as the secondary host, Hungary will host two Preliminary Round groups and a Main Round in Debrecen; Switzerland will host two Preliminary Round groups in Basel. The match schedule reflects that of the men's event in 2020. Due to an oversight, the event regulations were not updated and are still based on 16 teams, and since the registration for the event has concluded, it is no longer possible to amend the regulations. Thus, based on the regulations, the three host nations will be placed into Pot 2 in the EHF EURO Qualifiers draw, which will be held in Zurich on 20 April.

Despite 32 teams having registered for the event, the EHF leadership underlined that, for the future, stronger teams are needed and, overall, more teams are needed in the Qualifiers. Nonetheless, this event will enable several teams to become more visible.

### 3.1.4. Men's/Women's EHF EURO 2026/2028/2030

- Men's EHF EURO 2026 DSN: the early phases of organisation have been initiated; and due to the combined experience of the organisers, a good event can be expected.
- Women's EHF EURO 2026 RUS: due to the current situation, the EHF leadership are in the process of discussing alternative courses of action; a decision is imminent.
- EHF EURO 2028: no special report at this stage.
- EHF EURO 2030 (& beyond): due to the contractual situation (Infront) at the point in time, when steps would be taken to award the EURO events, it is clear that the EHF will be unable to award two consecutive events. Currently, discussions are being held to illuminate a suitable solution to ensure a proper rundown of the awarding process.

In the brief discussion that followed, it was noted that though women's sport is becoming stronger on the international stage, there is still much work to be done in relation to the EHF EUROs, organising an event with 24 teams remains a challenge (i.e., Qualifier registrations); thus, the WHB will continue to work with the Federations, as well as on concepts for future deliberation. It was also underlined that a strong EHF EURO begins with strong YAC events, therefore emphasising the need to work with YAC teams with a view to the future.

### 3.2. Younger Age Category Events

The preparation of the 2023 summer events is progressing accordingly and the EHF remains in close contact with the organisers. To the W19 EURO in ROU, the venues are fixed, and the information has been distributed to the participating teams. Concerning the W19 Championship events, eight teams in LTU and nine teams in KOS are awaited. In the W17 Championships, the event is distributed evenly with ten teams expected in AZE and TUR. Both the W19 and W17 EURO events will be played out with 16 teams.

The summer calendar is dense with not only the EHF events, including the M/W17 EHF Beach Handball EURO, but also events organised by the IHF (MU19 CRO and MU21 GER/GRE), and the EOC (EU Games and EYOF).

Looking to the future of the men's YAC events as of 2024, both the bidding and registration documents were distributed to the National Federations; the EURO events will take place with 24 teams. The EHF Office has received several bids that are currently under evaluation; the events will be awarded at the March session of the Executive Committee. The registration to the 2024 events closes at the end of April 2023; it was noted that the bid documents for the YAC Championships can only be distributed upon completion of the registration process.

### 3.3. Club Competitions | Status Update

The group phase of the Machineseecker Champions League is complete, and the play-off matches commence in the coming weeks. The competition is ongoing with no major issues. The Men's European League group phase is also complete and the Last 16 of the competition will begin next week. In the Men's European Cup, the competition is proceeding according to schedule; the stakeholders were informed on the resulting two legal cases arising from spectator behavioural issues in December 2022. To this, it was mentioned that it was a difficult and complex situation that was not easy to resolve. It was also stated that though it is positive to see the spectators return to the arenas, it is concerning to see behavioural issues rearing up again after such a period of calm in this area; it was underlined that the rowdiness did not stem from competition matters, but rather issues that are external to the sport resp. matches.

The play-offs of the Women's EHF Champions League will commence next weekend; the competition is running well. Due to the earthquake in Türkiye, the team participating in the WCL was granted special exemption not to travel; thus, one match (of no sporting relevance) was not played. Following the completion of the group phase, the quarterfinals of the Women's European League will commence in the next weeks. A match in Germany was highlighted for a special mention having broken an attendance record with 11.000 spectators. The Women's European Cup has entered the semi-finals phase.

The organisation of the 2023 Final4 events are ongoing, and there was no special report to be given.

In the ensuing discussion, the state of the Women's Champions League was highlighted with focus given to the level of the participating teams. It was noted that with the exclusion of teams from RUS, there were clubs in the competition that did not fulfil all the requirements in terms of technical infrastructure. This posed a short-term issue for the season but poses a long-term problem for the sport; therefore, this is a problem that will be addressed at all levels.

Looking to the upcoming season, the stakeholders were informed that several topics were already treated within the EHF structure, and the results thereof will be presented to the EHF club representatives. On the side of the clubs, there is much interest in the conditions for the next season; thus the ranking lists were adapted according to each competition to give a more transparent overview. These lists were already distributed.

As of the 2023/24 Men's European League season, the group phase will be expanded from 24 to 32 team and there will be only one qualification round. This new system sees four places reserved for teams coming from lower ranked Federations. Following the meeting of the EHF Executive Committee in March, a complete and updated MEL information package will be distributed.

During the current season adaptations had to be made to the starting times of some matches, in all situations, the decision to change the starting times were borne out of necessity in coordination with TV stations. At this time, there is no attempt to change the playing days/time slots of the competitions/matches, but the matter is still a topic of discussion within the clubs and leagues who need the times to be fixed to facilitate the planning of the leagues.

The topic of Hall Capacity vs. Capacity Utilisation is still question that remains in discussion, but unresolved. Prior to the Pandemic, there was talk of increasing the number of spectators; at this time, now that Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, the questions raised are around how to motivate the clubs e.g., initiating activities around the match to entice spectators to the halls. It was noted it was better to see a small, but full, hall as opposed to a large, but empty, arena.

An overview of the current criteria for upgrades was reiterated (point system based on performance, infrastructure, etc.). It has become apparent the system can exclude teams with potential to be part of the MCL via an upgrade based on a lack of history. The challenge for the whole system is not only about the teams with no history, but the potential of upgrades being challenged, and the possibility of integrating a second club from a national league.

Moving on to technical matters, it was noted that the points of discussion were of relevance for both club and national teams.

- Video Replay: it is the intent of the EHF to implement the use of video reply in every match of the M/WCL as of the start of the 2023/24 season. In the exploration of the technical equipment, it was underlined that systems that referees could use independently is the preferred option,

and it was noted that financing of the system would be a challenge. The EHF checking with several partners looking at the options. The matter will be further discussed in the EHF Board.

- Buzzer: again, as of the upcoming season, it is the intention of the EHF to use a buzzer in each match of the M/WCL as of September as a standard technical feature of the Champions Leagues. It is clear that the EHF cannot provide the same model of buzzer across Europe as the use of the technology is dependent on the technology available in the hall i.e., the link to the video cube, display screens, clock, etc. A motion will be submitted to the Executive Committee in March for further evaluation.
- The matter of the 'Coaches Challenge' was dealt with under AP 3.5.3.

### 3.4. Beach Handball Topics

Looking ahead to the 2023 EHF Beach Handball EURO, a draw event for the final tournament was held in Nazaré, Portugal. With much local involvement, it was an effective way to promote the event on an international level. This year, the event will take place earlier as it serves as a qualification to the European Games (EOG event in Poland) later in the year. Having beach handball at the EU Games is a major step towards taking the sport Olympic.

The further development of the sport continues through the collaboration of the dedicated team within the EHF Office and the Beach handball Commission. The unit continues to work with the Federations offering differing levels of support with the objective of expanding the number of active NFs in beach handball. Furthermore, the EHF continues to engage with the IHF with the aim of producing an international calendar for the sport as a better coordination of the activities is needed; this will benefit the players currently playing indoor and beach handball, as well as allowing more players to get involved once a comprehensive schedule is known.

The Beach Handball Commission, in close collaboration with the Sport & Game Services department are working on new educational materials, including studies and webinars. The development of a new licensing system for coaches within the framework of the RINCK Convention is ongoing.

### 3.5. Other Competition Topics

#### 3.5.1. Crisis Management | Case Study

Before presenting a visual case study to the topic of match fixing and how such a case is dealt with on an internal level, President Wiederer recapped the situation that occurred in 2018 and the current status of that case, which led to the cooperation with Sportradar, as well as the reignition of the matter via journalists (TV2) in DEN and FRA to the point where European referees were accosted in their service to the IHF at the World Championship in Sweden. The following points were highlighted:

- It is the analysis of betting habits that lead to alerts on potentially suspicious matches and alerts are sent automatically.
- The EHF works in close cooperation with Sportradar (i.e., video conference held last week).
- All sports are at risk of integrity breaches, but the situation is more complex in team sports, with referees being at risk from being contacted by nefarious structures.
- With the sporting landscape changing, the disreputable activities now focus on the number of goals scored.
- The EHF Executive Committee are fully informed on the situation; and the EHF has answered all questions that they are allowed to answer and those they are capable of answering.
- It was made clear that the issue is negative for the sport; but the EHF has a duty to protect its competitions from undue influence, as well as protecting officiators faced with accusations without evidence.

Following the introduction, the stakeholders were taken through the actions of the EHF who used this a case study to explore the topic and to show the actions taken by the EHF in such situations where crisis management became necessary based on the alert received on a recent match. The competition aspects (Ranking/Group Situation) were explained by CSO Glaser; the effect (Reactions) of external parties was informed upon by President Wiederer prior to giving a full and detailed explanation of all the actions (A & B) taken the EHF as well as the next steps. CSO Glaser added that within a few days of the actions being taken and the situation returned to calm, no further statements were issued by external parties. Despite an alert being received, it was clear that the behaviour did not rise to match manipulation.

The EHF was praised for its handling of the matter as all alerts must be followed, and the EHF handled the matter in a correct and transparent way. It was suggested that the EHF, for the sake of transparency among the handball community, publicise its procedure in such matters thereby showing that is undertaking its best efforts to protect the game.

### 3.5.2. EHF Officiating Structure

Wiederer recapitulated the account of the professionalisation of the EHF Officiating structure to ensure that all stakeholders had a clear overview of the development of matter, from the changes made within the organisation (nomination strategy), to the HUN motion presented at the 2021 EHF Congress and the subsequent reworking of that motion. The current structures are in place until 2025, and in view of the upcoming congress in September, the visual interpretation provided the outline of the next step. The activities in the area of officiating are expansive and are more than the approx.: 900 nominations per season that are undertaken in an effective way.

Nonetheless, this is a big challenge for the staff at the office level, and there are now more activities than in the past, and still more is to be done in the future. It is a combination of all aspects (i.e., Rules, Organisation, Technical Support, Recruiting, etc.) that are necessary to meet the challenges of the



future. In relation to the previous agenda point, it was suggested that the educational aspect also give focus to teaching referees how to deal with the (social) media in way akin to the education undertake with players via the RYT programme. The work is ongoing, and the stakeholders will be informed on progress accordingly.

### 3.5.3. Coaches Challenge

The project was one among many that was ignited based on the development in other sports (i.e., American Football, Volleyball, Ice Hockey, Basketball, Rugby, Tennis), game transparency, trends, and marketability. Moulded within the competitions department and treated on the level of the Technical Refereeing Committee (TRC), the Coaches Challenge found the support of the officiators, and was subsequently given the green light by the Executive Committee. The project is now in the finalisation phase.

The premise of the Coaches Challenge is to give the Coach the right to challenge one decision (per match) of the referees during the match. The Coaches Challenge works only within the technical preconditions of a Video Replay (VR) system and a Team Time-Out (TTO) Buzzer. Other important factors were laid out, the Coaches Challenge:

- does not extend the playing time of a match
- cannot be used within the last 30 seconds of a match
- can overturn a decision of a Referee based on VR evidence
- is examined by the match Referees **and** Delegate; the decision of the Referees is final
- can only be utilised when there a minimum of one TTO remaining
  - to determine Goal/no Goal
  - illegal/irregular use of goal area
  - 2-minute suspensions in the last 5 minutes of a match
  - irregular substitutions
  - extra player on the court
  - disqualifications
- as a regulation, cannot override the IHF Rules of the Game

From the ensuing discussion, some stakeholders thought that the Coaches Challenge would add another obstacle to an already complicated game, and that there would be too much pressure in the game for any coach to make use of the regulation. Furthermore, it would be necessary to implement measure to ensure that if implanted, the Coaches Challenge would not be misused. It is the intention of the EHF to implement the Coaches Challenge with the new season and, as a possible option, to introduce the concept at the 2023 Final4 events. Therefore, upon receiving the feedback, the EHF asked the stakeholders with functions within National Federations, to submit any additional input within the next days and prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee in order to unify the situation and not delay it any longer.

#### 3.5.4. EHF Excellence Awards

Following the many internal project meetings, encompassing various departments, the concept to honour players and legends was officially named the EHF Excellence Awards. This event will take place in Vienna on Monday, 26 June 2023. The overall objective of the project is to make the sport more visible/public, increase the contact to, and improve the relationship with, the players. It is clear from within the handball community that the majority of players do not quit the sport after the career on the court concludes; rather, they take up other positions within the game e.g., coach, club director, etc. Wiederer presented a brief overview of the categories and voting process; the work in progress, EHF Excellence Awards, is envisaged a highlight that can be developed into a TV product and, eventually, a revenue stream.

#### 3.5.5. IHF Topics

- Resin-free ball: the idea of the IHF to implement a resin-free ball into the sport has prompted much discussion since last year. Based on the information garnered on the implementation of a prototype in the Women's Youth World Championship in North Macedonia led to and EHF initiative towards the IHF, which in turn resulted in a working group (IHF) on the topic; the EHF nominated C. Manchado (ESP) to represent its interests.

The IHF continues to work on the project, and it is to be confirmed as to if another testing of a resin-free ball will be seen during the matches of the 2023 Men's U19 in Croatia. At this time, input received indicates that a resin-free ball is only usable for one game and some product makers are experiencing difficulties in producing balls in half sizes.

The EHF, having spoken with partners and stakeholders, is of the opinion that a resin-free ball should only be implemented at the lower and grassroots levels of the sport, and not at the top-level matches. Therefore, the situation will continue to be monitored.

- Commissions & Cooperation: a meeting of the Methods Commission took place in January 2023 via video conference. As to the other IHF technical bodies, no meetings have been held since 2021. The continental federations are all represented in the Commissions, there has been no active involvement of the European delegates.
- Council Meeting: the members convened in November via video conference for a brief session to which the minutes are available. The next meeting of the IHF Council is planned for June/July and it is hoped that the meeting will be in person.
- Coordination Meeting 12/2022: as a follow-up to the Council meeting in November 2022, the EHF requested a coordination meeting with the IHF leadership. Various matters of common interest were discussed (under shirts/shorts of players, international beach handball calendar, etc.) EHF took input to (undershirts, etc); due to the nature of the continuous process, a follow-up will be also planned in the near future.

## 4. Calendar/Meetings

### 4.1. Competitions Calendar 2023/24 & 2024/25

With the documents confirmed and distributed, no further information was necessary.

### 4.2. 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary EHF Congress 09/2023

The EHF reiterated the basics of the upcoming event in Switzerland and provided more information on the planned timeline. All EHF bodies (EXEC, TCs, Legal, etc) will hold a meeting a day prior to the Congress. It was noted that the visit to the IHF Headquarters is to be planned, and the Federations that wish to visit the IHF are to register its interest as soon as possible; the welcome dinner will be hosted by the IHF.

At the Congress, the EHF Sustainability Strategy will be presented in detail, and the attendees will also receive verbal reports from all the EHF bodies. Concerning the motions, at the EHF level, several topics are being prepared, and the National Federations were reminded to bring their motions forward.

### 4.3. XXXIX IHF Ordinary Congress 11/2023

The upcoming 39<sup>th</sup> Ordinary IHF Congress is scheduled to take place in Katowice, Poland on 1-2 November 2023. The congress agenda is to be distributed in September, followed by the official congress documents in October.

## 5. Various

- EHF Sustainability Strategy: the organisation has begun a collaboration with ‘Touchline’ a company with experience in creating sustainable strategies for sports (and non-sport) organisations. As a follow-up to the internal workshop, it was determined that the EHF sustainability strategy would be based around the long-term projects ‘Master Plan’ and ‘Circle of a Handball Life’ to create a common picture. In keeping with external influences, it is not enough to work sustainably, but it needs to be seen that the EHF is a sustainable operation, as it is desired that in the future the organisation is handed over in a better state than it was in its origins. *It was commented that the EHF could collaborate with the National Federations on this field, as some Federations are already experienced in this area.*
- Women’s League Convention: as the organisation moves forward in its development endeavours, the next event on 3 June 2023 in Budapest will focus on women’s leagues in Europe; the overall objective is the moves these leagues forward in order to create a platform that mirrors the men’s league forum (EHLB). It is hope that a stage can be reached to have such a structure for women implemented and active (valid) after the 2025 EHF Congress. N. Larsson, EHLB Chairman, will attend the Women’s League Convention and present the role of the leagues. Contact has been established in a first call to the national league representatives.

- RINCK Convention: The Sport & Game Services department is currently re-working the structure of the RINCK Convention which includes redefining the needs and requirements of lower-ranked nations, amending the coaching licensing system based on competences and skills targeted at different age groups ('Kids Coach') and goalkeepers; these are to be new specialisations. The new system will be presented at the RINCK Convention workshop next week.

With no additional topics raised, President Wiederer thanked the attendees for their attention and encouraged the further discussion of the topics in the individual meetings; thus concluded the Common Meeting of the Stakeholder Groups.

Vienna, 17 March 2023