
MINUTES TO THE 24TH MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S HANDBALL BOARD

Date | Time: Tuesday, 18 October 2022 | 10:30 – 12:30

Venue: Courtyard by Marriott Wien | Messe

Participants:

WHB:	Marta Bon	Chairwoman SLO
	Radmila Petrovic	Member WFCH MNE
	Jelena Eric	Member SRB
	Elena Borrás Alcaraz	Member ESP
	Monika Listkiewicz	Member POL
	Bente Aksnes	Member EXEC NOR
	F. V. Blazquez Garcia	Member EXEC ESP
EHF Office:	Alenka Cuderman	Women's Handball Coordinator Minutes
	Mario Kovacic	Director NT Competitions
<i>In Part</i>	Martin Hausleitner	Secretary General
Excused:	Leonor Mallozzi	Deputy Chairwoman Member NCW POR
	Nodjialem Myaro	Member NCW FRA
	Deja Ivanovic	Member WFCH SLO

The meeting took place as a second part to the common meeting of PHB/WHB where the general presentations were provided.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Bon warmly welcomed the participants to the meeting noting the absence of Deja Ivanovic and Nodjialem Myaro due to the health reasons, and Leonor Mallozzi due to the business reasons.

1.1. Minutes of WHB Meeting No. 23 (03/2022)

Without additional comment, the minutes of the previous meeting that took place in March 2022 were adopted.

2. Stakeholder Reports

2.1. EHF NCW / Nations Board

In absence of the NCW Members, Cuderman (EHF) reported the outcomes of the NCW discussions:

- A concern on the low number of the tickets sold for the upcoming **EURO** was expressed; for the future, possible initiatives to encourage the international fans to take part in the women's highlight events (EURO, FINAL4) should be further discussed.

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- Support for the introduction of the **“Women’s Handball Day”** as a promotion tool to highlight the Women’s EHF EURO 2024 during the first round of EURO Qualifiers (9-15 October 2023), targeting the following activities: special press conference involving the players and EURO ambassador, matches on TV/streaming, content on social media channels, involvement of role models, grassroots activities, all additionally strengthening the status of women’s handball and women in handball has been expressed.
 - To support the federations, which will for the first time participate in the EURO competition an **“Emerging nations workshop”** was further discussed. However, the NCW concluded, that a **marketing supervisor** nominated to the respective qualification match would be able to provide better support at the venue regarding the set-up and ensure the required quality standard of the TV picture, advertising (LED, floor sticker). An online workshop can help in addition.
 - **Resin-free ball:** there is a common understanding of the NCW that they are not in favour of implementing the resin-free ball, especially on a professional level.
 - IHF/EHF Women’s Trophy 2017 was the last **IHF competition for the women’s emerging nations**. On the men’s side since 2017 already two tournaments were organized by the IHF, therefore it is suggested that an equal status to be targeted for the women’s competition.
 - **EHF female delegates:** the fact that there are currently 119 male and 21 female delegates in the EHF officiating system initiated the reaction – the promotion of the role and an EHF support at the next delegates course (expected in spring 2023) for female candidates is thought.
 - **Economic and social impact study of the EURO event is recommended:** the information can serve the federations and organisers in discussions with the sponsors and negotiations for the governmental financial support.

The WHB appreciated and supported the comments of the NCW as presented under the remarks below:

- **Initiatives to promote the role of the delegates and referees** to the federations for encouragement of the competent and experienced female candidates to take the respective roles on the European level; further discussion with the EHF responsible persons is suggested.
- **Women’s Handball Day** – the WHB is of the opinion that the proposed timing for the introduction of the promotional tool is not optimal, better effect could be achieved after

the draw of the final tournament, when the allocation of the teams/venues will be known; important would be to provide a structured rundown of the activities to federations including the social media campaign, tickets promotion.

- **Fans at the women's highlight events** – important is the complete set-up of the event: competitive level of the host team/promotion focus, attractiveness of the venue location/alternative environment, entertainment for the fans, ticket prices, TV rights, etc. It is suggested that the topic to be further elaborated.

2.2. Women's Forum Club Handball

Due to her absence, Ivanovic informed that she would provide a written report from the last WFCH meeting.

2.3. Situation other interest groups

No input has been provided, however Bon announced for the next meeting that she will present the topics “social support for the female players” and “trend in transfers” and encouraged other members to be proactive.

3. Women's National Team Competitions

3.1. Preview EUROS 2022/2024

EURO 2022 (SMM): The WHB discussed the playing schedule, hygiene concept (2 PCR test prior and 1 by arrival, no bubble, no continuous testing – only in the event the symptoms, quarantine for positive tested persons, extended self-responsibility of the participants), the EURO promotion, TV markets and the concerning ticketing status. A discussion regarding the fan situation at the women's highlight event took place (importance of the set-up of the event, success of the host team, logistics and attractive environment, price of the tickets, etc.). It is proposed that a link for the EURO ticketing will be sent to the Federations via women's handball network.

EURO 2024 (HUN/SUI/AUT): The tournament will be played with 24 teams for the first time. The Preliminary Round will be played in Budapest, Debrecen, Basel and Innsbruck, the Main Round in Budapest and Debrecen and the Final weekend in Budapest. The preparation of the event is going according to the plan. The invitation for the registration to the competition will be sent out in November 2022.

3.2. EURO 2024 Qualifiers & WHB initiative status

The importance of levelling up the competition and further development of the EURO product was highlighted. In the first step, the aim is to strengthen the competition and to involve more teams in the qualifications.

Due to the playing format a minimum of 36 teams need to register to have a Qualifiers with 32 teams and for the pre-qualification round more than 36 teams need to register. There will be a special appeal during the Women's Handball Conference in Ljubljana to federations, who did not yet participate at the EURO, to register for the event. In the second step the required event standards have to be ensured, therefore an EHF support is recommended in form of the **"Preparation workshop for the newcomers"**, to discuss the standards, the expectations, as well as the possibilities (arenas of required standards, spectators, event presentation and promotion to attract spectators, media, and sponsors).

To strengthen the presentation and exposure of the Qualifiers, the focus will be given to the highlight matches within each round. Furthermore, along with the match schedule of Qualifiers the use of **a marketing supervisor** for less experienced nations is suggested to provide a support at the venue directly (set-up, LED, floor stickers, TV picture, etc.).

At the Women's Handball Conference in Ljubljana a lot of best practices will be provided in respect of the event organisation, and event presentation and promotion. For details see Minutes Common Meeting AP2.9 and WHB AP 5.1.

3.3. YAC Events 2022 – W16 European Open, EYOF (W17)

17 national teams (W16) participated at the European Open 2022 with ESP as the winner followed by ROU and FRA. The future change of the age from 16y. to 18y. in the European Open competition (in 2024) was briefly discussed. 8 national teams (W17) participated at the EYOF 2022 in Banská Bistrica/SVK with HUN as the winner followed by DEN and NOR.

3.4. WU18 and WU20 IHF World Championship 2022

The WHB reviewed the playing format of the IHF W18/W20 competitions with 32 teams, the event results and highlighted the experienced organisers (SLO, MKD).

W18 WCh. in MKD: 20 European teams participated, the winner KOR, followed by DEN, HUN.

W20 WCh. in SLO: 18 European teams participated, the winner NOR, followed by HUN, NED.

3.5. Younger Age Category Events – Future Outlook

The WHB briefly mentioned the upcoming women's YAC competitions 2023: W19 EURO/ROU, W19 Championships (LTU, KOS), W17 EURO/MNE, W17 Championships (AZE, TUR). A positive move to involve 3 new organisers (KOS, AZE, TUR) was noted.

The step to 24 teams in the YAC EURO competitions brings a positive motivation for the federations and the players, improved option for obtaining funding, a good base to develop the event (TV/streaming, social media activities, marketing, etc). On other hand a reduced standard of the competition at the beginning, higher costs (logistics, longer tournament), challenges with the playing schedule (early matches, training time) and to find the organiser(s) can be expected.

4. Club Competitions

4.1. Season 2021/22 – Conclusions

The season was very successful in all women's EHF club competitions on a competition, media, and marketing level. Despite of Omicron Covid time and due to the very good cooperation of the EHF/EHFM/Clubs, all matches were decided on the court, no administrative decisions were required. The TV coverage of the EHF CL are a bit lower than last season (-26%; only one team from ROU, absence of 2 RUS teams in 2022) and of the EL are positive (+15%). The positive development was noted also in the social media figures based on the newsletters, targeted campaigns, storytelling, entertainment content. There was a very successful organisation of the EHF FINAL4 Women in Budapest with attendance of 15.400 spectators and of the 'Energi Viborg' EHF Finals in Viborg. The season was very positive financially and resulted in highest payments been ever paid off to the clubs.

4.2. Season 2022/23 – Status

The run down for the season 2022/23 was noted with all required meetings, publication of club competitions regulations, deadline for club registrations, draw events and competitions start dates. There is a stable situation with the registered clubs, 112 women's clubs registered for the season (2021/22: 112 clubs), regarding the hygiene concept, no restrictions and testing is required. Up to date, all matches were played regularly.

The new advertising map was mentioned: 15 floor stickers (thereof 4 belong to the clubs), and 6 in the surrounding area. The contract with Uniqa is valid until end of the season 2022/23, the rest of partners' contracts were prolonged. The TV Broadcasters portfolio consists of 26 TV Broadcasters in CL and 24 in EL. The digital content is well covered with 5 days/week matches and additional podcast, newsletter, etc. activities, supported by competition campaigns and visuals. The internal preparation for the EHF FINAL4 Women 2023 started, focus is on ticket sales and VIP sales. The European League final events will be offered to neutral organisers (men and women) with the intention to get the host venue earlier, to be able to manage better ticketing, marketing, and subvention sources.

5. WHB Initiatives

5.1. Women's Handball Conference 2022

For details see the Minutes of the Common Meeting PHB/WHB AP2.9. The WHB commented the importance of levelling up of the EURO competitions and to find a professional approach to women's handball. The football EURO changed the landscape in promotion and sponsorship. A growth is possible if women's sport/athletes will be integrated. It is necessary to raise awareness in these fields, so that clubs and federations should approach the partners and sponsors respectively. It will be a great opportunity to work with all stakeholders (federations, clubs, leagues) at the conference.

The agenda is promising, providing information regarding developing national teams, organisation of the national team events, presentation of women's handball and the relation with sponsors, the role of the clubs and the leagues in strengthening of women's handball, creating a sustainable structure (players pathway), therefore it is a must for the teams who will register to the EHF EURO 2024.

5.2. Respect Your Talent (RYT) Programme

Cuderman reported about the Player of the Match activities during the M18/M20 EHF EURO/Championships 2022, where over 250 players were meeting the RYT Ambassadors (Stefan Lövgren, Carlos Prieto, Victor Tomas, Rastko Stojković, Luka Žvižej and Ivano Balić), who were sharing their experiences and inspiring and motivating players for professional handball.

Furthermore, from October 2022 onwards, the digital Ambassador sessions will be offered to the young talents (Player of the Match), where they will be able to meet their role models (Ambassadors) online, learn from their experiences and ask questions. The RYT Camp for the M18 EHF EURO/Championship All-Star team players will follow in January 2023.

The RYT Ambassador received an extended role, next to instructing the young handball talents, they are involved as experts in the evaluation process of the Player of the Year.

5.3. Women's EHF EURO 2022 promotion

The WHB initiated the cross promotion of the Women's EHF EURO 2022 via EHF Champions League 2022/23 Women in 6 matches (Round 4-6: RK Krim Mercator Ljubljana, WHC Buducnost BEMAX, Győri Audi ETO KC, CSM Bucuresti). The EURO Ambassadors (Anja Freser, Deja Ivanovic, Katalin Palinger, Katarina Bulatovic, Marija Jovanovic, Cristina Varzaru) have undertaken the promotional activities during the half time: inviting the fans to follow the EURO, leading the shoot-out, awarding the participating fans with the EURO ball, EURO t-shirts and EURO tickets, autograph cards, also targeting the social media campaign with the slogan #playwithheart. In addition, the podcast activity with the 4 episodes to promote women's handball has been agreed (Radicevic & Mehmedovic/MNE, Micijevic & Jezic/CRO, Reistad/NOR, Gros/SLO).

Bon informed about the EURO promotion in SLO with a special focus on sustainability and a lot of networking options for women in business, sport, and society. She reported about the activity of 1000 touches of the ball from Celje to Ljubljana, involving young female players from the surrounding regions, which brought the EURO closer to the players. She also mentioned the activities of the Slovenian EURO Ambassadors (all female, with various business, sport, and political backgrounds) and the upcoming Business Conference in Ljubljana (2-4 November 2022).

5.4. Cooperation League Board

Two fields, Leagues and Player are not covered yet in the women's board structure. In the first step the responsible persons of women's top leagues have been invited to the Women's Handball Conference 2022, where the role of the Leagues in strengthening of women's handball (i.e.: develop the environment, TV contracts, professional contracts, etc.) and the possible integration of women's League representatives in the work with the EHLB will be considered.

6. Women's Handball Strategy – Update 2022-2025

In close collaboration with the stakeholders the EHF wants to enhance and strengthen the current position of women's handball and bring it to the next level. The strategy objectives are based on the results of the surveys with federations, clubs, and players:

- Enhance the image, attractiveness, brand, visibility, and popularity of women's handball, attract sponsors interest
- Strengthen the EHF highlight events/competitions: EURO, Champions League and FINAL4, European League and Final event
- Strengthen women's youth handball
- Enhance the status of women in handball
- Improve the status of women's handball in emerging nations

The action plan is rolled out in three areas: education, development, and promotion. In the area of education the EHF offers subsidized educational courses of the EHF CAN group for coaches, sport managers, referees, and delegates (recruitment and further education of the female participants to continuously improve the competence level and participation is targeted). The strengthening of women's handball network is important, to ensure quality coaches in women's handball, especially for the youth and the professional level.

The development of women's handball is one of the objectives of the EHF Master Plan, therefore the general objectives are put in line with the Master Plan. In the area of development the strengthening of the stakeholders network is targeted (integration of the Leagues and Players to work together with the Federations and Clubs) to provide a professional environment for women's handball, which is levelled up to the men's standards. Further focus is on players development pathway/aged level training/Circle of a handball life/sustainable grassroots growth (early start in kindergarten, mini handball, bringing the school children to the clubs, talent management, handball academies and developing/strengthening national teams as well as recruitment of players for the post-career, integration of ambassadors into education and promotion structure.

In the area of promotion the organisation and presentation of women's handball events and female players has to reach top standards, to attract the media, sponsors, and the fans. The TV coverage/streaming, digital marketing and social media activities are important tools to boost the value of women's handball/female players. The role models /ambassadors (former top players) should be integrated as promoters, influencers, mentors, experts etc. A special effort should be taken to bring international fans to the women's highlight events.

The WHB will have a further discussion in respect of the strategy via an online meeting.

7. Follow-up to the Common Meeting

No additional topics raised; refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

8. Miscellaneous

No further topics were raised.

Bon thanked all participants for their constructive work and contributions.

Vienna, 24 October 2022

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