
MINUTES TO THE 26TH MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S HANDBALL BOARD

Date | Time: Tuesday, 17 October 2023 | 09:00 – 13:00

Venue: Renaissance Hotel Vienna

Participants:

WHB:	Leonor Mallozzi	Chairwoman Member NCW POR
	Marta Bon	Deputy Chairwoman SLO
	Nodjialem Myaro	Member NCW FRA
	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
	Rima Sypkus	National Team Competitions

Excused:	Michael Wiederer	EHF President
	Radmila Petrovic	Member WFCH MNE
	Deja Ivanovic	Member WFCH SLO
	Attila Heim	National Team Competitions

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

Cuderman welcomed the WHB members to the meeting announcing the absence of the President Wiederer, and a limited access to the Secretary General Hausleitner as he had to be in a parallel meeting with the PHB. Further, she noted that Ivanovic and Petrovic are excused due to the health reasons. Mallozzi has been announced and welcomed as a new chairwoman of the board by the coordinator first, then by former chairwoman Bon, who thanked the members for the confidence in the past two years and wished Mallozzi good work and expressed her full support. Mallozzi thanked Bon and the members for excellent work and a look forward for an enthusiastic cooperation. She warmly welcomed back Myaro, who has been absent for more than a year due to the health reasons.

2. Minutes of WHB Meeting No. 25 (03/2023)

Without additional comment, the minutes of the previous meeting that took place in March 2023 were adopted.

In the follow-up to 'Officiating' Cuderman informed:

- **EHF female Delegates:** there are 29 female delegates out of 148 in total (24% rate), 8 new delegates after the EHF Delegate Course 2023.
- **EHF female Referees:** there are 23 female referee couples out of 131 in total (17,5% rate); drop off due to the pregnancy of 3 referees and some long-term injuries, however 4 young referee couples were integrated during the EHF summer competitions (ESP, HUN, SUI, SWE). A full support of the federations and the EHF to the young female referees is required (YRP – 12 female referee couples, Candidates – 9 female referee couples).

3. Stakeholder Reports

3.1. EHF NCW / Nations Board

Myaro reported the outcomes of the NCW discussions:

- NCW raised their concern regarding the organisation of the EHF YAC events. With the respect to a new product 'YAC EHF EURO' with 24 teams, starting in 2024 for men and in 2025 for women, the complex position of **the event organiser** has been discussed, also due to the logistics (three venues) and the financial side of organisation, as there is only a limited number of Federations which are able to stage efficiently a YAC EURO event. The question was, if a strategy for more equal organisation of the YAC EURO can be developed to allow more federation to organise EURO event.
- Further support and encouragement for the emerging nations to take the opportunity to stage a **YAC Championship B or C-level** and to promote handball in a home country has been underlined, even if smaller halls (1500 capacity) in the summer events with only few spectators.
- NCW is of the view that whilst planning to develop the YAC EURO (raise the profile, TV rights, etc) the focus during the competition should be given to the further development of players and officials (referees, delegates, coaches). *WHB agreed to this view.*
- The NCW initiate a discussion in respect of the competition level of the **EURO Qualifiers**. The importance of levelling up the Qualifiers and further development of the EURO product was highlighted once again. In the first step, the aim is to strengthen the competition and to involve more teams in the qualifications.
- After playing two rounds of the **EURO Qualifiers** the difference of the playing level of few teams is too high, there are some results with a too high goal difference (> 30 goals). These may negatively affect the reputation of women's handball in these countries, future funding, TV, etc. There is no right judgement after the first two rounds. Smaller nations are playing catch-up, therefore the expectations and the mindset of the new comers must be realistic, federation and media support is required, helping smaller nations to come closer step by step and a high-level motivation and patience are of high importance. It is important to give the federations time to develop, and to help them, even with reducing standards on a very responsible way, if required.

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- NCW expressed their concern with regards to the pre-announced **U17 IHF World Championship**, as the competition would be in collision with the YAC EURO/Championship competition and would also change the YAC calendar including the qualifications. Means, that the federations would have to establish the national teams with 14 years old players, which is too early in their view. The WHB is of the same view.
 - The NCW expressed their support for the EHF motion of 'administrative sanctions' under the view that a transparent list of sanctions incl. penalties would be reproduced and presented in detail.

3.2. WFCH | Due to the absence of both members no input/report has been provided.

3.3. Situation other interest groups

- Bon prepared a short overview of the WHB work in last two years of her chairmanship, highlighted important steps for women's handball: Women's Handball Conference 2022, EHF Final4 2023 Women with a record attendance of 20.022 spectators, Women's League Convention 2023, Respect Your Talent Programme & App development, being part of the IHF working group for changing of the 'IHF Regulations on protective equipment and accessories', gender equality and safe environment in sport initiatives. Myaro and Bente added the importance of the safe and beneficial position of the professional female players in France and Norway in the event of pregnancy; further employment contractual points were discussed. The WHB board noted the whistleblowing platform of the EHF as protector/guardian, where the incidents can be reported.
- There is a repeated suggestion to the EHF to raise awareness in respect of the 'safe environment' in sport / sexual harassment to the member Federations at one of the EHF events with Federations attendance. The recent ESP example from football has been discussed, underlining the possible damage of the reputation for the sport.

4. Women's League Convention - Follow up.

- **Women's League Convention** has been staged during the EHF Final4 2023 Women and attended by 42 participants representing 28 registered leagues. The EHF sport-political structure has been discussed regarding the representation of the women's handball. The Chairman of the European Handball League Board (EHLB) Nikolas Larsson presented the position, the structure, the role, and the tasks of the leagues, whilst Frank Bohmann presented best practice of GER men's league and Vanessa Khalfa the best practice of FRA women's league. The EHLB expressed a full support and interest for cooperation and integration of the WHLB in the EHF structure. As follow up the founding meeting of the Women's European Handball League (EHLB) is scheduled during the EHF Final4 2024 Women, and after the Congress 2025 the respective representation of the WHLB in the WHB will follow.

5. Women's National Team Competitions | Follow up to Common Meeting

5.1. Preview EURO 2024 (AUT/HUN/SUI)

- For information see the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.1.2.
- The first women's EURO with 24 teams; the playing schedule: Preliminary Round: Innsbruck, Debrecen und Basel, Main Round: Vienna, Debrecen, Final Weekend: Vienna; 35 teams registered for the event, the Champion (NOR) and the organisers (AUT/HUN/SUI) are qualified and play EURO Cup, 31 teams play qualification for 20 places at the EURO.
- The final tournament draw will take place in May 2024, the final tournament will be played from 28 November-15 December 2024.
- The WHB priced a wide list of side events at the EURO 2024, especially on the Final Weekend, including input of the Women's Handball Conference 2024, which all will contribute to strengthen the highlight event and women's handball.

5.2. EURO Qualifiers & WHB initiatives status

- **EURO Qualifiers** were discussed under the AP 3.1.
- The importance of levelling up the competition and further development of the EURO product was highlighted.
- **Status initiatives:** The EHF has worked for the objective 'levelling up the competition' and organised in June 2023 first workshop with all new federations participating in EHF EURO Qualifiers (AZE, BIH, BUL, FIN, LUX, LAT, ISR) in order to discuss basic requirements and how to implement different marketing aspects, which are listed in the participant manual. In August 2023, a general kick-off meeting with all participating national federations has been held in respect of the competition, marketing, and media topics. A marketing game supervisor has been sent to AZE and BUL for additional support. In the first two Rounds of the Qualifiers all new federations played abroad, whilst in the second match they were a host. After two Rounds played no incidents have been reported and the marketing and media implementation has been satisfying.

5.3. EURO 2026 Status

- The WHB noted a new application process with three potential organisers POL/CZE, TUR and ROU and the EXEC decision to follow in January 2024.

5.4. Review YAC Events 2023

- For review see the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.2.
- YAC Events have been discussed under AP 3.1. 'YAC Organisers', the 'structure of the YAC events in the future' and the 'main objective of the YAC events'.

5.5. IHF Competitions

- **IHF Women's Trophy 2023 Europe for U17 and U19** took place in Kosovo from 11-15 October 2023. In the U17 tournament participated ALB, AZE, BIH, BUL, GBR, GEO, and KOS, whilst in the U19 competition only 4 nations (BUL, GBR, KOS, MLT) attended. The

winner of both categories (U17- Kosovo, U19-GBR) qualified for the intercontinental phase of the Women's IHF Trophy.

- **IHF Women's World Championship 2023**

The tournament will be organised by DEN/NOR/SWE (29/11-17/12/2023) with 32 teams, there are 16 teams from Europe qualified, further 2 teams (AUT, ISL) received a wild card as reserve teams out of respective qualifications.

- **Olympic Games 2024**

Twelve teams will compete at the Olympics: FRA as organiser, NOR as European Champion, KOR and ANG as continent champions, World Champion, and Pan Amerika Champion, as well as 6 teams via 3 qualification tournaments (11-14 April 2024).

6. Club Competitions

6.1. Season 2022/2023 – Review

- The played rounds of all three women's club competitions were reviewed. Up to one CLW match (situation in TUR) all matches were played and decided regularly.
- After great delivery and attendance record of the EHF FINAL4 Women 2023 in Budapest the expectations for 2024 edition are high. A neutral venue for the EHF EL Finals Women 2023 in Graz and the spectator situation has been discussed.
- The TV figures of the last three seasons of the CLW were reviewed and the dependency on the ROU market was noted. The broadcasting hours from season to season are increasing 2021/22 (+17%) and 2022/23 (+14%). The digital reach is distributed via the EHF channels; men's and women's clubs, and specifically in the CL there is a 36% digital reach rate regarding women's handball.

6.2. Season 2023/24 - Status

- With 114 registered women's clubs in the season 2023/24 there is a stable situation in respect of the club registration (2021/22: 112 clubs, 2022/23: 112 clubs). In the EHF Champions League Women (CLW) three clubs were invited to strengthen the competition (DVSC Schaeffler/HUN, Ikast Handbold /DEN, and Zagłębie Lublin/POL) regarding the competitions, organisation, and spectators. Consequently, in the CLW competition are competing three clubs from HUN and three clubs from DEN.
- The initiative for 'full hall attendance' has brought improving attendance, leading by Györi Audi ETO KC, CSM Bucuresti, Krim Mercator Ljubljana, Metz Handball, and some clubs not satisfactory yet: IK Sävehof and Buducnost.
- All three competitions have started, CLW with the Group Phase, whilst European League und European Cup with the Qualifications Round 2. Up to date, all matches were played regularly. The technical implementations (video replay, buzzer) were positively noted.
- Further information is available in the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.3.

7. WHB Initiatives

7.1. Respect Your Talent (RYT) Programme

- Cuderman reported about two RYT live events in 2023: At W17/W19 EHF EURO/ Championships more than 300 player participated at the '**RYT Player of the Match Events**' meeting RYT Ambassadors: Andreja Lekic, Anja Althaus, Carmen Martin, Beatrice Edwige, Jovanka Radicevic and Siraba Dembele Pavlovic. The 'All-Star Team' players of the W17 generation are invited to the **RYT Camp** in Vienna (7-10/12/2023) to work on their off-court skills. Parallel to the RYT Camp, the **RYT App** will be launched with 20 digital training sessions in areas of dual career, media, sports law, mental fitness and anti-doping, nutrition, regeneration, and fitness will follow. Furthermore, **the digital Ambassador sessions**, where the player can meet their role model (Ambassador) online, learn from their experiences and ask questions, are part of the RYT App.
- Bon expressed her appreciation that WHB through their Player/Federation analysis in 2012-2014-2018 has recognised the needs and initiated the RYT programme. However, the major role have the Ambassadors, who inspire and directly transfer their experiences and knowledge to young talents.

7.2. Women's Handball Conference 2024

- Cuderman informed that the Women's Handball Conference 2024 is scheduled as a side event of the Women's EHF EURO 2024; possible agenda points were discussed: follow-up example of the Women's Handball Conference 2022, grassroots, RYT, professional player environment / employment contract (social and safety support for players), mental coaching for women in sport, preparation of players for post-career and a successful example of a top player. The agenda will be further discussed at the next meeting.

7.3. Gender equality in sport – Round table EU Office report

- Based on the EU Office report Cuderman provided a brief information about priorities of NOC for 2024: ensure equal participation of women at Olympic Games, increase gender representation in leadership positions to at least 30%, adopt safeguarding polices and appoint safeguarding Officers, include gender equality as a criterion in decisions regarding resource allocation, foster visibility of women's sport.

8. Follow-up to the Common Meeting

9. Miscellaneous

- Blazquez Garcia raised the attention to the fact that more and more players from other continents (Asia, Africa and Pan-Amerika) are playing in European clubs and that the continental tournaments currently are not in the IHF/EHF Calendar, therefore the national team players have difficulty with the European clubs to be released for their continental national team competitions. It has been suggested to possibly integrate also continental national team competitions in the official IHF/EHF Calendar.

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- Borrás Alcaraz will inform at the next meeting about female leadership conference taking place in Madrid (2023).
 - Mallozzi asked the members to prepare for the next meeting a discussion about 'How can women's handball give contribution for sustainability.' The EHF sustainability matrix has been shared with the members.
 - Save the date for the next meetings: 25/26 March 2024 and 14/15 March 2024.

Mallozzi thanked all participants for their constructive work and contributions.

Vienna, 23 October 2023

For the minutes: Alenka Cuderman

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