

## Minutes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the (Men's) European Handball League Board

**Date / Time:** Monday, 11 March 2019 / 15:30 – 18:30

**Venue:** Hilton Garden Inn Vienna South – Room Gloriette 2

### Participants:

<b>EHLB</b>	Nikolas Larsson	SWE	Member 2	Chairman
	Frank Bohmann	GER	Member 1	Vice Chairman
	Stefano Podini	ITA	Member 3	
	Patrice Hitz	SUI	Member 4	
	Alf Mangor Johannessen	NOR	Member 5	
	Thierry Wagner	LUX	Member 6	
<b>EHF</b>	Markus Glaser		Chief Sports Officer	
	Mario Kovacic		EHF Club Competitions ( <i>Minutes</i> )	

*Please note that only the key inferences from the ensuing discussions throughout the meeting are condensed for the minutes.*

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Chairman Larsson welcomed the participants to the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the European Handball League Board (EHLB) and gave a brief overview of the agenda before moving to the next point.

### 2. EHLB meeting 09/2018 – Minutes and follow up

Chairman Larsson opened the floor for remarks and questions to the meeting that took place in September 2018. Vice Chairman Bohmann informed on the current situation in German stating that the discussion concerning players' workload and schedule is ongoing. Furthermore, some players have remarked that they have not been contacted by the players' union and that they do not feel represented. Larsson mentioned that the Swedish league has a collective agreement for and with players; this channel allows for dialogue in the areas of workload, salaries/pensions, brand, etc. In the ensuing discussion it was agreed that on this level, there is still much work to be done, and there remains room for improvement on the level of the players union. It was suggested that both the national federations and the leagues should assume the responsibility for creating a players' union. In a follow up, the EHLB will raise the matter of the current European Handball Players' Union (organisation, etc.) at the next meeting of the Professional Handball Board (PHB).

### 3. EHF Information

A common meeting together with the Nations Board (NB) was held prior to the meeting of the EHLB; therefore please refer to the minutes of the common meeting.

#### **4. Information flow**

In a follow-up to the agreed actions as specified at the 09/2018 meeting, the members gave a brief update on the contact made with different leagues/countries in their areas of responsibility. Chairman Larsson proposed a second contact initiative with the European leagues to gain additional information such as turnover of the clubs, spectator averages, coverage of the league, etc. Vice Chairman Bohmann spoke of the contact with the various members including the HandballLiga Austria (HLA). As part of the common discussion, the EHLB members noted that feedback was still awaited from many countries i.e. CZE, BUL, SRB, etc.

Member Podini briefly referred to the contact with the SEHA league and others on the fringes of the 2019 IHF World Championship. Member Johannessen commented on the constructive contact with the RUS league and noted that a telephone conference was scheduled for the following week; Member Hitz spoke of the contact with the HUN league. Member Wagner mentioned several mail exchanges with the combined BENE league and the other EHLB stakeholders from his contact list; he expanded on the matter of the different issues within the leagues and the ensuing difficulties trying to work from the same basis.

The importance of countries having information on the EC starting places, qualifications, etc. was underlined, and a comparison between the top leagues was made. It was underlined that the most important issues concerning the leagues had to be filtered, and also the approach towards the needs based on the quality gap (e.g. SCO-GER). CSO Markus Glaser took note of the dialogue and gave a brief input on league structures within national federation; he emphasised that it was sometimes not a simple task to identify the person responsible for league activities within a federation.

#### **5. Mapping of Leagues and further work on inclusion of Leagues in topics of value**

Facing the issue of getting feedback from the national federations/leagues, Chairman Larsson proposed to collate the information available and compose a survey (with the contact form) to form the picture of league activity in Europe and redistribute to the stakeholders at this stage of the season. It was noted that the biggest problem was getting the information back from the national federations; therefore it was suggested to make contact with the federations at scheduled events such as the EHF Congress and other conferences.

The willingness to cooperate by RUS was highlighted; it was also suggested to add the email addresses of the EHLB members as part of the minutes and the regions of responsibility, so that it is clear to the national federations/leagues who they can contact. Chairman Larsson underscored the fact that the development of the leagues is important for the development of the clubs and vice versa; the example of the Swedish model was given. It was also stated that such a development is also dependent on the quality of the matches as teams are using arenas where other sports are present as well.

The exchange of input resulted in a common understanding that it is important for the national leagues to have a centralised office running the daily business of the league and drive the different topics forward as this offers more potential for an overall development.

## 6. Calendar 2019/2020 brief check

Chairman Larsson opened the agenda point by briefly mentioning issues around the calendar and format of the competitions based on feedback already received. Using the current experiences of LNH (dissatisfaction with match days), he mentioned that in general it is very important to be able to see when matches are to be played and underlined the importance of planning the league. It was stressed that leagues are going to have issues with their TV partners regarding top matches on specific days. At this time, there will be no further changes to the weekend matches; the dates are settled.

EHF CSO Glaser reiterated that the information on dates will be distributed (once again) to the stakeholders to enable them to check the consequences for the domestic competitions. It was underlined that the matches of the Challenge Cup will remain on the weekends as most clubs do not have professional players.

In response to questions concerning place distribution and the scheduling of qualification matches, Glaser summarized this particular part of the new system, which is still under evaluation and not decided yet.

A question was raised there regarding the possibility of playing EHL Qualification rounds as a tournament in order to save costs. This is not foreseen as the experience of the EHF shows that it is rather difficult to find hosts for tournaments as they produce quite a large financial burden for the home team hosting guest teams over several days. Furthermore, in this situation, the guests would not have any home matches and thus no presentation of the home club in front of the home crowd, sponsors, partners, etc. Finally it must be understood that if a club already struggles with the qualification this club obviously does not provide the structure for a participation in the EHL Group Phase anyway.

Glaser also responded to further questions on the new playing systems (CL, EHL, EHF Cup) as of 2020/2021; and in response to a question on how the new media and marketing agreement with Infront/DAZN (I/D) will have an impact on the competitions on a club level (i.e. prize monies), Glaser expected that it would be a factor, but the decisions are still pending. An issue was raised regarding to referee/delegates costs in the future, Glaser stated there that this will be part of the decisions on the financial topics of the competitions which are currently under evaluation parallel to all other areas.

The various inputs prove the very different situation of clubs in Europe as some are ambitious and have a promising local environment while others are struggling to compete on a European level with finances being the central topic especially when it comes to travel costs etc. It was also reported by the Members that some Leagues/Federations support their clubs while this is not an option in many other Leagues/Federations.

Bringing the agenda point to a close, Larsson added that the development of the leagues is also a factor, although leagues are not responsible for the income of the clubs.

## **7. EHF 2020 and onwards**

### **7.1. Calendar 2020/2021**

Returning to the topic, also discussed in the common meeting with the Nations Board, Chairman Larsson questioned if any countries would find problems with the national league season ending at Sunday, 6 June 2021 as per the new calendar 2020/2021. Vice Chairman Bohmann supported the idea of having the Champions League Final4 in June to end the competition season.

Looking at the season calendar from a general point of view, he also floated the idea of changing the timeframes of club and national team competitions e.g. national team activities on the calendar year (January to December) and club team activities on the seasonal calendar July to June. Asking if such a change was even possible, he highlighted the importance of exploring the matter further. It was suggested, for the sake of clarity, to map a fact list of sorts (pros/cons) for changing league formats and dates.

Chairman Larsson stated that the EHLB does need to find new options and think outside the box e.g. consider the possibility of having league matches during the big events in January with those federations not participating in championships, etc.. He also gave credit to Bohmann for his idea of different approaches to future formats. Glaser expects that new ideas to be evaluated for future seasons will come up once all stakeholders are dealing with the new calendar in details. In the continuing discussions to the 2020/2021 calendar, it was noted that there are still many matters to be taken care of by the National Leagues and Federations.

### **7.2. New formats of European club competitions**

Information and talks will be handled at a later stage as more information is gathered.

### **7.3. Eventual conflicts of interest ECC and National Leagues**

- ◆ **Input by the French league LNH:** discussing the matter, it was mentioned that the process of fixed days was obviously unclear to the LNH. The French league is currently the only league opting for midweek matches and also raised the topic of the season ending before the Champions League Final4 in mid-June. At this time, the EHLB sees no general issue with this. SEHA League was also mentioned as a competition which mostly uses weekdays as playing days.

### **7.4. Update on other issues**

The EHLB took note of the upcoming changes that include the new naming of competitions as well as the it seems to be useful that streaming platforms are vied to be centralised to offer a better and broader distribution of matches. Moreover, the idea to change the name of the EHLB to the 'Board of European Handball Leagues' based on the move by the EHF to rebrand the EHF Cup to the European Handball League (EHL) needs to be tackled.

## 8. Upcoming meeting PHB

The next meeting of the Professional Handball Board is scheduled for the day right after this EHL Board meeting. In addition to the items already provided, the EHLB aim to discuss the topics of players' workload during the season and at WCh events, European Handball Players Union (EHPU), transparency about fixed playing dates as well as the EHF initiative regarding Officiating.

## 9. Other issues and questions

- ◆ Taking reference to the information given in the common meeting together with the Nations Board, the matter of rule interpretation (e.g. passive play) was raised. It was agreed that the EHLB members should contact their allocated federations/leagues resp. clubs to open a discussion on the topics with the target of gaining input to provide to the EHF, who will in turn deliver it to the IHF.
- ◆ Chairman Larsson will distribute the first draft of the agreed survey on Leagues in Europe to the EHLB members; coordination with the EHF office to distribute relevant information on the meeting that also includes EHLB member contact details, etc.

## 10. Next meeting

The next meeting of the EHLB is scheduled for 7 October 2019; it was requested that the structure remain the same i.e. a common information part together with the Nations Board followed by separate meetings.

## 11. Closing

Chairman Larsson thanked the participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.

For the minutes: M. Kovacic

Vienna, 15 March 2019

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### EHLB Contact List

Frank Bohmann <i>Member 1 - Vice Chairman</i>	<a href="mailto:bohmann@dkb-handball-bundesliga.de">bohmann@dkb-handball-bundesliga.de</a>	AZE, BLR, ESP, FRA, GER, POL, SEHA
Nikolas Larsson <i>Member 2 - Chairman</i>	<a href="mailto:nikolas.larsson@ifkkristianstad.se">nikolas.larsson@ifkkristianstad.se</a>	CRO, DEN, FAR, FIN, GRE, ISL, ROU, SWE, SVK
Stefano Podini <i>Member 3</i>	<a href="mailto:s.podini@figh.it">s.podini@figh.it</a>	ALB, GEO, ISR, ITA, KOS, MDA, MKD, MLT, MNE, MON, POR, SLO, TUR
Patrice Hitz <i>Member 4</i>	<a href="mailto:patrice.hitz@bsvbern.ch">patrice.hitz@bsvbern.ch</a>	AUT, CZE, HUN, LIE, LTU, SUI
Alf Mangor Johannessen <i>Member 5</i>	<a href="mailto:alf.mangor@peppes.no">alf.mangor@peppes.no</a>	BUL, CYP, NOR, RUS, SRB, UKR
Thierry Wagner <i>Member 6</i>	<a href="mailto:thierry.wagner@flh.lu">thierry.wagner@flh.lu</a>	BEL, EST, GBR, IRL, LAT, LUX, NED, ENG, SCO, BENE