

## Minutes to the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the (Men's) European Handball League Board

**Date / Time:** Monday, 7 October 2019 / 16:00 – 18:00

**Venue:** Hilton Garden Inn Vienna South – Room Gloriette 7

### Participants:

<b>EHLB:</b>	Nikolas Larsson	Chairman / SWE
	Frank Bohmann	Vice Chairman / GER
	Patrice Hitz	Member / SUI
	Alf Mangor Johannessen	Member / NOR
	Thierry Wagner	Member / LUX
<b>Guest:</b>	Siniša Ostoić	SEHA Gazprom League - Director
<b>EHF:</b>	Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
	JJ Rowland	EHF Business Development/Marketing
<b>Apologies:</b>	Stefano Podini	Member / ITA

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Following the completion of a combined meeting of the Nations Board and European Handball League Board, the EHLB chairman, Larsson, welcomed everybody to the meeting. He also welcomed Siniša Ostoić from the SEHA League, who he confirmed would now be joining the European Handball League Board as a guest in order to provide a connection to SEHA league and all the countries playing in that league.

### 2. EHLB meeting 03/2019 – Minutes and follow up

Larsson reviewed the minutes of the last meeting of the board on 11 March 2019 in Vienna. He also reported on informal meetings, which took place on the fringes of the VELUX EHF FINAL4 in Cologne with representatives of top leagues including Denmark, France, Sweden, Germany, Italy and also SEHA league. He reported on the difficult situation in France (and some other top leagues with existing contracts) with the new playing days of the EHF club competitions during the week but highlighted the fact that leagues had known about these changes since the competition workshop held by the EHF in Zagreb January 2018 at the Men's EHF EURO 2018; he stated that leagues will have to adapt going forward and it was agreed that fixed playing days for these competitions was an improvement. Glaser confirmed that playing times for mid-week matches have been set at 18:45 and 20:45. He provided a summary of the allocation of places to the two competitions:

#### Men's EHF Champions League (16 teams)

- Places 1 to 9: Nations ranked 1-9 (1 place per federation)
- Place 10: from EHF Handball League (place reserved for team from nation winning most EHL titles over past three seasons)

- Places 11-16: places decided by EHF Executive Committee based on the new criteria catalogue (see below)

#### **Men's EHF Handball League (24 teams in Group Phase)**

- 12 teams with guaranteed place in the Group Phase: 6 teams from a federation without a place in the EHF Champions League according to ranking list (nations ranked 10+); 5 teams from nations ranked 1-9 (second or third ranked teams in national leagues); 1 team for nation from EHF Cup (place reserved for team from nation ranked best over past three seasons)
- 12 teams from qualification: 4 teams guaranteed place in European Handball League Round 2; 20 teams versus 20 teams in European Handball League Round 1

Continuing, Glaser stated that an information pack for clubs was currently being compiled and will be sent out in due course. Larsson requested that this information also be copied to the EHLB.

Larsson asked about possible changes to the club playing system going forward and Glaser confirmed that adaptations were always a possibility year on year depending on how each competition develops. The EHLB asked for transparency in this process.

Larsson highlighted the fact that the rescheduling of the national team week – June to April – could be a challenge for some leagues with their play-offs. Glaser confirmed that this had been discussed at the meeting in January 2018 in Croatia and that the moving of the FINAL4 to mid-June would mean more time for leagues to be completed and will be an improvement for players.

### **3. EHLB Going Forward – Information Flow & Feedback / SMART Project**

Larsson presented an overview of the SMART project agreed with the EHF, which includes a financial support of €15.000 per year over three years for the activities of EHLB. The plan submitted has focused on the following areas:

#### **a) Emerging nations/middle ranked leagues:**

Members of the EHLB reported that it is difficult to get into contact with the representatives of the leagues and there have been no inputs so far from these leagues. Board members discussed the idea of developing a workshop for leagues every two years (two in five years) to provide information/knowledge transfer. Wagner proposed that this could take place parallel to an EHF event (Conference of Presidents etc.) because most of these leagues are organised by federations or at a handball event to drive participation. It was agreed that the EHLB needs to be clearer in its mission and how it can help leagues at this level to develop further. Glaser suggested that for the best success, the EHLB should focus only on 2-3 nations/leagues where there is interest from the people involved.

Hitz proposed the development of a web presence for the EHLB to provide the board with a face, there was however agreement that any website also needs to be maintained with content and that the board did not have the resources for this. It was agreed that Wagner and Podini would put together a road map/proposal for the approach to mid-ranked/emerging nations.

#### **b) Reaching new target groups through beach handball**

A report on initial discussions with the chairman of the EHF Beach Handball Commission, Ole Jørstad, was provided by Larsson, as well as contacts with the Aarhus beach handball event, with the idea of leagues further promoting beach handball as a means of reaching new target groups. Bohmann stated that an interest in beach handball from professional leagues would only develop if the sport were to be added to the Olympic programme. It was also discussed that the sport needs to be further professionalised (transfer regulations etc.) if it is to develop further on a top level. Hitz added that beach handball offers the opportunity to present handball in the cities and get people into contact with handball outside of sports halls/arenas. The board agreed that further discussions need to take place with Jørstad/EHF about approach to beach handball.

#### **c) Coordination of inputs from top 8 leagues**

Various issues discussed including the schedule for next World Championship (with the final match on 31 January 2021) as the league programmes are set to begin from the next day.

Also the possibility of cross promotion between leagues and other competitions was discussed in view of leagues also sharing content on their channels from other competitions. Rowland outlined the new digital strategy currently being developed with Infront and DAZN for the period 2020+, which will include production of content using artificial intelligence and influencer marketing to increase reach beyond EHF channels, and may offer new possibilities for sharing of short form content, depending though on media rights from market to market. In order to discuss and coordinate the issues and best practice for the top eight leagues (incl. schedules, media, calendar etc.) it was agreed that there should be an annual workshop with the top leagues to share best practice and coordinate inputs.

### **4. Common approach with EHPU**

#### **a) Road map to a European agent authorization model**

Possibilities for the regulation of player agents within handball were discussed as a point of cooperation with the EHPU. It was agreed that although this is possible on a national level, this would be a challenge and huge workload on a pan-European basis. It was agreed not to take this forward as a possible project.

#### **b) Initiatives against fraud, betting and doping**

The EHLB confirmed that was a common topic of importance; Glaser stated that the approach from the EHF to this issue was to improve education, especially at a youth level.

#### **c) Positioning of EHPU**

It was discussed that the EHPU is not well-known across different leagues by the players and this is a possible role for the EHLB.

#### **d) Education compensation**

The level of education compensation was highlighted as an issue for clubs by Hitz; Glaser confirmed that any change would require a Congress decision.

**Next steps:** It was agreed that there would need to be a follow-up with the EHPU to see where there may be possibilities for working together.

## 5. Other business

In order to comply with EHF requirements for the SMART project finances, it was agreed that Larsson would open a bank account and will use the address of the Swedish league for these purposes.

## 6. Next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting will take place 9 March 2020 and that the possibility of additional informal meetings via video conferencing or at the EHF EURO 2020 in January would be examined.

## 7. Closing

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

For the minutes: JJ Rowland

Vienna, 11 October 2019

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