
MINUTES TO THE 9TH MEETING OF THE EHF NATIONS COMMITTEE MEN

Date: Monday, 14 October 2024

Time: 11:00 – 16:30

Venue: Renaissance Wien Hotel

Participants NCM:

Jari Henttonen	Vice Chair FIN
M. S. Christensen	Member DEN
Mark Schober	Member GER
Fintan Lyons	Member IRL

Participants EHF:

Markus Glaser	Chief Sports Officer
Maximillian Riede	YAC Competitions
Marsha Brown	Corporate Liaison

Excused: Bertrand Gille Member | FRA

Resigned: Ingo Meckes Chair | SUI

1. Welcome & Introduction

1.1. NCM Meeting 04/2024 – Minutes and Follow-Up

In the light of the departure of former Chair Ingo Meckes, Vice Chair Jari Henttonen welcomed the participants to the meeting. The minutes are adopted without additional comment or question thereto.

1.2. Common Meeting / Follow-Up

Men's Competitions Conference (April 2025) & Women's Competitions Conference (May 2025): the NCW agreed that all stakeholders should be represented at both events; with the organisational aspects to begin in early January, the group discussed the differences between men's and women's handball speaking of the clubs, number of professional players, salaries, ticket sales, and other areas. It was clear that more data was needed for analysis as a full picture of the current situation within the European National Federations is not available but are necessary for efficient deliberations to highlight the areas that are primed for development. The NCW acknowledged the reasoning behind the separation of events.

International Calendar: the publication of the 2026/2027 competitions calendar – currently in draft form, is planned for December following approval by the Executive Committee. However, prior to finalisation, input from the will be sought from the stakeholders. It was underlined that the competition periods will not be changed following publication.

National Team Week: returning to the suggestion of the EHF to one of the men's NTW from the spring to the autumn as described in the common meeting, Member Schober spoke of the data concerning injuries of DHB players, which will be sent to CSO Glaser for information as it was questioned if a direct correlation could be drawn from the placements of the NTW. However, the NCM has differing positions on the possibility of moving the M-NTW from Spring to Autumn because it was underlined that the placement currently concerns the 2026 calendar only.

2. Men's National Team Competitions

2.1. 2024 Younger Age Category Events – Review

Taking reference to the adaptation of the YAC playing system to be implemented of 2025/2026, the challenge of dealing with the input/feedback, when considering the timing of the bidding (current) awarding process (December), was mentioned. Acknowledging that the YAC playing system has adapted in recent years, the new adaptation is deemed satisfactory by most Member Federations.

Moving on to the EHF EUROs, the matter of business cases that can bring financial benefit to the organising federation(s) remains an issue for the National Federations when considering whether to bid for an event. From the EHF standpoint, there is the element of facilitating the process and not wanting to stifle development from one event to another.

Wheelchair Handball: since the chair sports community is small, the NCM is not in favour of a strategic discussion at this juncture.

2.2. Beach Handball

Bearing in mind the information delivered at the common meeting, the complexity of the topic was reiterated. As beach handball will not be part of the next Olympic Cycles (2028 USA, and optionally as well not in 2032 AUS) and that the sport-political support has obviously receded as at the showcase in Creteil, the desired result was not attained in terms of interest from spectators and IOC representatives. At the planned EHF Beach Handball Summit in January 2025, strategic questions are to be discussed; the NCM agreed that a new plan is needed. Moreover, it is emphasised that indoor handball representatives must also be part of the discussion.

2.3. EHF EURO Events 2024 – 2028

2.3.1. EHF EURO Qualifiers 2026 DNS | Status Update

The Qualifiers will commence in November and from an organisational and technical standpoint, preparations are ongoing, and they are currently no major topics to be discussed. It was reiterated that matches with geopolitical challenges are being organised with care.

2.3.2. EHF EUROS 2026 & Beyond | Information Exchange

EHF EURO 2026 AHS | Following changes in the leadership structure within the Turkish Handball Federation, a meeting to be held in Vienna has been scheduled. Also, there have been many contacts and activities (inspections and such) with the organisers of the women's event.

EHF EURO 2026 DNS | many meetings have taken place at both the organisational and political level.

EHF EURO 2026 EPS | the initial steps are being taken.

EHF EURO 2030 & 2032 | one bid was received for the women's 2030 event; it was deemed unsuitable by the Executive Committee (see Minutes^o176); other bids submitted have been approved and the presentation and subsequent awarding can move forward in December.

2.4. Other Events & IHF Activities

IHF MU17/WU16 World Championships: the NCM reiterated the complete lack of support for the additional competitions planned in 2025 (MU17) and in 2026 (WU16).

Intercontinental Championships: the NCM took note of the information provided at the common meeting.

3. Miscellaneous

3.1. EHF EURO Qualifiers Phase 1 | General Development in the Future | Status Update

In reference to the EHF EURO 2028, Phase 1 of the qualifiers will be in tournament format in January with four teams. It is acknowledged that the qualifiers must have thirty-two teams for efficiency, and there is only one period with four teams. The tournament format is still preferable to some NFs. The issue with the women's event remains the fewer number of participants.

3.2. Emerging Nations Round Table

3.2.1. 2024 Status update

Member Lyons provided a Best Practice example to the ongoing developments within Irish handball following the rebranding from IOHA to OHI bringing a unification of the descriptor with other sports such as basketball and volleyball. The current objective is to continue to increase the yearly funding; the target amount being EUR 250k yearly. The communication strategy (social media) has been a success with visibility significantly improved among young people, this included an email campaign targeting schools with the 37% open rate. Further cooperation includes Sport Ireland that has supported Europe-wide initiatives such as the EWOS and Women in Sport movements.

OHI, with support, has given focus to confidence building measures, improved governance, and internal operations, as well as fostering relations that has led to accessing funding from Sport Northern Ireland (UK funding). In terms of 'Grassroots' measures, OHI has concentrated resources in education facilities that has seen 125 primary, and fifteen secondary schools register for activities. OHI also took a delegation to Partille, and this set to continue. Moreover, three universities in major cities continue to be involved, which has also seen the establishment of a new club in Cork. The intervarsity competition with Scottish Universities also run.

At the organisational level, there has been change including the appointment of interim CEO to oversee the professionalisation of the OHI office plus the EHF Master Plan application. There are three new board members, and other newly installed professionals will cover the areas of marketing as well as finance and governance. The integration has been seamless, and the internal transitions are ongoing. At the local level, a sports hall in North Dublin will be refurbished to accommodate handball through a 15-year licencing agreement, and efforts are being made to support new clubs in areas where handball is strong in the local schools. Moreover, to engage adult members, OHI is promoting a 5-a-side game.

To retain the momentum, OHI is also actively collaborating with clubs with the view of developing league and club competitions. In closing, OHI continues to develop long-term and sustainable plans targeting high-level handball, players education (academy system), as well as exposure to top level competitive games.

3.2.2. 2025 Deliberations & Focus

Member Lyons requested more support in the form of a dedicated EHF staff member to act as 'Emerging Nations Coordinator' specifically, a contact point as well as to coordinate Emerging Nations topics. Furthermore, with the next session of the Emerging Nations Round Table in June 2025, there is a need to see the progression of the lower-ranked nations engaging with the Master Plan.

3.3. Other

As a final remark, Member Schober reiterated the appointment of Ingo Meckes within the DHB Family, and his consequential exit from the NCM. For the remainder of the period, the NCM nominated Henttonen, in addition of Chairing the NCM meetings, to also represent the NCM in the Nations Board following the resignation of Meckes.

With no additional points to be raised, Henttonen closed the meeting.

For the minutes: M Brown