

MINUTES TO THE COMMON MEETING OF THE EHF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Date | Time: Monday, 8 April 2024 | 11:00 – 13:30
Tuesday, 9 April 2024 | 08:30 – 10:30

Venue: Renaissance Wien Hotel | Strassburg I & II

Participants: European Handball League Board
Nations Committee Men
Nations Committee Women
Professional Handball Board
Women's Handball Board
European Handball Federation

The Common Meeting of the Stakeholder Groups took place over two days; prior to the meetings the identical agenda was made available to all members present. Therefore, the information and feedback from both sessions has been amalgamated into the record.

1. Welcome and Introduction

President Wiederer welcomed the participants to the spring session of the stakeholder meetings. The original date in mid-March was postponed due to the Easter period as well as many overlapping activities; it was also noted that some stakeholders were excused due to illness and other business commitments. Wiederer also took a moment to welcome Trine Nielsen, a WFCH representative acting substitute for Radmila Petrovic, who resigned her post. The EHF was represented by those running the daily business, thus indicating much information to be exchanged.

Reiterating the purpose of the common meetings it was stated that the 14th Conference for Secretaries General in Copenhagen was a sound basis for the coming discussion process, and Wiederer extended his gratitude to the experienced host, Danish Handball Federation, as well as the colleagues of the office for the organisation and execution. It was underlined that such conferences were not only about the decision-making, but also about the processes and the outcomes thereof; to this end, the upcoming Ordinary EHF Congress in December was mentioned. Taking reference to the agenda, he reminded the stakeholders that the common meeting was an information session where all topics could be discussed further during the individual meetings in the sessions afterwards.

2. EHF Information

2.1. EHF Executive Committee | 12/2023 & 01/2024

Secretary General Martin Hausleitner opened the report by noting that the meetings held in December 2023 and January 2024, naturally, with a full agenda both times, aided in the finalisation of the EHF EURO organisational aspects, and dealt with YAC definitions, legal matters (which highlighted integrity topics), regulations including those on clothing issued by the IHF. Reports were also given on ongoing projects such as sustainability, RYT, and various other meetings. It was in January that the final decision was taken on the RUS/BLR situation, and the national teams were denied entry to the EHF EURO 2026 Qualifiers. The minutes were made available to the Stakeholders prior to the meeting.

2.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

The current business year is proceeding, and the club competitions are in the final phases in terms organisation; all four of the Final4 venues are known. Currently, a few topics are at the forefront of activities, these are the partner relations with Infront, promotional measures and activities such as the 'Dare to Rise' campaign, as well as the 'Full Venue' initiative. In these areas, EHF continues to work in close collaboration with its stakeholders. Since the last sessions, the EHF Advisory Board has met in Mallorca and Vienna reporting on the season delivered. Through the newly set up sale unit, new partnerships have been concluded despite the challenges faced since the marketing rights were returned from Infront to EHF. Other topics with key EHF involvement will follow through the agenda, specifically AP 3.3.

2.3. Sustainability Board

The Sustainability Board has been established and the members have been chosen from the handball as well as from the wider sustainability community. These experts will deliver recommendations in the three key ESG areas (environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and sustainable governance). On behalf of the Executive Committee, Franjo Bobinac was selected to Chair the board. The first official report will be delivered, and documentation to be distributed to the National Federations will also be presented for approval at the EXEC meeting in April. Soon, there will be an employee within the EHF office who will be tasked with this area of responsibility. As of 2025, the EHF will be working on the task to make financial reports in accordance with the external regulatory framework. Within the framework of the Conference for Secretaries General in Denmark, it became clear through discussions that the many national federations are already working on, and making adaptations to, sustainability concepts.

2.4. Masterplan | Status Update

The EHF Masterplan is the strategic development project in Europe where the objective is to assist national federations reach their full potential. Delivering information, Alenka Cuderman spoke of the 15 Masterplan projects currently in progress, four of which have been extended for a second year. New applications have been received from POR, ISR, and CYP. The Masterplan portfolio is now

valued at EUR 1.2 million. In a breakdown of how this financial commitment is being used, 40% of the funding is supporting the employment of staff within the National Federations, 39% supports the development of kindergarten, mini, and youth handball, 4% is invested in marketing and promotion, and 17% is linked to coaching and teaching materials.

It was mentioned that following the Emerging Nations Round Table, there was a brief surge in Masterplan interest from the National Federations, but difficulties in contacting some federation representatives have halted further action. The EHF will continue in its endeavours for direct contact to take the next steps to reach a desired development outcome.

2.5. European Handball House

The construction reached another target in early March as the topping out (placing the roof on the building) was completed. A small celebration was held, where the EHF office staff members were invited to the new location for a limited tour to the construction site where they had a chance to meet the contractors and construction workers. Within the foreseen timeline, the internal construction has now begun. Giving a brief overview of the key dates i.e. handover of keys, soft opening in December 2024, etc. Hausleitner also mentioned that the spring 2025 Stakeholder sessions would be held in the new building. At the administrative level, decisions on interior aspects are currently being taken, and the EHF Services & Infrastructure GmbH has already delivered its reports to the Finance Delegation.

2.6. 14th Conference for Secretaries General

In late March, together in cooperation with the Danish Handball Federation, the 14th EHF Conference for Secretaries General was held in Copenhagen. Among the 100 plus attendees, there were over 20 new federation representatives in attendance. A variety of topics were on the agenda including but not limited to the Younger Age Category events, Sustainability, SGS Education, Rinck Convention, Grassroots Charter, as well as the EHF EURO Qualifiers Workshop. The CfSG platform provided a good environment for the current needs of the Member Federations to be heard. For the national federations, in respect to the YAC and EURO events, the following three topics were deemed as emergent: daily rates, playing kits, and image & personality rights, thus they are to be discussed over the 2-day stakeholder session. A report was also given on the 'Respect Your Talent' App; the product is now available on iOS and Android via the usual app stores.

3. Competitions Information

3.1. EHF EURO Events

3.1.1. Men's EHF EURO 2024 GER | Review

Opening the report, the event was described as a "masterpiece", President Wiederer not only wanted to praise the OC, but also the many persons involved on the level of the EHF and the DHB, he also reiterated that this was beyond an excellent opportunity for handball to have a showcase event to present what is possible. Excellent feedback was received from the sport and media world, but also

from other continents as well. Overall, people realised that the EHF is following programmes to strengthen the sport on both the national team and club team level. Conversely, how much is possible on other continents is a topic that may be raised in the next few months. The EHF EURO 2024 GER will be reported by the European representatives at the IHF Council meeting and cooperation be offered to the other continents.

Secretary General Hausleitner presented the highlight figures, and placed emphasis on the fact that the event broke all records across all the EHF social media platforms. The TV figures were “outstanding”, and the EHF EURO even broke into new markets – AUT, FAR, GEO, and GRE. Among the 1 million onsite spectators, there were more international spectators than ever before. Turning to the side events, during the Grassroots Convention representatives from other team sports i.e. UEFA, FIBA, etc., joined in the discussions on the initiation of permanent growth. The Leadership Summit saw more than 150 participants attend; this creation has proven to be a great networking tool for the organisation. Another element of success was the cooperation and contribution of the national teams who created visibility; it is hoped that this event will be the catalyst that brings more players to the sport.

On behalf of the DHB, Mark Schober (NB Chairman) extended his thanks to the EHF for the positive cooperation, especially onsite, as it was a pleasure to work together. The success of the EHF EURO is a joint success, and looking to the future, it is a step in the right direction that the EHF takes over the organisation of more event elements. Morten Stig Christensen, NCM/NB Member, underlined that it was truly a milestone for the sport.

Wiederer remarked that having been in every venue to watch all of the groups in action, it was like travelling from one highlight to the next – he used the example of visiting Mannheim to watch a match, both with zero points, but playing with heart in front of 13.000 spectators; this was an education for the spectators; they do get value for money. Looking to the future, he emphasised that the EHF must work more with the National Federations in the Qualifiers, so that there can be many exciting and interesting events.

3.1.2. Women’s EHF EURO 2024 AHS | Status Update

Following the conclusion of the qualifiers, the final participants are known. The Final Tournament draw will be carried out on 18 April in Vienna. The various framework events and the Final weekend programme were reiterated i.e. Excellence Award, inauguration of the new House of Handball. With the next Women’s Handball Conference and the 1st General Assembly of the Women’s European Leagues, lends to the commitment to develop women’s handball and drive it forward on the fringes of the EURO.

Concerning the development of the teams, especially considering the match results with large goal differences (though expected), the next editions of the women’s EHF EUROs shall be taken as an opportunity for national teams to improve their quality. Matches with top teams should be viewed as

a motivation for the National Federations to invest more in their teams. Further discussion about the event will take place in the Nations Board.

3.1.3. Men's/Women's EHF EUROs 2026 & Beyond | General Information

EHF EURO 2026 DSN | GER officially passed the ball to DSN; the work continues, and to the organisation, a project management structure has been installed. The Final set-up has been defined. The initial ticketing offer will be released in the summer in Sweden, to be followed later, and after the 2025 World Championship by Denmark and Norway.

EHF EURO 2026 PRCST | the applications were good, but no application met all the requirements. Therefore, the EHF opted for compromise and, following numerous discussions, combined the event with all five applicants. The complex situation was acknowledged, but with strong cooperation the EURO will still be an excellent tournament. A Preliminary Round will be held in all five countries, the Main Round is based in Poland and Romania, and the Final weekend will be hosted by Poland. All nations have the full support of their governments. The first workshop for the event is planned for the end of April. A 'Phase 1' and 'Phase 2' will be offered for this edition of the EURO Qualifiers; to this end, a respective seeding of the teams is necessary. To enable a workable system, the EHF EURO Cup will be extended to allow for more teams five plus three.

EHF EURO 2028 EPS | informal talks have commenced; a meeting in Madrid is envisaged to discuss the possible use of a football stadium to present the event. To date, the venues selected are excellent.

EHF EURO 2028 DNS | due to several other events prior to the EURO in 2028, no update can be given.

EHF EURO 2030/2032 | the bid book was released in 2023, since then 15 letters of intent have been received. Formal applications are to be submitted by 1 June 2024. At the Conference for Secretaries General in Denmark in March, the registered National Federations were encouraged to submit a bid, as the EHF will evaluate all bids, even those that do not fulfil all the criteria. The successful bids are to be confirmed at the meeting of the Executive Committee in September, and the awarding of the events is scheduled for 14 December 2024.

3.2. Younger Age Category Events

3.2.1. Summer 2024 Events | Organisation

The overview of the 2024 events was presented:

Event	Period	Location
W16 EHF European Open 2024	1 –5 July 2024	Gothenburg, SWE
M20 EHF EURO 2024	10 –21 July 2024	Celje, SLO
M20 EHF Championship 2024	13 –21 July 2024	Pristina, KOS
M18 EHF EURO 2024	7 –18 August 2024	Podgorica, MNE
M18 EHF Championship I 2024	12 –18 August 2024	Humenné, SVK
M18 EHF Championship II 2024	12 –18 August 2024	Pristina, KOS

There will be full TV production for both EURO events. The site visits are currently in taking place, the final preparations for all events will follow. The registration process for the European Open is ongoing, to date there are 19 participating teams. At the 2024 EO, it will be the final time when teams can qualify directly from this event to the EYOF. Events contracts are to be signed in due course and the organisation is proceeding according to schedule. Closing the agenda point, Wiederer emphasised the importance for National Federations registering their teams to the YAC events in order to shape the national team players for the future.

3.2.2. YAC Events | Developments

2024 Developments

- **Player Shirts** | placing the name above the number no longer required, leaving a space for potential sponsors; this is only valid for the YAC Championships. This amendment to the regulation does not apply to the YAC EURO events as it is obligatory to have the surname of the player above the number.
- **Player Replacement** | the delegation is increased to 23 (+2 players); 2 players per round can be replaced. This amendment is only valid for the YAC EURO events and is not applicable to the YAC Championships.
- **Anti-Doping** | AD education mandatory for each participant; course(s) to be completed prior to the event by using the WADA tools.

2025 Developments

- **Daily Rate Increase** | intended to encourage more Federations to apply; effectually, it is a response to changes to the regulations and requirements, as well as external factors.
- Proposed is 170 EUR Per Person, Per Day up from EUR 130
- Proposed is 130 EUR Per Person, Per Day up from EUR 100

3.2.3. YAC Events | Future

Attila Heim, Head of National Teams, presented the timeline for application and awarding processes for future events. As soon as there is a decision on the daily rate, the bidding process will begin as it is the intention to award the events (2026 and beyond) two years in advance.

3.3. Club Competitions | Status Update

2023/24 Season | CSO Glaser presented an overview of the men's and women's European club competitions; with everything moving in accordance with the schedule and all matches played without major issues for both the men's and women's events. As the competitions are currently on hiatus due to the OG FRA Qualifications, the scheduled competition programme will resume at the end of April resp. beginning of May.

Glaser also gave a rundown of the key dates that will take the events to the end of the season. The draw event for the Women's EHF Finals 2024 took place in Graz at the end of March; the draw for

the Men’s EHF Finals 2024 is scheduled for 3 May following the conclusion of the quarter-final phase. This will be followed by the combined joint, and live televised, event for the draws of the Women’s EHF Final4 2024 and the TruckScout24 EHF Final4 2024 in Budapest on 7 May.

The venues were hailed: Graz - hosting the women’s Final for the second time, Hamburg - hosting for the first time as a neutral venue, Budapest – hosting for the 10th consecutive time, and Cologne – hosting the top event for the 15th time. With all events on neutral grounds, in well-known arenas, and ticket sales are moving well (in relation to the status) for all events.

Full Venue Initiative | Glaser provided an update on the project that was introduced at the beginning of the season. The figures presented focused on the clubs of the 2023/24 M/WCL season; the in-depth spectator analysis looked at the average attendance and the average fulfilment rate.

	Machineseeker EHF Champions League	EHF Champions League Women
Total Attendance	459.993	279.776
Average Attendance	4.107	2.498
Average Fulfilment Rate	72%	61%

The EHF continue to explore the matter in detail considering that the initiative is being dealt with on several levels – the Competitions Commission, the Stakeholders, the EHF, EHF, the EHF Club Boards. Respecting the fact that the clubs have completely different venue situations, the previous dialogue about the minimum capacity in venues has changed significantly. The big difference between the men’s and women’s results were highlighted. The admission of clubs into the leagues is made more complex when looking at the available venues, which is also a decisive factor depending on which club makes it to the top of the national league. Naturally, this remains an ongoing topic.

2024/25 Season | the countdown to the club competitions 2024/25 season starts with the meeting of the EHF Executive Committee on 19 April; here the members will decide on various motions, if accepted will result in amendments to the season regulations. The motions are reproduced in title only as a full explanation was presented to the Stakeholders present. The motions presented by the Competitions Commission are in addition to the EXEC confirmation of the Mandatory VIP Box acquisition by participating clubs at final events as of 2024.

Motion 1	Colours of dresses home team vs away team
Motion 2	Mandatory match recording in MEC and MEL/WEL qualification
Motion 3	Late entries of players who played outside of Europe
Motion 4	Limit of four teams per country in MEL
Motion 5	Teams from lower ranked federations must play MEL qualification, no automatic entry to the group phase.

Current Competition Topics (outside of the motions)

- Image & Personality Rights | further discussion needed.
- EUR 1 Ticket | to be rescinded.
- Throw-Off Times Men’s CL/EHL | a matter of preferences - Clubs vs Broadcasters. At this time, nothing major will change and the throw-off times remain unchanged. Further discussion is needed.
- Minimum requirements/guaranteed place | acceptable when all requirements are fulfilled.
- Playing System in the Future | no changes foreseen until after the completion of the 2025/26 season. The discussion process that could lead to possible changes in the 2026/27 season must commence shortly.
- Final4 Event Venues |

Event	Duration	Negotiation
Cologne MCL	2025, 2026	Negotiation ongoing; envisioned until 2029
Budapest WCL	2024, 2025, 2026	Negotiation ongoing
MEL & WEL	-	Neutral location sought; initial contacts will commence following the conclusion of the 2024 events in Graz and Hamburg.

3.4. Beach Handball

CSO Glaser presented the beach handball status update. The next event, the ebt Finals, will take place in France for the first time and in the city of Lacanau; this event starts in June. The sport returns to Varna, Bulgaria for the YAC 16 BH EURO and the senior championships in July. The final event will be the Champions Cup, which returns to Porto Santo, Portugal. The responsables are happy to return to known and competent venues, where the organisation is proceeding accordingly and without issue. Looking ahead, the bidding process for the 2025 BH EUROs is ongoing.

At the international level, issues around the matter of player release are constraining; therefore, a meeting with the IHF will be coordinated. The EHF approach will endeavour to strengthen the alignment with the international federation considering the breadth of IHF beach handball activities.

To the IHF BH Olympic Games showcase event, the preparations are ongoing and the FFHB invested highly in this venture. Despite this, having failed to bring BH into the Olympic family, has to be dealt with accordingly. This is a matter affecting the majority of stakeholders considering the number of resources poured into this number one objective. Looking to the (potential) consequences i.e. dropout rate of players/teams, the damage to the sport due to lack of progression seen with a reduced interest from the wider sporting community such as local and national government, sponsors/partnerships, media, etc.

This matter is to be returned to the IHF Council meeting where the representatives will ask for a clear initiative.

3.5. Other Competition Topics

Integrity & Crisis Management | EHF President Wiederer addresses the stakeholders to go over the latest information. At this time, there is no outcome available; the EHF still awaits the final decision from the investigative services on whether to close or move forward with the cases. To this end, there is no additional report. Wiederer emphasised that there was no new on ‘old’ cases and, currently, other accusations are being dealt with.

Thus, at the moment, the EHF is not challenged; information on previous cases needed additional activity from the side of the EHF, here, Wiederer briefly referenced the ‘Tag-Team’ questioning from TV2 DEN during the closing press conference of the EHF EURO 2024 in Cologne, which obviously were answered to the satisfaction of the media representatives. Upon question, it is confirmed that Sportradar continues with its observations and reporting each month as per the partnership agreement, and to date no new issues have arisen.

Technical Services | the EHF representatives opened the topic of the issues faced with the implementation and use of instant video replay (VR) and other technical game elements. In the current season, the EHF has authorised the use of the VR-tablet solution, where no monitor is needed and can be used independently by the referees, in all matches of the men’s and women’s Champions League. The goal light and goal line technologies are working well and without issue at the events. The new game technologies show how sport is changing, nonetheless, human error on and off the court remains, and all VR cases garner much interest. The EHF assumes the responsibility of reducing such errors.

The VOGO VR systems, as well as the other technical services, are working ok and the handling of the software resulted in no major issue. However, it is questioned whether the referees are using the tools or not; after the quarter-finals stage, an evaluation of the technology was undertaken. As a result, it was known that the VR system took much work in terms of training but resulted in a good execution. Additionally, the electronic buzzer was also introduced to the European League competitions; with this step, difficulties were experienced (i.e. import to some countries). Despite this, the feedback from the users is positive. Conversely, VR technical services, in the full version, are implemented at the national team level. Here, the usage has resulted in the production of training videos and other materials and was deemed a good use of resources. Nonetheless, a balance between the cost of the technical services provided and the responsibilities of the EHF must be found.

In response to a question about the Coaches’ Challenge, it was noted that the EHF considered all feedback and input received, and it was ultimately determined that this was a topic not to be pushed forward for the time being. It was underlined that the Coaches’ Challenge was not to be withdrawn, however, at this time, it will not be prioritised by the EHF in favour of the implementation and function VR and Electronic Buzzer services. It is imperative that the VR system works flawlessly as it is still connected to the Coaches’ Challenge.

IHF New Regulations/Rules | The stakeholders mentioned that some changes e.g. clothing regulations, distributed to the National Federations via the IHF Office were valid with immediate effect. It was underlined that the International Handball Federation has the authority to amend the rules and regulations as it sees fits as long as it does not dramatically alter the game. The latest rule modifications were published on 1 March and are basically valid as of 1 July; some amendments are applicable to referees, despite it being received by the NFs.

There is a tendency to apply basic rules that are part of the rules and regulations, however, cannot be implemented at the professional level. Thus, some come with the clause that territories may adapt the rule. As the EHF is responsible for all qualifications to IHF events, the situation is complex as it pertains to what can and cannot be done. Therefore, despite the outcome of the IHF working group dealing with the simplification of rules in the future, the EHF will analyse the situation in order to take the next appropriate steps. Further clarification will be sought for.

IHF Resin-Free Ball | the European handball community takes notes of the workshop that took place at the beginning of April and of the ongoing initiative. Though the resin-free ball remains undesired at the professional level, some stakeholders are open to an exploration of implementation only at the handball grassroots level.

4. Calendar/Meetings

4.1. Competitions Calendar

With the international calendar for the 2024/2025 season already approved and distributed in 2023, EHF CSO Markus Glaser gave focus to the 2025/2026 season; the draft calendar was distributed in January along with a request for feedback, which was subsequently implemented. The main deviation from the standard dates sees the women's European Cup season restart one week earlier. Briefly referencing the 2026/2027 competition season, Glaser stated that he foresees a major challenge as well as the choice whether to deal with the element of the playing system or the international calendar as the priority as this was the complexity underlining any potential changes. Nonetheless, he remained at the disposal of the stakeholders for any questions they had.

4.2. EHF Events 2024

Summarising the information provided during the meeting across the various agenda points, the main administrative events were reiterated in order commencement:

- 14th EHF Conference for Secretaries Generals
- Heads of Refereeing Convention
- 1st General Assembly of the Women's European Handball Leagues
- 17th EHF Conference of Presidents & 16th Extraordinary EHF Congress
- 2nd EHF Excellence Awards & Inauguration of the European Handball House.

Looking to the future, the 17th Ordinary EHF Congress is planned for September 2025; the country and venue are yet to be defined.

5. International Handball Federation (IHF) Matters

5.1. XXXIX IHF Ordinary Congress 11/2023 | Follow-Up

The minutes of the meeting were distributed by the IHF; Wiederer added that it seemed the online event limited the possibility of the discussion process. Apart from the regulations, there were no debateable topics. However, the contact with the IHF Sports Director regarding the non-admission of beach handball has to be noted.

5.2. Preview IHF Congress 2025

No further information was provided prior to the meeting of the stakeholders; thus, it stands that the next IHF Congress will be an 'in-person' event scheduled to take place in Egypt.

6. Miscellaneous

Given the recent societal changes, the question of transgender athletes was raised to the essence of how it is currently handled by the IHF. It was mentioned that the topic had been previously registered before and contact had been made with the TSF and the IHF; to date no further information has been forthcoming. At the request of the stakeholders, the topic will be raised by the European representatives at the next opportunity.

With the agenda complete, EHF President Wiederer thanked the members of the four stakeholder groups (Federations, Clubs, Leagues, and Players) for their presence and contribution to the topics.