
MINUTES TO THE COMMON MEETING OF THE EHF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Date | Time: Monday, 14 October 2024 | 11:00 – 13:30
Tuesday, 15 October 2024 | 08:30 – 10:30

Venue: Renaissance Wien Hotel | Paris

Participants: Men's European Handball League Board
Women's 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, and, 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

Opening the common meeting of the stakeholder groups, President Wiederer gave a special welcome to the members of the newly inaugurated Women's European Handball League Board (WEHLB) and the Women's Handball Board. He reiterated that the common meeting is a session where general questions are foreseen, and the information imparted is taken to the individual session for discussion.

2. EHF Information

**Following the conclusion of AP2 on 15.10.24, President Wiederer left the meeting; Secretary General Hausleitner concluded the remainder of the common meeting.*

2.1. EHF Executive Committee | 04/06/09/2024

Wiederer opened the briefing of the Executive Committee activities that spanned three meetings in the period since the last common meeting. The topics covered, described as snapshots, have also been referenced across the common and individual agendas as they constitute the normal business and, as the EXEC follows the meetings of the stakeholders, it also includes internal coordination with other boards and committees prior to the decision-making process.

Snapshot – Activities | the business reports of the various internal boards and committees have been submitted and decisions taken where necessary; the event organisation report is constantly updated. The EHF house topic and the transition has been a key topic and is on the agenda.

Snapshot - Agenda | around legal management, comprehensive reports are delivered to the Executive; it is underlined that the bodies act independently and only the administration of the decisions is managed by the office. The Technical Commissions (CC, MC, BC) continue to oversee their areas of responsibility as expected. Financial controls both internal (EHF & EHF SI – Comptrollers, EHF– Comptrollers Council), and external (Auditor) continue to uphold transparency and financial integrity.

Snapshot - Information | the EHF held a meeting with the new leadership of the EOC to ensure the interests of European handball are represented. Also, within the organisation, a cooperation with ‘Sports Lab’ a Scottish company has been forged to safeguard the quality of products in EHF competitions. The EHF Quality Programme will see only verified products are used in the future. Information on geographical issues as well as the actions (to be) taken by the EHF was also imparted, and the international calendar remains a recurring topic.

Snapshot - Competitions | not only via the events report, but also via the information coming from stakeholders, the EXEC dealt with the matters of EURO events 2024, 2026 & beyond, YAC Development, NTC Regulations, as well as the matters around the current season 2024/2025. The EXEC confirmed the organisation of the men’s and women’ competitions conference (April/May); the stakeholder will be asked for their input during the preparatory phase.

2.2. EHF Marketing GmbH

The 2023/2024 business year has been successfully completed. The EHF was able to overcome the pressing issues with Infront and managed to fulfil the agreement with the EHF and the Clubs making the payments in accordance with the regulations. This was possible due to the having marketing rights reverting to the marketing arm. The EHF also promoted stability of the competitions by extending the agreement with the cities of Graz (WEL) and Hamburg (MEL), Budapest (WCL) and Cologne (MCL) for the Final4 competitions. In line with standard procedures, the financial examinations have been finalised; the accounting will be presented at the General Assembly on 13 December in Vienna. Looking to the 2024/2025 budget, the parameters have been met, however the final adaptation will also take place at the EHF GA.

Despite the result of 2023/2024, the work continues to retain the position of the competitions in certain markets, as positioning in other markets is being explored. Furthermore, EHF via the Infront partnership is also working to deliver product to public access channels but understanding that most sports are moving over to digital presentations which has an impact on the overall market situation.

2.3. Sustainability Board

Regular meetings continue as the topics that encompass the action plan are being dealt with. Anna Lamprecht, who will assume tasks and responsibilities in the areas of sustainability and women’s handball, was introduced to the stakeholders. The vision and mission of the Board were published on the homepage together with the strategy. The Sustainability Board will be working with future

event organisers to ensure that sustainable elements are featured at EHF events. In the period between the meetings, the Sustainability Board supports their activities with regular conference calls; the reports from the board are delivered by Chair Bobinac at the Executive Committee.

In other areas, the EHF continues to bring balance to the sport-political systems with the introduction of the Women's European Handball League Board and bringing the Women's Handball Conference back to the EURO framework in December. Additionally, the new EHF Office has received 'Gold' status through the 'Klimaaktiv' programme, and in view of the EHF EUROs in 2030/2032, the EHF is asking future organisers for a sustainability concept and to follow guidelines to create a responsible future.

2.4. Masterplan | Status Update

Currently, there are twenty projects running and a major part of the cooperation is grassroots projects and the strengthening of internal structures. Several countries are doing well with the development activities i.e. CRO has activated a new age category, and POR also has similar projects. The SCO initiative has welcomed eight hundred new players, and GEO has been assisted in the field of marketing presentation and event organisation. The ISR cooperation focuses on school and women's handball.

The EHF intends to utilise the Emerging Nations Round Table in Budapest in June to motivate the smaller federations to be in contact to the office, so that assistance can be provided to help grow handball within these Federations; moreover, the Women's Handball Board is engaging with the Masterplan on the matter of reducing drop-out rates. The Grassroots Charter, which is to be formally presented at the Conference of Presidents, incorporates four levels (Foundation to Level III), and aims not only to engage with the Masterplan, but also the Circle of a Handball Life; it is intended that the tools provided support the Federations when approaching their local/national authorities for funding.

The EHF underlined that in the use of Federation funds it remains an investor that targets the longevity of the sport through its development projects and the monetary investments made in the National Federations.

2.5. European Handball House

By the end of October, the EHF will receive the keys to the office; with the construction completed on time and within budget, the finalisation of the internal infrastructure is scheduled over the next six weeks, this includes branding and signage. The new office boasts nine meeting rooms that will accommodate all EHF meetings as of 2025; 'The Arena', the new conference room is adaptable for large meetings, and will host the next edition of the RYT Camp. The EHF will also enter into local cooperation agreements in the new area with the local hotels and restaurants.

3. Competitions Information

3.1. EHF EURO Events

3.1.1. Women's EHF EURO 2024 AHS | Status Update

With the organisation of the event in the final stages, newcomers TUR and FAR will be among the 24 teams. To the matter of ticketing, the situation in HUN/SUI is good; additional promotional efforts are being undertaken in AUT. The EHF remains confident of an event with full arenas. The Final weekend is dense with various activities; the full programme will be a highlight creating much visibility.

3.1.2. Men's/Women's EHF EUROs 2026 & Beyond

EHF EURO 2026 DNS | in Sweden, the ticketing pre-sale has been activated; venues have been selected and the organisational framework has been defined by the three experienced organisers.

EHF EURO 2026 PRCTS | acknowledging the complex structure, it was reiterated that the basic idea of joint bids was to encourage smaller nations to organise preliminary rounds. The EHF EURO Cup Final 2026 will be played in September during the women's National Team Week.

EHF EURO 2028 EPS | initial organisational steps have been taken, and the event to have another stadium opener or closer preliminarily in Madrid.

EHF EURO 2028 NDS | no special report.

EHF EURO 2030/2032 | with the bids in hand, the events will be awarded in December on the fringes of the Final weekend.

3.2. Younger Age Category Events

3.2.1. Summer 2024 Events | Review

In total, six events took place. The Women's 16 European Open (SWE) was the final event to be hosted in that age category and will evolve in 2026 with the W18 EO. The EUROs M18 and M20 were conducted in Slovenia and Montenegro, respectively. Kosovo hosted the M18 Championship II and the M20 Championship; Slovenia hosted the M18 Championship I.

Turning to the recent adaptations to the YAC regulations, it was reiterated that the EHF solicited input and feedback prior to and following the conclusion of the M18 Championships; the application of the learnings to the issues led to a new (and approved) playing system for the YAC EURO; this system will be activated in 2025 with the women's events. Also, the ranking system was changed to allow for two EUROs and two World Championships to be taken into consideration; the four-year system will cover all age categories.

The 2024 EURO events saw the successful application of media and marketing rights (sold to Eurosport GER and Sport1 ESP) by the EHF which resulted in fourteen companies lending support to

the events and an approximate six million cumulative audience figures. This was the first full TV production of the YAC events paid for by the EHF; The M20 EURO was publicly broadcast in Spain; the figures for the M18 were not as impressive, despite several packages been sold and some games having over 100k viewers, as it ran parallel to the Olympic Games. In the future, and upon recommendation of the Competitions Commission, the YAC Championships secondary (away) rights will revert to the EHF; the primary (home) rights will remain with the organising Federation; this decision brings the Championships in alignment with the EUROS in this area.

3.2.2. YAC Events | 2025 & Beyond | Status Update & Schedule

The 2025 W17 & W19 EHF EUROS were awarded to the Handball Federation of Montenegro and both events will take place in Podgorica. The W17/19 Championships will be awarded following the conclusion of the qualifiers in November which will determine the teams playing the Championships. The bidding process for the 2026 M18 and M20 EHF EUROS is ongoing; following the approval of the bids, pre-inspections will be conducted. All documents are to be submitted to the December meeting of the Executive Committee for awarding. Beginning with 2025, the age category for the European Open will be adapted to W18 (2026) and M19 (2025), respectively.

3.2.3. IHF YAC MU17 2025 & WU16 2026

See AP 3.6.1.

3.3. Club Competitions | Status Update

The current season is running smoothly and in accordance with the timetable. With the EURO Qualifiers commencing shortly, the period of October and November will be busy. Solutions have been implemented for the matches of the ISR team.

Other competition topics are treated under AP 3.6.

3.4. Beach Handball Topics

The beach handball season ended last weekend following the successful execution of the Champions Cup in Porto Santo (POR). An overview of the events, from the ebt to the EUROS, were presented on screen.

The matter of the further development of the sport is a critical topic as beach handball was not part of the 2024 Olympic Games and will not be part of the next (and probably not even the over next) Olympic cycle. Despite the showcase event in Creteil, there remains a lack of interest by the IOC. Therefore, a reassessment on how to develop the sport a viable second handball channel is important. It is understood that the EHF is committed to the development of beach handball and is working in close cooperation with the Beach Handball Commission as to finding a new direction. Currently, there are two major ongoing discussions with the EOC; the first is with the view to the 2027 EU Games in Türkiye, here the challenge is the expectations of the EOC as it is the vision to have the EUG to serve as a qualification to the OG. The second discussion centres on the contact with the IHF to facilitate the definition of a new environment and a clear pathway to how BH nations can qualify

for the World Games in 2028; thus, a plan for the National Federations and their respective national teams is needed for them to be able to approach their local authorities.

All the topics mentioned will be treated at the Beach Handball Summit in January 2025; moreover, a grassroots concept is to be developed to safeguard the continuity of the sport taking YAC tournaments into consideration.

3.5. Refereeing

The EHF initiated the overhaul of the officiating system in 2019 and, after many meetings, the first restructure started before the pandemic; it was updated again in 2023. The pathway to professionalisation is still an ongoing matter. Briefly reiterating the starting position, it was a request from the Member Federations and the clubs not to have an elected person for nominations overseeing certain aspects of the officiating field that was the catalyst for change. Eventually, after much effort, the Congress decided to remove the position of CC Member Refereeing from the Statutes beginning with the next electoral period meaning that position will not be elected in September 2025.

In the past and understanding the sensitivity of the working field, criticism was aimed at the referees; since the adaptations increasing the professionalisation of the system, such interventions have been significantly reduced. However, with a stabilised and normal rundown of competitions, more focus must be placed on the technical field, especially rule interpretations where the EHF was not involved in the process, as well as the necessary strengthening the officiating structure. Aiding with these tasks is the Technical Refereeing Committee (TRC), a non-elected group of external experts who serve an internal committee, and with the Observers who analyses game play, interpret rules, if necessary, as well as support the EHF with initial referee scouting and assessment, the internal department can continue to work the daily business including nominations. The current system of having all important referee activities organised on the professional level; progress is visible as the EHF gains new referees, observing the candidates. The next phase of the professionalisation will see an additional staff member (refereeing expert) who will be responsible for rule handling, interpretation, trends, etc.

On a side note, the stakeholders were informed that despite the IHF raising the age limit of international referees to 55 years and the decision being valid as of 1 July 2024, the EHF still saw referee couples 'retire' at the end of the season of their own accord and much younger. The EHF will continue to treat these situations on an individual basis.

3.6. Other Competition Topics

Olympic Games Report | the situation in Paris in the first week saw the matches take place in a small, but sold-out, venue; the schedule was very demanding for the teams and the timing of the matches (taking global time zones into account) it must be highlighted that the sport was at a disadvantage in terms of visibility in the first phase. Comparatively, in Lille, the environment was most positive in terms of fans/spectators, level and presentation of matches, TV presence, and full capacity halls, which made a good and lasting impression.

Nonetheless, there are concerns about the presence of handball at the OG level considering the current situation with indoor and beach handball, the handball community is invested in maintaining resp. improving handball's position at both the EOC and IOC level. Turning to the 2028 (USA-Los Angeles) and potentially 2032 (AUS – Brisbane), beach handball will not be part of the events. It is important that the perception of the sport must be optimised for the non-traditional handball countries.

Women's EHF EURO Qualifiers | resolving geographical issues for the upcoming Qualifiers will see the ISR matches take place in NOR, and the UKR matches will be hosted in LTU. Looking ahead to the EHF EURO 2026, at this time and due to the rundown of the competitions cycle, there will be no participation from RUS/BLR, upholding the status.

General Information

Competitions Calendar | at this time, the calendar for 2026/2027 is in draft form and not confirmed, and in line with the media and marketing agreement, no changes can be made prior to the end of 2025/2026 season.

National Team Weeks | the W-NTW in September will be used for the matches of the EHF EURO Cup Final. Concerning the M-NTW, following input, the idea to move one of the two spring weeks (preferably the March week) to autumn as it is felt that due to the density of the calendar in spring with two M-NTW weeks, EHF activities, as well as league activities, there is too much pressure on the players. It is thought that tacking on a week in the autumn could be advantageous. At this time, a final decision has not been taken and the explorations around the topic continue with a view to completion by winter meaning that calendar distribution falls within 18 months in advance. This potential change also allows more flexibility to the players and the leagues.

Men's IHF Intercontinental Championship | the EHF took note of the possibility for a competition as listed in the IHF Statutes, though it has not been activated previously. An event has been awarded to EGY and is scheduled in January 2025 prior to the Men's IHF World Handball Championship in CDN; however, it is thought that the event might not take place in 2025. Moreover, there is no official documentation to this end, and at the last meeting of the IHF Council, no further information was given.

MU17/WU16 World Championships | any sudden introduction of an additional World Championship clearly impacts the Continental Federations and their Member Federations.

To the MU17 competition in October 2025, the Continental Federations have been informed that the teams are not obliged to play qualifiers and can nominate freely which, in the case of Europe makes sense as a qualification of optional 40 nations for two places will not work. If the Continental Federations choose not to do so, the IHF will select the participating teams. There is no additional information to the WU16.

The first edition of the WU16 is in 2026; thus, consequently, the Continental Federations would have to organise a qualification for girls in the 15/16 age group. This in turn would imply that the national selection and preparation phase would have to be with players aged 14-15 years. Many Federations currently do not recruit such minors at this age to national teams.

A competition at this age category is planned to see better results among the Continental Federations. It is expected that the competitions will take place outside of Europe with two European participants.

4. Meetings

4.1. EHF Events 2024

4.2. EHF Meetings 2025

Summarising the information provided during the meeting across the various agenda points, the main administrative events that will bring 2024 to a close were reiterated in date order; these events include the 17th EHF Conference of Presidents, 16th Extraordinary EHF Congress, second edition of the EHF Excellence Awards, as well as the inauguration of the European Handball House. Other meetings that will have a significant impact on the development of the sport across many areas start in January 2025 with the Beach Handball Summit to be followed by the Competition Conferences for both men and women as well as the Emerging Nations Conference.

5. Various

5.1. Grassroots Charter

As a follow-up to the meeting earlier in the year, the EHF has moved forward with its objective to develop the Charter to support the National Federations and to ensure cooperation at the four levels, from the Foundation through Level III. The Charter is designed to connect with activities of the EHF Master Plan and the Circle of a Handball Life (3 – 85+ years); the Rinck Convention will also be considered. Following activation through tailored content supported by experts and courses, regular reporting will ensure that the activities are safeguarded. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the Charter will allow another pathway for the National Federations to approach the authorities for funding with the backing of the EHF.

5.2. Women's Handball Conference

The preparations for the meeting have entered the final phase and on 10/11 December 2024 many interesting topics such as safeguarding, protection of the environment, officiating, and drop-out rates will be presented on the fringes of the Main Round of the Women's EHF EURO 2024. There will also be best practice examples. On the back of the positive feedback from the initial event in 2022, the event already has over sixty registrations prior to the close of the process. The Conference is open to all including all stakeholders who personally received an invitation from WHB Chair, Leonor Mallozzi, noting that three persons from each group can attend as there are three stages with simultaneous presentations.

5.3. 8th EHF Scientific Conference

Taking place in Zagreb on 13 November 2025, the forum will primarily address 'Grassroots' topics; the organisational information was already distributed to the participants as well as the UUHT (partner university). The EHF also extended the invitation to all the stakeholder representatives to be part of the conference. In March 2025, the call for topical abstracts and the provision of contributions will be announced.

5.4. Wheelchair Activities

The previous 4-a-side event organised by the IHF took place in Egypt. The discussion to determine the strategic plan is ongoing and the EHF has representatives in the IHF Working Group on Wheelchair Handball; the IHF remains amenable to the 4-a-side version of the game.

The Methods Commissions are keen on developing this area around the issues and in the knowledge that some activities are organised within a National Federation and others are managed by the respective Paralympic Committee; thus, in this respect, the picture needs to be more transparent. On the European level, it was underlined that there are only 5-10 active teams currently, and the organisation of activities is complex at times. To be clear, not only is there a financial and strategic impact, in the realm of social responsibility on the one hand and the Olympic family on the other, the work needs to continue.

Nonetheless, it remains the objective to bring wheelchair handball among the Paralympic disciplines in 2028 and it is believed that a decision could be coming soon. Thus, to follow the OG line, the next event to be organised by the EHF will be 2025 and a call for organisers will be distributed in due course.

Closing the meeting and with the agenda complete, Xavier O' Callaghan, PHB Chair, thanked the members for their presence and contribution to the topics.

For the Minutes: M. Brown