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## MINUTES TO THE 28<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S HANDBALL BOARD

**Date | Time:** Tuesday, 15 October 2024 | 10:30 – 13:00  
**Venue:** Renaissance Hotel Vienna | Strassburg 1 & 2

**Participants:**

<b>WHB:</b>	Leonor Mallozzi	Chairwoman   Member NB   POR
	Marta Bon	Deputy Chairwoman   Member   SLO
	Nodjialem Myaro	Member NB   FRA
	Deja Ivanovic	Member WFCH   SLO
	Trine Nielsen	Member WFCH   DEN
	Christoph Wendt	Member WEHLB   GER
	Karolina Bryl-Prokop	Member WEHLB   POL
	Elena Borrás Alcaraz	Member   ESP
	Jelena Eric	Member   SRB
	Monika Listkiewicz	Member   POL
	Bente Aksnes	Member EXEC   NOR
<b>EHF Office:</b>	Martin Hausleitner	EHF Secretary General (in part)
	Markus Glaser	EHF Chief Sport Officer
	Attila Heim	Manager NT Competitions
	Mate Kozma	Event Organisation
	Noemi Szecsenyi	Grassroots Coordinator
	Simona Margetic	Editorial Content Lead
	Alenka Cuderman	RYT Coordinator
	Anna Lamprecht	Senior Administrative Assistant   Women's Handball
<b>Excused:</b>	F. V. Blazquez Garcia	Member EXEC   ESP

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The meeting took place as a second part to the common meeting of PHB/WHB where the general presentations were provided.

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Mallozzi welcomed the WHB members to the meeting and informed about the absence of Blazquez Garcia due to unforeseen family commitments. Furthermore, she warmly welcomed the new members of the WEHLB Christoph Wendt and Karolina Bryl-Prokop, who introduced themselves. Additionally, she introduced Anna Lamprecht as the new Coordinator of the WHB's activities and thanked Alenka Cuderman for her long-term commitment and work for the development of women's handball. Cuderman provided a short introduction to the new

members about the foundation, development, and workwise of the board. Mallozzi welcomed and thanked the office members Heim, Kozma, Szecsenyi and Margetic for their presence and inputs.

## **2. WHB Meeting 04/2024 – Minutes and Follow-up**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved unanimously, without further additions.

## **3. Stakeholder Reports**

### **3.1. EHF NCW / Nations Board**

Myaro and Mallozzi reported the respective topics from the NCW and the NB:

- The NCW discussed the calendar and national team week in September and suggested November as another opportunity for a team week later in the season. Nevertheless, it was confirmed that the NTW in September was not a new initiative but had been scheduled in previous years but had not been used for competitive purposes. This is supposed to change in 2026, as the EHF EURO Cup Final is planned during this week.
- The NCW supports equal representation of female referees and delegates at the EHF EUROs 2024 AHS and stressed the focus on initiatives that emphasis on competencies, leadership, and social education.
- Potential inputs to the Women's competition conference 12/13 May 2025 were discussed with a need to follow-up (see AP 5/AP6.).
- The NCW discussed the status of handball at the Olympics with the conclusion of a missed opportunity to showcase Beach Handball in Paris 2024 due to the chosen venue.
- The NCW furthermore discussed the Women's Handball Conference, see the outcome under point (see AP 9.3.).
- The need for data and an extensive holistic survey about the current situation has been identified by both the NCM and the NCW to take strategic and focused decisions. Hausleitner provided an update to the NB on the planned initiative regarding the grassroots charter and the annual collection of data from federations. On that occasion Mallozzi also encouraged federations – especially emerging nations – to join the EHF's Masterplan project.

Cuderman added statistics on the current numbers of female EHF referees and delegates, with 22 referees (2023: 23), and 27 delegates (2023: 29). On this occasion it was suggested to intensively support National Federations' initiatives to development female officials and to address this topic at the women's competition conference.

### **3.2. WFCH**

Ivanovic reported from the meeting in the previous week together with the men's board, where the following topics were discussed:

- Gregor Planteu has been confirmed as new managing director of the FCH (both MFCH and WFCH) and will take up his duties from 1 July 2025 onwards.
- For the reports from the Advisory Board and the Competitions Commission Ivanovic referred to the Common meeting.
- The next elections for the WFCH Board will take place during the Final4 Weekend in Budapest (31.05. – 01.06.2025).
- During the last WFCH the topic gender identity was highlighted. This topic was dealt with under AP 10.
- WFCH Initiatives to share funds and best practices to raise attendance and TV audience were pointed out. On this occasion Cuderman added recent attendance statistics in the Women's Champions League. The average attendance at WCL games in the season 2023/24 was 2.981 visitors per game. In the ongoing 2024/25 season, there are 7 clubs with an average attendance of 1.468 visitors, 4 clubs with an average of 2.571, 3 clubs with an average of 3.696 and 2 clubs with an average of 4.209, resulting in an overall average attendance of 2.504 attendees.

### **3.3. Women's League Convention/Women's Handball League Board**

Wendt reported from the first meeting of the WEHLB, where tasks and responsibilities within the group were distributed. Three persons are working on the communication with the leagues with one each responsible for small, medium, and big leagues. The WEHLB as well follow-up on calendar discussions in the common meeting. Therefore, please refer to the meetings of the common meeting (see AP 4). Furthermore, challenges for the leagues, namely a lack of female faces in the leagues and consequently a lack of role models and challenges in retaining women in the leagues long-term as well as consequences for media reach and sponsor contract in conversation with marketing agencies due to the lack of known players were identified. To get insights in the current situation in the leagues the WEHLB plans to do a survey.

### **3.4. Situation Players Representation**

No input was provided. Responsibilities and the preparation of the congress 2025 should be followed-up.

## **4. Women's National Team Competitions | Follow up to Common Meeting**

### **4.1. Preview EURO 2024 AHS**

Kozma provided an update on the organisation of the final tournament and pointed out the two new participating countries Faroe and Türkiye. Since November 2023 tickets have been available, with around 30,000 sold so far. Federations are urged to increase marketing efforts, especially on social media. While Debrecen and Basel have strong sales, Austria needs more support. Tickets remain available, and more promotion is needed, according to Christoph Makovec. The fact that each venue hosts 8 teams was underlined, making it easier to fill the halls.

Partners and updated logo strips were shown in the slides. Sleeve advertising is being finalized, and information will be sent via email shortly.

Margetic presented current marketing and communication updates including the status of media and broadcasting incl. the expected audience reach and the promotional plan. Engagement will span across EHF social media, featuring four short documentaries, podcasts, and live shows, with Respect Your Talent ambassadors joining as hosts. For the first time three female commentators will be involved. Promotional efforts focus on broad promotion through key markets, including the EHF website and "Catch the Spirit" website. Various initiatives have been planned, including filming the official mascot at venues and activities like bungee jumping.

### **4.2. EHF EURO 2026 PRCST | Information (3-20/12 2026)**

*Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.1.1.*

Kozma presented an overview on the framework and roadmap of the organisation highlighting the launch of the official logo at the final weekend, on 14 December, in Vienna. The Qualifiers Draw will take place on 20 March 2025 in Cluj-Napoca (ROU).

Heim clarified the qualification system for the EURO 2026: EURO Cup with 5 organisers and 3 best teams from the EURO 2024 playing in two groups with 4 teams; two phases of Qualifiers, Phase 1 with lower organisational standards played for up to two places in the Phase 2, and the Phase 2 with 6 groups of 4 teams, playing for the 16 places. To assess the interest and opportunities of smaller nations, pre-registration for phase 1 has already been opened.

It was underlined that it is essential for emerging nations to participate in Younger Age-Category (YAC) events and present themselves at significant competitions, as this plays a critical role in their future development at the senior level. However, a major challenge arises when teams that participate in Phase 1 may be reluctant to compete in Phase 2. This reluctance is often due to financial constraints, or the increased organizational demands required for the next phase.

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### 4.3. EHF EURO 2028 & Beyond

*Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.1.2.*

- Kozma presented an overview on the framework and roadmap for the EHF EURO 2028 and underlined the Scandinavian markets potential for (Women's) handball.
- Possible venues are: Royal Arena Copenhagen (DEN), Jyske Bank Boxen Herning (DEN), Ceres Arena Aarhus (DEN), Göteborg Scandinavium (SWE), Helsingborg Arena (SWE), DNB Arena Stavanger (NOR), Trondheim Spektrum (NOR), Bergen Byaren Arena (NOR), Nye Fornebu, Oslo (construction) (NOR)
- For the Women's EHF EURO 2030 no candidates were approved, and a new bidding procedure will be defined.
- For the Women's EHF EURO 2032 only one candidate, a joint bid between GER/DEN/POL was approved.

### 4.4. YAC Events

#### 4.4.1. W16 European Open SWE | Review

#### 4.4.2. W17/W19 EHF EURO & European Championships | Preview 2025

*Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.2.2.*

Heim provided an overview on the developments since the last WHB meeting (04/2024) confirming the EXEC decision to increase daily rates to EUR 170, the changed age category, the hosting of both events in 2025 in Montenegro and the recent launch of the bidding for the 2026 M18 and M20 EHF EUROS.

For the W17 category 32 applications were received, with consequently one EURO with 24 teams and one championship with 8 teams. A historical decline in applicant number (35 teams in previous season) was stated and underlying reasons including potential financial reasons were discussed. The WHB concurred that this should be a key area of focus going forward.

### 4.5. IHF Competitions (WU16 WCh 2026)

Glaser provided an update on the introduction of the M17 & W16 World Championship by the IHF, the first of which (M17) is set for October 2025. Two places are allocated for European teams. The EHF expressed concerns, noting no qualification is planned for the M17 World Championship in 2025, as players would be too young (15-16 years old). Instead, a ranking system is being proposed to nominate teams. However, the EHF has not yet received the official documents on this matter and therefore no official procedure can be applied.

## **5. Club Competitions**

## **6. Other Competition Related Topics**

*For the Agenda points 5. Club Competitions and 6. Other Competition Related Topics please refer to the minutes of the common meeting AP 3.3.*

Glaser provided a comprehensive overview of current challenges concerning Women's competitions and highlighted significant issues in club competitions over the summer, with three teams facing financial difficulties (ŽRK Budućnost Podgorica, HBC Nantes, Vipera Kristiansand – with reoccurring financial difficulties). These issues reflect a broader problem with clubs depending heavily on one investor or institution. Furthermore, the absence of bids for Women's YAC events for 2025, despite the increased daily rates, a significant difference between Women's EURO qualifiers, with the expansion from 16 to 24 teams and struggles to find organisers for Women's Championship Qualification Phase 1 were pointed out.

The report highlighted broader concerns about the ongoing financial challenges that women's competitions are facing. Implications extend beyond the EHF/EHFM and into the broader league and national structures. With a different financial structure for women's handball compared to men's, the WHB agreed that financial difficulties can't be seen as the single root cause for the outlined issues as strategic issues and structural problems including the prioritising of women's handball must be considered.

Mallozzi emphasized that National Federations must work to make handball more attractive to young girls, beyond just economic factors, urged the need for action and once again suggested the Masterplan program as a useful tool for development to strengthen the base of women's handball.

## **7. Calendar | Meetings | Activities**

*Please refer to the minutes of the common meeting AP 4.*

## **8. Follow-up to the Common Meeting - Other Topics**

No agenda points were further discussed.

## **9. WHB Initiatives**

### **9.1. Respect Your Talent (RYT) Programme**

Cuderman provided a report on the RYT programme highlighting the focus on developing talented players into professionals and creating a coaching network. Greater success is seen when coaches are integrated. The program combines live events and a digital approach during Euros and Championships.

RYT Programme consists of two live events and two digital activities, all focused on personal development of the players in the areas: dual career, media, anti-doping, sports law, mental fitness, and nutrition. The digital platform for the player self-development RYT App with a

gamification concept is completed has been promoted to the Federations, focussing on federations staff working with the young national teams (16-20y.), staff in handball academies and talent development camps. Currently about 900 players are registered in the app.

The EHF wants to encourage the federations to deliver their own RYT activities with local Ambassadors in their country and to promote/encourage the use of the RYT app. The respective conception, presentations and graphics will be available for the federations in the future. In addition, the digital Ambassador sessions, where the players can meet their role model (Ambassador) online, learn from their experiences and ask questions, are part of the RYT App and are already implemented. In April and May 2024, the “Train the Trainer” workshops took place. In January a RYT camp will be organized in Vienna including 18-year-old boys. Additionally, an online workshop on the use of the RYT app is planned. Whilst it is very difficult to involve active players in the role of Ambassadors this is seen as crucial to attract and inspire the young players. Moreover, the target group of the RYT programme are young talented players on the way to professionalisation, everyone can access the app and be involved.

Further communication about the app is planned through National Federations and their communication channels and trainers, by the EHF and an assisting workshop and the creation of a RYT WhatsApp group in September for direct communication.

## **9.2. Educational Initiatives: European Handball Manager Course 2024/25**

Three female candidates are confirmed for the 2024/2025 course in English language, one each from Norway, Portugal, and Scotland. The 2025/26 course will take place in German language, invitations will be sent out to federations in January/February 2025. Again, three applicants will potentially be supported by the WHB.

## **9.3. Women’s Handball Conference 2024 (10/11 December 2024)**

Szecsényi provided information about the programme and the setting of the Conference. The programme was constituted following the Grassroots Conference in January, the Secretary General Conference, and inputs by the WHB, the Methods Commission and the Sustainability Board. Four core topics have been developed focusing on grassroots, empowerment and leadership, media representation and best practice examples. The event will feature one main stage and two smaller breakout sessions.

Promotion is ongoing, including direct invitations to federations, cooperation with the Austrian federation and paid LinkedIn promotion. Invitations to the different stakeholders are to be clarified. A follow-up invitation with further details will be sent to all stakeholders. Additionally, a series of Webinars with speakers of the Conference providing insights to the discussions is organised. The current number of registrations is about 60, mainly from federations, clubs, and individuals. The maximum number of participants is 150.

#### **9.4. Media and promotion**

Margetic provided an extensive overview of media initiatives and promotion supporting Women's handball. The Women's Handball Conference is being promoted on Instagram, the EHF website, and through a paid LinkedIn campaign targeting female professionals in sports. An editorial series is featured through the EHF newsletter, highlighting monthly topics on women's handball, such as dropout rates, gender equality, and successful league development in Europe. Furthermore, mini documentaries leading up to the EHF EUROS 2024 AHS were discussed under AP 4.1. There will be regular competition coverage with no difference between Men's and Women's EHF EURO coverage from an EHF media perspective with similar staff numbers on-site for both events.

Several platforms have been contacted for potential collaborations, including the Australian based platform 'The Female Project' for a podcast with decorated handball player Katrine Lunde. Media coverage during the final tournament of the EHF EURO 2024 AHS further includes athlete-led content focusing on player journeys, behind-the-scenes content, and athlete-driven stories in collaboration with HBS and EHF, the "Women in Sports" series highlighting women in leadership positions and sharing inspiring stories of female athletes.

The long-term aim is potential collaborations with platforms promoting women's sports aiming to extend beyond just the Women's EURO, ensuring sustained promotion of women's handball at both club and national levels.

#### **10. Miscellaneous**

The situation of gender identity and eligibility regulations for the female classification in handball was discussed. Although there have been former cases in handball, even on a continental level, the topic has so far played a minor role. Ivanovic urged the need for action due to recent developments in other sports. The WHB advocates for a highly differentiated approach, taking the facets of gender, biological components and conditions as well as the level of play into account and a positioning of the EHF.

Hausleitner underlined the IHF as the regulation setting institution in handball, and absence of the topic there so far. Additionally, he informed about contact to other team sports federations such as UEFA for alignment of initiatives as well as recent developments of legal cases within Europe and the situation at legal institutions (CAS, ECHR).

While taking facets of the issue such as player protection, arguments for fairness and the sporting environment, namely the approach by other sports organisations (IOC, IHF, UEFA) into account the WHB agreed on the need to involve specialists and to bring forward concrete examples, possible solutions and inputs to the IHF.

Mallozzi concluded the meeting and thanked the board members and EHF office employees for their participation.

For the Minutes: Anna Lamprecht  
Vienna, 21 October 2024