



17 – 19 November 2006 in Vienna, Austria

## **Keynotes – EHF Younger Age Category European Championships by Jan Tuik, Chairman Competition Commission**

From the beginning of our foundation in November 1991 in Berlin Germany, the EHF has committed a great deal of energy by creating the adequate competition formats for the Younger Age Categories.

In a four year education cycle we have organised European Championships for boys and girls to help the European nations to select, educate and lead young players to the top in their nations, in Europe and the world.

The EHF still wants to be a young and dynamic organisation which offers you a balanced competition system. In the past year we started also our actions of Fair Play during all the Championships. And as you know Fair Play starts on the paying court with good and correct behaviour of the players and as well of the team officials and board members.

Bad behaviour of players and officials influences the atmosphere before and during the matches. We cannot accept this type of misconduct and behaviour.

The education of players, coaches and team officials is a permanent process. We expect from the nations a pro-active and positive attitude in this field.

As participants of a European Championship you are representing the EHF. And for the media a big scandal is always interesting. We want to avoid that.

What can we do to realise the best conditions for the future of the young players in Europe. For this development it is necessary to know your own history, because of the fact that the future starts always in the history.

At the first tournaments in Hungary for girls and in Switzerland for boys in 1992 we had 8 participating nations (the youth championship / later called the W17 and M18) – at that time with a small number of Delegates and Referees. These tournaments were really an experiment for us.

In the next championships we enlarged the participations to 12 team (for the first time in ISR for boys and LTU for girls) and later on to 16 teams. You will find the exact dates and tournaments in the latest EHF publication "1992 – 2006 YAC European Championships", which you can find in your event folder.

At the first Men's Junior European Championship in ROM in 1996 12 nations were participating. The same number of teams for the girls in POL. Nowadays we call these two categories M20 and W19. In the meantime we have 16 participating nations in the Younger Age Categories Championships.

Question:

Is the current format of the YAC championships okay for you, or could we find a better option for the teams placed 9 to 16?

In 2005 we made the next big step in the development by introducing the European Open (24 teams) in Gothenburg/Sweden for boys and a year later for girls. The interest in these tournaments has been very good so far.

One of the main questions during the development of the YAC tournaments was "how to lodge the teams".

In the beginning (SUI) the facilities for the players were really poor and for sure not on a level that we could accept. Nowadays some organisers offer five star hotels for youngsters. In our opinion this is too much for this level of competitions. A good bed to rest and to sleep and good quality of food (menu for sportsmen) must be the basic pre-condition for every organiser.

I'm waiting for your reaction in this Convention.

However we have tried to continuously raise the standards of our YAC competitions, e.g. by supplying the same type of Taraflex floorings as we have in our Men's and Women's Euro Events. Venue set-up, event management, on-and off court procedures, preparatory educational measures for our officials have been improved a lot in the meantime.

Nowadays the EHF offers the national federations financial support (about € 3.000) for taking part in the qualification tournaments. The question is, whether this amount of money is necessary for all participating nations or would it be better to support the financial weaker nations with more money. This is a question of solidarity.

The EHF also gives a lot of financial support to the YAC organisers and invests pretty much into the European Open Tournaments. One Taraflex Championship flooring is always granted to the YAC organiser and stays there after the championship.

Special programmes for referees:

Our young referee programme is also a very good example for the development of Handball in Europe. Young referees are guided in several tournaments by very experienced former international referees and until now we have been satisfied with the results of our activities.

Also the educational programme for female referees is a good development and example for the national federations. It is a pity that not all member federations support these efforts. Nevertheless we will continue with this programme for female referees.

And for sure in the near future only female referees will be nominated for women's championships like in other sports as football, field hockey.

Today handball is a very fast sport and our referees are always under pressure. It is up to you to find a new structure of whistling a match in the future. I'm thinking on changing the rules or whistling with more referees like in icehockey. We are looking forward to new ideas.

The organisation of a European championship in the YAC is developing in the last years in a very good way – especially looking for all activities around the tournaments, e.g. more interest of spectators. In the last tournament in Innsbruck (Men's 20) about 4000 spectators were attending the final and in Belgrade (Men's 18) we had the record of 5000 spectators.

The Handball Federation of Austria set up a new trend for the media – with interviews for the youngsters and live streaming of the matches on internet. Also the show around the matches was attractive and for sure interesting for the young spectators of the last tournaments.

In my opinion the YAC European championships must be a great youth festival, with entertainment, music, dance and show. A very good example is the Partille Cup in Sweden.

We must create the idols for the future by involving the big handball stars of today and maybe also stars from other sports. Playing in Austria we can for instance use stars and testimonials from skiing.

This forum is to discuss and to exchange new ideas for the further development of Handball. This Youth Handball Convention is a challenge for the future of handball. Please consider new structures and define new targets.

**You are our youngsters, you are our future!!**

I thank you for your attention and wish you all a good conference with bright ideas.

Vienna, 17 November 2006 / Jan Tuik, Chairman Competition Commission