

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends of Sport!

What motivates a Secretary General to address the topic “referees and delegates”?

It is not for the pure fun of getting involved in technical matters – much rather out of a sense of obligation to contribute to an area that has a critical impact on the overall image of the European Handball Federation and, thereby, also defines the status of our sport.

In his welcome address, our President talked about the activities pursued in the 12 years of the EHF’s existence and about European handball in and with our Member Federations.

Let me add to this a few figures to provide a better picture of the sheer scope of our competition activities. At the same time, this review in terms of figures may also remind us of what our competitions looked like in 1994 and what they are today.

What have EHF Competitions seen since work was started a little more than 12 years ago:

- The final tournaments and qualifications of 41 European Championships
- 96 European Cup competitions and
- a large number of additional tournaments such as Club EChs, Nation Cups, Youth Club Tournaments, the Beach handball Tour etc.

Consequences are the administration, organisation and documentation of more than 10,000 games – with all the sporting, economic, and legal implications

For this, we had to provide the organisational framework, and from this we have gained experience.

What is important in this context is the step-by-step introduction of new developments. Let me just mention some of the innovations in European Championships that were initiated by the EHF and have meanwhile been adopted world-wide:

- floors in two colours, without lines
- floors with a coaching zone
- 14 players in the team and on the bench
- official squad (to be discussed in the IHF)
- continuous statistics and databases
- Internet on-line service with live ticker
- enhanced TV production due to host broadcaster regulations
- harmonised advertising
- sound working conditions for the media and other activities in the information sector

Special mention has to be made of the approach to security issues and the handling of fan groups. In this regard, it was specifically the organiser of the 2004 ECh in SLO that set new standards.



I remind ourselves of all this, as at Men's and Women's European Championships, which are clearly defined in terms of time and place, and where we partner with an Organising Committee with clearly defined responsibilities, it is of course easier to implement measures (despite the great effort involved) than in the large number of individual games.

But now the focus is on individual matches and, starting one and a half years ago our priority has been the Men's and Women's Champions Leagues.

TV presence and marketing on the one hand, market observation and product development on the other, are the activities that we have been pursuing with increased intensity and for which the EHF Marketing GmbH (Ltd) will be set up as of July 2005.

But whether something is actually a product and suitable for marketing is ultimately determined by what happens on the court and its immediate surroundings.

The clubs with their managers, coaches, and players, the media representatives, the supporters – they all play their parts “in the game that determines the value of the game”.

And, not to forget, our own part: the part of the referees, delegates, and representatives. These parts are becoming ever more important. The decisions that have to be taken at the venue are becoming larger in number and more momentous. In our transparent media-driven world, “non-decisions” in reality result in negative consequences.

We wish to strengthen the EHF representatives' position in the game: through clear-cut regulations, more specific mandates, nominations of better qualified personnel – simply through plain competence. Other team sports are already demonstrating this successfully.

In addition, we are planning to launch an initiative aimed at cleaning up the environment. As of the 2005-2006 season, players, coaches and managers staging vehement protests, fuelling public sentiment or even engaging in verbally or physically threatening behaviour must be a thing of the past.

Delegates who look the other way must not be appointed again! Clubs that raise the level of aggression in the European Cup disregard the principles of hospitality and good sportsmanship and therefore have to be sanctioned.

To support these initiatives, the EHF is also going to revise the procedure for the nomination of delegates. For specified duties, the EHF will compile its own list of competent delegates. Of course, the National Federations will still be able to nominate additional delegates for the general pool provided they have the required qualifications.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please understand these initiatives that are currently being pursued at all technical levels as a contribution to the protection and promotion of the development of our sport through the creation of a quality environment.

What are we seeking to achieve:

- an improvement in the environment in which games are played
- the creation of fair conditions for everyone – including the visiting team
- the cultivation of our image – the recruitment of young players, the acquisition of investments from sponsors, etc.



All this is critically dependent on our ability to enforce our views successfully at the venue and resolutely at the technical, administrative and legal levels.

This will enable handball to become a more marketable product in every sense.

This will justify the effort expended on preparatory activities and reward the trouble taken in enforcement.

Thank you very much for everything you contribute over the weekend.

Michael Wiederer - *EHF Secretary General*

