

EHF

# SPORT REPORT

2014/15



FONDAZIONE  
FC BARCELONA

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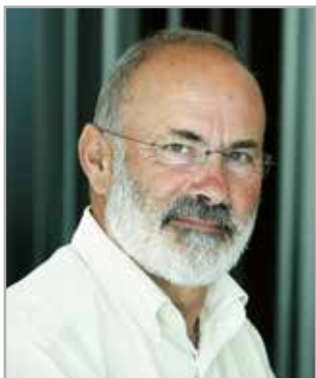
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# From the President



Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.

**Helen Adams Keller**



Dear Friends,

It is now time to close the chapter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> European club handball season. The start of the 2015/16 season is just weeks away and the European Handball Federation, in close cooperation with EHF Marketing, is pleased to bring a revitalised vision of the men's Champions League to the sports market. The VELUX EHF Champions League will open with an extended first phase expanding the reach of this top flight competition through the 32 teams spread across four groups.

The Women's EHF Champions League underwent a small 'facelift' as the competition was played with a main round that consisted of 12 teams, six teams per group, and a quarter-final phase was also introduced; the changes were validated through the smooth implementation and successful execution when the competition resumed following the winter hiatus.

The outcome of the 2014/15 European Cup proved excellent as in the men's competitions - the EHF Cup and the Challenge Cup - two teams celebrated their first ever European trophies. In all three women's competitions, the teams that hoisted the trophies were all winning the trophy for the second time. All summary reports on all the club competitions can be found in the fourth chapter of this publication.



Win if you can, lose if you must,  
but NEVER QUIT!

**Cameron Trammell**



Supporting our athletes in their quest for sporting magnificence is a vast network of coaches, managers, club and federation leaders, as well as the multitude of staff members who work closely together to make handball great. They are recognised within these pages giving us in their own words their contribution to the 2014/15 season. The national team events played on a global scale, encompassed the IOC Youth Olympic Games, the IHF senior, junior, and youth world championships, and of course, the European events. The performance of the European teams in all events was a testament to the adage of the American athlete, Cameron Trammell; from seven events in both the youth and senior competitions - 3 gold, 3 silver, and 5 bronze medals were won by our teams on the international stage.

There were many moments of glory for the teams, and instances of pride for the European Handball Federation, as we admired the performances of the European teams. Thus, I dedicate this edition of the sport report to all the clubs and national teams that participated in the 2014/15 season and especially to the players of Europe, the talented athletes whose passions and ambitions reside firmly with handball, proving once again that alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much.

Turn the page and reminisce on a spectacular season of sport.

**Jean Brihault**  
EHF President

# Going for gold

**F**rom the younger age category events for the up and coming talents to the top flight final tournaments for the stars of the sport, each and every national team wants to be on the winners' podium at the end of the competition. There are hundreds of athletes dedicated to their craft, training almost daily with their club teams, and convening with their team mates during national team weeks. The rewards for their efforts come with each qualification to each national team event. With a range of established high calibre competitions played every year, as well as the development in the playing standards, the skill and talent of each individual player is highlighted. We are proud of our competitions, and even more proud of the teams and their achievements.



# Women's EHF EURO 2014 Hungary / Croatia

The Women's EHF EURO 2014 in Hungary and Croatia was an event that was full of surprises, sensations, defeated favourites, and rising stars. At the end of it all, Norway reclaimed their throne; "Heja Norge" was the song of the night once again. Usually, it comes as no big surprise when the record Women's EHF EURO champions take another gold medal – but in the case of the 2014 event in Hungary and Croatia, the team of Icelandic born Thorir Hergeirsson had not even been a main contender to stand upon the winners' podium again. They were on the list of potential semi-finalists, but due to an incredible series of injuries, nobody could expect how the now six times EHF EURO winner marched through a remarkable event in terms of failed favourites.

For the second time after 2010 (Norway/Denmark) two joint hosts had organised a Women's EHF EURO. While four years ago, both hosts made it to the semis, in 2014 both hosts were eliminated much earlier than expected – again a part of the story of broken dreams. But if favourites fail, underdogs rise – like Sweden and Spain. Surprisingly, both sides each won their second EHF EURO medals. On the other hand, the 2012 champions, Montenegro were dethroned – and missed the big clash against Norway, which would have been a repeat of the final from the 2012 Olympic Games and EHF EURO 2012.



**EHF EURO 2014**  
**HUNGARY-CROATIA**  
 WOMEN • 7-21 DECEMBER

Finally the Norwegians were back where they usually belong, chanting "we are the champions", this time accompanied by a Hungarian gospel choir in the Papp László Sportaréna in Budapest. They were the only constant in a tournament full of surprises after beating Spain in an EHF EURO final for the second time after 2008 in Skopje. In the end, the 28:25 win was well-deserved, as the trophy was for the Norwegians.

"We had a dream, when we entered the plane heading to the EHF EURO, and we held on to this dream until the very last second of the event to make it come true," said Norwegian coach Hergeirsson, adding: "Winning this final provides us with the

biggest jackpot you can win: another trophy and the tickets to the World Championship and much more important, the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. This means, we can work without any pressure and stress in the upcoming years, without having to play any qualification matches." After host nation Brazil, Norway were the first women's team to clinch their berth for Rio.

In 2012, after becoming the Olympic champions for the second time in London, the star-studded Norwegians had missed two straight titles, firstly at the EHF EURO 2012 in Serbia suffering a defeat at the hands of Montenegro in Belgrade, and in the same venue one year later at the 2013 World Championship, when the hosts knocked them out in the quarter-final phase. Even as she left the court in 2013, playmaker Karoline Breivang made a prediction: "We will come back, and we will come back stronger, and we will grab the next trophy." Like Linn-Kristin Riegelhuth, Breivang became a record winning EHF EURO champion in Budapest, celebrating five individual gold medals.



# Women's EHF EURO 2014 Hungary / Croatia

On their way to gold, Norway defied the odds: the world's best goalkeeper Katrine Lunde missed the EHF EURO due to pregnancy, defence boss Marit Malm Frafjord was out due to injury, and in the last test match before the departure to the EHF EURO, left handed shooter Linn Sulland broke her foot. And the run of bad luck did not end when arriving in Hungary: in the first match of the preliminary round, the new No. 1 between the posts, Kari Grimsbö, was out after suffering an injury. But like a magician, Hergeirsson pulled another rabbit out of his hat, presenting Silje Solberg to the audience. The third Norwegian goalkeeper became the cornerstone of the success, was awarded best goalkeeper of the tournament, and was the key to winning the final against Spain through her 14 saves. Like Solberg, line player Heidi Löke and right back Nora Mörk (top scorer of the final) were also part of the All Star Team.



"We have quite a squad with a lot of talents, and we will be much stronger when Lunde, Sulland and Frafjord will be back on track," said Hergeirsson, looking towards upcoming competitions.

His team had steadily improved during the tournament. After clashing with the favoured Danes and Romanians in the preliminary round, they even left Spain empty-handed in the main round in what was considered the best match of the whole event. The only defeat for Norway occurred in the last main round match against Hungary, even though the semi-final ticket and the group win had already been sealed. The only time the Norwegians were shaken, was in the end stages of the final. After intermediately being down by five goals, Spain had two chances to equalise, but failed twice, so the gate to gold was open for the Scandinavians.

“ We had a dream, when we boarded the plane heading to the EHF EURO, and we held on to this dream until the very last second of the event to make it come true. ”

**NOR Coach  
Thorir Hergeirsson**

The Spaniards were the surprise team, and their tears, after losing the final, dried quite quickly. "We did not 'miss' gold, we took silver," was the clear statement of right wing, and All Star Team member, Carmen Martin. Her team had caused the first sensation of the EHF EURO by beating the main contenders for the gold and hosts Hungary in the preliminary round. And in the main round they withstood the

pressure after two defeats to beat another major gold favourite, Denmark, to book their tickets to the semi-final. Here, it was goalkeeper Silvia Navarro, who declawed and dethroned Montenegro, the 2012 champions.



And the team of Coach Dragan Adzic not only had to endure the end of a dream of taking gold for the second time, but also of taking any of the medals up for grabs as another team had another shock in store for them. Sweden, the other surprise team of EURO 2014, took revenge for the main round defeat and snatched the bronze medal away from the Balkan powerhouse. The driving force for the 'Tre-Krono' team was Isabelle Gullden, top scorer of the EHF EURO and also awarded Most Valuable player. "The final ranking, the medals, and the performances at the EHF EURO 2014 in general were a perfect promotion for the 2016 EHF EURO hosted on home ground," said coach Helle Thomsen.

FINAL RANKING	
1.	Norway
2.	Spain
3.	Sweden
4.	Montenegro
5.	France
6.	Hungary
7.	Netherlands
8.	Denmark

FINAL RANKING	
9.	Romania
10.	Germany
11.	Poland
12.	Slovakia
13.	Croatia
14.	Russia
15.	Serbia
16.	Ukraine



In contrast, the result and ranking of the favourites Denmark had been anything but a perfect promotion for their home World Championship in December 2015. The team played a weak EURO with shaky performances and eventually missed the semi-final, as a consequence head coach Jan Pytlick had to leave. But Pytlick and his fellow countryman Heine Jensen (coach of Germany) were not the only ones to move on after the EHF EURO: After the second match of the preliminary round, Croatian coach Vladimir Canjuga announced his retirement. As a joint host, the Croats had dreamt of the semi-finals, but their journey had come to an end after the preliminary round; missing the main round was cause for a near empty arena in Zagreb in the matches that followed.

Besides Denmark, the second joint host Hungary had been a hotly tipped favourite, but with their spirited team captain Anita Görbicz off the roster due to pregnancy, the rest of the team could not withstand the pressure on their shoulders. Finally, they made it to the final destination Budapest – not for the semi-finals, but for the 5/6 placement match, which they lost against France. The hosts were not the only ones to face massive disappointments at the EHF EURO 2014: four times world champions Russia and 2013 World Championship silver medallist Serbia also failed to advance to the main round. In addition, Romania and Germany were also left with a bitter aftertaste, as they ranked ninth and tenth at the end of the competition.



“ We did not ‘miss’ gold, we took silver. ”

**Carmen Martin**



Following the decision of the EHF Executive Committee, only EHF EURO champions Norway qualified directly for the 2015 World Championship in Denmark, thus medallists Spain and Sweden have to go through the play-offs. And some top nations will fall on their way to Denmark, as the nine play-off duels for the 22<sup>nd</sup> IHF Women's World Championship were drawn in Budapest on the final weekend as follows: France vs. Slovenia, Germany vs. Russia, Serbia vs. Romania, Netherlands vs. Czech Republic, Ukraine vs. Poland, Montenegro vs. Iceland, Austria vs. Hungary, Spain vs. Slovakia, and Croatia vs. Sweden

EHF EURO 2014 had the highest ever cumulative TV audience of 723 million – an increase of 90 per cent compared to 2012. Also the broadcast hours from Hungary and Croatia set a new record by 1,919 hours. The event was broadcasted in 145 countries worldwide.

#### All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Silje Solberg	NOR	
Left wing:	Maria Fisker	DEN	
Left back:	Cristina Neagu	ROU	
Centre back:	Kristina Kristiansen	DEN	
Line player:	Heidi Loke	NOR	
Right back:	Nora Mörk	NOR	
Right wing:	Carmen Martin	ESP	
MVP:	Isabelle Gullden	SWE	
Best defence player:	Sabina Jacobsen	SWE	
Top scorer:	Isabelle Gullden	SWE	58 Goals

#### RESULTS

##### Semi-finals

Montenegro vs. Spain	18:19 [8:13]
Norway vs. Sweden	29:25 [13:11]

##### 3/4 Match

Sweden vs. Montenegro	25:23 [11:12]
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##### Final

Norway vs. Spain	28:25 [10:12]
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# Men's EHF EURO 2016 Poland

Following the final tournament draw, the global handball community is all set for the Men's EHF EURO 2016 in Poland; the 15 teams that made it through the qualification can now start preparing their end game. As for the hosts, they will face the defending champions in the preliminary round.

It was the very last goal in the 84<sup>th</sup> match, the very last match of the Men's EHF EURO 2016 qualification, that gave two teams cause for celebration and left one team out of the running and highly disappointed. When the Danish left back Rasmus Lauge hit the back of the net for the final result of 26:25 in their final qualification match against Bosnia Herzegovina, he decided the last two open spots for the final tournament in Poland. Bosnia Herzegovina were out, and Belarus was in as the second ranked team in qualification group 2. Montenegro grabbed the 15<sup>th</sup> and final spot as best third ranked team of all groups, thus leaving Bosnia Herzegovina still waiting for their debut at an EHF EURO following their unlucky defeat.



Hungary, Denmark, as well as the defending champions, France, were the only teams to conclude their road to Poland with a clean record of six wins in six matches. In addition, Sweden remained unbeaten in their qualification group by five wins and a draw against Slovenia. All the favourites tipped for the event secured their spots for the 12<sup>th</sup> Men's EHF EURO in the 12<sup>th</sup> different host country. Only host Poland qualified directly – and 28 teams had started their march to the EHF EURO 2016 in October 2014. Alongside Denmark, France, Hungary and Sweden, the teams from Croatia, Iceland and Spain had finally topped their qualification groups. Norway, Belarus, Slovenia, Serbia, Russia, FYR Macedonia and Germany were the runners-ups in those seven groups. Most of those groups had been decided at the latest after the fifth round, but Group 4 was open until the final whistle. As Iceland and Serbia took their final victories, Montenegro was kept on edge until the match in Denmark was over before they could celebrate their participation in Poland.

The draw event for the preliminary round groups took place on 19 June in the ICE Congress Centre in Krakow, hosting city of the preliminary, main and final round of the Men's EHF EURO 2016, and was attended by highest ranked representatives of European and Polish handball, Polish government, and Polish sports bodies.

## Final Tournament Groups



### GROUP A - KRAKOW

France  
Poland  
FYR Macedonia  
Serbia

### GROUP B - KATOWICE

Croatia  
Iceland  
Belarus  
Norway

### GROUP C - WROCLAW

Spain  
Sweden  
Germany  
Slovenia

### GROUP D - GDANSK

Denmark  
Hungary  
Russia  
Montenegro

The Men's EHF EURO 2016 will be played from 15 to 31 January 2016; it is the first time that a final tournament has been extended to 17 days. The extension is due to change in the playing system for the main round. The arenas selected for this tournament are the newly-built Tauron Arena in Krakow with a capacity of 15,000 spectators, the ERGO Arena in Gdansk (11,000), the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Centennial Hall in Wroclaw (6,500) and the Spodek Arena in Katowice (10,000). The preliminary round will be carried out from 15 – 20 January, followed by the main round matches in Krakow and Wroclaw from 22 to 27 January, while the final weekend including semi-finals, placement matches and final is played from 29 to 31 January. The placement round for the positions 5 to 8 is in Wroclaw, and all medal matches will be played in Krakow.

The three best ranked teams of each preliminary round group proceed to the main round, those from groups A and B will continue in Krakow, those of group C and D in Wroclaw. The two best ranked teams from groups I and II will duel in the semi-finals, while the teams ranked third will play for positions 5 and 6, and the the teams ranked fourth will throw-off for the positions 7 and 8; these matches might be decisive for the Olympic Games qualifications tournaments in April 2016.

The EHF EURO 2016 champions will qualify directly for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and the 2017 World Championship in France. In addition, two teams, which have not clinched their berth for the Olympic qualification tournaments so far, remain in the race to Rio.

# 2014 Men's 20 European Championship

It was a curious case of same place, same final, same winner; at the Men's 20 European Championship, there was an eerie sense of déjà vu as Germany defeated Sweden in Austria to take their place on the winners' podium; exactly reminiscent of the Men's 18 event in 2012.

Eight matches, eight victories, two All Star Team members and a gold medal – this is the balance of the German “golden generation” at the Men's 20 European Championship in Austria. The team of head coach Markus Baur continued their successful series after becoming the Men's 18 champions in 2012 and bronze medallists at the Men's U19 World Championship in 2013.

In a great final, the German team needed every minute of the match to secure their victory, as they defeated Sweden by 26:24 in the game that showcased the two best teams of the entire competition. “This match was absolutely worthy of a final,” said Baur, analysing the rundown. “We made a few too many mistakes in the first half, and in the second half Sweden became better and better. But when they were about to decide the game, our goalkeeper Jonas Maier performed two amazing saves.”

Despite a 12:7 lead, Germany could not manage to swing an early decision. In the 51<sup>st</sup> minute, the score was 22:21 in their favour, but less than five minutes later Sweden had levelled the game at 23:23 and even took the lead for the first time in the entire game, inching ahead with 24:23. A penalty, converted by Fabian Wiede, put Germany back in the game, and the last two goals of the match belonged again to Germany, while Sweden were left unable to score, leaving Germany jubilant.

Both sides had already faced each other in the main round of the competition, and Germany were also the winners of that encounter, too, securing the group win by a 28:25; this meant that Sweden conceded only two losses, both times to the M20 champions.



The bronze medal match saw the pairing of Denmark and Spain, and the Iberians cheered their team to the victory. Denmark had the better start as they led by four goals midway through the first half. But Spain reduced the gap to one goal at half-time, when the score stood at 15:14 for Denmark. After 37 minutes, Spain took the lead for the first time, tightened their grip and did not let go until the end, eventually celebrating the bronze medal and a 29:27 win.

In the semi-finals, the Scandinavian duel became the expected tight affair with the lead constantly changing. Two unanswered goals by Henrik Olsson saw Sweden in front at 20:18. Denmark then fought hard to turn the game, but Sweden held on to the lead until the end. Germany had an easier time against Spain, being ahead by 19:13 at the break and decisively increasing the gap to 26:16 and even to 30:18 guided by the almost unstoppable Yves Kunkel, who scored nine goals overall.

The four semi-finalists had already won their respective groups in the preliminary round – and only the Spaniards needed some luck to proceed from the main round being equal in points with Serbia after a draw in the direct duel and a defeat against France, but thanks to the better goal difference they managed to advance in the competition.

“This match was absolutely worthy of a final!”

**Coach Markus Baur**



## RANKING

1. Germany
2. Sweden
3. Spain
4. Denmark
5. Slovenia
6. Austria
7. France
8. Serbia

## RANKING

9. Hungary
10. Norway
11. Belarus
12. Switzerland
13. Slovakia
14. Estonia
15. Israel
16. FYR Macedonia

## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

- Denmark vs. Sweden 24:25 [12:15]  
Germany vs. Spain 35:29 [19:13]

### 3/4 Match

- Denmark vs. Spain 27:29 [15:14]

### Final

- Sweden vs. Germany 24:26 [11:13]

### All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Thomas Thulin	SWE
Left wing:	Ives Kunkel	GER
Left back:	Paul Drux	GER
Centre back:	Nikola Bilyk	AUT
Line player:	Ignacio Plaza	ESP
Right back:	Blaz Janc	SLO
Right wing:	Niklas Mörk	SWE
MVP:	Nikola Bilyk	AUT
Best defender:	Simon Hald Jensen	DEN
Top scorer:	Nikola Bilyk	AUT 55 goals

# 2014 Men's 18 European Championship

Some say that it was pure luck that brought the French team through to the semi-finals of the 2014 Men's 18 European Championship in Poland, but it was pure ability that won them the gold medal in the final. In France, the men's senior national team is world renowned for their achievements; however, in the summer of 2014 and for the first time in the history of the French Handball Federation, the men's youth team won the gold medal.

Led by their All Star Team members Ludovic Fabregas and Melvin Richardson, "Les Bleus" stood on the winners' podium after defeating Hungary in the final in Gdynia. Scoring eight goals, Aymeric Minne was the match winner for the new European champions after turning a 16:18 deficit at half-time into a 33:30 win against the Hungarians, despite eight goals from Matyas Gyori. The final victory was the payback for the earlier defeat [26:34] against Hungary in the group matches – the only defeat of the entire competition for the French team.

"My players are truly fantastic, we had some bad moments but each time we bounced back even better. The spirit here is wonderful, the spirit of handball I mean," said Coach Eric Quintin, adding: "I'm also very happy for handball. It was a great game of two the best teams in this tournament. If you win against such an opponent, it is really great thing."

“My players are truly fantastic, we had some bad moments but each time we bounced back even better.”

Coach Eric Quintin



EHF MEN'S 18  
EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP  
**POLAND 2014**  
GDYNIA GDANSK 14-24 AUGUST

In the bronze medal match, Spain literally stormed to the bronze in a convincing 27:21 win, leaving Denmark no chance; with Spain in the lead and 17:7 on the scoreboard at half-time, the match was clearly decided. "It wasn't an easy game, but we won, because we were a team and we played like it was the first match of the tournament," said Coach David Alonso. "It was an emotional game, but we managed to win and we finished third."

Spain had been very close to reaching the final when they played the semi-final against France, and had turned a 10:12 half-time deficit into a 17:15 lead. But France struck back hard, led by Julien Meyer who scored the decisive goals to finally make it to the gold

medal match with a nail-biting 23:24 victory.

In comparison, the second semi-final was a more straight forward affair, with the Hungarians leading from start to finish. Though Denmark kept the game interesting, they simply could not get close enough to take the lead, and Hungary ran away with a convincing 32:26 victory. "We had some bad periods, but due to the fact that spirit in our team is really good, we managed to win," explained goalkeeper Imre Pasztor.

Up until that point, Hungary and Spain were the only teams to arrive at the semi-final with an unbeaten record of six wins in six matches – but funnily enough, though both teams managed to win medals, the gold medal was not to be. On their way to the title, France was beaten by Hungary in the preliminary round, and tied with the Germany in the main round; only goal difference allowed France to advance to the semi-final. As for Germany, they started strong at the beginning of the tournament, but eventually finished seventh after a final win in the placement match against Poland.

## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Spain vs. France 23:24 [10:12]

Hungary vs. Denmark 32:26 [13:10]

### 3/4 Match

Spain vs. Denmark 27:21 [17:7]

### Final

France vs. Hungary 33:30 [16:18]

### All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Emil Nielsen	DEN
Left wing:	Jaime Fernandez	ESP
Left back:	Matyas Gyori	HUN
Centre back:	Björn Zintel	GER
Right back:	Melvin Richardson	FRA
Right wing:	Kauldi Odriozola	ESP
Line player:	Ludovic Fabregas	FRA
MVP:	Adam Juhasz	HUN
Best defender:	Patrik Ligetvari	HUN
Top scorer:	Aliaksandr Padshyvalau	BLR 45 goals



## RANKING

- France
- Hungary
- Spain
- Denmark
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Germany
- Poland

## RANKING

- Iceland
- Croatia
- Belarus
- Russia
- Serbia
- Czech Republic
- FYR Macedonia
- Romania

# 2014 Women's 18 European Open

Russia and Denmark are the two powerhouses of women's handball in the Younger Age Category competitions. To the testament of their skill at such events, both teams have won the Women's 19 European Championship three times; Russia also won the Women's 17 European Championship three times, and Denmark won the W17 title twice. On a global scale, the Danes scored two U18 World Championship victories (Russia once). Of the U20 World Championship events, Russia (incl. results from the former USSR) took the title eleven times compared to one Danish win. In the first edition of the Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing in 2010, both teams faced each other in the final, which ended with the gold medal for Denmark. So it was no surprise that Russia and Denmark also faced each other in the final of the 2014 Women's 18 European Open in Sweden.

The tournament hosted 18 teams, which included the debutants from Kosovo. Denmark, Russia, Norway and Czech Republic, the teams that would later become the semi-finalists, finished the preliminary round at the top of their groups; and the future finalists, Russia and Denmark won all of their respective matches, clinching their semi-final berth again without leaving any doubt of being the favourites. Thanks to their 19:16 win against the 2013 W17 champions Sweden, the Czech girls sealed the semi-final deal, while for Norway took a narrow 20:19 victory against Romania, which was enough to get them a semi-final place.

Russia initially had more problems than expected to advance over Norway in the semi-final match; the seven goals by right back Valentina Vernigorova were instrumental in getting the team to the final. In the end, Russia remained undefeated with a 22:17 win on the back of a small 13:11 lead at the end of the first half; Vernigorova was eventually nominated to the All Star Team for her overall performance. In contrast, Denmark had



an easy-going affair with the team from the Czech Republic and the semi-final was already decided by the end of the first half as Denmark took the lead 14:6. On the final whistle, the Danes celebrated their entry to the final having defeated the Czech Republic by 28:16.

So for Russia and Denmark it was smooth sailing as both teams entered the final game with perfect 100% records. The first half was played at a rapid pace, which appeared to suit Russia perfectly as they raced into a 17:10 lead at half-time. Denmark came back into the game in the second period, restricting Russia in attack and improving in defence, with Pauline Boegelund leading the Danes with five goals, while

her teammates proved to be a scoring threat from all areas of the court. Nevertheless, Russia's first half lead proved to be more than enough, as they held on to take a 26:22 win and the entire squad, as well as the team officials, erupted with joy at the end. Golikova and Belikova were the top scorers of the match with six goals apiece.

The bronze medal game between Norway and Czech Republic was a real thriller; a match where either side could have won. The two teams were evenly matched making the outcome totally unpredictable. After going into the dressing rooms one goal down, Norway turned the game around and, in an extremely close second half, took the bronze with a 23:22 win. Yaroslava Frolova was named most valuable player of the European Open; Frolova is a star in the making, proving her value to the club team Dinamo Volgograd, who nominated her to the squad that played the 2015 MVM EHF FINAL4 in Budapest.



## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Russia vs. Norway	22:17 (13:11)
Czech Republic vs. Denmark	16:28 (6:14)

### 3/4 Match

Norway vs. Czech Republic	23:22 (14:15)
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### Final

Russia vs. Denmark	26:22 (17:10)
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### All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Sofie Börjesson	SWE
Left wing:	Viede Karoline Nord	NOR
Left back:	Yulia Golikova	RUS
Centre back:	Mette Thrysted	DEN
Right back:	Valentina Vernigorova	RUS
Right wing:	Nikolett Dioszegi	HUN
MVP:	Yaroslava Frolova	RUS
Best defence player:	Aleksandra Zimny	POL
Top scorer:	Cristina Laslo	ROU 38 goals

## RANKING

1. Russia
2. Denmark
3. Norway
4. Czech Republic
5. Romania
6. Sweden
7. Hungary
8. Switzerland
9. Netherlands

## RANKING

10. Slovakia
11. Poland
12. Iceland
13. France
14. Lithuania
15. Austria
16. Faroe Islands
17. Finland
18. Kosovo

# 2015 Men's 19 European Open

In front of 5,800 fans, the 2015 Men's 19 European Open concluded in a Scandinavian final in the Scandinavium Arena in Gothenburg, and it was Iceland who came out on top for the very first time. In one of the most memorable editions of the competition, Georgia and Kosovo made their European Open debut, and even though Sweden won the silver medal, the gold medal remained elusive in the third consecutive final for the team after 2011 and 2013.

In a sensational performance, the Icelandic national team won their first ever trophy in this age category after an unexpected clean sweep of seven wins in seven matches including the 31:28 victory in the final against Sweden. "It simply feels amazing, we will party all night", said Icelandic goalkeeper Ari Gudjonsson, who played a key role in this first major European trophy for the YAC team from Iceland.

The action in the final match kept not only both the teams, but also the fans on edge until the 58<sup>th</sup> minute. Sweden had the better start and forged ahead taking the score to 13:10 at the break. Iceland got the upper hand in the second half, but could not manage to cast off their opponents. Finally the individual class of the top scorers of the match Egill Magnusson (10 goals) and Omar Magnusson (8) decided the high-class encounter, in which even eleven goals from Felix Claar were not enough to turn the tide in Sweden's favour.

After 56 matches, the Men's 19 European Open celebrated yet another new champion - the fourth in the history of the competition after Germany, Slovenia, and Sweden. One year ago, Iceland finished ninth at the 2014 Men's 18 European Championship, and Sweden ranked 5<sup>th</sup> at the same event. Spain, who took the bronze medal at the M18 in Poland, also took the bronze medal at the European Open after defeating Russia 25:22.



## EUROPEAN OPEN M19

In the battle for the gold medal, the two finalists had arrived at the match with a perfect record of six wins each. Both had won their preliminary round stages with three wins and did the same in the main round. By beating Spain in a close match [27:28], Iceland secured their ticket to the final; Sweden easily handled Russia 31:26 to rank at the top of their group.

This edition of the 2015 Men's 19 European Open was an anniversary; ten years ago, in 2005, the European Handball Federation installed this new event to the YAC repertoire with the objective of helping young player gain more international experience. "We are very pleased to witness the ongoing resounding success of this event. The European Open continues

to serve its purpose as the players 'graduate' to be seen a year later at the next YAC European Championship," said EHF President Jean Brihault, adding: "now the next generation is ready to step into the spotlight."

The European Open saw two debutants enter the competition; for the first time in the history of the event, Georgia and Kosovo were among those 16 teams in 2015. Georgia prevailed over Kosovo in the 15/16 match with a final score of 31:28.

As usual, the European Open was held parallel to the Partille Cup, the biggest youth handball tournament in the world where 1,035 teams comprising of 21,000 players from 43 countries worldwide participated in the annual sport festival. "We are satisfied after a lot of good games at the end of the tournament. Everything has worked really well, and on the court you have seen a lot of good players," was the conclusion of organiser Krister Broman.

In 2016, the European Open will continue with the next edition of the Women's 18 event.

### RESULTS

#### 3/4 Match

Spain vs. Russia 25:22 (13:11)

#### Final

Iceland vs. Sweden 31:29 (13:16)

#### All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Juan Ledo	ESP
Left wing:	Hakon Styrmisson	ISL
Left back:	Eftraim Jerry	NED
Centre back:	Francisco Castro Pena	ESP
Line player:	Arnar Arnarson	ISL
Right back:	Ruslan Dashko	RUS
Right wing:	Francisco Tavares	POR
MVP:	Felix Claar	SWE
Best defence player:	Emil Hansson	SWE
Top scorer:	Miguel Martins	POR 59 goals



### RANKING

- Iceland
- Sweden
- Spain
- Russia
- Portugal
- Netherlands
- Romania
- Slovakia

### RANKING

- Finland
- Estonia
- Czech Republic
- Moldova
- Faroe Islands
- Austria
- Georgia
- Kosovo

# 2015 European Beach Handball Championships

From 26 to 28 June 2015, the town of Lloret de Mar in Spain hosted the Men's and Women's 19 European Beach Handball Championships, as well as the 2015 Beach Handball EUROs for senior national teams from 30 June to 5 July. As the first event opened, the young beach stars of tomorrow provided a flavour of what was to come later.



Spain had the better start to the women's final as they narrowly took the first set 21:20, and up until this point Spain had yet to lose a set in this tournament. However, that particular moment came about in the second set of the final in which Hungary dominated and eventually won 25:13. The subsequent shoot-out turned into a true thriller and at this point, it was clear that the tension had got to both teams. Hungary looked nervous at the start of this head-to-head and failed to convert the third penalty. However, Spain faltered with their fourth attempt and when Spain's goalkeeper Ana Marin Perez missed a direct attempt on goal, Hungary celebrated a 10:8 win in the shoot-out and an overall 2:1 win.



In the men's event, a new winner was crowned with Russia topping the podium in Lloret de Mar. In comparison to the women's showdown, the men's final was a relatively straight forward affair. Russia took the first set 31:16, having proved too strong for Croatia. And the tale of woe for Croatia did not end there. A red card that took Nikita Stepanov out of the game left Croatia weak, and team Russia had no problem exploiting this to take the second set in convincing fashion 28:21.

In the race for third place, the matches that preceded two finals provided more than enough excitement for the teams involved. In the women's event, team Germany let it be known that they were no rookies in the beach handball realm; in their first participation at this level, they outclassed Russia 2:1 to take their very first medal. In the men's bronze match, Spain extinguished any hope Hungary had of leaving Lloret de Mar with a medal, defeating them 2:0 in two great sets.



## RANKING - MEN 19

1. Russia
2. Croatia
3. Spain
4. Hungary
5. Turkey
6. Portugal
7. Switzerland
8. Georgia
9. Romania



## RANKING - WOMEN 19

1. Hungary
2. Spain
3. Germany
4. Russia
5. Turkey
6. Croatia
7. Slovakia
8. Romania
9. Switzerland

## RESULTS - MEN 19

### Semi-finals

Croatia vs. Ukraine	1:2	[18:20, 24:23, 4:6]
Spain vs. Croatia	1:2	[29:30, 26:23, 2:6]

### 3/4 Match

Hungary vs. Spain	0:2	[14:18, 23:24]
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### Final

Russia vs. Croatia	2:0	[31:16, 27:21]
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### Awards

Most Valuable Player:	Marti Gascon Comas	ESP
Best Goalkeeper:	Mislav Smolkovic	CRO
Top Scorer:	Mirko Hess	SUI 89 points
Fair Play Award:	Croatia	

## RESULTS - WOMEN 19

### Semi-finals

Hungary vs. Russia	2:1	[14:15, 21:14, 6:5]
Spain vs. Germany	2:0	[22:13, 15:14]

### 3/4 Match

Russia vs. Germany	1:2	[19:18, 20:25, 4:7]
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### Final

Hungary vs. Spain	2:1	[20:21, 25:13, 10:8]
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### Awards

Most Valuable Player:	Lara Lozano Macias	ESP
Best Goalkeeper:	Magdalena Frey	GER
Top Scorer:	Victoria Vigh	HUN 93 points
Fair Play Award:	Switzerland	

At the end of the 2015 European Beach Handball Championships, the men's team from Croatia won their fourth consecutive gold medal, and Hungary successfully defended the women's title.



Time and again, Croatia has proved to be the undeniable dominant force in men's beach handball and in Lloret de Mar, this was no exception. Even though at the start of the final match Spain had the better start and took the first set 17:15, Croatia recovered quickly and broke Spain's resistance early in the second set to eventually win the second period 32:23. It took the shoot-out to decide the match, and when Juan Vazquez failed to convert Spain's sixth attempt, Ivan Dumencic took the responsibility and successfully delivered Croatia's winning shot.

In the women's event Hungary successfully defended their title they won in Randers in 2013 with a hard-fought 2:1 win against Norway. The women's final also needed the shoot-out to decide the winner.



Norway won the first set 17:16; Hungary took the second 18:17, and when the first two Norwegian players failed to deliver in the shoot-out, Hungary carved out a strong lead, which eventually enabled them to win 7:4.

There was no shortage of shoot-outs in the matches for third place either, as both bronze medal matches, Spain vs. Italy and Ukraine vs. Hungary, needed the third set to claim their medals. In the placement matches, Poland won the all-important battle against Netherlands for the last remaining World Championship place in the women's competition after claiming fifth place. Russia came seventh by defeating Ukraine. In the men's event Russia came fifth after a 2:1 win against Serbia, and Norway finished seventh after a 2:1 win against Germany.

All four teams that reached the medal matches - Croatia, Spain, Ukraine, Hungary (men); Hungary, Norway, Italy, Spain, and Poland (women) - have all secured their places at the VII Beach Handball World Championships organised by the IHF hosted in Budapest, Hungary in Summer 2016.



## RESULTS - MEN

### Semi-finals

Croatia vs. Ukraine	2:1	[28:29, 24:20, 9:6]
Spain vs. Hungary	2:1	[18:22, 27:24, 4:0]

### 3/4 Match

Ukraine vs. Hungary	2:1	[24:19, 15:17, 7:4]
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### Final

Croatia vs. Spain	2:1	[15:17, 32:23, 9:8]
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### Awards

Most Valuable Player:	Juan Vazquez	ESP	
Best Goalkeeper:	Igor Totic	CRO	
Top Scorer:	Juan Vazquez	ESP	164 points
Fair Play Award:	Norway		

## RESULTS - WOMEN

### Semi-finals

Spain vs. Norway	1:2	[13:10, 10:13, 8:10]
Italy vs. Hungary	1:2	[20:11, 14:19, 6:9]

### 3/4 Match

Spain vs. Italy	1:2	[19:6, 7:9, 6:8]
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### Final

Norway vs. Hungary	1:2	[16:17, 18:17, 4:7]
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### Awards

Most Valuable Player:	Kitti Groz	HUN	
Best Goalkeeper:	Monika Pruenster	ITA	
Top Scorer:	Isabel Barnard	NED	108 points
Fair Play Award:	Serbia		

## RANKING

1.	Croatia
2.	Spain
3.	Ukraine
4.	Hungary
5.	Russia
6.	Serbia

## RANKING

7.	Norway
8.	Germany
9.	Poland
10.	Sweden
11.	Italy
12.	Switzerland

## RANKING

1.	Hungary
2.	Norway
3.	Italy
4.	Spain
5.	Poland
6.	Netherlands
7.	Russia

## RANKING

8.	Ukraine
9.	Croatia
10.	Switzerland
11.	Serbia
12.	Sweden
13.	Germany
14.	Montenegro

# The World Stage

**P**articipation in any national team event is a source of pride for the delegations and national federations. Thus, when European teams qualify to intercontinental events organised by the International Handball Federation and the International Olympic Committee, it is especially pleasing to watch our teams give strong performances. Once again, Europe performed exceedingly well taking 11 medals in total – 5 bronze, 3 silver, and 3 gold medals. We take this moment to congratulate our teams.





# 2015 Men's Handball World Championship

The French national team proved once again, why they are nicknamed "Les Experts" at the 2015 Men's World Championship in Qatar by beating the hosts in the final by 25:22 (14:11). Thanks to this result, after an unbeaten record in the whole competition, France are the first team in history to become World Champions for the fifth time and for the second time to hold all major titles (Olympic, EHF EURO and World championships) concurrently.

The fourth ever Men's World Championship to be hosted outside Europe saw a record number of 15 European teams among the 24 participants. Only four European teams missed the qualification to the knock-out stage, and with the exception of Qatar (the first ever non-European team to make it to a Men's World Championship final) the quarter-finals were an all-European affair.

Nonetheless, all teams were outclassed by the French side who took their fifth trophy at World Championships after 1995, 2001, 2009 and 2011. For the third time after the 2009 World Championship (in Croatia) and the EHF EURO 2014 (in Denmark) they beat the host team in the final; and thanks to their EURO (2014) and Olympic (2012) victories, the French national team once again hold all major trophies as it was in 2010.

In addition to gold medals and the trophy, France booked their ticket to Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Olympic Games. Five more European teams - Poland (EHF EURO 2016 host), Spain, Denmark, Croatia and Germany - as well as Qatar have clinched their berth for the three Olympic Qualification Tournaments in April 2016.

The second best ranked European team in Doha was Poland after an extremely thrilling bronze medal match against Spain. The team of coach Michael Biegler provided a perfect basis for hosting the next EHF EURO by beating the EHF EURO 2014 bronze medallist Spain by 29:28 after extra-time. Poland turned around an 18:22 deficit with nine minutes left to force a period of extra-time, finally Michal Szyba zoned in to score the winning goal.

After Qatar had eliminated three European teams (Austria, Germany, and Poland) in the knock-out stage, France were aware of their opponent in the final, but the match was decided only 70 seconds before the



final buzzer, when Daniel Narcisse scored for the final score of 25:22. Thierry Omeyer, named the most valuable player and best goalkeeper of the tournament, was invaluable to the French victory. After Jerome Fernandez, Omeyer is the only player to have attained four World Championship titles.

The only really hard nut to crack for France were Spain, their semi-final opponents, after Onesta's squad had easily eliminated Argentina and Slovenia in the eighth-finals and quarter-finals. The second semi-final between Qatar and Poland was another thriller, but the individual class of the Qatar strikers and goalkeeper Danijel Saric was instrumental.

One of the biggest surprise teams of the event was Germany. Having failed in the play-offs against Poland and after receiving an IHF wild card, they made it to the quarter-final and earned a place in the Olympic Qualification tournament over the other European surprise Slovenia, whose squad included the top scorer of the competition, Dragan Gajic.

EHF EURO 2014 finalist Denmark narrowly missed the semi-final in an excellent match against Spain, as Joan Canellas scored the win with the final buzzer. Another surprise was the Croatian defeat in the quarter-finals against Poland after a clear lead in the second half. The consequence: Coach Slavko Goluzica resigned from his position.



## RESULTS

### Quarter-finals

CRO vs. POL	22:24	[10:12]
QAT vs. GER	26:24	[18:14]
SLO vs. FRA	23:32	[10:18]
DEN vs. ESP	24:25	[11:11]

### Semi-finals

POL vs. QAT	29:31	[13:16]
ESP vs. FRA	22:26	[14:18]

### 3/4 Match

POL vs. ESP	29:28	[24:24, 13:13]
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### Final

QAT vs. FRA	22:25	[11:14]
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## FINAL RANKING

1. France

2. Qatar

3. Poland

4. Spain

5. Denmark

6. Croatia

7. Germany

8. Slovenia

9. FYR Macedonia

10. Sweden

11. Iceland

12. Argentina

## FINAL RANKING

13. Austria

14. Egypt

15. Tunisia

16. Brazil

17. Czech Republic

18. Belarus

19. Russia

20. Bosnia Herzegovina

21. Iran

22. Saudi Arabia

23. Chile

24. Algeria

# 2014 Women's Junior World Handball Championship

In a totally unexpected victory the national team of Korea became the 2014 women's junior (U20) world champion after a surprising one-sided final in Koprivnica against Russia, the 2013 Women's 19 EHF EURO champion. With a 34:27 [16:10] win, the Asian champions became the first non-European world champion in this age category at the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of this competition. Russia missed out on a 12<sup>th</sup> title and lost their second straight final in this age category after the 2010 event in Korea against Norway.

In the final, the incredible 3:3 defence was the key to success for the Korean team, and it was the nine goals of Hyojin Lee, named both top scorer and most valuable player of the tournament, that caused the most trouble for the Russians. During a weak period in the first half, which proved to be downfall of the 2012 World Youth Championship silver medallists, Korea forged ahead taking the score to 16:8 leaving little room for Russia to play catch up. But despite making a brief comeback, putting up a great fight at the start of the second half, and reducing the gap intermediately to only three goals, the Russian players could not turn the tide in their favour, as Korea continued to dominate with impressive athleticism.



Prior to the final in the match for third place, Denmark managed to deny Germany victory, snatching the bronze medal from the German team, which had been ahead until the final stages, but then missed too many clear chances to take their place on the podium. Despite many technical mistakes on both sides, the Danes always managed to close the gap when the goal deficit grew too large, and when it mattered the most, in the second half, they cruised past their German counterparts to take a 20:17 lead.

In the semi-final, the Danes – who had defeated Russia in the 2012 U18 World Championship final, had been close to stopping the Kirilenko's express, but Russia kept the upper hand and by maintaining a very small advantage, and got to the final on a 31:29 [17:13] victory that was deemed the best match of the whole competition. In the second semi-final, Germany never stood a chance against the high-speed handball played by Korea, losing by 28:24 [15:11].

Four more European teams had been part of the quarter-finals and finally took the positions 5 to 8: France, Romania, Hungary and Netherlands. Romania had been one of the main contenders for a medal in Croatia, but the team was eliminated by soon-to-be champions Korea in the quarter-finals. Another handball dynasty missed the quarter-finals; Norway sensationally nose-dived in the eight-finals [24:28] against Germany, while the high flying hopes of host Croatia were shattered in the same round by Netherlands.

## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Denmark vs. Russia 29:31 [13:17]

Korea vs. Germany 28:24 [15:11]

### 3/4 Match

Denmark vs. Germany 21:20 [11:14]

### Final

Russia vs. Korea 27:34 [10:16]



## RANKING

1. Korea
2. Russia
3. Denmark
4. Germany
5. France
6. Romania
7. Hungary
8. Netherlands
9. Norway
10. Croatia
11. Czech Republic
12. Serbia

## RANKING

13. Sweden
14. Slovenia
15. Brazil
16. Portugal
17. Japan
18. Uruguay
19. China
20. Argentina
21. Angola
22. Tunisia
23. Kazakhstan
24. DR Congo

# 2014 Women's Youth World Handball Championship

Whilst Romania is a top team in all female younger age competitions and always seen among the main contenders on a European and world stage, since winning the Women's 19 European Championship title in 2000, all efforts at winning another medal have been futile. But the tenacity of the team was not in vain, and the long wait for the nation was finally over as a new generation of players won the IHF Women's Youth [U18] World Championship in August 2014. In incredible style, Romania dominated team Germany to take the gold medal 32:21 (15:7) in the final.

In this event, the fourteen teams from Europe put on a good performance with all of them ranking in the top twenty, with eight ranking in the top ten; gold for Romania, silver for Germany, and Denmark taking the bronze medal in their match against Montenegro in a close match that ended 19:20 (13:8). The All Star Team roster was also a source of pride with all positions, with the exception of the top scorer, coming from the Europe. The Romanian delegation – which included three of the All Star Team players – ended the competition unbeaten; they tied to a draw early in the preliminary round against Denmark, and both teams also defeated Germany in the first stage of the tournament.

By the time the competition was ready for the quarter-final stage, eighty matches had been played and Europe had six teams still going strong. Three of the quarter-final matches were clearly decided as Germany left Korea without a chance; Denmark played a strong game keeping the young Russian team at bay; and Romania easily handled the Dutch delegation. Only Montenegro experienced a fierce quarter-final against Brazil, with the team having to work very hard for every goal; but their resolve paid off after they took the match by a single goal to win 25:24.



## All Star Team

Goalkeeper:	Jessica Jochims	GER	
Left wing:	Itana Grbic	MNE	
Left back:	Bianca Maria Bazalio	ROU	
Centre back:	Cristina Laslo	ROU	
Line player:	Lorena Ostase	ROU	
Right back:	Djurcina Malovic	MNE	
Right wing:	Stine Bindlev Holm	DEN	
MVP:	Emily Bölk	GER	
Top scorer:	Sojeong Yu	KOR	81 goals



## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

ROU vs. MNE	28:25 (12:13)
GER vs. DEN	26:24 (10:10)

### 3/4 Match

MNE vs. DEN	19:20 (13:8)
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### Final

ROU vs. GER	32:21 (15:7)
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The two semi-finals proved to be a perfect promotion of handball in this age category as the Romania-Montenegro duel was a pure battle royale on an equal level for 58 minutes. But when the Romanians scored a triple strike after the 24:24 the deal had been sealed. Boosted by their brilliant quarter-final performance against Korea, Germany had been ahead for the whole 60 minutes against Denmark and seemed to be on the winners' way when the score was 21:16, and even as the Danes managed to close the gap goal by goal, the German team stood strong enough to defend a 26:24 until the end.

The bronze medal match also had the crowds on the edge for 60 minutes, and like their counterparts in the Junior World Championship in Croatia, the Danes took the silver medal. Though Montenegro left empty-handed, the team took the lead in the first half of the match over Denmark with 13 goals to eight. Nevertheless, it was clear in the second half that Montenegro was losing steam and had to put in tremendous effort for each goal. In minute 56, Denmark took their first lead at 19:18 and kept that minimal lead until the final whistle, taking the bronze medal 20:19.

After such an equal clash, the fans expected the same for the final, instead they were taught a Romanian lesson in handball: already after 13 minutes, the German defence was broken, when the unstoppable opponent took the lead by 7:1, a solid foundation for the victory to come. Changing sides with an eight goal advance (15:7) had already paved the way for the Romanian gold medal and 18 minutes before the end of the match, the margin was double-figured at 12:22. The German delegation was thoroughly defeated; but there was some recognition for Germany, Emily Bölk, daughter of 1993 world champion Andrea Bölk, was awarded the accolade of most valuable player of the competition.

## RANKING

- Romania
- Germany
- Denmark
- Montenegro
- Korea
- Netherlands
- Brazil
- Russia
- Sweden
- Croatia
- Portugal
- Argentina

## RANKING

- Norway
- Japan
- Hungary
- France
- FYR Macedonia
- Tunisia
- Paraguay
- Angola
- Kazakhstan
- China
- Congo
- Uzbekistan



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# 2014 Youth Olympic Games

The second edition of the Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing, China was held from 16 to 28 August 2014. Over 3,600 young athletes from 201 nations participated in 222 events that showcased 28 sport disciplines, among them handball that was played in the Jiangning Sports Centre.

Headed by the new boys' champions Slovenia, and applauded by President Dr. Thomas Bach of the International Olympic Committee, all four European participants returned home from the Youth Olympic Games with medals around their necks. After another final defeat, the Russian girls were celebrated as silver medallists, while the bronze medals in the both events were awarded to Scandinavian teams: to the Swedish girls and the Norwegian boys.

Debutant Slovenia was the only team from a total of twelve to finish the event with an unbeaten record of four victories. In the final, the team of head coach Janez Klemencic dethroned defending YOG champions Egypt in a 31:25 [13:11] victory. The match was equal until the score reached 20:19, and then Slovenia scored a 6:0 series to win the first Olympic medal (including senior teams) for the Slovenian Handball Federation.

Following a bronze victory at the Junior World Championships in 2003 and 2009, bronze at the Men's 20 EHF EURO events in 2004, 2010 and 2012, and gold at the 2013 European Youth Olympic Festival in Utrecht; the triumph at Nanjing was the biggest success for Slovenian youth handball. Match winners in the final were goalkeeper Urh Kastelic with 11 saves and top scorers Gal Marguc and Blaz Janc with eight goals each.

While the Slovenians were celebrating, the Russian girls received their silver medals after an unlucky 31:32 [14:17] final defeat against Korea.



The Asian champions were the Russian nightmare last summer: seven weeks after the junior (U20) team lost the final of the World Championship in Croatia [34:37] against Korea, the same fate visited the youth girls (U18) in Nanjing. And the runners-ups of the Women's 17 European Championship in Poland did not only lose their second straight final against Korea, but also lost their second consecutive YOG final after they had conceded a 26:28 defeat four years ago in Singapore against Denmark. The final was thrilling as the lead constantly changed, it was a most worthy gold medal match. Nothing was decided until the 56<sup>th</sup> minute, then Russia who were in the lead [29:30] missed three chances; the Koreans seized the opportunity and decided the game with a triple strike, winning 32:31.

In the bronze medal matches, both Scandinavian participants won their respective duels: Sweden beat Brazil 23:16, and Norway, runners-ups at the European Youth Olympic Festival, dominated Qatar and took the match with ease with a clear 34:26 win. Russia [30:22 against Brazil] in the girls competition and Egypt [34:26 against Qatar] in the boys competition won their semi-finals in style and made it to the finals with an unbeaten record, while Korea [25:24 against Sweden] and Slovenia [33:30 against Norway] had to struggle hard in their fight for the gold medal.

The next Summer Youth Olympic Games will be hosted in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires in 2018 – and handball will undergo a major change in YOG programme, as for the first time not the indoor, but the beach version will be staged in Buenos Aires.



## RESULTS - GIRLS

### Semi-finals

Korea vs. Sweden	25:24 [11:10]
Russia vs. Brazil	30:22 [17:7]

### 3/4 Match

Sweden vs. Brazil	23:16 [11:5]
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### Final

Korea vs. Russia	32:31 [17:14]
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## RANKING

1. Korea
2. Russia
3. Sweden
4. Brazil
5. Angola
6. China

## RESULTS - BOYS

### Semi-finals

Egypt vs. Qatar	34:26 [15:14]
Norway vs. Slovenia	30:33 [14:13]

### 3/4 Match

Qatar vs. Norway	25:33 [13:19]
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### Final

Egypt vs. Slovenia	25:31 [11:13]
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## RANKING

1. Slovenia
2. Egypt
3. Norway
4. Qatar
5. Brazil
6. Tunisia

## The Expert View

**O**n the sidelines and behind the scenes there are many people that lend support to the athletes, be it on a club or national team level; and the players themselves have a unique view of the sport. Whether it is a group phase match in the European Cup, or a qualification, or even a final tournament, a considerable amount of work goes in to the organisation of every event. From the development and preparation of players to long-term strategies and goals, the European Handball Federation had the pleasure of having conversations with some key persons who work their magic both off and on the court.



# Conversations.. Martin Hausleitner



*In 2012, Austria had hosted nearly all the same teams, during the Men's 18 European Championship; and Austria's latest endeavours in hosting a YAC event was most successful. This was due to the Organising Committee being well-rehearsed and experienced, says Martin Hausleitner, Secretary General of the Austrian Handball Federation (ÖHB).*

*In this interview, the ÖHB Secretary General shares his thoughts about hosting the 2014 Men's 20 European Championship.*

The 2014 Men's 20 European Championship played in Linz and Traun marked the fifth time Austria had hosted a major European handball tournament, the federation previously hosted the European Championships of 2005 (Women 17), 2006 (Men 20), EHF EURO 2010, and the 2012 Men's 18 event.

## **Looking back on the organisation of the 2014 Men's 20 European Championship - what are your major reflections and impressions?**

» It was a success in terms of organisation and in terms of the sporting performances of the teams. Since the Men's EHF EURO in 2010, we have built up a team of organisers in the various departments, which has the experience and the know-how for such events. For the most part, since as Austria played in Linz, one of the 2010 venues, we even had nearly all of the same volunteer staff members as we had four years ago.

## **Why did you host the event in Linz and Traun, two cities very close to each other?**

» This was part of our concept, all teams were accommodated in the same hotels, and everybody had short distances to travel, a maximum of five kilometres, which the teams really appreciated.

## **How was the general response of the participants?**

» We only had positive feedback on the event. For us the players and teams are the clear focus - so, if they were satisfied, we were satisfied too. In general, it was a very positive event; the only negative point was the number of spectators. We had hoped for more than the 18,000 who attended the matches.

## **What, if any, impact did this event have on handball in Austria?**

» We always have two goals when we host events like the Men's 20 European Championships; firstly we want to create great opportunities for those who represent Austria on the court; but those players were already "on fire", as we had had hosted the Men's 18 event with the same group two years ago in Austria. So, again, they could enter the stage again on home ground. The second goal is to increase the public interest for handball in general in Austria. We managed for the first time to have a live TV broadcast of the final, and by organising coaches' courses and youth training sessions in the framework of the event we increased the public interest too. So we could reach new target groups for handball and spread our sport.

## **Was it an additional impetus for Austrian handball that your player Nikola Bilyk was awarded Most Valuable Player of the competition?**

» It was a nice experience and a deserved award for him. I believe this award was a significant moment in his career, and no coincidence that half a year later he signed a contract with THW Kiel in Germany. But in general we have to consider the huge steps this team has made thanks to the funding from a sponsor, which has aided the constant improvement and preparation.

## **The next major event for the Austrian Handball Federation will be the co-hosting of the Men's EHF EURO 2020 with Sweden and Norway. What are your plans until then?**

» We would like to organise more Younger Age Category events, as those are a great platform to bring handball forward in Austria. Unfortunately, we cannot host another tournament in the next two years due to state funding restrictions. But we are ready for more events, and we will definitely bid for a younger age category event in 2018 or 2019 to have a preparation for the men's event in 2020. We want to implement the structures and want to educate our staff. We are already in the starting blocks for future events.

# Conversations... Attila Heim



*It was an honour for Hungary to be granted the opportunity to organise and host another Women's EHF EURO ten years after hosting their first in 2004; but this time around the Hungarian Handball Federation would be co-hosting the event with their neighbours, the Croatian Handball Federation.*

*This special and high-quality event meant that the European handball community were paying close attention to the hosts. The Federation tried live up to the standards set by the EHF, in addition to giving something special to their visitors. Attila Heim, the EHF EURO 2014 competition director, took the time to share his experience with us.*

» When this position was offered to me, I was over the moon. Being part of the event was a very special chance for a sport organiser like me. Making fast decisions, living and breathing the event every moment is a big challenge and a distinct opportunity. I was dealing with similar projects in handball before and I enjoyed every minute of it. I felt responsible for a successful organisation, but I wasn't alone because I got a lot of help from the leaders of EHF EURO department and working with them was elevating.

## **Was it easy to work with EHF EURO department and Croatian Handball Federation?**

» I have only positive memories to share. My cooperation with the Croatian OC was smooth, we helped each other, and I got on quite well with Monika Flixeder and Johannes Muller. The work was really constructive with EURO Events just as with JJ Rowland, Head of EHF Media. In general, all people working for EHF EURO 2014 were extremely precise and professional, everybody gave 100%. They wanted the European Championship to become one of the highest quality events, and they expected the same professional approach from us, as well.

## **How was the local organisation built up?**

» The secret is the preparation and excellent team organisation, where everybody can work together in the team and also work independently. The managing director, Zoltán Marczinka tried to recruit people to the Hungarian Organising Committee who not only had an understanding of the sport, but who also loved handball. Obviously the most important part of organisation was the event itself; with the help of the European Handball Federation, I think we did a good job.

## **Why was the EHF EURO 2014 important for Hungary?**

» Hungary is a frequent bidder for hosting various sport events, we love to host the world; and handball is the second most popular sport in our country. After a big tournament, there is much enthusiasm from children towards the sport, and we as a federation are happy that we can give them something to aim towards. We were able to contribute to the success of the sport and gained valuable experience for organising the upcoming events. We have a very popular national team and the players love getting the chance to shine in front of their home crowd. During the event our supporters always managed to give the national team an extra boost by creating that special atmosphere in the arenas, particularly in Győr and Debrecen.

## **What were your favourite memories from EHF EURO 2014?**

» Although the 'Media Match' where the media representatives played handball each other was something really special, on the whole the EHF EURO 2014 was simply unforgettable as the event had it all: joy, tears, great competition - sportsmanship at its best. Even though a better result from the Hungarian national team would have been great, there is no better way to summarise it actually than our slogan: Handball, I love you!



# Conversations... Kresimir Lackovic



*Croatia co-hosted the Women's EHF EURO 2014, which saw the warm welcome to eight teams in their respective groups based in Varaždin and Osijek, before the best three teams of each group met in the Arena Zagreb for the Main Round.*

*Here Kresimir Lackovic, local media supervisor in "Gradski Vrt" hall in Osijek during the Women's EHF EURO 2014, and journalist and editor of the sport section of "Glas Slavonije" newspaper, shared his views on the event.*

## **As the preparation began for the Women's EHF EURO 2014, what initial challenges did you face?**

» Upon learning that Osijek, Zagreb, and Varaždin were selected to be host cities, we immediately needed to get underway to prepare the venues for the major event. It was an advantage that the infrastructure from the 2009 World Championship had left us with good arenas to begin our work with. We had to plan, prepare, organise and make sure everything ran smoothly. The venues were ready for the fans, but certain aspects of the media organisation required more work. The "Gradski Vrt" venue in Osijek for example needed to be adapted to suit the needs of the EHF EURO, but it was all in place on time.

## **In what way did the experience acquired at the 2009 World Championship aid in the organisation of the Women's EHF EURO 2014?**

» The World Championship in 2009 was a major experience for all of us involved. The very team from 2009 was the one organising this event, and the basis was set in 2009 during the World Championship; it was when the media professionals gathered and gained the invaluable experience to assist in the organisation of the EURO five years later. The final preparation work began in September 2014; the countdown had begun. We had major support from the EHF and the Croatian Handball Federation since the very beginning and throughout the great work that was upon us.

## **Women's handball in Croatia is somewhat overshadowed by the popularity of the men's team. How was this issue addressed from a media standpoint?**

» The group placement was very good for media, marketing, and promotional activities. It was also very favourable for the fans having the neighbouring countries Montenegro and Serbia together in Group D in Osijek. Slovaks are also a prominent minority in Osijek area, so it was a great opportunity for the fans to come and support their teams. On top of that, the highly organised team of France was present as well, which guaranteed great excitement, and interesting matches ahead. I was very happy with the turnout and the media feedback I was getting throughout the competition. Having the Croatian team in Varaždin was also a great opportunity for the fans and media; though the organisation was more challenging due to the high domestic media interest.

## **In Croatia, there is a great interest for handball; how did Croatia's early exit change the situation?**

» That development caused a major problem - a lot of Croatian fans gave up on the event, and the projected capacities were in grave danger of becoming vacant. That created a big challenge for the organisation, especially coming from the smaller venues in Varaždin and Osijek to the big arena in Zagreb, where the main round took place. We were able to come to a solution. This resulted in Arena Zagreb being opened to all fans in addition to a public viewing being organised.

## **Looking to EHF EURO 2018, do you have any thoughts to share?**

» Although the Croatian coast is the main tourist attraction, I hope that the visitors have a chance to see the beauties of the urban Croatia as well. In 2014, the EHF EURO host cities represented Croatia in the best possible way, and did a great job welcoming the teams, the fans, and the media. We have forged invaluable friendships and as we approach the Men's EHF EURO 2018, we are looking forward to seeing everyone back in Croatia in three years.

# Conversations... Helle Thomsen



*Helle Thomsen (44) was the only female coach at the Women's EHF EURO 2014 in Hungary/Croatia; the Dane, who is in charge of the team together with Thomas Sivertsson, is used to being in a man's world; so her situation was really nothing strange or unusual. When not coaching the women's national team, she is a figurehead in the Danish league where she is in charge of FC Midtjylland.*

*In this interview, she reflects on the reasons why there are so few female coaches in women's handball. At the same time, she looks back on her first year as Swedish national coach along with being head coach by Danish champions FC Midtjylland.*

## **What was it like for you to be the only female coach at the Women's EHF EURO 2014?**

» It did not feel peculiar in any way. I am used to the coaching world being a man's world, and for instance, I am also the only female head coach in the Danish league at present. Therefore, I did not really think about being the only female coach at the EURO.

## **In your opinion, why are there so few female coaches in women's top handball?**

» I think it is a bit the same as in the business world, where you also see relatively few female top executives. I think it has something to do with the fact, that when you are head coach at top level, you also have to make the tough decisions; and many women do not like to have to do that. Furthermore, the pressure increases, the higher the level you are on, and so does the attention from the media and the outside world in general. I think many women are not up for that pressure, and therefore, we see so few female top coaches. It is the same in women's football. When you look at female U16 and U18 teams, you see quite a lot of female coaches, but when you reach top senior level, you hardly see any. I think this proves my point.

## **It came as a surprise to many people (at least outside Sweden) that your team managed to take the bronze medal at the EHF EURO 2014. Did it come as a surprise to you too?**

» To a certain degree. That championship was one of the most equal I have ever seen, with a lot of teams who were able to defeat each other. We managed to get off to a good start, and that is extra important at a tournament with so many teams on a par; but in a way, I was a bit surprised at the end.

## **What do you see as the reason for the Swedish success in Hungary and Croatia?**

» As I said, we got a good start, and we managed to keep a stable level, which is also crucial at such an equal tournament. Furthermore, a great deal of our players performed at a very high level which made our squad really deep, and that also contributes over such a long tournament.

## **You have been national coach together with Thomas Sivertsson for a year now. Looking back on that year, what has it been like for you?**

» Of course, it has been very successful due to our great result at the European championship. It has been interesting to experience this way of coaching too. For instance, being away for a championship for four weeks, like we were for the European Championship, was something completely new to me. It is also new that compared to being a club coach, you do not have the chance to work with the players on a daily basis.

## **Along with being national coach in Sweden, you are head coach of the Danish top team FC Midtjylland. How do you manage?**

» First of all, it is important that we are two national coaches. I would probably not be able to manage, if I was alone in the job. Another factor that makes it all possible is that so many Swedish players actually play in Denmark, which makes it easier to follow their form and stay in regular touch with them.

\* At the time of going to print, Helle Thomsen had resigned her position as head coach of the Swedish national team on 31 July 2015.

# Conversations.. Markus Baur



*As a player he was world champion (2007), EHF EURO champion (2004) and Olympic finalist (2004); and even on the court he was a “helping hand” to the former German national team coach Heiner Brand. So it was clear that Markus Baur (44) would become a coach. In addition to coaching Swiss champions Kadetten Schaffhausen, Baur took over the German junior national team in 2012 – and led those boys to Men’s 20 EHF European Championship gold in Austria in 2014. In this interview, he talks about development and the key to success.*

## Looking back on the Men’s 20 European Championship, was it a deserved title for your team?

» Definitely! We won all nine matches including the final, so we were very determined and dominant in this tournament. They are the German golden generation; they have already played four major events – two European Championship tournaments, one World Championship, and the European Olympic Youth Festival – and have returned home each time with medals, including two European Championship titles. Three of those players – Paul Drux, Fabian Wiede, and Simon Ernst – are already part of the men’s national team; a constellation we definitely do not have every year in Germany.

## How much of this trophy is down to you?

» Most of the credit of this success belongs to the club coaches who work hard every day with these players. We – the staff of the national team – do our job as well as we can, but what we need is well prepared material. This team is extremely good, the players have motivation, character and skills – there’s nothing much more to be added by our coaching staff.

## Did you expect to face Sweden again in the Men’s 20 final – recreating the 2012 Men’s 18 Championship final?

» Of course the Swedes belonged to the favourites, just as we had been among the favourites one year ago; but at the U19 World Championship – both teams missed the final. When we saw the squad that Sweden had nominated for Austria, we were sure that they would be able to play a big role in this event.

## At what point were you sure that Germany would be the champions?

» Exactly ten seconds before the final whistle was blown; then we were ahead by two goals, before that, this match was on the edge.

## What was the key to success?

» You have to see that in former German younger age category teams only a few players had been part of Bundesliga clubs. In this team it was different: most of them are part of first league teams, and this situation really boosted their improvement. Most Swedish players are playing for first league teams already at the age of 17; in Germany it was completely different – but fortunately times have changed.

## In your opinion, what is the reason for such a change within the German clubs?

» Our talents have always been first rate on a European and world level, so their performance level up to the age of 20 or 21 had never been bad. Coaches only look at the quality a player can offer and also consider the opportunities the club has in terms of money. So if the clubs sign a Swedish talent, who has more experience compared to a German player, it is no problem for me. But now, all clubs recognise the experience and the strength that German players have, and the players have the quality the clubs are looking for. The seed is growing – and the harvest can be taken by all sides: clubs and national team.

## How important is the new elite concept of the German Handball Federation for the success of your current team?

» These are the first players who have undergone the full programme. This new concept offers the opportunities for a highly individual development process for all players. Finally we can conclude this programme, when more players from the different age groups are selected to the senior team. But the intermediate balance is highly positive.

## Is your team the top favourite for the 2015 U21 World Championship in Brazil?

» I believe so. It depends on which players will be part of our squad. But if all are there, we can go for gold.

\* At the time of going to print, Germany won the bronze medal at the event in Brazil.

# Conversations... Silje Solberg



*Silje Solberg [24] is convinced that it was youth and experience that pulled Norway through the EHF EURO 2014 in Hungary/Croatia. Solberg advanced from third to first choice of the coach as a pregnancy and an injury waylaid his other goalkeepers.*

*Solberg, who also had her twin sister Sanna in the Norwegian team, mastered the challenge so well that she did not only contribute to Norway winning the championship, but she also was nominated to the All Star Team of the tournament. Away from the national team, Solberg is the goalkeeper for the Danish club 'Team Tvis Holstebro'.*

## What do you see as the reason for the Norwegian success at the EHF EURO 2014?

» We were many players in the team; some who were new, but others who had been in the team for four or five years, and who had therefore already played at quite a few championships. I think the combination of youth and experience brought us far. We were a bit like the underdogs this time around, but our will to win and our belief in ourselves contributed to pull us through. We were lying behind in several matches, but we never doubted in ourselves, and therefore, we came back every time. Furthermore, Thorir (national coach Thorir Hergeirsson) was good at using the entire squad which meant that we had more resources at the end, than some of the other contenders may have had.

## What do you remember in particular from the tournament?

» The final against Spain, obviously, but also the win against Denmark. Previously, we had lost three or four matches in a row against Denmark, so it really was a great experience to finally beat them again!

## You were nominated for the All Star Team. What did that mean to you?

» In fact, it was bit unreal. However, I took the chance as Kari got injured at an early stage, and it worked out well. I had confidence from a successful first half of the season in the Danish league, and I took that with me into the European Championship, I suppose.

## You have just finished your first season outside Norway with the Danish Team Tvis Holstebro. What has that been like for you?

» It has been good for my development to play in the strong Danish league and to be challenged in every match. Of course, I have had to get used to being away from friends and boyfriend and family in Norway, but they are all good at visiting me in Denmark, and I also have the opportunity to come home and visit them from time to time, so actually everything is fine.

## With Team Tvis Holstebro, you also won the Women's EHF Cup this season; two titles in one season. Would you say that your season has been perfect?

» Yes, close to perfect at least. Of course, it would also have been great to have qualified for the Danish championship finals, but with these two titles and the bronze medal in the Danish championship too, I still think I can call my season perfect.

## The World Championship is coming up next, and that is going to be in Denmark, where you have your career? What will that be like?

» First of all, I will have to wait and see if I even get nominated at all. There are many strong goalkeepers around the Norwegian national team, but, of course, it would be great to play a championship on home ground, so to speak. Furthermore, we are going to play close to Norway, so there will undoubtedly be a lot of Norwegian fans coming down to support us. It will actually be like playing at home!



# Conversations... Ignacio Plaza



*The line player Ignacio Plaza (20), standing tall at 195cm, has already made a name for himself in the handball world. When Julen Aguinagalde retires from the Spanish national team, he can probably do so with an easy mind; the successor seems to be ready. In fact, Ignacio Plaza is heading for the international elite at high speed.*

*At the 2014 Men's 20 European Championship in Austria, Plaza was nominated to the All Star team. The next task for Ignacio Plaza and his national team mates will be the IHF U21 World Championship in Brazil; and as this interview reveals, it takes quite a lot to impress him.*

## What did it mean to you to be nominated for the All Star Team at the M20 in Austria?

» It was a prize for the great work done in the championship, but that is not the most important thing. The significant thing was that we won the bronze medal against Denmark: this was the big prize for me and for the team, and a reward for all of our hard work. The nomination to the All Star Team is a prize, but it is definitely secondary.

## What do think of your own and the Spanish team's performance at the M20?

» We increased our performance level as the championship developed in the later stages. We started as we always do in every championship - not so focused on the tournament, but step by step we managed to improve, until we reached a good way of playing, which allowed us to achieve the goal - the bronze medal.

## Many experts see you as one of the greatest talents in international handball at the moment - and definitely as one of the most promising young line players. How do you feel about that? Do you view this as pressure or motivation?

» It is not a pressure, it is a motivation! I believe you should never limit yourself, you have to achieve more and more ambitious targets, and at this age, we have achieved nothing yet. You can play better or worse, but at this age you have not reached your limit. One must be ambitious and always search for more in order to give your best.

## As a player, what do you see as your strengths and what are your weaknesses?

» As a weakness, I would say especially the defence aspect; I haven't reached the level where I would like to be. The best things are mostly on the offensive traits; I could highlight my capacity to block and spin, when in I am in possession of the ball.

## You will continue your club career in the German Bundesliga with Füchse Berlin; what expectations do you have about playing in such a strong league?

» I expect to play as much as possible in my new team, and adapt to it as soon as possible. It is a radical change. The goal is to adapt fast and be able to give my 100% quickly.

## Already at the age of 16, you had your debut in the VELUX EHF Champions League. What has changed since your time with BM Ciudad Real?

» When I played in Ciudad Real it was a different. Now, to play the Champions League has another importance; in Ciudad Real, I was very young and I didn't belong to the "senior" team - I played in the younger team. Now, for me to play the Champions League would mean to play it actively, and I look forward to playing in this competition.

## What are your ambitions on a long-term basis regarding your national team career and at club level?

» Once I arrive in Germany, I would like to continue there. I know that it's hard, but when you make it to such a strong league as the Bundesliga, my long-term goal is to stay there as long as possible.



# Talking National Teams... Germany



*In the current EHF and IHF ranking list, it is Germany that tops the men's list for younger age category competitions. There are at least three U21 players in the core men's national team squad; many young stars now have key roles in Bundesliga clubs. Additionally, the women's youth teams made it to both World Championship semi-finals in 2014.*

*The not-so-secret weapon in the development arsenal in the German Handball Federation is the 'Elite Advancement Concept'. Following a successful start with the male players, the programme will soon be adapted for the female talents. Here, Wolfgang Sommerfeld, sports director of the German Handball Federation, shares his view on the successful youth programme and how talents can now rise in Bundesliga.*

## Are you surprised that Germany tops the IHF and EHF ranking lists for YAC events?

» No, as we have been among the best consistently over the previous eight, nine years. In some years we were number one, in some we were second. So we knew that our youth programme was well positioned. However, we have optimised certain aspects, mainly the individual advancement of the players.

## How did you implement those changes?

» In the past, our top talents made their way to the men's national team at an age of 26 or 27, as only then they had the international level to compete. With our new concept, we managed to change this method completely. From those 14 players, who are part of this elite concept, twelve play for Bundesliga clubs. Some of them have already taken over key roles in their clubs – a fact, which had been completely different some years ago. If you look at the Men's EHF EURO 2016 qualification match in Spain, Fabian Wiede, Simon Ernst, and Paul Drux, were all part of the team that won the 2014 Men's 20 European Championship.

## What makes this concept so special?

» As the former mentor of this concept, I visited those elite players three to five times a year in their clubs and talked to their coaches. We visited their schools and because the concept also includes the non-sportive career, we also went to their training companies. Every player was given a training plan, which is matched with the club coaches and the coaches of DHB and the regional federations. Every one of those young players needs to have an individual programme, as younger talents train in a different way to older players. The development framework is all about everybody involved taking his part of the responsibility.

## With the current U21 team – the reigning M20 European champions – flying high, can Germany count on more “renewable handball resources”?

» Our current team consisting of players born 1994 to 1996 is really a golden generation. Our former men's national team coach Heiner Brand just said that no country in the world can count on so many talented players in this age group. But we can count on younger players who will step up in the upcoming years. We just have to make some more adjustments such as the athletic base of those players. In this aspect, nations like France or Croatia are still ahead of us.

## What is the plan for the female youth programme?

» We are currently adapting this elite concept for the girls. Our female youth coordinator Maik Nowak is working on this task and is trying to adopt those things and to standardise the programmes. But looking upon the results of our U18 and U20 teams in 2014, when they reached the semi-finals of their respective World Championships, shows that we are on the right path.

## And what has changed in the relationship of Bundesliga clubs to the Federation?

» The club coaches recognise the potential of our talents now. All coaches nowadays count on young German players and support them in their development by ideal training conditions. And none of those players, coming from the elite programme, have ever disappointed any of those Bundesliga clubs.

# Talking National Teams... Denmark



*Flemming Dam Larsen and Heine Eriksen, national team coaches of the women's U19 and U17 team, both view the development of the up-and-coming talent in Denmark as a topic to be taken as a whole. According to the two men in charge of the country's two female junior teams, it is no coincidence that Denmark came out as number one in European women's youth handball in the 2014/15 season. In light of Denmark being on the top spot, Larsen and Eriksen took time out of their demanding schedules to talk to the EHF, and gave their opinions on various elements of development such as the various approaches to training, the availability of players, and the value of cooperation.*



## **Bearing in mind the performances of the YAC national teams, how do you view the current development strategy in Denmark?**

- » **Larsen (U19):** The girls' project launched by the Danish Handball Federation has become a great success and means that we can usually develop six to eight top players from each vintage.
- » **Eriksen (U17):** There is great cooperation between the Danish Handball Federation, the respective national teams, the clubs – this includes the coaches and officials, as well as with the schools the players attend. We also strive to involve the players personally in the process, and that way we create a whole solution. We also have a geographical advantage, Denmark is a small country; it is easy to get around to the clubs and have the necessary talks with the coaches and individual players. But, we are also keen to learn from other countries. Training more and harder is something we can learn from other countries. In Denmark, hardness is generally not something we like, neither in the schools nor in other parts of society, so an increased hardness in training and in playing is definitely something we can learn from others.

## **It is no secret that the number of handball players in Denmark has continued to decrease over the years, but this trend has not hit the junior national teams yet...**

- » **Eriksen (U17):** We are not feeling this negative trend at the level from which we recruit the players for the national teams. But, there is no doubt that if the trend continues, we will feel it within four or five years. However, the federation has launched so many great initiatives to counteract that development that I am sure we will see a change before it gets that far.

## **With the Women's 19 and Women's 17 European Championship upon us, how easy was it to put your teams together?**

- » **Larsen (U19):** When nominating my squad for Spain, I was not in the same situation as many of my colleagues in other countries who had to search for the last four, five, or six players for their squads. Unlike others, I was in a position where I had to drop some players from the roster. Of course, it is never nice to have to tell a player that she has not been nominated, but still it is a pleasant situation for a coach to have so many players to choose from.
- » **Eriksen (U17):** Actually, in preparing this squad for the W17 championship in FYR Macedonia in August, I can say that this vintage is a bit atypical compared to what we are used to. Normally, we have some very deep squads, but this time we have relatively few top players. However, this also opens an interesting perspective, as we also have a wish to create great individualists, and this may give us a chance to do just that.

## **What does the near future hold for your squads?**

- » **Larsen (U19):** I see several future senior internationals among my players. Right now, I cannot say exactly which players we may expect to see in the senior team any time soon, especially in the goalkeeper position; we have a couple of players who I expect will develop and progress to the senior national team level.
- » **Eriksen (U17):** Among my girls, I can easily spot four or five players who are likely to make it into the senior team.

# Holding the cards... The Referee Report



## Making a difference...

The top referee Laurent Reveret (39) can already look back on many highlights in a great career which is far from over. The VELUX EHF Champions League, the World Championships, and the Olympic Games are just some of the finals that Reveret and his partner have presided over. Reveret, who is also in charge of developing new referees in France, knows that even top referees have to keep in

top physical and mental shape in order to keep up with today's fast and intense handball.

## What has been your greatest experience during your already long career as a referee?

» Without any doubt, the men's handball tournament at the 2012 Olympic Games in London; the quarter-final between Iceland and Hungary, which ended with a Hungarian victory by one goal after two extra times. And, of course, the final match of the 2011 VELUX EHF FINAL4: FC Barcelona vs. BM Ciudad Real, which ended with a win for Barcelona. However, I have a lot of nice memories in my head, of course.

## Over the years, handball has become faster and more intense. Has this made it more difficult to be a referee, and what can you do as a referee to keep up with this development?

» The pressure today is very high, and we have to be able to face it with a good physical and mental preparation. For this, we will need more time to train in the future, and we will have to think about some kind of semi-professional status for international referees.

## You have had two partners during your career as an international top referee. How long does it take to adjust to a new partner?

» To be honest, in our case it went faster than I could have imagined. The most difficult part is to show and prove that you are back on top with a new partner. He was also an EHF referee before we started refereeing together, and he had some nice games in the EHF Champions League. Usually, it is very hard to come back when you change partners, but we have worked hard and worked well together. We feel very motivated.

## You are also responsible for the formation of young referees in France. How do you see the future of refereeing? Do you see many potential top referees?

» We are working hard with the new generation, especially from a mental point of view in order to enable them to handle stress in all situations.



## Congratulations...

In the 2014/15 season, two EHF Referee Candidates Courses were held. Following the conclusion of the courses in November 2015 and July 2015, the following persons achieved the EHF Referee status.

Denic Bolic / Christoph Hurich	AUT
Davor Loncar / Zoran Loncar	CRO
J. Kirkholm Madsen	DEN
Ismailj Metalari / Nenad Nikolovski	MKD
Yves Schols / Roel Zuijlen	NED
Bogdan Kaludjerovic / Ivan Vujacic	MNE
Jakub Jerlecki / Maciej Labun	POL
Konstantin Ershov / Anton Pavljukov	RUS
Emil Blanck / Anreas Isen	SWE

## Salutations...

The European Handball Federation says goodbye and thank you to the referees, who decided to lay down their cards and hang up their whistles at the end of the season, as well as the five EHF delegates who have written their final reports. As we wish them the best in their future endeavours, we thank for their dedication to the sport.

Shlomo Cohen / Yoram Peretz	ISR
Leif Poulsen	DEN
Holger Fleisch / Jürgen Rieber	GER
Libor Skruzny	CZE
Kim-Rune Stenhaugmo	NOR
Samuel Bernet / Dominique Wick	SUI
Toni Schlick	AUT
Leif Sundell	FIN
Jean Simon	LUX
Gordana Naceva	MKD
Stevan Popov	SRB



### Up & coming...

The European Handball Federation is pleased to announce that the Young Referee Programme continues to be a success. In the season 2014/15, a total of 60 referees, which included 18 female couples, from 33 countries were registered with the programme. In their quest to gain the experience needed before they can apply for EHF status, these young referees were nominated to the most recent editions of the EUSA Games in Rotterdam (NED), Cell Cup in Veszprem (HUN), Lundaspelen in Lund (SWE), Prague Handball Cup in Prague (CZE), Vrillittos Youth Tournament in Veria (GRE), Norwegian Youth Play-Offs in Bergen (NOR), M19 European Open in Gothenburg (SWE), and the European Youth Olympic Festival in Tbilisi (GEO).



### On the rise...

As a testament to the programme, the EHF would like to introduce the Sa sisters. Seeing double on the handball courts is no new phenomenon in international top handball. In the 2013/14 season, the twins Marta and Vania Sa [28] achieved EHF status, thus being the first female referee pair on the international scene from Portugal. Marta and Vania have been refereeing together for 11 years, and as Marta reveals in this interview, the Sa sisters are ready for the Olympics.

### What is it like to be refereeing with your twin sister? What are the advantages - and are there any disadvantages?

» Refereeing with my twin sister is amazing! We have grown together, so after 28 years of living and eleven years of refereeing with her we sometimes don't even need to talk with each other to know what the other one is thinking. That is probably the main advantage. In the matches, we are always one step ahead because we can predict the next step of one another. The fact that the players can't tell us apart could be seen as an advantage on the one hand; but this is also a disadvantage, because a player or a coach talks to one of us and then when he talks to other he usually thinks that he is talking to the same one!

### You and your sister form the first female pair of international referees from Portugal. How does that make you feel?

» It is an amazing feeling to see our efforts being recognised as well as knowing that younger referees look up to us - we are role models. At the same time, it is also a huge responsibility!

### What has been your greatest experience in your career as referees so far?

» Concerning national competitions our highlights have been the Women's championship final and the Women's Portuguese Super Cup. On an international level being distinguished as EHF referees was definitely a key moment.

### What are your future ambitions as referees?

» I would say that our main ambition is probably the same as all other referees at this level, and that is a nomination to whistle at the Olympic Games!



# Moving on.. Transfers

The practice of professional and amateur player transfers within the European Handball Federation stands firmly on the foundation of regulations created and enforced on a global level by the International Handball Federation. At the beginning of the year, the count of professional players, those men and women playing in top teams, stood at 15,500. Thus, the movement of players each season is minimal in comparison, coming in at between ten to fourteen per cent each year.

Within the EHF transfers department, accuracy and efficiency is espoused when taking into consideration that a standard transfer with no complex elements will take approximately three days to complete; naturally the process is expedited where necessary. The European Handball Federation, especially the transfer specialist, remains aware that there is a duty of care to ensure that all transfers are undertaken in a precise and proper manner. This not only ensures the freedom of movement for all players, but also delivers high standards to both the releasing and receiving federation, guaranteeing a smooth conversion for all parties involved.

With the conclusion of the 2014/15 season, more players were on the move. Upon completion of his three-year contract with Rhein-Neckar Löwen, goalkeeper Niklas Landin made his transition to THW Kiel in the hope of winning a fourth Champions League title; and to throw-off the upcoming season, SG Flensburg-Handewitt shored up their defences by bringing in a couple of new back court players. The centre back Kentin Mahe, left back Rasmus Lauge; Line player Toft Hansen will also join Vranjes' squad. When it comes to FC Barcelona, it is clear that size really does matter; standing at 213cm, the Croatian right back Marko Kopljär transferred from Paris Saint Germain to the most successful club in the history of the EHF Champions League. He is joined by the 206cm tall Polish line player Kamil Syprzak.



## Transfer statistics

In all, during the period 1 July 2014 to 31 July 2015, the European Handball Federation administered 3,455 transfers; this figure comprised of 1,300 IHF transfers, students, § 5.3 releases (all without fee), 979 amateur players and 1,176 professional players.

MKM-MVM Veszprém also went star fishing and caught the youngest two-time EHF Champions League winner Aron Palmarsson. The skilled centre and left back, was hit by a string of injuries that kept him out for most of the 2014/15 season, but he is hoping to kick-start his career in Hungary. For the 2015/16 season, the Karabatic brothers will add to the defensive wall of Paris Saint Germain. Luka and Nikola will again join forces with Noka Serdarusic, and with Omeyer, Hansen, and Narcisse on side, the French club will be a force to be reckoned with.



They call him the 'goal machine', and after a brief stint in the Qatari club Al-Ahly, Paval Atman is back in Europe; the left back will start the new season with Meshkov Brest. Jorge Maqueda, the powerful Spanish right back, Alexander Dereven from Chekhovskie Medved, and Macedonian international Dejan Manaskov are bringing a fresh wind to Vardar Skopje. Other notable transfers include the Russian Konstantin Igropoulo, who has headed north to take his place with KIF Kolding-Kobenhavn. Nicknamed 'minister of defence', goalkeeper Darko Stanic is the latest signing to Rhein Neckar Löwen, and after two years apart, Coach Talant Dujšebaev and powerful Polish left back Mariusz Jurkiewicz are finally reunited in Poland at Vive Tauron Kielce.



Now at the end of the 22<sup>nd</sup> European Cup season, a number of female players are also embarked on new journeys, moving on and creating new stories with their new teams. Defending champions Buducnost Podgorica struggled to keep their keepers and both Clara Woltering, 2015 MVM EHF FINAL4 MVP, to German side Borussia Dortmund, and Marina Rajcic who is now sporting Metz's colours. With the departure of Barbara Arenhart, Camilla Herrem, Irina Davydenko, and Ksenia Makeeva, Baia Mare lost some key players, but picked up the great centre back Allison Pineau, recipient of the IHF World Handball Player of the Year award, along the way. Baia Mare is her second Romania club, Pineau played for Oltchim in the past.



Could it have been the seven gold medals on an Olympic, world and European level, or maybe the four Champions Leagues victories, or the four AST goalkeeper accolades? Whatever it was, the Russian club Rostov Don know a good investment when they see it. With the deal done in early 2015, goalkeeper extraordinaire Katrine Lunde said goodbye to Györi Audi ETO KC at the end of the season to take up her position in Rostov Don. In Rostov, she will be reunited with the brilliant centre back Macarena Aguilar.



Györi Audi ETO KC underwent a major transition at the end of the season and said goodbye to eight top players as Katrine Lunde, Orsolya Herr, Ivett Szepesi, Vesna Milanovic Litre, Agnes Hornyak, Macarena Aguilar, Susann Müller and Jelena Grubisic all left the club. But as one door closes, another opens; the Hungarian champions will be bolstered by the arrival of home grown and international talents. Left back Zsuzsana Tomori, 2013 Champions League top scorer, and Anita Görbicz, returning to work after maternity leave, will find themselves right at home in Győr. Brazilian Eduarda Amorim also joins the team hoping to get her game back on track after being benched following a serious injury and the subsequent long recovery. Former Larvik right back Linn Sulland signed up to replace Susann Müller and the two Dutch nationals, Yvette Broch and Cornelia Nycke Groot, who both continue to make a strong name for themselves, conclude the new face of Györi.



At Vardar Skopje, Serbian national team players Sanja Damjanovic and Andrea Lekic are reunited on a club level; after two seasons in Viborg, the left back bade farewell to Denmark for a new challenge closer to home. Isabelle Gullden also left Viborg to join the team of her Swedish national team captain Linnea Torstenson in the Romanian capital. But she will not be the only new kid in town as Dane Line Jörgensen, Croatian goalkeeper Jelena Grubisic Romanian top star Aurelia Bradeanu have also found a new home at CSM Bucharesti.

Other players that have moved on included Vesna Milanovic Litre who joined the rejuvenated Krim Ljubljana, and after playing for Vejen, Holstebro and Viborg, the young dynamo Louise Burgaard has joined FC Midtjylland, her fourth Danish club. The Romanian rising star that is Eliza Iulia Buceschi signed to Germany's Thüringer HC as a replacement for Nadja Nadgornaja. After two seasons and several severe injuries, Amanda Kurtovic leaves Oppsal Handball and returns to Larvik, the club where her professional career began.

# Draw Highlights



Over 50 draws were conducted during the 2014/15 season, the majority for EHF's various European Cup competitions; but there were also important draw events for national team competitions including the EHF EUROs and the Younger Age Category tournaments taking place in the summer of 2015 in FYR Macedonia and Spain.

The Austrian capital, Vienna, once again hosted the season opener in June 2014 with 55 of Europe's top clubs learning their fate in the draws for the qualifications and group phases of the VELUX EHF Champions League and Women's EHF Champions League. Highlights during the season included the draw for the quarter-finals of the VELUX EHF Champions League live from the studios of TV partner, Sky, and the Women's EHF FINAL4 draw in Budapest's Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), where the competition's new trophy was revealed for the first time.

In April 2015, the road to the Women's EHF EURO 2016 in Sweden began in Kristianstad, where 28 teams were drawn for the competition's second phase of qualification. And in June, the season finished on a high, with the grandest draw of them all in Krakow, Poland. An invited audience of over 600 people and television viewers worldwide witnessed a spectacular entertainment event in the city's ICE Congress Centre as Europe's best 16 national teams were drawn for the final tournament of the Men's EHF EURO 2016.



# Golden quotes.. Winners' statements



“ It's a great reward for my squad, which hasn't had the easiest of seasons. I really enjoy coaching this team, and winning this Challenge Cup gives me massive satisfaction. ”

**Manu Mayonnade**  
Coach Union Mios Biganos-Begles  
Winner Women's Challenge Cup



“ One year ago, I was here after losing the semi-final, and I decided to finish my career and then took the offer to extend for one more year. I am so happy that I made this decision to enjoy and fight for one more year. Today was the reward for everything, for our fight and our joy. Thanks Berlin! Thanks to all people! Thanks to handball for 20 years to end in this moment. ”

**Iker Romero**  
Player Fuchse Berlin (GER)  
Winner Men's EHF Cup



“ This is one of my most important and best moments of my life. I will leave Buducnost after this season, so this is the perfect way to say goodbye. But I also have to say that really the two best teams were in the final. ”

**Clara Woltering**  
Goalkeeper Buducnost (MNE)  
Winner Women's EHF  
Champions League



“ This gold medal is very special to me. It was so great when I ran to the court and fans were greeting me and calling my name. I feel here like at home and it is really a great feeling to be here. I really believed in us from the start. But I know that there were not so many people who thought we could go all the way. ”

**Heidi Loke**  
National Team Player (NOR)  
Winner Women's EHF EURO 2014



“ Winning the Champions League was my main goal in this season. I'm very proud of winning this one here in Cologne. The FINAL4 is something like the Holy Grail in handball. ”

**Nikola Karabatic**  
Player FC Barcelona (ESP)  
Winner VELUX EHF  
Champions League



“ As soon as we missed out on qualifying for the Champions League, we set ourselves the goal of winning the Cup Winners' Cup, so it is fantastic that we have done this. ”

**Line Jorgensen**  
Player FC Midtjylland (DEN)  
Winner Women's CWC



“ My players are truly fantastic, we had some bad moments but each time we bounced back even better. The spirit here is wonderful, the spirit of handball I mean. I'm also very happy for handball. It was a great game of two the best teams in this tournament. If you win against such an opponent, it is really great thing. ”

**Eric Quintin**  
National Team Coach (FRA)  
Winner Men's 18 EHF EURO 201  
European Championship



“ This match was absolutely worthy of a final. In the second half Sweden became better and better. But when they were about to decide the game, our goalkeeper achieved two amazing saves. ”

**Markus Baur**  
National Team Coach (GER)  
Winner Men's 20 EHF EURO 2014

# Join the Club

The 22<sup>nd</sup> European Cup season concluded on 31 May with the spectacle that was the VELUX EHF FINAL4 lifted by the men of FC Barcelona. Only a few weeks prior to the event in Cologne, Buducnost thrilled the Papp László Sportaréna in Budapest when they took the MVM EHF FINAL4 trophy. Füchse Berlin won the men's EHF Cup, their first European title for their club, on home soil; and it did not stop there, as Team Tvis Holstebro from Denmark won the women's EHF Cup title. In the men's Challenge Cup, it was HC Odorhei of Romania that stood on the winners' podium as the crowd celebrated them. Union Mios Biganos-Begles of France won their second Challenge Cup; and it was also number two for FC Midtjylland having won the women's Cup Winners' Cup. Congratulations to all the winners!





# 2014/15 VELUX EHF Champions League

From the start of qualifications in September 2014 to the thrilling climax on 31 May in Cologne, the competition experienced another enthralling season in the men's VELUX EHF Champions League that saw 160 matches played. The group stage produced a rather expected outcome as the heavyweights finished at the top of their respective sections, with Kielce giving a particularly impressive performance as they won all 10 games in their pool and which hinted that they would be strong candidates with the chance to at least emulate the success of 2013, when they reached the FINAL4 and finished third.

In Group A, Kiel suffered a shock opening defeat at the hands of the season's surprise package HC Prvo plinarsko drustvo Zagreb, whose youthful and success-hungry outfit followed up their good home form with an equally stunning win over Paris Saint Germain Handball. But Kiel quickly bounced back and won nine games on the trot to finish top ahead of PSG, whose potent attack was at times in stark contrast with a fragile defence as they suffered four defeats, including a double against rampant Kiel. Third-placed Zagreb, whose goalkeeper Filip Ivic came to the fore with a string of superb saves, later showed that their surge was no fluke while Spaniards Naturhouse La Rioja claimed the group's final Last 16 berth.



Barcelona set the pace from the start in Group B and won it comfortably although they suffered a 34:31 defeat at the hands of Polish side Orlen Wisla Plock, which turned out to be their only setback of the season while they were also held to a 27:27 draw at KIF Kolding København. Both sides went through to the knock-out stage alongside Barcelona and were joined by last season's champions SG Flensburg-Handewitt, who struggled to recreate the form that saw them lift the trophy in 2014. Group C offered more of the same as Veszprém, led by the competition's top scorer Momir Ilic who finished with an impressive tally of 114 goals, romped to a 9-1 record ahead of HC Vardar, Rhein-Neckar Löwen, and Montpellier Agglomeration. In Group D, Kielce reigned supreme and were followed into the Last 16 by MOL-Pick Szeged, Dunkerque HB Grand-Littoral, and Aalborg handball, who came out on top and avoided an early exit in a three-way battle against HC Motor Zaporozhye and Kadetten Schaffhausen.



The Last 16 produced one major upset as Zagreb proved their vast potential by knocking out more fancied København, with Ivic and company shining in a 22:17 first-leg win at home before KIF took the 23:21 win in the return match in Denmark saw them advance to the quarter-finals. The all-French tussle between PSG and Dunkerque treated fans to some rugged and physical handball, with Paris Saint-Germain prevailing 46:43 on aggregate after a pair of slender wins against their compatriots. Barcelona steamrolled Aalborg to a 60:33 overall victory; a breathtaking 31:11 home win was followed by an emphatic away performance which must have struck primal fear into the hearts of their Danish rivals.

## Last 16 Results

Naturhouse La Rioja vs. MKB-MVM Veszprém	23:31
MKB-MVM Veszprém vs. Naturhouse La Rioja	37:31
Montpellier Agglomeration HB vs. KS Vive Tauron Kielce	25:29
KS Vive Tauron Kielce vs. Montpellier Agglomeration HB	31:33
Aalborg Handball vs. FC Barcelona	11:31
FC Barcelona vs. Aalborg Handball	29:22
SG Flensburg-Handewitt vs. THW Kiel	21:30
THW Kiel vs. SG Flensburg-Handewitt	33:28
Dunkerque HB Grand Littoral vs. Paris Saint-Germain	21:23
Paris Saint-Germain vs. Dunkerque HB Grand Littoral	23:22
Orlen Wisla Plock vs. HC Vardar	32:26
HC Vardar vs. Orlen Wisla Plock	31:20
Rhein-Neckar Löwen vs. MOL-Pick Szeged	30:34
MOL-Pick Szeged vs. Rhein-Neckar Löwen	31:29
HC PPD Zagreb vs. KIF Kolding København	22:17
KIF Kolding København vs. HC PPD Zagreb	23:21





The German affair between old rivals Kiel and Flensburg turned out to be a one-sided contest as Kiel eliminated the title holders with two clinical performances, winning 63:48 on aggregate. Then there were the two most dramatic encounters, with Vardar overturning a 32:26 first-leg deficit against Wisla followed by a pulsating 31:20 home victory saw them reach the last eight, while Kielce made heavy weather of their double-header against Montpellier. Finally, Szeged produced a bit of a surprise by cruising past Rhein-Neckar Löwen but the outcome was not a total shock as the German side showed plenty of flaws in the marathon group stage of the competition.



The quarter-finals, in contrast, went completely according to script. Most of all Barcelona's double-header against Zagreb, with the Croatian champions blown away by a 43:21 defeat in the return leg after a valiant effort in a 25:23 home loss. Vardar again faced Polish opposition in Kielce, but they were on the receiving end this time and suffered a pair of narrow two-goal defeats against a slightly more resourceful rival.

Veszprém justified their billing as an emerging force as they brushed aside PSG with a 34:28 home defeat of the French giants after a 24:24 draw in the first leg, where they threw away a five-goal lead having dominated the lion's share of the contest. Szeged could not follow in their compatriots' footsteps although they must have had high hopes after beating Kiel 31:29 at home. However, the German side turned the tide with a convincing 31:23 win in the return leg to complete the FINAL4 line-up.



#### Quarter-final Results

HC PPD Zagreb vs. FC Barcelona	23:25
FC Barcelona vs. HC PPD Zagreb	43:21
HC Vardar vs. KS Vive Tauron Kielce	20:22
KS Vive Tauron Kielce vs. HC Vardar	33:31
Paris Saint-Germain Handball vs. MKB-MVM Veszprém	24:24
MKB-MVM Veszprém vs. Paris Saint-Germain Handball	34:28
MOL-Pick Szeged vs. THW Kiel	31:29
THW Kiel vs. MOL-Pick Szeged	31:23



# 2015 VELUX EHF FINAL4

It was their eighth EHF Champions League victory, and their second VELUX EHF FINAL4 triumph in Cologne; FC Barcelona had done it again! In a match where they dominated over their opponent MKB-MVM Veszprém, FC Barcelona, secured a 28:23 victory and their crown. The Catalan side left their Hungarian counterparts behind in front of a 20,000-strong crowd, which rose to its feet to honour the 2015 champions long before the final whistle. FC Barcelona are the second club to win the trophy for the second time in Cologne, after THW Kiel [2010 and 2012], extending the run of victories in this competition for Spanish and German clubs, which stretches back to 2004.

Barcelona, who lost only one group phase match (against Plock) in the whole season, had lost two finals, in 2010 and 2013, before reclaiming the trophy. In the semi-final they eliminated Poland's KS Vive Tauron Kielce led by Coach Talant Dujšhebaev, while MKB-MVM Veszprém avenged the

last year's semi-final defeat against THW Kiel. In the third place match Kielce got the best of THW Kiel.

Icelander Gudjon Valur Sigurdsson ended his "Cologne-curse" by winning the Champions League trophy for the first time at the fifth attempt, with a fourth different club. "I often left this arena very disappointed. Therefore I am very very happy about this victory. It is unbelievable to win this title," said Sigurdsson. FC Barcelona's Sjarhei Rutenka became the fifth player in history of the competition to win the EHF Champions league six times. The top scorer award went to Veszprém's Momir Ilic, who scored five goals to finish on 114 goals, eight ahead of Kiril Lazarov's final tally. Nikola Karabatic was voted most valuable player of the FINAL4.

The season's highlight will be hosted by the LANXESS arena until 2020; and the next edition 28/29 June 2016 is bound to be successful again after 8,000 tickets were sold during the FINAL4 weekend.



## Semi-finals

FC Barcelona (ESP) vs. KS Vive Tauron Kielce (POL) 33:28 (16:14)

THW Kiel (GER) vs. MVM-MKB Veszprém (HUN) 27:31 (13:13)

## 3/4 Match

KS Vive Tauron Kielce (POL) vs. THW Kiel (GER) 28:26 (12:12)

## Final

FC Barcelona (ESP) vs. MVM-MKB Veszprém (HUN) 28:23 (14:10)

## Top Scorers of the 2014/15 VELUX EHF Champions League

Momir Ilic	MKB-MVM Veszprém	114 Goals
Kiril Lazarov	FC Barcelona	106 Goals
Mikkel Hansen	PSG Handball	103 Goals

## 2014/15 VELUX EHF Champions League All Star Team as voted by 44,000 fans

Goalkeeper:	Roland Mikler	HUN	MKB-MVM Veszprém
Left Back:	Nikola Karabatic	FRA	FC Barcelona
Left Wing:	Uwe Gensheimer	GER	Rhein-Neckar Löwen
Centre Back:	Mikkel Hansen	DEN	PSG Handball
Line Player:	Renato Sulic	CRO	MKB-MVM Veszprém
Right Back:	Kiril Lazarov	MKD	FC Barcelona
Right Wing:	Victor Tomas	ESP	FC Barcelona
Defender:	Rene Toft Hansen	DEN	THW Kiel
Young Player:	Alex Dujšhebaev	ESP	HC Vardar
Coach:	Talant Dujšhebaev	ESP	KS Vive Tauron Kielce

**VELUX®**  **EHF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE** **FINAL 4**



# 2014/15 Women's EHF Champions League

As the highly anticipated 2014/15 Women's EHF Champions League season opened, the handball community was introduced to a rejuvenated competition. The new look champions league entertained a main round that consisted of twelve teams that was followed by a quarter-final round. A total of 128 matches were played over the season.

As the result of a near-flawless performance, the Montenegrin giants Buducnost fully lived up to expectations as EHF Champions League favourites in the 2014/15 season and won their second title in Europe's premier club competition. Led by trophy-laden coach Dragan Adzic, Buducnost won 15 of their 16 games and claimed the trophy with an emphatic 26:22 defeat of Larvik in the final, where the depth of their roster was everywhere to be seen. Dinamo-Sinara was the season's surprise package as the Russian outfit reached the MVM EHF FINAL4 after impressive displays in the group stage and the main round, while a transition at Györi Audi ETO KC took its toll with the Hungarian side, who having won the previous two titles, were unable to get past the quarter-finals.



It all started with the qualifying tournaments last summer, when Scandinavian rivals Byasen Trondheim of Norway and Denmark's FC Midtjylland suffered shock exits after defeats by Croatia's HC Podravka Vegeta and Serbia's Radnicki Kragujevac respectively. Podravka went on to qualify for the group matches from that preliminary section, while HC Leipzig advanced from the other qualification group at the expense of FTC Rail Cargo Hungaria. The German side continued their good run as they finished second in Group A behind Dinamo-Sinara, who brushed aside former Champions League winners Krim Mercator and Hypo Niederösterreich.



## WOMEN'S



EHF  
CHAMPIONS  
LEAGUE

Third-placed Krim also progressed under an updated competition system which saw three teams from each of the four groups qualify for the main round, featuring two pools of six.

In Group B, the strongest of all four, Buducnost romped through with five wins and a 24:24 draw at the hands of WHC Vardar SCBT, who went on to reach their second successive FINAL4 after a topsy-turvy season. Germany's Thüringer HC joined them thanks to strong home-court performances which included a shock 21:20 win over Vardar, while Podravka were left rooted to the bottom of the group with six straight defeats.



### GROUP I

1. Buducnost	10	9	1	0	270:193	77	19
2. Dinamo-Sinara	10	5	1	4	267:260	7	11
3. WHC Vardar SCBT	10	5	1	4	277:254	23	11
4. Thüringer HC	10	5	1	4	258:251	7	11
5. HC Leipzig	10	3	0	7	245:282	-37	6
6. RK Krim Mercator	10	1	0	9	248:325	-77	2

### GROUP II

1. Larvik	10	10	0	0	263:216	47	20
2. Györi Audi ETO KC	10	8	0	2	282:224	58	16
3. HCM Baia Mare	10	4	0	6	262:270	-8	8
4. Viborg HK A/S	10	3	1	6	252:274	-22	7
5. Metz Handball	10	3	0	7	244:253	-9	6
6. IK Sävehof	10	1	1	8	227:293	-66	3

Győri Audi ETO KC strolled through Group C with six wins from as many games but it turned out in the latter stages of the competition that lack of tough opposition did them no favours. Denmark's Viborg HK finished as runners-up ahead of third-placed Scandinavian rivals IK Savehof of Sweden, who went through to the main round despite not winning a single match in the group stage. Savehof advanced with three draws and as many defeats ahead of Lokomotiva Zagreb who had two draws and four defeats, the turning point in their dogfight to avoid an early exit being a 23:23 stalemate in the Croatian capital. Larvik had an equally straight-forward route in Group D but the battle behind them went right down to the wire as Metz Handball and Romania's HCM Baia Mare edged out Poland's MKS Selgros Lublin.



The heavyweights largely lived up to their billing in the main round as Buducnost steamrolled to the top spot in Group I, defeating all their rivals to finish on 19 points from a possible 20 ahead of a three-pronged chasing pack who were tied on 11 points each. Dinamo-Sinara, Vardar and Thüringer were placed behind Buducnost in that order, the Russians nosing ahead thanks to a better head-to-head record against their rivals from FYR Macedonia and Germany. Although boasting a talent-packed outfit featuring the likes of 2013 world player of the year Andrea Lekic, Vardar had anything but a smooth ride and were again stung by German opposition when they were beaten 26:23 at Leipzig, who eventually finished fifth in the section and did not make it to the last eight. Dinamo-Sinara also inflicted a crushing 33:25 home defeat on Vardar, who produced their best handball of the season in the quarter-finals after staggering across the finish line in the main round.



#### Quarter-final Results

Viborg HK A/S vs. Buducnost	22:28
Buducnost vs. Viborg HK A/S	29:19
Thüringer HC vs. Larvik	26:29
Larvik vs. Thüringer HC	36:18
HCM Baia Mare vs. Dinamo-Sinara	25:23
Dinamo-Sinara vs. HCM Baia Mare	30:25
WHC Vardar SCBT vs. Győri Audi ETO KC	24:18
Gyori Audi ETO KC vs. WHC Vardar SCBT	27:27

In the main round group, the top two spots went to Larvik and Győri Audi ETO KC respectively, after the Norwegians maintained their perfect record with a pair of impressive wins against the Hungarian side who showed the first chinks in their armour. A fascinating three-way battle for the other two quarter-final spots again favoured Baia Mare as they finished third, a point ahead of also-qualified Viborg and two points in front of unlucky Metz.

The highlight of the hotly contested quarter-finals was Vardar's captivating 24:18 home win over Győri which effectively sealed their fate, as the outgoing champions could only manage a 27:27 draw in the return leg, thus surrendering their crown without reaching the FINAL4. Buducnost enjoyed an expectably comfortable 57:41 aggregate win over Viborg, and Larvik followed in their footsteps with a 65:44 overall win over Thüringer, taking their tally to 14 wins from as many games at that stage. The closest double-header was between Baia Mare and Dinamo-Sinara, the Russian side overturning a 25:23 first leg deficit to win 53:50 on aggregate and advance to their maiden FINAL4 tournament.



# 2015 MVM EHF FINAL4

The follow-up to the last season's showdown of four best teams in the Women's EHF Champions League was wonderful celebration of handball. After a successful premiere in 2014, the MVM EHF FINAL4 was back in the Hungarian capital, following the spectacular ending of the Women's EHF EURO 2014 in Papp László Sportaréna in December.

Despite the Hungarian team Győri AUDI ETO KC missing out on the event (having lost in the quarter-finals to WHC Vardar SCBT), and therefore a chance to defend the Women's EHF Champions League title won in 2014 - the participating teams saw good support on a neutral court in the Papp László Sportaréna, generating an excellent atmosphere on both playing days of the MVM EHF FINAL4 - in words of the EHF President Jean Brihault "a major international event" was created.

"The women's game is obviously in good health and, despite the fact that we're missing a Hungarian team from this year's event, we've attracted good crowds for the final matches and there has been a great atmosphere in the arena," said Jean Brihault. "By bringing together the top teams to play over two days here in Budapest we've created a major international event; this clearly shows what we can achieve and in turn creates new ideas and innovative concepts," said Brihault on the eve of the final match.



The excitement culminated with a final of the former champions, as well as two undefeated teams - Buducnost and Larvik. It was Buducnost who came on top with a 26:22 win, lifting the elusive trophy for the first time since 2012, following last year's final defeat.

WHC Vardar SCBT repeated their last season's success, rising above the brave debutant Dinamo-Sinara in a 28:26 triumph. Vardar had done well to overcome the semi-final loss and reclaim the third place finish with pride. "It is a great honour and a privilege to play at this event, and to be among the four best teams in a wonderful ending of the season. To be the third out of four amazing teams is a great result we are proud to have accomplished," said Andrea Lekic WHC Vardar SCBT centre back.

## 2014/15 All Star Team as voted by 22,000 fans

Goalkeeper:	Sandra Toft	DEN	Larvik
Left Back:	Cristina Neagu	ROU	Buducnost
Left Wing:	Siraba Dembele	FRA	WHC Vardar SCB
Centre Back:	Aniko Kovacsics	HUN	Győri Audi ETO KC
Line Player:	Heidi Loke	NOR	Győri Audi ETO KC
Right Wing:	Linn-K. Riegelhuth Koren	NOR	Larvik
Right Back:	Nora Mörk	NOR	Larvik
Defender:	Dorina Korsos	HUN	Győri Audi ETO KC
Young Player:	Eliza Iulia Buceschi	ROU	HCM Baia Mare
Best Coach:	Ambros Martin	ESP	Győri Audi ETO KC



With two teams back at the MVM EHF FINAL4 for the second consecutive time and two clubs who made their debut in Budapest, the very first day of the event already showed tangible excitement, as the semi-finalists approached the court. The returnees among the top four, Larvik brought the newcomer Russian side Dinamo-Sinara to the sword [31:22] to pave their way to the final, despite the spells of good defending displayed from the Russians in the first half [16:13].

The Norwegian powerhouse, and the 2011 Women's EHF Champions League champions, displayed a statement of intent on their coach's Ole Gustav Gjekstad penultimate game in handball. Larvik crushed Dinamo-Sinara's dream of a perfect debut with a dominant opening of the second period [21:14]. Larvik brought the match to a close with relative ease on the wings of Linn-Kristin Riegelhuth Koren's nine-goal performance, adding to their unblemished run in the 2014/15 season.



Buducnost and Vardar crossed swords in the second match of the day - a reprise of the last year's semi-final clash. The atmosphere in Papp László Sportaréna reached its peak with the loud support of the frantic crowd coming from both Podgorica and Skopje in support of their teams. It was Buducnost who came on top and through to the final, thus denying Vardar a chance of revenge for the last year's extra-time semi-final defeat. Tight defence and seven-goal performance of the competition's joint top scorer Cristina Neagu, kept the star-laden Vardar at bay, dealing the Macedonians an even greater blow than last time, winning by 10 goals on this occasion - 27:17. Buducnost was in control throughout and demonstrated the determination and strength needed to become the MVM EHF FINAL4 finalist for the second time.

#### Semi-finals

Larvik (NOR) vs. Dinamo-Sinara (RUS) 31:22 (16:13)

WHC Vardar SCBT (MKD) vs. Buducnost (MNE) 17:27 (9:14)

#### 3/4 Match

Dinamo-Sinara (RUS) vs. WHC Vardar SCBT (MKD) 26:28 (15:16)

#### Final

Larvik (NOR) vs. Buducnost (MNE) 22:26 (8:14)

#### Top Scorers of the 2014/15 Women's EHF Champions League

Cristina Neagu	Buducnost	102 goals
Andrea Penezic	WHC Vardar SCBT	102 goals
Nora Mörk	Larvik	98 goals

The final day had brought the top quality handball on display to another level, for the fans and media to enjoy. The two undefeated teams of the season deservedly found their place in the finals. It was up to Buducnost and Larvik to decide who would lift the new trophy, and be crowned the Women's EHF Champions League winner for the second time in club's history.

The defeated but not disheartened WHC Vardar SCBT met Dinamo-Sinara in the 3/4 Match, as both teams had to make amends for their semi-final losses and close the season on a high note. The 3/4 Match had all the elements of a mini-final, as Dinamo-Sinara wanted to take the most from their MVM EHF FINAL4 debut, while the Macedonian side had last year's result - third place at MVM EHF FINAL4 - to defend. Women's EHF Champions League joint best scorer (level with Cristina Neagu) Andrea Penezic was the embodiment of the Vardar's determination. The team recovered from the semi-final loss and defeated Dinamo-Sinara in a tightly contested 26:28 win. The Croatian sharpshooter led the way, having nine of her shots hit the back of the net to reach the season-high 102 goals mark, and bring Vardar to another third-place finish.

The final match saw Buducnost lay claim to the trophy as early as midway through the first half. The heroic Clara Woltering, who was voted most valuable player of the FINAL4, stated "I think this is one of my

most important and best moments of my life," as her dream of a perfect farewell to Buducnost topped Nora Mörk's 10-goal performance to set the Montenegrin team four goals apart (22:26), and bring the trophy to Podgorica. Larvik had their work cut out with Buducnost opening the match with four goals that went unanswered (0:4). The Norwegians had two chances for a comeback, with the last one coming in the dying minutes of the match. Coming from 13:21 to 18:22, the quintessential right back Nora Mörk single handedly kept Larvik's title hopes alive, netting 10 goals by the end of the match.



However, Buducnost managed to survive Larvik's late comeback carried by Katarina Bulatovic's hunger to lift her fourth Women's EHF Champions League trophy. The Montenegrin sharpshooter recorded seven goals to put Buducnost ahead by four and send their buoyant fans present in the Papp László Sportaréna into rapture, before gathering on centre court to celebrate the victory.

"We did this together! I was so thrilled (to win the trophy). Every one of the four I have won has a special story, and deserves a special place in my heart. We have left Budapest with full hearts, and are already looking forward to coming back next season to this amazing event," said Katarina Bulatovic.



# 2014/15 Men's EHF Cup

After missing the final last season, Füchse Berlin managed to go all the way finally winning their first EHF Cup title. The Finals of the Men's EHF Cup were played on the Foxes' home ground in the Max-Schmeling-Halle, for the second year in succession. Many matches were played prior to the final weekend on 16/17 May in the German capital; the tournament was played with three qualifying rounds, a group phase with 16 teams, quarter-finals, and the finals.

In February, the group phase was ready to launch, and in Group A, VELUX EHF Champions League winners from 2013, HSV Hamburg took the first place, while Slovenian Gorenje Velenje followed the German team to the quarter-finals from second position ahead of Norwegian champions Haslum Handballklubb and Pfadi Winterthur from Switzerland. Group B was won by Danish Team Tvis Holstebro who finished third in the tournament in 2013, while seven points were not enough to send second-placed Fraikin BM. Granollers to the quarter-finals from the group which also contained Romanian champions HCM Constanta and Russian St. Petersburg HC.

The fact that organisers Füchse won Group C meant that the German team went straight to the Finals which meant only three quarter-finals, and this rule cost the Spanish team further participation. This was not the case for Skjern Handbol who finished second in Group C after Füchse. With ten points, the Danes finished even with Füchse, and only one goal was actually the difference between the two top teams, as Skjern won by four goals at home against Füchse who then won by five goals on their home court on the second last match day of the group phase. Portuguese Futebol Clube do Porto and Serbian HC Vojvodina had to realise that their EHF Cup adventure ended with the group phase. Three German teams had qualified for the group phase and all three won their groups. MT Melsungen completed the Bundesliga triumph by winning Group D ahead of Swedish Eskilstuna Guif, Croatian RK Nexe and Balatonfüredi from Hungary.

The three quarter-final ties all became close affairs. HSV did not seem to fare particularly well against Swedish teams. In the last qualification round, they had their trouble with IFK Kristianstad, and as they travelled to Sweden again to face Eskilstuna in the first leg of the quarter-final, they lost 29:26. However, the Swedish outfit was not able to withstand



the pressure in Hamburg in second leg, and a 27:22 win was enough to send HSV to Berlin. The meeting between Skjern and Melsungen became a real thriller. For the second time this season Skjern defeated a Bundesliga team, as they won 25:20 at home.

For 60 minutes, Melsungen seemed to be reaching out for the overall win, as they met again in Kassel, though 3,147 spectators actually saw the home team catch up the five goal deficit at the end.

However, the final result, 28:23 meant that Skjern booked the ticket for Berlin due to more away goals. A 28:27 win at home against Team Tvis Holstebro did not make Gorenje Velenje feel overly optimistic before the trip to Denmark for the return match.

However, the Slovenian team managed to land another one goal win, when they visited the Graakjaer Arena in Holstebro (31:30), and then Gorenje could celebrate the final round berth, preventing Holstebro from reaching the finals for the second time in three years.

The first semi-final in the Max-Schmeling-Halle Saturday, 16 May was a German-Danish duel, as Skjern were up against their third German opponent in the tournament, HSV Hamburg. However, the Danes were not as successful this time, as they had been earlier in the competition.

HSV were in control from the start, and after leading 14:11 at half time, they booked their ticket for the final with 27:23 win. The second semi-final was between the hosts from Füchse and Gorenje Velenje. The team from the Fuchsbaus (Fox's lair) neighbourhood in Berlin were seeking to reverse the failure of last season, when they missed the final, but this time there was no doubt. After leading 16:12 at

half time, Füchse qualified for the final with a 27:24 win. The following day, Skjern got some consolation for their semi-final defeat, as they took the third place with a 27:22 win against Velenje, who were leading 13:12 after the first 30 minutes, but who did not manage to hold on to that lead.

The final was an all German encounter, as Füchse Berlin met HSV Hamburg. For a long time, it looked like a clear win for Füchse who were leading 21:16 ten minutes into the second half after being in the driver's seat constantly until then. However, it only took HSV four minutes to equalise bringing the score to 21:21, but in the end, Füchse was the team who managed to keep their cool long enough to win the final 30:27, and celebrate their triumph in front of 8,206 spectators.



These were brilliant days for us. The quality of competition was incredibly high with four strong teams. In the end, the home advantage might have helped us to win this greatly-desired title.



**Füchse Berlin President  
Frank Steffel**

**FINALS**  
16-17 MAY 2015  
**BERLIN**  
GERMANY

## Semi-finals

Skjern Handbold vs. HSV Hamburg 23:27 [11:14]

Rk Gorenje Velenje vs. Füchse Berlin 24:27 [12:16]

## 3/4 Match

Rk Gorenje Velenje vs. Skjern Handbold 22:27 [13:12]

## Final

Füchse Berlin vs. HSV Hamburg 30:27 [16:13]







# 2014/15 Women's EHF Cup

For the second time in three years the women from Team Tvis Holstebro won the EHF Cup, but only after dramatic finals against Rostov-Don. Having won their first European competition in 2013, defeating Metz Handball in the EHF Cup finals, Team Tvis Holstebro repeated their success this season by winning the tournament once again. However, the Danish team had to endure a dramatic final against Rostov-Don, which Holstebro won by 13 goals at home, only to lose by 11 away, before the victory was sealed.

Before getting that far, however, the finalists had to undergo a long journey. Both teams entered the tournament in Round 3. Here, Holstebro met HB Dudelange from Luxembourg who eliminated Feta Epirus Anagennisi Artas from Greece by four goals on aggregate. Despite having the home advantage in the double-header at the middle of the November, Dudelange were no match for Holstebro. The Danish visitors won 45:18 and 50:19 and were ready for the Last 16. Rostov-Don had to work a bit harder for their Last 16 berth. In Round 3, the Russian team faced DHK Banik Most from the Czech Republic who sent LC Brühl Handball from Switzerland, with a six goal difference, out in the previous round. Rostov-Don won 26:21 at home in the first leg, and in the return match in Most, they defeated 'The Black Angels' by 22:20.

For Holstebro, the Last 16 meant their first meeting of the season with their Russian counterparts - and two more away matches. The Danish club was drawn against Handball Club Lada, and both matches were played on the Russian team's home court in Togliatti. Once again, playing away did not bother the Holstebro women much, though. They won the first match 32:29 and the next day; this win was followed by another with almost the same digits, 32:30. In front of 3,000 spectators, Rostov-Don probably had more trouble pronouncing the name of their Hungarian opponents, Dunaujvarosi Kohasz Kezilabda Akademia, than they had defeating them. Rostov Don won the first leg 28:19, and after a more modest 29:28 away win in return match, the team under Danish head Coach Jan Leslie was ready for the quarter-finals.

At this stage in the competition, they were in for an all Russian meeting, as they were drawn against Astrakhanochka, but their fellow countrywomen were no match for the Rostov-Don players. Through wins



of 37:19 and 27:16, they swept all resistance aside and entered the semi-final in style. The quarter-finals became a much more nail-biting affair for Holstebro, although nothing indicated this after the first game against Issy Paris Hand. The ladies from the French capital were defeated 40:27 in the first match in the Graakjaer Arena. As the stage changed to Paris a week later, things turned out differently. This time, it was Issy's turn to dominate, and with four minutes left, the French team was actually in the semi-final, leading by 14 goals. However, Holstebro managed to score the last two goals of the match, limiting the defeat to 32:20 and proceed to the semi-final.

In the semi-finals, the Danish women and their coach Niels Agesen had to sweat much less than in the quarter-finals. Their opponents were Turkish Muratpasa Beleddiye SK, and Holstebro made things clear already in the first match, in which they won 38:25 on away ground. A 29:24 victory in the return match, which was actually a formality, only confirmed Holstebro's ticket to their second EHF Cup final in three years. Rostov-Don did not have much trouble in the semis either. For the second time in the tournament, they had another Hungarian opponent, this time ÉRD HC. In the first leg in the away match for Rostov-Don, the Russians took the clear lead from the start, and the final result

of 28:24 for Rostov Don did not actually give an accurate picture of the difference in strength between the two teams in that game. Still, this four goal lead turned out to be sufficient for Rostov-Don who won by another four goals at home with a finishing score of 32:28.

Four days ahead of the first leg of the final, Rostov-Don won the Russian championship; but this went unnoticed

as the team entered the Holstebro Graakjaer Arena for the match on 3 May. After the visitors managed to pull back a four goal deficit to take a 12:12 result with them into half time, they were steamrolled by the home team in the second half. Holstebro won the first leg 33:20, with the Swedish international Natalie Hagman contributing considerably with 15 goals. Those who expected the finals to be decided early, were to be proved wrong. The teams met again in Russia one week later, Rostov-Don actually managed to catch up 12 of the 13 goals deficit, but that was a far as they got; Holstebro managed to limit the defeat to 11 goals (33:22), which meant that the Danish team could celebrate their second EHF Cup win.



The defeat in Denmark was our first defeat in the EHF Cup this season, and I must say that when it eventually arrived, it was a defeat you noticed!



Coach Jan Leslie

## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Muratpasa Belediye SK vs. Team Tvis Holstebro 49:67 [25:38, 24:29]

ÉRD HC vs. Rostov-Don 52:60 [24:28, 28:32]

### Final

Team Tvis Holstebro vs. Rostov-Don 55:53 [33:20, 22:33]



# 2014/15 Women's Cup Winners' Cup

For the second consecutive year, the Women's Cup Winners' Cup trophy remained in Denmark. After Viborg HK won the tournament in the 2013/14 season, it was the turn of FC Midtjylland to celebrate this year. It was the second Cup Winners' Cup triumph for Midtjylland who finished fourth in the MVM EHF FINAL4 last year, but who did not manage to qualify for the Women's EHF Champions League this season. As soon as the qualification for the Champions' League group phase had failed, the team set a clear goal of winning the Cup Winners' Cup instead, and on 10 May, they celebrated their sweet victory at home in the IBF Arena after defeating Fleury Loiret Handball in the final.

Fleury's road to their first European final ever was a bit longer. Fleury's first opponent was ZRK Umag from Croatia, who was easily defeated in Round 3; with a somewhat narrower margin, Fleury then took the Dutch team ZERCODAK Dalfsen out of the competition in the Last 16. In the quarter-final, the French team made short work of Zvezda Zvenigorod who they defeated by nine goals on aggregate. Hypo Niederösterreich, who sent out Siofok KC Hungary in the Last 16 and Norwegian Byasen Trondheim in the quarter-final, finally met their match when they came up against Fleury in the semi-final. The French team won 32:20 in Vienna and 30:20 at home in Orleans.

FC Midtjylland, who had more final experience than Fleury, defeated Romanian H.C.M Roman easily in the Last 16, before meeting Polish MKS Selgros Lublin in the quarter-final. After winning 35:25 away, the return match was virtually a formality for the Danish outfit who won 30:18 at home. Another traditionally strong team awaited Midtjylland in the semi-final. FTC-Rail Cargo Hungaria had quickly eliminated Tertnes Bergen in the Last 16, then HSG Blomberg-Lippe in the quarter-final by winning by nine goals at home in Budapest and drawing in Germany. However, in the semi-final, the Hungarian side was unable to shake FC Midtjylland; after a seven-goal away win, the Danish team could take things a bit easier at home, where they won by two goals and secured their place in the final.

The first leg of the final between Fleury Loiret Handball and FC Midtjylland became a close and dramatic affair in front of 2,800 spectators in the Palais des Sports Aubrais on Sunday, 3 May. FC Midtjylland had the lead for most of the first half, having their biggest lead at 10:7 just after having hit the 20-minute mark. However, the hosts made a quick comeback and with a great finish that ended the first 30 minutes, they managed to get the score to 11:11 at half time.



## CUP WINNERS' CUP

After the break, Fleury Loiret Handball was in the driver's seat. The team under Coach Fred Bougeant, who won the French league as well as the French Cup this season, not only took the lead, they also went three goals up. With the score at 20:17 with ten minutes left, Fleury seemed to be heading for an extremely good position ahead of the second leg. However, the visitors managed to come back once again and reduce the gap to only one goal, with the final result of 23:22 for Fleury Loiret Handball.

A one goal lead is never much to take with you to a return match, but for great part of the first half in the IBF Arena in Ikast that following Sunday, Fleury actually seemed to be successful in defending their narrow lead. The French side was constantly leading by one or two goals for the first 15 minutes, but the last part of the first half belonged to the home team who turned the game around and went into the half time break four goals up at 13:9.



Throughout the second half, FC Midtjylland thrilled the 2,050 spectators - except for the Fleury fans who had made the long trip from France to support their team - with a great handball. The hosts cruised to a nine-goal lead before finally winning by five (24:19), which was more than enough for the final win. By winning the Cup Winners' Cup, Midtjylland crowned a fantastic season, in which they also won the Danish championship as well as the Danish Cup.

### RESULTS

#### Semi-finals

FTC-Rail Cargo Hungaria vs FC Midtjylland 52:62 [23:30, 29:31]

Hypo Niderösterreich vs. Fleury Loiret Handball 42:64 [20:32, 20:30]

#### Final

Fleury Loiret Handball vs. FC Midtjylland 42:46 [23:22, 19:24]

# 2014/15 Men's Challenge Cup

**O**n 24 May 2015, the players of Handball Club Odorhei gave the club and their fans the best possible gift to celebrate the club's first ten years of existence, as they won the Men's Challenge Cup by defeating Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho from Portugal 60:57 on aggregate in the finals. As they hoisted the trophy, the victory was more the sweeter for the fact that not only was it the club's first trophy, it was also the first time that Handball Club Odorhei had made it to a final of a European club tournament.

Handball Club Odorhei played ten matches before they were able to lift the EHF Challenge Cup trophy on home court, two more matches than their final opponents; Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho entered the tournament one round later. Odorhei did not have to work too hard in their first two matches, though. In Round 3, the British club Cambridge HC were defeated by 35:14 and 43:21 in Romania in November.



The challenge was not much greater in the Last 16, where they met club Red Boys Differdange. Differdange had hooked two huge wins against Ankara İl Özel İdare SK from Turkey in the previous round, but the team from Luxembourg did not stand a chance against Odorhei. Once again, both matches were played on Odorhei's home court, and under the watchful eye of Coach Vlada Caba, resulted in two clear home wins of 33:20 and 30:16. It was at this point that Liberty Seguros entered the tournament, and the Portuguese team did not have much trouble with HC Dukla Praha. The Czech team, who had eliminated Macedonian HC Pelister 08 Bitola in Round 3, was defeated 42:27 in Portugal and 32:20 at home.

The quarter-finals brought a bit more work for both future finalists; the draw gave Odorhei ZTR Zaporozhye as opponents. The Ukrainian side had eliminated B.B. Ankara Spor in Round 3 and Pölvi Serviti from Estonia in



the Last 16. However, Odorhei managed to secure the semi-final berth in the first leg through an away win of 26:18. With this strong lead, a 22:20 win at home in the return match was more than enough for Odorhei. Before meeting Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho in the quarter-finals, Käsipalloseura Riihimäen Cocks Ry had eliminated Samtredia from Georgia and H.C. Holon from Israel. But their skills were not enough against Liberty who made it clear in the first leg which way the result was going to fall. A 27:22 win in Finland gave Liberty a great position ahead of the home game, in which the Portuguese side left no doubt, winning 38:27.

In the semi-final, Odorhei got their first taste of Portuguese opposition in the tournament, as they were drawn against S. L. Benfica. Benfica had opened their Challenge Cup campaign by sending Norwegian Fyllingen Bergen out. In the Last 16, HC Dudelange from Luxembourg had to bite the dust, and in the quarter-final, it was Polish KS Azoty-Pulawy's turn to realise that Benfica is not only football.

Odorhei started at home, but they definitely did not get a reassuring lead to take with them into the return match. In the Sala Sporturilor HC Odorheiu Secusiesc, the first leg of the semi-finals resulted in a close victory for the home team with 31:29. Still, the lead turned out to be enough, as Odorhei copied the two goal win in Lisbon a week later. Taking the match with a 27:25 win, Odorhei left the Portuguese capital as Challenge Cup finalists and ended Benfica's strong campaign.

In the second semi-final, Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho met Stord Handball from Norway. Earlier in the competition, the Norwegians eliminated KH Pristina from Kosovo, HC Radnicki from Serbia and Ramat Hashron HC from Israel. Winning the first leg at home 25:18, Liberty were in a great position for the return match in Norway; therefore, a 27:25 defeat in the away game had no bearing on their ticket to the final.

While Odorhei were debutants in a European final, it was the third time for Liberty. Under the name ABC Braga did they actually reach the final of the first ever EHF Champions League back in the 1993/94 season, but left empty handed, just as they did in the 2004/05 Challenge Cup final.

Liberty won the first leg of the final on home court by four goals (32:28) in front of 2150 spectators in the Pavilhao Flavio Sa Leite in Braga, after also having been four goals up at half time, 18:14. For great part of the first half in the return match in the Sala Sporturilor, this lead seemed to be enough, but after an 18:15 lead at half time, Odorhei really benefitted from their home advantage in the last 30 minutes, where the 1,560 spectators in the filled hall saw their heroes increase their lead to nine goals before winning by seven, 32:25.

## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Handball Club Odorhei (ROU) vs S.L. Benfica (POR)	58:54 [31:29; 27:25]
Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho (POR) vs. Stord Handball (NOR)	50:45 [25:18; 25:27]

### Final

Liberty Seguros ABC/UMinho (POR) vs. Handball Club Odorhei (ROU)	57:60 [32:28; 25:32]
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# 2014/15 Women's Challenge Cup

For the second time in the history of the club, Unions Mios Biganos-Begles celebrated winning the Women's Challenge Cup. The first time the French club took the title was in the 2010/11 season when they defeated Muratpasa Belediyesi from Turkey in the finals. This year, Mios' adversary in the final matches was Pogon Baltica Szczecin who crowned their first ever season in European Cup by making it as far as final.

By reaching the finals, however, both teams had to come a long way; as a matter of fact, they both started their journey towards the final in Round 3. Here, Mios actually had some trouble with Dutch Schuler Afbouwgroep/DOS who were only narrowly defeated 29:28 in the Netherlands and 32:31 in France. Szczecin's first appearance ever in Europe went considerably smoother. HIFK from Finland were defeated by 40:21 in the first leg and 34:17 in the return match.



The next step for both future finalists was the Last 16, and Unions Mios Biganos-Begles easily took care of their next opponent. Yellow Winterthur, who had sent out Swiss countrywomen DHB Rotweiss Thun in Round 2, were beaten 34:18 and 28:16 over one weekend, where both matches were played in France. Pogon Baltica Szczecin did not have too much of a tough time;

the Polish team won both matches in Portugal 33:22 and 26:21 against JAC-Alcanena, who had defeated Bosnian ZRK Gorazde in two large wins in the previous round.

In the quarter-final, Mios were up against DHC Sokol Poruba. To get to this stage, the team from the Czech Republic had won big against Juve Lis in Round 2, and survived a tough match against another Portuguese team, Colegio de Gaia, in the Last 16. In the first leg of the quarter-final, in the Sareza sportovni hala - Ostrava, Mios practically decided the quarter-final when they easily won 31:24. And with a 24:22 win at home in Bordeaux, they were in the semi-final.

For their quarter-final duel, Szczecin was to meet Ardesen GSK. The Turkish team sent Energa AZS Koszalin from Poland out in Round 3 and RK Zelina from Croatia in the Last 16, but as they met their second Polish opponent in the tournament, they had to bow out. Both matches were played on Ardesen's home court in Turkey, and here, Szczecin suffered their first defeat in the tournament, as they lost the first leg 31:28. The following day, however, the Polish visitors set things straight with a 31:26 win.



One of the semi-final ties became entirely French as Mios ran into HAC Handball from Le Havre. HAC had not entered the tournament until the Last 16, where they defeated Gorodnichanka from Belarus before sending WHC "KNJAZ MILOS" Arandjelovac from Serbia out in the quarter-final. In the semi-final, HAC seemed to dominate the first leg match on Mios' home court in Bordeaux. The team from Le Havre took a 28:21 win, but those who thought that this was the final decision in this match up were proved wrong. When Mios travelled to Le Havre, the team gave HAC a taste of their own medicine; took control of the second leg and won by 38:26. Unions Mios Biganos-Begles was in the final.

For Szczecin, their next opponent was Galytchanka from Ukraine who earlier in the competition had eliminated Dutch Virto/Quintus in Round 2, Amyntas Amyntaiou from Greece in the Last 16, and Serbian ZRK Naia Nis in the quarter-final. Just like Mios, Szczecin got into trouble ahead of the away match. A 29:28 win at home was not much for the Polish side to take with them to Ukraine. However, it turned out to be more than enough, as Szczecin won the away game 25:21.

This meant that everything was set for the final matches between Pogon Baltica Szczecin and Union Mios Biganos-Begles. Pogon started at home, and in the evening on Sunday 3 May in front of 2,500 spectators in the Azoty Arena Szczecin who were ready to support the local team in the first match. The French visitors got the better of the hosts; after a 10:7 lead at half time, Mios won the match 21:20. Mios were even leading 17:13 in the second half, but at the end, they had to settle for a one goal win. Still, this put them in a fine position ahead of the home match exactly one week later.

In the Salle Jean Dauguet in Bordeaux, 2,000 spectators cheered on the home side who was well on their way to the title as they surged ahead in the first half which ended 18:12. Yet, Pogon were not defeated yet; far from it. The visitors actually managed to catch up at 23:23, but at Mios managed the better finish, regaining control of the match to win 28:24, which secured them the trophy for the second time in the history of the club.



## RESULTS

### Semi-finals

Pogon Baltica Szczecin (POL) vs. Galytchanka (UKR) 54:49 [29:28; 25:21]  
 Union Mios Biganos-Begles (FRA) vs. HAC Handball (FRA) 59:54 [21:28; 38:26]

### Final

Pogon Baltica Szczecin (POL) vs. Union Mios Biganos-Begles (FRA) 44:49 [20:21; 24:28]

# 2014 EHF Beach Handball Champions Cup

If there was ever any doubt about the excitement factor of beach handball, it was washed away during the premiere edition of the EHF Champions Cup on the island of Gran Canaria in November 2014.

"We initiated the Champions Cup to give the Europe's beach handball players another event in a nice environment which then works as a kind of closing to the beach handball season," Peter Fröschl, the responsible manager for beach handball at the EHF, said ahead of the tournament.

20 national beach handball champions, 10 in the men's and 10 in the women's event, had made their way to Maspalomas on the southern tip of Gran Canaria. Following two days of top-notch beach handball in the group phase, the final day provided some truly thrilling matches for spectators and players alike.

In the final of the women's event Skrim Kongsberg from Norway faced Croatian side Detono Zagreb, who up until the final had not lost even a single set. However, it took Kongsberg only 10 minutes to make exactly that happen when they took the first set 20:16. Zagreb bounced back quickly,



**EHF**  
**Beach Handball**  
**CHAMPIONS CUP**  
Gran Canaria

and spurred on by Lucija Kelava, who scored 19 points overall, they took the second set 26:18.

In the subsequent shoot-out Kongsberg's Tonje Klevstad saw her attempt saved, but because Zagreb's Nikolina Vojic and Katja Herakovic also faltered in front of the goal, it was Kongsberg who ultimately celebrated.

After they had seen their women's colleagues lose to Kongsberg, Detono Zagreb's men's team was determined to take revenge when they met BHC SKKM-EKATERINODAR from Russia in the final.

And first it looked as if things were going their way as they took the first set 22:20. But there were no easy wins this afternoon and hence EKATERINODAR - despite a red card for Viacheslav Kasatkin - took the second set 17:14, and the men's final also went into shoot-out. Of the first five attempts for each team, two Croatian and two Russian players did not convert their shots. The shoot-out was therefore extended, and Zagreb's Marko Hranilovic was the first whose nerves succumbed to the pressure, while EKATERINODAR's Roman Kalashnikov scored to secure the tournament victory.



## AWARDS - MEN

Top Scorer:	Zvonimir Djikic	CRO	85 points
MVP:	Evgeny Svestula	RUS	
Best Goalkeeper:	Norbert Duleba	HUN	
Best Specialist:	Alberto Iglesias	ESP	
Fair Play Team:	Copaca Bale	SUI	

## AWARDS - WOMEN

Top Scorer:	Lucija Kelava	CRO	92 points
MVP:	Anika Niederwieser	ITA	
Best Goalkeeper:	Monika Pruenster	ITA	
Best Specialist:	Ingvild K. Bakkerud	NOR	
Fair Play Team:	Beachqueens	SUI	

## RESULTS - MEN

1. RUS	BHC SKKM-EKATERINODAR
2. CRO	Detono Zagreb
3. HUN	Dabas Beach Boy'z
4. ESP	Club BM Playa Ciudad de Malaga
5. POR	V. Gaw / Café Rossio
6. NED	Paksoft Camelot
7. GER	"Nordlichter" Oldenburg
8. ITA	Pallamano Grosseto
9. SUI	Copaca Bale
10. GRE	A.C. Kiklopes Alexandroupoli

## RESULTS - WOMEN

1. NOR	Skrim Kongsberg
2. CRO	Detono Zagreb
3. ITA	FIGH Esercito Futura Roma
4. GER	Brüder Ismaning
5. HUN	OVB -Beach Girls®
6. SUI	Beachqueens
7. ESP	Cubas Llopis BM Playa Sevilla
8. POR	N. Belchior / Acad. de Leiria
9. POL	BHT Piotrkowianin Juko Piotrków Trybunalski
10. NED	Paksoft Camelot

# European Beach Handball Tour & ebt Finals 2015

The 2013/14 European Beach Handball Tour (ebt) was jam-packed with tournaments, more than 60 tournaments were played in both the men's and the women's event. The Hungarian teams showed their strength in the sport as OVB (639 points (women)) and Dinamit BHC (689 points (men)) topped the ranking at the end of the ebt season.

The corresponding 2015 ebt Finals took place at the end of May in the town of Budaörs, Hungary. The 12th edition of ebt Finals summoned the best teams of the 2013/14 season, and also served as the kick-off event for the 2014/15 season. In addition to OVB and Dinamit BHC, OVB Beach Girls and Detono Zagreb returned to defend their respective titles. The participating teams of the 2015 ebt Finals came from Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland.

Three days of great games, and Detono Zagreb retained their title for the second consecutive year and the sixth time overall following a 2:0 (20:19, 17:14) win against Dinamit BHC. In the women's event the championship plate went to Hungarian side Agenta Girls who beat



Paksoft Camelot 2:0 (22:18, 18:15) in the final. BHC SKKM-EKATERINODAR won the bronze medal after defeating Club Balonmano Playa Algeciras 2:0. In the women's event BHT Piotrkowianin Juko Piotrków Trybunalski snatched bronze with a 2:0 win against Detono Zagreb's women's team.

The 'clash of clashes' was seen in the semi-finals when defending champions Detono Zagreb faced previously unbeaten BHC SKKM-EKATERINODAR. The Russian's won the first set 15:14 before Zagreb bounced back to win the second set 20:11. In the subsequent shoot-out both teams failed to score once, but while all of Zagreb's remaining four attempts were worth two points, Igor Neklyudow's attempt for EKATERINODAR was only worth one point, so Zagreb had an unassailable 8:5 lead after five shots. Agenta Girls in the finals repeated their outstanding form they had shown on the first two days. After having won all four group matches, they beat BHT Piotrkowianin Juko Piotrków Trybunalski 2:0 in the semi-final, before they eliminated Paksoft Camelot in similar fashion, thus winning the ebt undefeated.



## Awards - Men

Top Scorer:	Roman Kalashnikov	RUS	73 points
MVP:	Roman Kalashnikov	RUS	
Goalkeeper:	Ramon Fuentes Zamora	ESP	
Specialist:	Matej Sošić	CRO	
Fair Play Team:	Detono Zagreb	CRO	

## Awards - Women

Top Scorer:	Eefke ter Sluis	NED	63 points
MVP:	Kitti Gróz	HUN	
Goalkeeper:	Ivana Čović	CRO	
Specialist:	Renáta Csiki	HUN	
Fair Play Team:	Beachqueens	SUI	

## RANKING - Men ebt Finals

1. CRO	Detono Zagreb
2. HUN	Dinamit BHC
3. RUS	BHC SKKM-EKATERINODAR
4. ESP	Club Balonmano Playa Algeciras
5. HUN	Budaörs Beach Stars
6. CRO	BHC Cakovec
7. NED	Paksoft Camelot
8. POL	BHT Auto Forum Petra Plock
9. POR	OS Gordos / Aposta Ganha
10. SUI	HSG Wasserschlöss

## RANKING - Women ebt Finals

1. HUN	Agenta Girls
2. NED	Paksoft Camelot
3. POL	BHT Piotrkowianin Juko Piotrków Trybunalski
4. CRO	Detono Zagreb
5. ESP	Club Balonmano Getasur
6. NED	Westsite
7. HUN	OVB -Beach Girls®
8. HUN	OVB
9. GRE	AC Spartacus Goalbet
10. SUI	Beachqueens

# 2015 Season Calendar

## - JULY -

2015 Men's 19 European Open in Sweden  
2015 Men's & Women's Beach Handball European Championship  
2015 Men's U21 IHF Junior World Championship in Brazil  
2015 Women's 19 European Championship in Spain  
2015 Men's and Women's European Youth Olympic Festival in Georgia

2015/16 European Cup Draws

## - AUGUST -

2015 Men's U19 IHF Youth World Championship in Russia  
2015 Women's 17 European Championship in FYR Macedonia

## - SEPTEMBER -

VELUX EHF Champions League *Qualification / Group Phase*  
Men's EHF Cup *Qualification 1*  
Women's EHF Champions League *Qualification*  
Women's European Cup *Round 1*

## - OCTOBER -

VELUX EHF Champions League *Group Phase*  
Men's EHF Cup *Qualification 2*  
Men's Challenge Cup *Round 2*  
Women's National Team Week  
Women's EHF EURO 2016 Sweden *Qualification / Round 1-2*  
Women's EHF Champions League *Group Matches*  
Women's European Cup *Round 2*

2015/16 European Cup Draws

## - NOVEMBER -

Men's & Women's Beach Handball Champions Cup  
Men's National Team Week  
2017 Men's IHF World Championship *Qualification Europe / Round 1-2*  
VELUX EHF Champions League *Group Phase*  
Men's EHF Cup *Qualification 3*  
Men's Challenge Cup *Round 3*  
Women's National Team Week  
Women's EHF Champions League *Group Matches*  
Women's European Cup *Round 3*

2015/16 European Cup Draw

## - DECEMBER -

Women's National Team Week  
2015 Women's IHF World Championship in Denmark *Final Tournament*  
VELUX EHF Champions League *Group Phase*

2015/16 European Cup Draw



# 2016 Season Calendar

## - JANUARY -

Men's National Team Weeks  
 2017 Men's IHF World Championship  
*Qualification Europe / Round 3-6*  
 Men's EHF EURO 2016 in Poland  
*Final Tournament*  
 Women's EHF Champions League *Main Round*  
 Women's European Cup *Last 16*

2015/16 European Cup Draw

## - FEBRUARY -

VELUX EHF Champions League *Group Phase*  
 Men's EHF Cup *Round 1-3*  
 Men's Challenge Cup *Last 16*  
 Women's EHF Champions League *Main Round*  
 Women's European Cup *Quarter-final*

2015/16 European Cup Draws

## - MARCH -

VELUX EHF Champions League  
*Group Phase / Last 16*  
 Men's EHF Cup *Round 4-6*  
 Men's Challenge Cup *Quarter-final*  
 Women's National Team Weeks  
 Women's EHF EURO 2016  
*Qualification / Round 3-4*  
 Rio2016 *Qualification Tournament Women*

2016 Women's U20 World Championship  
*Qualification Europe*

2015/16 European Cup Draw

## - APRIL -

Men's National Team Week  
 Rio2016 *Qualification Tournament Men*  
 Men's EHF EURO 2018 *Interface*  
 Men's 20 European Championship  
*Qualification*  
 VELUX EHF Champions League *Quarter-final*  
 Men's EHF Cup *Quarter-final*  
 Men's Challenge Cup *Semi-final*  
 Women's EHF Champions League  
*Quarter-final*  
 Women's European Cup *Semi-final / Finals*

2015/16 European Cup Draws

## - MAY -

VELUX EHF Champions League  
*Quarter-final / FINAL4*  
 Men's EHF Cup *Quarter-final / Final Tournament*  
 Men's Challenge Cup *Semi-final / Finals*  
 Women's National Team Week  
 Women's EHF Champions League *FINAL4*  
 Women's European Cup *Finals*

## - JUNE -

Men's National Team Weeks  
 2017 Men's World Championship  
*Play-Off Europe*  
 Women's National Team Week  
 Women's EHF EURO 2016  
*Qualification / Round 5-6*

# Afterword

**A**t the time of going to press, the draws for the matches that will begin the 2015/16 European Cup season for all club competitions have been made. The groups of the EHF EURO 2016 final tournament in Poland were drawn under spectacular fanfare in Krakow; and the 2015 European Beach Handball Championships and the European Open have concluded the national team events for this season; and we are at the end of this report.

With the start of the 2015/16 only weeks away, the excitement of those in the handball community is now reaching fever pitch. This stage - the "in-between" - is a short, yet intensive period for us at the European Handball Federation; there is only a limited time to enjoy our successes as our focus is moved towards the future. In the upcoming season, the European Handball Federation, with all its representations on a strategic, technical, and professional level has a lot to offer friends in handball - our federations, our clubs, our partners and sponsors, and above all - our athletes.

Season upon season, we do our utmost to provide sporting events that our athletes are eager to play, that enrapture our fans, and encourages more people to the sport - player, fan, and sponsors alike; the sport continues to grow and gain popularity - and that is our biggest achievement.

Thank you for reminiscing on the season past, and welcome to the season present!



**Michael Wiederer**  
EHF Secretary General



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