

EUROPEAN HANDBALL FEDERATION

2021/22 EHF Hygiene Concept

Covid-19 Concept and Guidelines for EHF Club and National Team Competitions – **Version 2**
(valid as of 12.10.2021)

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document “2021/22 EHF Hygiene Concept, Version 1” provides EHF guidelines for the handling of issues of the Covid-19 pandemic around matches of EHF Competitions. It is valid from the start of the season until further notice.

These guidelines work alongside the existing EHF regulations for each competition.

All clubs and national federations need to have their own detailed Covid-19 mitigation plans in place, in line with local government guidelines, and remain responsible for implementing the necessary measures in their regular domestic club and national team environments. Clubs and national federations are responsible for preparing competitions in a safe environment and ensuring that they follow all national guidelines and safety recommendations.

The EHF recognises that government regulations, local regulations and even Arena regulations as well as recommendations concerning Covid-19 differ from country to country and where these are more stringent, these would supersede the EHF guidelines.

Where local Health Authority Covid-19 guidance is significantly different to the concepts outlined in this document, the host club or National Federation should contact the EHF in advance to discuss whether some relaxations of the guidelines are possible. Any changes would need to be communicated to and agreed with the visiting team in advance.

With the Covid-19 situation constantly evolving, this will be a living document and we will re-issue guidelines where we feel changes are required.

2 AIM

The aim is to ensure that all possible mitigation steps are taken to reduce the risk of infection for all those involved in the matches, although the risk cannot be completely eliminated. All stakeholders participate in the competition at their own risk.

This protocol is intended to provide a minimum standard to ensure the health and safety of all players, staff and officials, but allows some latitude for clubs and national federations to adapt them to their own circumstances.

Going into the second season with the pandemic the EHF Hygiene Concept is very much based on the opportunity for persons of being vaccinated and it therefore mentions a combination of three groups of persons being cleared to be personally involved in matches of an EHF competition. Those three groups are indicated as “fully vaccinated”, “recovered” or “tested”.

The guidance document focuses on providing a positive experience for a television audience. However, some local regulations may allow the attendance of spectators under certain conditions. Where this is the case, and if the home club or national federation decide to sell tickets, it is important that all local regulations are respected and that spectators are handled according to the regulations and procedures of the respective authorities. This responsibility lies fully in the hands of the home club resp. home Federation.

3 COVID-19 OFFICER

As already implemented at the start of last season, all teams and national federations must appoint a Covid-19 Officer who will be responsible for ensuring all mitigation measures are followed by players, team and match officials and all other personnel involved with the event. The Covid-19 Officer should work in close cooperation with the club's or national federation's medical officer or advisors. The Covid-19 officer should be knowledgeable in the symptoms and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 as well as the relevant laws and preventive measures for diseases transmission.

The home team Covid-19 Officer will be responsible for checking transport, hotel and arena measures and ensuring that the EHF and/or local Covid-19 guidelines have all been followed.

The home team Covid-19 Officer will be responsible for liaising with the government, authorities to ensure that all relevant laws and guidelines have been followed.

The Covid-19 Officers should notify the EHF immediately if new travel restrictions or bans are enforced by the government or local authorities, which could impact the ability of the visiting team to travel to the country.

4 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR HYGIENE AND COVID-19

4.1 GENERAL HYGIENE

These measures are recommended for all players and officials at all times:

- Wash your hands several times a day with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand disinfectant.
- Teams and team officials are recommended to each carry a personal hand sanitizer.
- Given the fact that only persons of one of the three groups mentioned earlier (fully vaccinated, recovered or tested) will be present at a match, the wearing of a face mask is only recommended by the EHF, but not mandatory. However, wherever face masks are mandatorily requested for any area by local requirements, their use is mandatory.
- Maintain social distancing.
- Avoid busy places (even where social distancing measures are in place) and large crowds of people.
- Avoid public transport.
- Be aware of all the symptoms of Covid-19 and notify medical staff if symptoms appear.

4.2 COVID-19 STATUS

This Hygiene Concept is very much based on the opportunity for persons to be vaccinated and therefore obviously have a much stronger protection towards Covid-19 infections. The EHF very strongly counts on the understanding and the co operations of all stakeholders to use this opportunity and, by doing so, offer more safety to all other stakeholders and also support the carrying out of matches according to schedule and therefore avoiding the postponing or even cancelling of matches.

All teams (clubs and National Federations) need to have the status of each person of the delegation available at all times and make sure that the respective data is available when travelling to a game or hosting a game at home. The procedures of the EHF will include a checking of these data by the EHF Delegates prior to each game.

4.3 ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE AT AN EHF MATCH

All players and officials of a team, EHF Officials resp. all additional persons (e.g. timekeeper/secretary, etc.) who are actively involved at an EHF match must fulfil one of the following criterias:

4.3.1 *Vaccination against SARS-CoV-2:*

The person is fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2. The second vaccination (in case of Johnson & Johnson vaccine resp. after a recovery – single vaccination) must be earliest 14 days prior to the resp. match. Only one vaccination (except Johnson & Johnson or after a recovery) or 2nd vaccination date is less than 14 days prior to resp. longer than 12 months before the resp. match does not fulfil this requirement.

In this case the person does not need to be tested anymore towards the EHF.

4.3.2 *Recovering from a Covid-19 infection:*

Persons do not need to be tested or vaccinated for the eligibility of an EHF match if they had a Covid-19 infection within 6 months prior to the respective game and are not in quarantine any longer.

In case the person will be still tested positive, the following requirements must be fulfilled:

- No quarantine any longer
- crossing threshold (Ct) value must be above 30
- the person shows no symptoms
- and the persons has been tested first time positive longer than 14 days prior to the resp. match.

4.3.3 *Testing:*

Persons which are not recovered from the infection of SARS-CoV 2 within 6 months prior to the resp. match or players and officials which are not vaccinated must conduct a test with a negative result (PCR or Antigen test) prior to the resp. match. PCR tests can be carried out earliest 72 hours (timepoint of sampling) prior to the respective match and Antigen tests can be carried out earliest 24 hours prior to the respective match. Due to the higher sensitivity, PCR testing is highly recommended.

4.4 POSITIVE CASES

4.4.1 Positive case in a team

If there is a person with a positive testing result in a team in a time period of less than 10 days prior to a match in an EHF competition, the EHF must be informed immediately after the case is detected.

The EHF will consider all remaining persons of the team which are fully vaccinated (see point 4.3.1) as no direct contact persons.

4.4.2 Positive case at the venue

If a player or an official of a team tests positive for Covid-19 after arriving at the venue of a match, the team concerned should take the advice of the local medical staff for self-isolation and mitigation. The EHF is to be informed immediately according to the testing protocol and the further procedure will be co-ordinated depending on the individual situation.

5 GUIDELINES FOR TRAVEL

5.1 PRIOR TO TRAVEL

- It is the responsibility of the home team/organisers to liaise with the government and local authorities to ensure that the visiting team can enter and leave the country without limitation.
- It is also the responsibility of the home team/organisation to provide the visiting team with timely information on any measures that are required to enter and leave the country without quarantine.
- Local regulations may set different timescales and where more stringent than the EHF guidelines these should be followed.
- Should local authorities require a test for visitors on arrival to that country, then the local team Covid-19 Officer shall oversee the arrangements with the local authorities and the results should in principle be delivered at the latest six hours prior to throw-off time. These costs must be paid the home team.
- The travelling team should ensure that it follows all local guidance and regulations while travelling, to ensure they mitigate against the risk of contracting the virus. This includes the requirements regarding testing for crossing borders and entering countries during travel.

5.2 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TO MATCHES

- It is the responsibility of the visiting team and EHF officials, who fly to a venue for a match, to ensure they follow all local authority and transport company Covid-19 regulations during all stages of travel (maintain social distancing, wear a mask throughout travel and wash hands regularly, ideally arrange separate check-in area).
- Where teams are close enough to travel to the match by bus, please see recommendations in '5.3 Travel during stay'.

5.3 TRANSPORT DURING STAY

- Each team should have its own dedicated bus for the duration of the event/stay.
- Other than the bus driver, team/officials guide and Covid-19 Officer, no one else should travel on the bus with the team or officials.
- The bus drivers should respect all hygiene recommendations, wash hands with sanitizer every time they return to the bus and always wear a mask.
- All vehicles should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected immediately before being used to transport the teams for the first time and again if used for any other purpose during the event.
- These guidelines should also be used for the home team if they travel by bus.

6 GUIDELINES FOR HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

- It is the responsibility of the home team Covid-19 Officer to contact the hotel in advance to ensure that all arrangements (requests of the guest team must be coordinated beforehand) are in place and that the hotel understand what is required of them.
- The home team Covid-19 Officer must be present in the hotel at the arrival of the guest team.
- The visiting team may also consider sending their Covid-19 Officer ahead of the main group to familiarise themselves with the hotel and the arrangements.
- Ideally the hotel should be exclusively for the visiting team and officials, but if this is not possible, other options should be considered:
 - Dedicated entrance for team
 - Dedicated hotel areas without other guests (whole floor, dining room, meeting room)
 - Dedicated lift
- Hand sanitizers should be provided on the dedicated floor and in common spaces (dining room, meeting room).
- The hotel should provide thorough cleaning and disinfecting of rooms and spaces used by the team immediately before the team's check-in and to ventilate all rooms.
- There should be no cleaning of rooms while the team member is in the hotel room.
- Hotel staff should regularly disinfect hands; there should be no access to any area of the hotel for anyone showing symptoms of infection.
- Dedicated dining and meeting rooms should be large enough to allow for social distancing.

- Contact with hotel staff in the dining area should be minimised so that the smallest number of staff is present in the dining room during meals.

7 GUIDELINES FOR MATCHES

7.1 VENUE

There are two possibilities of a venue set-up:

7.1.1 *Vaccinated, recovered, tested*

In case the home club is able to ensure that everybody (spectators, media, staff, etc.) entering the arena can fulfil one of the criteria mentioned in point 4.3, no zoning is necessary any longer. Therefore the hall set-up can be prepared as normal. Exception for children in the spectator area: see point 10.1.1

7.1.2 *NOT vaccinated, recovered, tested*

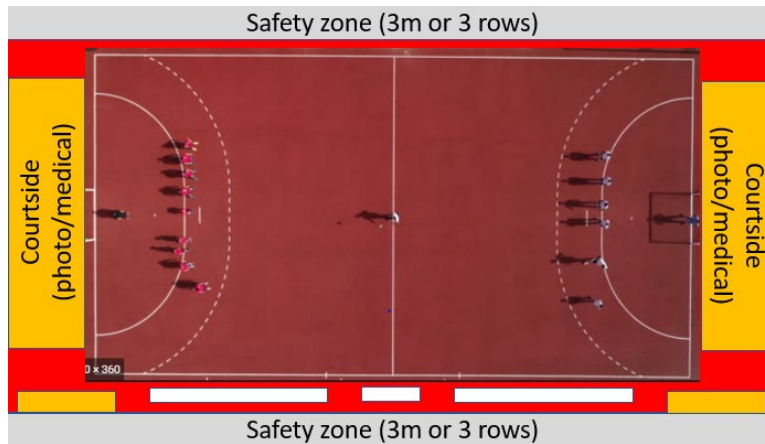
In case the home club is not able to ensure that everybody (spectators, media, staff, etc.) entering the arena can fulfil one of the criteria mentioned in point 4.3, a “red zone” for all players, officials, EHF officials must be set and all persons which are allowed to enter the red zone must fulfil one of the criteria mentioned in 4.3.

In case a club or a Federation is not able to guarantee the carrying out of its home match according to 7.1.1 and consequently the game is carried out according to 7.1.2 the club has the responsibility to inform the EHF and the guest team in due time, however, five days prior to match date at the latest.

Red zone:

Court, courtside/bench, changing rooms & treatment rooms, doping control room, toilets must be divided for players, officials, EHF officials, table workers, moppers, EHF Doping Control, Floor Manager, Photographers, Medical services, TV Production/cameras, Covid-19 Officer, Security

- The zone must be clearly separated and, where in the same stand, should have a minimum of three rows between them – see example below.
- It is important that all players, coaches, referees, and main match officials in the red zone remain isolated from other groups and maintain the precautions they already have in place in their home/training environments.
- Staff in the red zone should never approach players or officials closer than two meters, unless specifically called onto court by referees (e.g. medical teams) and then maintaining social distancing from other players and officials).



- Zoning access must clearly be identified on everyone's and no one should be allowed access without accreditation.
- The home team is responsible for the creation of a complete accreditation list of all parties directly involved in the game and their zone access.
- There should be a minimum 3m distance between the backs of the seats in the courtside player area and the first row of seats behind them. There should also be a minimum of 3m between the court and the spectator seats on the other three sides. Where this is not possible, a buffer zone of three rows of empty seats must be put in place.
- The red zone must be clearly marked out at the area and sufficient staff on hand to enforce it.
- For players given a red card during the match a suitable and clearly separated area must be identified. The respective places are to be coordinated between the EHF delegate and the home team Covid-19 Officer prior to the match.
- Separate toilets should be allocated in each of the zones and clearly identified.

7.2 GENERAL PREPARATION

- Changing rooms must be cleaned and disinfected. Once cleaned, no one outside of the teams/officials should enter the changing rooms for the duration of the event.
- The team benches must be cleaned and disinfected before the teams arrive and at half time.
- At half time teams should take all their belongings from the bench back to the changing room or place them in separate player piles at the back of the bench, so that cleaning of the bench can take place. Nothing should be left on the bench.
- All arena public areas should be thoroughly cleaned before the arena opens for the arrival of the teams and officials.

- The court, goals, player seats, timekeeper's table & seats should all be cleaned and disinfected before the teams arrive.
- The arena and all rooms used should be thoroughly cleaned after everyone has left.
- Touchless Hand sanitizers should be provided in each changing room, meeting room, treatment room, toilet and at the timekeeper's table courtside and in any shared areas.
- In addition to the regular briefing, all home team staff working on the match (marshals, security, medical, cleaning, moppers, etc.) must be fully briefed on Covid-19 measures.

7.3 TEAM AND STAFF ARRIVAL

- Access to the arena should be via dedicated entrances, no mixing of other persons/spectators, etc is allowed.
- Teams and officials should be dropped immediately by their entrance.

7.4 TIMEKEEPER'S TABLE

- Given the fact that only persons of one of the three groups mentioned earlier (fully vaccinated, recovered or tested) will be present at a match, the wearing of a face mask at the Timekeeper's table is only recommended by the EHF, but not mandatory. However, wherever face masks are mandatorily requested for any area by local requirements, their use is mandatory.
- All communications between the timekeeper's table and bench must be done while observing social distancing rules.

7.5 TECHNICAL MEETING

- The technical meeting should be conducted in a meeting room large enough to ensure social distancing.
- Only essential people should attend, i.e. EHF Delegate(s), organiser, one representative per team, television representative, EHF Marketing Supervisor and Covid-19 Officer(s).
- The Covid-19 Officer should ensure that the teams are fully aware of the Covid-19 procedures for warm-up, entrance on court, half-time and match end.

8 ANTI-DOPING CONTROLS

The EHF carries out random doping checks at the matches and allowances should be made for this.

A clean and disinfected room should be made available for anti-doping checks.

9 GUIDELINES FOR THE MEDIA

In order to secure a safe working environment at the venue, it is important that all media respect the hygiene protocol in place at EHF competitions. In order to be able to enter and report on an EHF competition match, the accredited media representative must either be tested for, vaccinated against or recovered from Covid-19.

9.1 GENERAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

- All media representatives must be accredited with the home club or the national federation and provide full contact details.
- Media representatives should be made aware of the Covid-19 regulations in place at the match and that they are obliged to follow them.
- It is recommended that all media representatives carry hand disinfectant and wash hands regularly. The requirement where and when to wear a face mask shall follow the respective regulations in place at the venue.
- The home club is responsible that the entire media routing and the corresponding media spaces are aligned with possible local and/or national hygiene regulations in place at the venue.
- Catering in the media room shall be provided in a room that the risk of infection is minimised in the best way possible.

9.2 PHOTOGRAPHERS

The home club should allocate photo places in compliance with the respective hygiene and safety rules (if applicable) at the respective venue. It is recommended that photographers keep wearing a face mask during the match.

9.3 PRESS CONFERENCE

We recommend that press conferences are being live streamed and that the link is shared with the media. For additional guidance, please refer to the EHF document “Press Conference Live Streaming Guidelines”.

9.4 TV INTERVIEWS (FLASH ZONE, MIXED ZONE)

- The home team media representative/media partner representative (‘supervisor’) are jointly responsible for coordinating TV interviews.
- Where in place, social distancing rules shall always be respected during the interviews (both in the mixed zone and when accessing it for players/coaches).
- Where possible pooling may be considered using the unilateral feed to minimise the number of interviews – one per team in own language.
- All microphone covers should be cleaned with an anti-bacterial wet wipe just prior to and between interviews.

- If any of the rules are breached or the player/coach feels uncomfortable, an interview should be ended immediately by the media supervisor.

9.5 TV PRODUCTION

- For more detailed guidelines, see separate EHF document ‘Guidelines for TV Production for Competitions during the Covid-19 period’.
- The TV partners of the home team are responsible for the TV production and their staff.
- It is the TV Production’s responsibility to ensure that the Code of Conduct regulations are respected, as well as all local Covid-19 guidelines.

10 GUIDELINES FOR SPECTATORS

The decision on whether to allow spectators to attend matches is up to the host club or national federation, in line with local country regulations. The host club will be responsible for ensuring that all health and safety regulations are met for spectators.

Important reference must be made to 7.1.1 and 7.1.2.

10.1 EXCEPTION:

Children (age: until 16 years) are excluded from the check (tested, vaccinated or recovered) at the entrance of the arena. This exception is only valid for the spectators area. This exception is NOT valid for children on resp. around the playing court before or during the match (e.g. flag kids, escort kids, moppers, etc.).

Similarly, the decision on whether to open retail and refreshment shops at the arena rests with the host club/federation and should be guided by local country regulations.

At this time, the EHF recommends that visiting team fans do not travel to matches.