



SEVEN PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE

EUROPEAN HANDBALL MASTER PLAN 2020–27

INTERIM REPORT

EHF
EUROPEAN HANDBALL
FEDERATION

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INTRODUCTION



The signing of the new media and marketing contract with Infront and DAZN Group in May 2018 marked the start of a new era for European handball. This 10-year partnership will bring many opportunities and new developments as we work together to further enhance the appeal of the sport, especially to younger audiences, through an enhanced digital offering.

At the same time, however, we also need to look to the future and ensure the long-term growth of our sport. We need to consider how we can increase

the number of active players, coaches and officials, how we can make the game and our competitions more attractive to fans and, as we look to possible negotiations for the next tender process from 2027, how we create additional value for handball.

It is for this reason that we created the ‘Seven Players for the Future – European Handball Master Plan’ a strategic plan for the development of the sport across Europe through to 2027. First presented at the Conference of Presidents in January 2020 in Stockholm, on the fringes of the Men’s EHF EURO 2020, it has been produced following extensive consultation with the federation’s elected bodies, national federations, stakeholders, partners and fans.

Seven key pillars – or players – have been identified as part of the master plan including all aspects of the sport from the game itself through to events, fans, grassroots, governance and commercial aspects. As in any handball team, each of the players is important in their specific position, but it is only the combined effort of the whole team that will ultimately bring success.

This interim report details the progress made so far with the creation of the master plan. It provides an overview of how the plan has been developed, the insights gained, goals that have been set, information on each of the seven players and the key areas of work ahead. Inevitably, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on progress and led to the inclusion of a new ‘Back to Handball’ phase with additional support for national federations.

Over the coming months, as we approach the EHF’s 30th Anniversary and Extraordinary Congress in November 2021, the final details of the master plan will be finalised. The EHF’s newly elected bodies and stakeholders will be tasked with providing inputs, ideas and proposals for the plan. This is your opportunity to shape the future of handball and I trust that with your knowledge, expertise and passion for the game, we will realise our vision of making handball the most attractive team sport in Europe!

MICHAEL WIEDERER
EHF PRESIDENT



1. DEVELOPING THE PLAN

BRAND CORE

The basis for the European Handball Master Plan is the brand core, developed as part of the EHF's new brand system and launched on 1 July 2020. This core provides guidance for the organisation – like a compass – and creates meaning for the outside world. It defines the very reason for our existence, our raison d'être; it describes the purpose we aim to fulfil (our promise); and it sets the direction and vision for the future. Our culture, the way we see ourselves and how we want to be perceived by others, helps to lead us in the right direction and keep a steady course.

The vertical axis defines the direction:

- > where we come from/why we are here
- > what we do
- > where we are going

whereas the horizontal axis describes the relationship with stakeholders:

- > who we are
- > what we do
- > how we are perceived



WHY WE EXIST

As members of the handball community, the passion for handball is part of all of us and it is our mission to pass on the sport to future generations in an even better state than we received it

WHAT WE DO

We play handball for fun, friendship and athletic, tough competition

WHO WE ARE

Active, likeable ambassadors
Respectful, honest and fair
Courageous and clever
Contributors to the future

HOW WE WANT TO BE SEEN

Intense, unique entertainment
Outstanding all-round athletes
Intelligent teamwork
Social responsibility

WHERE ARE WE GOING

We will be the most attractive team sport and grow our community

RESEARCH & CONSULTATION

The idea of creating a strategic plan to define the future direction of handball in Europe was first presented at the Conference for Secretaries General in Copenhagen in April 2019, by the EHF President, Michael Wiederer.

Extensive research has taken place since then with all of the sport's key stakeholders, elected bodies as well as external partners participating in surveys, workshops and meetings in order to develop a clear picture of the different requirements of the sport across Europe.

A survey of 4,500 fans across 10 of Europe's top handball markets was carried out in the summer of 2019 and the results of a survey conducted amongst the national federations were presented at the Conference of Presidents in Cologne in June 2019. Additionally, consultation meetings were held with the federation's stakeholder boards (NB, PHB, WHB, EHLB) as well as with the federation's technical commissions.

In January 2020, the results of this research and consultation phase were presented at the Conference of Presidents together with the concept of the 'Seven Players for the Future', the basis on which the master plan has been further developed.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant a postponement of the Conference for Secretaries General, with the event finally taking place in Vienna in September 2020. The master plan was a key topic and representatives of the national federations were able to provide their inputs, ideas and requirements in a series of break-out sessions.



INSIGHTS

FANS

How do fans see handball?

Fans have a positive image of handball as fast-paced, social, exciting & intelligent
Following national teams is one of the key drivers for fans

How do we reach more fans?

Promote handball as a second sport
Promote free-to-air broadcasts
Multi-channel & differentiated content
BUT do not alienate older fans!

How do we engage Gen Z and younger fans?

Offer more opportunities to play the sport
Focus on social and fitness benefits of sport
Promote stars of the sport
Create social media icons
Create viral & sharable content

STAKEHOLDERS

Satisfaction with:

Governance of European handball
Development of sponsorship and media sales for top events
Development modern in-game technology
TV production quality and look & feel of elite EHF events

Recommendations:

Improve knowledge transfer
Raise level women's handball & gender equality
Increase revenue in European handball
Invest in technology and data
Attract more children and youth
More fan-focused media content
Make game easier to understand for fans & more accessible for new players
Improve position of handball within society, the media and on a political level
Raise level of emerging nations in Europe
Make handball a truly global team sport

2. MASTER PLAN

GOALS

The goals for the master plan have been created on the basis of the research and consultation phase. Five clear targets for the master plan have been set through to 2027:

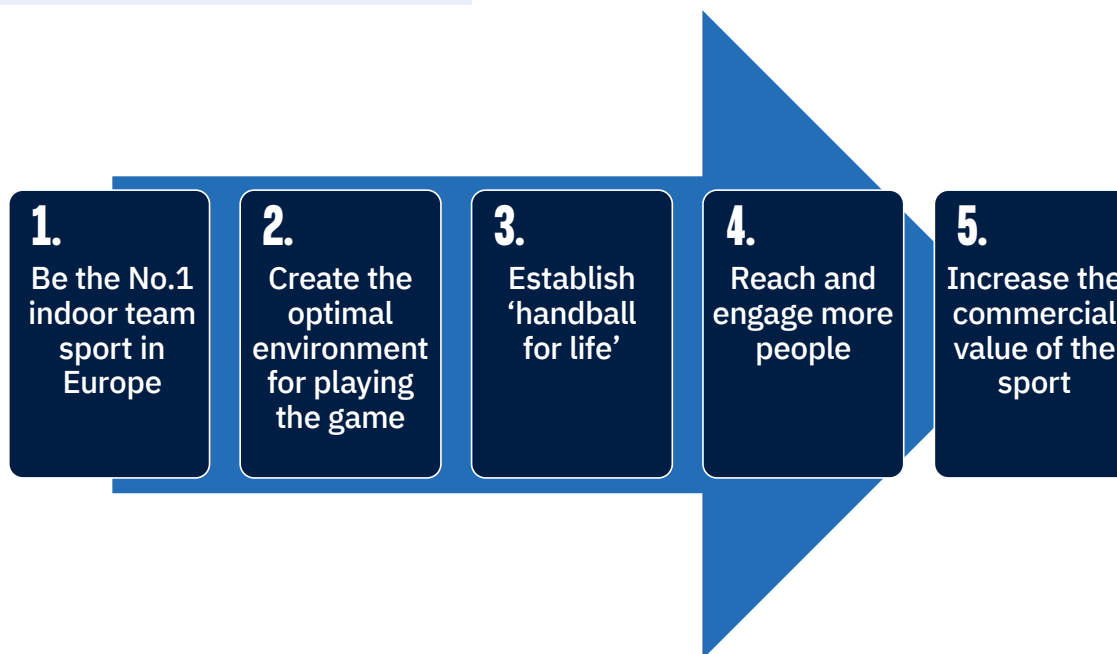
1. Be the No.1 indoor team sport in Europe: establish handball on the European sports market as the leading team sport in terms of spectators and television audiences for the EHF’s top events such as the EHF EURO or EHF FINAL4.

2. Create the optimal environment for playing the game: ensure that the game and its competitions are accessible to everybody; facilities and equipment are of the highest standard for playing the game; players have the best playing conditions; use technology to enhance the game.

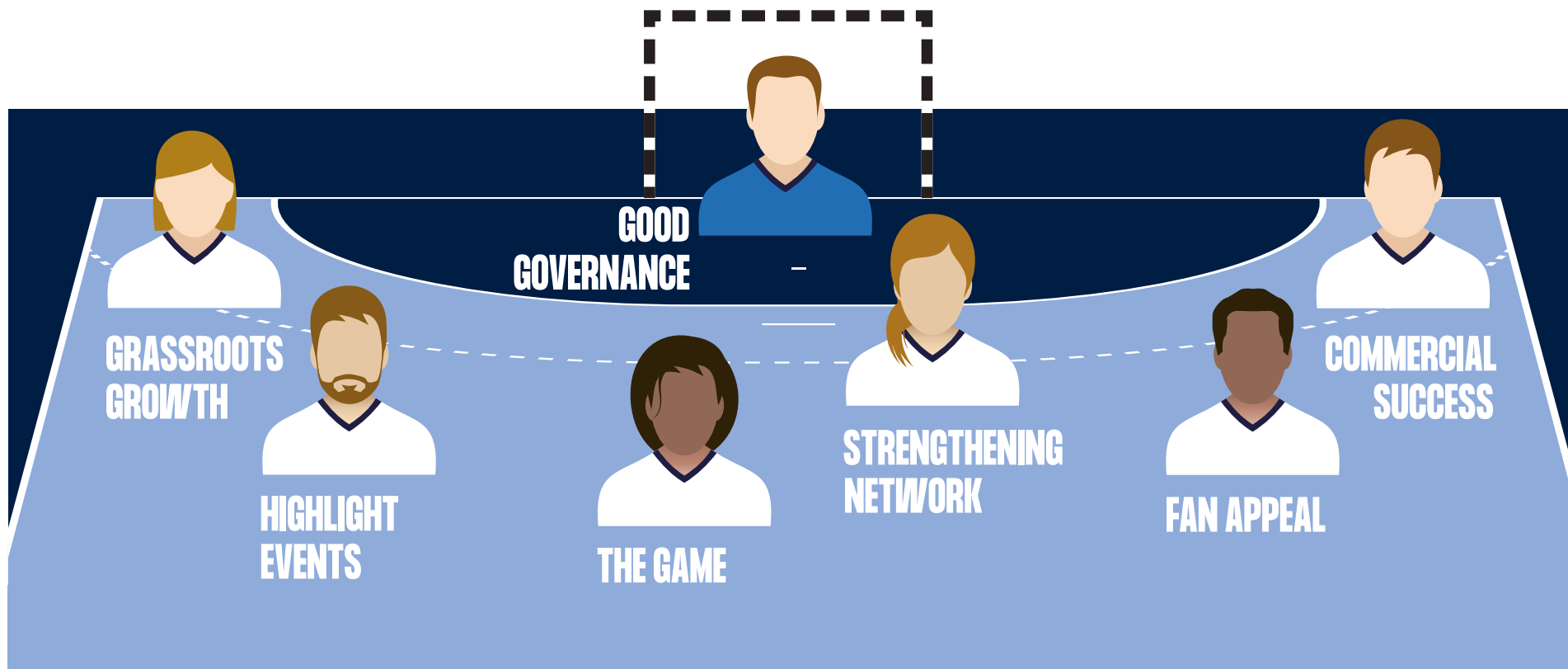
3. Establish ‘handball for life’: create life-long journeys for everybody involved in handball; create more opportunities in handball at every stage of life and for all abilities.

4. Reach and engage more people: increase the exposure and popularity of the sport in Europe and worldwide; attract more fans especially younger audiences through investment in digital content; increase the number of players, coaches and officials.

5. Increase the commercial value of the sport: raise the commercial value of media and marketing rights across the sport; ‘become a unicorn’ and double the commercial rights value of the EHF.



SEVEN PLAYERS



MASTER PLAN

The master plan is based on seven pillars representing the different areas of the sport that will be addressed in the strategic plan. These pillars are represented by the seven playing positions on the handball court, with each player bringing their own strengths, skills and tasks to the team:

1. THE GAME

CENTRE BACK: The brains of the team, directs play and one of the key players for success on any team. Handball is and will always be at the centre of everything we do.

2. HIGHLIGHT EVENTS

LEFT BACK: Powerhouse at the back of the court, a real goal-getter and one of the stars of the show: just like our events. Top club and national team competitions provide a shop window for the sport and offer the opportunity to showcase handball, its teams and its players at their very best.

3. FAN APPEAL

RIGHT BACK: One of the most valued players in handball in a key scoring position. One of the key pillars of the master plan as we look to attract new and younger audiences to the sport.

4. GRASSROOTS GROWTH

LEFT WING: In this position, a component vital to the future of our sport: grassroots growth. A fast, clever and agile player: essential skills if we are to continue to attract people – especially new generations – to the sport in an ever more competitive sports and entertainment market.

5. GOOD GOVERNANCE

GOALKEEPER: The last line of defence, a safe pair of hands and a back-up for everything that happens on court. Good governance forms a solid basis for the work of the EHF and its member federations.

6. STRENGTHENING NETWORK

LINE PLAYER: One of the toughest positions on the court, having to wrestle and fight to get the ball and score. Supporting the hard work of national federations and clubs and their officials and volunteers through knowledge transfer and education is key to the delivery of the master plan.

7. COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

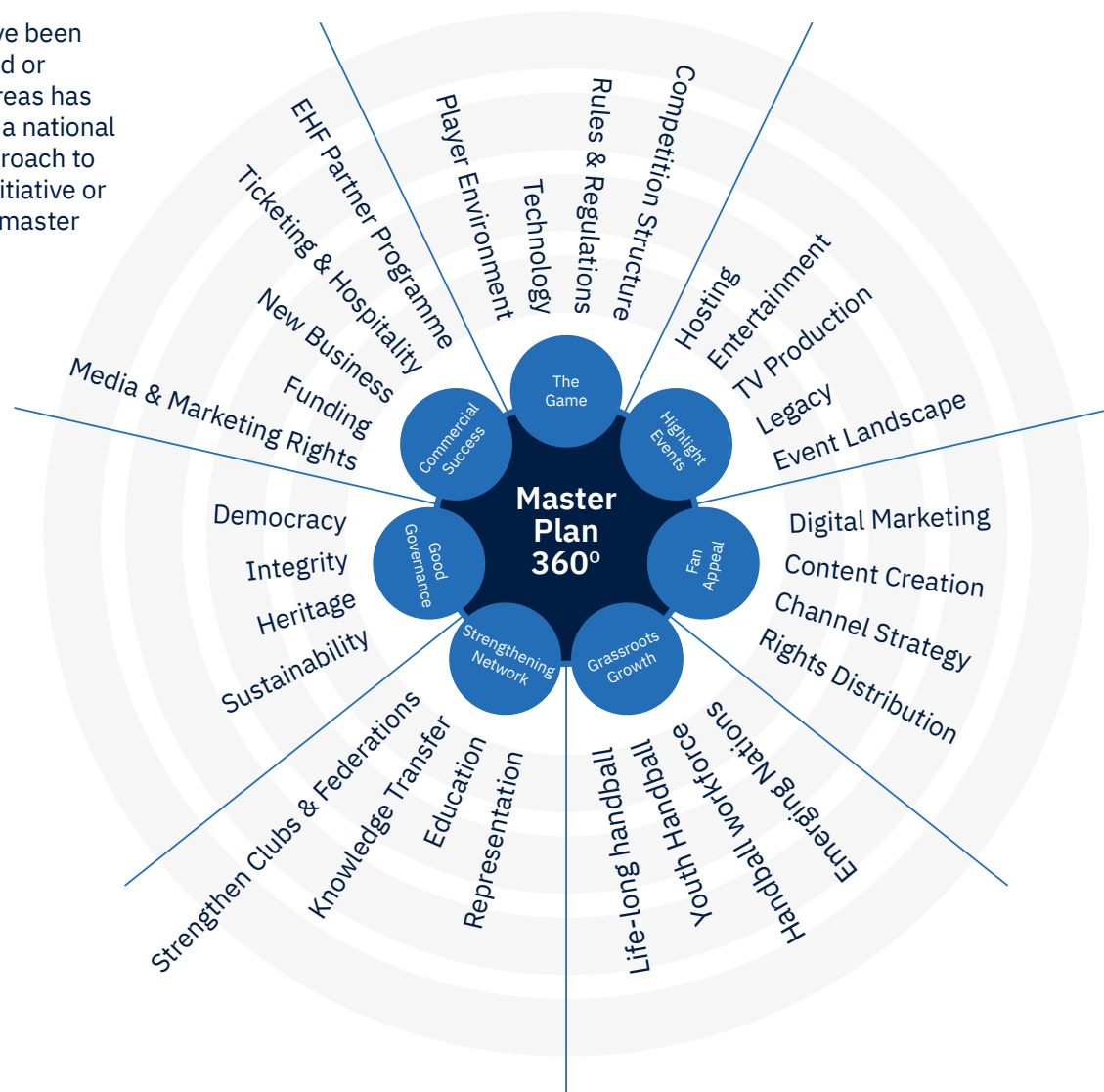
On the right wing is commercial success – dependent on teammates, but if the team plays well together, success will come. The result of all the efforts to promote and develop the sport as a top-class entertainment product will be to continuously increase the commercial value of European handball.



3. REALISING THE PLAN

MASTER PLAN 360°

For each of the seven pillars or ‘players’, a number of key areas have been identified where specific initiatives and projects need to be created or further developed in order to realise the plan. Each of these key areas has been highlighted in the initial phases as being important on either a national federation or European level. There needs to be a 360 degree approach to the development of the strategy, because each player and each initiative or project needs to contribute to the overall strategy in order for the master plan to be successful.



PRIORITIES

1. THE GAME

We will create the best possible environment for the sport, its players, coaches and officials at all levels. Work will focus on providing the best conditions for playing the game as well as continued investment in technology to further improve officiating and bring the game even closer to fans.

Priorities:

1. Create a European model for the lifecycle of players, coaches and officials
2. Be the leading voice and source of information for players, coaches and officials
3. Enhance the game through technology
4. Provide support and education for elite players
5. Be the leader in increasing Europe-wide knowledge and expertise in sports science
6. Ensure competitions are current and up to date

2. HIGHLIGHT EVENTS

High-profile events including the EHF EURO and the club final tournaments such as the EHF FINAL4 provide a high point to the season. They attract millions of TV viewers and fans in arenas across Europe and are an attractive platform for partners and sponsors. The EHF and EHF Marketing will work together with Infront and DAZN as well as with organisers to further promote, develop and professionalise the approach to its benchmark events to ensure the best possible fan experience.

Priorities:

1. Create fan experiences (not just competitions)
2. Increase hosting standards for events
3. Enhance the watching experience for fans through technology
4. Use flagship events to drive reach of competitions
5. Inclusion of handball into major multi-sport events

3. FAN APPEAL

A holistic digital strategy will be at the centre of efforts in order to meet the expectations of existing and new handball fans. This will be done through a variety of channels, including digital marketing – reaching and engaging fans beyond the EHF’s own channels – content creation, and rights distribution to maximise reach further.

Priorities:

1. Reach and engage with the 115 million handball fans in Europe
2. Create personalities, heroes and influencers
3. Increase the number of TV viewers worldwide
4. Establish OTT strategy
5. Create and grow a database of all handball fans worldwide

4. GRASSROOTS GROWTH

Special efforts need to be taken to attract young people in kindergartens and schools and to retain more people in the sport throughout their lives. More opportunities for officiating and volunteering will also be important in developing grassroots growth.

Priorities:

1. Increase the number of active players, coaches and volunteers
2. Create opportunities to play handball at every stage of life and for all abilities
3. Use digital to channels reach new audiences
4. Individualised long-term national federation plans
5. Create content and Europe-wide campaigns to grow the sport

5. STRENGTHENING NETWORK

The success of European handball strongly depends on its administrators, officials and volunteers – their continuous education and the transfer of knowledge within clubs and federations and to external partners will result in the increased professionalism of all stakeholders.

Priorities:

1. Provide e-learning platform for handball community (professional managers to volunteers)
2. Create education programme for federations/clubs
3. Create business development mentoring programme for national federations
4. Support the development of clubs and federation professional staff through scholarships

6. GOOD GOVERNANCE

Through democratic structures and transparent decision-making procedures, the EHF will continue to ensure integrity and maintain high ethical standards. Looking to the future, the issues of sustainability and the creation of CSR programmes will be important topics for the master plan.

Priorities:

1. Be a leading federation for good governance and a best practice example
2. Secure the heritage of the EHF
3. Create a sustainable approach to the work of the EHF (profit, people, planet)
4. Create CSR projects

7. COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

This will be achieved by optimising traditional revenue streams as well as identifying new and innovative sources of income. Ultimately, the EHF aims to reinvest as much of the revenues as possible back into the European handball system.

Priorities:

1. Increase income through partnerships
2. Increase income through ticketing & hospitality
3. Increase the amount of funding in the sport
4. Use data to reach, engage and monetise
5. Exploit available media/marketing rights
6. Increase income through merchandising/e-commerce



4. NEXT PHASE

NEXT PHASE

The final details of the master plan are now to be completed ahead of the Extraordinary EHF Congress in November 2021. The vision, goals, seven pillars or players, focus areas and priorities have been identified but in the next phase, the specific initiatives and projects need to be created and developed. Additionally targets and KPIs needs to be agreed and budgets allocated to both new and existing initiatives.

Within the EHF Office a ‘Master Plan Team’ will be established with a member of staff responsible for coordinating and driving the further development of each of the seven players. Reference groups will also be established for each area comprising handball experts, partners and stakeholders where required.

Each member of the EHF’s newly elected bodies and stakeholder boards will have an important role to play in the final composition of the plan within their area of expertise. This will ensure that the master plan meets the needs and requirements not only on a European level but also for national federations and all other important stakeholders.

Timeline



23/24 April 2021	EHF Congress
10/11 June 2021	Executive Committee Meeting
26/27 August 2021	Meetings Technical Commissions
23/24 September 2021	Executive Committee Meeting
11/12 October 2021	Meetings Stakeholder Boards (PHB, NB, NCM, NCW, WHM, EHLB)
18/19 November 2021	Executive Committee Meeting/ EO Congress/30 th Anniversary



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A stylized graphic of a handball, composed of a central pentagon with five lines extending from its vertices towards the corners of the page, creating a star-like shape. The lines are light blue against a dark blue background.

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