



Minutes Meeting of IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group

Date: Friday, 22 September 2022
Time: 14:00-15:30
Place: Dr Hassan Moustafa Sports Hall, Cairo

Participants:

Dr Frantisek Taborsky	Chairman of IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group
Mr Flavio Melo	Member of IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group
Dr Hossam Mostafa	Member of IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group
Mr Muhammad Shafiq	Member of IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group
Mr Vicente Breto	Cooperating Expert for referees/technical delegate for wheelchair handball four-a-side

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Status of wheelchair handball on the continents
3. IHF Referee/Technical Delegate Education
4. Application for the LA 2028 Paralympic Games
5. Challenges and tasks for the future
6. Miscellaneous

Dr Frantisek Taborsky welcomed the participants of the IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group to its meeting which was held on the occasion of the 1st IHF Wheelchair Handball World Championship Four-a-Side in Cairo, Egypt. He excused Mrs Rabenseifner who couldn't be present in Egypt due to professional obligations.

Since it was the first Meeting of the IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group in the new composition, Dr Taborsky asked the members to shortly introduce themselves and report about the status of wheelchair handball on their continents.

Dr Hossam Mostafa (EGY) reported that for the time being, wheelchair handball was only played in Egypt. Wheelchair basketball is currently more popular. However, he believes that wheelchair handball could become a very popular Paralympic team sport in Egypt.

Flavio Melo (BRA) explained that they are trying to develop wheelchair handball in South and Central America and to re-activate teams. Only six or seven out of 12 teams are active at the moment. In most cases, the reason for the inactivity is financial problems. In South and Central America teams have to travel long distances in order to play international matches/to participate in continental championships. Further, the wheelchairs are quite expensive. Dr Taborsky appreciates the work done in South and Central America and mentioned that the ratio on the continent is not that bad. Almost one third of the teams are already active in wheelchair handball, which is a good number compared to Africa and Asia.

Muhammad Shafiq (PAK) expressed his thanks for the invitation to this event and informed that five teams exercise wheelchair handball in Asia: Afghanistan, India, Iran, Japan and Pakistan. However, some countries have a problem with the mixed format as they don't allow women to play together with men. For this reason, they couldn't participate in any IHF Wheelchair Handball event this year. Support for the development of wheelchair handball shall be discussed also with the Asian Handball Federation.

Dr Taborsky informed the participants that there are currently 14/15 National Federations in Europe, which are active in wheelchair handball, mostly in the six-a-side variant.

After this short introduction Dr Taborsky passed the floor to Vicente Breto (ESP), who talked about the education of IHF wheelchair handball referees/technical delegates. He informed the participants that an online education course was held in February/March 2022 for referees/technical delegates proposed by their National Federation. At the end of the course, 25 referees/technical delegates passed the exams and received an IHF certificate. As this championship is the first IHF wheelchair handball event, the referees don't have a lot of experience in international competitions yet. Thus, he stressed that the main task for the future is to improve the level of the referees. Dr Taborsky added that it's more important to focus on the quality of the referees, rather than on the quantity. However, since the IHF currently only has male referees/technical delegates efforts should be made to also find some female referees/delegates. Further, he informed that Sergio Cedrun, fitness coach for the IHF indoor referees expressed his interest to also be involved in the physical preparation of the IHF wheelchair handball referees. He would be in permanent contact with the referees to improve their physical condition and provide some training material.

Due to obligations at the Wheelchair Handball World Championship, Mr Breto left the meeting after giving his input.

Dr Taborsky informed the participants that the IHF sent the application to be part of the LA 2028 Paralympic Games to the IPC in July 2022. The decision whether wheelchair handball will be accepted as part of the sports programme will be announced at the end of January 2023. The three main criteria the IHF needed to fulfil are:

- Active teams on at least three continents (IHF has 4 continents)
- At least 24 active National Federations (IHF has 34 NFs)
- Organisation of at least two World Championships (IHF organised EGY & POR 2022)

Dr Taborsky asked the working group members for their opinion for which variant they see better chances. Mr Shafiq thought that six-a-side has better chances whereas Mr Melo and Dr Mostafa voted for four-a-side because of the smaller number of participants and teams. Dr Taborsky also saw better chances for wheelchair handball four-a-side for economic, recruitment and logistical reasons. Smaller delegations mean lower costs and less organisational work and may also be beneficial regarding the IPC quotas for Paralympic Games.

Since wheelchair handball four-a-side has similarities with wheelchair basketball, Dr Mostafa mentioned that it might be an advantage for wheelchair handball teams to recruit their players from wheelchair basketball.

The cooperation with national Paralympic bodies is a challenge for the IHF and National Federations, as the governing bodies for indoor handball and wheelchair handball are not necessarily the same. Thus, on the one hand, the IHF bodies must be in contact with its Member Federations and, on the other hand, also with the National Paralympic Committees in order to reach those countries whose governing body for wheelchair handball is not the national handball federation. In order to facilitate the communication and to make wheelchair handball more popular, there should be a person responsible for wheelchair handball on each continent. To date, Mario Garcia de la Torre (President of NACHC) has not been able to find a responsible person for wheelchair handball in North America and the Caribbean. Also, in Oceania it's difficult to find someone as only Australia has had a wheelchair handball team in the past. Regarding the geographical situation and the general popularity of handball in the region, it is expected that only Australia and New Zealand would be able to have a wheelchair handball team in the future.

Tasks for the future

1. Become part of the Paralympic Programme, preferably from 2028. (The IHF was informed that a total of 33 Paralympic sports applied to be part of the Games in LA.)

The IHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group must be prepared for two scenarios:

- a) Wheelchair handball will be accepted for LA 2028: Wheelchair handball WCh will be played every 4 years in even years when there are no Paralympic Games (the next events would be in 2024 (exceptional, as the sport is not Paralympic yet) and 2026 (regular) as PG would be in 2028). Continental championships in odd years (2023, 2025 and 2027) as qualification events for WCh and PG. The winner of the WCh 2026 would also be qualified for PG 2028.
- b) Wheelchair Handball World Championships in odd years (2023, 2025 and 2027). 2027 will be qualification events for PG 2028. Continental

championships in odd years as qualification tournaments for the World Championship.

2. Find contact persons for wheelchair handball in North America and the Caribbean, Oceania but also in countries like Algeria, Kenya, Morocco and Nigeria.
3. Continue the education of IHF referees and technical delegates.
4. Recruit and educate classifiers for wheelchair handball.

Dr Taborsky thanked all attendees for their active participation in the meeting and closed the session.