



**International
Handball
Federation**

III. Player Eligibility Code

Edition: 21 December 2025



Table of contents

Article 1 – Basic Principles	2
Article 2 – Player Status	2
Article 3 – Professional Players	2
Article 4 – Registration	3
Article 5 – Eligibility to Play	4
Article 6 – National Players	4
Article 7 – Release of National Players	7
Article 8 – Participation in Olympic Games	9
Article 9 – Suspensions	10
Article 10 – Disputes	10

Appendices

Appendix 1 – List of competitions recognised by the International Handball Federation	11
Appendix 2 – List of National Federations being part of the IHF New Markets' Project	12
Appendix 3 – List of Top, Developed and Emerging National Federations	13



Article 1

1. Basic Principles

1. All handball players shall be subject to the Player Eligibility Code of the International Handball Federation (IHF).
2. The Player Eligibility Code is valid for Indoor Handball, Beach Handball and Wheelchair Handball players and players with learning disabilities alike as well as for players crossing from one of the aforementioned forms of handball to another.



Article 2

2. Player Status

1. Players participating in organised handball are either amateurs or professionals. A professional is a player who has a written contract with a club and is paid more for his/her handball activity than the expenses he/she effectively incurs. All other players are considered to be amateurs.
2. Definitions:
 - a. A professional is a player who has a written employment contract with a club and is paid more than the expenses he/she effectively incurs in return for his/her handball activity. It is therefore compulsory to stipulate a written contract between the club and a player. Oral arrangements between a club and a player, although possibly admissible by and in conformity with local labour law, are not in line with these regulations. Players that have another regular working activity or employment besides their remunerated handball activity (so-called semi-professionals) shall also be considered as professionals if they comply with the first sentence of 2.2.a.
 - b. An amateur is a player who pursues sport just for fun or as a hobby, without any material gain, and who does not receive any remuneration other than for the actual expenses incurred. Furthermore, he/she basically has no written contract with the club with which he/she is registered. Expenses incurred through involvement in a match or in training (e.g. travel, sports equipment, insurance, etc.) and the costs of a player's equipment can be reimbursed to the player without jeopardising the amateur status of the player.



Article 3

3. Professional Players

1. The IHF or the Continental Confederation concerned has the right to determine the status of a player

by itself. The respective request may be forwarded by the National Federation, a club or a player.

2. The agreement/contract between the player and the club shall include all details that rule the mutual rights and duties and shall be valid for a concrete period of time. The details mentioned in the specimen contract (see Regulations for Transfer between Federations (IV)) can be considered elements of an agreement/contract between the player and a club. The parties involved are free to rule further details in the respective agreement/contract which must not contravene the specimen contract.
3. In case of disputes, a copy of the contract shall be made available to the IHF or the Continental Confederation concerned, if required.
4. National Federations may add their own provisions to their player contracts, as long as they do not contradict this Player Eligibility Code.



Article 4

4. Registration

1. Every club shall, for each playing season, report the players it has under contract to its National Federation by means of a form provided by the IHF by 30 September of each calendar year. Amateur players concluding a contract during the season shall be reported to the National Federation by the club within 7 days. National Federations shall generate a central register of professional players within their jurisdiction by 15 October of each year to be submitted to the Continental Confederation concerned. The Continental Confederation shall submit this register to the IHF by 15 November of each year. Players who are not registered in this list or who are not announced in due time according to Article 4, are considered amateur players.

National Federations concerned shall immediately register players who have achieved status as a professional player between the aforementioned entry dates to the Continental Confederation concerned, which shall submit this register to the IHF. Non-compliance with this rule shall be fined in line with the IHF Regulations concerning Penalties and Fines.

2. The registration of players shall be differentiated between Indoor Handball, Beach Handball and Wheelchair Handball players and players with learning disabilities.

In general, a player is allowed to cross from one form of handball to another as per Article [1.2](#). However, if a player participates in two or more forms of handball, the player shall be registered in each form of handball accordingly.



Article 5

5. Eligibility to Play

1. Only players eligible to play may take part in games and competitions announced by the National Federation concerned.
2. The National Federation must confirm eligibility:
 - a. if, in the case of a transfer from one federation to another, once the player is in possession of an International Transfer Certificate approved by the IHF and/or the Continental Confederation concerned, releasing him/her from the previous federation where he/she was eligible to play.
 - b. if the player is under 16 at the moment of the request and has not yet played for any other federation.
3. The National Federation may confirm the eligibility to play in cases 5.2.a and 5.2.b only after receipt of the corresponding written approval from the IHF or the Continental Confederation concerned:
 - a. if the player has refugee or asylum seeker status and a valid residence permit in the country of the National Federation concerned.
 - b. if the player has not played in any National Federation for the previous 24 months.
4. If 5.3.b applies, the federation for which the player has last been eligible to play shall confirm the date of the last game in writing. This confirmation shall be submitted within 15 days at the latest following the request. In case no confirmation is submitted in compliance with the deadline, the IHF or the Continental Confederation concerned will be able to grant player eligibility following the request by the new federation.



Article 6

6. National Players

6.1. National team players shall meet the following conditions:

- a. Citizenship of the country concerned.
- b. With the exception of the conditions specified in Articles [6.2](#) and [6.3](#) below, any player who has participated in a match (either in full or in part) in an official competition of any category or any type of handball for one national team may not play an international match for another national team. Official matches are considered to be: the qualifying matches for a continental championship, matches in a continental championship, qualifying matches for IHF World Championships and Olympic Games, matches in IHF World Championships and Olympic Games and other competitions recognised by the International Handball Federation as listed in Appendix [1](#).

6.2. Player Eligibility in Case of Multiple Nationalities

Players who hold more than one nationality may choose which senior national team they want to represent.

6.2.1. Conditions

A player who holds more than one nationality is eligible to officially represent one of those countries if:

- a. he/she complies with Article [6.1](#) and
- b. he/she was born in the territory of the federation concerned or
- c. his/her biological mother or biological father were born in the territory of the federation concerned or
- d. one of his/her biological grandparents was born in the territory of the federation concerned.

6.2.2. Restrictions

1. With the exceptions mentioned in Article [6.3](#), a player's choice of a senior national team is definitive and irreversible.
2. If a player chooses to play for a senior national team, but has previously represented the National Federation of their other nationality in the youth and/or junior category, they must respect a six-month waiting period between the last selection with the youth or junior team and the first selection with the senior team.
3. A player cannot play for two different national teams in the youth or junior category.

6.3. Change Eligibility to Play for a National Federation

6.3.1. Conditions

Players who hold more than one nationality and do not fulfil the conditions specified in Article [6.2](#) may change sporting nationality, even after having already represented a different senior national team, provided that they:

- a. comply with Article [6.1.a](#), and
- b. have been living in the territory of the federation concerned for more than 36 consecutive months (this residency requirement does not apply if the player obtained citizenship of the relevant federation before the age of 21 and has never played for any national team), and
- c. have not played in any national team of another country in the three years preceding their first appearance in the national team in an official match. Official matches are considered to be: the qualifying matches for a continental championship, matches in a continental championship, qualifying matches for IHF World Championships and Olympic Games, matches in IHF World Championships and Olympic Games and other competitions recognised by the International Handball Federation as listed in Appendix [1](#).

6.3.2. Limitation per National Team

1. With the exception of Article [6.3.2.3](#), a national team playing in an official match of the International Handball Federation may have only two players on its team who changed their sporting nationality based on Article [6.3.1](#).
2. Players who acquired citizenship (passport) of a country before having reached the age of 21 shall not be considered as players who changed their sporting nationality based on Article [6.3.1](#).
3. The limitation provided for in Article [6.3.2.1](#) shall not be applicable to those National Federations being part of the IHF New Markets' Project (listed in Appendix [2](#)). This list will be reviewed annually by the IHF Council based on the development of the National Federations concerned.

In case any of the National Federations concerned reaches the position of a performance place at the IHF World Championship, the continent of the National Federation in question will not benefit from this performance place. The performance place concerned will be allocated to the continent of the next ranked National Federation.

6.3.3. Special Case

Players who have played with a senior national team (see Article [6.1.b](#)) may not play for a national team of another country if they do not comply with Article [6.3.1](#). However, under exceptional circumstances, the IHF Executive Committee may authorise, case by case, such players to play for the national team of an "Emerging National Federation" (listed in Appendix [3](#)) or a National Federation being part of the IHF New Markets' Project (listed in Appendix [2](#)) if they have not played in the last three years with their former national team and if this is in the interest of the development of handball in this country. Such players shall come from a "Top National Federation" national team and their former National Federation shall be consulted during the process, before the decision of the Executive Committee.

6.3.4. Specifications

It is only permitted to change the National Federation and thus to obtain eligibility to play for a new national team one time. In case of disputes or unclear circumstances over eligibility, the Executive Committee of the International Handball Federation will decide after examining each case individually. The Head Office of the International Handball Federation has the right to request further documents from the parties involved to determine the circumstances regarding the eligibility of the player concerned. If a National Federation presents incorrect documents concerning eligibility of a player, Article 21 of the Regulations concerning Penalties and Fines is applicable. In case of dissolution of an existing federation or a constitution of a new one, the IHF shall create a separate body to examine the cases should disputes over eligibility arise.

6.4. Administrative Procedures

1. All National Federations requesting change of eligibility must provide all necessary documents as

stipulated in Article [6.2](#) not later than 30 days prior to the potential release date. Any requested additional document submitted within seven days prior to the beginning of a competition will be refused.

2. All changes of nationality must be approved directly by the International Handball Federation and communicated to all parties involved (National Federations and Continental Confederations).
3. Any player who has the right to choose or change national teams in accordance with Articles [6.2](#) and [6.3](#) above shall submit a written, substantiated request to the IHF Head Office. Within this request, the player shall especially acknowledge the consequences of his/her choice.
4. The documents to prove that a player fulfils the conditions to be eligible to play for a National Federation shall be official documents, including, but not limited to, passport, birth certificates, certificate of residency, family record book. All documents shall be official state documents delivered, stamped and signed by official state authorities.
5. All documents shall be translated in an official language of the IHF by a certified translator.
6. Once all necessary documents are sent by the National Federation requesting the eligibility of a player, the International Handball Federation will have 15 days to hand down a decision.
7. National Federations must request a confirmation of eligibility to the IHF if they wish to include a player holding multiple nationalities within their provisional team list. This request must be sent only for the first appearance of the player within a list of the National Federation in question. In case the Continental Confederation is in charge of the reception of the provisional team lists, the Continental Confederation shall request the confirmation of eligibility to the IHF. This provision applies to all age categories.



Article 7

7. Release of Players to National Teams

1. Players called to play in national teams shall meet the conditions set out in Article [6](#) of the IHF Player Eligibility Code.
 - 1.2. A club having a foreign player under contract shall release such player to his/her National Federation if he/she is called up to take part in activities of that federation's national team.
 - 1.3. A club shall release a player to his/her national team in accordance with [7.1.2](#) as follows:
 - 1.3.1. Olympic Games, World Championships, continental championships: Releases shall be limited to a period from 15 days prior to the beginning of the competition to 1 day after the end of the competition, but not more than a maximum of 29 days per above-mentioned competition.
 - 1.3.2. Qualification matches/tournaments for competitions named in [7.1.3.1](#): Releases shall be limited to a period from 2 days prior to the beginning of the playing period to 1 day after the end of the playing period, but not more than a maximum of 31 days in a calendar year.
 - 1.3.3. With respect to [7.1.3](#), National Federations and the clubs concerned are free to agree

otherwise in writing.

- 1.3.4. The dates of releases in accordance with [7.1.3](#) shall be communicated in writing to the clubs concerned and to the National Federations concerned not later than 30 days prior to the beginning of the national team's activity. In case a player is changing his/her club the request should be sent on the date that the International Transfer Certificate is issued. A copy of such an invitation to a national team activity shall also be sent to the IHF and the Continental Confederation concerned.
- 1.3.5. The dates of events and releasing periods mentioned under [7.1.3.1](#) and [7.1.3.2](#) are fixed in the so called IHF World Calendar which is approved by the IHF Council and published in general two seasons ahead.
2. A club releasing a national player in accordance with Article 7 shall not have any claim to compensation.
 - 2.1. For the IHF Senior World Championships and the IHF Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments the IHF will pay a so called releasing fee to the releasing National Federation for the benefit of the respective releasing employer clubs of the players. The amount of the releasing fee is fixed by the IHF Council and is announced by the IHF before the respective competition.
3.
 - 3.1. Provided that no other agreement has been made in writing, a federation calling up its player to national team activities shall bear that player's travel and accommodation costs. At IHF Senior World Championships, IHF Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments and the Olympic Games the accommodation is provided and financed by the IHF or its contractual partners.
 - 3.2. The club for which the player is eligible to play shall take out insurance coverage for the player in the event of personal injury and resulting consequences for the period for which the player has been called to his/her federation's activities.

At IHF Senior World Championships and IHF Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments the IHF will compensate the losses encountered by the handball clubs due to accidents or sickness of a handball player suffered during release period for the National Federation of the respective event and consequential temporary total disablement as well as permanent total disablement from playing handball for his/her handball club or accidental death of a handball player (IHF Handball Players Support). The IHF Handball Players Support will provide compensation for handball clubs / handball players in the event that national A-team handball players participating for their National Federation in IHF Senior World Championships and IHF Olympic Games Qualification Tournaments suffer a temporary total disablement (TTD) as a result of sickness or bodily injuries caused by an accident which lasts for more than 14 consecutive days, payable up to a maximum of 90 days benefit period. Details will be annually updated by decision of the IHF Council and announced before the respective event to the National Federations to be forwarded to their members.

4.

- 4.1. Should the federation so request, any player unable to follow his/her federation's call due to illness or injury may be examined by a physician selected by the inviting federation. If the medical advice of the physician chosen by the inviting federation is not the same as the medical advice of the physician of the club to which he/she belongs, the federation can ask the IHF to name another physician who will examine the player and will give a definitive opinion on his/her health. The federation concerned shall bear the costs thereof. In this case, the request of the federation must be met within a deadline not exceeding 72 hours.
- 4.2. If a player does not follow a call to an activity by his/her federation in accordance with [7.1.3](#), he/she shall not be eligible to play for his/her club during a period from two days prior to five days after the relevant playing period.
- 4.3. If the player still plays for his/her club during such period, he/she shall, at the request of the National Federation concerned, be suspended by the IHF or by the Continental Confederation concerned, from playing in his/her club's matches for six months.
- 4.4. A club which, in violation of these Regulations, fails to release a player who is able to play and who is called up by his/her National Federation, or prevents such a release, shall be penalised in accordance with the IHF Regulations concerning Penalties and Fines and the disciplinary regulations of the Continental Confederation concerned.



Article 8

8. Participation in Olympic Games

Participation in the Olympic Games shall be subject to the IHF's and the International Olympic Committee's eligibility codes.

1. Players participating in the Olympic Games
 - a. shall respect the spirit of fair play and inviolability and act accordingly,
 - b. shall use no illegal substances or make use of illegal applications as set forth by IOC and International Handball Federation regulations,
 - c. shall observe the stipulations of the IOC Medical Code and act accordingly.
2. For the duration of the Olympic Games, players taking part in the Olympic Games shall not permit their persons, names, visual representation or performance to be used for advertising purposes.
3. There shall be no connection to financial compensation of any kind regarding a player's registration or participation in the Olympic Games.



Article 9

9. Suspensions

Suspensions imposed by the IHF or a Continental Confederation shall also apply to games within Member Federations during the period of the suspension.



Article 10

10. Disputes

All disputes arising from these Regulations will be handled by the IHF legal bodies. After exhaustion of the internal IHF remedies, the final decision of IHF can be appealed to the International Handball Court of Arbitration (IHCA) in Basel / Switzerland in accordance with the IHCA Code, that shall definitely resolve the dispute in accordance with IHF Regulations, additionally Swiss Law. A recourse to ordinary courts is prohibited unless provided by Swiss Law as further recourse against the final IHCA decision.



Appendix 1

List of competitions recognised by the International Handball Federation

- IHF World Championships and all related qualification phases
- IHF Beach Handball World Championships and all related qualification phases
- IHF Wheelchair Handball World Championships
- Olympic Games and all related qualification phases
- Continental championships and all related qualification phases
- IHF Trophy
- Youth Olympic Games and all related qualification phases
- World Games
- World Beach Games
- European Games
- African Games
- Asian Games
- Pan American Games
- Pacific Games
- Commonwealth Games
- Mediterranean Games
- Universiade
- World University Championship for Handball
- EHF EURO Cup



Appendix 2

List of National Federations being part of the IHF New Markets' Project

- Australia / AUS
- Canada / CAN
- China / CHN
- Great Britain / GBR
- India / IND
- Italy / ITA
- United States of America / USA



Appendix 3

List of Top, Developed and Emerging National Federations

1. Criteria used to establish the list

The list of the Top, Developed and Emerging National Federations shall be used by the IHF Executive Committee to decide on eligibility requests which can be made in accordance with Article [6.3.3](#) of the IHF Player Eligibility Code.

The last two IHF World Championships of both genders and all age categories were used to calculate the points allocated to each National Federation:

- Men's Senior World Championships 2023 and 2025
- Women's Senior World Championships 2021 and 2023
- Men's Junior World Championships 2019 and 2023
- Women's Junior World Championships 2022 and 2024
- Men's Youth World Championships 2019 and 2023
- Women's Youth World Championships 2022 and 2024

The list will be updated every February.

The first 16 National Federations are considered as Top National Federations. The Executive Committee has the right to reassign National Federations from the Developed National Federations or Emerging National Federations to another category.

The points were calculated as follows:

	Placement	Points until WChs 2019	Points as of WChs 2021
Final	1	16	16
	2	14	14
Semi-Finals	3	13	12
	4	12	11
Quarter-Finals	5	11	9
	6	10	8.5
	7	9	8
	8	8	7.5
Performance places	9	7	5.5
	10	6	5
	11	5	4.5

	12	4	4
Main Round	13-16	3	2.5
	17-20	2	2
	21-24	1	1.5
President's Cup	25-32	-	1

- Points were multiplied by 3 for the results at Senior World Championships
- Points were multiplied by 2 for the results at Junior World Championships
- Points were multiplied by 1 for the results at Youth World Championships

2. List of Top, Developed and Emerging National Federations

Men's Handball

Top National Federations:

1. Denmark (DEN)
2. France (FRA)
3. Germany (GER)
4. Croatia (CRO)
5. Egypt (EGY)
6. Portugal (POR)
7. Hungary (HUN)
8. Spain (ESP)
9. Norway (NOR)
10. Iceland (ISL)
11. Sweden (SWE)
12. Slovenia (SLO)
13. Brazil (BRA)
14. Serbia (SRB)
15. Tunisia (TUN)
16. Faroe Islands (FAR)

Developed National Federations:

ALG – ARG – AUT – BRN – CHI – CPV – CZE – JPN – KOR – KSA – MKD – NED – POL – QAT – SUI – USA

Emerging National Federations:

Africa:

ANG – BDI – BEN – BOT – BUR – CAF – CGO – CHA – CIV – CMR – COD – COM – DJI – ETH – GAB – GAM – GBS – GEQ – GHA – GUI – KEN – LBA – LBR – LES – MAD – MAR – MAW – MLI – MOZ –

MRI – MTN – NAM – NGR – NIG – REU – RSA – RWA – SEN – SEY – SLE – SOM – SSD – STP – SUD – SWZ – TAN – TOG – UGA – ZAM – ZIM

Asia:

AFG – BAN – BHU – BRU – CAM – CHN – HKG – INA – IND – IRI – IRQ – JOR – KAZ – KGZ – KUW – LAO – LBN – MAC – MAS – MDV – MGL – NEP – OMA – PAK – PHI – PLE – PRK – SGP – SRI – SYR – THA – TJK – TKM – TLS – TPE – UAE – UZB – VIE – YEM

Europe:

ALB – AND – ARM – AZE – BEL – BIH – BLR – BUL – CYP – ENG – EST – FIN – GBR – GEO – GRE – IRL – ISR – ITA – KOS – LAT – LIE – LTU – LUX – MDA – MLT – MNE – MON – ROU – RUS – SCO – SVK – TUR – UKR

Oceania:

ASA – AUS – COK – FIJ – FSM – GUM – KIR – MHL – MNP – NCL – NRU – NZL – PLW – PNG – SAM – SOL – TAH – TGA – TUV – VAN

North America and Caribbean:

ANT – BAH – BAR – CAN – CAY – CUB – DMA – DOM – GLP – GRL – GRN – HAI – IVB – JAM – LCA MEX – MTQ – PUR – SKN – TTO

South and Central America:

BIZ – BOL – COL – CRC – ECU – ESA – GUA – GUF – GUY – HON – NCA – PAN – PAR – PER – URU – VEN

Women's Handball

Top National Federations:

1. France (FRA)
2. Norway (NOR)
3. Denmark (DEN)
4. Hungary (HUN)
5. Sweden (SWE)
6. Netherlands (NED)
7. Germany (GER)
8. Spain (ESP)
9. Brazil (BRA)
10. Montenegro (MNE)
11. Czechia (CZE)
12. Japan (JPN)
13. Korea (KOR)
14. Romania (ROU)
15. Croatia (CRO)
16. Switzerland (SUI)

Developed National Federations:

ANG – ARG – AUT – CHN – EGY – IRI – ISL – KAZ – MKD – POL – POR – RUS – SLO – SRB – SVK
– TUN

Emerging National Federations:

Africa:

ALG – BDI – BEN – BOT – BUR – CAF – CGO – CHA – CIV – CMR – COD – COM – CPV – DJI – ETH
– GAB – GAM – GBS – GEQ – GHA – GUI – KEN – LBA – LBR – LES – MAD – MAR – MAW – MLI –
MOZ – MRI – MTN – NAM – NGR – NIG – REU – RSA – RWA – SEN – SEY – SLE – SOM – SSD –
STP – SUD – SWZ – TAN – TOG – UGA – ZAM – ZIM

Asia:

AFG – BAN – BHU – BRN – BRU – CAM – HKG – INA – IND – IRQ – JOR – KGZ – KSA – KUW – LAO
– LBN – MAC – MAS – MDV – MGL – NEP – OMA – PAK – PHI – PLE – PRK – QAT – SGP – SRI –
SYR – THA – TJK – TKM – TLS – TPE – UAE – UZB – VIE – YEM

Europe:

ALB – AND – ARM – AZE – BEL – BIH – BLR – BUL – CYP – ENG – EST – FAR – FIN – GBR – GEO
– GRE – IRL – ISR – ITA – KOS – LAT – LIE – LTU – LUX – MDA – MLT – MON – SCO – TUR – UKR

Oceania:

ASA – AUS – COK – FIJ – FSM – GUM – KIR – MHL – MNP – NCL – NRU – NZL – PLW – PNG – SAM
– SOL – TAH – TGA – TUV – VAN

North America and Caribbean:

ANT – BAH – BAR – CAN – CAY – CUB – DMA – DOM – GLP – GRL – GRN – HAI – IVB – JAM – LCA
– MEX – MTQ – PUR – SKN – TTO – USA

South and Central America:

BIZ – BOL – CHI – COL – CRC – ECU – ESA – GUA – GUF – GUY – HON – NCA – PAN – PAR – PER
– URU – VEN