

**EHF**

# REPORT

# STATUS WHEELCHAIR

# HANDBALL 2026



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## INTRODUCTION

In 2006, wheelchair handball was added to the working fields of the EHF Methods Commission. Ever since, the sport has grown across Europe and beyond. At the beginning of its development, smaller tournaments were organised throughout Europe, before in 2022 the first European Championship took place. The European Championship 2025 so far states the peak of the development of wheelchair handball with nine participating teams.

With the application to the International Paralympic Committee to be included in the 2032 Paralympics in Brisbane/AUS, the EHF Methods Commission decided to boost the development of the sport by supporting the 'Wheelchair Handball Development Plan' presented by the Sport & Game Service Department. The document lays out a strategic approach for the upcoming years with the goal of combining forces and unifying the individual national approaches. One major part of the plan is the analysis of the status of wheelchair handball to serve as a basis for future development measures, as well as point of reference in the evaluation of those measures.

The goal of this document is to present the status quo of wheelchair handball in 2026. The following document will demonstrate that wheelchair handball has an existing and lively community across Europe that is worth to develop. Also, the document will outline the heterogenous structures and divers approaches each individual federation has. Depending on the decision of the EHF Methods Commission and EHF Wheelchair Handball Working Group, this report will be published yearly or bi-yearly to present the actions taken by the EHF and its impact on the community.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data presented in this report originates from multiple sources. In August 2025, a questionnaire was sent out to all federations of the EHF (the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A). In the questionnaire the federations were asked to provide statistics about their current player base as well as other relevant numbers, like coaches, clubs and classifiers. Also, the federations were asked to explain if and how their national championship is structured, and which format of wheelchair handball is played (4- and/or 6-a-side). Out of 50 European federations, 17 completed the survey. Below the list of the responsive federations can be found.

Active Federations*		Interested Federations**
BEL	LTU	GRE
CRO	NED	IRL
ESP	NOR	POL
FRA	POR	SLO
GER*	ROU	SRB
HUN	SWE	

*\*Information by DRS (German wheelchair sport federation)*

**Please note:** The responsive federations were classified as ‘active’ if they show wheelchair handball activities on national level. The federations classified as ‘interested’ handed in their survey stating that they don’t have any activities currently but are interested in joining the wheelchair community in the future.

Secondly, during the EHF European Wheelchair Handball Championship 2025 in Vilnius/LTU, a ‘wheelchair handball roundtable session’ was organised. On 29 November 2025, around 80 people (players, coaches, referees, delegates and classifiers) gathered to exchange and brainstorm about wheelchair handball. The outcome of this session can be found in the ‘Wheelchair Handball Roundtable Session Report’. Lastly, to summarize the chronological history of the sport, internal documentation was analysed.

## HISTORY

After the first contact with the European Paralympic in 2005, in 2006 the EHF Methods Commission introduced wheelchair handball within the EHF. With the initiative ‘wheels on fire’ wheelchair handball was born in Europe. In the same year a demo match was played at the EHF Youth Handball Convention in Vienna. Around ten years later, the EHF organised the first official wheelchair handball competition. Under the name ‘Nations’ Tournament’ different teams came together to compete. In 2020, the EHF decided to organise the first-ever European Championship. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the wheelchair handball community had to wait two more years, before the first edition was held in Leiria/POR in 2022. The championship was organised together with the IHF as a mixed World and European Championship (six-a-side) and nine countries (seven from Europe) competed. After this championship, the European wheelchair handball community had to wait three years for the next championship. In the meantime, the IHF decided to focus solely on the 4-a-side format to increase chances of becoming a paralympic sport. The EHF followed this decision, which is why the EHF European Wheelchair Handball Championship 2025 was the first of its kind (four-a-side). A full overview of the history of wheelchair handball in the EHF and Europe can be found below.

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>2005</b> | <b>First contact to European Paralympic Committee</b> and proposal for implementation of wheelchair handball in the Methods Commission   |
| <b>2006</b> | <b>Demo match in Vienna</b><br>In 2006 the EHF Methods Commission officially added wheelchair handball to its working fields. As a first step, a demo match was organised in Vienna.   |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>EHF Wheelchair Handball Event</b><br>In 2008 a two-days wheelchair handball event was organised by the EHF in Vienna/AUT. The event consisted of an introductory course for wheelchair handball and a demo match between Austria (wheelchair basketball team) and Sweden. |
| <b>2015</b> | <b>Nations’ Tournament in St. Pölten/AUT</b><br>In 2015, the first Nations’ Tournament was organised by the EHF in St. Pölten. On  |

two matchdays the participating teams NED, POR, NOR and SWE competed in the 6-a-side format.

**2016 Nations' Tournament in Sölvesborg/SWE**

At the end of 2016, the second Nations' Tournament took part in Sweden. Participating teams: NED, POR, SWE and ITA.

**2018 Nations' Tournament in Leiria/POR**

After a one-year break, the third edition of the Nations' Tournament took place in Portugal. For the first time, the classification system was applied. Participating federations: CRO, HUN, NED and POR.

**2019 Nations' Tournament in Zagreb/CRO**

In its 4<sup>th</sup> edition, the Nations' tournament gathered six teams. Participating federations: CRO, HUN, NED, ROU, SLO and POR

**2020 World and European Wheelchair Handball Championship – Cancelled**

In 2020, the EHF decided to organise the first-ever wheelchair handball European Championship. Together with the IHF a combined World and European Championship (six-a-side) was planned in Kristianstad/SWE. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tournament had to be cancelled.

**2021 World and European Wheelchair Handball Championship – Cancelled**

After the first try of hosting a combined World- and European Championship the year before, the second attempt also had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

**2022 World and European Wheelchair Handball Championship in Leiria/POR**

After two years of postponing, the first-ever 6-a-side World and European Championship was finally played in Portugal. In total, nine teams attended the championship – seven from Europe and two from outside. The participating nations were POR, NED, NOR, ESP, CRO, HUN and ROU from Europe and IND and PAK (out of competition) from Asia.

**2023 Decision to focus on 4-a-side format**

In order to increase the chances of receiving the paralympic status, the IHF decided to focus on the 4-a-side format for the future. The EHF supported this strategical decision and was eager to organise both a 6-a-side EURO and a 4-a-side World Cup qualification tournament. Due to struggles finding an organiser, the event was unable to be realised.

**2025 EHF European Wheelchair Handball Championship in Vilnius/LTU**

In 2025, the first ever European Championship in the 4-a-side format was held. A record number of nine teams participated in the championship organised by Lithuania. Participating nations: LTU, CRO, ROU, HUN, FRA, ESP, POR, NED and NOR

**2026 Wheelchair Handball Development Plan**

In February 2026, the EHF Methods Commission approved the 'Wheelchair Handball Development Plan' by the Sport & Game Service Department to strategically prioritise and develop wheelchair handball in the future

## EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

The history of international wheelchair handball competition started with the first Nation's Tournament (NTs) in 2015. After that, another three editions were played before the first European Championship was organised in 2022 (European- and World Championship 6-a-side). After the IHF and EHF took the decision of focussing on 4-a-side only, in 2025 the first ever 4-a-side European Championship was organised in Lithuania. With nine participating teams, this championship was the biggest European Championship and the biggest international wheelchair handball championship globally, ever. Below, the attendance and final ranking of each (active) federation is projected:

Federation	NT 15	NT 16	NT 18	NT 19	EURO 22	EURO 25
	6/side	6/side	6/side	6/side	6/side	4/side
<b>CRO</b>			2	1	6	4
<b>ESP</b>					5	5
<b>FRA</b>						2
<b>HUN</b>			4	3	7	8
<b>ITA</b>		4				
<b>LTU</b>						3
<b>NED</b>	1	1	3	4	2	9
<b>NOR</b>	3				3	6
<b>POR</b>	2	2	1	2	1	1
<b>ROU</b>				5	8	7
<b>SLO</b>				6		
<b>SWE</b>	4	4				

The following table shows an overview of the medal collection per federation. It is important to mention that for this overview all EHF competition were included (Nations' Tournament and EUROS), as well as both formats (4- and 6-a-side) were treated equally.

Federation	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Appearances
<b>CRO</b>	1	1		4
<b>ESP</b>				2
<b>FRA</b>		1		1
<b>HUN</b>			1	4
<b>ITA</b>				1
<b>LTU</b>			1	1
<b>NED</b>	2	1	1	6
<b>NOR</b>			2	3
<b>POR</b>	3	3		6

<b>ROU</b>				3
<b>SLO</b>				1
<b>SWE</b>				2

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Next to the European tournaments organised by the EHF, the IHF has organised different events in past. After the planned World and European Championship had to be cancelled two times due to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021), in 2022 two championships were organised. Together with the EHF, a combined World and European Championship (6-a-side) took place in Leiria/POR, while the first-ever 4-a-side World Cup was held in Kairo/EGY. In 2024 a second version for 4-a-side was held again in Kairo. The full list of tournaments and its participating federations can be found below. The next edition of the Wheelchair Handball World Cup is planned for September 2026, again in Kairo/EGY.

Nr.	World and European Championship 2022	World Championship 2022	World Championship 2024
	6-a-side	4-a-side	4-a-side
1	Portugal	Brazil	Egypt
2	Netherlands	Egypt	USA
3	Norway	<b>Slovenia</b>	Brazil
4	India	Chile	<b>France</b>
5	Spain	<b>Netherlands</b>	Japan
6	Croatia	India	Chile
7	Hungary		<b>Portugal</b>
8	Romania		India
9	Pakistan (Disqualified)		

## NUMBERS AND FIGURES

In the table below, some statistics on the player base of the currently active federations are projected.

### COMMUNITY

The table shows that France has the most developed wheelchair handball in Europe. With Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal four more federations claim to have more than hundred active wheelchair handball players.

Federation	Year of Start	Clubs	Players	Coaches	Classifiers*
<b>BEL</b>	?	2	15	2	
<b>CRO</b>	2017	2	20	2	
<b>ESP</b>	2023	6	74	16	2
<b>FRA</b>	1985	60	500	15	2
<b>GER</b>	2017	12	180	12	
<b>HUN</b>	2007	5	50	8	
<b>LTU</b>	2024	0	16	1	
<b>NED</b>	2014	13	150	15	2
<b>NOR</b>	2015	8	110	15	
<b>POR</b>	2010	8	130	12	6
<b>ROU</b>	2016	4	60	4	
<b>SWE</b>	2014	6	38	6	
<b>Total</b>		120	1305	102	12

*\*Statistic before the EHF Wheelchair Handball Classifier Course 2025*

## NATIONAL COMPETITION

To explain the different approaches to wheelchair handball, the overview below was designed. The overview displays the format of the national championship, the number of teams involved and which version of WH is played (4-a-side, 6-a-side or both). In the last column ('Inclusiveness') it is displayed whether the league is inclusive, meaning both disabled and able can participate or if the league is exclusively for people with disability.

Federation	Format	Nr. Teams	4/side	6/side	Inclusiveness?
<b>FRA</b>	Championship with levels	20	yes	yes	No
<b>GER</b>	League with tournaments	5	No	Yes	yes
<b>HUN</b>	championship rounds	5	yes	yes	No
<b>NED</b>	Matchdays	12	yes	yes	yes
<b>NOR</b>	Integrated in Indoor Handball				
<b>POR</b>	Championship	8	yes	yes	No
<b>ROU</b>	Tournament	6	yes	No	No

In order to better understand the individual approaches to wheelchair handball, the table below displays some more explanatory details per federation.

<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4/side (championship since 2024) and 6/side (cup – 2x per year)</li> <li>• 5 teams</li> <li>• Championship in tournament setup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National championship in 6-a-side</li> <li>• 12 Teams</li> <li>• A-League (4 teams) and B-League (8 teams)</li> <li>• 4-a-side league planned, currently only individual tournaments</li> <li>• Able bodies allowed to participate</li> <li>• National team training (4-a-side) every two weeks</li> <li>• Young age category clinics. competition maybe in the future</li> <li>• <a href="#">Link</a></li> </ul>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6/side &amp; 4/side (since one year)</li> <li>• Currently 9 teams</li> <li>• WH teams participate in regular indoor handball leagues (only home matches, indoor handball teams play in wheelchairs)</li> <li>• One WH tournament per year in Oslo</li> <li>• National cup level A (4/side) and level B (6/side)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No league, yet</li> <li>• Wheelchair Handball project started in 2024 with a national team only</li> </ul>
<b>France</b>	<b>Spain</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4/side and 6/side</li> <li>• Competition in both versions</li> <li>• 20 teams in 6/side championship</li> <li>• 4/side cup and tournaments</li> <li>• Youth competitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4/side (league) &amp; 6/side (cup)</li> <li>• National league with 6 teams in two groups</li> <li>• League and Cup played together</li> </ul>
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Romania</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4/side &amp; 6/side</li> <li>• 7 teams</li> <li>• National championship</li> <li>• Youth WH</li> <li>• 4/side rules different to IHF (e.g. 15 min per half, women not mandatory but influence TCP)</li> <li>• No rule for mandatory woman on the court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Championship in one tournament</li> <li>• 4-a-side</li> <li>• 6 teams</li> </ul>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>Croatia</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6/side league with tournament structure</li> <li>• 7 teams</li> <li>• Organised by German Wheelchair sports federation (wheelchair handball department)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Link</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No national championship</li> </ul>

## EXPERTS

At the point of publishing this report, the following persons are registered as EHF experts for the field of wheelchair handball:

Name	Federation	Field of expertise
Danilo Ferreira	POR	Coaching
Kees van Breukelen	NED	Classification expert

## EDUCATION

In terms of education the number of activities is still quite low. An overview per field can be found below.

### Officiating – Referees and Delegates

In the past, the EHF didn't organise public educational events for educating referees and delegates. For the tournaments organised, an international education was offered for the officials involved. In the process of organising the EHF European Wheelchair Handball Championship 2025, an online seminar was held including 31 participants. Based on the attendance and test results, the nominations for the European Championship were made. The persons involved were invited based on personal connections by the EHF officiating supervisors Marc de Sousa and Vincenc de Breto.

### Coaching

In the past years, no coaching education was offered by the EHF.

### Classification

During the EHF European Wheelchair Handball Championship 2025 in Lithuania, the first-ever wheelchair handball classifier course was conducted. With nine participants (seven from Europe, one from Asia, one from Australia) the course was seen as a success. With its competition, all participants were awarded their 'Level 1 – National Classifier' certificate, making them eligible to classify on national level. By successfully completing a 'Level 2 – International Classifier' course, the participants would be eligible to classify on international level, e.g. at a European championship.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

As the structures of the wheelchair handball community are complicated it is interesting to have a look also across the federation activities to cover the full image. Therefore, in the following initiatives outside the federation framework are presented.

## EUROHAND4ALL

The EUROHAND4ALL tournament in Lyon is organised by the handball club UODL Handball and took place already four times. For the tournament, European and international national wheelchair handball national teams are invited. In 2026, a competition with 8 teams is planned to take place (2-4 July 2026).

## Meuse-Rhein-League

The Meuse-Rhein-League consists of five clubs from the Netherlands (2), Belgium (1) and Germany (2). The league was formed to enable regular competition among the neighbouring city across borders. The five teams meet every 6-8 week to compete in the 6-a-side format. The league welcomes every player that is interested in wheelchair handball (with or without disabilities) and has the ambition to grow wheelchair handball in the region.

Link: <https://www.meuse-rhein-league.eu/>

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

To conclude the status quo of wheelchair handball, important documents will be presented in the following.

### Basic Documents

<b>Rules of the Game</b>	The IHF Rules of the Game state the foundation of international wheelchair handball. The rulebook was updated last on 1 January 2026.	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>Classification Manual</b>	The IHF Classification Manual describes the rules and regulations that need to be applied for classification at international competitions. Additionally, it lays out the educational pathway for becoming a wheelchair handball classifier.	<a href="#">Link</a>

### Additional Documents

<b>Roundtable Session Report</b>	At the EHF Wheelchair Handball EURO 2025, a roundtable session was organised by the EHF. The findings of this session are presented in this report.	
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