General conditions:
The National Federation of Romania was a very good and well prepared host for the European Championship. All the conditions – accommodation, meals, transport, rest day programs, meeting-rooms and technical facilities – were on high level!

Nominated referees and nomination criteria:
AZE-Aliyev/Agakishiev
BLR-Gousko/Repkin
DEN-Pedersen/Mortensen
GER-Schaller/Wutzler
ISL-Eliasson/Gudjonsson
LTU-Gatelis/Mazeika
POR-Cacador/Nicolau
ROU-Stark/Stefan
TUR-Erdogan/Özdeniz
UKR-Kouz/Zgoba

Nomination criteria were:
- Successful European Cup season
- Good, talented referees
- Age (not older than 36 years)

Preparation by the referees:
One month prior to the championship all participants (referees and delegates) received the following materials:
- Main experiences on rule interpretation Euro 2008 Norway
- Teaching DVD with relevant clips
- „Homework“ on five different topics in rule interpretation

Officials’ Conference:
Well prepared; concentrated on the main topic – discussion in interactive form – all participants were active! The „homework“ was, of course, on different levels; some of them on very high level; also good possibility to control the language knowledge.

Experiences on rule interpretation:
Significant marks in games were:
- High speed, in many cases more attacks like in senior games
- Number of technical faults and mistakes
- Number of committed faults, “effect” in faults
For a successful refereeing the basics were:
- Referee couple like a team
- Perfect physical condition
- Consequent line during the games
- Good control in last minutes, too
- Understanding the new tactical elements

Progressive punishments:
  Use the correct punishments in early phase of games
  Hold the line!
  Hit on face and neck – in every case punishment!
  To have courage in red card situations

Offensive faults:
  In frontal positions generally good decisions,
  only one difficulty at the collisions – defender inside or outside?

7 m-s:
  In recent time in different championships this was a basic problem!
  Very easy to take in decision and show it by referees, defender inside.
  In first days we were discussing long and improved the knowledge of the referees.

Theoretical and physical tests:
- 30 rule questions from the IHF questionnaire – minimum requested 75 %
- 10 sentences from the rules text
- Cooper Test 12 min. – minimum 2400 m
- Shuttle Run – minimum level 9.5

Evaluation of the referee performances:

On the whole, the performance of the referees was very good. Only in a very few games was the showing on average level and I stress no weak performances were demonstrated. On the first day of the competition, the practical preparation of the referees was observed and the results were as follows:

- only three couples officiated in matches prior to the championship
- only four couples received advice and support from the chief of referees within their own Federation - which is not acceptable
- The regular physical preparation undertaken by all of the referees was sufficient

Cognitive skills – Referee Attitude & Personality
During the entire tournament, we were working with motivated referee couples, all of whom were active and open in discussions. The display of self-control and self-confidence of the referees was appropriate.
Application of the Rules
Overall, there was a good comprehension of handball tactics and strategy. The interpretation of the situations displaying incorrect behaviour by the players (progressive punishments) was good. In younger age competitions it is necessarily significant to recognise the high speed and the unexpected combination of steps which need more control by the referees.

7m
In the first stages of the competition many decisions were taken robot-like – very mechanically! If there was a player on the line = 7m. After discussion, this issue and the line were clearer.

Passive play
The referees generally gave a forewarning signal in good time; however, courage was needed to take the ball away when the team did not change the attacking style.

Cooperation and teamwork
This was the basis for the successful performances! At the beginning of the competition, there were some difficulties; the goalkeepers took responsibility outside the 9m line too – which was the reason for opposing decisions. In the second part of the competition, there were many improvements in this area.

Summary
Good cooperation and good teamwork among the nominated referees! The right attitude was shown by the referees. In the discussions, we used a lot of pregnant situations and this is a great acknowledgement to the perfect cooperation. By keeping the concentration on a high level and the steady consistent performances right up until the end of the games proved positive.

Cooperation among the officials:
Very good and positive atmosphere during the whole time. Colleagues from the Romanian Handball Federation side were very helpful. The working system, task distribution, evaluation talks with the referees took place in positive attitude! I must underline the help of Robert Kleiner with the DVD scenes is really help- and useful; a little disadvantage was that it was possible on only at one venue! We worked with the referees not only on theoretical way, but we wanted to show them the “life-style” of the referees with physical activities, too!

Thank you for everybody, and special thanks to Nadine who did for us lots of support.

Andorka Sándor/ Sep. 2008