



# **W19 EHF EURO (Montenegro)** **YAC Qualitative Analysis**





# W19 EHF EURO

MONTENEGRO • 9–20 JULY 2025

## CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Tournament — facts & figures	4
Team performance	5
Matches & players — facts	6
Coaches	6
Defence analysis	7
Defence general aspects	7
Defence tactical aspects	8
Goalkeeper performance	9
Attack analysis	10
Attack general aspects	10
Attack tactical aspects	10
Attack transition defence	12
Profile of the modern player	13
Conclusions and findings	14
All-star Team	14





# INTRODUCTION

The Women's 19 EHF EURO 2025 Montenegro qualitative summary provides an analysis of the performance of the 24 participating teams and the players who competed at the tournament from 9 to 20 July 2025. The matches took place in three venues in Podgorica: Bemax Arena, Moraca Sports Centre and Verde Complex.

The analysis uses the XPS network and Handball.ai analysis software, and details technical and tactical trends from the tournament combined with video clips from the W19 EHF EURO.

For the first time the W19 EHF Euro was comprised of 24 teams.

Expert: Mark Hawkins





## TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES

- 24 teams competed in the W19 EHF Euro in six preliminary round groups of six teams each
- the best two teams of each group formed two main round groups
- matches were played over the course of eight matchdays
- 5,306 goals were scored at a rate of 55.27 goals per game, with an effectiveness of 50.03 per cent
- 2,222 saves were made at a rate of 23.14 saves per game
- Germany were the top goal scorers with 278 goals
- Germany, Spain, Denmark and Austria reached the semi-finals. Germany won their first title in this age category
- Spain won the silver medal and Austria finished fourth. Both teams were promoted from the W17 EHF Championships in 2023, showing the strength in depth and justification for expanding these competitions to 24 teams

# TEAM PERFORMANCE — OVERVIEW



- Germany beat Spain in the final, 34:27. This was a rematch from a match in the preliminary round where the two finalists drew 29:29
- Austria had lost two matches before the semi-finals, losing to Croatia in the preliminary round and France in the main round
- Denmark were the only team arriving in the semi-finals with a perfect record, having won all six previous matches
- Germany, Denmark and France all won seven matches and had an average margin of victory of over six goals which shows a very high level of performance throughout
- Austria and Croatia, despite finishing fourth and eighth respectively, both had a negative average goal difference, suggesting that they won key matches to get further in the competition; they both lost four matches, suggesting the defeats were heavier than their victories were
- Romania, despite finishing ninth, played a very strong tournament, finishing with six wins (only Germany, Spain and France had more wins). They also had an average margin of victory of over six goals, like the top teams, and their only two defeats were to finalists Germany and Spain in the preliminary round. This suggests they have a very good performance and the draw for group D was exceptionally strong
- Lithuania were the only team without a win, but drew their match with North Macedonia

Team	Rank	Games	W	D	L	Average score		Average goal diff.
Germany	1	8	7	1	0	34.75	27.88	6.88
Spain	2	8	5	1	2	26.50	24.13	2.38
Denmark	3	8	7	0	1	29.88	23.75	6.13
Austria	4	8	4	0	4	26.00	28.38	-2.38

# MATCHES & PLAYERS — FACTS



- the age category for the tournament was 2006/2007
- several countries introduced younger players into their teams. Five teams had players born in 2008 and Lithuania had two players born in 2010, including Alteja Ustilaite who was Lithuania's second top scorer with 27 goals
- the top three scorers were Gabija Pilikauskaite (Lithuania) with 71 goals, Maud Horvers (Netherlands) with 65 goals and Bukat Seven (Türkiye) with 60 goals
- goalkeepers Seraina Kuratli (100 saves, 35.0 per cent efficiency), followed by Hiranur Ozturk (86 saves, 28.0 per cent efficiency) and Nina Smelcerz (86 saves, 36.9 per cent efficiency) were on top of the list of goalkeeper saves. Andrea Nørklit Jørgensen (70 saves, 39.3 per cent efficiency) had the best save percentage
- the top three most efficient shooters who attempted more than 30 shots were Bojana Pelicic (Montenegro, 87.1 per cent), Teodora Damian (Romania, 81.4 per cent) and Vilde Fresvik (Norway, 81.0 per cent)

## COACHES

- there were seven female head coaches at the championship — Beata Bohus (Hungary), Jennie Linnell (Sweden), Sandra Martins (Portugal), Seyhan Kaljoshi (Türkiye), Ane Mallberg (Norway), Rachel de Haze (Netherlands) and Ernesta Ziliene (Lithuania)
- seven nations also had female assistant coaches
- Switzerland had a head coach from a different nation (Knut Ove Joa, Norwegian)

## DEFENCE GENERAL ASPECTS

- France had one of the most effective defences in the tournament, conceding just 177 goals (first) at a rate of only 17.63 goals per 50 defences (second).
- Spain, France and Hungary all conceded under 18 goals per 50 defences and all ranked in the top seven positions
- Sweden, interestingly, also conceded less than 18 goals per 50 defences, despite finishing 13<sup>th</sup> overall, and playing in the main round with fixtures against the higher ranking teams showed that they had a defence worthy of the top places in the tournament
- Austria and Montenegro both conceded over 21 goals per 50 defences, by far the highest within the teams from the main round, although they finished with a high overall ranking
- France and Sweden both forced the opponents into more than 13 turnovers per 50 defences, as did Germany and Hungary, as expected from higher-ranking teams. Finland, Portugal, Iceland and Spain also ranked highly here (over 12 turnovers forced per 50 defences). These four teams were some who played the most open defences. This shows that especially the teams with the lower ranks here were maximising their defensive skills and variation to improve performance and put themselves onto a level of some of the top teams in these aspects, suggesting good foundations for positive development.

Team	Rank	Goals conceded	Goals conceded per 50 defences
Germany	1	223	18.96
Spain	2	193	17.90
Denmark	3	190	17.18
Austria	4	227	21.66

## DEFENCE SYSTEMS

- 21 of the 24 teams used a 6:0 defence as their primary defensive structure
- Finland and Lithuania were the two teams whose primary defensive system was a 5:1 defence
- Iceland split their time evenly between a 6:0 and 5:1 defensive system
- North Macedonia, Montenegro, Portugal and Spain played something other than a 6:0 approximately 20 per cent of defences

## DEFENCE TACTICAL ASPECTS

- Most of the teams used a 6:0 zone defence. Germany, Spain and France were more aggressive with their positioning:
  - to break normal style of offensive play
  - to control attackers' positioning and be more in control of duels
  - to create more chances to make steals
- The other most common way to play the 6:0 defence was to be more aggressive when taking the duel and staying more compact as opposed to making pressure before they receive the ball:
  - staying compact as a group and allowing more help if losing a 1v1 duel
- Three teams predominantly used 5:1 as a primary defensive system:
  - Iceland and Lithuania used a more zonal based structure with particular emphasis on the front defender splitting the court and keeping the attack on one side
  - Finland were more player-oriented whilst using the same structure
  - Portugal and Spain, who regularly used 5:1 as a secondary method, used a far more open style, with side defenders being higher up the court more oriented around the ball which could become very open and sometimes resemble a 3:3 defence
- More teams tried to take control in inferiority in defence:
  - France and Portugal stayed with the principles of their equality defence, being aggressive to try and pressure the ball
  - Montenegro did similar by playing a 4:1 defence in inferiority
- The technical skills to defence as a side back in defence given the necessity to cover large open spaces, pressure the attackers away from the ball and be comfortable in making decisions and recovering bigger spaces behind them is prominent among the higher-ranked teams.

This not only leads to enhanced skills needed in this position but also a more rounded skill set for the middle defenders to be able to defend the side and cover the sidebacks should they switch to a 5:1 in a hybrid defence. Flexibility of defenders to be able to defend all of the central four positions is becoming increasingly necessary to allow for adaptability and more flexible defensive structures.



## DEFENCE TACTICAL ASPECTS

- The goalkeeper performance has shown some differences in comparison to the W17 EHF EURO 2023 involving the same generation of goalkeepers. There is the same overall save percentage (20.9 per cent), however performance has increased from 6m (+3.4 per cent) and reduced from 9m (-2.8 per cent).

Interestingly those teams (Germany, Austria, Montenegro, Spain) who were able to provoke a higher proportion of shots from the wing position finished higher in the rankings, including Austria and Montenegro who conceded more goals per 50 attacks than others in the main round.

The goalkeeper performance shows no clear trends but is much more focused on fitting the goalkeeper style to the team structure and the shots provoked. There is a clear rise in the performance of saving from 6m which continues to EHF EURO level where 27 per cent is the benchmark.

### TOP 3 BEST DEFENDERS

Name	Nation	Blocks	Steals	Attacking fault provoked	Total	Avg.
Isabelle Ryden	SWE	7	17	3	27	3.4
Asrun Inga Arnadottir	ISL	6	19	0	25	3.1
Ruslana Litvinov	GER	0	16	5	21	2.6

## DEFENCE TOGETHER WITH GOALKEEPER

### GOALKEEPERS

	Saves	Shots	Percentage		
			2025	2023	2024
6m centre shots	831	4119	20.1	16.7	27
Wing shots	427	1599	26.7	26.3	33
9m shots	776	2662	29.1	31.9	45
Total	2222	10604	20.9	20.9	30

## ATTACK GENERAL ASPECTS

- At the W19 EHF EURO 2025 Montenegro, 5,306 goals were scored from 10,604 shots (50.03 per cent). Finland, Lithuania and North Macedonia were the three teams playing at the highest tempo with over 76 attacks per game. Outside of Türkiye and Croatia, these three teams made the most errors in attack and finished in the bottom three positions in the rankings. This increased tempo was likely a result of a weaker performance allowing quick attacks against them as opposed to a pre-determined strategy.
- One common element from the tactical side was the use of isolations in attack. Defenders of course are aware when this is coming, but the technical ability to manipulate the defender's position to create a 1v1 on the terms the attacking player wants is becoming ever more crucial and there were some good examples on show.
  - Germany had the best attack with 24.51 goals scored per 50 possessions. Next best were Montenegro and Romania (23.25 and 23.23, respectively). All three teams had a 58 per cent shooting efficiency, which was the highest
  - Sweden also recorded very good statistics across all these categories despite finishing 13<sup>th</sup> overall and competing in the main round when the tournament split
  - Croatia conversely managed an eighth-place finish whilst having the joint worst attack efficiency and highest amount of technical faults/50 attacks. They played with the lowest tempo, suggesting they were designed to be more effective in lower scoring encounters
  - Spain and France played at the slowest tempo of the top teams (66 attacks per game)
  - top scorer Gabija Pilikauskaite scored 71 goals out of 118 shots (60.2 per cent) in eight matches.
  - Amongst the best 10 top scorers were eight back players and two wing players.

## ATTACK TECHNICAL ASPECTS

## ATTACK TACTICAL ASPECTS

- One obvious trend in attack was to isolate defenders to play 1v1 either to a conclusion or to create superiority from these situations they created this by either:
  - basic cross and moving the pivot away
  - wing transitions
  - back player transitions
- Developing on this theme, the top teams were very good at creating isolations for the pivot players, so they could arrive in more dominant 1v1 situations 'pinning' a defender and receiving the ball.

## ATTACK TACTICAL ASPECTS

- The increased number of offensive defences was previously mentioned, many teams were more proficient to cope with this by trying to flatten these defences during the attack with either temporary or more conventional transitions from backs or wings off the ball.
- Against open defences, the most common strategies were:
  - sending in a second line player predominantly from the back position, but sometimes from the wing
  - in keeping with the modern trends there were also attempts to create more isolations
  - finally, against the more aggressive defences (Spain and Portugal) teams were forced into more 'free play' where the line player and wings would join more
- 7v6 was a strategy used as a consistent attacking strategy by 4 teams – Finland, Faroes Islands, Montenegro and Spain.
  - Finland and Faroe Islands played more conventionally with 2 pivot players
  - Montenegro also did this, however they had far more variety in their systems and had some more creative system with 4 back players and more crossing actions.
- When attacking in numerical superiority, the teams often played with two line players. There were increasing amounts of teams who were playing with one line player using them to screen and create a superiority, and many who were placing the line player between one and two defenders.

**RATIO & EFFICENCY OF SHOTS BY POSITION**

Rank	Team	9m Ratio	9m Shot %	6m Ratio	6m Shot %	Wing Ratio	Wing Shot %
1	Germany	19%	36%	45%	71.6%	20%	58%
2	Spain	16%	33%	50%	67.0%	15%	48%
3	Denmark	31%	44%	35%	64.3%	12%	56%
4	Austria	24%	32%	41%	53.8%	15%	61%



## ATTACK TRANSITION DEFENCE — TOGETHER WITH THE GOALKEEPER

- The teams that played with the most fast breaks were all in the top 10 most forced turnovers per 50 defences. This suggests most fast breaks were from winning the ball back, not from saves or missed shots. Germany had the highest ratio of fast breaks in their attacking play and consequently had the most effective attack, reinforcing how important the fast break is to final ranking.
- Germany were very effective in the fast break and fast restart and had a simple structure which was an extension of their set attacks, creating familiarity and good execution.
- Some nations very obviously chose against using a lot of fast attacks. Spain made this tactical decision, having the third most turnovers per 50 defences and yet attempted the sixth fewest fast breaks per 50 attacks.
- There were a group of teams who tried to play a lot of fast break attempts but, in the end, created more turnovers by forcing longer passes from the goalkeepers/playmakers or attacking against already organised defences. The more successful were the teams who had a more considered arrival structure using quicker, shorter passes to create a fast break chance.
- During either passive play situations or deeper into the attacks teams did use free throws as a way of organising a quick shot:
  - most common was to build a wall in front of the defence to shoot over, with occasional passes to a different player
  - Portugal had more of an attacking trend where they would use three to four passes, aiming to create an overload to one of the wings



## PROFILE OF THE MODERN PLAYER

Ruslana Litvinov, the back player from Germany, is a good example of the modern player. A two-way player who had an enormous impact on Germany's defence and ranks in the top three in the tournament for defensive turnovers, Litvinov could defend large areas provoking turnovers and controlling the opponents' attack by protecting open spaces and defending higher up the court. This has been a marker of success in this generation and is necessary for the senior international level.

In attack Litvinov played across all back positions as a right hander, showing great skill in doing so. Contributing 24 goals (at a 68.5 per cent success rate) and providing 17 assists is a considerable impact. Interestingly she was very effective in the crucial last 15 minutes of matches, in the semi-final and final alone she contributed three goals, five steals and two assists in the crucial stages.

# CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- Germany won their first ever W19 EHF EURO title
- Spain and Austria were both promoted from the W17 EHF Championship in this age generation and did not play in the W17 EHF EURO 2023
- Germany scored the most goals (24.51) and made the fewest turnovers (8.47) per 50 attacks
- a continuing trend was that there was a lot more proactivity in defence, trying to prevent passes, make steals and be more disruptive in transmission of the ball
- there was a distinct relationship between the number of turnovers forced to and effectiveness of fast breaks
- despite finishing ninth Romania had a very impressive tournament statistically in a preliminary group with the two finalists, but they are showing good progression in developing players for the future
- attacking structure is becoming more focused around creating positive isolations to attempt 1v1 situations

## ALL-STAR TEAM

The All-star Team was based on thousands of votes from fans and a panel of EHF experts.

### GOALKEEPER



Goundo Gassama

### RIGHT WING



Blandine Gros

### LEFT WING



Chiara Rohr

### LINE PLAYER



Aurelie Egbaimo

### LEFT BACK



Anne Dolberg Plougstrup

### BEST DEFENDER



Clara Mendgaard Sørensen

### CENTRE BACK



Belen Rodriguez

### MVP



Natalija Lekic

### RIGHT BACK



Lara Dauble





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