

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

M20 EHF EURO 2026

8–19 July 2026

Felix Schmidt / GER

EHF

EUROPEAN HANDBALL
FEDERATION





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The Men's 20 EHF EURO Qualitative Analysis offers an in-depth look at the performances of the 24 participating teams and the players who took part in the tournament. The M20 EHF EURO 2026 was held in Cluj-Napoca and Turda (Romania) from 8 to 19 July.

Going beyond the final results, the analysis explores the technical and tactical trends that shaped the tournament, using data and insights from Handball.ai and XPS Network. These findings are brought to life through selected video clips from the M20 EHF EURO 2026, providing a closer look at key situations and recurring patterns of play.

The report also connects the identified technical trends with practical coaching approaches, offering valuable insights and ideas to coaches, which can be applied directly to training and match preparation.

EHF ANALYST

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- Handball coach and performance analyst with more than 10 years of experience in competitive handball
- Experienced in EHF Younger Age Category competition analysis
- Instructor and examiner in handball coach education at C/B licence level
- Teacher and Head of Sport

TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES



COMPETITION

- 15th edition | 24 teams | Cluj-Napoca and Turda, Romania | 8–19 July 2026.
- Podium: 1. Hungary, 2. Sweden, 3. Slovenia, 4. Denmark.
- Hungary defeated Sweden 34:32 after overtime and won their first Men's 20 EHF EURO title.
- MVP: Liam Hultberg (Sweden) | Top scorer: Valdis Kalnins (Latvia, 104 goals) | Best defender: Máté Mészáros (Hungary).
- 15 European places for the 2027 IHF Men's Junior (U21) World Championship were decided. Israel secured the final position by beating Croatia 36:31.
- The central tournament story was Hungary's response to a 24:40 defeat in the main round against Sweden and their 34:32 overtime victory over the same opponent just six days later, in the final.
- First meeting: Hungary recorded 20 turnovers versus Sweden's six; two transition goals compared to 15; positional attack efficiency at 42 per cent compared to 68 per cent.
- Quarter-final against Germany (27:25): Hungary reduced turnovers to 13 and showed greater control in possession, more coordinated help-side defence and more selective transition decisions.
- Final: Hungary reduced turnovers to 12 while Sweden increased to 15; Hungary won the transition balance with 12, compared to eight; Sweden's positional attack efficiency fell from 68 to 46 per cent, while Hungary remained almost unchanged at 43 per cent.
- The decisive development was not a new playing identity, but better control of the weaknesses Sweden had exposed: earlier defensive disruption, greater patience in possession and improved judgement about when to accelerate or reset.
- No player from the Men's 18 EHF EURO 2024 All-star Team made it into the M20 EHF EURO 2026 All-star Team — a useful reminder that youth development is non-linear and selection at a certain age does not define the next stage.

Final ranking

		Hungary	13		Iceland
		Sweden	14		Romania
		Slovenia	15		Israel
4		Denmark	16		Croatia
5		France	17		Latvia
6		Germany	18		Poland
7		Spain	19		Serbia
8		Switzerland	20		North Macedonia
9		Portugal	21		Czechia
10		Norway	22		Bosnia and Herzegovina
11		Austria	23		Türkiye
12		Faroe Islands	24		Greece



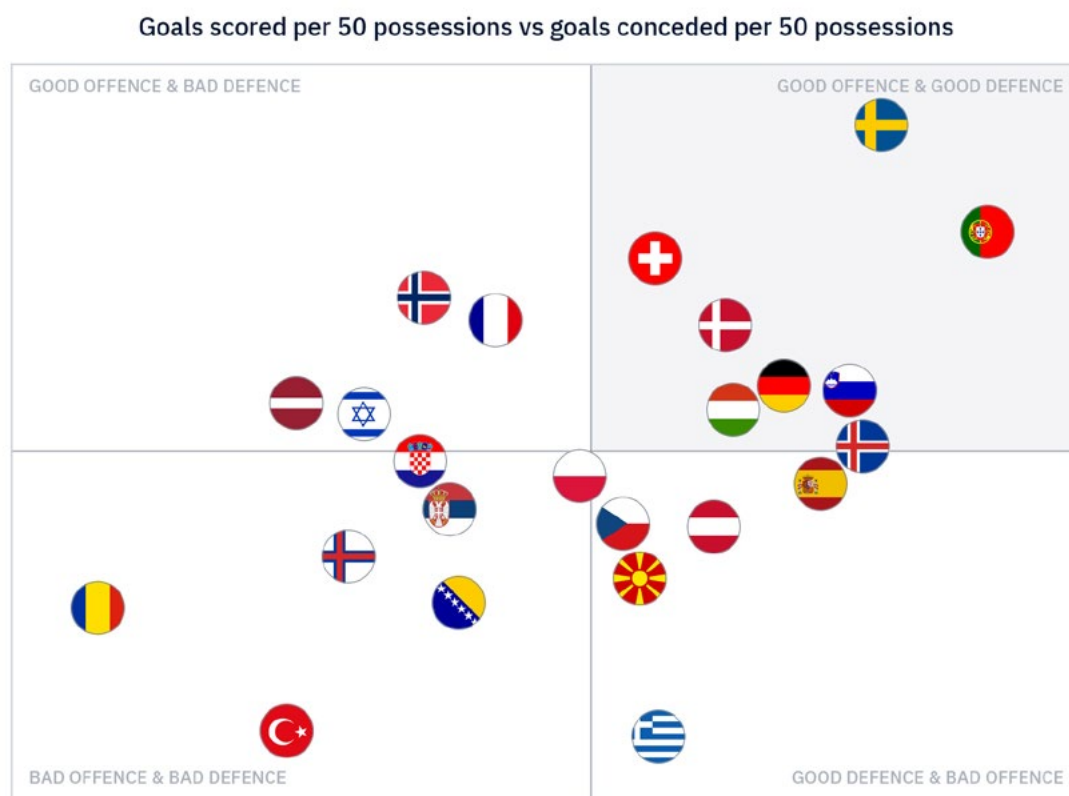
M20 EHF EURO
ROMANIA • 8–19 JULY 2026

TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES



TEAM PERFORMANCE

- **Hungary** — Adaptability under pressure. Stabilised possession, adjusted defensive behaviour and became more selective in transition without abandoning the overall game model.
- **Sweden** — Depth and multiple solutions. Power, speed, long-range threat, line player movement, wing finishing and different back-court profiles created several problems inside one collective structure.
- **Slovenia** — Tactical maturity and game intelligence. Defensive disruption, goalkeeper contribution and controlled changes in attacking rhythm were consistently connected to perception, timing and decision-making.
- **Switzerland** — Responsibility, courage and proactive play. Individual initiative, especially through Tiago Cuencas, was combined with active defensive behaviour and collective organisation.
- **Germany** — Structure, discipline and organised transition. Clear running roles and defensive organisation provided orientation while still leaving players responsible for the next decision.



The chart analyses goals scored and conceded per 50 possessions, calculated as goals scored/ conceded divided by the total number of possessions, multiplied by 50. The intersection represents the tournament average, with standard deviation used to define the four performance areas. This shows which teams performed above or below average in offence and defence, and by how much.

TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES



ALL-STAR TEAM

GOALKEEPER Viggo Håkansson			RIGHT BACK Måns Fredriksson		
LEFT WING Simon Sejer Kristensen			RIGHT WING Alfred Arnelin		
LEFT BACK Aljuš Anžič			DEFENDER Máté Mészáros		
CENTRE BACK Márkó Eklemovic			TOP SCORER Valdis Kalnins		
LINE PLAYER Arvid Andreasson			MVP Liam Hultberg		



DEFENCE GENERAL ASPECTS

- The 6:0 itself was not the main story. Teams changed distance, pressure, defensive height and help-side behaviour according to the attacking threat.
- Proactive defending did not always mean defending high: Hungary disrupted earlier, Spain raised the pressure after half-time, while Germany remained active from a deeper base against Greece (29 per cent positional attack efficiency).
- Defensive cooperation prioritised restoring a functional structure; turnovers were interpreted by distinguishing defence-induced errors from unforced attacking errors.

Hungary vs Sweden (comparison between the main round clash and the final):

- Sweden's positional attack efficiency dropped sharply from 68 per cent to 46 per cent, while Hungary forced more turnovers (up from 20 to 12, meaning fewer turnovers by Hungary), and transition chances shifted heavily — Hungary's transition opportunities rose from two to 12, while Sweden's fell from 15 to eight. Together, this shows Hungary defended earlier and more cohesively in the final, disrupting Sweden's usual attacking efficiency and flipping the transition battle in their favour.



Slovenia vs Spain:

- Spain's positional attack efficiency was low, at just 33 per cent, and out of 11 nine-metre shooting situations analysed, only one was converted. Goalkeeper Matevž Mlakar backed this up with 16 saves. Together, this shows that Slovenia's defensive pressure, combined with strong goalkeeping, severely limited Spain's ability to convert their best scoring chances.



Spain vs Switzerland:

- The half-time score was 20:16 in Switzerland's favour, but the score in the second half flipped to 17:9 for Spain. Goalkeeper David Failde's saves nearly doubled from four in the first half to eight in the second. This indicates that, although the overall game state remained close (roughly a six-goal swing each way), Spain's defence became noticeably tighter in the second half — playing taller and engaging attackers earlier — which changed the game's dynamic despite similar overall scoring margins.



TACTICS – DEFENCE



DEFENCE SYSTEMS

- The 6:0 defence was the primary defensive system observed across all participating nations at the M20 EHF EURO 2026.
- The 6:0 was often interpreted actively and flexibly: defensive height, step-out behaviour, handovers, assignments and help-side responsibilities changed depending on the opponent, individual threat and game situation.
- Situational alternatives, especially 5:1 or 3:2:1, were observed with Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Germany, France, the Faroe Islands, Denmark, Austria and Bosnia Herzegovina; the 6:0 remained the base.



GOALKEEPER PERFORMANCE

Sweden vs France – Viggo Håkansson:

Håkansson recorded 22 saves with a 54 per cent save rate, including a key save around the 10th minute while Sweden were playing shorthanded. This shows that calm positioning and reading the specific distance of each shot allowed him to solve clear scoring chances, and the pressure of the match situation (being down a player) made these individual saves even more valuable to the team's outcome.

Slovenia vs Spain – Matevž Mlakar:

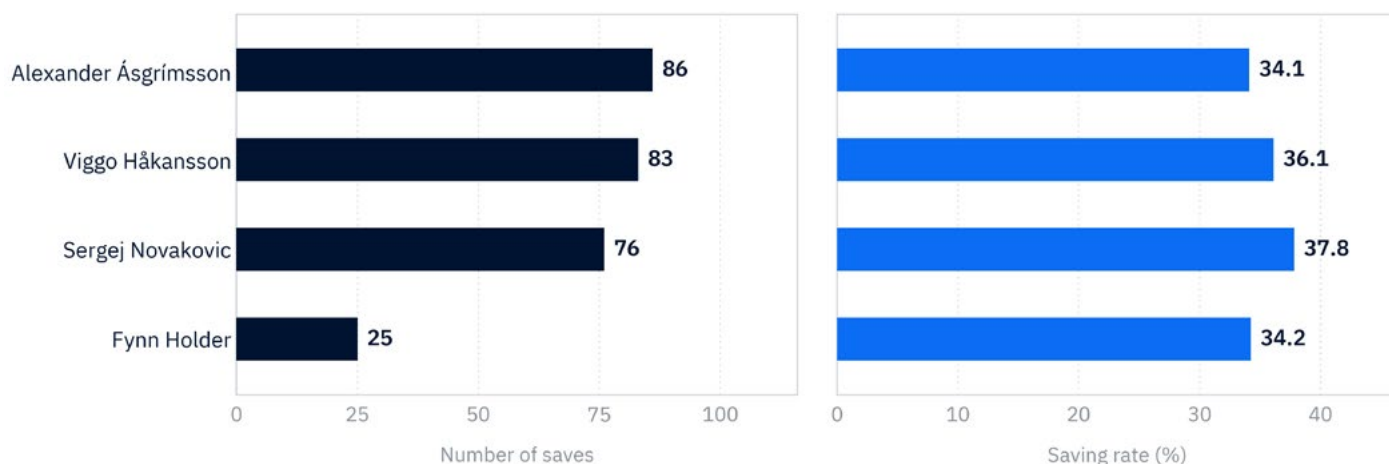
Mlakar made 16 saves, with Spain converting only one out of 11 analysed nine-metre shooting situations and recording a low 33 per cent positional attack efficiency overall. This indicates that while Slovenia's defensive pressure was the main driver limiting Spain's chances, Mlakar's individual goalkeeping quality added an extra layer of resistance when clear scoring opportunities still got through.

Greece vs Germany – Rafail Kotzias Stamou:

Despite a 37 per cent save rate, Germany won 28:19, with Greece's positional attack efficiency at just 29 per cent. This shows that a solid individual save rate by the goalkeeper wasn't enough to offset broader weaknesses in Greece's attacking play – goalkeeper performance needs to be evaluated within the context of the team's overall phase-by-phase play, not in isolation.



Goalkeeper performance across the whole tournament



TACTICS – OFFENCE



GENERAL OFFENCE ASPECTS

Sweden vs France:

Arvid Andreasson converted five out of six attempts and Måns Fredriksson scored on all six of his analysed shots, giving both players a near-perfect efficiency. This shows that the space created through ball circulation, crossing, attacking depth, and line player movement was effectively finished by two different player profiles, each converting the chances created for them in their own way.



Slovenia vs Spain:

Aljuš Anžic scored 10 goals as Slovenia won the match 30:23. This suggests that Slovenia's ability to control the rhythm of play, combined with off-ball movement after passing and quick acceleration into moments of defensive instability, directly connected chance creation to finishing – with Anžic as the main beneficiary.



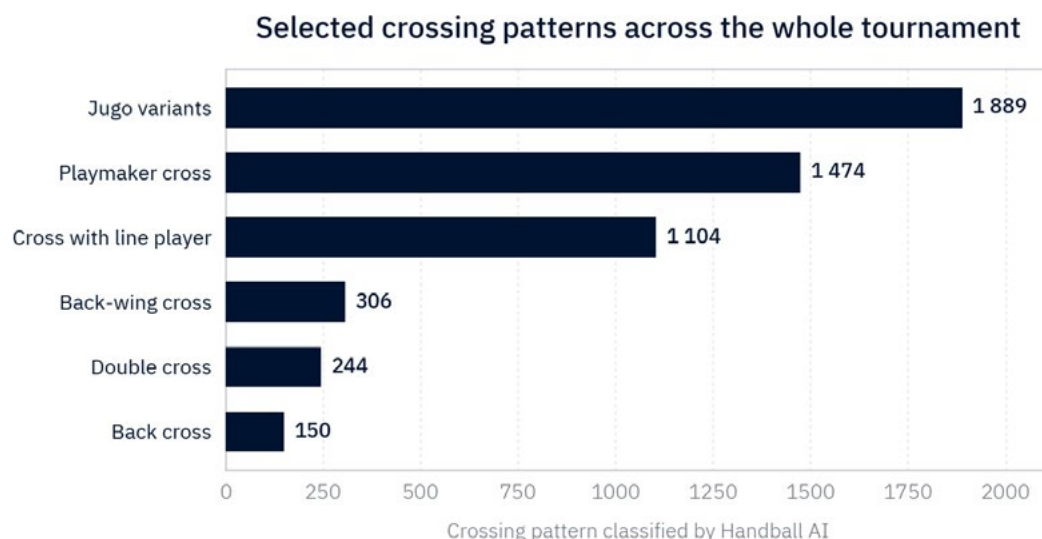
Portugal vs France:

Portugal were trailing 13:17 at half-time, but they outscored France 16:13 in the second half. Possession losses dropped from nine to five, and Portugal completed six of the seven breakthrough attempts. This indicates that Portugal did not abandon their attacking approach in the second half, but instead sharpened their decision-making – knowing better when to continue an attack, shift to open space, or avoid forcing a risky pass – which reduced turnovers and improved their overall output.



Tactical initiation & action patterns

Recurring positional triggers included crossings, playmaker–back position changes, press left/right, press with a line player screen and 2v2 cooperation with the line player.



TACTICS – OFFENCE



TRANSITION

- The decisive advantage often began before the first pass: Germany's wings and line player prepared the next phase during the opponent's finishing action.
- The goalkeeper's first scan determined whether to play the direct long pass, use the centre back as distributor or accelerate the fast throw-off after conceding.
- Structure created speed: wide wings, early line player, staggered back court and a centre back reading the defensive organisation.
- Being back is not the same as being organised. Germany continued through second and third waves while the retreating defence lacked stable assignments and collective connections.
- Against Greece, Germany recorded one counterattack goal and eight fast-break goals; the more important feature was how the transition was organised before the final scoring situation appeared.



TECHNICAL



The collaboration between EHF and Learn Handball brings the findings from the EHF YAC Analysis Reports directly into practice. Key insights from the tournament are connected to practical exercises, giving coaches the opportunity to apply the findings directly in their training sessions and turn analysis into action.

Want to explore it yourself? Learn Handball offers a 14-day free trial, so you can discover the platform, try the exercises, and see how it can support your coaching. Click the logo below and give it a try!



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Start your 14-days free trial.



Collective tactical solutions depend on individual technical quality. Across offence, defence and goalkeeping, technique became most valuable when it remained effective under pressure and was connected to perception and decision-making.

Offence: attack after the pass

- Slovenia showed how movement after passing prepared the next advantage and how pass speed and accuracy under pressure helped keep the advantage alive.



Learn Handball: passing exercise – V-passing; pass | advanced



Defence: footwork

- Máté Mészáros demonstrated that proactive defending depends on stance, footwork, controlled contact and readiness for the second defensive action.



Learn Handball: defense – Mathias Gidsel; 1 on 1 – offensive defense



Goalkeeping

- Viggo Håkansson's technical quality was based on calm positioning, economical movement and situation-specific stay/step-out decisions.



Learn Handball: ready position & attack against the breakthrough
Ready position for wing shots – Mikael Appelgren.



PLAYERS TO WATCH



Péter Gázsó

Position: Left back
Year of Birth: 2006
Club: NEKA KFT (HUN)
Goals: 33 (66% efficiency)
Assists: 5



- A two-way profile linking proactive defensive responsibility, transition involvement and purposeful attacking decisions. In the final against Sweden, Gázsó converted 14 of 18 attempts.
- Development focus: maintain the ability to influence different phases without losing decision quality.



Tiago Cuencas

Position: Centre back
Year of Birth: 2007
Club: Pfadi Winterthur (SUI)
Goals: 46 (60% efficiency)
Assists: 25



- A high-responsibility attacker capable of both creating and finishing, forcing opponents to adjust distance, positioning and help behaviour.
- Development focus: continue expanding selection quality under defensive pressure while retaining individual initiative.



Matevž Mlakar

Position: Goalkeeper
Year of Birth: 2006
Club: RK Celje Pivovarna Laško (SLO)
Saves: 52 (29% efficiency)



- Against Spain, Mlakar combined 16 saves with strong interaction between defensive pressure and individual goalkeeper quality; Spain converted only one out of 11 shots from the three analysed nine-metre zones.
- Development focus: connect anticipation, positioning and reading of the defence with the final individual save.





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