



Brussels, 16th November 2021

The President of the European Commission addressed the European Horse community in Brussels with an optimistic message

Mrs Hilde Vautmans, Member of the European Parliament and Chairwoman of the MEP Horse Group and the European Horse Network, welcomed Mrs Ursula von der Leyen at their annual conference.

Member of the European Parliament and Chairwoman of the MEP Horse Group Hilde Vautmans (Open Vld, Renew Europe): “We can look back on a successful conference. We were very honored that Commission President Ursula von der Leyen took the time to join our conference. We discussed the importance of the horse sector together with the Members of the European Parliament and the many representatives of the sector. Given the economic importance of the horse sector in Europe, the MEP Horse Group and European Horse Network want to give a voice to the sector in Europe. Therefore, we have made a memorandum with 5 priorities for the coming months, in order to support the industry as much as possible. The most important priority in our view is fiscal harmonization with a reduced and unified European tax and VAT system and the recognition of horses as agricultural animals. In addition, we also want to find solutions for the issue of wolves, ensure the smooth movement of horses and insist on science-based decision making to ensure and promote the health and welfare of equines.”

“We share the same passion for horses” were the introductory words of the President, “horsemanship is a culture, a knowledge and is part of our future”.

Mrs von der Leyen listed the three policies with important opportunities for the equine industry: the agriculture policy and green tourism, NextGenerationEU and the Green Deal.

The MEP Horse Group was founded in 2011 with the aim of bringing greater visibility to the horse sector on the European political agenda and Mrs Hilde Vautmans has done exactly that this year when protecting and supporting the equine industry and sport during the antimicrobial debate.

Stephan Conter insisted on the European leadership for sport that must be preserved by politicians and regulators editing clear and simple rules. Experts from the industry, **Roly Owers** from World Horse Welfare, **Julius Peters** representing the Equine Veterinarians and **Paul Khan** from the Horseracing authorities, showed how the equine sectors was impacted by the Covid crisis and the Brexit, heavily limiting the movement of horses for breeding and horseracing and sport competitions, as well as leisure activities. The review of the three main pieces of European legislation affecting equines (transport, welfare at farm and slaughter) opens the possibility to improve existing rules by including the latest scientific evidence and make them fit for purpose.

Invited panellists all agreed to say that the Covid-19 crisis made the population in great need for nature and equines are the animals best placed to recreate and strengthen this link.

Mark Wentein, Chairman of the European Horse Network concluded with concerns about 2022: *“2022 will be a most difficult year for the EU equine community. The Covid pandemic is not over yet as well as the Brexit problems. Also, the new EU Animal Health Law (AHL) and the future transportation regulations will create lots of unknown situations. The task of EHN is to remain vigilant and to defend the interests of the equine industry.”*

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The equine industry in Europe

- 100 billion euros a year economic impact
- 800 000 full time jobs equivalent provided by the sector
- 7 million or more horses in Europe
- 6 million hectares of permanent grassland given over to horse grazing

EHN represents the European Equine Industry since 2010

The European Horse Network is a non-profit network of stakeholders acting at a World, European, and National or Regional level within the European horse sector. EHN has been created early 2010 following the European Horse Conference, EQUUS 2009, organised by the Swedish European Presidency. The aim is to organise a platform to communicate on the horse sector and promote its development

28 European and International structures linked to horses' activities (Breeding, horseracing, sport, betting, research, recreation and tourism, education, health and welfare)

More information about EHN: www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu

EHN Office: Belgicastraat, 9 – B- 1930 Zaventem