



## **MEP discussed education & training with horses on 19 March 2014 in Brussels**

Julie Girling introduced the last MEP Horse Group Lunch of this legislature and drew up an assessment after 2 years of meetings since June 2011: 6 meetings and 6 MEPs attending (on average<sup>1</sup>), 5 European Commission representatives invited and 9 topics discussed: CAP reform, Sport, Welfare, Health, Research, Financing, Transport, Education.

It has been a strong cooperation between 17 European structures (European Horse Network, EHN) and Parliamentarians in relevant committees (ITRE, ENVI, AGRI, IMCO) and we hope to continue - The horse sector has a hugely important role to play in Europe and EHN shared thoughts with Members of the European Parliament on how collectively we might help maximise the sector's impact in Europe.

The purpose of the 6 lunches organised since 2011, was to discuss current or forthcoming issues of interest to European Parliamentarians such as equine health and welfare (including the welfare in transport review), the opportunities to position the Horse Industry in future Research programmes when adopting Horizon 2020, to see how money from betting can benefit the sector when discussing the online Gambling Action Plan, the position of horse farming and breeding in the CAP reform process, VAT and state aid issues as well as horses in Sport and social use.

Members of the European Parliament acknowledged the fact that horses are specific animals with specific needs not always considered in EU regulations and activities

While introducing the day's topic, **Julie Girling** reminded the many benefits of Sport and Education with Horses:

- Equity between men and women, young and old, people with or without physical difficulties
- A real influence on the personal development and mental health – Equine therapy, incentives for business executives and specific projects in schools, positive experiences for disabled persons and behavioural disorders
- Promoting values of responsibility, integration, volunteering, mentoring, leadership and management, nature connected

Such benefits have been proven by studies and experiences and the experts invited made presentations on high performance schools for racing (gallop and trotting) and its impact on the industry, reviewed the exchange of best practices at EU level through Leonardo Da Vinci projects and the Equestrian Educational Network as well as Veterinarian Schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Attendance of meetings: 6 MEPs on 15 June 2011 - 13 MEPs on 25 January 2012 - 7 MEPs on 10 July 2012 - 5 MEPs on 24 January 2013 - 4 MEPs on 18 June 2013 - 4 MEPs on 27 November 2013

**Karin Ericson**, responsible for education and research at the Swedish national horse centre for trotting, and **Keith Rowe**, Director of the Racing Academy in Ireland, both asked for more harmonisation and recognition at EU level. They insisted on a greater mobility, for the benefits of students, trainers, professionals but also for the benefit of countries less developed in this sector.

**Markus Scharmann** representing the Equine Education Network showed how mobility and sharing experiences are relevant in Life-long learning projects (Leonardo Da Vinci programme). However, Europe has not yet defined common standards in vocational training

**Pierre Lekeux** from Hippolia Foundation recalled the latest EU regulation regarding Veterinarian schools. Veterinarians are a regulated profession at EU level and schools are evaluated and approved with specific common criterias. 60 Veterinarian schools have been approved out of 100 in EU. However, there are no consequences if a school is not approved and vets from the school can still practice in another country.

**Emma McClarkin**, MEP, UK is an expert on qualification and education issues and she regrets that more harmonisation is not possible in this sector (Education is not a European policy and therefore the EU Institutions cannot adopt common legislation). However the European Qualification Framework (EQF)<sup>2</sup> facilitates the adoption of guidelines for certain professions. **EHN and the Horse sector should bring forward input on EQF.**

Moreover, the Bologna process and Accords focus on higher education and the horse sector need recognition and guidelines regarding vocational training, insisted **Tim Morris** from EMHF.

**Hannu Takkula**, MEP, Finland, whose work focuses mainly on the areas of Education, Culture and Sports, insisted on the knowledge about Education with Horses and Dual Careers that should be spread. **EHN should set up a database listing all schools and universities offering education and vocational training on horses** (and where to find jobs in a second step).

**Jacob Kornbeck**, representing EU Commission, DG Education and Culture, described the new opportunities in Erasmus + and future Sport projects.

#### **Next topics suggested for future MEP Horse Group meetings:**

- General meeting in September with re-elected and new MEPs – Figures of the European Horse Sector – assessment and achievements of EHN and the MEP Horse Group
- Social benefits of Horses
- Finances of the European Horse Sector

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<sup>2</sup> The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) provides a common reference framework which assists in comparing the national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels. It serves as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe, and thus promote lifelong and life-wide learning, and the mobility of European citizens whether for studying or working abroad. [http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/home\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/home_en.htm)