

# **Presidential Programme (2022-2026)**

**Ingmar De Vos**

**Looking at the past, the  
present and the future**

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Dear Friends,

I am truly humbled that our community has, for the second time in a row, allowed me to stand unopposed for re-election to the FEI Presidency. I see this not only as a full endorsement of the work that we have done together in my two previous terms, but also a golden opportunity to continue working on everything we have not yet completed.

You will have seen my letter of motivation, which is published on the [FEI Elections page](#) together with my Curriculum Vitae and letter of support from the Belgian National Federation, and I would now like to give an overview of what has been achieved over the past eight years and what I would like – together with you – to tackle in the next four years.

The world has been through some desperately dark times in the last couple of years, and some areas of the world are still suffering. Firstly, we had an unprecedented two-year interruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and equestrian sport was then hit by the outbreak of the neurological form of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) in mainland Europe. And now there is the destruction caused by the war and the terrible pain of the Ukrainian people. All of this has meant that we, as a community, have faced exceptional challenges and our focus had to be on survival, but more than that, we have fulfilled a lot of our goals. However, there is still work to be done.

I firmly believe that whatever role you have in life, it is essential to have the ability to accept criticism as a positive force, and also to be self-critical. It is important to me to be able to look myself in the mirror and ask the question, am I truly proud of the work that I - together with the FEI Executive Board, the FEI Board, FEI Headquarters and the wider equestrian community - have achieved over these past eight years? And the answer is yes. But it is a cautious yes, as we are all aware there is still so much to be done and so many new known and unknown challenges to face.

Standing for a third and final term gives me – us – the chance to look back at what has been accomplished, and to look forward at what we want and need to achieve in the future. It also provides me with a unique opportunity to look at the legacy I would like to leave for my successor – and the community – in four years' time so that we can guarantee the continuity and the well-being of our organisation.

This legacy is not for me personally, it is for the whole community to know that, together, we made the changes necessary to ensure that an increasingly urbanised population can understand that our sport is resolutely based on horse welfare and integrity.

## **PRESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME**

My 2014 Programme had five pillars:

- Serving our Community;
- Sport: Our Core Business;
- Equestrian Sport in the Olympic & Paralympic Games;
- FEI Solidarity: The Engine of Development;
- Horses as our Partners.

They came with a set of key commitments, and I added a number of important pledges to each of the same five pillars when I stood for re-election in 2018.

Each of those pillars and their linked commitments remain relevant today, but we must all be aware that there is an urgent need to constantly re-focus our attention so that we can future-proof our industry. And we need to do that based on the FEI Mission: *To drive and develop equestrian sport globally in a modern, sustainable and structured manner with guaranteed integrity, athlete welfare, equal opportunity and a fair and ethical partnership with the horse.*

Our National Federations and the sport that we govern together have grown exponentially and we must encourage that growth. What could be viewed as the wearing of too many hats by the FEI leaders is seen by some to be a dilution of focus on FEI matters. On the contrary, it is crucial for the FEI to have a seat at the top table, and the additional roles that I and our Secretary General Sabrina Ibáñez have taken on over recent years in the wider sports world outside of equestrian sport are a vital part of that.

Being an International Olympic Committee (IOC) Member, a member of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) Council, and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Executive Committee and Foundation Board, are positions that are important for the FEI, not personally for the FEI President. It is essential that the FEI is represented in these bodies where decisions affecting the wider sports world are taken. Being part of that decision-making process outside the FEI also provides us with invaluable opportunities to promote and protect our sport, further increase the credibility of our organisation, and to gain early insights into new trends so that we can proactively tackle them at the earliest possible moment.

The FEI and equestrian sport as a whole cannot live as a separate entity. No man is an island and neither can any sport survive alone. We need not just to be a member of that much bigger sporting community, but also to do our part to help the visionary thinking process that will keep sport at the forefront, even when other kinds of entertainment may seem more attractive to the youth.

As I look towards embarking on a third and final term at the helm, this is the time to consolidate what we set out to do when I was first elected in 2014, review what we have since achieved together and look at the way we can continue to keep our sport relevant in this ever-changing world, especially to the youth.

## **SPORT: OUR CORE BUSINESS**

### **Olympic & Paralympic Games**

Equestrian sport, which will be hosted in the grounds of the iconic Palace of Versailles at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has been confirmed in the initial programme for Los Angeles 2028. However, the events and quota will only be decided after Paris 2024, so it is crucial that we deliver successful Games in the French capital in two years' time.

Our Secretary General travelled to Los Angeles with Sydney 2000 Olympic Eventing Champion and Chair of the FEI Eventing Committee David O'Connor in May 2022 to meet the LA 2028 CEO Casey Wasserman and visit the proposed equestrian venue.

The IOC is now doing a discipline review together with LA 2028 and only after that process has been completed will we have confirmation that all three equestrian disciplines will be on the schedule for 2028. I have been a member of the IOC Coordination Commission for Los Angeles 2028 since 2019 and, as the US has such a strong equestrian tradition, we are confident that our sport is in good hands there.

And looking further ahead, the FEI Games Operations Director has already visited Australia to see the proposed equestrian venue for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Following questions I raised in the last IOC Session around transport and quarantine, Brisbane confirmed that they will fund transport of the horses and that they will apply specific quarantine protocols to facilitate entry to Australia for the Equine Athletes.

### **Youth Olympic Games**

Following the regrettable four-year postponement of the Dakar 2022 Youth Olympic Games (YOG), and in order not to deprive an entire generation of their YOG dream, I initiated discussions with the IOC about staging an equestrian replacement for the YOG2022 in Aachen (GER). The FEI was the only International Federation to create such a concept, and the IOC was happy not only to agree to the proposal, but also to allow the FEI to use the unique Spirit of Youth Olympic Games branding at the FEI Youth Equestrian Games (YEG) in Aachen from 23 June to 3 July 2022.

The FEI has also put in place a comprehensive Education Programme for the YEG participants, allowing the 30 Athletes from 30 nations to learn about all aspects of their sport, and take part in sessions focused on their current and future sporting careers, with an emphasis on the significance and relevance of the Olympic values.

As we know, the YOG was designed to create a pathway for Athletes towards the Olympic Games. Many of our Athletes have benefitted enormously from the experience, most notably Switzerland's Martin Fuchs, team gold medallist at the inaugural YOG in Singapore 2010, but also Athletes from other continents who have relished the chance to get onto the Olympic stage early in their careers. This is what universality is all about and success at YOG, and this year's YEG, will help drive investment in our sport in countries outside the traditional leading nations.

### **FEI World Equestrian Games™ & Championships**

In 2018, I pledged to review our Championships objectives, with the future and sustainability of our sport in mind. The outcome of that review means that we now have a much more flexible and sustainable model which allows for individual and multi-discipline FEI World Championships, but still leaves the door open for Organisers to bid for the full FEI World Equestrian Games™.

### **FEI-Named Series**

The Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ has witnessed strong growth and the Final in Leipzig (GER), after two years of cancellation, really revitalised the sport with some truly great performances. The new set-up for the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ - North American League has proven successful, with a significant increase in digital and broadcast exposure already in its inaugural year. Title Partner Longines has increased its commitment to the series, also financially, providing ample opportunities for further development of the series and the participating events.

Whereas the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ series has proven to be a great and very successful product over which the FEI has full control, I am afraid this is not any longer the case for the FEI Jumping Nations Cup™.

Unlike the very successful Final of the Longines FEI Nations Cup™ series, which was introduced in 2012 after many discussions at the FEI Sports Forum, the FEI does not have any control over the selection of venues for the qualifiers nor their dates. The FEI is entirely dependent on the actions of the National Federations who solely decide to which Organisers they allocate the host status and the date of the event. There is also a lot of confusion, as other Events that are not part of the series are permitted to use the “CSIO” status and Nations Cup naming.

Further to the multiple requests of National Federations and relevant stakeholders to safeguard the future of this series by enhanced protection and promotion, I asked the FEI General Assembly two years ago to give more control to the FEI. Regrettably we had to withdraw this proposal as it was clearly not supported by the relevant National Federations involved in the series. While the National Federations still make the decisions on CSIO allocations, already two important qualifiers have left the series, which has resulted in a considerable loss of value and prestige.

With the support of our top partner Longines, the FEI has worked very hard to preserve the future of this series, but we came to the conclusion that the survival and future success needs a firm engagement of all parties involved.

We need to look carefully at the future of the FEI Nations Cup™ and we probably will need to make some tough decisions, because in the past too many compromises have been made, which have had a detrimental impact on the series.

## **FEI Calendar**

Without a fully functioning FEI Calendar, we would have no sport, but with close to 5,000 FEI Events scheduled annually, making it all work is a major juggling act.

There is one important point that needs to be made about the FEI Calendar: it must be based on a free market and run in accordance with anti-trust legislation. Our own products – such as FEI-Named Series – need to be strong enough to stand on their own feet, without the need for over-protectionist measures.

The Covid-19 pandemic of course had a major impact on the FEI Calendar, and in order to minimise the damage, we created discipline-specific Calendar Task Forces, with each including key representatives in their membership so that we would be ready to restart our sport safely when the time came. The FEI Secretary General, who is in charge of the FEI Calendar, chairs each of these Task Forces.

The FEI Board, which had to meet far more than normal during the Covid-19 crisis – although obviously these were virtual meetings – passed 100 Emergency Board Resolutions and more than 200 Board Resolutions specifically to deal with issues caused by the pandemic.

None of us were to know that a year later we would be hit by an equine virus that resulted in an FEI-imposed six-week lockdown of international equestrian sport in mainland Europe.

But we survived both those storms and came out the other side stronger and more united by the struggle. However, the disruption has meant that looking at improved ways for elite Athletes to compete in a balanced Calendar remains an ongoing project.

The Task Forces are still in operation, and the Jumping Calendar Task Force met recently to look proactively at Calendar issues, including Calendar Application Fees, Cancellations and Date Clash Rules, and is proposing some solutions to the FEI Board for consideration.

## **Organisers**

The FEI supported Organisers through both Covid-19 and the EHV-1 outbreak, waiving Calendar Fees and not charging additional fees. The Calendar Task Forces also allowed for increased flexibility with the FEI Calendar.

Incredibly, there are more events in the FEI Calendar in 2022 than pre-Covid-19 in 2019. We owe a big debt of thanks to all our Organisers and to each and every one of the commercial partners that support our sport. Without their optimism and dedication, our sport could have really struggled to come back from the double hit of Covid-19 and EHV-1.

## **Online Invitation System**

The introduction of the FEI Online Invitation System (OIS) for Jumping is crucial for preserving the integrity of our sport, as it allows for a fair sport in which elite Athletes that deserve to compete at the high-level events have the opportunity to do so. Stakeholders have been involved right from the very beginning of the development process and the current OIS was the result of a successful Jumping community round table session in Lausanne in June 2019.

The OIS ensures the correct application of the Jumping CSI Invitation Rules in order to invite Athletes from the Longines Rankings in descending order for CSI5\*, CSI4\*, CSI3\* and CSI2\* events.

After three years of development, several pilot phases and the decision of the 2018 FEI General Assembly to adjust the system and to conduct further pilot phases, the FEI Online Invitation System was fully rolled out for FEI Events at the beginning of February 2020, just prior to the start of the global pandemic. Since the launch of the system, more than 12,000 Athlete invitations have been allocated.

We have made massive improvements to the OIS already, and we are continually striving to guarantee the best possible experience for National Federations, Organisers and Athletes, so there will be ongoing developments.

When I joined the FEI as Secretary General in 2011, I already had a very clear vision about a functional data information system, having been a member of the Information Technology Working Group under the FEI Strategic Plan 2006-2010. I proposed Horse and Athlete registrations, and the obligation to make all entries through an FEI entry system. It was a radical change, but – with increased financial investment – the IT system is really performing. We digitalised the FEI Calendar and Results Management, and now the rollout of the OIS has completed the circle.

## **FEI Online Schedules**

The FEI Online Schedule delivers significant efficiencies for National Federations, Organisers and the relevant FEI Discipline Department. It has been used for all Eventing Events worldwide since June 2021 and work is currently ongoing on the Online Schedule for Jumping. A pilot phase will be launched towards the end of 2022, with a planned full roll-out for January 2023. Digitalisation of the FEI sport's administration processes will be completed with the integration of an Online Schedule for the other disciplines.

## **Event Standards & Requirements**

In line with my 2018 pledge to help Organisers meet the highest standards but also to ensure the application of minimum requirements, we had a very successful interactive session on FEI Events Standards at the FEI Sports Forum this year. This session focused on five key areas: security & access control; training & exercise provision; stabling provisions; event facilities & services; and cleanliness & biosecurity.

Aligning standards at FEI Events is strongly linked to horse welfare and integrity and is crucial to ensuring the future of our sport. Resources – both from a staffing and financial perspective – will continue to be made available for this important project.

## **Officials**

The FEI Officials education system has been fully adapted to make it more pragmatic and flexible, in line with the recommendations of the Officials Working Group. The appointment of a new FEI Director of Education & Officials in January 2019 has also fast-tracked this process.

The revised system, which runs on competency based evaluation, allows for a well-defined career planning structure with clear transfer up and transfer down rules. The age limit for Officials has been abolished, however, we need to find – with the help of our National Federations – new young dynamic Officials to introduce into the system.

We also have to review the per diems system for FEI Officials. There is an awareness that there needs to be a discipline-specific approach and we have started with Jumping as the first project to bring Organisers and Officials together to see if we can reach an agreement.

## **Online Reporting for Officials**

We need to continue to support our Officials, and the online reporting platform is both environmentally and user-friendly. The platform has been in place since 2014 for FEI Official Veterinarians' Reports. A further nine Official Reports have since been added to the platform, and the FEI IT Department is constantly working on further additions, with the FEI Chief Steward Report for all disciplines next in line.

As FEI HQ receives thousands of reports throughout the year, the use of online reports makes it easier to flag issues directly and speedily to the FEI, allowing for efficient and rapid follow-up.

## **Other IT initiatives**

There is always a lot in the pipeline and even when many projects were put on hold due to Covid-19, some important IT initiatives were still being developed:

- The FEI SportManager app (launched in 2018), which allows Jumping Athletes to manage their invitations "on the go" for FEI Jumping events;
- The Online Bidding Platform (2019) for the submission of bids for future FEI Events;
- An approval system for IT Service Providers for FEI Events (2019) related to time keeping, data and results, ensuring the quality of the data provided by a "Certified Service Provider";
- Dressage Paperless Judging (2020);
- The Dressage Performance Dashboard (2022);
- The Eventing Horse Form Index or HFI (2022); created in collaboration with EquiRatings, the HFI evaluates performance and risks for horses competing in FEI Eventing Competitions.

## **FEI Equipment Expert Group**

The FEI Equipment Expert Group, created to ensure harmonisation across the disciplines on the equipment approvals process and rationale, was approved by the FEI Board in June 2020. Composed of a core group of key personnel from FEI Headquarters, the Group has a list of veterinary, scientific and equine behavioural experts on hand for consultation in the equipment approvals process when and where necessary.

The Group has identified the need to develop a publicly accessible database that will provide the equestrian community and our FEI Officials with a clear understanding of what tack and equipment can and cannot be used during FEI Competitions.

We also need to explore the possibility of establishing an FEI certification system, which could potentially include the allocation of an FEI quality mark. Currently, there are producers of equine equipment that use labels stating, "FEI approved", although this is not the case. As well as ensuring the quality of equipment that has been certified, it could also be a new revenue stream for the organisation.

We need to learn what other International Sports Federations do on this issue and we are already in contact with FIA (automobile) and FIM (motorcycling) on a number of their initiatives, such as helmets, air vests etc., as they have certified products.

## **ATHLETES**

We have been in dialogue with the Athletes Clubs regarding elections for the Athletes Representatives in each of the disciplines and have reviewed the current procedures. It has been agreed that there needs to be a simplified voting system. We are already in direct contact with Athletes through mobile apps for entries etc., allowing us to communicate more easily with them, and it has been agreed that the use of apps will make the voting process much easier.

While we liaise directly with the Athletes Clubs, it is not always easy to get Athletes to put themselves forward for election to the FEI Athletes' Committee. It is understandable that professional Athletes do not have the time for other commitments, but this is an important opportunity for the Athletes' voice to be heard, so we are hoping National Federations will work with their Athletes to find the right representatives for each discipline.

The WADA Foundation Board also takes Athlete representation very seriously and has recently announced that it will replace its current 12-member Athlete Committee with an Athlete Council of 20 members. The new Athlete Council members will be chosen by Athletes and will include eight Athletes elected by the Athlete Commissions of International Federations. The FEI will encourage its Athletes Committee to participate in this process.

## **Athlete mental health**

Following some recent high-profile withdrawals from major events in other sports, the spotlight is finally also on Athlete mental health. However, it's not just the Athletes who struggle with the pressure of competition and toxic comments on social media, with the resulting impact on their mental health.

With the pandemic lockdowns and the loneliness that created, the vulnerability of people in every community has increased. And sadly, some people seem to feel even more justified in posting their poisonous outpourings on social media, safe behind their anonymity and not caring what effect that has on their target, whether that's an Athlete, an Official, a Groom or whoever.

We all need to protect each other, and mental health and wellbeing need to be at the forefront of everyone's minds. The FEI published social media guidelines some time ago,

but we all need to be more conscious of the damage that can be done by a throwaway online comment.

I believe we all learned something from both the Covid-19 pandemic and the EHV-1 outbreak and that was about helping each other, being kind. That needs to extend to social media and it cannot be said often enough: Think before you post.

It is unquestionably true that mental and physical health are inseparable and while the FEI has been extremely proactive in safeguarding our Athletes from any form of physical or psychological abuse, as well as issuing social media guidelines, we are aware that protecting the mental health of our Athletes is just as important.

The IOC has been leading the way on Athlete mental health issues and has created multiple online resources for Athletes, as well as recommended prevention and management techniques for coaches, trainers, doctors, psychiatrists, and other professionals who work with elite Athletes. The conversation around Athlete mental health must be an open one and the stigma around mental health issues should be a thing of the past.

No-one should be subject to any kind of harassment or abuse while doing the sport that they love. This is why the FEI was one of the first International Federations to adopt a Safeguarding Policy in 2019 and we have a dedicated safeguarding team in FEI Headquarters to confidentially handle any reports of safeguarding issues that arise in the FEI community.

### **Human anti-doping**

In order to align the FEI with the IOC recommendation and also with other International Federations, we are putting forward a proposal that human anti-doping cases should be prosecuted by the International Testing Authority (ITA) and decided by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) Anti-Doping Division.

This would mean that human anti-doping rule violations will be dealt with by two bodies that have broad experience in dealing with human anti-doping rule breaches. It would be a totally independent procedure, allowing the FEI to focus on its area of greater expertise, equine anti-doping.

### **Legal support**

When confronted with legal proceedings, especially in anti-doping cases, Athletes are often forced to apply for expensive outside legal counsel, even for straightforward cases. The FEI Legal Department is always prepared to provide advice and guidance, but it is understandable that this is not perceived as being impartial.

As a service organisation, we should consider providing some free initial legal advice to our Athletes in certain cases so that they can avoid unnecessary and often excessive costs. The appointment of an independent ombudsperson could be a solution, but we need to look at the process and the funding.

## **HORSES**

### **Veterinary**

There are multiple ongoing veterinary projects aimed at further promoting equine welfare and equestrian sport globally.

The Global Endurance Injuries Surveillance (GEIS) project provided scientific support for the Endurance Rules revision and, ongoing, involves collection and analysis of data from Endurance events throughout the world.

Work on implementation of harmonised health certificates for FEI Regional Groups V and VI – known as The Americas Project – is continuing, and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE<sup>1</sup>) Regional Office in Buenos Aires is starting to hire staff for it. The project, which will facilitate easier movement for horses within the Americas (Group VI and parts of Group V), has a planned 2025 completion date.

Climate mitigation protocols, and particularly the preparation for and management of Horses and Athletes during equestrian events held in climatically challenging environments, has been an ongoing FEI project since the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games. Education and communication around this topic will continue to be a priority.

The Rules around blood on a horse are still being clarified and harmonised as far as possible between disciplines, but this is also an ongoing project.

The FEI worked extensively with a group of world leading epidemiology experts during the EHV-1 outbreak, which led to the creation of the FEI Veterinary Epidemiology Working Group. This collaboration will continue and the Group members are still available for consultation if and when required.

### **Elective Testing**

All Controlled Medication (CM) substances (almost 300) are now available for Elective Testing to allow National Federations, Athletes and their entourage to treat their horses and ensure that any CM substances used are not present in the body of the horse at the time of competition. Previously, the number of substances available for Elective Testing was extremely limited (approximately 20).

The FEI continues its close collaboration with European and international horseracing on laboratory standards, gene doping and regulatory matters.

### **Veterinary Research**

The FEI is working with the pharmaceutical industry on research into improved vaccines against the neurological form of EHV-1, notably with Boehringer Ingelheim, with whom the FEI has already worked on a number of projects. This is an ongoing project and will provide valuable information to the FEI Veterinary Committee.

The FEI will continue to fund and assist in research projects, including through our International Horse Sports Confederation (IHSC) partnership, which brings together the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) and the FEI.

FEI Regional Group IX (Africa) has expressed its concerns about lack of vaccines against African Horse Sickness (AHS). This is a particularly problematic as AHS vaccination is

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<sup>1</sup> The Office International des Epizooties (OIE) is now known as the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

compulsory for horses to be able to cross borders between many countries in the African sub-continent.

The IHSC has supported the scientific steps towards a traceable (DIVA) vaccine for AHS and the good news now is that other bid parties within a consortium are moving towards the development of a DIVA vaccine using the most modern technology, but this is a long-term project.

### **FEI HorseApp**

Thanks to the development work on the FEI HorseApp that had already been undertaken in the framework of the IHSC- WOAHA public-private partnership, it was relatively simple – and most importantly quick – to create the biosecurity modules that were key in controlling the outbreak of neurological Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) in Mainland Europe in February and March 2021.

A section was developed on the FEI HorseApp for the uploading of EHV-1 PCR test results. More than 9,500 PCR documents were uploaded during and after the outbreak and onsite Veterinarians were able to consult test results via the app.

New modules were added to the FEI HorseApp and, following approval of the enhanced biosecurity protocols in the FEI Veterinary Regulations at the FEI General Assembly 2021, these will remain as part of the weekly workflow of FEI Events. These modules include:

- Examination on Arrival;
- Self-check-in to geo-localise a horse;
- Temperature recording (pre- and during Events, which can be consulted by all Veterinarians and assigned FEI Officials);
- Horse Health Self-Certification Form;
- Sanctioning system (FEI HorseApp and FEI Database working in tandem to monitor non-compliance with Horse Health Requirements and automatically issue the relevant sanction)
- Horse Checkout on departure (mandatory for Organisers' use), improving future traceability.

There are approximately 3,500 individuals who use the FEI HorseApp on a daily basis, with around 5,700 temperature recordings entered on a daily basis. Over 1.5 million twice daily temperature recordings have been entered on the FEI HorseApp between 1 November 2021 and 19 May 2022 - one temperature recorded every second of the day at the moment - and close to 150,000 Self-Certification Forms have been filled in on the app in the same period.

All of this is very recent and there is a necessity to further review procedures and sanctions. Proposals for adaptations are being made to the FEI Board.

As part of the continued development of the FEI HorseApp and in compliance with the EU Animal Health Law (AHL), the FEI will manage the recording of compulsory equine vaccinations.

Congratulations to the FEI IT Department for the incredible work on development of the app and the very labour intensive follow-up during and after the EHV-1 outbreak. This huge additional workload has not been easy for either the IT or Veterinary Departments and it has been extremely stressful, especially with regard to sanctioning people, so I believe they deserve to be treated with respect in all communications.

## **Digital Passports**

As mentioned above and in the framework of the IHSC- WOAH public-private partnership, the FEI has invested heavily in the creation of what should become an equine digital passport. The equine digital passport will monitor and guarantee a high level of biosecurity for our horses and our events by ensuring correct identification, control of biosecurity requirements and traceability.

The equine digital passport will also allow for the safe and biosecure movement of horses, and will maintain the FEI's credibility as a reliable partner with National Governments and with the WOAH.

Development of both the FEI HorseApp and the digital passport has required substantial investment by the FEI, from both a financial and staffing perspective. Also, the maintenance and regular updates of these resources and the support is costly. This will be funded by the increase in fees for annual horse registration from CHF 10 to CHF 25, which was approved at the FEI Hybrid General Assembly 2021 for implementation on 1 January 2023.

## **International Movement of Horses**

The importance of maintaining stringent biosecurity controls cannot be overstated, not just for protection against disease, but also to safeguard the High Health status of FEI horses that allows free international movement. The FEI's public-private partnership with the WOAH has resulted in a very close collaboration between the two organisations, and also for racing through the umbrella body, the IHSC.

The additional biosecurity requirements that were implemented for the post- EHV-1 Return To Competition By-Laws have now been incorporated into the revised biosecurity protocols in the FEI Veterinary Regulations 2022 and will play a crucial role in maintaining the privileged status of FEI Horses for cross-border transportation. Biosecurity continues to be a major focus for the FEI and the updated biosecurity protocols in the FEI Veterinary Regulations are fully supported by education and control systems.

The FEI's ongoing partnership with the IFHA, through the IHSC, remains strong. Our organisation also maintains close collaboration with the European Commission and national veterinary authorities on short and long-term matters, including disease outbreak management, international standards, AHS vaccines, laboratory capacity, legislation and trade agreements.

Border-crossing remains problematic in some of the FEI Regional Groups, and joint IHSC-WOAH regional workshops have been organised in six FEI Groups as part of ongoing work to improve relations between the horse industry and the relevant competent authorities, including customs.

Workshops held in Johannesburg, Guatemala, Montevideo, Hong Kong, Rabat and Moscow and attended by representatives of the public and private sectors within horse sports, were aimed at facilitating regional horse movement through networking and capacity building. Roadmaps were created and are still being followed up.

## **Grooms**

Grooms, who play such a vital role in our sport, have now been fully integrated into the FEI Family with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the FEI and the International Grooms Association (IGA) at the FEI Sports Forum 2022. This has been something of a personal project for me and I am delighted that it has finally been delivered.

The FEI provided financial and legal support to set up the international body and, in the start-up phase and for the next four years (2022-2025), we will continue to provide financial support. An online Grooms' education platform was created back in 2015 under FEI Solidarity, and the MoU with the IGA now means that there will be a direct link to the Grooms, allowing them to access information on anti-doping, biosecurity and general stable management.

Additionally, an online self-registration form has been developed for Grooms, allowing them to register with the FEI and obtain a personal FEI ID number. This allows them to access the FEI HorseApp to use specific modules.

### **WBFSH/FEI Data Exchange Platform**

We truly recognise the importance of breeders for our sport and industry and in the framework of our partnership with the World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH), an agreement for the creation of a Data Exchange Platform between the WBFSH and the FEI was signed in October 2019, following three years of discussion.

Development of the Data Exchange Platform, shared and co-owned by the WBFSH and the FEI, allows the Studbooks to retrieve competition results for their Horses and the FEI to retrieve breeding information for all WBFSH Horses competing at FEI Competitions. Selected Studbooks have been using the platform in a pilot phase and it is planned to initiate full integration of all interested Studbooks in the near future.

### **SOCIAL LICENCE TO OPERATE**

Crucial to the sustainable future of our industry, not just our organisation, is maintaining society's acceptance of partnering with horses in sport.

There is increasing public and internal scrutiny of equestrian sport and, as part of ensuring that our Social Licence to Operate (SLO) is not gradually eroded, we have recently [announced](#) the creation of an independent Commission that will develop a practical framework to address current and future concerns related to the use of horses in sport.

In my 2018 manifesto, [A Roadmap for the Future](#), I pledged to lead the charge on horse welfare awareness through education in all regions in order to keep the welfare of the horse at the top of everyone's agenda. A lot of work has already been done on that front, including zero tolerance of all forms of horse abuse and increased sanctions, with no time limit for prosecution, and this new Commission is the next major step in strengthening equestrian sport's place in society through transparency.

Fifty percent of the 10-person Commission is external to the FEI, including the Chair, Professor Dr Natalie Waran (NZL). The Commission will focus on our sport and its specific challenges, not on racing, although there is the opportunity to reach out to the racing industry on common ground as part of the IHSC horse welfare charter. The Commission members represent equine welfare and veterinary groups, and the FEI community, including FEI Athletes and FEI Officials.

While the Commission's work will be entirely independent and the Chair and members will define their own goals and terms of reference, I see it as a much-needed opportunity to confirm and redefine the unique and natural relationship between human and horse, to explain why we can work with horses, train with horses, compete with horses, and under what circumstances.

It may well be that the Commission finds that there is a need, perhaps an urgent need, to further improve our Rules and Regulations, and we will know more when the Chair presents an interim report at the FEI General Assembly 2022 in Cape Town (RSA). A second report on the Commission's findings will be made at the FEI Sports Forum in April 2023 and the

final framework – perhaps in the form of a charter, but that is up to the Commission – will be submitted for approval at the FEI General Assembly 2023 in Mexico.

Their work is crucial to the continuing acceptance of horses in sport, even down to the basics of horses being ridden at all or having any interaction with humans. I cannot speak for the Commission, but in my view, the uniqueness of this relationship is basically that, without this special bond between human and horse, there is no horse.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Equally pivotal to society's ongoing acceptance of sport, and here I mean all sport not just equestrian, is a focus on its environmental impact. Sport as a whole has to deliver on its carbon reduction promises, but harmful emissions are only a small part of the picture. We need to be authentic. There can be no greenwashing. We all know there is no planet B.

For a long time, we have asked future Organisers for their sustainability initiatives as part of their bid documents, and FEI HQ has been "green" for a number of years, but this needs to be further rolled out to extend to our entire community. This is so much more than creating awareness. We need to make sustainability a central pillar of our work globally. We should be the thought leaders, and doers, on sustainability in our community.

The FEI – one of the early signatories of the [UN Sports for Climate Action Framework \(S4CA\)](#) – was one of the first sports governing bodies to adopt sustainable practices into its day-to-day operations at HQ. To help spread the word further, we launched the first FEI Sustainability Handbook for Event Organisers in 2014, before the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born out of the UN. The global sports industry still views the FEI Handbook as the benchmark in terms of guidelines for event organisers.

In acknowledgement of its work on carbon footprint calculation and carbon offsetting initiatives, the FEI received an IOC-DOW award in 2019 and 2020. The Awards are given to those International Federations and National Olympic Committees that have demonstrably reduced their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the scope of their organisations and respective events. The FEI is currently collating the 2021 data.

Always conscious of the need for sustainable initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of our events and create a positive social and economic legacy, ecological criteria are taken into account when evaluating bids for major FEI Events, with two of 15 main parameters being Legacy & Sustainability, and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Looking ahead, the FEI will be monitoring sustainability performance and is setting up officially validated emissions inventory practices, including development of an equestrian activities centric carbon calculator. Version 2 of the sustainability guidelines for events and member organisations is scheduled for publication later in 2022, along with a learning platform – the FEI Sustainability Hub – to support events and individuals involved in sustainable event management.

Helsinki (FIN), annual host of a Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping qualifier, has long been a standout sustainability champion, using horse manure to generate all electricity used at the event and implementing an on-venue zero waste policy. And, as a further example of how FEI Organisers are embracing these eco-friendly initiatives, the FEI World Championships 2022 in Herning (DEN) will be a CO2 neutral event, using carbon offsetting, and planting 20 hectares of forest outside Herning that will bind around 12,000 tons of CO2 emissions.

Would the Herning Organisers have developed all these sustainability initiatives if they had not been successful in their bid for the four-discipline FEI World Championships 2022? Of course they would, but now they can show them off to an appreciative global audience

and demonstrate that sustainability can be seamlessly integrated into a profitable business model, and one with which sponsors want to align their brands.

## **MODERNISATION**

Equestrian sport is founded on a long-standing tradition of which we are naturally very proud, but we were given a clear warning after the London 2012 Olympic Games when, despite returning really strong results across the majority of the categories under scrutiny by the IOC, we were downgraded one category in the International Federations Olympic Groupings that determine the revenue distribution from the IOC. This was then backed up by IOC President Thomas Bach's demand to all sports in the Olympic Movement to change or be changed.

Naturally, the proactive route was the only option if we wanted equestrian to remain in the Olympics. So it was gratifying to hear the IOC President expressing his appreciation of the FEI and the work done in that regard during his speech at the FEI 100 Years celebrations in April 2022.

*"The IOC is happy and proud to have FEI as a partner who has truly embraced Olympic Agenda 2020+5. Whether it is your initiatives in strengthening sustainability; making FEI a 'gender champion'; promoting animal welfare; leading by example in good governance; or showing solidarity with the equestrian community in Ukraine suffering from the war. These and many more examples demonstrate the strong standing of FEI in our Olympic community."* – Thomas Bach, IOC President

Some changes proposed by the FEI and endorsed by the FEI General Assembly may not always be popular with all sectors of our community, such as the reduction to teams of three without a drop score for the Olympics so that we could meet the IOC requirements and expectations. Short, easy to understand formats that keep our sport relevant and attractive to a broader audience are not so contentious, but we have to face facts – maintaining that "strong standing" in the Olympic community is crucial to the future of our sport and industry.

President Bach has also acknowledged the way our sport has changed over the years. *"Equestrian sport is steeped in history and tradition. At the same time, FEI has also always understood how to embrace change. You have together embarked on a journey of modernisation, making equestrian sport fit for the future."*

That journey of modernisation has not been easy for everyone, but major changes – or indeed less major ones – are never made without first undertaking a full and transparent consultation process on proposals with our community, including the Athletes, prior to the final approval – or not – by our National Federations at the FEI General Assembly.

This process is fully in line with the FEI Rules Revision process and is a central element of the FEI's governance principles. It is also aligned with two of the pledges I made in my Roadmap For The Future when I put forward my candidacy for the 2018 Presidential election – that the FEI would continue to engage and involve our community and experts on strategic matters through inclusive dialogue and consultation, and that I would ensure that relationships with all our stakeholders are nurtured and respected.

This dialogue and consultation is done through the annual FEI Sports Forum, many task forces, round tables and Rules sessions that are organised, and these two pledges continue to be fundamental to the success of our organisation.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Dialogue and consultation**

As part of the ongoing community dialogue, we will be removing the session “Group meetings with the FEI Board” from the FEI General Assembly programme to allow for a broader discussion on key topics and make for a more efficient use of everyone’s time. While we have the Rules Session, and of course the FEI Sports Forum earlier in the year, we should also use the framework of the FEI General Assembly to have a more wide-ranging consultation and discussion.

Athletes, Organisers, Officials, Grooms, Owners and MoU signatories will be invited to join the National Federations so that we can debate important matters that affect our community and the wider industry, such as our sport’s social licence to operate, the economic situation, and digitalisation to attract a broader fan base, not just regulatory issues.

### **Integrity**

As with all International Sports Federations, the fight against doping continues, although with two Athletes – the human and the horse – the FEI has to be doubly vigilant. There have been important modifications to the FEI Prohibited Substances List and the FEI is heavily invested in research into prohibited substances.

As a Member of the WADA Executive Committee and Foundation Board, I am also at the forefront of the fight against doping in human Athletes. Although the use of Prohibited Substances in our equine athletes is a bigger issue in our sport than doping of our human Athletes, issues do still arise. Ignorance of the Rules is not an excuse, so it is still important for all National Federations to educate their Athletes on this important topic.

We continue to invest in preventing competition manipulation. This is of course a complex area, but just to single out two areas that have been particularly successful – the Hyposensitivity Control System (HCS) to prevent the use of nerve-blocking and the improved Limb Sensitivity Protocol have the double benefit of ensuring the integrity of our competitions but, equally if not more importantly, they prioritise horse welfare.

As part of these improved protective measures for horses, research and development of the HCS, including field testing, was carried out and the system has now been successfully implemented. We need to look at potentially extending this examination to other disciplines where it is relevant.

The improved strategy and equipment used for the Limb Sensitivity Protocol has also been well received by the community. Formal training has allowed for a more than 150% increase in the number of specialist FEI Veterinarians that can carry out the testing.

Endurance was a big issue on my desk when I arrived in Lausanne. It has been a struggle, but there has been an incredible amount of work done and huge thanks are due to the Chair and Members of the Endurance Temporary Committee, whose recommendations resulted in vital changes to the discipline Rules, which were ultimately approved by the National Federations at the FEI General Assembly in 2019.

The implementation of the revised Rules with stricter qualification, and the introduction of the HCS Examination has resulted in a dramatic decrease in catastrophic injuries in competition. The revised Rules/HCS combination seems to have got Endurance back on track, but this is a discipline that will always need a strong support system to ensure integrity remains the number one priority.

## **Diversity & Inclusion**

Equestrian has been recognised as the true gender champion in world sport for many years now – on the Field of Play at least – but we all need to continue our efforts around diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I am proud that, immediately after my election as FEI President in 2014, I announced the appointment of the FEI's first female Secretary General, Sabrina Ibáñez.

I believe we are leading by example, as our Secretary General was asked to be a member of the IOC Gender Equality Working Group in 2018, the year after I became a UN International Gender Champion. I was also made a member of the IOC Women in Sport Commission in 2019. Sabrina took over as Chair of the ASOIF Diversity and Gender Equality Consultative Group in October 2020 and, together, we continue to push for gender equality in the workplace, both at FEI HQ but also within our National Federations.

Together, we have transformed the governance of the FEI, and our organisation has consistently been in the top group of International Federations (IFs) in the four IF Governance Assessments organised by ASOIF since 2016.

Our Secretary General is also continually championing better integration of para-sport, and not just in her role as President of the Association of Paralympic Sport Organisations (APSO) since 2017. She has also been a Member of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Governance Review Group since 2018.

## **Legal System**

I pledged to ensure that we would continue to evaluate the Global Equine Anti-Doping and Controlled Medication Programme (EADCMP) in order to further improve its performance and to make it more cost-effective, and we continue to review the programme on a regular basis. As a result, there have been many important changes to the FEI Legal system in the past four years.

As part of improved protective measures for Persons Responsible (PRs) under the FEI Equine Anti-Doping and Controlled Medication Regulations (EADCMRs) and to further ensure a level playing field, the FEI introduced the concept of Specified Substances in 2016, which allows for a more flexible approach to substances that could have been ingested inadvertently by a horse, such as contaminated feed.

In addition, the FEI Atypical Findings Policy (ATF) came into force on 1 January 2021, meaning that in certain cases of a laboratory finding of a substance on the FEI's Equine Substance Prohibited List in an equine sample, this would not automatically trigger an Adverse Analytical Finding (AAF), i.e. a positive case. The ATF provides greater protection for Athletes in potential equine contamination cases, while still maintaining the integrity of the FEI EADCMRs. For example, if the ATF Panel is satisfied with the PR's explanations, there will be no further action taken and the PR's results at the Event in question will not be disqualified.

Under the new Administrative Disciplinary Procedure (ADP), which came into force on 1 January 2020, FEI Headquarters, acting through the FEI Legal Department, can directly impose sanctions for Minor Offences. The system, which maintains the full right to be heard, speeds up the disciplinary process. Sanctions such as Provisional Suspensions or Suspensions of up to three months can be imposed.

Other important changes in 2021 included the provision that allows the FEI Board to impose a Provisional Suspension in the event of serious well-founded allegations of wrongdoing, and removal of the statute of limitation on horse abuse cases, meaning there is no time limit to prosecute such cases, even outside the jurisdiction of FEI Events.

## **Finances**

We can be very proud that FEI finances remain healthy, despite all the challenges of the past two and a half years. The risk management assessment conducted over two years, (2016 and 2017), prior to presentation to and approval by the FEI Board in 2018, together with careful management of the FEI finances, allowed us to establish solid reserves specifically for use in a crisis. While we were prepared for an equine disease outbreak, no-one expected a human pandemic of such proportions.

However, thanks to proactive financial management and the availability of the necessary reserves, the FEI could remain independent and we never had to apply for outside support. Despite the fact that we had to drastically cut costs by cancelling or postponing non-essential projects and putting staff on partial unemployment, we were still able to help Organisers and National Federations and continue the FEI Solidarity Programme.

In the absence of events, we continued to produce digital content to retain and further expand our fan base and provide a return on investment to our sponsors. More recently, we were able to support the Ukrainian Equestrian community by establishing a dedicated Relief Fund of CHF 1 million in February 2022.

The positive financial result of 2021 allowed us to compensate for the 2020 losses in an important way, whilst still allocating CHF 1 million to both the FEI Solidarity Fund and the IT Fund, so that Solidarity projects and important IT developments could be maintained.

The socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, with massively increased Government expenditure that will have to be paid back by future generations, have been intensified by inflation and increased cost of living as a result of the war in Ukraine. This will have a potential long-term impact on our sport and our organisation, and a focus on sound financial oversight and ensuring cost-effectiveness will become ever more important. We need to focus on the essentials, simplify and optimise, reusing and recycling wherever we can so that our finances and our planet benefit.

Financial health needs to be and is a top priority for the organisation so that it can fulfil its mission to support the sport and the equestrian community as a whole, and particularly in difficult times. Let's not forget, the FEI is a service organisation dedicated to serving the sport in everything it does.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

As we are part of a global society – and sport is said to be a mirror of society - we must also be aware and make our community aware of our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), so we were pleased to announce our partnership with JustWorld International in mid-2019.

JustWorld International, a non-profit organisation aimed at uniting the global equestrian community to provide basic needs programmes to children around the world, is now the "Official Charity Partner of the FEI".

JustWorld International's work focuses on education and nutrition programmes and the new partnership, formalised with the signing of a MoU with the FEI, allows the two organisations to mutually promote their activities and work closely on development and fundraising for the JustWorld International charity programmes.

## **Regional Groups and Continental Associations**

Effectively losing two of the last four years in crisis management mode meant that the planned working group for Regional Groups and Continental Associations was not created. Instead, we have had constructive meetings with the Continental Associations (and I

mention them here in alphabetical order) – the African Confederation of Equestrian Sports (ACES), the Asian Equestrian Federation (AEF), the European Equestrian Federation (EEF) and the Pan American Equestrian Confederation (PAEC), as well as maintaining excellent relations with each of the Regional Groups.

More specifically, we have had productive dialogue with the EEF about our relationship and the fact that they want to take over some responsibilities, such as the Continental Championships, and we will continue these discussions also with the involvement of the Regional Groups and the other Continental Associations.

## **FEI SOLIDARITY**

The FEI will continue to ensure the financial sustainability of FEI Solidarity. As mentioned above, the healthy financial position of the FEI has allowed us to allocate an additional CHF 1 million to the FEI Solidarity Fund.

One of FEI Solidarity's priorities is the development of the sport in other regions of the world by providing National Federations with the necessary tools to develop equestrian sport and horse welfare in their own countries. The aim is to create in-house knowledge so that these developing National Federations can reduce or eventually eliminate their reliance on foreign experts.

Covid-19 is still impacting many communities, and the result is that there are many FEI Solidarity projects on hold, with a bottleneck of Solidarity projects waiting to be activated. However, it is encouraging that a total of 419 National Federation projects have received FEI Solidarity support between 2012 and 2021

Coaching for Vaulting and Para Equestrian has been organised, and two new Education Programmes have been added to the FEI Solidarity portfolio – a Stable Manager Education Programme and Biosecurity Education Programme. There are also three new FEI Solidarity tools – a workshop for National Federations on their role, mission and responsibility; a workshop for National Head Coaches; and Grooms' training.

An FEI Regional Development Officer has been contracted for Asia and the FEI is funding the EEF Regional Development Officer. In addition, eight National Federation and Regional Group Projects have been approved.

## **FEI Campus**

Educational programmes continue to be added both to our online learning platform, FEI Campus, and also through FEI Solidarity, but we need to maintain this essential work to ensure that all needs are met.

FEI Campus was launched in 2015, following a CHF 1.5 million donation received in 2014, which was organised by my predecessor, HRH Princess Haya. Since its launch, a total of 125 online courses have been added to the platform. A further 15 courses are in the developmental phase, and others are currently under discussion. The most recent additions centre around biosecurity and courses specifically for Grooms.

There are almost 33,000 FEI Campus users with a wide-ranging age profile, and the top 10 countries with the highest number of enrolled learners are: United States of America, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Australia, Spain, Canada, Belgium and Brazil.

The top Courses based on numbers of enrolled learners are: Jumping (Level 1, Course Designer), Horsemanship Study, Behaviour & Handling (Equine Behaviour), Equine Conformation, Equine Anatomy & Physiology, Veterinary (Permitted Treating Veterinarian Online Exam 2021), Behaviour & Handling (Challenging Situations), Jumping (CES), FEI Essentials (What is the FEI).

## **MARKETING**

### **Promotion of our Sport**

Audiences – particularly the youth – now consume media in a totally different way. Generation Z hardly watches linear television, and audience ratings for all major sports events show that. So we need to be flexible and constantly reinvent ourselves to have a content offering that works across all platforms and for all audiences, as well as providing brand exposure for our sponsors and promoting our beautiful sport.

The media landscape has seen enormous change in recent years, particularly across broadcast content creation and distribution. The sales of television broadcast rights have reduced significantly for many sports, yet one of the key demands of the IOC remains broadcast coverage. There is clearly a need for the FEI to change its approach to TV rights sales and it is likely that we will have to do much more in-house. Our first priority is promotion and visibility for our sport, not financial revenue, and we need to find a balance between the two.

With the change to media consumption, particularly among the youth, the market for over-the-top (OTT) and streaming services has grown substantially and online viewing figures have increased dramatically.

In order to further immerse ourselves in this sector and to expand the reach of the FEI's OTT channel FEI.TV, ClipMyHorse.TV became the FEI's official streaming platform and media partner in July 2020. Out of this partnership, the FEI Media House was born.

FEI Media House, which handles a significant part of all content production for the FEI, allows for far more cost-effective content production. While there will always be an important demand for competition coverage, there is also an increased focus on lifestyle content, as that is what consumers are asking for, but this in turn helps in the promotion of our sport. This enhanced production offering allows the FEI Media House to provide a wide range of premium media products across TV, mobile and digital.

While live sport was on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic, FEI.TV offered free-of-charge coverage of past events and special equestrian features to everyone, not just existing subscribers.

FEI.TV has been extended to the mobile area with the addition of applications for iPad and iPad Mini. Partner websites are able to embed a syndicated version of FEI TV on their own website.

### **Commercial Partnerships**

We continue to maintain an extremely strong relationship with our Top Partner Longines, despite the cancellation of so many FEI Events during Covid-19 and EHV, including two Longines FEI World Cup™ Finals, and we are enormously grateful for their continued loyalty to our sport and to the FEI, particularly at a time when many sports are losing sponsors.

Longines has stayed with us through good times and bad, and have welcomed the creative initiatives produced by the FEI's Commercial and Digital teams to maintain Longines' brand visibility in the marketplace, even when there was no sport. Cavalor, as the FEI's Official Nutrition Partner, has also remained very loyal to the FEI.

In the current challenging economic situation, and in a very competitive market, it is far from easy to attract new partners for the FEI Series. We are still working on finding the

right partner for the FEI Dressage World Cup™ series, and we need to continue these efforts, but also manage our own and our community's expectations.

### **Online advertising**

While there were many challenges for the commercial portfolio during Covid, the strategy of selling online advertising has worked extremely well. This has opened up the FEI digital channels for organisations to advertise on FEI channels, rather than restricting them to the more traditional sponsorship opportunities at equestrian events. The new strategy requires far less resources and provides a solid revenue stream through content marketing.

These commercial partnerships have already provided Boehringer Ingelheim, Tommy Hilfiger Equestrian and the Swedish-based insurance company Agria with the opportunity to promote their brands and connect more deeply with the FEI fan base via the FEI digital channels as well as on their own platforms.

### **FEI Digital Platforms**

The FEI's digital platforms continue to deliver impressive increases, and are an important legacy for the organisation as they allow us to consolidate the appetite for our sport among all audiences, but particularly the youth.

The FEI has launched numerous global marketing campaigns to promote equestrian sport and to drive engagement. The #ForTheLoveOfEquestrian campaign, launched during the pandemic, celebrates equestrianism in its widest form. Promotion is not only about competition results, it is about our relationship with the horse and the love, dedication and hard work that entails. The voiceover by US superstar Kaley Cuoco, herself a huge horse lover, added to the success of the campaign.

For the FEI European Championships 2021, a marketing campaign was launched around the concept of 'Ride the Moment', and the FEI launched the 'We don't Play' campaign for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, which resulted in an outstanding digital performance with very strong engagement rates.

Page views on the fan site, FEI.org, increased by 646% to 26.1 million between 2015 and 2021. Video views showed an even bigger increase, up by 721% to 343 million between 2017 and 2021, and in the same five-year period followers have increased by 263% to 3.2 million. Engagement has gone up by 393% to 21.2 million between 2018 and 2021.

Our social media campaigns have been hugely successful across a wide range of platforms, with a constantly growing digital following and rapid increase in engagement rates. Good story telling, design and creativity, along with the right choice of channels and technology have been crucial to this success, along with collaboration, distribution and amplification through stakeholders.

Umbrella social media multi-discipline campaigns have worked extremely well, while the decision to focus separately on the individual disciplines has been very effective.

Engagement numbers on FEI Facebook have increased from 24.9k in 2018 to 152.6k in 2021, and there have been similar increases over the same period on the FEI Instagram account, from 21.8k to 136.6k. These impressive statistics are the result of earned, paid, owned and shared content across the FEI digital platforms on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter and Spotify, and this tailored combination appears to be the right mix for success.

## **Digital Workshops**

Following feedback from the Digital Activation session at the FEI Sports Forum 2022, the FEI is planning to host a series of virtual digital workshops for Athletes, National Federations and Regional Groups in the last quarter of 2022. The objective will be to familiarise participants with best practices in the management and activation of digital channels (web and social media).

Athletes, Chefs d'Equipe, Grooms and the Athletes' Clubs will be invited to the dedicated session, which will include advice on how to build a personal brand. Individuals responsible for management of the digital channels within National Federations, Regional Groups and Continental Associations will be invited to separate workshops.

The seminars will also be recorded for on-demand viewing, and best practices handbooks will be made available afterwards.

## **THE LEGACY**

Without the incredible work of the FEI Executive Board, the FEI Board, the great staff at FEI HQ and the excellent relationship with our National Federations and stakeholders, and of course the unwavering support of the FEI Top Partners, in particular Longines, none of this would have been possible. And of course I owe a really special thank you to HRH Princess Haya, who started the modernisation process of bringing the FEI into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I was blessed to have such a visionary predecessor and much of my focus has been about continuing her work and building on her legacy. Thank you to you all.

We have shaped the future together since 1921 and we need to continue to nurture the special relationships that form the FEI Family for that progress to be sustainable.

Sustainability covers so many elements of our organisation's function – not just the environmental perspective, but also the financial aspect and – most crucially – the sustainability of our sport overall that we can only achieve by maintaining our social licence to operate. This is possibly the greatest legacy I could wish for, followed immediately by our place on the Olympic Programme.

The Olympic Games are, without question, the biggest sporting event on the planet. The value of equestrian as an Olympic sport cannot be measured in dollars or euros. It is much bigger than that, so I will continue to prioritise preserving our place within the Olympic Movement, as it is crucial for our industry, our National Federations and all our stakeholders.

Remaining relevant as a sport and further expanding our fan base by attracting new and young Athletes are also top priorities for the future. That focus on youth will not be at the expense of our existing community, but the success of our FEI digital platforms – driven by the youth – is an important legacy and one that needs to continue to grow.

Good governance is consolidated in our organisation, and that is something of which I – and our Secretary General – are enormously proud.

While I have never been in any doubt about what my role as FEI President covers, the FEI Statutes are not particularly informative on the subject. I strongly believe it is important for the good governance of our organisation that there is more clarity on the role of the FEI President, and I also see this as part of my legacy. The Statutes currently allow for the possibility of an honorary President, or a working President like myself, who is fully accountable.

I want to be absolutely neutral and impartial in this discussion, but I truly believe that the FEI Board and our National Federations should review the role of the future FEI President and approve a clear job description at the FEI General Assembly in 2025 so that applicants can be confident about what the FEI is looking for in its future President.

We will continue to push our commercial activities to fund promotion and development of our sport. That financial stability is important so that we can continue to fund FEI Solidarity and grow our sport in new regions of the world.

Enhanced biosecurity protocols are central to the safe running of FEI Events, but also key to maintaining the privileged status of our FEI horses so that we can continue to open borders.

New Officials enlisted into the FEI Family is another legacy I would like to leave my successor, but I need the help of the National Federations to achieve that.

As well as a legacy, this Presidential Programme is also a wish list, and I cannot do all of this alone. We will only achieve everything if we continue working together with these common goals in mind. And none of this is set in stone. It is our FEI, not my FEI, and I am happy to discuss ways of further improving this Programme with the input of our community.

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was a man who loved horses and two of my favourite quotes are, "No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle" and "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man". But as I look back at what we have achieved over the last eight years and what we want to focus on in the next four and beyond, I am happy to quote Churchill again: "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see".

It is an honour and a privilege to be able to look back on more than 100 years of FEI history, and now I can focus – not just on looking forward to the next four years – but on the legacy that I wish to leave for the Federation and the sport as a whole so that we can look both backwards and forwards with pride.

There is still a lot of ongoing work to be completed and challenges will continue to land on the President's desk. But I believe I can genuinely look forward to handing over to my successor the reins of a Federation fully invested in sustainability, from both an environmental and financial perspective, but also an organisation in charge of a sustainable and transparent sport that will maintain its social licence to operate through its love of the horse and the importance it places on ensuring their welfare at all times.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ingmar De Vos', with a large, stylized initial 'I'.

Ingmar De Vos  
25 June 2022