

Dear Colleagues

As the president of the Royal Dutch Equestrian Federation I like to share with you my concerns about the future of the equestrian sport in Europe. Recent developments, that have taken place in the FEI, show that we in Europe have to ask ourselves questions about Europe's position. The globalizing within the FEI seems to be synonym with less Europe.

Recently we received information from the FEI that they had made an agreement with the GCT/GCL. Of course it was good news that a settlement had been reached. However rumours became louder that the conditions that had been agreed could mean that the Nations Cup was in danger. In first instance the FEI refused to give any information as, according to them, the signed MOU was confidential. The EEF and other European organizations put pressure on the FEI to publish details about that agreement. When details were published it became clear that the rumours were indeed true that this agreement could have a big impact on the continuation of the Nations Cup. The question that raises is: How is it possible that an organisation, that told us a year ago that the Nations Cup is their most important product, signs such a deal without making sure that the Nations Cup will be able to continue?

Another proposal called harmonization is may be an even more dangerous threat for the sport in Europe. The harmonization from the entry fees into international shows should, according to the proposal, become a system equal as the system that is used in the USA. The consequence of that sort of harmonization will be that entry fees for the international shows here will increase in such a way that it is threatening the sport in Europe. And also here the question: Why to change the system in Europe, that has proven its value over the years and is still successful, into a system less favourable for the equestrian sport and its development in Europe, just for the sake of harmonization. Should Europe not be the one that decides on such an important subject.

Let make myself clear. We are not against globalizing the sport as we also believe that in the future a global sport can be stronger and more attractive for TV etc. However it seems that for the FEI globalizing means a way to make sure that there will be less Europe. Whereas Europe represents still 75% of the sport worldwide. Europe with 75% of the sport, 60% of the shows and 90% of the breeding should be the centre of FEI's strategy. It is time that the FEI starts to realize that there never can be a successful globalization of the sport without Europe. Europe is the baker mat of the sport and will be also in the future, it will be the most important factor in the FEI despite all the developments that will take place in the rest of the world. And let us not forget the federations in Europe pay the majority of the contribution fees into the FEI. Why than running a course that is a threat to the equestrian sport in Europe.

If we like to keep the sport at the high standard we have now Europe will need a very strong position, much stronger than we have now, within the FEI. To strengthen the position of Europe within the FEI we need:

- 1) A representation in technical committees reflecting the fact that 75% of the sport is in Europe.

- 2) A withdrawal of the proposal for harmonization of entry fees as they are a big threat for the sport in Europe
- 3) A guarantee of the FEI that they will continue with the Nations Cup in Europe with the two division as it is now.
- 4) Decisions that have a big influence on the sport in Europe should be put first to the EEF.  
When the EEF agrees with the proposal they can put forward to the GA.

When you agree with me that we have to stand up against the way the FEI is acting and neglect more and more the position of Europe I urge you to let the EEF know from your support so that they can defend Europe and its equestrian sport and convince the FEI that it is time for Europe first.

Theo Ploegmakers

President KNHS/EEF board member