

Session 1 – Interim Report from the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

The Equine Ethics and Wellbeing (EEWB) Commission presented a second interim report to the FEI and its Stakeholders during a dedicated Session on 24 April 2023.

The Chair of the EEWB Commission gave a presentation during the first hour of the Session. During her presentation she put forward [24 draft recommendations](#) to ensure a good life for horses strategic objective in equestrian sport.

The recommendations (which can be consulted [here](#)) included measures that the FEI and the wider equestrian community could take to achieve higher standards of horse welfare through individual and collective responsibility, trust, transparency, reactivity and independent evaluation; a FEI Equestrian Charter was also part of one of these 24 recommendations.

The EEWB Commission's proposal for a welfare-centric FEI vision for sustaining equine participation in sport, aimed to address ethical concerns related to equine involvement in sport as well as during a horse's lifetime.

The vision of a Good Life for Horses, and the associated draft recommendations, which had been informed through research and engagement with the equestrian community and the public, would help inform and inspire a positive direction. Through accepting this vision for the future, it was believed the FEI would have a solid starting point to effect real change in equestrian sports' mindset and practices.

This vision and the draft recommendations, as well as the FEI Equestrian Charter, were a starting point to affect change across equestrianism. They had been created primarily around the concept of providing horses with a good life and the collective responsibility towards it. This would require a long-term commitment of the whole equestrian community and industry and not only the FEI.

During the second part of the Session, moderated by Grania Willis, the five external members of the EEWB Commission plus the EEF President engaged in a positive consultation and discussion with the FEI Sports Forum participants. The material presented by the EEWB Commission received strong support from the participants.

This was the first time the EEWB Commission has held in-person consultations with the wider equestrian community on its work and findings, since it was created by the FEI in June 2022.

Following feedback from participants during the FEI Sports Forum and afterwards by the stakeholders, the Commission would present a final interim report to the FEI Board at its in-person meeting on 6-7 June 2023.

Q&A Session

The following questions and comments were raised by the participants:

- Daniel Fenaux (ESP), made a comment about how the FEI community could address social license to operate actions to the general public that was not necessarily horse educated or connoisseurs.

The EEWB Commission Chair explained that among the 24 drafted recommendations presented there were a number of them related to education and communication actions.

Furthermore, Jessica Stark explained that good actions would speak for themselves to the public and in the current social license landscape the vision of Good Life for Horses and the 24 drafted recommendations were the pathway that would help to properly address the general public. She highlighted that we were all responsible, subject to intense scrutiny and we could fully justify what we were all doing if we felt we were doing the right thing.

- Ulf Helgstrand (DEN), made a comment about how we could monitor that horses were mentally fit to compete.

The EEWB Commission Chair highlighted the importance of constantly kept on investing on research so decisions were taken based on the best of the evidences available. In this topic there were good research disseminated around particularly about negative welfare indicators (e.g. stress or pain in horses); there were even tools to measure horses pain. The challenges were that we needed reliable tools to be used on the field, on practical situations and also based on positive emotions and experiences of horses. Private companies and some governments were funding these researches but were currently on an early stage.

- Ali Tweissi (UAE), had 3 comments about:
 - o “Horses Voice” within the FEI Headquarters: Dr Camie Heleski explained that the idea was to have a person/body that represented Horses’ welfare within the FEI.
 - o Practical training for all Officials: the EEWB Commission Chair explained the work that the EEWB Commission was currently carrying out with the FEI Education Department.
 - o Publication of simple kits around Horses’ pain: the EEWB Commission Chair explained that public must be educated in a positive way to be able to identify what happy horses look like.

- Sami Al-Duhami (KSA), made a comment about reaching youth.

Jessica Stark explained that it was a good proposal to work on.

- Jason Brautigam (GBR), made a comment about tack and equipment, how to be approved in a more transparent and clear way, how to be correctly used and properly checked.
- Tom Gordin (FIN), had a question for Mr Theo Ploegmakers about European Equestrian Federation (EEF) plans on this topic.

Theo Ploegmakers explained that EEF, as key actor of the equestrian community, would work together with the FEI in the European region. The FEI was not alone but each National Federation must take its own responsibility because we were all together in this task. To globally succeed we all needed to work together.

- George Dimaras (GRE), made a comment about using the correct language, what did it mean and how could be used.

Jessica Stark explained that we shall demonstrate that we shared people's values by using positive language that reflected respect towards the horse and avoiding problematic expressions like "breaking a horse". We must demonstrate at all time that the horse was upfront and it was a privilege for people to have horses in sport. We shall speak a language that non equestrian people would understand.

- Kaja Koczurowska-Wawrzkiwicz (POL), made a comment about the importance of social media and influencers to be part of the FEI's media strategy.
- Monika Gattiker (GER), made a comment about training of young horses.

Professor Madeleine Campbell explained that we must try to understand what was better for each individual horse.

Professor Dr. Kathalijne Visser explained that not every horse was suitable for elite sport and was important to recognise the behaviour of the horse to identify if the horse was happy when performing their activities.

- Isabel Werth (GER), agreed that we all shall increase social "acceptance" and welfare of the horse and questioned about the survey made by the EEWB Commission last year, how conclusions were reached by the Commission based on the surveys and whether more surveys and evidences were to be provided by the Commission to made recommendations. She also asked how national sport could be encompassed in the 24 recommendations.

The EEWB Commission Chair pointed out that social license was about perception and we should stop asking for more evidence and stop denying that there were no problems because this was negatively affecting social license in itself and

highlighted that in her view there 24 drafted recommendations would provide the industry with an opportunity to take a lead to be proactive. It was always important for evidences to be robust but people would have different options about it and would interpret it them depending on the different angles that they were looked at.

Professor Dr. Kathalijne Visser explained how Surveys were conducted, results managed as well as the significance of the results.

The EEWB Commission Chair further informed that this was an on-going work and a Pulse Survey would be put together in the spring or summer of 2023 to signal to the wider community about the recommendations, to hear about what they think about the recommendations and if there would be supported; this would also help to continue monitoring social license throughout FEI leadership.

Professor Madeleine Campbell finally explained that the national level was crucial; as this was a shared responsibility National Federations had a key role to play.

- El Sayed Refaei (UAE Official) made a comment about transportation guidelines.

The EEWB Commission Chair explained about the work made on this field which did not address few points such us characteristics of horses trucks or horses extremely used to be in horses truck. It was important to identify the physical burden on horses and use the data to guide some thinking around how should look like to competitions horses.

He was suggested to talk to FEI Veterinary Director about this topic.

- Klaus Roeser (GER), made a comment about who would define what was right or wrong for the horses.

The EEWB Commission Chair responded that a positive engage with all stakeholders was important. Different stakeholders would have different views. Good life for horses definition must take into account scientific evidences and research based around trying to do a good thing. She would be happy to continue discussion with his stakeholder group as it had been done in the past. However, she explained that for the Commission to engage with every single group in a way that was meaningful for them was going to be challenged for the Commission. However, this work did not finish with the final report but was an ongoing piece of work to define what a good life for a competitions horse look like.

- Eleonora Ottaviani (ITA), agreed that stakeholders must be proactive. The International Jumping Riders Club was taking actions on this area like producing videos and participating in forums. She asked how or who could finance these actions. A second question was whether FEI Technical Committees were involved for recommendations concerning tack and equipment.

The EEWB Commission Chair explained that when the Commission submit a recommendation to the FEI Board, the latter decides what to do next, including the involvement of FEI Technical Committees.

FEI President clarified that FEI Technical Committees were involved when necessary, as part of the standard FEI consultation and decision making process. Regarding the finances the FEI President explained that the future of all was at stake. The FEI itself had a huge responsibility to make sure that resources needed to be successful were available.

- Roly Owers (GBR), had 2 questions about practical implementation of the 24 drafted recommendations and about advising National Federations on how to manage social license risk in their countries.

The EEWB Commission Chair explained that the FEI Board would need to discuss further steps.

Professor Madeleine Campbell highlighted that National Federations must be also doing the maximum that could possibly be done to reduce and avoid risks to demonstrate that we were left only with unavoidable risk. Risks existed in all sports.

Theo Ploegmakers, added that if we all respected the horse and used them according to their capabilities, we could reduce risks.

- Moderator asked the panellists how National Federation fitted in the puzzle

Professor Madeleine Campbell explained that National Federations played a crucial role because they sit between the FEI and the national equestrian communities. National Federations must think how they could help and even implement these recommendations.

The EEWB Commission Chair emphasised that we were all responsible. National Federations had massive influence over a sector of the equestrian community. She invited all when leaving the room to talk to everyone participants could about the 24 drafted recommendations, conveying the good horses life message and identifying what each person could do in its area of influence; it was a wheel of change.

- Tina Donandt (GER), asked a question about non-FEI respondents of the survey and their age group as well as languages implications.

Professor Dr. Kathalijne Visser, explained that ages of respondent were not asked but group categories in line with what was standard in similar academic researches and surveys.

- Wiveka Lundh (SWE), explained about the Horse Welfare Commission created within SWE NF where all stakeholders were present and offered the FEI their assistance, if needed.
- Tore Sannum (NOR), made a question about health certificates and out-of-competition testing.

The EEWB Commission Chair emphasised that there was a recommendation about out of competition checks.

- Quentin Simonet (FRA) made two comments about taking measures that were sustainable in the future and taking actions to address social license to operate beyond the FEI's activities to reach a broader community and not only the equestrian.
- Frédéric Barrelet (SUI), what efforts should be made to extend the discussions with other industries in the horse world that were confronted with identical problem, in particular the international horse racing, are there mechanisms for interchange of information and how can FEI take a leading role?

The EEWB Commission Chair explained that public did not make a distinction between equestrian disciplines, e.g. racing and Jumping. The Commission was of the opinion that forces must be joined to address welfare of the horses when relevant. Good life of horses' statements were very similar in different industries. We should generally communicate what good life for horses in general was.