

“A Fresh Approach to a Create Space for the Sport”

AN ANALYSIS FROM HENK ROTTINGHUIS - CANDIDATE
FOR THE 2010 PRESIDENCY OF THE FEI - AT THE END OF
HIS 100-DAY LISTENING PROGRAMME

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Introduction to My Analysis

When I started my 100-day Listening Programme, I was very open minded about it and did not know what kind of response I would get. I have been surprised and learned more than I had hoped for.

In this Analysis, I want to present to you what I have heard so far. My Analysis is based on the conversations I have had with many people in the sport over recent months, the formal results of my Survey and the meetings I have attended. It will form the basis for my Presidential Agenda.

Of course, there are many people to whom I have not yet managed to speak. That's why I will continue listening and why I would welcome your comments and feedback on this Analysis.

Your views will help me further refine my Analysis and I will then publish my Agenda, setting out the actions and approach I will take if elected FEI President.

Inevitably, any Analysis tends to be critical in its tone. It has to be if it is going to produce constructive criticism and bring about improvements.

In preparing this document, I have found that there is a high dissatisfaction among riders, organisers and National Federations with the way things are currently handled. And I am aware that people in the field have told me that they are tired of surprises and there are far too many of them, which damages the sport.

It is also clear that big differences in needs of Member Federations have lead to very different and sometimes contradictory requirements and demands on the FEI.

I do not think this is something we need necessarily be worried about in a worldwide community like the FEI, as long as we respect our differences, take the trouble to understand each other and make an effort to bridge the gaps that exist.

We don't have to pretend to be one happy family when, in reality, we are dealing with the challenges faced by a growing global sport that is maturing in the 21st century. As long as we discuss our aspirations and challenges on that basis, I feel we can overcome internal differences and build upon what has been achieved so far.

What you will read in this Analysis should in no way be seen a direct criticism of those who have worked so hard to make our sport such a growing success. They should be very proud of their contribution. But progress and development can only be achieved by keeping a critical eye on performance and being open to change. In short, by constantly listening to what's being said and then acting on that, so we keep up the momentum that our fast paced sport demands.

That requires a fresh approach and this is what I hope to present in the Agenda I will publish in late September.

In the meantime I am keen to hear your views on my Analysis. Do you agree or disagree with them? Or are there any issues you think have not been included? If so, please visit my website:

www.henkforfei.org and feel free to leave your comments (anonymously), or email me directly at henkforfei@henkrottinghuis.org

Yours sincerely,

Henk Rottinghuis

My Overall Findings

1. Whatever people's concerns may be about our sport, there is a huge passion and enthusiasm for it that transcends disciplines, regions and countries.
2. The sport generates a unique camaraderie and brings together people from all walks of life and all corners of the world, united in a love of the horse and its welfare who give a lot of time and effort to our sport
3. Our sport is growing fast in all disciplines and in all regions
4. There are some exciting and innovative developments that mean more and more people are able to enjoy our sport

BUT:

5. Federations feel the FEI does not take their local circumstances and conditions into account. It does not always stand for the needs of the NFs.
6. The FEI is not meeting the professional standards organisers and riders require from them.
7. The FEI has lost its image and authority in many matters due to self-inflicted incidents.
8. Europe is perceived as too dominant and yet Europe feels its specific needs not met, which leads to unjustified and mutual mistrust. We lack a global unity with respect for diversity.
9. There are too many rules and too many new initiatives being introduced into the sport at the same time and before we have implemented and finished the ones at hand.

1 Regulation of the Sport

“We need more sport and fewer rules”

“Don’t fix things that aren’t broken”

“Make some room for a bit of common sense”

“There is a ‘gotcha’ mentality”

“Don’t aim so high all the time”

Analysis – Too Many Surprises and Too Many Rules

- ❖ The rules do not cater to the needs of many smaller federations particularly outside Europe and North America.
- ❖ The proliferation of events within the sport increases the need for more officials, as does the introduction of more rules
- ❖ There is lot of unrest within the sport among riders, organisers and officials, since people in the field are constantly being confronted with surprises
- ❖ Rules are being introduced simply as a reaction to incidents within the sport, or for the sake of political correctness
- ❖ Rules are not always tested on practicality and timeliness
- ❖ There are no clear warnings ahead of changes to the clean sportpolicy, which catches riders unaware
- ❖ There is too little room for common sense in the sport
- ❖ Small and start-up event organisers find the FEI’s rules governing these events are increasingly complex and a burden

2 Appeal of the Sport

“Make our sport fit for the 21st Century”

“The sport has to innovate or perish”

“We do not listen to the outside world for innovation”

Analysis – More Support and Better Integration

- ❖ Riders and organisers expect more professional support in their effort to be economically viable
- ❖ The FEI does not adapt fast enough to the modern needs of the sport and of the National Federations
- ❖ There is no real link between the development of the sport and the needs of the modern media
- ❖ Commercial FEI-products (like series, etc.) are not well integrated into the sport or adapted to meet the needs of those in the field (riders and organisers)
- ❖ Some non-Olympic disciplines question the support of the FEI in developing their discipline
- ❖ The FEI is not cooperative when approached by those seeking to introduce private commercial initiatives into the sport
- ❖ There is too big a gap between the levels of the sport in some disciplines and between developed and developing nations
- ❖ The FEI does not make the most of connecting and communicating with the millions of grass roots riders and horse lovers around the world

3 Development of the Sport

“One size does not fit all”

“We have to be global in 2020”

“Our sport should follow the development in the world”

Analysis – Better Understanding of Different Needs

- ❖ The local needs of Federations are not understood. There are big differences in the conditions, circumstances and (legal) requirements locally
- ❖ There are big differences between federations even within the same region
- ❖ There is no separate body on Development within the FEI structure which has long term responsibility and political influence
- ❖ The Development department at HQ was dissolved without a clear explanation as to why and its tasks were redistributed – but the effectiveness of this move is unknown
- ❖ The Taskforce Development is a good initiative but it came too late, after four years. It has good representation but too little expertise
- ❖ There has been too little progress in the last 5 years on specific issues such as quarantine and transport
- ❖ The Development Fund was at it's lowest in 8 years in 2009, being 25% less than it's peak (FEI Annual Report 2009)
- ❖ Few bigger and established Federations have an own view and policy on Development
- ❖ Headquarters are far away notwithstanding excellent support from various individuals from Lausanne

4 Welfare of the Horse

“Welfare is much more than clean sport”

“The FEI should be the authority on horse welfare”

“There is too much emphasis on the negative and the exceptions”

Analysis – Be Clear on What We Mean and the Benefits of What We Do

- ❖ The focus concerning welfare is purely on the issue of clean sport alone
- ❖ An integrated vision on horse welfare is not put forward
- ❖ There is a tendency to political correctness
- ❖ There is no interest in horse welfare beyond international competition horses
- ❖ There are differences in the perception of horse welfare in different regions
- ❖ There is too little scientific, conclusive evidence for some decisions
- ❖ Awareness of the dangers of spreading of diseases is low outside the circle of experts.
- ❖ The need for education is high

5 Volunteers in the Sport

“The volunteers must have the chance to a) make a difference / progress, and b) have fun”

“It’s fun to do”

“They make a difference and help progress the sport”

“We share a huge passion and camaraderie”

Analysis – Value Our Volunteers

- ❖ The role model between professionals and volunteers is unclear
- ❖ Volunteers get too little praise and are the most valuable part of the organisation
- ❖ More and more rules make life for officials increasingly complicated
- ❖ The growth in the number of events requires more officials and volunteers
- ❖ The need for education is high
- ❖ There is too little use made of the great pool of capable people present in and around our sport (including celebrities)

6 Structure and the Way We Work

“We are an organisation of horse people first and foremost”

“If we chase structure and governance all the time, we will forget our love of the horse and the sport and fail to put this first”

“Concentrate on the needs in the field”

“There should be no ivory towers”

“Don’t forget the FEI is a service organisation”

Analysis – Systemic Problems

- ❖ The FEI has been discussing a new structure now since 2004, but has not come to a solution
- ❖ There is no proper representation of athletes
- ❖ There is no clear order in which initiatives and plans should be implemented (plan your work and then work your plan)
- ❖ There is no transparency of plans or accountability on the progress that has been made
- ❖ There is no distinction between making policy and implementing it
- ❖ The legal process is under question by some
- ❖ There is no clear governance regarding the position of the regional federations

7 Finances

“Not all expenses support the FEI priorities”

“Expenses are not always effective”

“We became dependant on single sources”

Analysis – Spend Every Penny Wisely

- ❖ We are not balancing the books: it is a good principle to spend no more money on structural costs that there is coming in annually and the medium term lack of resources is already visible today
- ❖ We need to restore the FEI's financial equilibrium, for which it has a solid history, but which has been negatively affected recently
- ❖ We need to stop having too many initiatives that cost money but do not contribute directly to the sport
- ❖ Fees have been frozen but costs have risen
- ❖ Big commercial contracts are running out at the same time

Next Steps

The above Analysis is the basis on which I plan to produce an Agenda to support my candidacy as prospective President of the FEI.

Before I do that, however, I am keen to hear your views on my Analysis. Do you agree or disagree with them? Or are there any issues you think have not been included? If so, please visit my website: www.henkforfei.org and feel free to leave your comments (anonymously), or email me directly at henkforfei@henkrottinghuis.org

As I have said from the outset, I want to listen to what you have to say about the FEI and the sport – and develop an Agenda that reflects and addresses *your* views and *your* priorities.

Yours sincerely,

Henk Rottinghuis