

Making Strides in Sustainability

Protecting horse welfare at home

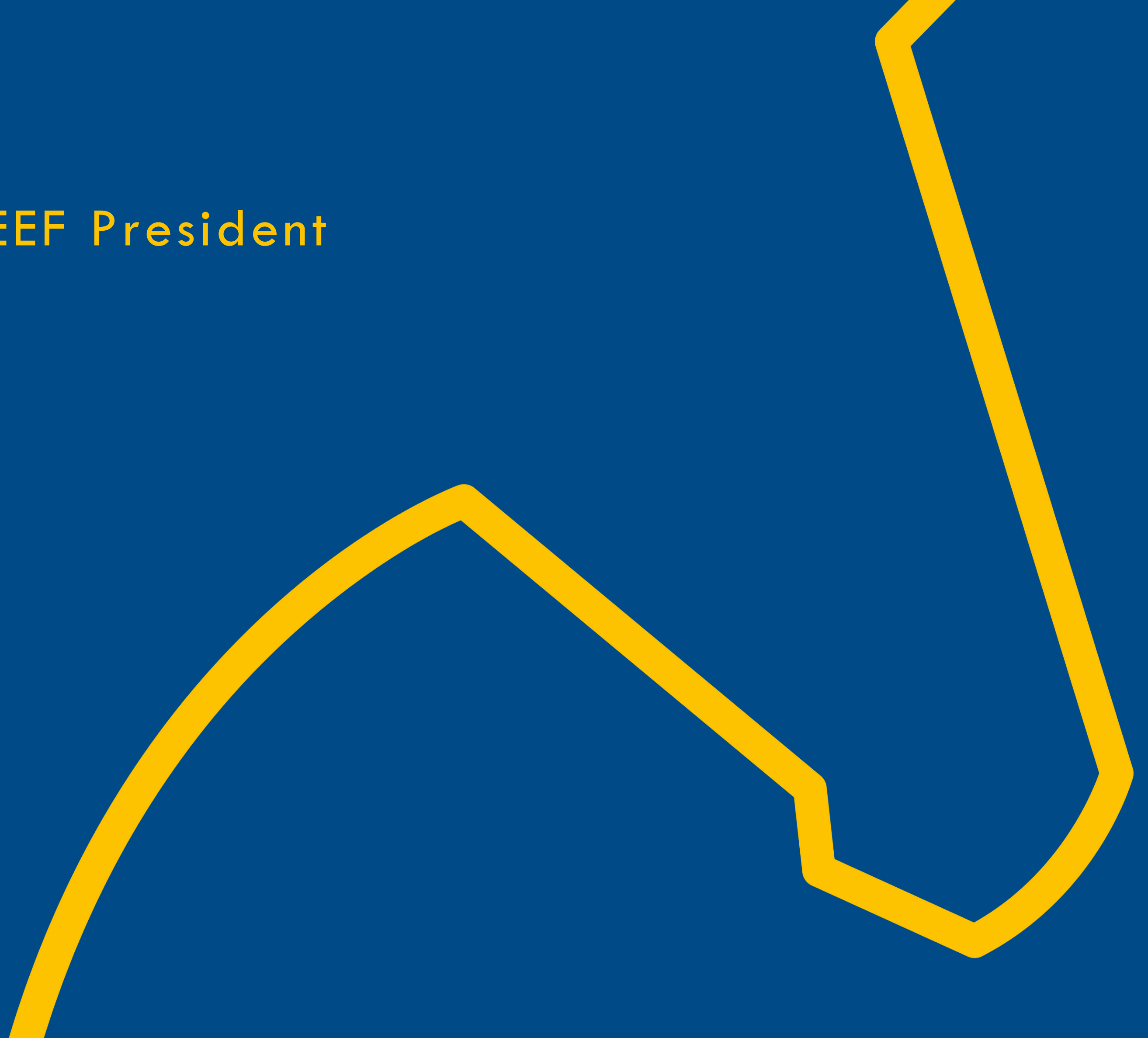
15 April 2024

EEF
EUROPEAN
EQUESTRIAN
FEDERATION



Welcome

Theo Ploegmakers – EEF President



Overview of the issues and survey results

Ulf Bromster – EEF Sustainability lead



Survey Overview and results

The purpose of today's session is to look in depth at one of the key areas identified in the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission's work.

They conducted a survey that found 6 key areas of concern:

- Training and riding practices, Tack and Equipment
- Emotional and physical stress of the sports horse
- Enforcement, accountability, horsemanship
- The other 23 hours (outside competing)
- Horses treated as an object or equipment and not as an emotional creature
- Horses being not fit to compete or masking health problems

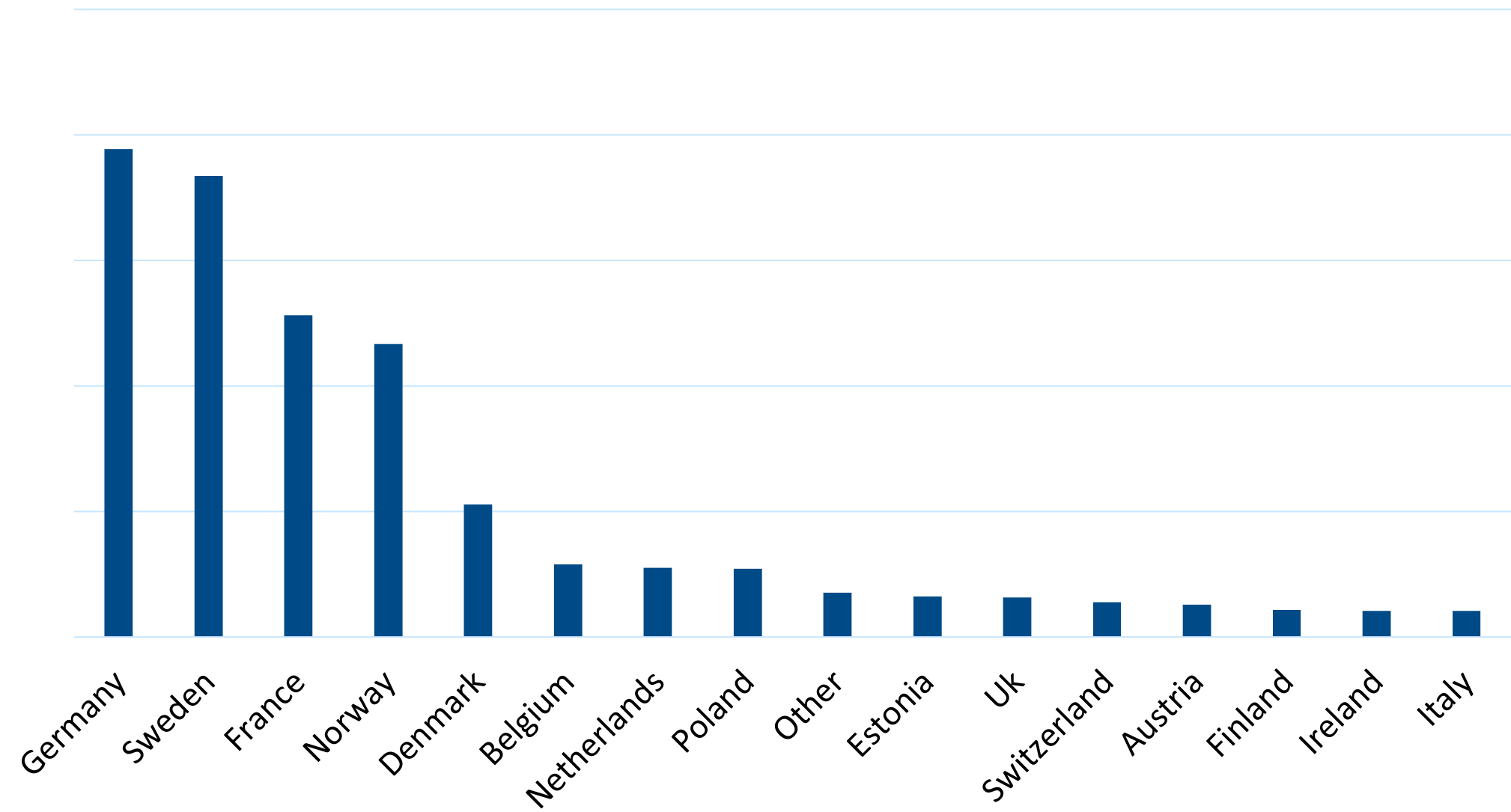
Given recent high-profile events regarding training methods that negatively impact the horse, we chose this topic to focus on.

The EEF represents 40 European National Equestrian Federations (NFS), and is it our focus to work within this area of influence and help our NFs to understand the extent of the issue, and the potential actions that can be taken to maximise horse welfare at home.

Survey Overview and results

The survey has been accessed by 9622 people, who all completed the mandatory questions. 5332 completed the entire survey which included optional comment areas to expand feedback and share experiences.

94% of respondents were in Europe, with 4.6% from North America.

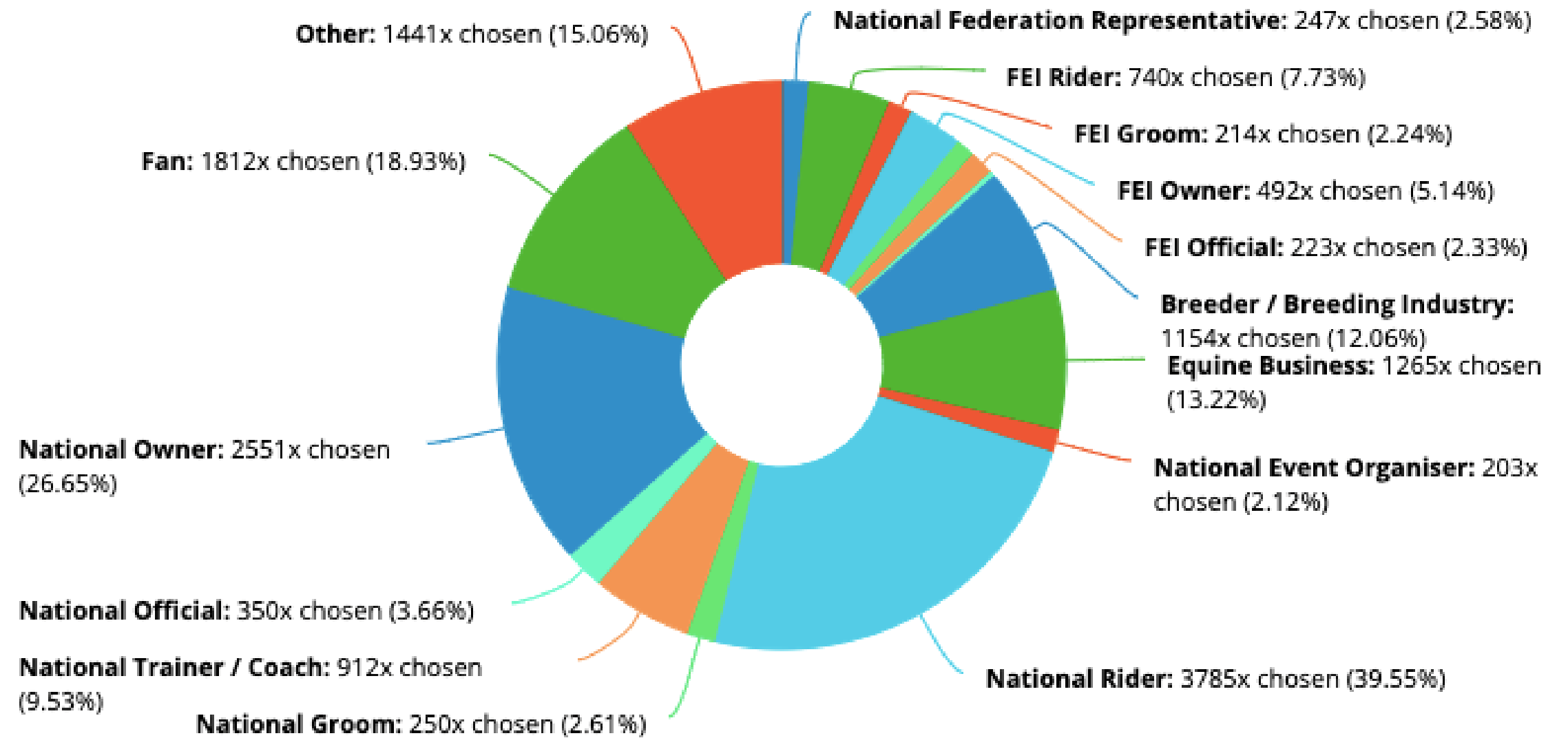


Survey Overview and results

The largest portion of respondents were national riders (39.5%) and national owners (26%).

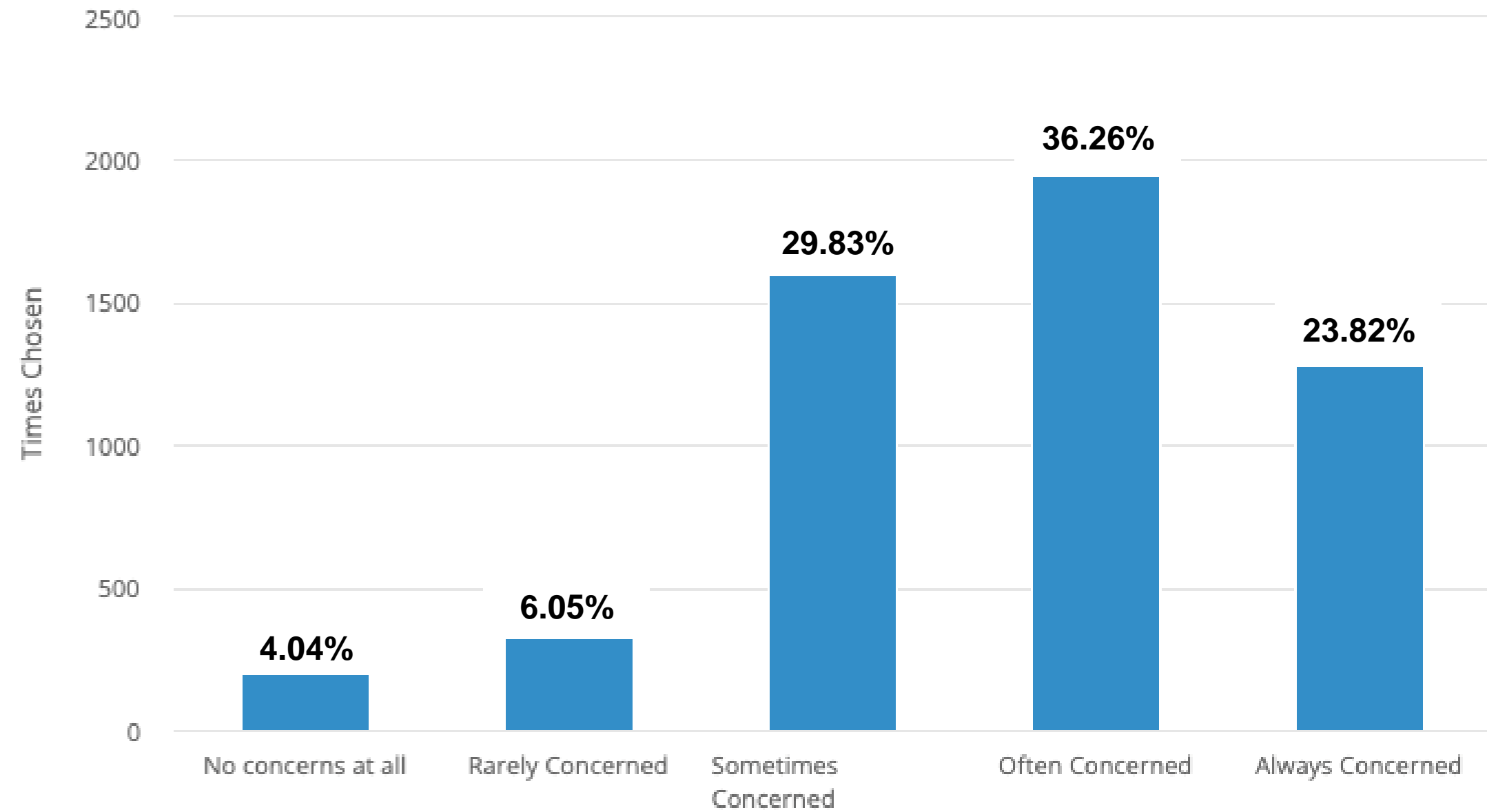
Those who recognised themselves as being involved in international FEI competition (rider, owner or groom) only accounted for 15% of respondents.

NB 15% recorded other, completing a text box with a significant recording for hobby owner / rider



Survey Overview and results

When asked about their level of concern for horse welfare at home, in a training environment. Respondents showed clear high levels of concern



Survey Overview and results

We then asked a series of questions to allow us to inform back to our National Federation members.

Respondents were asked if they were aware of their NF having rules and regulations for training methods at home. 48% said yes, 18% no, 34% were unsure.

If respondents were aware of rules, only 10% felt the rules were being applied. We asked why they felt rules were not applied:

- Lack of resources
- Lack of evidence
- No control out of competition
- Not willing to investigate

Survey Overview and results

The next set of questions focused on identifying the scale of the issue:

90% of respondents stating they have witnessed training behaviours they believe compromise horse welfare.

Of those, **58.2%** stated they witnessed this in the last 6 months. Which equates to potentially thousands of cases.

Survey Overview and results

47% stated they had been asked to carry out a training action they felt compromised horse welfare.

Additionally, 44.6% said “yes” they would intervene if they observed a situation that compromised horse welfare. 30% were unsure, 21% said no, they would not intervene.

We asked those who wouldn't intervene what would stop them from speaking up:

- Risk of reputation
- Risk of employment
- Fear of not being listened to
- Unsure if their opinion is correct
- Pressure from the environment
- Fear of being excluded

Survey Overview and results

60% of respondents did not know who to contact if they wanted to report a horse welfare issue.

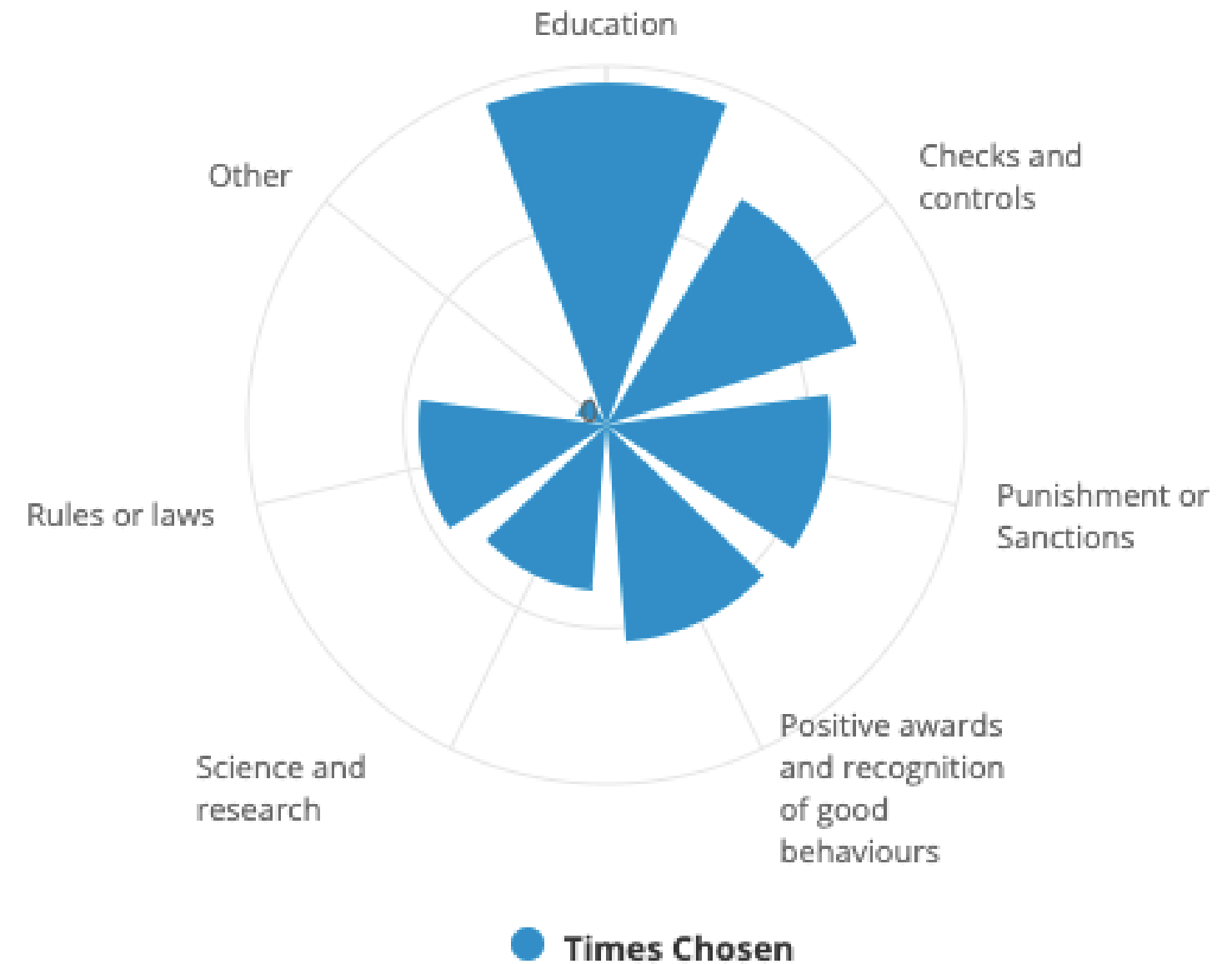
Of the **40%** who did answer ranged between vets, national federations, and governmental or criminal bodies.

There is no consensus on who should handle these instances.

Survey Overview and results

Finally, respondents were asked what tools they felt were the most important for improving horse welfare at home.

Education and checks and controls were the highest topics, followed by punishments and sanctions as well as positive awards and recognition of good behaviours.



Survey Overview and results

Respondents were left with a final comment box to add any additional thoughts. 1732 comments were left in which the passion for improved standards of welfare and the desire for action were clear.

There were considerable comments focused on the discipline of dressage and the belief that current judging rules and standards are having an effect on the methods of training.

Finally, a recurring theme was in the lack of clarity on who can manage this situation. Is it a role for the FEI, the National Federations, or governmental bodies?

A Grooms Eye View

Jackie Potts – Founder International
Grooms Association, Groom William
Fox Pitt



A BRIEF HISTORY



31 years working for William Fox-Pitt as Yard Manager

Head Girl for Di Lampard

Worked for Chris Hewlett at Haddon Stud

Assisted at 9 High Performance Sales run by Jennie Loriston-Clarke

Trained at the Bartles Yorkshire Riding Centre

Groomed at 5 Olympics, 6 World Games and 8 European Championships

TRAINING AT HOME PRIORITIES

Maintaining happy horses who can perform to the best of their abilities

Keeping the sport 'clean' – no misuse of drugs

Integrity in training – abuse of training aids



DIFFICULTIES FACING GROOMS OVER REPORTING ABUSE



Concern over the reaction of the rider

Loss of employment

Fear of jeopardising future employment

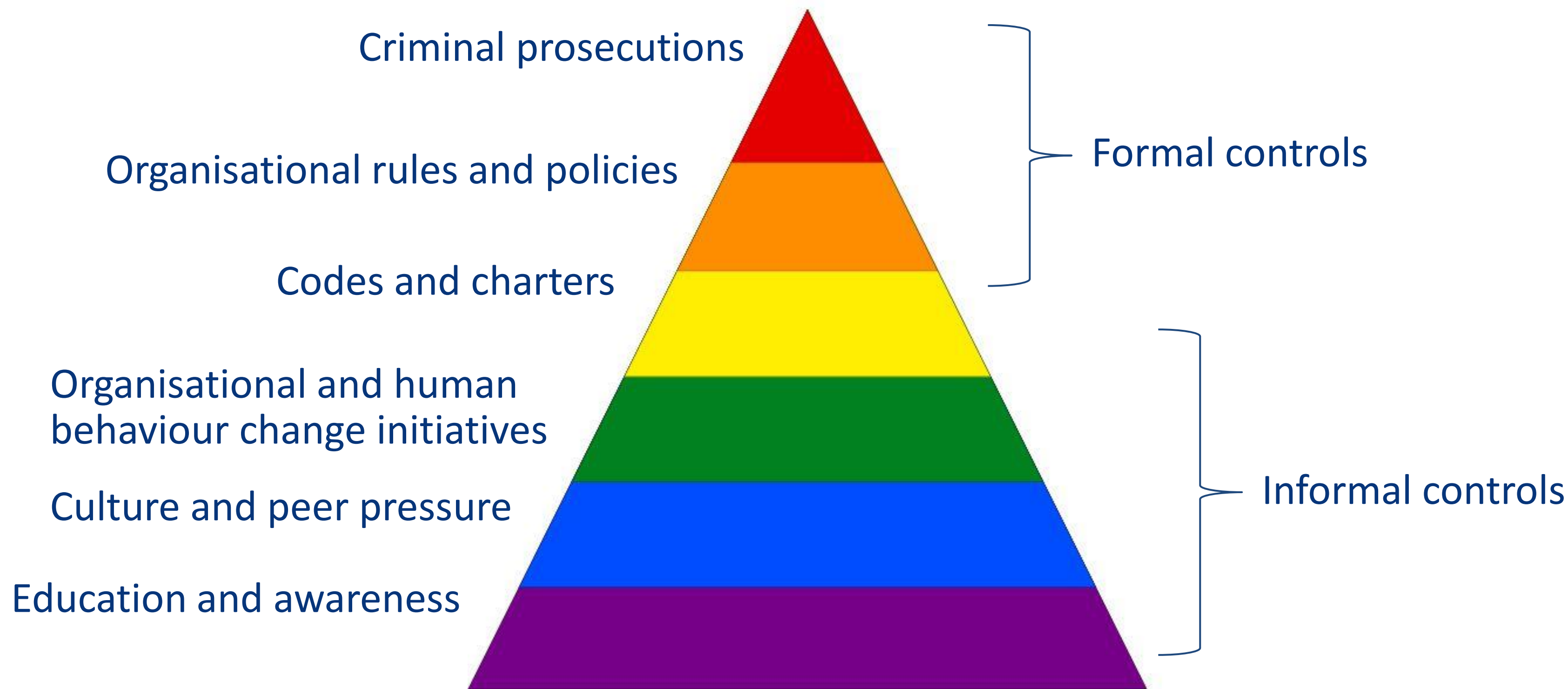
Who do they turn to to air their concerns?

World Horse Welfare

Roly Owers – Chief Executive WHW



Controls Pyramid



Formal controls

FEI Integrity Unit

- Restricted in practice
- Need hard evidence; anonymity an issue

Safeguarding – for equines too?

- Same ethical and reputational issues

Welfare investigation service?

- World Horse Welfare service in Britain
- Supports enforcement of **welfare legislation**
- Resource intensive! 20+ staff in Britain
- Local presence required
- Vexatious complaints/disputes

Equestrian Community Integrity Unit (ECIU)

Concerns regarding integrity issues? Call the equestrian Community Integrity Unit



confidential hotline on +44 (0) 20 7935 5822
Email: report@equestrianintegrity.com

The ECIU is a mechanism to protect integrity principles within the equestrian community, including, but not limited to, the Clean Sport programme and betting or corruption risks. It is responsible for investigating any integrity issues related to the FEI, Headquarters, and all bodies whether

Safeguarding in Sport

OUR POLICIES

[BRITISH EQUESTRIAN SAFEGUARDING POLICY \(CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE\)](#)

[BRITISH EQUESTRIAN SAFEGUARDING POLICY \(ADULTS AT RISK\)](#)

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE

If you're worried about a child or adult at risk, it can be hard to know what to do. We've different types of abuse, how to spot the signs and what you can do to help keep child

[SPOTTING THE SIGNS](#)

[ADULTS AT RISK TYPES OF HARM](#)



Worried about a horse?

Find out how to report a welfare concern [here](#)



Informal controls

Codes/Charters

- Set out expected behaviour
- Could be grounded in legal basis - but mostly not

Organisational & human behaviour change initiatives

- Welfare reporting officers
- Whistleblowing service – but manage expectations
- Active bystanders/Empower speaking up

Culture and peer pressure

- Don't tolerate it: 'We don't do that here'

Education and awareness

- Promote evidence-based training
- Learn how horses learn

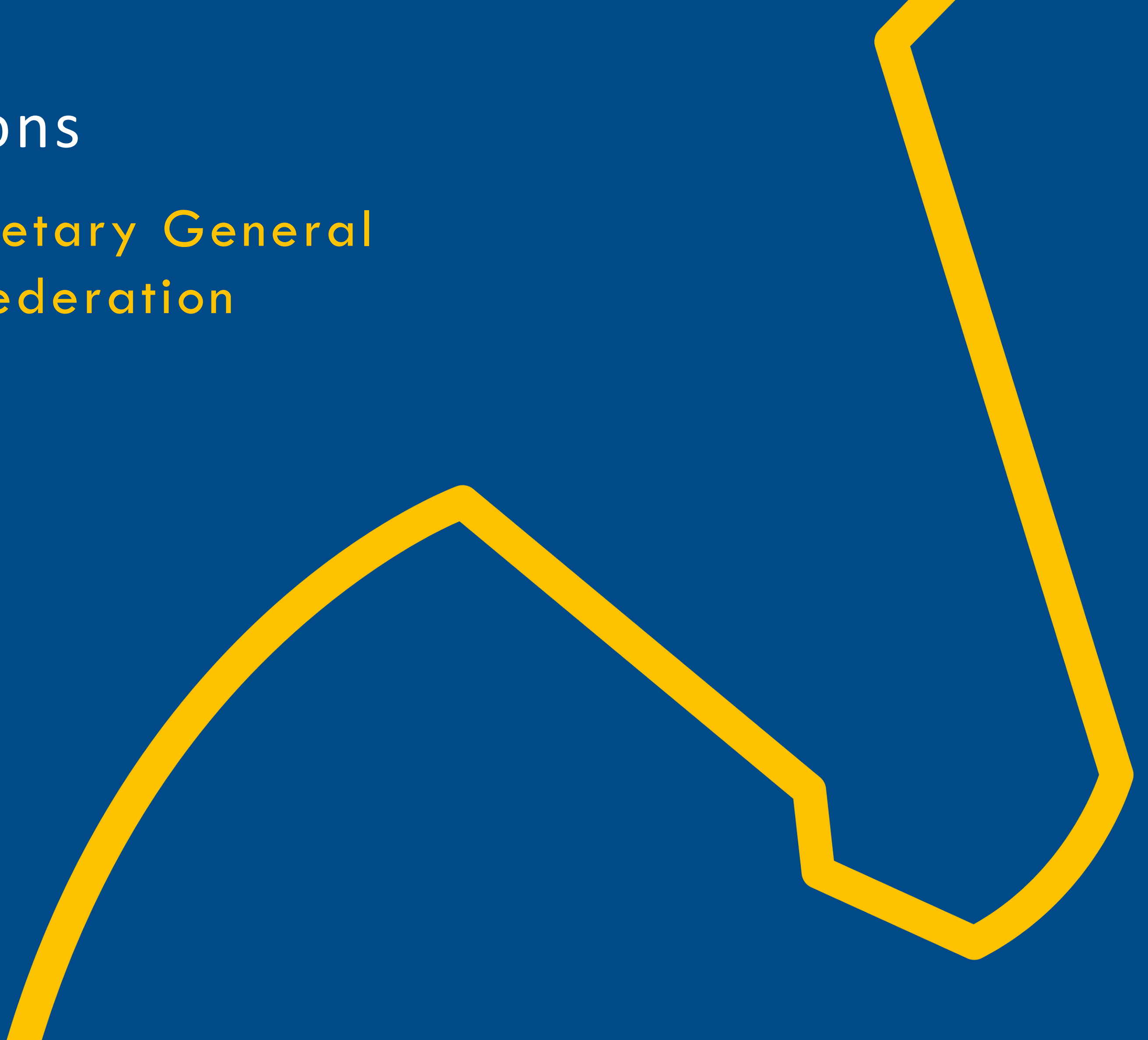
“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.” – Military

proverb



National Federations

Johan Fyrberg – Secretary General
Swedish Equestrian Federation



A close-up photograph of a horse's face, focusing on its eye and the bridge of its nose. The horse has dark brown fur. The background is out of focus, showing a bright blue bokeh effect. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing white text.

Sweden's work on horse welfare



The debate in Sweden

- ➔ Cases in Sweden and abroad sparked a debate on horse welfare within the Swedish equestrian community.
- ➔ As an NF, we see this as an opportunity to develop our sport from a horse welfare perspective.
- ➔ We've been active with tangible action and statements from day one.
- ➔ This only complements our ongoing work.



SVENSKA RIDSPORT
FÖRBUNDET

What actions have we taken?



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FÖRBUNDET

Regulations and collaborations nationally

- ➔ **Initiated a collaboration with governmental agencies and the horse industry, to make us all better equipped to identify any deviations.**
- ➔ **The National Sports Confederation - change the definition of sports to enable the regulation of more types of situations.**





International horse welfare meeting

During Gothenburg Horse Show, we gathered NFs, international competition organizers, and other experts to discuss the path forward.

- ➔ Nordic letter to the FEI → Dressage forum
- ➔ Continued dialogue & cooperation



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Sports Forum

The Swedish positions:

- In higher dressage classes, the double bridle should not be mandatory.
- The whip should only be used as guidance. Striking the horse should be considered a rule violation.
- A horse that is medicated with antibiotics should not be considered fit to compete.



**SWEDISH EQUESTRIAN
FEDERATION**



SVENSKA RIDSPORT
FÖRBUNDET



Communication

- **Be part of the debate – it is here to stay.**
- **Remind people about our ongoing work for horse welfare, and take new initiatives.**
- **Be available to the media!**
- **Quick and transparent communication to people within and outside of the sport.**



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Thank you



National Federations

Dr Constanze

Winter – General Counsel, German
Equestrian Federation

