

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

# EMHF

European & Mediterranean  
Horseracing Federation

## **EUROPEAN PONY RACING ASSOCIATION**

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING**

**FRIDAY, JULY 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**BERYSTEDE HOTEL, ASCOT**

Present:

Paull Khan (PK)	EMHF (Chair & Secretary)
Cecile Madamet (CM)	France
Simon Claisse (SC)	Great Britain
Fiona Rawson (FR)	Great Britain
Clarissa Daly (CD)	Great Britain
Botond Kovacs (BK)	Hungary
Marta Seres (MS)	Hungary
Fulop Kovacs (FK)	Hungary
Camilla Hovding Blom (CB)	Norway
Kjetil Kjaer (KK)	Norway
Cecilia Graberg (CG)	Sweden

Observer:

Tracey O'Hara (TO'H)	Australia
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Apologies/Not Present:

	Belgium
Otakar Novy	Czech Republic
Charlotte Brasch Andersen	Denmark
Kostas Loukopoulos	Greece
Andrea Picchi	Italy
Jan Valtyni	Slovakia
Victoria Barderas	Spain
Martina Bloechliger	Switzerland

PK opened the meeting by thanking CD, SC and FR for the Pony Racing Authority of GB's kind hosting of this Third Annual EPRA Meeting. He looked forward to the opportunity to witness Pony Racing at Ascot Racecourse the following day.

He welcomed those present, especially those attending for the first time, and made especial mention of the presence as an observer of TO'H, of Australia, who was substituting for Lindy Maurice, who was unwell.

### **1 Minutes of Second Annual Meeting 30.06.23, Chantilly**

The Minutes of the Second Annual EPRA meeting, held on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 in Chantilly, had been pre-circulated and were accepted as a true record.

### **2. Update on Membership**

PK noted that membership numbers remained unchanged, although there had to be a doubt over the continued participation of Greece, where, sadly, racing had ceased.

He referred to the omission of Ireland – one of the top Pony Racing (PR) nations of the world – from EPRA's membership. He had been seeking to encourage the Irish authorities to remedy this. He had, for example, suggested in his submission to Horse Racing Ireland's Strategic Plan that they might take control of PR. It would likely fall within the remit of the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board and he had also been in correspondence with its CEO, Darragh O'Loughlin. The latter had explained that PR was not in its remit and that it was unable to become involved, therefore. CM said that she had been approached by some Irish breeders keen to learn how PR was organised in France.

### **3. Possible association with JRA**

PK explained that, following his presentation on the EPRA at the EMHF's General Assembly in Copenhagen, he had been contacted by the JRA's London Representative, Dr Kanichi Kusano (who had been an Observer at that meeting). Dr Kusano had stated that much was going on with PR in Japan and had forwarded links to two articles thereon. He suggested that a dialogue between EPRA and the JRA might be mutually beneficial. PK had welcomed this and asked for the most appropriate contact. Dr Yoshimasa Takizawa had been given as that contact and PK had written to him recently and was awaiting his response. The meeting expressed enthusiasm at the involvement of the JRA. PK would keep the group informed of developments.

### **4. Report from EMHF General Assembly**

PK recalled that, at the last meeting, he had requested from members examples of celebrated PR alumni from their respective countries. He had felt that, after two years of the EPRA's existence, it was timely to expose to the EMHF membership the work of this Association. Indeed, one of the EPRA's aims was to 'further EMHF member Racing Authorities' knowledge of PR in the region'. He had therefore included within the EMHF General Assembly's Agenda a presentation on the EPRA. He ran through the presentation, as he had made it in Copenhagen. This included a 9-minute video which GB's Pony Racing Authority had recently produced.

CD relayed some comments made to her subsequently by Simon Cooper, Chair of the European & African Stud Book Committee that he had been impressed by how much PR activity there was across Europe.

## **5. Updates from Members Present on Pony Racing in their Respective Countries**

### **Hungary**

BK gave an upbeat summary. PR had started, sporadically, in 2022. Subsequent to the EPRA's formation, PR had expanded greatly, with a Champion's Series having been established. In 2022 43 riders had ridden 54 ponies in 24 races; in 2023, the number of races increased to 38. The FEGENTRI Junior race in 2023 had been placed in the middle of the mainstream card and had benefitted from Frankie Dettori's enthusiastic involvement.

In the current year 48 races – four per raceday - were planned. Red Mills remained the valued sponsor. Demand exceeded available opportunities – all places had been booked on-line within 15 minutes of the window opening. Further growth was limited by the number of mainstream race days.

MS added that three PR graduates now held an Amateur Licence. Riders from Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania had participated.

PK enquired whether Hungary might consider holding stand-alone days to absorb the excess demand, even if these races attracted little general public interest. CD remarked that stand-alone days worked very well in Britain and suggested incorporating training alongside the races. BK added that it might be an option to stage PRs on Trotting Racing days.

In response to CD, BK confirmed that races remained confined to 400 metres, with occasional 800 metre races.

### **Great Britain**

CD reported that British PR enjoyed considerable support from trainers and jockeys, as witnessed by the unpaid contributions from several of them to the promotional video. Participation numbers were stable, with c260 members. In 2023 22 racecourse fixtures had been held with 45 Point to Point fixtures (2 or 3 races per P2P meeting), 10 Pony Club racedays and a couple of standalone days. The PRA was funded in part by sponsorship, in part by the Horserace Betting Levy Board and in part by the Racing Foundation charity. Current support from the Racing Foundation, which funded the 'pathway into racing' (funding the academies for some 80 children who do not own their own ponies) was due to end next year. SC explained that betting was allowed on PR in Britain. CD believed that such betting, which was very small-scale, did not impact on the participants in any way.

### **France**

CM explained that PR in France had historically been under the aegis of equestrian sport, rather than racing. Recently, France Galop had become more involved, and discussions were ongoing as to the nature and extent of the rules and regulation that should apply to PR.

Races were not currently handicapped but were split into several categories of pony size and ability (Elite – 80 riders; Intermediate – 254 riders; Beginner – 200 riders). As in Britain, participation levels were static.

A meeting had been staged at Deauville the previous weekend by Together for Racing International in conjunction with the French riding school, AFASEC, with an international apprentice race at its heart, to which PR administrators had been invited and which included a visit to the Soumillon Academy.

## **Sweden**

CG reported record high levels on several key indicators, but sadly the Racing School had closed. This had prompted a joining of forces with Trotting. Both codes used Shetland Ponies.

Following advocacy by trainer Jessica Long, it had been decided to stage PRs on all major mainstream racedays, interleaved with mainstream races. While welcome, this also created time pressures, due to the need to maintain schedules for betting turnover reasons. Swedish law prevented betting on participants under 18 years of age, which created difficulties and some attrition of sub-18 year olds.

## **Norway**

CB stated that 70 horses and riders had enrolled for training this year. Eight racedays were staged, of between one and four races each. The Pony Derby had been won by a Swedish pony and rider. There was no handicapping as such, and children were not weighed. Instead, ponies were banded for race entries, and some close finishes had resulted, with an attendant improvement in race-riding skills. Races were always on mainstream racedays, but there could (as in Sweden) be no betting on children, nor could any coverage of PR on television be commented upon. Recruitment of children remained an issue – maintaining the engagement of those involvement, less so.

## **Australia**

TO'H explained that PR had only been in existence in Australia for one year, having started with a few pop-up meetings. PR was organised under the auspices of Pony Club Australia, which organized the participants' insurance. PR administration was primarily based on volunteer labour, and funded by sponsors, whose colours were worn by the riders. Training programmes were State based, with perhaps 50 children in each. Selected children would be invited to training days on participating racetracks. Ponies were measured on arrival and could be prevented from starting if misdescribed. Races were over either 2 or 3 furlongs, with PRs on mainstream racedays, interleaved between races despite these being scheduled at just 30-minute intervals. There was no handicapping or weighing of riders.

## **6. Preview of Following Day's Pony Races**

The following day would see two PRs, the first for ponies of <138cms (9 runners), the second for <148cms (the maximum of 12 runners). The first would be timed to start 90 minutes before the first mainstream race, the second one hour before. The first race was of 6 furlongs and the second of 1 mile. Jockey Coach Carl Llewellyn would be giving guidance before and after the races. Ponies would be saddled in a segregated area but would be tacked-up in the Pre-Parade Ring and mounted in Ascot's famous Paddock. Ponies would be handicapped (by ex-Senior Handicapper Phil Smith) and would therefore weigh-out and -in as per mainstream races.

Details of the PRs would be included in the Official Racecard and there would be presentations in the winners' enclosure, with filmed interviews of the winning riders, and a joint presentation to all competing riders.

## **7. Report on FEGENTRI Junior Championship**

CM believed (and other delegates agreed) that the FEGENTRI Junior Championship continued to develop and improve. This year's series featured one additional country – Belgium had taken the total to six, with one race in each. A plan for the Soumillon Academy to supply all the ponies for the FEGENTRI Junior Series had not come to fruition, for cost reasons. The impediment to British involvement remained considerations of insurance.

## **8. Future Meetings, including Annual Meeting, 2025**

CG offered to ascertain whether it might be possible to host the 2025 Annual Meeting in Sweden.

BK explained that there was a standing offer from Hungary to host future meetings.

PK thanked them both.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was none and PK closed the meeting.

## **AFTERNOTE**

Subsequent to the meeting, a suggestion was made by MS that member countries be invited to submit their Pony Racing Rules, which MS offered to compare and place onto the EPRA website. This suggestion and offer was gratefully accepted and it was agreed that the idea would be progressed between this and next year's Annual Meeting (**Action PK/MS**).