

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000939/25
to the Commission
Niels Fuglsang (S&D), Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE), Sebastian Everding (The Left)
(5 March 2025)**

Subject: Legislative initiatives and minimum standards for the use of horses in sport

Nowadays we are seeing an increased focus on animal welfare in equestrian sports. Scandals with the mistreatment of horses have led, among other things, to several riders ⁽¹⁾ withdrawing from the 2024 Olympics and later being suspended. The Danish Animal Ethics Council (DAEC) ⁽²⁾, which was established pursuant to Section 38 of the Danish Animal Welfare Act, presented legislative proposals in December 2024 ⁽³⁾ to ensure respect for horses' needs. The legislation should be a supplement to equestrian sport's own initiatives, which the DAEC does not believe are sufficient.

1. Does the Commission agree with the DAEC that legislation is needed to ensure animal welfare in equestrian sport, which is a widespread, economically important and prestigious sport in Europe?
2. Does the Commission believe that the current legislation is sufficient, as Article 13 of the Treaty of Lisbon ⁽⁴⁾ states that 'animals are sentient beings' and must be treated accordingly, when recent events have proved that they do not always benefit from such treatment in equestrian sport?
3. Will the Commission consider revising Directive 98/58/EC ⁽⁵⁾, which currently covers horse welfare only in relation to farming, or does it plan to introduce legislative measures to sanction the mistreatment of horses in sport?

Submitted: 5.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(6 May 2025)**

The Commission is aware that animal welfare issues arise in equestrian sporting activities and has been engaging in discussions on this topic with the International Federation for Equestrian Sports and other actors representing equestrian sports.

However, at EU level, the welfare of Equidae is covered by Directive 98/58/EC ⁽¹⁾ concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes.

Directive 98/58/EC is only applicable to animals kept for farming purposes and not to animals kept for other activities such as equestrian sports.

The welfare of Equidae used for such activities is therefore subject to Member States' national legislation, and it pertains to them to adopt such legislation if they deem it necessary.

Currently the Commission is not considering revising the scope of Directive 98/58/EC nor introducing measures applicable to Equidae kept for equestrian sporting activities.

¹ <http://www.olympics.com/en/news/paris-2024-olympics-three-time-olympic-gold-medallist-charlotte-dujardin-withdraws-from-games>.

² <https://detdyreetiskeraad.dk/english>.

³ <https://detdyreetiskeraad.dk/publikationer/2024/henvendelse-om-brug-af-heste-til-sport-2024>.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016E013>.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31998L0058>.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23).