

Meet the Middle East

Text by Noor Al-Rawi and Piotr Wawrzyni

The Middle East has continuously been gaining importance in the equestrian sports during recent years. Riders and owners from the Middle East come to train and set up their business in Europe and vice-versa. European riders are settling down in the Middle East or are being employed by owners and sponsors from the Middle East. The increasing importance of the Middle East is reflected by media coverage. For instance, recently the media was covering the case of the FEI suspension of the United Arab Emirates related to alleged violations of rules, at two National Endurance Events (CEN); the Sheikh Mohammed Cup and The President's Cup on January and February 2020. It is a full suspension of all activities across any FEI discipline, plus a further suspension for national endurance activity and a hefty fine topping CHF 1.5 million. This case reflected how far reaching the tights are between the equestrian sports and the business in the Middle East and the rest of the world. Many riders and equestrian professionals from outside the Middle East have been seriously affected by that suspension.

The Arab culture

In the Middle East, horses have always been a big part of the Arab culture, and Arabian horses are considered of the most famous varieties worldwide. The equestrian sport, and the horse industry that supports it, is experiencing great growth in that region and so the passion for horses across the Middle Eastern countries is expanding as they take part in horse shows, world cup, and other athletic sports. "Across the Middle East and Africa region, there has been huge investment in equine facilities for equestrian sport and racing, and with this growth has come job opportunities and tax revenues, as well as a strengthening of the rural

economy and its social fabric." Said former FEI President HRH Princess Haya. In 2020, events were mostly canceled due to the COVID-19 however, there are on average more than 65 show jumping events and 55 endurance events per year in the Middle East. Most of these competitions take place in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Qatar. Moreover, there are almost 700+ registered show jumping athletes and 1500+ registered endurance athletes at the highest level. Since the infrastructure in Europe is more extensive, where there are more horses offered and bigger breeding operations are found, more and more show jumpers are moving to Europe where they can further develop themselves. Also, training facilities are present in almost every city in Europe.

Equine law and Sports law desk

For this reason, Schelstraete International Law Firm has an Equine law and Sports law desk for the Middle East and is based in the Netherlands. Its devoted Equine and Sports lawyers have the expertise to provide a comprehensive legal advice to protect the interest of its international clients from the Middle East. Schelstraete International Law Firm also provides sound and realistic legitimate guidance to the Middle Eastern clients in their projects in Europe. The Middle East Equine Law & Sports Law Desk is composed of international lawyers admitted to the Dutch bar and a PR manager (Noor Al-Rawi) who is a native Arabic speaker. Hence, we have an impeccable knowledge of the local culture and commercial environment of numerous countries in the area. Therefore, we tackle the challenges and opportunities facing international clients in Europe and the Middle East.

We offer the following services:

- International legal advice and contracting

- Litigation
- Assistance at national and international disciplinary proceedings; including FEI and CAS
- Advise financial stakeholders in the equine business
- Tax advice to people and entities involved in the international equine business like VAT issues at cross-border transactions
- Immigration services
- Family Office

References:

Saudi client wins in appeal procedure in Arnhem! Saudi client of Schelstraete Law Firm wins Court of Appeal procedure in Arnhem (The Netherlands): Horse trainer does not have a right of retention. Court lifts arrest on several horses. Source: ECLI:NL:GHARL:2018:3893 dated 24 April 2018. Saudi client of Schelstraete wins again in appeal! The court of appeal confirms the ownership of the client of 4 valuable jumping horses and orders the counterparty to pay damages for the unlawful appropriation of these horses. The court further declines the claim of the counterparty of € 400.000,- as he failed to deliver sufficient proof. Source: ECLI:NL:GHARL:2020:5234. ■

If you have any questions and/or comments after reading this article, we would be happy to hear from you. You can also contact us for all equine-law related questions or matters. Please contact us via info@europeanequinelawyers.com or by telephone +31-(0)135114420.

