**SPINE project completed!**

**The future of the Extra Qualification**

*The* ***Extra Qualification******(EQ)*** *has been developed as a product of the Erasmus+ SPINE Project (Schools’ Project to Increase employability in the European Equestrian Market). The partners of this Project are nine member schools of EEN (Equestrian Educational Network).*

The partners of the SPINE project are proud to announce that the project has reached its initial aims and goals. During the last three years we have worked together to create an education which aims at enhancing the employability for equestrian professionals in educating horses and riders in the international equestrian labour market. This education we named Extra Qualification (EQ). In the first stages of the project (October 2017 – November 2018) we created a first draft of a curricula for the education. It was decided to divide the education into three different modules, with the last one containing an exam in both theoretical and practical subjects. The modules are made to be held at any of the schools within the Equestrian Educational Network (EEN). When attending each of the three modules the candidate will gain experience from three different schools withing the EEN. One module is approximately 4-5 days depending on the number of candidates. The basic knowledge, skills and competences demanded of an Extra Qualification Candidate are the **minimum requirements of IGEQ Riding Instructor, Level 2** (Horse management, Riding and Teaching).

Among the project partners we also discussed and decided what subjects and training the EQ should contain, and each school/partner picked a topic which they were responsible to develop with learning material, curriculum and guideline manual. We discovered that some subjects were more suitable to deliver as a unit and this created even more cooperation between the schools than we knew at the beginning. This even further enhanced the exchange of good practices and the social and cultural exchange.

The EQ was tied together by a joined curriculum, containing information on the education, a plan for all subjects, the outline of the exam and the learning outcome of all subjects. In addition to the Curricula and the learning material created there is also a Guideline manual that describes how to conduct each module in the EQ, this is to ensure that all future modules are carried out with the same learning outcome, indifferent of what school holds each module.

To test implementation and quality of the EQ each partner chose a student from their school to participate in the pilot modules of the education. These nine candidates were offered to do all three modules and help us to evaluate and improve the education. All nine completed the education and the end Exam. Our candidates were an essential part of the project and their efforts and input helped us in the process of creating the EQ. The pilot modules were carried in Germany, December 2018, France, March 2019 and Norway, November 2019.

After each pilot module the students and teachers gave their opinion, and the partners of the project discussed and made improvements for the next module to come. At the end of each module the students were offered to evaluate both anonymous in a questionnaire and in a group together with the teachers. During their ongoing education the students trained and performed homework at their home schools, resulting in them spreading their new knowledge at home with classmates and other students.

From December 2019 until now the original plan was to have three physical meetings with the partners of the project to finalize the structure and material for the EQ. This was an important work to be able to disseminate our projects results and hold a Multiplier event in Finland in May 2020. The purpose of the Multiplier Event was to present our EQ to important stakeholders in the equestrian business as well as relevant media and of course the target group - future candidates for taking the EQ. This presentation was planned to be both practical and theoretical. Unfortunately, all travel and physical meetings had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and all our meetings in 2020 has been in digital form instead. This has been a challenge for us, but with good communication between the partners we managed to finalize the material and hold a webinar in august 2020. We invited people in our target groups, important stakeholders in the industry such as the FEI, EEF, EHN and IGEQ and relevant media to join. All in all people from 10 different countries were invited to take part in the webinar where we presented our intellectual outputs produced, the outcome of the project and the future of the EQ in a shorter Multiplier event than originally planned. The Multiplier event was successful, and the participants left positive comments on the outcome of the project.

We are now in the process of finalizing the end report of the project, and later this autumn/winter anyone interested can view and use all our project results at <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2017-1-SE01-KA202-034575>

If you are already now interested to read more about the Extra Qualification here you can find the Curricula of the EQ and the presentation used in the Multiplier event when presenting the EQ at our website: <https://www.equestrianeducationalnetwork.com/spine>

**Outcome of the Extra Qualification:**

Having passed the EQ Exam the Candidate will receive an EQ Certificate. The aim is that in the future the EQ Certificate also will be approved by the International Group for Equestrian Qualifications (IGEQ), and that the Candidate could get an EQ Stamp in her/his IGEQ Passport.

**The first modules of the Extra Qualification:**

The original plan was to start the first round of the Extra Qualification with module 1 in Starum, Norway in the beginning of 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainties on travel restrictions and possibilities to join from different countries it was decided to postpone the first round of the EQ to the beginning of 2022. This is to ensure that the education can be given and that as many nationalities as possible are able to join safely.

When the registration for the first EQ is open you apply via the EEN website: <https://www.equestrianeducationalnetwork.com>

News on the first EQ start will be announced at our EEN facebook page as well as the EEN partners social media channels.

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