

First General Assembly of the World Haflinger Breeding and Sports Federation held in Ebbs (A)

Solid basis for forward-looking projects

On Friday 27 September 2013, some 30 delegates from all over the world met in the Austrian town of Ebbs for the very first General Assembly of the World Haflinger Breeding and Sports Federation. After the almost euphoric atmosphere and the strong wish to start afresh expressed at the founding session, expectations were high as WHBSF President Lukas Scheiber opened the meeting and read out the day's agenda –promisingly entitled "Step by step towards our goal"– to a room filled to the brim with breeders' representatives waiting to hear about the work done by the Board of Directors. And the delegates' expectations were not disappointed: The past months were marked by great efforts to lay the groundwork required to put the Federation on a solid basis in all aspects –including financially– and to make sure that its ambitious projects have a lasting effect.

International Haflinger events

Three large-scale international events are planned for the next two and a half years: the **World Haflinger Congress**, scheduled to take place in Merano/Meran (I) in June 2014 together with the **South Tyrol Haflinger County Show**, the **2015 Haflinger World Show** at the **Fohlenhof Ebbs stud farm in Tyrol (A)** and the **European Haflinger Championship**, which the Italian national federation ANACRHA I has asked to host. Up until then, the Federation will focus primarily on judges' training programmes in order to put together a team of high-profile judges especially for the upcoming Haflinger World Show but also to support the training of future judges. To this end, a team of four coordinators has been appointed. Its members are Lukas Scheiber (Tyrol/Austria), Gerhard Rainer (South Tyrol/Italy), Andrea Sgambati (Italy) and Walter Werni (Styria/Austria). All training programmes for judges will be guided by the WHBSF's efforts to harmonise the Haflinger breed. Similarly, the Commission of Experts for the Haflinger breed has already started defining the norms and standards for breeding as well as the breeding objectives. In accordance with the statutes, the Commission consists of representatives of the organisations in charge of the original stud books, i.e. the federations in Tyrol/Austria and South Tyrol/Italy.

The concept for the 2015 Haflinger World Show presented by Lukas Scheiber was warmly welcomed by the delegates: In his bid to host the Show, the Chairman of the Haflinger Breeders' Association Tyrol (HPT) described an international event which would involve all member organisations and put a strong focus on young generations. As the host, the HPT would like to sign up 350 horses from among its own ranks. The remaining 350 participating horses would come from other WHBSF member countries. The event concept contains a number of shows to illustrate the extent of the international collaboration efforts.

New website

Symbol of the new approach to communication –a key WHBSF philosophy–, the brand-new Federation website was also presented at the occasion of the General Assembly. Its most important feature is perhaps the way it recounts the history of the breed: Secretary Michael Gruber introduced and explained a timeline which lists the most significant events in almost

140 years of Haflinger breeding from an entirely neutral perspective – highlighting the Haflinger horse as the main character in its own history rather than countries or individuals.

While the website offers the member organisations plenty of room for presentation, its international event calendar will prevent key events from overlapping each other.

International platform for all Haflinger organisations

The Federation is already held in high regard for being an international Haflinger platform, as the seven latest applications for membership clearly show. After the General Assembly vote, the WHBSF is now proud to welcome the *Nederlands Haflinger Paarden Stamboek* as a new associate member and four new full members: *Koninklijke Vereniging Het Nederlandse Trekpaard en De Haflinger* (Royal Society of The Dutch Draught Horse and The Haflinger), *De Belgische Haflingervereniging* (Belgian Haflinger Association), the *Australian Haflinger Horse Breeders Association* and *Slovenská Asociácia Chovateľov Haflingov* (Slovak Association of Haflinger Horses).

That makes twenty regular and five associate WHBSF members who in a joint effort strive to harmonise Haflinger breeding and further strengthen the Haflinger's position as the world's most popular small horse breed.

Merit of the organisations in charge of the original stud books

The delegates were visibly pleased with how the Federation has been managed so far: The original stud book organisations have successfully contributed to establishing an international Federation whose members treat each other as equal partners and who are determined to go to great lengths together – for the benefit of the breed and at all times guided by the principles of transparency and direct democracy.