

# WHO IS FEIF?

FEIF unites people in their passion for the Icelandic horse

FEIF is the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, composed of Icelandic Horse associations in 21 countries. FEIF, from the German Föderation Europäischer Islandpferde-Freunde (Federation of European Icelandic Horse Friends), was established in 1969 in Switzerland. As a federation of national associations, FEIF is also the sum total of the members of these organisations. That means: FEIF really is you – and about 80,000 other people who love, ride, breed, care for, and passionately enjoy the Icelandic horse, wherever they may live, from Iceland to New Zealand. Phew – that is huge! But does it really help to answer the question? This series of FEIF leaflets on breeding, education, leisure riding, sports and youth work will explain the work of FEIF, and how we achieve our goals.



International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations

[www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org)

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EDUCATION



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## EDUCATION AND THE MIGHT OF THE MATRIX

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## Training the trainers

The training of riding instructors is organised very differently in different countries. Here it is a seminar-, college- or even university-based training course, there it is maybe an apprenticeship programme, in other places yet, it is learning on-the-job. Also bear in mind that across the world, we have very different riding traditions, and a different outlook as to what is the place and the function of the horse in its respective culture. In most countries, the horse is in agricultural animal and it comes under the respective legislation. But the horse also used to play an incredibly important role in warfare. Even today, in Switzerland, keeping horses comes under military regulations. In contrast, Iceland never had an army, and until the 1950s, the horse was the main mode of transport overland. Farmers and soldiers and travellers have different needs, and thus different attitudes to the horse. Today, the horse is mainly used for leisure and sports, but in each country, the historical roots still very much shape the training of riding instructors.

## How it all began

Interestingly enough, in 2002 the FEIF Education Department arose from the work of the then 'pleasure riding committee'. So historically, it was more important to FEIF to think about leisure riding at the heart of our activities. The Leisure Department as it was then (long before the internet, or communication via social media) had set itself a nearly impossible task, namely to bring together all riders who loved the Icelandic horse, everyone with their own agenda. As it turned out, rather than attempting that, it was easier at the international level to bring together education standards – and by that is meant the training of riding instructors and horse trainers.



**Seamless mutual recognition of qualifications for instructors across all member nations.**

## Comparable skills and competences

The ambitious project undertaken by the FEIF Education Department was to find a system which would allow the seamless mutual recognition of qualifications for instructors across all member nations. FEIF has neither means nor the wish to enforce a unified education system. This would go against all ideas of autonomy and of welcoming cultural difference. So how then can we ensure that different systems comply to the same standards?

The answer was in the development of a list of competences at various levels as a minimum standard from candidates. These skills have to be acquired and trained in whichever way a national association wants to structure their education system, but as a minimum requirement, the competences on the list need to be demonstrated. You find them in the FEIF Rules and Regulations book. A lot of the basic training was developed in close collaboration with existing national horse training facilities and structures, but in Europe the qualities needed to teach riding gaited horses are mainly the work of national Icelandic horse associations.



## The Matrix

Today, we have the Education Matrix: four levels of riding instructors which share comparable skills without having followed a single syllabus or programme. The list of FEIF licenced instructors can be found on the FEIF website under the education tab, and it is updated regularly. Instructors can not lose their qualification, but becoming a FEIF instructor is regulated by a license. All instructors have to undergo professional development at least once every three years, and failing to do so may result in the loss of the license. Currently, the training of sport and breeding judges is not under the auspices of FEIF Education, which only concerns itself with the training of trainers, but the FEIF departments cooperate with one another in combined CPD seminars for judges and trainers/instructors.



**The training of riding instructors is organised very differently in FEIF member countries.**