

## DEVELOPING AN EQUESTRIAN NETWORK IN THE PROVINCE OF DRENTHE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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### AIM OF THE ABSTRACT

This abstract describes a study to the economic value of the equestrian sector in the province of Drenthe (Netherlands) and the possibilities for the equestrian sector to optimize its economic value.

The provincial government of Drenthe sees that the equestrian sector in Drenthe is a valuable sector. However, the actual economic value is unknown. The provincial government wants more insights in the economic value of the equestrian sector and how the equestrian sector can develop itself towards an established business and leisure sector.

### PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

From January 2014 till February 2015 the research has been conducted. To quantify the economic value of the equestrian sector we distinguished the sector in two sub-sectors: 1) a sector with direct involved organisations (e.g. equestrian associations, horse breeding companies, equestrian sports federation (KNHS), farriers, equestrian events, equestrian recreation, etc.), and 2) a sector with indirect involved organisations (e.g. livestock transport, feed companies, veterinary doctors, hospitality industry, etc.). Using a mixed method strategy first the key-persons in the equestrian sector and representatives from local governments were interviewed. They were asked to describe the core strengths and opportunities of the sector. They were also asked to give an overview of all the equestrian (related) organisations. Existing databases were also consulted to get an insight in the contacts in the equestrian sector. In this way the researchers were able to build a database with all the known equestrian related organisations in the province of Drenthe.

In the second, quantitative, phase of the research two different surveys were sent to the (in)direct involved organisations to the equestrian sector. Direct involved organisations (n = 294, response of 45,2%) and indirect involved organisations (n = 1156, response of 13,8%). The aim of the surveys was to get insights in size of the sector in terms of the amount of FTE, annual turnover, events, horses, horsemen, volunteers and tourists. The data from the surveys made it possible to create an overview of the size and value of the equestrian sector by extrapolating the numbers from the respondents. The annual turnover of the (in)direct involved organisations in equestrian sector in the province of Drenthe is about €230 million. Thereof is an annual turnover of €94 million realised by the direct involved organisations in the equestrian sector, mostly the breeding and trading companies. In the province of Drenthe are 50.000 horses, 60.000 horsemen and 450 equestrian events yearly. There are about 3000 FTE in the equestrian sector, mostly in the indirect related organisations to the equestrian sector (2000 FTE). 18.000 volunteers are yearly involved in the equestrian activities in the province.

### CONTEXT DESCRIPTION AND INVOLVED ACTORS

The province of Drenthe is in the north of the Netherlands and has a population of about 490.000 inhabitants. The province is thinly populated and characterises itself with nature and space for leisure and tourism. The equestrian sector is well developed but not so organised. There are a lot of equestrian organisations and the breeding and trading companies do business around the world. But, the different sub-sectors are not working together. For example: equestrian associations know each other, but are not working together with breeding and trading companies. The aim of the province of Drenthe is to establish an equestrian network which takes their responsibility in profiling the sector. The main goal is that the equestrian sector is so well organised and known

that tourists from outside Drenthe will visit Drenthe and companies outside Drenthe and the Netherlands will do business with the companies in Drenthe.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND LEARNING

The next phase in the research was to give recommendations about how the equestrian sector can develop itself more towards a wellknown sector for business and leisure activities.

The equestrian sector should focus itself on the following themes to give the sector a clear profile: (1) tourism and recreation, (2) local governments with ambition, (3) trading horses and (4) events

The key question is how the equestrian sector can give itself a better profile. In general, we recommended the following: (1) Create a network wich is wider than equestrian organisations itself. (2) Develop a multiannual agenda. (3) Concretize implementing the multiannual agenda and involve external experts in this.