

Entente Européenne – quo vadis – where are you going? That's what I titled my last year's report. Today I would still have to ask this question, even more, I would have to call it small animal breeding quo vadis. Although small animal breeding will not die out if there are no more European shows, it is becoming increasingly difficult. The fact that this has something to do with the aging of our society cannot be denied. The possibilities of keeping small animals are also becoming fewer and fewer, the possibilities for leisure activities are increasing and the willingness to take on responsibility is decreasing. From my point of view, however, much more serious are the constantly tightened regulations such as exhibition and transport regulations, which are too much for some breeders and they give up their hobby.

The EU is well on the way to making international exhibitions impossible for us. If these are missing, the exchange of ideas and experiences is lost, yes, the sale of animals, which is essential for the survival of many breeds, will then be history or is only possible illegally. But the costs for the halls in which larger exhibitions would be possible have risen to such an extent that there are hardly any organizers willing to take the financial risk of a large exhibition.

So bleak prospects. However, the situation is nowhere near as hopeless as it appears to be at the moment. Our newly composed Advisory Board is working flat out to obtain an exception for us in Regulation 2020/688. But we are also worried about the 429 regulation, which has been in effect for a number of years, according to which everyone in Europe who keeps even a pigeon, or a chicken has to register. In Switzerland you have had to do this for poultry for more than 15 years - but many poultry farms don't care! And that's where I see the problem! It's not about the breeders who don't register. It is about the fact that many association managers within the EE fout about these regulations.

Imagine a large handcart that some people are pulling at the front, but the car can move because nobody is helping to push it at the back. The advisory board pulls in front. The people who are (should be) behind are the country leaders who don't make enough effort to talk to MEPs in their countries and ask them for support. They exist, which is why I don't want to upset them now. However, there are still too few. My urgent appeal therefore goes to those who have not yet helped to push. The Advisory Board will also be dependent on the support of the federal states in the future. He can direct the car, but he can't pull it alone!

There was no lack of goodwill from those responsible for the European Show 2022 in Poland, and we all hoped and firmly believed that we could hold the European Show that was postponed last year this year. However, the war in the Ukraine and the flow of refugees to Poland that started as a result meant that those responsible felt unable to hold the European show in November. As painful as this is for us, we should not forget that it is more important to give the thousands of refugees a roof over their heads, food and care than to be able to show our animals at a European show.

The pandemic has not yet been overcome either, but it seems to be slowly getting under control. Although the bird flu is not yet under control, a vaccine against it is apparently being developed.

Pandemic, bird flu, war, EU regulations, animal welfare regulations - there are many stumbling blocks to the European Show 2024 in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, we will support the preparations of the Czechs with high pressure and hope confidently that this European show can be held.

The Presidium is still working on the "Quo vadis EE" and thus also on the future of the European shows. One approach could be that if no organizer for 2027 can be found by 2024, category-related European shows could be held this year. However, this has to be discussed in the Executive Committee, since such a decision would in turn result in a change in the regulations for European shows.

Our finances are healthy, but a few years ago they were so bad that the Danish association had to give us a loan. We owe the fact that we have a nice cushion today to our savings efforts, for example by doing without a daily allowance for years, having fewer meetings and above all because we had a considerable income from sponsors every year. We owe that to our Honorary President Urs Freiburghaus, who not only initiated the sponsorship but also operated it single-handedly. We all understand that at almost 85 years of age he would like to take a step back. However, his successor as the person responsible for sponsorship has not yet been clarified. I therefore appeal to everyone to look for a suitable candidate. The lack of income from the canceled European show and the lack of sponsorship income will weaken our cash register significantly.

With the election of Jeannine Jehl, Erik Apperlo and Wolfgang Vogt, the upheaval in the Executive Committee was initiated last year. This will be continued this year after Jan Schop's surprising resignation and will continue in the next two to three years. I announced my resignation as of 2023 but no later than 2025 last year. Even if we have an idea who could succeed me, that does not mean that this person has to be chosen. Suitable candidates should therefore now "position themselves".

I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues on the Executive Committee for their commitment to the European Association and the Executive Committee. We have it good and we pull together, even if we don't always agree, and that's the way it should be. But they all have the same goal: to work for the benefit of EE - and we do that - together with all of you!