

# FEI Social Media Policy - FAQ

*(effective 01 January 2024)*

## 1. What is the purpose of the FEI Social Media Policy?

As social media usage has increased, regrettably so has the trend towards offensive and hurtful posts. Although the majority of FEI Participants use social media in a respectful manner and with the aim of promoting their own participation and equestrian sport. Regrettably, there is a small minority who use social media platforms to make negative and personalised comments. The aim of the FEI Social Media Policy is to give the FEI the tools to intervene in such cases with the aim of making the online equestrian community a safe space for all FEI Participants.

The FEI Social Media Policy serves to protect the equestrian community, FEI Participants, the FEI, its members, Athletes, Officials and anyone involved in equestrian sport, while also offering guidelines for responsible and effective use of social media in the context of the FEI's values. It's an essential tool in the digital age, where social media plays a significant role in interaction and communication. The FEI Social Media Policy aims to provide FEI Participants with clear guidelines on using social media responsibly, protecting their personal and professional image and reputation.

The FEI fully respects the principle of free speech; at the same time the FEI wants all FEI Participants to be able to engage with in equestrian sport in a safe and respectful online environment.

## 2. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all persons who participate in FEI activities including but not limited to Athletes, Officials, Accredited Persons, FEI Representatives (FEI Board members, FEI Committee members, FEI Headquarters staff, etc), Organisers, Support Personnel (Coaches, Trainers, Horse Owners, Grooms, Stewards, Chefs d'Equipe, team staff, etc), and Persons Responsible.

## 3. What are the key principles of social media usage?

- **Respect and Integrity:** FEI Participants should always treat others with respect and maintain the highest level of integrity in their online interactions.
- **Positive Representation:** FEI Participants are encouraged to showcase positive aspects of their sportsmanship, teamwork, and dedication to their sport and community.
- **Privacy:** Personal and sensitive information should not be shared on social media. FEI Participants should be cautious about sharing personal details and must respect the privacy of others (fellow Athletes, Grooms, FEI Officials, etc).
- **Avoid Controversy:** FEI Participants should refrain from engaging in or promoting controversial topics, offensive language, or discriminatory content.

## 4. Can FEI Participants have personal social media accounts?

Yes, of course, any FEI Participants are allowed to have personal social media accounts. However, it is important to remember that their behaviour on personal accounts can still reflect on the equestrian community, their team, colleagues, Trainers, Coaches, Horse Owners or sponsors. FEI Participants are encouraged to maintain a positive and professional image on all platforms.

## **5. Are there any restrictions on the content FEI Participants can post?**

As mentioned above, the FEI fully respects the principle of free speech, but there are still some limitations. FEI Participants should not make derogatory, offensive, or inflammatory comments about other Participants, the FEI or any other individuals involved in equestrian sport.

For example, hate speech, discriminatory content, and incitement of violence based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors are prohibited. Harassing, stalking, or bullying individuals on social media is also not allowed.

## **6. Can FEI Participants express their personal opinions?**

Yes, FEI Participants can generally express their personal opinions on various topics, such as politics, social issues, sport or other non-sports-related matters on social media platforms. Social media is a platform for sharing ideas, thoughts, and opinions, and it allows users to express themselves freely. This does not absolve FEI Participants from adhering to social media platform-specific rules and the FEI Social Media Policy or potentially facing consequences for violating them.

## **7. How should FEI Participants handle negative comments or online conflicts?**

FEI Participants should refrain from engaging in online conflicts. If they come across negative comments or messages, it is best to first consider if it is really necessary to respond. Try to resist the temptation to reply immediately. If a response is necessary, then the advice is to respond professionally and consider taking the conversation offline if necessary. If the situation escalates and involves any person under the jurisdiction of the FEI, such as an FEI Participant, the matter should be reported to the FEI HQ for follow up.

## **8. How will this Policy be enforced?**

Enforcement of this policy will be carried out by the FEI Legal Department. It is important to highlight that the FEI will not proactively monitor social media accounts of FEI Participants. However, alleged violations of the FEI Social Media Policy are likely to be reported to the FEI. The FEI will assess all reported posts on a case-by-case basis to decide if follow up action is necessary. The FEI may also contact the FEI Participant (either directly or through their NF) who made the post and request them to remove the post.

For minor violations, the FEI may, for example, either report any incident to the National Federation of the Athlete's or Official's concerned for follow up or the FEI Legal Department can rely on the provisions in the FEI General Regulations for "Minor Offences" through the Administrative Disciplinary Procedure (ADP). A right to be heard is naturally provided to the person who allegedly breached the FEI Social Media Policy.

Minor Offences are those offences where the maximum sanction(s) would be:

- (a) Formal Warning;
- (b) Fine not exceeding CHF 2,000;
- (c) Provisional Suspension;
- (d) Suspension not exceeding 3 (three) months;
- (e) Demotion of Official (following consultation with the FEI Director of Officials and the relevant FEI discipline director);
- (f) Removal of an Official from a specific Event (following consultation with the FEI Director of Officials and the relevant FEI discipline director).

For major violations, the matter would be submitted, through the FEI Legal Department, to the FEI Tribunal for an FEI Tribunal's decision. Here as well, a full right to be heard is naturally provided to the person who allegedly breached the FEI Social Media Policy.

**10. Who can FEI Participants contact if they have questions or concerns about social media use?**

FEI Participants can reach out to the FEI Headquarters for any questions, concerns, or clarifications about social media use and this policy.

**11. Can you provide an example of the type of post that could lead to disciplinary action?**

Athlete A is competing in an FEI Event with their horse "Mark Zuck" and is disqualified by the President of the Ground Jury "B. Spears" for a violation of the Sports Rules. On their way home from the Event, Athlete A posts the following on social media together with a picture of B. Spears.

*"Disqualified from Event X today. Mark Zuck & I were doing a fantastic round and we were in contention for the podium until B Spears got involved and decided to DSQ us for no reason. Wrong, wrong, wrong. B Spears is a joke; she has no idea of the rules and always takes the wrong decision. Everyone knows she is secretly training Athlete B. So it's no big surprise that Athlete B won today..... #moneytalks"*

The above post is insulting to the President of the Ground Jury by alleging that the PGJ does not know the rules. It also calls into question the PGJ's ethics/morality by implying that the PGJ took the decision in order to grant an unfair advantage to Athlete B and may have benefitted financially.

How could Athlete A have posted differently to avoid risking disciplinary action?

See below an example:

*"Disqualified from Event X today. Mark Zuck & I were doing a fantastic round and we were in contention for the podium but we were disqualified. Apparently, we breached the sports rules. Don't agree with the decision! I thought we were doing everything right! But we will pick ourselves up from this disappointment and we will go again next week."*

***Please note that this FAQ document is meant to provide general information and guidance about the FEI Social Media Policy. For the most accurate and up-to-date information, please refer to the official FEI Social Media Policy.***