

# Article of the thesis

## “Professionalisation in the equine industry in the Netherlands”

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# **“Professionalisation in the equine industry in the Netherlands”**

## ***What does that mean?***

By: Marinka Crielaard

**The term professionalisation is a commonly used word in the media nowadays. Every branch needs or wants to professionalise, but what is actually meant with professionalisation? When this question is asked in a room of 10 people, everyone will have a different opinion. In the developing equine industry in the Netherlands professionalisation has become a commonly used word, but, the numerous organisations within the industry have not indicated what they mean with professionalisation. That is why a research is being done about this topic, to find a meaning of professionalisation in the equine industry.**

### **Theoretical meaning of professionalisation**

First there is done a literature review to try to gain a theoretical understanding of the term professionalisation, but from these literature we are not getting any wiser. Many authors have written about the concept of professionalisation and derivatives of that and many visions about the concept exists. Originally professionalisation meant the creation of a profession, whereby a profession was seen as a functional group, which consists of knowledge and expertise, has an autonomous position and has responsibility, such as, medics, lawyers and accountants. Professions gave a high social status value to occupational groups and members of these occupational groups wanted to maintain or improve their status to be able to present themselves as a member of a profession and as professionals. Not really something whereto the equine industry is able to develop to. Some authors indicate that professionalisation is the ambition to reach the status of a professional, but also about the concept of professional there are numerous of definitions in circulation and is it impossible to give an unambiguous definition of the concept. So the answer must be found in the equine industry itself.

### **Meaning of professionalisation according to the equine industry**

To find the meaning of professionalisation in the equine industry several parties are being interviewed. These parties are the branch organisations in the equine industry, the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), 20 equine entrepreneurs and educational institutions. Namely the branch organisations of the equine industry and especially the FNRS (Federations of Dutch Riding Centres), LTO (Dutch Agriculture and Horticulture Organisation) and SRP (Sector Council Horses) are expressing the wish to professionalise the equine industry and besides them also the ministry of LNV has an opinion about it. However from their articles, reports, brochures and websites the term professionalisation can not be defined. When asked to the branch organisations three aspects play an important role in professionalisation, namely; quality improvement, from craftsmanship towards entrepreneurship and that equine entrepreneurs must broaden their vision and has his view less internal focused, so also looks at the sector as a whole. The branch organisations see professionalisation mostly in an individual way, to reach the status of an equine professional. And a professional implies according to them an equine entrepreneur which is occupational busy and with that has a healthy business.

The branch organisation did not develop strategies which can support their vision about professionalisation. For the ministry of LNV professionalisation means that the sector comes to one joined goal and vision, and that the sector itself must undertake more action to accomplish that. So where the branch organisations see professionalisation on an individual level the LNV sees professionalisation more on a collective level. For the equine entrepreneur aspects like quality improvement and respond on the demand of the customers are of importance if it is about professionalisation. Besides that a better structure and clarity in the equine industry also is an important aspect, something which is not mentioned by the branch organisations. The branch organisations want to facilitate the businesses in achieving economic health, so they would like to see that an equine entrepreneur becomes a professional, remarkable with this is that the equine entrepreneurs believe this is not the most important aspect if it being a professional and professionalisation, a profitable business is for them less important. So the branch organisations and equine entrepreneurs are at the moment not on the same wave length. This is being enforced by the fact that the reputation of the branch organisation amongst the equine entrepreneurs is not very high. Either they do not know the branch organisation or know them but has the feeling that they are not there for them. Equine entrepreneurs have also no idea what the branch organisations want to achieve and if they do they believe that branch organisations mostly work on collective level, whilst this is not the case. For that reason the branch organisations must be aware that if they will not stand out more, not show who you are, for who you are there for and what you do their existence becomes in danger due to the lack of social support. It is not likely that an equine entrepreneur will join a branch organisation, if he has another view than the branch organisations about how to

professionalise, has the feeling that the branch organisation are not there for him and has no idea what the branch organisations are heading to. So what could branch organisations do to create the necessary social support?

### **Recommendations**

To create social support the branch organisations need to work closer with the primary in order to appreciate, what do they need and want? From this strategies can be and need to be developed, followed by a strong and clear communication plan to all involved parties. To really develop and improve professionalisation within the equine industry the branch organisations need to have one mutual goal and vision. However the umbrella organisation of the equine industry, the Sector Council Horses (SRP) exists of representatives of almost all of the equine branch organisations, for this the SRP has too many representatives of all the other branch organisations. This causes that into the SRP too many opinions and views exist and it will be impossible to come to such a mutual goal and vision. This is only possible if an organisation, for example the SRP, is going to stand above the other branch organisations, is independent and also has the power to direct the other organisations. Only when the branch organisations can give an actual meaning about the term professionalisation, they can gain respect and social support from the primary sector in essence to take a giant and important step towards professionalising the equine industry in the Netherlands. This will unite the equine industry more and they will be able to establish stronger and concrete plans, which can give an stronger and stable economy in the industry, which also will have an influence on the economy of the equine entrepreneur. Also the industry will be more acknowledged by the society, by which the equine industry is able to keep developing in the future.