

# Setting Up Equine Projects through Participatory Investment



**Thematic area:** Socio-Economic Performance.

**Priority:** How can access to agricultural land be managed?

**Need:** Land cost: Difficulties in acquiring land (price of agricultural land, competition with other sectors of agricultural production), what solutions?; How to access land with increasing prices?

**Solution EU number:** PR-01.

**Content of the solution:** Public-interest sponsorship enables equine projects to secure financial, material, or skill-based support from public- or mission-driven partners in recognition of their social, environmental, or cultural impact, without commercial return expectations.

## Reasons for Implementing the Solution

Public-interest sponsorship reduces dependency on bank loans and market-based financing while strengthening the project's credibility, visibility, and alignment with public-interest objectives. It is particularly suitable for equine initiatives that deliver social inclusion, animal welfare, rural development, or environmental benefits.

## Description of Solution Strategies

Public-interest sponsorship or patronage is a participatory investment mechanism based on public-interest value rather than financial profitability. In equine contexts, it allows project leaders to mobilize resources from companies, foundations, public bodies, or private individuals who wish to support socially or environmentally meaningful activities involving horses and donkeys.

In this document, the term “patronage” is used interchangeably with “public-interest sponsorship”. In some countries or languages, the term patronage may carry unintended connotations (e.g. favoritism or political influence); therefore, it should be translated and interpreted carefully to reflect its intended meaning of voluntary, non-commercial support for projects serving the public interest.

Equine projects such as therapeutic riding centers, equine-assisted education, job training programs, heritage breed conservation, sustainable pasture management, or rural animation often generate positive externalities (social cohesion, landscape preservation, inclusion of vulnerable groups, animal welfare). Public-interest sponsorship recognizes and supports these impacts without requiring a commercial return on investment.

Support can take several forms:

- Financial patronage, such as donations for infrastructure, equipment, or start-up costs.
- In-kind patronage, including equipment, feed, professional services, or volunteer expertise.



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- Skills-based or communication patronage, such as legal, marketing, fundraising, or visibility support.

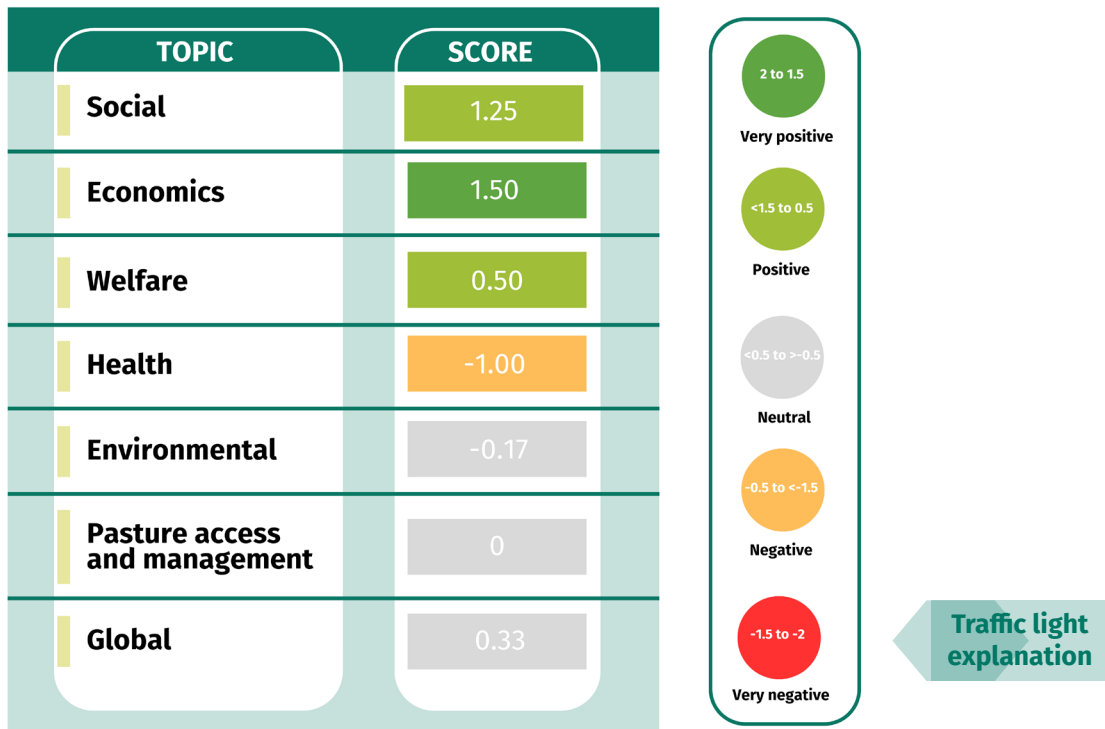
While patronage frameworks vary across EU countries, they often require the project to operate under or in partnership with a recognized public-interest legal structure (e.g. association, foundation, cooperative with public-interest status). In some countries, donors may benefit from tax incentives, which further increases the attractiveness of this model. Patronage can be combined with other financing tools such as public subsidies, crowdfunding, membership fees, or ethical loans, making it a flexible component of a diversified funding strategy. While tax incentives and legal requirements for patronage vary between EU Member States, the underlying principle of non-commercial, public-interest support is widely applicable. National frameworks should be consulted for specific eligibility and fiscal conditions.

### Implementation Steps

- 1. Define the equine project and its public-interest impact:** Clearly articulate the social, environmental, cultural, or animal-welfare value of the project, including target groups and expected outcomes.
- 2. Choose or create an appropriate legal structure:** Ensure the project is eligible to receive patronage (directly or via a partner organization) and, where applicable, to issue tax receipts.
- 3. Identify potential patrons:** Target companies, foundations, institutions, or individuals whose values align with equine welfare, rural development, inclusion, sustainability, or heritage.
- 4. Prepare a patronage dossier:** Include a concise project description, storytelling elements, expected impacts, funding or resource needs, and forms of support sought.
- 5. Formalize the partnership:** Sign a patronage agreement defining the type of support, duration, visibility arrangements, and reporting obligations.
- 6. Acknowledge and promote the patron:** Provide visibility through communication materials, events, or on-site recognition, in line with non-commercial patronage rules.
- 7. Report on the use of support and achieved impact:** Maintain transparency to strengthen trust, ensure compliance, and encourage long-term or renewed patronage.

## Setting Up Equine Projects through Participatory Investment

### How Will this Solution Impact the Performance of your Farm?



**Socioeconomics:** This solution will support the social performance of the farm because participatory investment or patronage strongly enhances the farm’s social legitimacy and visibility when projects demonstrate clear social, environmental, or cultural value (e.g. equine therapy, sanctuaries, educational or environmental missions). Securing support from external patrons signals credibility, public trust, and societal relevance, strengthening relationships with communities, institutions, and mission-driven partners. However, this positive social impact is highly conditional: it is mainly applicable to farms with a strong social or ethical vocation and requires significant additional work in communication, reporting, and stakeholder engagement.

This solution will support the economic performance of the farm because patronage can provide non-repayable financial, material, or skill-based resources that improve short-term cash flow and enable investments without increasing debt. These funds can support infrastructure upgrades, welfare improvements, or project development, indirectly strengthening farm capital and long-term viability. Nevertheless, the economic impact remains uncertain and context-dependent, as access to patrons is limited, implementation is demanding, and the solution is generally not well suited to purely profit-oriented equine farms.



**Health & Welfare:** This solution may negatively influence the health performance of the farm if the farm maintains or accepts donations of sick or geriatric horses. Depending on the farm’s activities, including rescue centres or sanctuaries for handicapped animals, problems may arise because such animals are often in pain

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and require drug treatment. Uncertainty regarding the continuity of patronage and the resulting financial support may lead to inadequate use of medications, thereby compromising animal health and welfare. Additional problems may occur if charitable organisations are primarily oriented toward fundraising rather than animal care, which keep suffering or terminally ill animals and refrain from euthanising them. However, there are also well-functioning organisations, including the beneficiaries of projects partially supported by local government, as financial stability must be ensured to maintain a high health status of the animals.

This solution can support the welfare performance of the farm if the principles of the 3Fs, so the extended access to forage or grazing, social contact, and freedom of movement, are ensured. However, it should be noted that, due to emotional reasoning based on anthropomorphism, certain practices may be inappropriately applied under the assumption of providing “high” welfare standards. These may include the overuse of rugs or excessive protection against injuries or adverse weather conditions by confining animals to stables. Nevertheless, when a positive emotional state is observed and the 3Fs criteria are fulfilled through the continuous activities of the farm, this solution may be effective in achieving an enhanced level of animal welfare if the investment in welfare-friendly infrastructure can be funded.



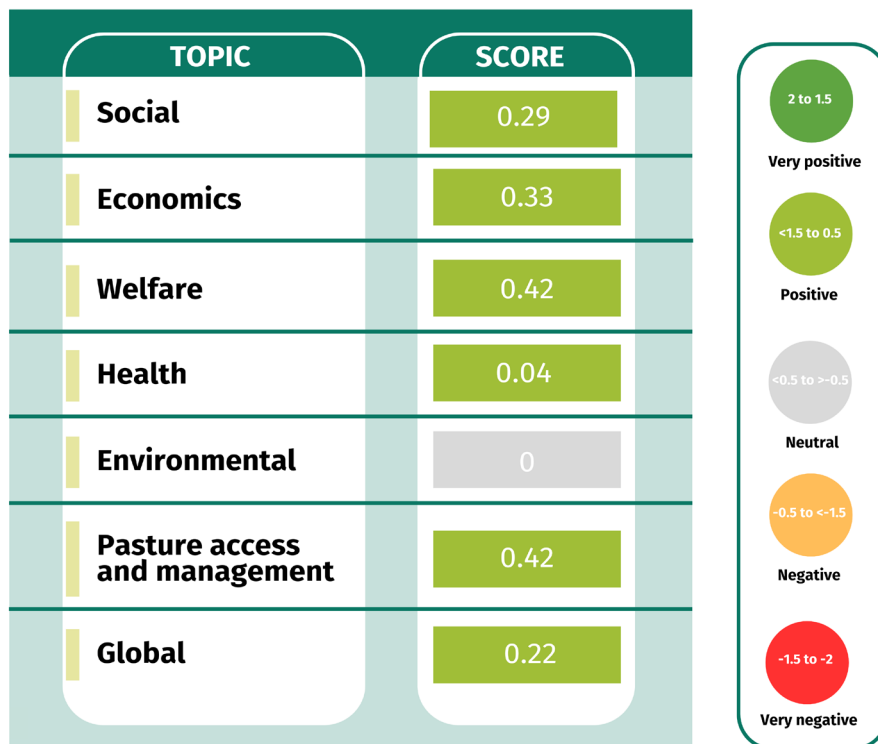
**Environmental sustainability:** This solution will not have effect on the environmental performance because patronage itself does not directly affect environmental performance. Its impact depends entirely on the type of project being supported. For example, patronage that helps preserve biodiversity through equine grazing can have positive environmental effects. However, patronage for projects like equine mediation may have no relevance to climate adaptation or water management. Additionally, sponsoring for instance more or older animals can increase greenhouse gas emissions, negatively affecting the carbon footprint

This solution will not have effect on the land access or management performance of the farm because patronage itself does not directly affect grassland management. It depends entirely on the type of project being supported.



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## How Will this Solution Impact the Resilience of your Farm?



**Socioeconomics:** This solution will not impact social performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because its social effects are highly variable and depend on the continuity, conditions, and objectives of the patronage rather than on the farm’s own adaptive capacity. While emotional support, reassurance, and occasional social outreach benefits may arise (e.g. feeling supported, online engagement during pandemics, improved image when welfare standards are met), these effects are indirect, uncertain, and not systematically linked to the farm’s resilience. If patron support is withdrawn due to inflation, pandemics, non-compliance, or activity interruptions, social benefits can quickly disappear, leading overall to a neutral impact.

This solution will not impact economic performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because patronage does not provide a stable or predictable economic buffer against shocks. Although it can temporarily ease financial pressure by funding investments, covering veterinary costs, or delaying sales during crises, it also creates dependency risks. Inflation, pandemics, disease outbreaks, or changing sponsor priorities can interrupt funding at any time, and relying on patrons does not strengthen the farm’s structural profitability or cost control. As positive financial contributions are counterbalanced by uncertainty, conditionality, and lack of long-term guarantees, the overall economic effect on resilience remains neutral.

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**Health & Welfare:** This solution does not support the farm's health performance, as it does not directly reduce pain, mortality, or the need for medication when the farm is exposed to external pressures. However, animal health may deteriorate if, due to external challenges such as cuts or discontinuation of funding, the farm is unable to provide appropriate veterinary care. Health issues occur more frequently in geriatric or neglected horses, and in such cases pain levels or the use of veterinary drugs may increase. Nevertheless, with appropriate care and continuity of funding, the health status of horses may remain at a good or high level despite external challenges.

This solution has a neutral effect on farm welfare performance, as it does not inherently improve welfare-friendly housing conditions or promote a positive emotional state when the farm is subjected to external pressures. Moreover, animal welfare may decline if the farm faces uncertainty regarding future funding, due to, for example, reductions or cuts affecting feed quality, adequate straw provision, or resulting in excessively high workloads for animals. Conversely, when funding is secured over the long term, welfare can be supported, for instance, by providing year-round access to pasture, which may enable the farm to better withstand external pressures.

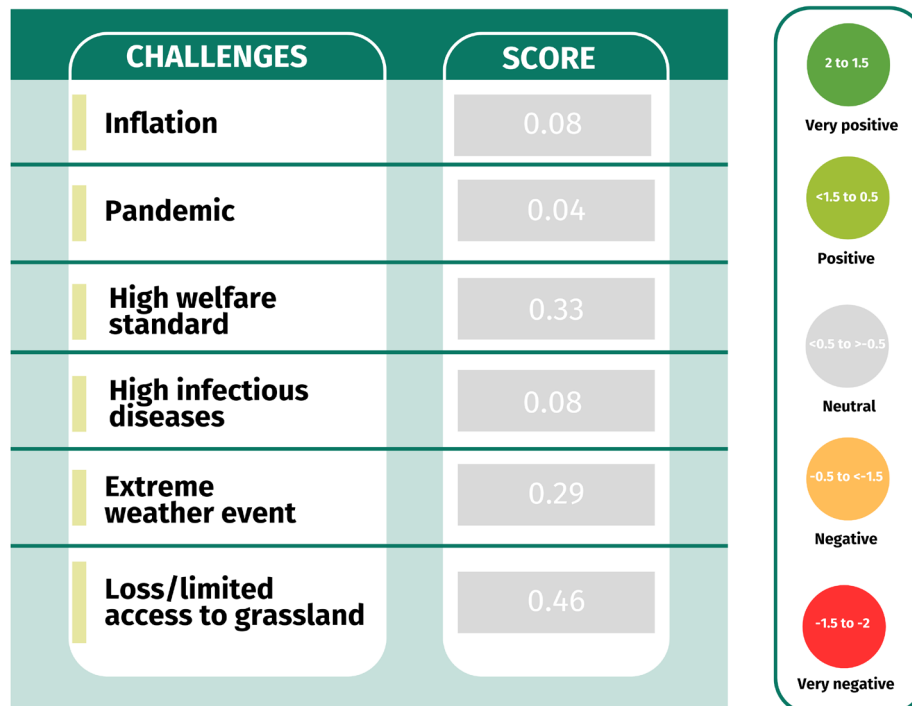


**Environmental sustainability:** This solution will not impact environmental performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because the impact depends entirely on the type of project being supported. External funding can in some cases help to do investments to repair the environmental damage.

This solution will not impact land access or management performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because the impact depends entirely on the type of project being supported. External funding can in some cases help to get access to additional land.

## Setting Up Equine Projects through Participatory Investment

How can this solution help your farm to face specific external challenges to be more resilient?



**Inflation & Social Crises:** Social challenge: This solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing pandemics because patronage-based support is not structurally linked to the farm’s capacity to cope with social disruptions. While sponsors may continue to offer moral support or financial contributions remotely, such support is conditional and may be interrupted if activities stop or lose visibility during a pandemic. As these social benefits are indirect, uncertain, and dependent on external actors rather than on internal farm organisation, they do not provide a reliable improvement in overall resilience.

Economic challenge: This solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing inflation because patronage does not constitute a stable economic safeguard against rising costs. Although external funding can temporarily offset expenses or delay sales, inflation can also reduce sponsors’ ability or willingness to contribute. The risk of sudden withdrawal and the absence of predictable, long-term financial security mean that positive effects are counterbalanced by dependency and uncertainty, resulting in a neutral impact on the farm’s economic resilience.



**Welfare & Diseases:** Health challenge: This solution has a neutral effect on the global performance of the farm across all three areas when facing an infectious disease challenge. Socioeconomic, environmental, as well as health and welfare priorities may not be adequately fulfilled if the farm is confronted with a sudden infectious disease outbreak, particularly when continuity of funding is uncertain. Managing infectious diseases requires specific measures, including the ability to isolate sick animals, appropriate materials to ensure biosecurity, and access to veterinary care and pharmaceutical products.

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Therefore, the farm must be well prepared, with investments in such biosecurity and health-protection measures already in place. Provided that these measures are implemented in advance and regularly updated, the global performance of the farm should remain secured from this perspective.

**Welfare challenge:** Similarly, this solution does not significantly affect the global performance of the farm when facing high-standard welfare legislation. As with health security, the implementation of welfare legislation imposing high standards may be difficult under conditions of long-term funding uncertainty. However, if high welfare standards are already in place, the farm's global performance can be maintained, provided that additional funding allows further investment in welfare-friendly infrastructure, such as new shelters or the rental of additional pastureland.



**Climate Change & Access to Land:** Environmental challenge: this solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing abnormally high or low temperatures, draught, excessive rain, windstorm or/and flood because the impact depends entirely on the type of project being supported. For instance, financing through sponsors or patronage may help the farmer to postpone selling foals and thus improve profitability. Similarly, if sponsors or patronage want to support equine welfare e. g, the "3F" model, they might offer assistance or funding to cope with challenges such as heat. This solution also may help to access additional funds for repairing or adapting infrastructure after extreme weather event-related damage.

**Land access/management challenge:** this solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing loss or limited access to agricultural land because the impact depends entirely on the type of project being supported. For example, incorporating bird protection into the patronage model enhances the equine farmer's public image. Financial support from sponsors or patronage enables the purchase of additional land, improving profitability, expanding pasture space per horse, and creating habitat for nesting birds. A reputable partner and a project with public-interest value can further increase access to communal land and additional funding opportunities.

# Setting Up Equine Projects through Participatory Investment

## Cost-benefit Analysis

### Costs

#### Socioeconomics:

- **Additional time and skills required for:**
  - Preparing a patronage dossier (project description, storytelling, impact, funding needs).
  - Identifying, contacting, and managing patrons.
  - Promoting the patron in communication activities.
  - Reporting on activities, objectives, and use of funds.
- **Partial loss of project autonomy:**
  - Expectations or values of the patron may influence project decisions.
- **Reputational risks:**
  - The equine farm's image becomes linked to the patron's image.
  - Risk of crisis communication if the patron faces reputational issues.
- **Limited applicability:**
  - Difficult to implement in economically oriented or profit-driven equine farms.
  - Experts consider the solution not always credible for standard commercial farms.
- **Accessibility challenges:**
  - Difficult to reach individuals or companies with sufficient economic capacity.
  - Success depends strongly on the socio-economic background of potential supporters.
- **Structural dependency:**
  - Works mainly for foundations, sanctuaries, or public-interest-oriented equine projects.
- **Note:** Patronage requires continuous engagement and administrative effort and is not a "low-effort" funding tool.



### Benefits

- **Additional source of funding:**
  - Reduces reliance on bank loans and market-based financing.
- **Leverage effect:**
  - Facilitates access to other funding sources, subsidies, or sponsors.
- **Increased credibility:**
  - External validation by a third party enhances trust among stakeholders.
- **Positive image effects:**
  - A reputable patron can improve the farm's public image and visibility.
- **Economic benefits for equine farmers:**
  - Higher income stability and increased economic resilience.
  - Additional funding can be used for long-term investments improving farm capital.
- **Benefits for the local community:**
  - Increased solidarity and social cohesion.
  - Patrons develop contact with animals and rural activities.
  - Sense of usefulness and meaningful engagement.
- **Societal benefits:**
  - People can engage in meaningful projects.
  - Development of empathy toward animals, environment, and rural life.
  - Increased sense of self-efficacy and social contribution.
- **Note:** An equine project financed through patronage can significantly enhance the social impact profile of the supporting company.

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### Costs

#### Health & Welfare:

- **Risk of prolonged suffering:**
  - Animals may be kept alive too long due to emotional or symbolic considerations.
- **Anthropomorphic decision-making:**
  - Human emotions may interfere with animal welfare-based decisions.
- **Higher health care needs:**
  - Older animals often require more treatments and medical interventions.
- **Environmental side effects affecting animal health:**
  - Soil contamination from veterinary medicines may indirectly affect equine and ecosystem health (One Health perspective).
- **Note:** The presence of a patron alone does not guarantee improved animal welfare.

#### Environmental Sustainability:

- **Increased use of veterinary medicines:**
  - Potential contamination of soil and water.
- **Potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions:**
  - Keeping older animals or increasing herd size may negatively affect the carbon footprint
- **Note:** Patronage itself has no inherent environmental benefit and may have neutral or negative effects depending on project design.



### Benefits

- Animals perceived as individuals rather than economic units.
- **Improved welfare conditions:**
  - More space, pasture access, and freedom of movement.
  - Increased attention and affection.
  - More frequent or higher-quality veterinary care.
- Better care for non-working, elderly, or rescued horses and donkeys.
- **Project-specific positive impacts:**
  - Patronage supporting biodiversity or extensive grazing can improve horse welfare (e.g. "3F": freedom, forage, friends).
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- **Note:** Welfare benefits depend entirely on the nature and objectives of the supported project.



- **Increased biodiversity:**
  - Extensive equine grazing supports diverse habitats.
  - Planting hedges, bushes, and trees improves ecological structures.
- **Landscape enhancement:**
  - More structurally diverse and resilient rural environments.
- **Positive effects for the local environment and community:**
  - Improved ecological quality and landscape attractiveness.
- **Project-specific environmental benefits:**
  - Strong positive impact when patronage supports biodiversity conservation or land management through equine grazing.



## Technical Sheet for Solution Implementation

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### Costs

- Risk of reduced on-farm biodiversity if concentrate feeding replaces forage.
- Potential soil/water risks if manure is not sustainably managed.

### Cooperation between farms:

- **Risk of negative perception among peers:**
  - Patronage may be perceived as unfair advantage or “special status”.
- Potential social tension within the farming community.



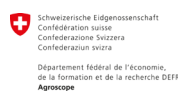
### Benefits

- **Note:** Environmental impacts must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- **Development of networks:**
  - New connections with other farms, organizations, and stakeholders
- **Opportunities for cooperation:**
  - Joint projects, shared knowledge, or shared infrastructure
- **Note:** Cooperation effects depend on transparency and communication within the local farming community.

## Additional Resources

### Key Contacts

- France:
  - Admical Network – national sponsorship platform: [www.admical.org](http://www.admical.org)
  - Accountants/lawyers for tax and legal matters



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## Ideas to Animate a Workshop About the Solution

- Ask a foundation, company CSR manager, or patronage advisor specialized in agriculture, equine welfare, or social projects to sponsor the workshop.
- Find a model equine farm or equine social project already using patronage as a funding mechanism.
- Let participants actively contribute to:
  - Drafting a short patronage pitch.
  - Identifying potential patrons.
  - Simulating communication and reporting tasks to understand the system in practice.

## Proposed Structure For the Workshop on Patronage as a Participatory Investment Model in Equine Farms

### 1. Introduction to Patronage

- What is patronage in the context of equine farms?
- Key characteristics:
  - Non-commercial support.
  - Focus on public-interest value (social, environmental, animal welfare).
- Main forms of patronage:
  - Financial donations.
  - In-kind or skills-based support.
  - Communication and visibility support.

### 2. Benefits of Patronage in equine farms

- Additional funding without repayment obligations.
- Reduced dependence on bank loans or market revenues.
- Increased credibility and visibility through third-party support.
- Strengthened social impact for:
  - Equine-assisted therapy.
  - Education and training.
  - Animal welfare and biodiversity projects.

### 3. Practical Applications on equine farms

- Financing infrastructure or equipment improvements.
- Supporting care of elderly, rescued, or non-working horses and donkeys.
- Funding biodiversity-oriented grazing or landscape management.
- Supporting social and educational equine activities.

### 4. How to Choose the most suitable approach

- Evaluation of the farm's objectives and public-interest value.
- Assessment of legal and organizational requirements.
- Identification of compatible patrons (values, sector, scale).
- Decision between direct patronage or cooperation with a hosting organization.



### 5. Hands-On Demonstration

- Live exercise:
  - Drafting a simple patronage dossier.
  - Formulating a project narrative and impact message.
- Role-play:
  - Farmer ↔ patron conversation.
  - Expectations and boundaries.
- Group discussion on visibility and communication rules.

### 6. Maintenance and Relationship Management

- Ongoing communication with patrons.
- Reporting on activities, impacts, and use of funds.
- Managing expectations and preserving project autonomy.
- Handling reputational risks.

### 7. Case Studies and Real-World Examples

- Examples of equine farms, sanctuaries, or projects using patronage.
- Discussion of:
  - Success factors.
  - Challenges encountered.
  - Lessons learned by project leaders.

### 8. Cost Analysis and Return on Investment (ROI)

- Non-monetary and strategic ROI:
  - Improved resilience.
  - Increased visibility.
  - Stronger networks.
- Time and workload required versus benefits gained.
- Patronage as part of a mixed financing strategy (with subsidies, crowdfunding, etc.).

### 9. Q&A Session

- Open discussion on:
  - Feasibility for different farm types.
  - Access to patrons.
  - Animal welfare and environmental implications.
- Address doubts regarding credibility and applicability.

### 10. Wrap-Up and Resources

- Summary of key takeaways.
- Checklist for first steps toward patronage.
- Useful resources:
  - Patronage guidelines.
  - Legal information (EU/national level).
  - Networks and platforms for finding patrons.