

Defining the Outdoors (revised in 2016) ¹

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Introduction

Officially the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** was established as a non-for-profit organisation on 30/08/2008.

From day one it was clear that 'Outdoors' was used - as a concept - by many to describe activities such as canoeing, mountain bike, sailing, survival, hiking, skiing, etc., etc. On the other hand it was hardly understood that - apart from existing regular training and competitions organised by sport clubs and governing bodies - this kind of outdoor activities were also organised on a recreational level by many thousands of Small and Medium Sized **Enterprises** (SME's) and consequently provided for an income for even more thousands of people throughout the EU.

Therefore, EC-OE felt the need to define more precisely the field of action it was involved in. The latter is what this article is all about: 'Defining the Outdoors'.

The first part of this article focuses on '**identifying**' the Outdoors within a European context. The second part will then focus on '**describing**' the Outdoors properly whereas the third part of this article will be devoted on '**positioning**' EC-OE and the 'Outdoors' within the overall European 'Sport & Active Leisure' scene.

However, though the original version of this article dates back only to 2010 revision was necessary in particular because many web links had changed over the years and thus were inaccessible for consultation.

The opportunity was also used to rephrase or adapt some minor details in part 1 and part 2 of the original text. On the other hand, no changes were made in the tables in part 2.

Because of recent developments within the 'Active Leisure' sector, part 3 (Positioning of EC-OE; Positioning of 'The Outdoors') needed to be extended. The new part 4 therefore emphasises on the 'Active Leisure Alliance' (ALA) established between EC-OE on the one hand and EuropeActive (Fitness) on the other hand.

It is believed that this revised article ties up the process of first '**identifying**', then '**describing**' and finally '**defining**' the Outdoors.

¹ The original text (2010) can be consulted on: <http://www.ec-oe.eu/defining-the-outdoors/>

1. Identification of 'Sport', 'Active Leisure' & the 'Outdoors'

1.1 The European context and European umbrella organisations

In the 1990's early 2000's, European umbrella organisations focusing on 'specific' or even 'general' sports related issues, became a new phenomenon.

Obviously many – mostly scientific – international organisations already existed in the 'sports arena' (e.g. on the history of sport and physical education, sports psychology, sociology of sport, sports geography, etc. etc.,).

On the other hand, international sports federations, the IOC and even organisations such as for example the sport for all federation (FISPT)², the International lifesaving federation (ILSF)³, etc., were also operational for many years.

The 'new phenomenon' referred to in this article consists of umbrella organisations with a specific European (political) mission and mostly relying on European sponsorship generated through European project funds such as Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education and training), Grundvig (adult education), Comenius (schools) and Erasmus+ (higher education).

Organisations such as ENSSEE (1989)⁴, ENGSO (1995)⁵, EOSE (2002)⁶, EASE (2003)⁷, have all been set up to study and / or promote specific aspects related to the sports sector within the European community.

From 2004 onwards the focus of many umbrella federations partly shifted under the impulse of the Maastricht treaty (Maastricht, 2004).

At this conference the European Council and the European Commission decided on creating the European Qualification Network (EQF).

“ The EQF is a common European reference system which will link different countries' national qualifications systems and frameworks together.

² www.fispt.org/

³ www.ilsf.org/

⁴ www.enssee.eu ; The European Network of Sport Science, Education & Employment (1989) is probably one of the oldest umbrella organisations. “ Due to its network character the activities of ENSSEE are various. Mostly, the network concentrates on projects trying to develop and promote the sector of sports and sport sciences on a European (political) level. Areas include Physical Education, Sport Coaching, Health & Fitness, Sport Management, Sport Employment and e-learning in sport.”

⁵ www.engso.com ; The European non-governmental Sports Organization (1995) considers itself to be the “ partner for the defense of general sports interests at a European level, especially vis-à-vis political and administrative bodies of the European Union.”

⁶ www.eose.org ; the European Observatoire of Sports Employment was established in 2002. “ EOSE acts at the European level with the goal to serve as a source of knowledge and a strategic facilitator to support the development of Sport and Active Leisure including employment, sports systems, developing standards, competence, qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (VET). “

⁷ www.easesport.org ; The European Association for Sports Employers was created in 2003 to “ address social affairs linked to the sport at European level ”.

*In practice, it will function as a translation device making qualifications more readable. This will help learners and workers wishing to move between countries or change jobs or move between educational institutions at home.*⁸

Key concepts in the context of the EQF are: **comparability of qualifications**, **mobility of workers** and **lifelong learning**. The eight common European reference levels within the EQF are described in terms of learning outcomes: **knowledge**, **skills** and **competences** (autonomy).

During the last decade the European Outdoor sector invested a lot of effort in developing standards and adapted qualifications based on the EQF. The latter culminated in the ELESa project (2013-2015).⁹

1.2 'Active Leisure' employers federations

Probably the oldest Outdoor employers federations in Europe are the 'Beroepsfederatie van Natuursport Ondernemingen' (BFNO) in Belgium and the Dutch 'Vereniging Buitensport Ondernemingen Nederland' (VeBON). The BFNO¹⁰ was created in 1989 and the VeBON¹¹ in 1991.

Both employers federations were basically created to defend the interests of Outdoor employers. One of the main concerns in those days was safeguarding access to nature, a universal issue that will always remain very sensitive.

Besides the Outdoors, Fitness seems to be the only other sector specific segment to be organised. Moreover, the European Health and Fitness Association (**EHFA**) established in 2001, was probably the first sectoral federation to be organised on a European level. In 2015 EHFA changed its name into **EuropeActive**.¹²

More recently in 2008 the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** was founded.¹³

Employers from Belgium (BFNO), The Netherlands (VeBON), France (France Plein Air), Portugal (APECATE) and Ireland (ILAM) got to know each other during a European Leonardo da Vinci project called European Qualification Framework for Outdoor Animators (EQFOA).¹⁴ During that EQFOA project these employers federations decided to join forces and to establish the EC-OE.¹⁵ Unfortunately, a few years later ILAM did not survive the economic crisis in Ireland.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

⁹ <http://www.ec-oe.eu/projects/elesa/>

¹⁰ www.bfno.be

¹¹ www.vebon.nl

¹² www.europeactive.eu

¹³ www.ec-oe.eu

¹⁴ www.eqfoa.eu

¹⁵ www.bfno.be ; www.vebon.nl ; www.francepleinair.fr ; www.apecate.pt ; www.ilam.ie

In 2009 EC-OE welcomed Spain (ANETA), in 2010 Switzerland (SOA), in 2012 Greece (HATEOA) and finally in 2015 the Czech Republic (CF-OA) as new full members.¹⁶ Alongside the formal structures EC-OE also developed several informal networks e.g. in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and Romania.

1.3 Vocasport: a milestone for 'Active Leisure' in Europe

In 2004 EOSE published an extensive study on "Improving employment in the field of sport in Europe through vocational training" called Vocasport.¹⁷

In this study a presentation of the sports sector was made. This presentation led to the conclusion that the European sports scene was made up of several segments around the production of differentiated services.¹⁸

- 1) Professional sport: whose main focus is to produce events;
- 2) Competitive association sport: is what forms the original and still dominant fabric of the sports sector. It is made up of associations, which in turn come together in sports federations, and provides its members with training and competitive sporting activities;
- 3) Sporting leisure pursuits: organized either by associations (an increasing number of which are also present in the competitive sports sector), or by businesses, often very small businesses (SME's). Each sporting leisure field (fitness, horse riding, sailing, winter sports, racket sports, etc.) has its own particular features and its own identity. Some of them are facing problems with the mobility of their staff within the European area (skiing, mountain pursuits, etc).
- 4) Social sport: it is difficult to scope, as it includes not-for-profit organizations aimed at groups for whom social integration is difficult (the disabled, minorities, refugees, etc).

Besides identifying these four segments "**around the production of differentiated services**" the Vocasport study did also produce interesting estimated numbers of employees for each segment:

- Professional: 50.000 workers; ± 3.000 businesses
- Competitive association sport: 250.000 workers; ± 1.000.000 associations
- Sporting leisure pursuits: 400.000 workers; ± 30.000 businesses
- Social sport: between 50.000 and 100.000 workers.¹⁹

From the Vocasport study one might conclude that approximately 800.000 people in Europe (25 member states represented in Vocasport 2004) were employed in the 'sports sector'. Moreover, some 400.000 of these people had a job in the 'sporting leisure pursuits' sector!

¹⁶ www.aneta.es ; www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch ; www.hateoa.gr

¹⁷ EOSE (2004), *Vocasport*, 180 pp.

¹⁸ o.c., pp. 16 – 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

1.4 In conclusion

The significance of both the identification of the four segments of the sports sector and of the estimated number of workers per segment must not be underestimated.

First of all it is remarkable to conclude that since 2005 the segment of 'sporting leisure pursuits' seems to have been gradually translated or rephrased into 'Active Leisure'. EOSE, EASE and last but not least EC-OE all refer to 'active leisure' as part of their field of action or even as their sole core field of intervention (EC-OE).

Secondly the importance of the estimated number of workers in the 'sporting leisure pursuits' segment is reflected in a number of new European research projects that have been launched during the last couple of years. Both 'Fitness' and the 'Outdoors' have been scrutinized through different 'Leonardo da Vinci' projects: Fitness (Eurofit-QST in 2004; ECVET fitness in 2008 & EA – Fitness in 2009)²⁰ and the Outdoors:

- 1) EQFOA: European standards for Outdoor Animators (2006-2008)²¹
- 2) CLO2: Professionalizing training and mobility for Outdoor animators in Europe bridging the gap between sector Competences and Learning Outcomes (2008-2010)²²
- 3) ELESA: European Learning Syllabus for outdoor Animators (2013-2015)²³

Although it was never really specified more explicitly, it seems that both '**Fitness**' and the '**Outdoors**' were by far considered the two most important cornerstones of the 'Active Leisure' segment.

However, a segment of the active leisure sector that - up till now - has barely been considered is '**industrial leisure**' (including businesses such as Disney World, Club Med, etc....).

As it turns out from this brief review it seems appropriate to rephrase some premises and some descriptions of the so-called European 'sports sector'.

- 1) By deduction the number of workers (based on the 2005 figures - Vocasport) in the 'sporting leisure pursuits' segment can be estimated at +/- 400.000 workers and 30.000 businesses;
- 2) **Active Leisure** seems to be more appropriate to describe what was originally identified as the segment of 'sporting leisure pursuits';
- 3) To many actors on the European sports scene tend to claim 'active leisure' as their 'field of action';
- 4) EC-OE is the only specialised employers federation representative for the '**Outdoors**'. Within EC-OE there is no collision of interests

²⁰ <http://www.ehfa-programmes.eu/>

²¹ <http://www.ec-oe.eu/projects/eqfoa/>

²² <http://www.ec-oe.eu/projects/clo2/>

²³ <http://www.ec-oe.eu/projects/elesa/>

between members. All members of EC-OE – one per country - are focused on 'Active Leisure' and do not claim, or even want to claim to be representative for any other segment;

5) It seems reasonable to re-define the four segments of the sports sector as they were identified by the Vocasport report (2004). The segments would then be identified as:

- Professional sport
- Voluntary sport (including 'competitive association sport' & 'social sport')
- Active Leisure (including 'Fitness' & the 'Outdoors')
- Industrial leisure

2. From identifying to ‘describing’ Active Leisure

2.1 Approach

After analysing the context in which ‘Active Leisure’ is to be comprehended and after identifying the actors in the field of action, the conclusion was reached that Active Leisure is to be identified at least as one of the main sub-sectors in the so called European sports scene. (cfr. part 1)

Consequently it becomes necessary to really ‘describe’ what is considered to be the Active Leisure sector. In other words: what are the appropriate ‘denominators’ to describe what is really meant by Active Leisure.

The starting point was to put Active Leisure in opposition to the other identified segments of the ‘sports & Active Leisure sector’. According to the above described analysis, (cfr. part 1), Active Leisure was then subdivided into ‘**recreational activities**’ on the one hand and ‘**industrial leisure**’ on the other hand.

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Table 1: The 4 segments of the sport and Active Leisure sector (EC-OE, 2009)

The next step was to identify the ‘denominators’ that can help to describe Active Leisure in opposition to the other sub-sectors.

The approach used to do this exercise was empiric.

It must be stressed that this exercise was done by the whole EC-OE partnership during the 2009 General Assembly meeting (Huldenberg - Belgium, 20-22 Nov. 2009). In other words; input was collected by means of brainstorming amongst the delegates of 8 European Outdoor employer federations. Afterwards the same brainstorming exercise was repeated several times at national employers meetings.

Beforehand it was agreed that:

- This exercise would be approached from the point of view of an Outdoor company manager;
- The focus would be on the characteristics of the ‘Outdoors’ without expressing appreciations on the other segments;
- It is realised that using this technique the ‘wordings’ used to clarify some denominators will never be 100% exclusive, inclusive or exact. The aim was to describe as exact as possible and to avoid controversy as much as possible.
- Basically the up-set was to ‘describe’ Active Leisure / Outdoors without even trying to describe the other segments.

After all several hundreds of Outdoor employers through Europe participated in this exercise so it is fair to state that the results presented in this article reflect the views of the European ‘Outdoor’ employers.

2.2 Denominators

2.2.1 Economic sector

As Outdoor companies are obviously running a business it is not surprising that one of the first denominators to be identified is the ‘economic sector’ in which an Outdoor company operates. Since the harmonisation of the European NACE codes ²⁴ in 2008, ‘leisure’, ‘recreation’, etc... are allocated the **NACE code 93.2**. Sport in general is classified under NACE 93.1.

The latter – from an economic point of view – clearly indicates that ‘Active Leisure’ on the one hand and ‘sport’ on the other hand are two completely different economic activities.

In sum (going back to the initial comparative chart) this means:

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
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Table 2: defining the Active Leisure sector (phase 1)

2.2.2 Governance

Depending on the country an Outdoor company is operating in – and some do operate in several countries – the competent bodies they have to cope with are very often Ministers of Work / Economy / Tourism. Professional sports & voluntary sports organisations mostly relate to Olympic Committees (national sport federations) and Ministers of Sport.

²⁴ NACE Code = Statistical classification of economic activities in the EU.

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
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Olympic Committees & Min. of Sport	Governance	Min. of Work / Economy / Min. of Tourism
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Table 3: defining the Active Leisure sector (phase 2)

2.2.3 Counterparts

In a business setting one is confronted with employees and consequently the counterpart employers have to deal with are the employees trade unions. On both the professional sports and the voluntary sports sides, it seems to be evident that these organisations will have to deal with the appropriate 'leagues' and 'federations'. Negotiation is the obvious 'raison d'être' for both employers and employees whilst sports federations and leagues tend to impose their regulations.

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
-----------	-----------	-----------------	-----------	-----------

Olympic Committees & Min. of Sport	Governance	Min. of Work / Economy / Min. of Tourism
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Leagues & Federations	Counterparts	Employees Unions
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Table 4: defining the Active Leisure sector (phase 3)

2.2.4 Characteristics of the Outdoors

Reflecting on the 'typical' day-to-day Outdoor company, and taking into account the routine normal work performed in such a company, resulted in identifying some structural characteristics for the Outdoor businesses.

It is fair to state that not all identified characteristics can be attributed exclusively to the Outdoors. But, if they are put in opposition to professional sport and voluntary sport, they do help to better understand the prominent features of the Outdoor business.

- Outdoor companies are very small enterprises often employing only one or two people (often self employed);
- Outdoor companies do engage paid employees (often part-time);
- The employees engaged are ‘animators’ with a strong focus on ‘service competences’;
- The activities offered are situated within the range fun / pleasure / personal development / active tourism;
- The activities are often offered as a ‘package’ including food, beverages, overnight, ... etc.;
- The activities are often ‘multi-activity’.

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
-----------	-----------	-----------------	-----------	-----------

Olympic Committees & Min. of Sport	Governance	Min. of Work / Economy / Min. of Tourism
------------------------------------	------------	--

Leagues & Federations	Counterparts	Employees Unions
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Companies	non-for-profit Club's	Characteristics	SME's	Companies
Competition / Training / Rules		“	Fun / Pleasure / personal development / Tourism	
Well-paid employees	Un-paid volunteers	“	Paid employees	
Trainers / Coaches (focus on tec. competences)		“	Animators (focus on service competences)	
Single Event	one-sided activity	“	package / multi activity	

Table 5: defining the Active Leisure sector (phase 4)

2.2.5 Job description

In most cases the job description of a trainer or a coach in sports is quite obvious. On the long / short term the goal is to obtain the best possible performances (= results). Consequently the schooling of trainers and coaches is mainly focused on training, workout, practice, ...

The job description of the Outdoor animator is wider and mostly depends on the ‘job on the spot’. One day the animator might be in charge of children and

the next day he/she might be assisting a ‘team building’ session. The latter implies that the schooling of an Outdoor animator must be focussing on vocational education and on the job training.

2.2.6 Target group

The services delivered by an Outdoor company are delivered vis-à-vis its clients.

2.2.7 Revenue

Ultimately the services must be paid for; meaning that the Outdoor company must do business and as such earns an income through ‘service purchase’.

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
Olympic Committees & Min. of Sport		Governance	Min. of Work / Economy / Min. of Tourism	
Leagues & Federations		Counterparts		
Competition / Training / Rules		“	Fun / Pleasure / personal development / Tourism	
Well-paid employees	Un-paid volunteers	“	Paid employees	
Trainers / Coaches (focus on tec. competences)		“	Animators (focus on service competences)	
Single Event	one-sided activity	“	package / multi activity	
Training / workout / practice		The Job	Vocational education / on the job training	
Spectators	Members	Target group	Clients	Clients
Entry/TV/Sponsoring	Member fees /Subsidies	Revenue	Service purchase	

Table 6: defining the Active Leisure sector (phase 5)

2.2.8 Fiscal

Doing business automatically implies one has to pay taxes, respect the appropriate VAT regulations. In order to do all this in the right way every company has to run it's own accountancy or engage a bookkeeper.

2.2.9 Insurance

A company employing people and delivering services to clients should at least invest in professional liability insurance and without doubt also in other insurances imposed by Labour laws in favour of the employees.

2.2.10 Safety

As an Outdoor company - by definition - delivers services to clients 'Consumer Safety' will be of a prime concern for every entrepreneur in the Outdoors.

2.2.11 Justice

If in the worst case anything goes wrong during an Outdoor activity the Outdoor company might have to appear in court. Moreover, because the Outdoor company 'delivers a service' to 'clients' the company will have to appeal to a civil court.

2.2.12 The setting (environment)

Outdoor activities by definition are organised in the Outdoors. The natural environment, be it woodland, a river, a ski slope, in the air, a cave, ...etc., is the setting to perform outdoor activities.

Moreover, most of the outdoor companies all over Europe seem to be located in rural areas.

It can even be stated that the Outdoors is probably one of the most outspoken examples of a business that is not eligible to 'delocalisation'.

From an employment point of view this means that as long as 'clients purchase outdoor services', the businesses, jobs and revenue for the local people will persist.

The 'Active Leisure' sector according to EC-OE (2009)

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE	
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Recreational activities	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?

Denominator

NACE 93.1	NACE 93.1	Economic sector	NACE 93.2	NACE 93.2
Olympic Committees & Min. of Sport		Governance	Min. of Work / Economy / Min. of Tourism	
Leagues & Federations		Counterparts	Employees Unions	
Companies	non-for-profit Club's	Characteristics	SME's	Companies
Competition / Training / Rules		"	Fun / Pleasure / personal development / Tourism	
Well-paid employees	Un-paid volunteers	"	Paid employees	
Trainers / Coaches (focus on tec. competences)		"	Animators (focus on service competences)	
Single Event	one-sided activity	"	package / multi activity	
Training / workout / practice		The Job	Vocational education / on the job training	
Spectators	Members	Target group	Clients	Clients
Entry/TV/Sponsoring	Member fees /Subsidies	Revenue	Service purchase	
Accountancy/VAT/Tax	minimal	Fiscal	Accountancy / VAT / Tax	
Company & personal liability	Personal liability	Insurance	Company and Personal liability	
Security (hooliganism, policing spectators)		Safety	Consumer Safety	
Arbitration (doping, transfers) & civil courts (violence)		Justice	Civil courts (liability, consumer relations)	
Fixed (stadiums, tracks) liable to delocalisation		Setting	Nature (on the spot)	open space

Table 7: defining the Active Leisure sector (EC-OE, 2009)

2.3 Preliminary conclusions

By undertaking this exercise and repeating it several times within the EC-OE network, the ultimate goal was to identify how the sector itself thinks the Outdoors really should be described.

As indicated in the beginning (cfr. approach, p. 7) it was agreed:

- To approach this exercise from the point of view of an Outdoor company manager;
- To focus on the characteristics of the Outdoors without expressing appreciations on the other segments;
- To realize that using this technique the 'wordings' used to clarify some denominators will never be 100% exclusive, inclusive or exact;
- To identify 'denominators' that can help to describe 'Active Leisure' in opposition to the other sub-sectors;
- To 'describe' Active Leisure / Outdoors without even trying to describe the other segments.

It is understood that the same exercise could be undertaken by the other segments to identify their field of action. But, as mentioned earlier, it is not up to EC-OE to do this kind of exercise.

In reverse it was also realized that – although the approach was not to interfere with other segments - during this exercise some 'noise' or even overlap between concepts was experienced.

2.3.1 1° conclusion: the need to reframe the segments of the 'sport & Active Leisure sector'

As a starting point '**sport**' was positioned in opposition to '**Active Leisure**'. Using the Vocasport²⁵ approach, sport was then subdivided into '**professional sport**' and '**voluntary sport**'.

Finally, according to the above analysis (cf. part 1) 'active leisure' was further subdivided into '**recreational activities**' on the one hand and '**industrial leisure**' on the other hand.

Recreational activities were perceived as being the combination of the 'Outdoors' and of 'Fitness'. (p. 6)

At the end the exercise turned out to be too confusing to consider both the Outdoors and Fitness in one and the same segment. Though both activities to a large extent are very similar in their way of doing business, they do differentiate on some denominators:

- The NACE codes are different (fitness = 93.1);
- The 'product' differs in the sense that Fitness is not really a multi activity and is mostly not sold as a package (food, drinks, accommodation, etc...)

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.16-17

except maybe if one considers Fitness and 'wellness' (body care) to be part of the same segment;

- Fitness is mostly situated in an urban 'indoor' setting.

Putting all these arguments together leads to the conclusion that the segments of the 'Sport & Active Leisure Sector' should be reframed.

The European Sport & Active Leisure Sector

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE		
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Outdoors	Fitness	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?	

Table 8: The 5 segments of the sport and Active Leisure sector (EC-OE, 2009)

The segment of 'Industrial Leisure' (including businesses such as Disney World, Club Med, etc....) remains to be scrutinised.

2.3.2 2° conclusion: describing the 'Outdoors' proper

Up till now the focus was on comparing the Outdoors with the other segments of the sports sector. It was through putting the Outdoors in opposition to the other defined segments of the sports sector – and looking at this equation through the eyes of an Outdoor employer – that twelve (N=12) denominators were distinguished.²⁶

The next logical step was to separate the Outdoors from the comparison with the other segments (Table 7, p.13). The latter results in describing 'the Outdoors' proper as is illustrated in Table 9 (p.16).

In fact it can be stated that the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers** (EC-OE) considers Table 9 to be **'the description' of the Outdoors** to be used from now on.

²⁶ Due to dynamics in society in general, it must also be taken into account that these 12 denominators by consequence can also be subject to change over time.

Description of the Outdoors proper according to EC-OE (2009)

The Outdoors	
Workers	+/- 300.000 in the EU
Denominator	
Economic sector	NACE 93.2
Governance	Ministry of Work / Ministry of Economy / Ministry of Tourism
Counterpart	Employees Unions
Characteristics	Small & Medium size enterprises Fun / Pleasure / Personal Development / Tourism Paid Employees Animators (mainly focused on service competences) Packages / Multi Activity Offers
The Job	Vocational Education / On the Job Training
Target Group	Clients
Revenue	Service Purchase
Fiscal	Accountancy / VAT / Tax
Insurance	Company & Personal Liability
Safety	Consumer Safety
Justice	Civil Courts (liability, consumer relations)
Setting	Nature (on the spot)

Table 9: The 'Outdoors' proper (EC-OE, 2009)

3. Positioning of EC-OE; Positioning of the Outdoors

3.1. Content: outdoor activities

The Outdoors – through EC-OE – really claims **its unique identity**; which is an identity of Outdoor employers **organising** and **selling** ‘outdoor activities’.²⁷

The Outdoor sector offers a combination of outdoor activities to its clientele such as canoeing, mountain biking, skiing, canyoning, rafting, dog sledding, hot air ballooning, etc.... An extended list of ‘outdoor’ activities can be consulted in Appendix 1.²⁸

So Yes, to a certain extent the Outdoors does relate to physical activities and implements or translates these activities into a leisurely context:

No competition, no training, no fixed rules, ...etc.

In some cases these activities are sold as a package labelled ‘Company Day’, ‘Team Event’, ‘Team Building’, etc., etc. (cfr. the denominator ‘Characteristics’ in Table 9, p.16).

A more sophisticated and elaborated functional description of what the Outdoors offers to its clientele is to be found in the EQFOA ‘Functional Map’ for the Outdoor sector. This Functional Map describes the key purpose of the Outdoors as:

*“To provide positive opportunities for managed experiences in challenging outdoor activities to enjoy, learn or develop through the provision of effective services and products that meet and/or exceed individual’s expectations and potential.”*²⁹

So No, outdoor companies do not organise or sell sport.

3.2 Positioning of EC-OE

Up till 2008 when EC-OE was set up, organising and selling outdoor activities was hardly recognised as an economic activity. Even in those few countries where Outdoor employers federations existed, these federations mostly focused on trying to solve day-to-day local problems. The business as such was not really scrutinised.

Consequently - and certainly on the EU policy level - if appropriate, the Outdoors from time to time was taken into account but mostly was considered to be no more than a marginal phenomenon.

Things only started to change from ± 2005 onwards when the French employers federation Snepsalpa (now France Plein Air) launched the idea of

²⁷ Smulders, H., The impact of a European Qualification Framework on the organisation of outdoor activities within the EU:

www.bfno.be/files/Presentation%20H.%20Smulders%20Vierumaaki.pdf , 2008

²⁸ www.eqfoa.eu , Industrial Occupational Map of the Outdoor Sector, p.11, 2006

²⁹ www.eqfoa.eu , Industry Functional Map for the Outdoor Sector, p. 4, 2006

starting up the Leonardo da Vinci EQFOA project. Thus bringing together stakeholders from different countries and from different structures.

Since the start of the EQFOA project, and certainly since the foundation of EC-OE, the Outdoors swiftly matured. Anno 2016 EC-OE represents employer’s federations from 8 different European countries and has excellent contacts in many other countries. (Appendix 2)

Without doubt EC-OE became the only specialised employers federation representative for the Outdoors within the EU. Moreover, it is the mission of EC-OE to be **‘the voice of the European Outdoors’**.

3.3 Positioning of the Outdoors

In fact, positioning EC-OE is positioning the Outdoors as well.

As EC-OE indeed is the only European umbrella organisation representative for the Outdoors, EC-OE will act accordingly. The latter implying - amongst other things – that EC-OE will support and defend the unique position of the Outdoors within the European Sport & Active Leisure scene.

Referring to the first preliminary conclusion (cfr. p. 14-15) this means that EC-OE considers the Outdoors to be an important and distinguished segment of the 5 identified segments of the European sport & Active Leisure sector.

The European Sport & Active Leisure Sector³⁰

SPORT			ACTIVE LEISURE		
Professional Sport	Voluntary Sport		Outdoors	Fitness	Industrial Leisure
50.000	250.000	Workers	400.000	?	

EC-OE therefore commits itself to be a full partner – and stakeholder for the Outdoors - within the European sport & Active Leisure sector, and as such to contribute in a positive sense to the further development of this sector.

Obviously EC-OE will also have to deal with ‘internal affairs’ related to the Outdoors such as for example, environmental issues, liability, VAT, social dialogue, etc., etc.

³⁰ Table 8: The 5 segments of the sport & active leisure sector (EC-OE, 2009) – cfr. p. 14-15.

3.4 Active Leisure Alliance

As the EU-wide **representatives** of the Outdoor and of the Fitness Industries are identified as the main actors of the Active Leisure sector according to the Eurofound Study on Representativeness³¹ and as defined within the NACE Rev.2 classifications of 93.13 (Fitness facilities) and 93.29 (Other amusement and recreation activities) which represents some 80.000 private companies, employing approximately 500.000 of the 800.000 employees of the whole 'Sports and Active Leisure' sector (Vocasport, 2004)³² the European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE) and the European Health and Fitness Association confirmed their cooperation to create the **Active Leisure Alliance (ALA)**. The statement of cooperation was signed in Brussels on the 23rd of November 2012.

The principle objectives of the cooperation and alliance between EC-OE and EHFA³³ are to:

- Declare their respectful entire **autonomy of representation** as far as social dialogue issues in the Sport and Active Leisure sector are concerned at the European level;
- **Recognise each other** as particularly significant and largely unchallenged in their respective position **as the EU-wide representatives of the Active Leisure Sector**;
- **Actively cooperate** in the representation of the employers of the Active Leisure Sector, particularly for Social Dialogue issues;
- **Jointly declare their immediate availability** for their participation to the construction of social dialogue within the 'Sport and Active Leisure' Social Dialogue Committee;
- Jointly decide to bring the present statement to the sector's partners' knowledge and that of the European Commission,

Gradually the Active Leisure Alliance enabled both EC-OE and EuropeActive to join forces and to participate in several EU projects mainly in the area of Social Dialogue (DIAL) and recently also in the area of EQF / International Qualifications (SIQAF).³⁴

³¹ Representativeness study on Sport and active leisure industry; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/comparative-information/representativeness-of-the-european-social-partner-organisations-sport-and-active-leisure-industry>

³² Vocasport (2004), project pages 17 & 74, supported by the European Commission (DG Education and Culture, Contract n° 2003-4463/001-001)

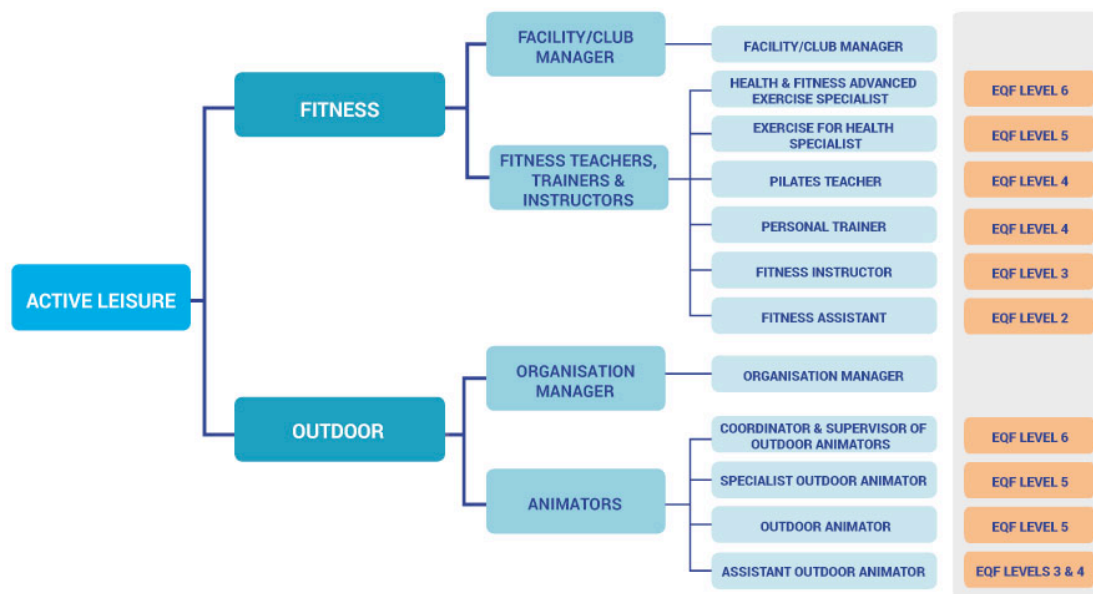
³³ In 2015 EHFA changed its name to EuropeActive

³⁴ <http://www.active-leisure-alliance.eu/projects>

The representativeness of the Active Leisure Alliance is also articulated through the increasing number of consultations of both EC-OE and EuropeActive by EU authorities and research organisations alike.

A major EU project, both EC-OE and EuropeActive were invited to participate in, is ESCO. ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.³⁵

The main outcome of ESCO for the Active Leisure Alliance (ALA) is the Active Leisure organogram drawn up by ALA.



Within the context of this article, the most important feature of this organogram however, is the accompanying set of definitions and descriptions of skills and competences.³⁶

The Outdoor sector was defined as:

(The Outdoor sector) “ Uses outdoor related activities (canoe, rafting, horse riding, etc.) as the basis of delivery of a recreational or personal development service. The outdoor sector uses qualified animators or instructors to deliver these outdoor activities in a context of fun, recreation, tourism, outdoor learning or engagement with the natural environment. Outdoor providers do not generally offer competitions.”

During eight consecutive DIAL project meetings (cfr. p. 19), the proposed definitions for ‘Active Leisure’ ‘Fitness’ and ‘Outdoor’, have been discussed, amended and validated by some 150 delegates representing 20 different EU member states.³⁷

³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

³⁶ <http://www.active-leisure-alliance.eu/about-ala>

³⁷ <http://www.ehfa-programmes.eu/node/20>

With this agreement on sector definitions, the recognition and representation of Active Leisure can now be fully realised.

At this stage it is believed that it is fair to state that the cycle of first '**identifying**', then '**describing**' has finally culminated in '**defining**' the Outdoors. However, it is important to bear in mind that as society in general is dynamic, consequently definitions such as for the Outdoors can also be subject to change over time.

In Conclusion

Basically the initial purpose of this article was to summarize the results obtained from a brainstorming exercise done during the 2009 General Assembly of EC-OE to identify the Outdoors.³⁸ As it turned out, awareness grew that it would be necessary to first analyse the position of the Outdoors within the wider European context of 'Sport & Active Leisure'.

After identifying and then describing the Outdoors the tools became available to position the Outdoors within the broader European context. The latter then provoked the question of representativeness and the need to clearly define the sector.

In fact during this process we came across four milestones that seem to have marked the identification of the Outdoors:

1. The Vocasport report published in 2004;
2. The creation of the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** in 2008;
3. The EU Eurofound Representativeness study in 2012;
4. The Active Leisure Alliance (2012).

1) By analysing the **Vocasport** report and consequently scrutinizing the so called 'Sport & Active Leisure' scene, it became clear that the Outdoors are undoubtedly to be considered as an **autonomous segment** of this scene.

Two other very significant elements that really had a stimulating effect on the process of describing the Outdoors as presented in Table 9 (cfr. p.16) must be highlighted as well:

- The reviewed European NACE code (93.2) expressing the economic status of the sector;
- A French court ruling (2005) stating that leisure activities – in this case: paintball - cannot be considered as sport because of the absence of competition, regular training and agreed rules.³⁹

*“ Considérant qu'il ressort des pièces du dossier que le « paintball », **largement pratiqué comme une activité de loisir, ne s'adresse pas nécessairement à des sportifs qui recherchent la performance physique au cours de compétitions***

³⁹ Conseil d'Etat statuant au contentieux N° **258190** lecture du mercredi 13 avril 2005

organisées de manière régulière sur la base de règles bien définies ; qu'ainsi, en se fondant, pour refuser à la FEDERATION DE PAINTBALL SPORTIF l'agrément qu'elle sollicitait, sur le motif que le paintball ne présente pas le caractère d'une discipline sportive au sens du I de l'article 16 précité de la loi du 16 juillet 1984,

A similar judgement was pronounced in 2008 regarding 'la Fédération des Activités Aquatiques d'Eveil et de Loisir (F.A.A.E.L.)'.⁴⁰

2) The creation of **EC-OE** in 2008 enabled the Outdoors to claim its legitimate place within the European 'Sport & Active Leisure' scene. Moreover, the swift growth of EC-OE is indicative for the need expressed by the sector to be represented at the EU level by a representative umbrella organisation.

Regards the impact our sector can have on decision making, reference can be made to a recent Portuguese law (2009) instigated by APECATE, the Portuguese EC-OE partner. This law stipulates that only commercial companies are entitled to organise and sell 'active tourism' and 'adventurous tourism activities' to the public; the field of action for non-for-profit organisations thus being legally limited to their members.⁴¹

As has been indicated earlier (cfr. p.18) EC-OE indeed commits itself to be the 'voice of the European Outdoors'.

3) Alongside the work delivered by EC-OE since its creation in 2008, comes the Eurofound study on **representativeness** (2012). Representativeness is key to be operational and acceptable as a reliable partner both at national and at International (EU) level. The latter e.g. is expressed clearly in the very first sentence of the 'Project Summary' (written by the EU), of the newly (2016) awarded SIQAF project in:⁴²

" The representative sector organisations of EuropeActive and EC-OE ... "

Moreover, dealing with such issues as social dialogue and sector skills it is imperative that all partners (i.e. employers, employees and trade unions as well as political decision makers) fully understand who their counterparts are and who or what these counterparts represent.

4) Needless to justify once more why the Outdoors - within the wider scope of **Active Leisure Alliance** – is to be considered as an autonomous entity within the broader European Sport and Active Leisure scene.

The field of action for EC-OE is double. Obviously on the internal level the focus will always be on organising, informing, promoting, ... the Outdoor

⁴⁰ Conseil d'État N° 308568 lecture du lundi 3 mars 2008

⁴¹ Ministério da Economia, Inovação e Desenvolvimento, Decreto-lei n° 108/2009 de 15 de Maio.

⁴² <http://www.active-leisure-alliance.eu/projects/active-leisure-efq>

sector whereas on the external level, the 'modus operandi' for EC-OE to a large extent, will be the Active Leisure Alliance (ALA).

Together with our partners from the Fitness sector (EuropeActive) we will promote and represent Active Leisure by participating in, or launching e.g. European research projects deemed proper for the sector. Priority will be given to such matters as EQF related projects with special interests in 'recognition of qualifications', 'training issues', 'mobility of workers & outdoor companies', 'social dialogue' and the development of a 'sector skills'.

Huldenberg (BE) – 07-10-2016

APPENDIX 1

List of Outdoor activities (EQFOA, 2008) ⁴³

Lakes & sea	Snow	Earth	Stream	Air
<i>Main Activities</i>	<i>Main Activities</i>	<i>Main Activities</i>	<i>Main Activities</i>	<i>Main Activities</i>
Beach games	Alpine skiing	Group A	Canoeing	Hot air balloon
Board surfing	Cross country skiing	Hiking - Walking	Fishing	Parachuting
Body board surfing	Ice fishing	Nature discovering	Hydro speed	Paragliding
Buggy sailing	Ice skating	Nordic walking	Kayaking	Parapenting
Canoeing	Kick sledding	Orienteering	Rafting	ULM flying
Deep sea fishing	Kite skiing	Group B	Rapid swimming	
Diving	Mountaineering	4X4 driving		
Jet skiing	Musher	ATB biking		
Kayaking	New tools	Cycling		
Kite surfing	Ski joering	Horse back riding		
Parasailing	Ski trekking	Quad riding		
Sailing	Sledding	Roller skating		
Wake boarding	Snow shoes trekking			
Water skiing	Snowboarding	Group C		
Wind surfing	Snowmobile	Abseiling		
	Telemark skiing	Bungee jumping		
		Canyoning		
		Caving		
		High ropes parks		
		Rock climbing		
		Via ferrata		
		Group D		
		Archery		
		Assault courses		
		Paint ball		
		Shooting activities		

⁴³ www.eqfoa.eu, occupational map, p.11

APPENDIX 2

EC-OE anno 2016

Full members:

Belgium: www.bfno.be

Czech Republic: nihil

France: www.francepleinair.fr

Greece: www.hateoa.gr

The Netherlands: www.vebon.nl

Portugal: www.apecate.pt

Spain: www.aneta.es

Switzerland: www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch

Associated:

Albania

Bulgaria

Estonia

Hungary

Romania