

Defining the ‘Outdoors’

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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 ‘the 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 these kind of activities were organised by many thousands of very small businesses and consequently provide for an income for even more thousands of people throughout the EU.

Simultaneously, through a multitude of contacts the EC-OE felt the need to define more precisely the field of action they were involved with. The latter is what this article is all about: defining the outdoors.

The first part of this article will focus on ‘**identifying**’ the outdoors within a European context. The second part will then focus on ‘**defining**’ the outdoors. And finally, the third part of this article will be devoted to ‘**positioning**’ EC-OE and ‘the outdoors’ within the overall ‘Sport & Active Leisure’ scene.

1. Identification of ‘Sport’, ‘Active Leisure’ & the ‘Outdoors’

1.1 The European context: European umbrella organisations

In the 1990’s begin 2000, 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 the sport for all federation (FISPT) ¹, the International lifesaving federation (ILSF) ² etc., etc. are also operational for many years.

The ‘new phenomenon’ we are referring to in this article are 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), ‘Erasmus’ (higher education)...

¹ www.fispt.org/
² www.ilsf.org/

Organisations such as ENSSEE (1989)³, ENGSO (1995)⁴, EOSE (2002)⁵, EASE (2003)⁶, 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. 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.”⁷

Key concepts in the context of the EQF are : **comparability of qualifications, mobility of workers and lifelong learning.**

Evolving from the introduction of the EQF, a number of European organisations in 2005 decided to join forces to coordinate their contribution to the further development of the EQF. To achieve this goal the European Sport Workforce Development Alliance (ESWDA) - later to become the ‘**Alliance**’ - was created. In fact the ‘Alliance’ is an informal partnership of European stakeholders involved in the sports sector. Other European organisations active in the sport and active leisure sector can at all times apply for membership.

EOSE acts as the facilitator of the Alliance.

1.2 ‘Active Leisure’ employer federations

Probably the oldest Employer federations in Europe are the ‘Beroepsfederatie van Natuursportondernemingen’ (BFNO) in Belgium and the Dutch

³ 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.”

⁴ 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.”

⁵ 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). “

⁶ www.easesport.org ; The European Association for Sports Employers was created in 2003 to “ address social affairs linked to the sport at European level ”.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

‘Vereniging Buitensport Ondernemingen Nederland’ (VeBON). The BFNO⁸ was created in 1989 and the VeBON⁹ in 1991.

Both employer 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 specialised segment to be organised. Moreover, the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) established in 2001, was probably the first employers federation to be organised on a European level.¹⁰

More recently in 2008 the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** was founded.¹¹

Employers from Belgium (BFNO), The Netherlands (VeBON), France (SNELM), 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).¹²

During that EQFOA project these federations decided to join forces and to establish the EC-OE.¹³

In 2009 EC-OE welcomed Spain and in 2010 Switzerland as two new full members and Estonia as an associated member.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

In this study a presentation of the sports sector was made. This presentation led to the conclusion that the sports sector is made up of several segments around the production of differentiated services.¹⁶

- 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 : They are organized either by associations (an increasing number of which are also present in the competitive sports sector), or by businesses, often very small businesses. Each sporting leisure field (fitness, horse riding, sailing,

⁸ www.bfno.be

⁹ www.vebon.nl

¹⁰ www.ehfa.eu

¹¹ www.ec-oe.eu (under construction)

¹² www.eqfoa.eu

¹³ www.bfno.be ; www.vebon.nl ; www.snelm.org ; www.apecate.pt ; www.ilam.ie

¹⁴ www.aneta.es ; www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch

¹⁵ EOSE (2004), *Vocasport*, 180 pp.

¹⁶ o.c., pp. 16 – 17.

winter sports, racket sports, etc.) has its own particular features and its own identity. Some of them are faced with problems of 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, 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. ¹⁷

In conclusion one might state 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 on the ‘sporting leisure pursuits’ sector !

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, the Alliance, and last but not least EC-OE all refer to ‘active leisure’ as part of their field of action or as their core business (EC-OE). From time to time it is not even clear why certain organisations refer to active leisure’. EASE e.g. that is structurally dependent from the French Olympic Committee ¹⁸ and as such – as one could presume – should be focussed on the segment of ‘competitive association sport’ also pretends to represent the ‘active leisure’ segment.

*“ Le sport est perçu comme un tout même si des sous-secteurs sont identifiés. Le fonctionnement de EASE s’appuie donc sur **4 commissions** afin d’englober les intérêts spécifiques des sous-secteurs du sport : sport professionnel, sport associatif, fitness, loisirs de plein air.”* ¹⁹

It’s interesting to note that EASE on the one hand apparently seems to omit the segment of ‘Social sport’ and on the other hand identifies ‘fitness’ and ‘loisirs de plein air’ as separate segments. ²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸ <http://www.easesport.eu>

¹⁹ <http://cosmos.asso.fr/art.php?id=4381>

²⁰ It’s even more interesting to note that EASE uses 2 different web addresses: .org & .eu . If one uses the .eu address one ends up on the web site of the “Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français” !

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) ²¹ and the outdoors:

- 1) EQFOA: European standards for Outdoor Animators ²²
- 2) CLO2 : Professionalizing training and mobility for Outdoor animators in Europe bridging the gap between sector Competences and Learning Otcomes ²³

Although it was never really specified more explicit, up till now it seems that '**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 2004 figures) in the 'sporting leisure pursuits' segment can be fine-tuned by attributing 100.000 to 'fitness' and 300.000 to the 'outdoors'.
- 2) **Active Leisure** seems to be more appropriate to describe what was originally identified as the segment of 'sporting leisure pursuits'.
- 3) Too 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 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

²¹ <http://www.ehfa.eu/39.html>

²² www.eqfoa.eu

²³ <http://www.clo-2.eu/home/>

2. From identifying to 'defining' active leisure

2.1 Approach

After analysing the context in which 'active leisure' is to be comprehended and after describing 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 European sports scene. (cfr. part 1)

It now becomes necessary to really 'define' what we consider 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 our analysis (cfr. part 1) we then subdivided 'active leisure' 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 sports & 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 collect by means of brainstorming by the delegates of 8 European Outdoor Employers Federations. Afterwards the same brainstorming exercise was repeated several times at national employers meetings.

Beforehand it was agreed that:

- we would approach this exercise from the point of view of an outdoor company manager,
- we would focus on the characteristics of the 'outdoors' without expressing appreciations on the other segments,
- we realized 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 we wanted to 'define' active leisure / outdoors without even trying to define 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 ‘Outdoors’.

2.2 Denominators

2.2.1 Economic sector

As outdoor companies obviously realise that they are 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 ‘sports’ 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 and Ministers of Sport.

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

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

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	

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 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	
Leagues & Federations		Counterparts	Employees Unions	

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.
- 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
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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 their 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 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	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	

Training / workout / practice	The Job	Vocational education / on the job training
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Spectators	Members	Target group	Clients	Clients
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Entry/TV/Sponsoring	Member fees /Subsidies	Revenue	Service purchase
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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 a 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 appeal 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, 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 framework, we have tried to indicate how the sector itself thinks 'the outdoors' really should be defined.

As we indicated in the beginning (cfr. approach, p. 6) 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 'define' active leisure / outdoors without even trying to define the other segments.

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

In reverse we also realized that – although we meant not to interfere with other segments - during this exercise we often experienced some 'noise' or even overlap between concepts.

2.3.1 1° conclusion : the need to reframe the segments of the 'sport & active leisure sector'

As a starting point we positioned '**sport**' in opposition to '**active leisure**'.

Using the Vocasport²⁵ approach, we then subdivided 'sport' into '**professional sport**' and '**voluntary sport**'.

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

Recreational activities were perceived as being 'the outdoors & fitness'. (p. 6)

At the end of the exercise it 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 not sold as a package (food, drinks, accommodation, etc...) 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

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.16-17

Putting all these arguments together brings us 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	300.000	100.000	?

Table 8: The 5 segments of the sport & 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: defining 'the outdoors' proper

Up till now we focused 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 we distinguished twelve (12) denominators.²⁶

The next logical step now is to separate the 'outdoors' from the comparison with the other segments (Table 7, p.12). The latter results in defining 'the outdoors' proper as is illustrated in Table 9 (p. 15).

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

²⁶ Due to dynamics in society in general, these 12 denominators by consequence can also be subject to change.

Defining 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 / Economics ; Ministry of Tourism
Counterpart	Employees Unions
Characteristics	<p>Small & Medium size enterprises</p> <p>Fun / Pleasure / Personal Development / Tourism</p> <p>Paid Employees</p> <p>Animators (mainly focused on service competences)</p> <p>Packages / Multi Activity Offers</p>
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. The content: outdoor activities

The ‘outdoors’ – through the 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 “*sporting*” activities but implements or translates these activities if you like, into a leisurely context: no competition, no training, etc. ...

In most 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.15).

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 don’t 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 employer 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 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.

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

Things only started to change from ± 2005 onwards when the French employers federation Snepsalpa (now SNELM) launched the idea of 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 2010 EC-OE represents employers federations from 8 different European countries (± 1/3 of the EU) 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. 13-14) this means that EC-OE considers the 'outdoors' to be one – and in absolute numbers the most important one – 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	300.000	100.000	?

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.

The latter without doubt subject of another article.

³⁰ Table 8: The 5 segments of the sport & active leisure sector (EC-OE, 2009) – cfr. p. 13-14.

In Conclusion

Basically the initial purpose of this article was to summarize the results obtained from a brainstorming exercise done during the General Assembly of EC-OE to 'identify' the outdoors.³¹ 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'.

Finally, after 'identifying' and then 'defining' the outdoors the tools became available to 'position' the outdoors within the broader European context.

In fact during this process we came across two 'milestones' that seem to have marked the identification of the 'outdoors':

- The Vocasport report published in 2004
- The creation of the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** in 2008

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

We would like to underpin just two very significant elements that really had a stimulating effect on the process to define the outdoors as presented in Table 9 (cfr. p. 15) :

- The European NACE code (93.2)
- 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.³²

“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 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'Éveil et de Loisir (F.A.A.E.L.)'.³³

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 on the EU level by a **representative** umbrella organisation.

Finally reference can be made to a very recent Portuguese law (2009) stipulating that only commercial companies are entitled to organise and sell

³¹ Huldenberg – Belgium, 20-22 Nov. 2009

³² Conseil d'État statuant au contentieux N° **258190** lecture du mercredi 13 avril 2005

³³ Conseil d'État N° **308568** lecture du lundi 3 mars 2008

'active tourism' and 'adventurous tourism activities' to the public. The field of action of non-for-profit organisations is legally limited to their members.³⁴

Needless to justify once more why the 'outdoors' - within the wider scope of 'Sport & Active Leisure' – are to be considered as an autonomous segment.

As has been indicated earlier (cfr. p. 17), EC-OE therefore commits itself to be the 'voice of the European Outdoors'.

The field of action for EC-OE in fact can be sub-divided in two levels: an 'external level' and an 'internal level'.

On the 'external level' EC-OE will promote and represent the 'outdoors' by participating in, or launching e.g. European research projects deemed proper for the sector. Priority will be given to EQF related projects with special interests in 'comparability of qualifications', 'mobility of workers & outdoor companies' and 'lifelong learning'.

On the 'internal level' identified priorities are 'consumer safety' and 'social dialogue'.

Huldenberg – Belgium, 12/02/2010

³⁴ Ministério da Economia, Inovação e Desenvolvimento, Decreto-lei n° 108/2009 de 15 de Maio.

APPENDIX 1

List of Outdoor activities (EQFOA, 2008) ³⁵

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		Rapid swimming	
Diving	Mountaineering	Group B		
Jet skiing	Musher	4X4 driving		
Kayaking	New tools	ATB biking		
Kite surfing	Ski joering	Cycling		
Parasailing	Ski trekking	Horse back riding		
Sailing	Sledding	Quad riding		
Wake boarding	Snow shoes trekking	Roller skating		
Water skiing	Snowboarding			
Wind surfing	Snowmobile	Group C		
	Telemark skiing	Abseiling		
		Bungee jumping		
		Canyoning		
		Caving		
		High ropes parks		
		Rock climbing		
		Via ferrata		
		Group D		
		Archery		
		Assault courses		
		Paint ball		
		Shooting activities		

³⁵ www.eqfoa.eu, occupational map, p.11

APPENDIX 2

EC-OE anno 2010

Full members:

Belgium: www.bfno.be

France: www.snelm.org

Ireland: www.ilam.ie

The Netherlands: www.vebon.nl

Portugal: www.apecate.pt

Spain: www.estiloactivo.es/que-es-aneta.php

Switzerland: www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch

Associated members:

Estonia: nihil