

Promotion of a dialogue and a strong link between employment, education and training at the regional, national and European level between all key stakeholders of the Sport and Active Leisure sector

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INTRODUCTION

Sport is fun, sport is healthy, and sport already plays a positive role in the lives of millions of Europeans. Around sport has emerged a growing but immature industry which has the potential to unlock even greater benefits to nations and individual citizens; benefits in terms of health, society, the economy and jobs.

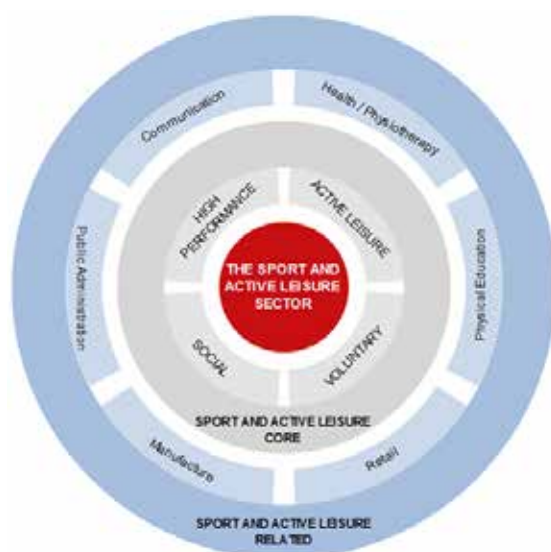


Fig 1. The Sport and Active Leisure sector

¹ Thierry Zintz is also Chair of the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE) and director of the MEMOS (Executive Master in Management of Sport Organisations, a co-organisation of the IOC and 12 universities in the World). He is the vice-president of the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee.

The challenge is to build an industry with a workforce that can deliver this potential, bringing increased health and wealth across Europe. (...) Driven by volunteers, the Sport and Active Leisure sector (Fig. 1) is a people facing sector where a skilled and qualified workforce (paid staff and volunteers), from the grassroots level to the high performance end of the spectrum, is paramount to its success (EOSE, 2011b).

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The Sport and Active Leisure sector has the potential to make a huge impact on the economy, the health of a nation and social cohesion.

It is worth to notice² that the total population of the 28 countries of the European Union is approximately 505 million people. 305 million citizens (61%) are physically active at least once a week. 200 million citizens (40%) play sport at least once a week. 700 000 sport associations exist in the 28 countries of the European Union The Sport and Active Leisure sector represents on average 1.6 % of the GDP of the EU members. The economic added value of the sport sector is bigger than agriculture and fishery combined. There is no updated data on employment but it is admitted that over 1.5 million persons are employed in the sector.

This potential is being increasingly recognized by government at national and European level. Their expectations challenge the traditional models of delivery of sport and are bringing new business opportunities into a sector that has been dominated by voluntary and public sector led provision (EOSE, 2011b) (Falcoz & Walter, 2009).

If the sector is to capitalize on these opportunities and meet these challenges, it has to continue to change and evolve (Zintz & Camy, 2005) (Zintz & Vailleau, 2008).

A key component is the workforce (paid and unpaid). It is a people facing sector and to deliver new and different opportunities for everyone to participate in sport and physical activity then the sector must have a workforce with the right skills to lead and deliver to a new and expanding market.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Sport and Active Leisure provides a framework for the development of a strategic approach to ensure that vocational education, training and qualifications (VET system) exist to support the development of this workforce.

As a growing and promising sector, it must adapt and evolve to meet its potential as a major contributor to society (impact on economic, health and social inclusion)

² Source: Eurobarometer, March 2010 & Study on the economic value of sport in the EU, November 2012

while delivering new and different opportunities for everyone to participate in sport and physical activity (EOSE, 2011b) (Bauger et all, 2004).

MAIN EDUCATION AND TRAINING CHALLENGES IN THE SPORT AND ACTIVE LEISURE SECTOR

To respond to these changes, there are a number of key issues in the field of education and employment which need to be considered if the sector is to achieve its potential:

- Employers need well trained employees able to match the requirements of more demanding customers and participants;
- Courses and qualifications are often not regarded as appropriate by employers and sport federations (EOSE, 2011a);
- The sector lacks a clear career structure showing how to enter and progress a career through the sector. This is needed in order to attract the best people and particularly to give graduates the opportunity to find employment in the sector;
- There is poor communication and co-operation between the different stakeholders because of the fragmentation of the sector and the lack of organised contact between employers and the VET providers;
- Sport training often sits outside the national qualification structure in many countries;
- Consequently the sector is not delivering its potential as an economic and social driver.

A RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING CHALLENGES: INTRODUCING THE LLL SPORT STRATEGY

EOSE (2011b) has developed a coordinated response to education and training entitled the Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Sport and Active Leisure sector (LLL Sport Strategy).

The LLL Sport Strategy has been mainly produced in order to:

- Understand and anticipate realities, changes and future skills needs of the labour market;
- Organize the sector in support of the European policies and strategic initiatives especially the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET);
- Promote a transparent and flexible education and training system with clear learning and career pathways;
- Engage main stakeholders from the sector;
- Facilitate the link between the worlds of education and employment;

- Match education and training to the needs of the labour market.

This should be done while taking into account three specific challenges regarding education and employment:

- Courses and qualifications are often not regarded as appropriate by sport organizations;
- The sector is fragmented and there is a poor communication and cooperation between stakeholders;
- Sport training often sits outside national qualification structure in many countries (EOSE, 2011a).

The approach entitled Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Sport sector (or 7 steps model) was developed to understand the realities of the labour market, facilitate the link between the worlds of education and employment, equip the workforce with the right skills, and improve the recognition of competences and qualifications. It has been designed to be flexible and can be applied consistently to the sector as a whole, a sub-sector, an individual sport, a specific occupation etc.

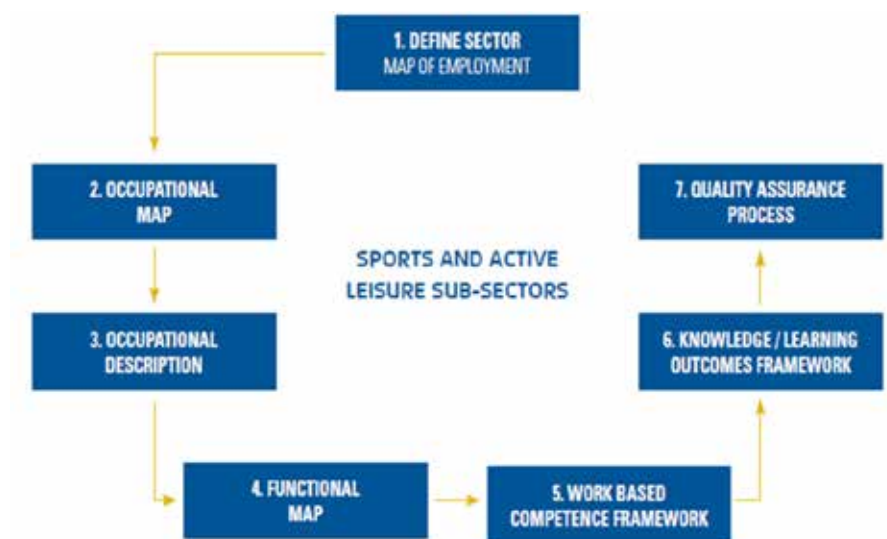


Fig 2. The Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Sport sector

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ATHLETES: MOBILITY AND DUAL CAREER

In the framework of an on-going study entitled “Feasibility Study on possible future Mobility Measures for Sport in EU” (EOSE, 2013), EOSE and its partners³ conducted a survey in 2013 to public authorities, national and international sport governing bodies in the 27 member states of the European Union. More than 400 organizations participated in this survey. We underline interesting findings related to the education and training mobility of non-professional athletes with special consideration to their dual career (Wylleman, 2013), in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Sport sector.

- 83% of respondents (303 organizations) believe that learning mobility can be beneficial or very beneficial for non-professional athletes;
- 86% believe that learning mobility would be beneficial to help the athlete to prepare for his/her second career;
- 65% believe it should support their improvement as an athlete;
- It is here that the dilemma lies – should mobility support sporting development or broader education or both?
- Athletes need to be able to balance their sporting development with their broader education and employment needs and being able to continue their training and competition commitments are essential;
- This is not a homogeneous group. Athletic and educational achievement are not synonymous and the demands of different sports (winter v summer, and individual v team sports) make planning and co-ordination of mobility a real challenge within a fixed academic year;
- Their course of study or second career may not be in sport or be sport-related;
- Mobility can support both the sporting and educational development of athletes;
- The engagement of National Federations in these programs is seen as important by over 70% of respondents, this would ensure mobility could be linked with high level training;
- The main barriers identified for learning mobility of athletes are the financial constraints, the lack of awareness of opportunities, the lack of guidance and the fact to be considered as not eligible target groups;
- Sport performance is not recognized as a vocational learning outcome in the same way as other occupations (e.g. electrician, plumber).

³ Partners of this study are (1) EOSE, (2) the « Chaire Olympique en Management des Organisations Sportives » at the Faculté des sciences de la motricité - Université catholique de Louvain, and (3) Sport and Citizenship.

CONCLUSION

Higher Education linked opportunities to provide better context for athlete students so they can benefit from learning mobility need to be explored. This would require flexibility in educational programming, access to quality sport facilities and services, co-operation between universities and federations and a willingness to share these resources between Member States.

In this context, the presentation delivered by Paul Wylleman at the FISU Rectors' Forum (Umea, 13 June 2013) "Supporting the development of the dual career of talented and elite athletes", is a first but realistic answer to the main concerns that were expressed in the survey of the "Feasibility Study on possible future Mobility Measures for Sport in EU" (EOSE, 2013).

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