

Result 15

Report on the feasibility of developing a European register of Outdoor Professionals



Lifelong Learning Programme

The CLO2 project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the view only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

This report has been produced by the CLO2 partnership and the main objective of the work was to explore for the first time the feasibility and possibilities of developing a European Register of Professionals for the Outdoors sector.

In order to define what we mean by Outdoor sector, we are going to refer to some elements of the content of the “Industry Occupational map of the Outdoor Sector” developed through the EQFOA Leonardo da Vinci project 2006-2008.

In that document it is mentioned that the Outdoors provides an expansive and diverse range of experiences that span the spectrum of human activity comprising learning and recreation.

The sector uses mainly outdoors activities/sports and related activities as the basis for delivery. In the main, a common feature of these is their focus on the natural environment, with some notable exceptions, such as artificial climbing walls.

These outcomes may range from purely personally recreational, through social recreation, to use of the activity as a vehicle for learning and development in the personal and interpersonal (and even into relatively new areas such as adventure therapy). Finally, the activity can be used as a basis for formal school-based learning in areas such as science, natural history, geology, mathematics etc.

The main thematic areas of the outdoors may be seen as:

- **Outdoor Recreation** (In some countries, the word “adventure” is used as a positive addition in terms such as adventurous activities, adventure travel, adventure tourism, outdoor adventure. However, in some countries, adventure is not a positive term, so care must be taken. Our generic terms is “the outdoors”);
- **Outdoor Education** (or outdoor learning), including formal, informal, personal, interpersonal;
- **Development Training** (often sited as the adult/corporate/organizational version of children and young people’s personal and interpersonal education);

To these traditional three, two or more additional areas can be added:

- **Sports Development** (relatively limited area of the gaining formal outdoor sports qualifications and skills for educators, and trainers);
- **Expeditions and exploration:** a rapidly growing area that is now seen as having its own specific characteristics and needs, but with strong links to the other areas such as recreation and education;
- **Adventure Therapy:** new and developing: utilizing the outdoors and activities as the basis for therapeutic interventions to promote healing and learning in the area of psychological and personal problems.

There are extensive overlaps between the areas, depending on exactly the activity chosen and the purpose for which it is being used.

Many providers of Outdoors Activities engage their operations taking account of this overlap and offer 2, 3 or even more of the sub-sectors. This may be for commercial, logistical and/or other reasons.

For those looking in from ‘outside’ the outdoors, the sector can appear difficult to understand in terms of activities, structure, organisations, etc.

To help map out what we mean by the outdoors, it is useful to think of it in terms of three key variables:

➤ **Outdoors Activity Purpose/Objectives**

- recreation
- outdoor sport
- personal/interpersonal learning and development
- outdoors/adventure therapy
- education (curriculum/academic related – schools, FE/HE)
- corporate/work performance

➤ **Participants/Customers/Clients**

- individuals
- families
- groups (social, education, work)
- children, young people/youth groups
- adults

➤ **Outdoors Activity Delivery – Organisations/Types**

Organised and/or delivered by:

- participants themselves
- sole traders/individual service providers
- small, medium and large organisations
- commercial, public, not-for-profit/charities, voluntary
- specialist organisations or part of a larger diverse one (e.g. in tourism/hospitality)

At this early stage, the goal is not to create and implement a European Register of Professionals but to conduct extensive desk research to search for relevant and concrete examples and good models of existing registers already implemented in the Sport and Active Leisure sector and elsewhere.

This work has the goal to also highlight the benefits a Register could have for the sector and the main stakeholders such as the employers, employees, training providers, students etc.

Indeed, the principle needs of the Outdoor sector in relation to qualifications and workforce development have been identified before building the project, mainly through employer representative bodies and can be summarised as follows:

- An accredited, comparable and transparent sector qualification structure;
- Training programmes matching employer and market needs;
- High quality, trained employees;
- The mobility of appropriately qualified employees to be encouraged and enabled.

The CLO2 project (building upon work from the previous EQFOA project) took a huge step towards meeting these needs as the work has been implemented to provide a relevant solution jointly agreed by employers and training providers to encourage and maintain the continued growth and development of the sector labour market.

Until now, there has been no formal link at European level between the competences required by outdoor employers and organisations, and the learning outcomes acquired by the employees through training supplied by training providers, no matter how good this training may have been.

In other words, never have European outdoor employers mutually agreed the functions and competences they required, nor has a bridge ever been established between these requirements and the vocational and educational training provided by training bodies. The first step, the development of a range of integrated documents including Occupational Descriptions for Assistant Outdoor Animator, Outdoor Animator and Specialised Outdoor Animator roles, plus a Functional Map and a Competence Framework for the Outdoor Animator role, was completed under the previous EQFOA – European Qualifications Framework Outdoor Animator project (www.eqfoa.eu) supported by Leonardo de Vinci.

The main aim of this follow-on European outdoors project entitled CLO2 (www.clo-2.eu/home) is to bridge from EQFOA's Functional Map and Competence Framework, to the skills and learning outcomes delivered by the training providers in the field.

The partners working together to achieve these ambitious and fundamental activities have been selected for their particular competences in the fields addressed:

- firstly a group of outdoor employers' unions responsible for analysing and fine-tuning the results of the EQFOA project (Occupational map, Functional Map and Competence Framework for Outdoor Animators), in order to present it to training providers in a logical and detailed way;
- secondly a group of training providers that was responsible to establish the learning/knowledge outcomes needed by future students/trainees in order to match the competences requested, and to set a coherent methodology for a quality assurance framework within the field in Europe;
- A third group composed of the main sector European organisations has helped and supported the consortium to achieve and disseminate the work efficiently.

2. Working methodology

The working methodology and responsibilities of each partner within that process were presented and described in details in the operational manual distributed and presented to the whole partnership during the 1st Full Partner Meeting at the start of the project.

The activity to explore the feasibility of developing a European Register of Professionals for the Outdoors was mainly led by SkillsActive who has practical experience in the running of a national Register for Fitness Professionals in the UK composed of almost 30,000 registered individuals.

The work has been managed through extensive desk research for good practices and existing Registers of Professionals within and outside the sector across the world. From that desk research a draft report, including a precise definition of a Register of Professionals, a SWOT analysis, some existing Registers at the International/European & National levels and of course an investigation into the relevance for the Outdoors to develop such a tool, was developed for discussion and consultation with the whole partnership and main European stakeholders of the sector. Some feedback was received and the report was unanimously accepted as a starting point to aid further consideration.

The Register could be imagined as a central feature of the professionalism of the industry that is essential to giving customers, users, citizens and partners the necessary level of confidence in the quality of services provided by outdoor professionals. Registration could then signify that an Outdoor professional has met certain standards of good practice and so is competent and qualified to do their job.

II. THE CONCEPT OF REGISTER OF PROFESSIONALS

1. What is a Register of Professionals?

The simplest way of describing a register of professionals is as a public list of names. A register holds a database of the names of people who work in a particular sector (as paid and unpaid staff) and this database is usually accessible by the public.

A register can also be described as a system of self-regulation. A register is evidence that a sector can organise itself around a common set of standards and ethics – in industries where health and safety is paramount it could be seen as prudent to self-regulate with standards set by the industry itself so that it is less likely that government seeks to regulate by statute and impose standards which may not be suitable.

Finally a register can be described as a way of improving professionalism in a sector. All registers put in place systems to develop the professionalism and workforce of the sector, for example through setting training standards adapted to the labour market, using recognised qualifications, insisting on appropriate insurance, having a code of ethical practice and having a requirement for continuing professional development.

In other words, a register of professionals brings together individual with the right skills and competences to achieve a certain work in line with the expectations of the employers and the realities of the market.

2. Main purpose and objectives

The main purpose of a register is to advance professionalism in a specific sector. The main way this is done is by ensuring that professionals have the right skills and knowledge and are qualified to safeguard and provide relevant and safe services to the public (participants/clients/customers).

Gaining recognition and respect for a sector from governments and other industries is also a key objective of any new register - if a sector can show, through a register, that it is working to an agreed set of standards and ethics it is more likely to be taken seriously by government and others.

The objectives of a register may also include:

- To provide clarification and recognition of qualifications that meet agreed standards;
- To provide confidence in the quality of services provided by professionals;
- To safeguard the livelihood of professionals who have invested time and money into their education;
- To facilitate the movement between education and employment and provide clear learning and career pathways;
- To protect the public from individuals who do not meet nationally recognised standards or who are not qualified to the required standard;
- To make sure that members work to strict Code of Ethical Practice – this establishes the rights, responsibilities & principles of being a professional;
- To represent and serve the professional interests and status of members.

3. The main benefits for the sector

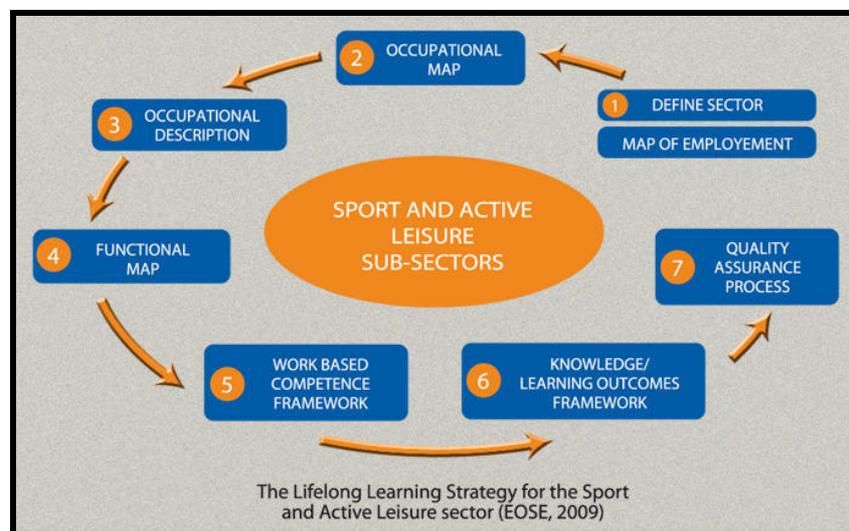
The main benefits to a sector of establishing a register may be listed as follows:

- Clarity on qualifications, employers can easily check and verify who is qualified and has met agreed standards;
- Sector is better recognised and respected by governments;
- Workers see employment in the sector as a career and stay longer –retention of staff by employers increases;

- Workers are qualified, insured and work to a code of practice – so malpractice is less likely;
- The framework of a register automatically provides a qualification structure and career pathways;
- The public will be confident and more likely to use the services of the sector;
- Improved staff performance;
- Commitment to further learning (CPD);
- A register provides an easy way to research skills in the sector and map levels of qualification, which will hopefully rise following the introduction of the register.

4. The Register of Professionals as part of the Quality Assurance process

Through the EQFOA and CLO2 projects the outdoors sector has been putting in place the component parts of a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy. The products which have been developed include an occupational map and occupational descriptors, functional map, work-based competence and learning outcomes framework.



This common Lifelong Learning methodology to develop occupational standards has been developed for the whole Sport and Active Leisure sector through the EQF-Sport project run by EOSE in 2007/2008. The development of occupational standards is industry-led and the content specifies the standards of performance that people are expected to achieve in their work, and the knowledge and skills they need to perform effectively. In other words, standards define the competences, skills & knowledge needed for the jobs of the sector.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy has been designed and developed:

- To organise the Sport and Active Leisure sector in Europe in support of the elements of the European White Paper on Sport published by the European Commission in July 2007 especially related to Vocational Qualifications, EQF, EQARF and ECVET.
- To take the major opportunity created by the EQF to coordinate qualifications & training for VET and HE in the sector.
- To enhance social inclusion, personal development and active citizenship but also employability.
- To promote a transparent and flexible education and training system with clear learning and career pathways and respond to the VET challenges.

- To ensure the development of a competent workforce with the right skills and competences in line with the expectation of the employers in the Sport and Active Leisure sector in Europe.
- To make easier the movement between education and employment & support the Lifelong Learning process
- To develop mobility, transparency and mutual trust of qualifications, raise standards and facilitate the growth of business opportunities.
- To ensure there are qualifications and training that equip people to work in the Sport and Active Leisure sector because many jobs require specific technical knowledge and skills (e.g. health and safety is very important).

The final step in this recognised methodology is a quality assurance process.

Quality assurance involves the Accreditation/Verification of an education or training programme and has been defined as “A process through which accredited status is granted to a programme of education or training, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative or professional authorities by having met predetermined standards” - CEDEFOP 2008

A register of professionals is often involved in the quality assurance process. A register provides a guarantee to employers and the public that its members can work to an agreed standard. This guarantee can only be provided if the register is confident in the qualifications and training that its members have achieved.

A register may therefore provide quality assurance of qualifications, alternatively they may work with a third party who provides the quality assurance of qualifications. Ideally the register will recognise qualifications which have been quality assured by a national qualifications authority and appear on a national qualifications framework, in this case quality assurance provided by the register will not be required.

Through quality assurance a register provides confidence and trust between employers and education. Employers set the work based competences for the industry and the education providers turn this in to learning outcomes. The register ensures that the workers in the industry are working to the standards that the employers set at the start of the process.

5. Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat – SWOT analysis

When considering whether a register of professionals would be appropriate for the outdoors sector it is important to consider all the factors which would impact on the development and implementation of a register. The benefits have to be considered alongside the costs and other issues to be overcome.

The following provides a SWOT analysis for a European Register of Exercise Professionals which is one model the outdoors could consider. See below for an outline of the potential models for a register system in the outdoors. Before any work progressed further on a European register all the issues raised here in the SWOT analysis should be investigated in more detail.

Strengths	Weaknesses
✓ Increased professionalism	✗ Lack of awareness across Europe,
✓ Respect for the sector	✗ Lack of European Body representing the whole sector
✓ Career pathways	✗ Staff needed to make it work
✓ Agreed standards	✗ Other set up costs
✓ Linking Employers and Education	✗ Hard to take account of differences in approach in each country

✓ Mobility of workers	✗ Can't rely on project funding only
✓ Retention of the participants/clients/customers	✗ Recognition by workers
	✗ Low pay
	✗ Seasonal work
	✗ Young workforce
	✗ Link to statutory requirements in each country
Opportunities	Threats
✓ Increased participation in sector	✗ Conflicts with governments, regulators, national qualifications authorities
✓ Mobility of labour	✗ Register not recognised by employers
✓ Staff seeing industry as a career	✗ Infighting in the sector
✓ Less staff turnover	✗ Link between vocational and higher education
✓ Enhanced health and safety	✗ Cost too high to implement
✓ Better service to the public	✗ Tensions with the national level
✓ Retention	✗ Language barriers
✓ Recognition	

III. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF EXISTING REGISTERS OF PROFESSIONALS

When investigating a register or registers of professionals for the outdoors sector there are three main models which could be considered. A European register, individual national registers developed separately or national registers which are linked to a central database using the same standards.

A European register may be the ideal solution to some stakeholders but this would pose the most challenges, including questions over who would manage and operate the register, recognition of the register in different countries and the links between national qualifications frameworks and a European register. Many sectors see it as more appropriate to implement registers at the national level.

National registers can be housed in national outdoor organisations and can have a direct relationship with national qualifications frameworks, national employers and national laws and regulations.

The third option could be to have a networked of linked registers mapping to standards which have been developed at the European level. Each country would develop a register based on their local circumstances and level of maturation. National laws and regulations could be recognised by each register but some consistency in practice across Europe could be achieved through mapping the standards developed at the European level.

1) European level (Archaeologists, Fitness Professionals)

✦ Register of Professional Archaeologists:

The purpose of the Register of Professional Archaeologists is to advance professionalism in archaeology by:

- a. Identifying archaeology as a profession and qualified archaeologists as professionals;
- b. Encouraging high standards in the training of archaeologists;
- c. Establishing and encouraging high standards of performance for professional archaeologists by promoting conformance to a published Code of Conduct and Standards of Research Performance;
- d. Designating qualified individuals as Registered Professional Archaeologists (each such individual an “RPA”);
- e. Administering grievance procedures to address questions of compliance with the Code of Conduct and Standards of Research Performance;
- f. Undertaking other activities that will serve to enhance the professional conduct and integrity of archaeological projects and research.

For more information on this Register, please go to the website at: <http://www.rpanet.org/index.cfm>

✦ European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS)

The European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS) is an independent process for the registering of all instructors, trainers and teachers working across Europe in the exercise and fitness industry. It is a pan-European system, based on independent national registers, culminating in a central European database.

Through its quality assurance process EREPS recognises that exercise professionals are qualified to do their job giving consumers, employers and partners in medical professions the necessary level of confidence in their professionalism and a structure for increased mobility of workers. Registration means that an exercise professional has met prescribed minimum standards of good practice, including the adoption of a Code of Ethical Practice and that they are committed to raising standards through a process of continuing professional development.

EREPS is regulated by the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) Standards Council using an accepted official European qualification framework which describes the knowledge, skills and competencies exercise professionals need to achieve for registration

Some examples of benefits of the Register of Professionals for operators of fitness clubs:

- Improve business performance and the retention of technical skills. Benefits on member retention and business success as a proven result.
- Improve international mobility of professionals and the labour pool of high quality exercise professionals
- Provides a career structure for lifelong learning and continuous professional development improving the chances of retaining staff.
- Create a data set that can be used to project the future trajectory of the industry and individual companies.
- Industry moving quickly towards health agenda requiring higher skilled exercise professionals and a greater level of proven professional credibility.
- For exercise professionals
- Exercise professionals deserve recognition and respect from the consumer, employers and governments of their skills and knowledge.
- Exercise professionals deserve to know that regardless of where they took their qualification, it will be recognised by employers across Europe.
- Exercise professionals deserve a set career structure in which they can develop their qualifications and experiences and be rewarded and recognised for their achievements.

The status of registration that EREPS grants to its members is based upon the levels of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and is usually described by the principle occupations of the fitness industry which are determined by EHFA – such as personal trainer or group fitness instructor.

For more information on the EQF and EREPS levels and occupations please go to the EREPS website at: <http://www.ereps.eu/Qualifications.asp>

2) National level (Health Professional in the UK, exercise professionals in the UK)

✦ Health Professional Council Registration (HPC)

Health Professional Council (HPC) Registration in the UK means that a health professional meets national standards for their professional training, performance and conduct. It means that people have proved that they meet the Health recognised standards and are therefore allowed to be registered with us and to use a legally protected title such as 'chiropodist'. <http://www.hpc-uk.org/microsite/whoarehpc/>

Professionals which fall under the Health Professionals Council are regulated by law.

✦ Fitness professionals in the UK (REPS)

REPS Fitness UK: <http://www.exerciseregister.org/>

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) has been set up to help safeguard and to promote the health and interests of people who are using the services of exercise and fitness instructors, teachers and trainers.

The Register uses a process of self-regulation that recognises industry-based qualifications, practical competency, and requires exercise professionals to work within a Code of Ethical Practice. Members of the Register are given a card and registration certificate to prove their qualification and membership.

Also known as the Exercise Register it operates in the UK and across the world to recognise personal achievement and competencies of qualified exercise professionals.

The mission statement is... ***"To ensure that all exercise professionals are suitably knowledgeable and qualified to help safeguard and to promote the health and interests of the people who use their services"***

REPS is an independent public Register which recognises the qualifications and expertise of health enhancing exercise instructors in the UK. One of our key functions is to provide a system of regulation for instructors and trainers to ensure that they meet the health and fitness industry's agreed national occupational standards.

Membership of Repts provides assurance and confidence to consumers, employers and health professions that all registered exercise professionals are appropriately qualified and have the knowledge, competence and skills to perform specific roles. Members are acknowledged for their professionalism, their adherence to the industry's nationally recognised standards and their ongoing education. Members are bound by a **Code of Ethical Practice** and hold appropriate public liability insurance. In order to remain on the Register, members must continue to meet the standards that are set for their profession through Continual Professional Development (CPD).

To gain recognition by the Register of Exercise Professionals, instructors must provide evidence that they meet the National Occupational Standards. These standards are produced by SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for the Active Leisure & Wellbeing, who represent the needs of the industry agreed by employers and other stakeholders.

HISTORY: REPs was established in 2002 to:

- Provide clarification and recognition of qualifications that meet agreed national standards available in the fitness industry
- Provide confidence in the quality of services provided by fitness professionals
- To safeguard the livelihood of professionals who have invested time and money into their education
- To protect the public from individuals who do not meet nationally recognised standards

MAIN BENEFITS FOR THE PUBLIC:

All REPs registered instructors have

- **met** agreed National Occupational Standards (which describe the knowledge competence and skills of good practice)
- **hold** recognised and approved qualifications, are
- **competent** in the work place, are
- **committed** to their ongoing professional development and are legally
- **covered** by appropriate insurance

All REPs instructors are required to follow the **Code of Ethical Practice** and abide by the following four principles:

- **Rights** - To promote and respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being
- **Relationships** - To develop a relationship with their customers based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect
- **Personal Responsibilities** - To demonstrate proper personal behavior and conduct at all times, and be fair, honest and considerate to all participants
- **Professional Standards** - To retain a high level of competence through qualifications and a commitment to ongoing training that ensures safe and correct practice

REPs registered instructors are issued with an annual membership card detailing their skills and competencies a Certificate of Registration and must have adequate insurance cover. In choosing a REPs instructor your health and safety is at all times paramount in the delivery of exercise and fitness instruction.

MAIN BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS:

Before the Register, employers found it hard to understand what a fitness professional was qualified to do which made recruitment of the right staff a difficult undertaking.

The Register brings clarity to the plethora of qualifications in the sector and employers can be assured that REPs registered fitness professionals have the appropriate knowledge and skills for the job they have employed them to do.

A properly qualified and registered workforce of fitness professionals with the skills and competences to do the job improves business performance and staff / member retention. It is also very important for insurance purposes and in case of litigation.

The Register creates a framework of career progression pathways for instructors. This framework which is transparent and visual forms an incentive for instructors to progress through the levels - the UK Register began with the majority at level 2 now the majority are at level 3. This means that the workforce standards are raised and instructors can deal with more of the population.

The Register also creates trust and respect for the sector as a recognised 'profession' this means that allied occupations e.g. medical profession are more likely to refer to registered professionals and employers can engage with this new market of potential clients

Current principle objectives

- Raise the standards, qualifications and skills of exercise professionals in the UK across all disciplines, working with a diverse range of users
- Establish registration as a pre-requisite for working in the industry and a commitment to ongoing continuing professional development into the framework of self-regulation
- Enforce that all members of the Register of Exercise Professionals have the skills, knowledge and competencies (including adequate public liability insurance) to fulfill their role and safeguard the interests of the public who use their services
- Support employers to deliver high standards of service to their customers, providing safe and effective exercise to a wide range of individuals
- Raise the profile of REPs across the industry and amongst policy makers, medical profession and the wider public to develop brand awareness and promote the resources of the organisation.

IV. A REGISTER OF PROFESSIONALS FOR THE OUTDOOR SECTOR

Introduction

In previous sections, we have explored many of the background ideas and concepts related to the general principles for a register of professionals for the outdoor sector. We have also used the highly successful REPS and EREPS systems as a detailed example of how one particular industry sector has developed in this area of professionalising (which is undoubtedly related to the outdoors sector).

Before progressing on to the list of contents for this section which we will cover (noted below), it is important to spend a little time exploring a principle central to the whole question in this paper. There is a fundamental issue which many organisations either ignore or do not deal with adequately.

An issue: the term “professional”

What do we mean by “professional”, by “professionalising” and by extension, by the term “profession”? Related to this is also the issue of not only what do **we** mean, but equally importantly, what is the perception of both the outdoors sector – employers, providers, employees, volunteers, participants/customers of the terms “professional” in the context of the outdoors industry sector. The question is asked because, from long experience, we find that people, organisations, industry sectors and countries use these terms in different ways, with different meanings.

We are in complex territory here! Language, in the two inter-related aspects of the meaning of words and their use in day to day language, is an area which more than anything is typified by two symbiotic features – a) language (and its use) is highly complex and demanding and b) language is real, alive, dynamic and used in such a plethora of locations, contexts, fields of activity etc., especially in our normal day to day lives, that precision and clarity of meaning is often very challenging.

This is not a complaint – but simply an observed reality that just needs to be taken into account, worked through and agreement made by those involved. (Easy to state, delivery may be a little more challenging!) One further critical aspect is the need to ensure that everyone operating in that area of work or life is aware of the current position and that we are all aware that as the world and time progresses, then meanings change too!

This attention to detail, overly obsessive and un-necessary to some, is especially important when we are developing new areas and new schemes so as to ensure that the basis and foundations for any new development are made on clearly agreed definitions and meanings. We have found this to be especially true in a European context in our various Leonardo projects.

There have been some interesting examples where we have discussed various aspects of working in the outdoors only to find that different partners have different understandings of a particular term and its appropriate usage. What is a ‘job description’, what is an ‘animator’ when compared to an instructor, leader, guide, coach, and educator? Can we use the term ‘adventure’ in a job title for all partner countries? (Answer = No! because in some countries ‘adventure’ does not have a positive connotation.)

The **formal** (traditional?) meaning of terms ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ are linked to a time when specific occupations were deemed to be ‘professional’ and the job holder was deemed to be in a ‘profession’ or part of a ‘profession’. These roles included those such as doctors, teachers, ministers of religion, architects, engineers, etc. These occupations were seen to have a requirement for one or more of the following:

- a large amount of specialist knowledge and skills;
- often intensive and/or long academic education/training;
- membership of a professional institute or body;
- Conforming to technical and/or ethical standards and/or codes of practice, with the threat of some form of sanction from the institute or body in the event of transgression of the standards or code.

In sport, the term ‘professional’ was, in the past more often used to designate a sports player or performer who was paid and who earned his/her living from their sport. Until approximately 30 years ago, this was less usual that many sports performers who participated as ‘amateurs’ and who were usually unpaid. In fact, in many sport areas, amateurs were forbidden from receiving payment or prizes of any value apart from a token level of clearly defined value.

Even with this meaning there is some linkage with previous meaning of 'professional' in that the ability to be full time in training and practice often raised performances to a higher level, linking with the previous criteria of specialist knowledge and skills plus intensive training/long training.

However, a less positive position has emerged where in some competitive sports, the use of the term 'professional foul' denotes a cynical and pre-planned calculated infringement on an opposing team's player.

Finally, in everyday, common language, the use of the term 'professional' has become homogenised and to an extent 'dumbed down' (as is frequently the case) through over- and inappropriate use which has taken the term away from its more formal and precise roots.

The term 'professional' in general everyday communication is now used in a much more relaxed and less formal way. Phrases such as 'that was a very professional response you made' tells us that he does his work to a high standard, but in much less formal way than the older, more traditional definition of 'professional'. There are numerous other examples where the term is used in a less precise way and where effectively, the meaning is around the idea of doing something well in terms of efficiency and effectiveness – a quality approach. Professional = good or top quality.

The point of this exploration of the term 'professional', both in 'to be professional' and 'to be a professional' is that if we are considering the setting-up of a register of outdoor professionals, we need to be clear about what we mean in this context by the term 'professional'.

Does this matter? For potential direct and indirect users (outdoor instructors etc. and customers/participants, plus parents and teachers etc. who control and sanction use of the services offered), what the terms used actually mean is important and may well determine their involvement or not in the register.

As has been mentioned previously, at its most simple and basic, a register is a listing of, in this case people who might offer certain services related to outdoor adventure. Once we add the term 'professionals' into the title, we need to define what this means along a spectrum of requirements, standards and possible memberships.

The outdoors industry sector (and its wide range of stakeholders) or a significant part of it, would need to explore and agree the precise definition or criteria for admission to and ongoing membership of the register.

The current view and usage of the term professional in the context of outdoors and outdoors animators/instructors (who may deliver services from a paid employment or volunteer positions) across the CLO2 partners is that, as in most things European, there is significant variance and diversity. Here are two examples that demonstrate the range of approaches and understanding.

In France, for most, the term Outdoors Professional denotes someone who is in paid employment. Therefore term 'professional' for many here is purely to denote employment status, and has no specific bearing on quality or technical competence or any other qualitative measure. This is even though some countries have a much more regulatory approach to qualifications and licensing to practice for individuals in the sport sectors – and these can overlap into the outdoor sector. Unsurprisingly, this can be a point of contention and more for some! (Any technical qualifications that are required can be obtained by volunteers not in work as well. They are not exclusive to paid employment.)

However, in UK outdoors scene, in general, the term 'professional' does not denote employed/paid status. The term is not used consistently in a formal way, and has a more informal use relating to a task, skill or job (paid or unpaid) done to a high standard. Some people may use it to denote their perception of someone who works in the outdoors industry sector, but this is far from consistent or commonplace.

In summary: when considering the idea and principles surrounding the possible development of a European Register of Outdoors Professionals, the issues surrounding the words used in all ways is important and central. Each of the words, including the term 'professional' needs defining in terms of meaning and understanding in the participating countries and these definitions need to be communicated with clear, logical and relevant reasoning to all whose involvement, directly and indirectly, will be sought.

In the context of this report, the word "professional" will be used in terms of the title and subject of the report. That is, the use of the term "outdoors professional" is used, but is defined at this stage and

within this report, as being someone who is a practitioner in the outdoors industry sector. The scope and activities of the outdoors industry sector are defined in the EQFOA Industry Occupational Map.

Practitioner might be defined as one who provides a service – paid or otherwise – to others as an instructor, animator, leader, guide, facilitator, trainer, etc. in a range of outdoors activities for a range of purposes, including recreation and education. The use of the term “coach” is generally not seen as part of the outdoors industry sector area, in that, as a term used primarily in sport, it relates more to the development of personal performance and usually in a competitive context.

Whilst for many there are clear overlaps here for both participants and workers, in general, coaching is not seen as part of the standard landscape of the outdoors sector. However, this is a fluid situation and much development and interaction is taking place in these areas currently, in both those countries where there is a well developed outdoors sector (however fragmented) and those countries where there is a new and developing awareness of the worth and potential of the outdoors for a myriad of uses and reasons.

The time appears to be right and the desire appears to exist for a better and more systematic sharing of issues, ideas, processes and structures across Europe and across the wide landscape that is the outdoors.

And another issue: the fatality of fragmentation OR why it's important to learn to hold hands!

Whilst almost everyone involved in the outdoors sector is hugely enthusiastic about it and committed to its future, its sustainability and its increasing success, a good portion of realism is necessary. It simply isn't good enough that believers in the worth of the outdoors sector believe the worth in all its guises. Increasingly in an ever more competitive world, it's vital to be able to advocate the worth and importance of the outdoors strongly and flexibly, but from the viewpoint and mindset of others – especially for the decision-makers and influencers (as well as the potential participants and customers).

To operate successfully as any industry sector in the modern world requires a smart approach that acknowledges and works wholeheartedly with all the systems and structures that affect our complex lives... thinking here about government (at all levels from local to European and global), government agencies and organisations that control and influence so many aspects.

If we genuinely want the outdoors to achieve its level of true worth and potential – be that as a commercial proposition or as a key contributor to the health and well-being of citizens, as two amongst many and diverse benefits – then we have to be realistic about the way we might go about this advocacy and influencing role.

The outdoors is wonderful, exciting and inspirational in so many ways. But as industry sectors go, it is relatively small, in terms of employment, GVA/GDP figures etc., etc. Nice to have, but not overly important in comparison to industries' big guns such as construction, engineering, manufacturing, retail, financial service and such like.

Governments, their agencies/organisations and other influencers/decision-makers do not want to and certainly do not need to understand the minutiae of detail and complexity about the difference strands of the outdoors. That might be in the types of outdoors activity – outdoor recreation, outdoor education, development/corporate training, adventure therapy, bushcraft, expeditions, etc., or in the types of organisational operating systems in the outdoors – commercial, public sector, charitable/not-for-profit, voluntary, etc.

It is clear that the outdoors has a range of sub-sectors as detailed near the start of section 'a)' below. In fact, in some countries many of these titles exist as sub-sectors in themselves. But all too often, the outdoors defines itself in terms of its differences – what separates and divides these sub-sectors, what gives us reasons to be different have not have common views and needs – and certainly not in terms of our similarities and common features – the things that might be common to our subsectors, activities, organisations and jobs.

Governments do not want to deal with a myriad of little representative groups all with the words outdoors or adventure in the title, however valid the case may be for the differences.

If the outdoors sector wants to ensure it has the best, most powerful chance of working with and strategically influencing government and related organisations, then it needs to start acting much more as one industry sector, explicitly valuing and emphasising the common elements and aspects,

emphasising what makes the outdoors sector one overall entity. Of course, the range of sub-sectors and different structures can still go on.

The outdoors sector needs to learn to speak with one voice at all levels of interaction and communication with the outside world. The different sub-sectors and structures need to start learning to hold hands and to show a united front. A group that holds hands shows that united front and is all the more impressive for it, whilst retaining the individuality of each person.

The Outdoors Industry Sector context

Now, we will look in a little more detail at the outdoors industry sector. The areas we will cover are:

- a) **Current features** of the outdoors industry sector, both in general and from an instructor/ animator viewpoint that need to be taken into account;
- b) **Likely challenges** for the future for the outdoors;
- c) **What currently exists** in the outdoors in the area of registers of professionals in the broadest aspects of this concept, and what can be learnt from these examples;
- d) **How a Register of “professionals” might help** to achieve future success and sustainability for the outdoor industry sector and **what difficulties** this principle might encounter;
- e) **Some examples** of different types of registers
- f) ...

a) Current features of the outdoors industry sector.

A general overview of the current situation for the sector might include the following points:

1 Overall participation

There is an excellent outlook overall for the sector as the interest and involvement in all things outdoors, including outdoors recreation, outdoors education, use of the outdoors for corporate or organisational development training, expeditions, adventure travel/tourism etc. as well as related areas such as outdoor/adventure sports sets a highly positive current situation. Participation and business levels linked to the outdoors sector has been growing strongly for many years, and looks set to continue.

There are 2 important issues around titles/descriptions that need addressing where there is a lack of understanding and consequently, some ignorance and confusion. This relates to a) the titles for the area of activity (What is the correct title to use and for which area of activity?) and b) the job titles used. Some examples:

Outdoor Sector Titles used across Europe include:

- The Outdoors
- Outdoors Activities
- Outdoor Sport
- Outdoor Adventure
- Outdoor Education
- Outdoor Learning
- Outdoor Recreation
- Adventurous Activities
- Adventure Tourism
- Expeditions
- And combinations of these
- etc.....

Outdoor Sector Job Titles used across Europe include:

- Instructor
- Animator
- Coach
- Trainer
- Facilitator
- Leader
- Guide
- Educator
- etc.....

What we are **not** arguing for is some kind of law or regulation – even if that was possible – that forces each country (and all the different groups in each country!) to adopt one common sector descriptor and one common job title for each outdoors sub-sector throughout Europe.

Of course, we are committed to the need and right of each country to decide what descriptors and job titles it uses. However, the current situation is extremely confusing, often within countries and certainly across Europe.

There is a need for better communication, understanding and consideration when using terminology /descriptors/titles which mean different things in different sub-sectors and between countries.

2 Employment profiles (See the CLO2 Outdoor European Research Report for more information)

As noted previously, the outdoors sector encompasses a wide range of practitioners, including paid employees, self-employed (sole traders and free-lancers) and volunteers. **The term ‘employee’ will be used throughout to encompass this wide range, and very much includes the key grouping of ‘volunteers’.**

Seasonal patterns of outdoor activity, and therefore of employment, are a major feature of the outdoors sector. Overall this is mostly in the period May to September, but additionally, with specific countries where winter/snow sports are a feature, there is a mirror in the employment graph of December through to March/April.

Seasonality in employment is an issue in some ways for some employees – not being able to obtain a full time/permanent contract makes it more difficult to commit to the outdoors as a long term career. The term “get a proper job” is often used. But many outdoors employees, especially at the younger end of the age profile are in relatively junior and by definition, less complex and demanding roles. Some see the seasonal employment of the outdoors being something they will do for a number of years before looking to move to that “proper” job. Others work through this seasonal period to reach higher levels of employment where year round contracts are more likely.

However, it should be noted that many freelance or sole trader instructors accept the seasonal nature of the sector in terms of employment and look for alternative employment in their off-season period. For example, this may be within the outdoors sector or outside it altogether.

Some positively relish this time as one to indulge their passion for the outdoors and travel to take part in their specialism(s) – be that climbing, sailing or a range of other activities.

The age profile of employees naturally varies to some extent by country, but under 30 year olds working (including volunteers) constitute between 40% and 60% approximately of the workforce overall.

So at the entry/less complex end of the employment spectrum, we see a large number of young, seasonal employees who may not be contemplating a longer term commitment to the outdoors in terms of paid employees. At the most ‘junior’ end of the spectrum, 18-21 year olds join seasonal or even summer operations, sometimes as a summer job, sometimes as a gap year prior to, during or after college/university. Of course, the type and level of activity they get involved in instructing/leading is certainly at the less complex, less risk and less responsible end of the jobs range. Never-the-less,

these roles do exist and with the sector's success and its generally excellent safety record, then there seems to be no genuine reason why this should not continue.

This seasonal, young employees feature is one issue that needs to be taken into account when considering the concept of a register of outdoors professionals. Another is the important category of volunteer outdoors instructors/leader etc.

It is more likely that older and more experienced employees who have made a longer term career commitment, possibly with longer, annual or permanent contracts, to the outdoors would be interested in and see relevance and worth of membership of a register. This is assuming that membership of a register is voluntary. Younger employees and especially those in short seasonal and voluntary roles may not see the value and therefore, be less inclined to join a register. Of course, these young, often new, sector entrants are very important, but also very much in need of good consistent initial training, qualifications and support/guidance.

Therefore, a situation might develop where older, more experienced employees will join a register whilst younger, less experienced lower level employees will not. The danger here is that the outdoors sector could end up with a two tier workforce, and those organisations which employ mainly young people (or use volunteers) at the lower end of the outdoors activity spectrum will have their work and quality and safety of service compromised or seen as of lower standing in some way. This would not be good for the sector as a whole, and this issue needs to be considered carefully.

3 Training, qualifications and related structures – initial and ongoing development

Like the outdoors sector itself, the range training and qualifications (and the structures in which they operate and are delivered) for the outdoors employees are very diverse and complex. This is both within each country and across Europe.

Here are some of the variables:

- Some countries have a strictly formalised, statutory structure and system that requires some or all instructors/animators to hold specific technical activity qualifications for some or all activities. In some countries, the statutory picture is at a regional level and different in each one.
- Some countries have a less formalised, non-statutory (voluntary) structure and system.
- Some countries have a structure and system which is linked to federations/NGBs or some form of association.
- Some countries require a certain minimum level of qualification – equating to EQF level 3, 4 or 5 – and sometimes delivered by a training provider – often at Higher Education level by a university.
- Some countries do not require instructors to have a specific qualification but require them to be able to prove occupational competence or capability, possibly coupled with the instructor's organisation/employer need to prove its ability to deliver activity programmes safely and successfully.
- Some countries have different structures and systems for different sub-sectors - commercial, public, charitable and not for profit.
- Some countries have a mixture of two or more of the above.

This gives us the clear picture of not a very clear picture. The outdoors sector overall across partner countries in CLO2 is quite fragmented in terms of training and qualifications sometimes within each country and certainly across countries.

Similarly, in the area of the structures and organisations in the different CLO2 partner countries that oversee the training, qualifications and organisation of the outdoor sector, we have an equally diverse range of systems and arrangements.

Common to all countries are outdoor sports federations (in UK known as outdoors National Governing Bodies of sport, or NGBs). The sole or prime focus of these organisations is the development of their outdoor sports in the areas of competition and performance development through membership, clubs, coaching and qualifications. Depending on national/governmental requirements, some also have a role in encouraging participation. The general remit of federations is not usually of direct interest for

most outdoors practitioners, except where the practitioner finds federation qualifications or membership of use in terms of proving competence and technical ability.

Some countries have linked their federations into a more formal, regulatory system – and this may be linked to government and ministries. This may relate to all aspects of the outdoor activity or may only focus on the competitive sport aspect. Certainly, it can be a point of contention and challenge.

Further variation occurs when federation qualifications are accredited onto national qualification frameworks. In some cases this allows qualifications to become part of further education qualifications and in some cases higher education qualifications, and related public funding opportunities.

Other non-federation organisations which are linked to the outdoors have a range of vocationally-related awards linked to capability in the workplace. A good example here is the UK organisation, the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL), a large and influential membership organisation for outdoor education/learning practitioners and their employers. IOL has developed a suite of practitioner awards ranging from the introductory level (EQF equivalent level 4), through to a high level award which recognises exceptional contribution to the outdoors. The lower level awards are seen by many organisations as indicators of capability in the outdoors learning field.

Finally, there are, of course, a wide range of formal education qualifications for the outdoors in further and higher education. These range from academic to vocational, but there is still much debate over the relevance and worth of many of these in the sense of their links to the practical delivery of job functions in the outdoors. There are notable excellent exceptions where there is genuine collaboration between employers/outdoor organisations and the colleges/universities. These exceptions should have much wider impact as examples of good practice.

All these issues have implications for the outdoors in terms of development, growth, sharing work and opportunities as well as mobility of labour and clarity and easy understanding of communication to participants and potential participants. One simple example of this might be a family going on holiday from one country to another and keen to do some mountain biking, or a school going from one country to another on an educational trip and wanting to include some locally sourced canoeing.

Finding a:

- 'reputable' or
- 'recommended' or
- 'approved' or
- 'competent/capable' or
- 'qualified' (By whom? To do what?) organisation and/or instructor/animatior

is not a simple task! Perhaps it might be useful if it was more so.

So clearly, **for existing and potential new participants/customers**, there are issues around the lack of clarity regarding the qualifications/competence of outdoor instructors/animatior. This lack of clarity may be a barrier to getting new participants involved in many of the wide range of outdoor activities and the sub-sectors (for example, education, recreation, corporate development, etc).

Similarly and in parallel, **for existing instructors/animatior and potential new recruits** (paid or voluntary), there are similar issues around the lack of clarity regarding training, qualifications, proving competence – both initially in terms of induction and also in terms of ongoing development and career progression.

Those who are long established in the outdoors sector and are on the inside of the sector have the best knowledge and understanding. It is the participants and instructors (existing and potential) who have the biggest challenge – and one which can ultimately affect very significantly the future growth, development and success of the outdoors sector.

b) Likely challenges for the future for the outdoors.

Of course, the outdoors exists and functions within countries and societies, and is part of human activity. Consequently, the outdoors is inextricably linked to all other aspects of life. One way to explore these relationships is through a 'PESTEL' analysis. The version below is not intended as the

'last word' or any kind of definitive exclamation, but gives a good flavour of the factors in the overall context in which the outdoors exists and operates and which currently affect it now and going forward.

<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability & climate change agenda • Awareness and support for education using the outdoors (schools) • Health & wellbeing agenda • Rural regeneration • Health & safety – deregulation? • Training/qualification regulation • Regulation of the outdoors? • Safeguarding children – police/record checks • Developments in qualification structures/frameworks • Qualification funding (public) • Access to HE 	<p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of skills amongst employees • Economic confidence & 'credit crunch' • Global and national economic downturn • Reducing disposable income • Less consumer spending • 'Staycation' (people taking holidays at home rather than foreign travel) impact/exchange rates • European market, mobility, etc. • Rural economy/regeneration • Secondary markets (accommodation providers offering activities) • Sector linkage – tourism, hospitality, retail, fashion • Taxation increases
<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater participation in the outdoors, especially for those more deprived/diversity & under-represented groups/socially excluded groups • Population changes i.e. ageing population • New 'outdoor' sport trends & regulation of safe practice • Change in consumer tastes & standards e.g. demanding better quality goods & services • Fashion trends ('wilderness chic') encouraging market growth • vocational versus degree route • Increase in obesity and health issues with outdoor sport/activity/learning benefits 	<p>Technological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in on-line marketing and selling products & services • Innovative outdoor websites • Webcams • Social media • E-learning development & opportunities • Equipment improvements meaning activities are perceived as more accessible, less risky and less vulnerable to weather conditions. • Virtual outdoors? 3D immersion - simulators
<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal access & further growth encouraged through changing policy frameworks • Compatibility/tensions between sector growth & environmental sustainability • Planning & designing product offerings in ways that enhance capacity & limit impact • Effective community consultations in planning • Managing facilities & outdoor products in ways to prevent & mitigate impacts & that respect local values • Educating employees to encourage them & participants to behave in environmentally responsible ways • Climatic change impacting activity provision (e.g. skiing industry) 	<p>Legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing legislative framework for outdoor businesses, including health & safety and licensing obligations • Capacity of SMEs to respond to legislative frameworks • Safeguarding children – police/record checks • Increased taxation & regulatory burden affecting small businesses

It should be emphasised that the current overall situation for the outdoors is a very positive one. Growth appears to have been strong in recent years and going forward, these seem set to continue.

In those countries where the outdoors sector is well developed, there are challenges to be faced as the outdoors competes – in recreation at least – with other social and recreational activities. The competition is not just in the activity itself, but as much in the aspects of customer service and quality of experience. The expectations of participants in the outdoors are informed by their experiences across their wide spectrum of experiences in all sorts of recreational areas – hospitality, cultural etc. These are always increasing and improving. Any other industry sector which even just stands still is, in effect, going backwards! Doing nothing is not an option, if the outdoors wants to continue to grow and be successful – for whatever reasons – commercial, recreational, educational, physical, spiritual and well-being.

In those European countries where the outdoors sector is not as developed, but where there is great potential to do so, initially this is often through tourism (for all sorts of excellent reasons and outcomes). There is clearly a need and opportunity to develop many aspects of the sector and the ways in which it operates. This might include aspects as diverse as structures, organisation, policies/codes of practice training, qualifications, links with federations and general communication and marketing, to name but some.

Arguably the critical focus and main ultimate determinant of success for the participant/customer comes down to the hugely important experience that the participant/customer has in the activity and their overall experience measured against their expectations.

In the recent CLO2 outdoors survey, across all partner countries of the CLO2 project, the main concerns of outdoor providers were:

- Legislation and regulation;
- Increasing operating costs;
- Lack of funding for qualifications and training;
- Economic downturn;
- Recruitment and retention of employees and volunteers.

Not for the first time, the summary statement ‘the **right** numbers of employees, with **right** knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences in the **right** place at the **right** time’ seems to sum up a key guiding principle for the sector.

c) What currently exists in the outdoors in the area of registers of professionals in the broadest aspects of this concept, and what can be learnt from these examples?

Currently, to our knowledge, there are no formal European registers of practitioners working (paid or un-waged as volunteers) in the outdoors sector where the register is of a general type where practitioners may have a range of activities/sports. (As previously mentioned, the use of the term ‘professional’ is acknowledged, but as it has significantly different meanings – sometimes opposing - in various countries and contexts. Furthermore, a register may be based on a number of rationales and reasons for listing.

In the outdoors currently there are three main types of groupings of practitioners – that is, individuals who are involved in delivering a service through what the CLO2 and previous EQFOA projects defined as “the outdoors” in terms of industry sector. Fundamental to this is the acknowledged overlap and linkages between the outdoors and adjoining sectors, including sport, leisure in a wider setting than just the outdoors, customer service and hospitality etc. (It is acknowledged that some small outdoor organisations in some countries are fundamentally and stridently opposed to any link whatsoever with anything to do with “sport” or “sports federations”, choosing a separatist development path. This is far from being the main or majority view across Europe.)

The first of the two main types of groupings are those practitioners who are members of a particular federation (in UK, NGB) in a specific activity or sport area. Each country tends to have a federation for each activity/sport: for example, archery, canoeing/kayaking, caving, climbing/mountaineering, mountain biking, orienteering, rafting, sailing/windsurfing, skiing, waterskiing, etc. Federations are primarily about their specific sports, their clubs, members and the competitive and performance

development aspects of the sport. Their relationship with the outdoors sector and employers/employees is an interesting one.

Membership is usually linked to a range of qualifications. Typically, these are of a coaching nature (with personal proficiency awards interlinked). However, many employees and employers (including voluntary organisations) use these qualifications as the indicators or proof of technical competence and capability as part of being fit to “do the job”. This utilisation by the sector of federation qualifications is an interesting crossover between sport and the outdoors. Increasingly, some federations are realising that the outdoors sector brings not just some complexity and a degree of confusion to their prime focus and agenda, but also brings large volumes of introductory participation through outdoor (non-club) organisations who are potential club members and champions for the future. Furthermore, this also brings new and additional income streams of significant sizes in terms of qualification and membership fees for outdoors employees. Many federations also have schemes for accrediting or recognising outdoor centres as suitable places for the delivery of their particular outdoor activity, or sport, as they would see it. They know that typically, only introductory sessions are provided, often for children and young people in school/youth groups or for individual children, adults and/or families.

Outdoor employers in many countries seem to accept the use of federation qualifications in this way, as long as the qualification provides a ‘reasonable’ fit for the specific role requirement. A key additional benefit of this process is the fact that many young employees recognise the need for these qualifications in employment at higher levels and the fact that many employers provide and pay for employees to gain the qualifications.

The **second main type of grouping** is where there is in a country a regulatory requirement to obtain and hold a specific ‘licence to practice’ as an outdoor practitioner. Again, this is closely linked to the provision of sports coaching services in some countries. In some countries, this is organised on a regional basis.

This ‘licence to practice’ may take the form of a specific licence with a range of activity/sport specific modules or diplomas, or may link into federation qualifications. Some countries, even in the context of the European Union and its principles of the mobility of labour, appear to have cynically used a national licence to practice and its accompanying diplomas or technical qualifications as a wall in a blatantly protectionist manner to prevent foreign workers to get jobs, with no desire to explore the concept of equivalence between countries and their national qualifications. This would seem to somewhat at odds with the principal and spirit of the European Union. The use of state-sponsored licences-to-practice is also cited to support the retention of high standards of “professionalism” and to protect the wages and conditions of the workforce. Others see this as unwelcome, inappropriate and unnecessary intervention by the state, and the maintenance of artificially high standards and qualifications. The idea that qualifications and training should be ‘fit for purpose’ is an interesting focus for discussion in this context.

The **third main type of grouping** is where there are outdoors-related associations or institutes which are membership organisations. In some instances, these come relatively close to the type of grouping or listing that might be envisaged as a ‘register of outdoors professionals’. However, these are not common, and certainly do not exist on a pan-European basis. One major issue is that these associations or institutes tend to focus on one sub-sector of the outdoors, and therefore not providing a comprehensive umbrella for all outdoors sub-sectors which so clearly overlap and inter-relate at a number of levels and areas.

However, there certainly appears to be worth in further exploration of these organisations and their processes and operations as useful reference points for future developments on a European basis.

d) How a Register of “professionals” might help to achieve future success and sustainability for the outdoor industry sector and **what difficulties** this principle might encounter.

A register might provide:

- A **listing of appropriately qualified practitioners** (instructors/animators, etc.) for use by service users/customers/participants and other stake holders, such as schools and organisations sourcing outdoor reaction, outdoor education etc;

- Ways in which **qualification, training, competences and related aspects could be more directly compared** and equivalences made across Europe... and perhaps wider afield. This may aid the process of facilitating the mobility of labour;
- A way to **develop a culture of enthusiasm for and commitment to ongoing professional development** or continuous professional development (CPD)... to ensure that the driving forward of consistent and acceptable standards of capability and competence continues to take place, as part of a wider world where standards improve continuously;
- Assurance that **ongoing standards are improving**, there is a degree of future-proofing taking place and from this, **increased sustainability** for the outdoors sector;
- A powerful way to **send a message to governments/decision makers**, etc., that this industry sector is serious and committed to the development of a high quality professional workforce. From this, the sector sends a signal that it can manage, organise and possibly regulate itself as a professional body and by extension, an industry sector;
- A **basis for “professionalising” the outdoors sector** – accepting that the definition of what that actually means needs debate, argument and discussion. As a started, let’s say it’s about creating consistency, minimum standards, developing excellence and providing pathways and opportunities for careers in the outdoors sector. It is the lack of consistency and inexperience in a rapid growth situation where corners can sometimes be cut, especially with less experienced organisations, where concerns may lie. But it is also about ensuring and supporting the highly experienced individual practitioner and organisation does not get complacent or too settled. This can prove an equally dangerous threat;
- A **challenge** in that the outdoors sector (and its practitioners) is proudly and fiercely independent, and wary of being told what to do. The sales pitch would need to be superb in very way;
- A **challenge** in that a register and any accompanying association or institute would need to be fully inclusive and representative of all areas and sub-sectors of the outdoors;
- A **challenge** in the enormity of the task taking in the whole of Europe, if the aim is a pan-European model. Of course, start small and grow is the wise and proven method in these circumstances. The process might start with some real positive and inclusive outdoors networks that would initially focus on communication, sharing best practice and ideas, building understanding and trust, in possibly a small number of countries initially;

e) Some examples of different types of registers

Here are a number of different types:

1 **A simple plain basic listing** as a searchable database incorporating employees/practitioners with qualifications, experience, training, specialisms etc. Individuals would pay for their listing and could update their own entries and qualifications could be third party verified. Additional services such as activity/third party liability insurance could be provided at a cost, but obviously volumes of scale could make this aspect an attractive feature. Access by employers/service users could be free or for a subscription or rental fee.

2 Similar to No1 above, but a **more formal ‘association’ of outdoor professionals** or similar. This could be a formal organisation with constitution, code of practice and/or rules of membership. Topics and services could vary from minimal to extensive and include a wide range of important issues for the outdoors employee, including personal and technical development and environmental and sustainability issues. As with No1, benefits and costs could be various in range and levels.

3 Moving into **formal register territory**, but with an ‘institute’ feel to the structure and activities. Features might include: constitution, code of practice, endorsement of qualifications, requirements regarding continuous professional development (with defined standards and quantities, for example) for members, sponsored training and development programmes/events/conferences. Different levels of practitioner and membership titling. Again, benefits to members, and possibly links to both federations and a more academic approach to research and development could be part of this type of register.

4 A register in the form of an association or institute which would address the problem as noted at the end of section a)2 “Employment Profiles” where the issue of young and inexperienced employees on short seasonal contracts not seeing the benefit of register membership, yet where the sector could end up with a ‘two tier’ ‘upstairs downstairs’ situation which would be detrimental to the sector overall.

One strategy for dealing with this problem is if a register was not just for outdoors professionals as individuals, but also for outdoors organisations including all employers and voluntary organisations. As “professional outdoor employers” on the register these organisations which employ younger, less experienced and usually seasonal or voluntary staff would commit to defined standards of training, development, qualifications and support for their employees. This could be in addition to individuals being members of the register as well.

Of course, as previously noted, the levels of individual and group membership, with related commitments, qualifications and continuous ongoing development requirements, plus the all important membership and other services pricing structure would be vital to get right and not be prohibitive or exclusive.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every possibility, variation and combination thereof! But perhaps it gives a flavour of a range of different options.

V. CONCLUSION

As can be gleaned from all before this, this is a complex and challenging proposition. There are many hurdles at many different stages and levels.

However, as the excellent truism goes “organisations [and to that we might add ‘industry sectors’] which don’t imagine the future, won’t be there to enjoy it”. The outdoors sector is developing well – in some countries for much longer than in others.

However, the momentum of a) good will, interest and enthusiasm for the outdoors from existing and potential participants and customers and b) the wide diversity of the excellent and powerful benefits that participation in the outdoors can bring to citizens young and old, perhaps tells us that the time is right to explore taking this amazing sector forward to the next level.

What exactly that “next level” is and of what it consists, remains to be explored more fully. But this process must start with communication, sharing and discussion across Europe. Certainly, the idea of a **register of outdoors professionals**, in whatever guise comes to pass could well and most plausibly be one of the foundations for future success, development and sustainability for the outdoors industry sector. What is equally important here is that the time appears to be right for the outdoors industry sector individuals and their organisations to be exploring this “next level”.

The CLO2 project has given us an excellent opportunity for some first explorative steps in these complex areas, and provided initial opportunities to link and build relationships that can be a legacy and can form at least part of the basis of future work.