



**EU standards for Outdoor Animators**

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# **INDUSTRY OCCUPATIONAL MAP for the OUTDOOR SECTOR**



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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***English version***

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Industry Occupational Map for the Outdoor Sector

1/11



Education and Culture  
**Leonardo da Vinci**  
European Training for the UK

## Introduction

The occupational map for the EQFOA project (2006-2008) provides a frame of reference for the outdoors sector. In the main, of course this relates to the key occupations in the sector.

However, to provide a sense of position in relation to the related areas with which the sector interacts, this occupation map includes a review of how the sector is organized to deliver its objectives/targets and how it operates at a range of levels including organizational and occupational.

The report will consider what types of activities are seen by practitioners and clients as belonging to the “Outdoors”. There are a range of views on this - based on theoretical and conceptual considerations but also from a pragmatic practical point of view.

The outdoor sector is a relatively small one, economically, but plays a significantly more important and influential role than its economic size would suggest. Furthermore, the sector shows a diverse complexity in some partner countries yet less so than in others. Are there observations and lessons to be drawn from these differences?

Due to the complex and varied operational and occupational practices, it is challenging to develop a set of statistics relating to size of sector in terms of employment numbers and types, participation, economic value and such like. These are issues some individual partners are currently dealing with, concurrent to this European project.

# Mapping the sector

## What do we mean by “The Outdoors”?

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 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.

For example, a simple climbing session can be used for a wide range of outcomes, most planned, but sometimes, and equally valuable, sometimes not planned.

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 cited 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.

It is true to say that the outdoors can be subdivided into many differing sets and subsets. However, most can be located along a simple recreation/education continuum.



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)

Furthermore, many organisations involved in outdoor delivery will provide services to more than one client sector. For example, an outdoor centre owned and operated by a local council/local government will provide outdoor recreation and/or education activities for school groups from that council area during term-time, but will also offer outdoor development programmes to business/corporate groups and run summer outdoor recreation programmes for individuals – often children or adults. It is a rich and complex picture.

It must be emphasised this picture varies greatly across the project partners and others. Some have a more simple, less varied delivery structure and system.

Specific desires and requirements of participants/clients should and in most instances, drives the delivery of successful outdoor activity provision, for the range of purposes mentioned above. Of course, this impacts on what providers do with regard to staff qualifications, capability and other related issues.

## **Organisational structure**

As with the overall structure of the outdoors sector, individual organisational structures vary enormously across partner countries.

For a variety of reasons, the last two or three decades have seen a significant growth in the commercial sector, not only for outdoor recreation but in the other key areas of outdoor education, development training and expeditions.

Many of these companies are small or medium-sized enterprises (SME's).

This means that marketing, sales, finance, logistics, administrative, executive and other functions are the responsibility of the manager and co-workers or employees. Also typical for SME's is that the services offered by commercial outdoor companies are diverse: organising transport and overnight stays, supplying food, organising activities and logistics, guiding/educating participants, renting equipment or infrastructure.

There is a varied picture across the partner countries, but it is clear that if the sector is to fully realise the potential for the benefits that the outdoors can bring to society and it's citizens in all areas of activity and outcome, then there is a fundamental issue of professionalizing and up-skilling the sector, especially in key areas of business, organisational and management development. This is a major challenge, but the potential rewards for everyone involved are immense.

## **Activities of the sector**

To many involved in the outdoors (for whatever purpose), the concept of what we actually mean by use of the term “the outdoors” and what it refers to in terms of human activity is simply taken for granted. We know what we mean! Of course this isn't good enough for projects and studies, and from an external and conceptual/philosophical perspective, it is, perhaps, worth ‘unpacking’ this complex area a little more.

The key concept that we refer to as ‘the outdoors’ is not simply and solely related to the place that is ‘outside’ or ‘out of doors’ – that is, not inside a building. (There are even some relatively small, but important exceptions to this principle, such as indoor climbing walls which mimic the key characteristics of the real thing and caving.)

The outdoors is a location for activity related largely to a natural environment, usually outside. Furthermore, and critically, the term ‘the outdoors’ relates to **the interaction between people and the outdoor environment and the related tools or specialist equipment for specific single or multiple purposes**, as discussed previously, mainly in the broad generic areas of recreation and/or education.

To many, the more ‘extreme’ outdoor activities, which may take place in potentially hazardous, isolated and challenging environments, are what the outdoors is truly about in its most pure form. However, it is vital that the principle of the outdoors being based on each individual’s perceptions, needs and wants is clearly remembered.

What is a challenging and suitable outdoor adventure for an inexperienced child will be very different from that in which a highly skilled and experienced expert practitioner will wish to take part and be appropriately challenged, excited and satisfied. This is where concepts such as ‘individual adventure threshold’ come into important focus.

Organisations and individuals involved in delivering outdoor activities **must be fully and constantly aware of these vital issues** if they are to be successful.

As a practical mapping of outdoor activities which are the vehicles for wide range of objectives, besides this conceptual approach, the EQFOA project decided to compose an arbitrary list of “outdoor activities” from a pragmatic point of view.

This list was developed during the EQFOA meetings and can be found in “**Annex 1**” of this occupational map.

## Statistical and Labour Market Information

It has become clear that, across the EU, there is little reliable detailed information regarding the outdoors in terms of simple statistics which map the size of the sector, numbers of organisations, employees, participants, GVA (a measure of financial worth of a sector), etc.

Furthermore, international SIC and SOC codes are extremely unreliable due to the current lack of specific outdoor-related code. (It is hoped to address this issue in the next year or two as there is likely to be an imminent opportunity regarding changes to the code system.)

In the UK, extensive econometric surveys and specialist surveys, have failed to produce data in which the industry sector itself has confidence. For example, it appears from 2 similar surveys completed in 2001 and 2006 that the number of paid employees has halved, when it is clear that the sector has experienced excellent growth in participant volumes (which in the outdoors is closely linked to employee numbers due to ratio requirements) over this period.

We have noted this situation and as part of a proposed follow-on project, we aim to complete a simple ‘census’ type survey across partner states which will provide this vital basic data.

## Key Drivers

- *Globalisation:*

As with other industries/sectors, the outdoors exists in an increasingly global context and market. Equivalence and transferability of outdoors instructing/coaching qualifications present issues relating to employment barriers and operations. There is need for a recognised international Accreditation of Prior Learning.

- *Demographics:*

Ageing population will increase the proportion with leisure time. This will increase the pool of potential customers with the time to take part in outdoor pursuits. However, equally, an ageing population will reduce the employment pool of young workers and the sector may need to adopt new strategies to recruit skilled people, or to train new entrants within the industry sector.

- *Consumer trends:*

A number of key and growing trends are clear. Interest in the natural environment and the countryside and concerns for the health and use of the planet is one. Health and wellbeing for citizens, concerns over obesity and diseases associated with a less active lifestyle appear to be raising awareness of a more healthy and active lifestyle for families and individuals. This is a special concern with children as sedentary lifestyles couple with concerns for safety are having serious impact on children’s health and wellbeing both now and in the for of “health time bombs” for the future. There is clear evidence that the outdoors can provide a powerful antidote to these concerns. Finally, some countries are moving out of a risk averse state, and are now acknowledging the importance of young people learning positively about risk and how to manage and work with risk. This argument also acknowledges the existence of risk and it’s importance in our modern world and the vital need to ensure young people are well equipped to make the best use of risk and its opportunities in adult life.

- *Commercialisation of leisure:*

Outdoor leisure and recreation is becoming more attractive business development, in line with the leisure sector as a whole. The key issue here is that of the safety and quality of provision – poor quality may drive clients away to other leisure areas. Certainly, poor safety definitely will!

- *Tourism:*

In Europe, the Outdoor Leisure sector is recognised as a rapidly growing industry. Holiday-makers from all over Europe are increasingly seeking for active type vacations which not only

take them to attractive locations, but increasingly provide them with enjoyable and often exciting activities such as biking, hiking and climbing, skiing and snowboarding, sailing and windsurfing and many more. Due to this rapid growth and change, and the projected increases into the future, the current workforce is now under-skilled to meet increased customers and business demand.

- *Digital and Information Technology:*

Outdoor centres which operate with schools groups at the more curriculum-related end of the schools market recognise that requirements come from schools for the centres to offer gradually increasing levels of "supportive technology", e.g., use of digital cameras, simple GPS navigation systems and similar consumer level examples. Outdoors organisations will need to make best use of technologies in the development of their organisations.

## **EU and national governance drivers**

- *Proactive influences :*

The Government can be seen to provide strong positive influence from government policy on sport, education, health and wellbeing and skills, for example:

- encouragement of sustainable development will increase the opportunities of outdoor learning and adventure/environmental tourism.
- the Outdoors as a motivating experience to encourage longer term/life long engagement in outdoors activities,
- recognition that outdoor learning, including school visits should be part of every child's school experience
- clear standards as well as giving best practice advice

- *Reactive influences :*

The Government can be seen to provide regulatory frameworks and equally inhibitors.

- Regulation and insurance requirements will increasingly bind the sector in record keeping and audit trails, innovation working is restricted
- In some countries the ongoing rise of the safety and risk aversion/litigation culture may discourage schools/parents from taking children on outdoor activities.

## **Partner Organisations**

As the Outdoors sector is a relatively small, yet complex area of activity, with many specialist interests, there are a significant number of partner organisations directly involved in the outdoors through participation, qualifications and training, business, or direct advice/guidance. These include national outdoors sports organisations, trade and professional associations, special interest groups in education, etc.

## **Workforce**



Whilst paid employment is a key economic feature, it is important to acknowledge the vital role that the voluntary sector and volunteers in general play in the outdoors. This is reflected in the wide scope of outdoors provision in the voluntary and youth sectors, both in terms of instructing and leading and in terms of participation. Furthermore, there is a rich crossover between voluntary and employed sub-sectors in the outdoors in staff terms. Many outdoor employees started their careers and developing those vital initial skills and attitudes in a junior, voluntary role in a local community or club.

- *Seasonal fluctuations:*

There is a high degree of seasonal fluctuation in the numbers working in the outdoors with demand increasing during the summer months, and to a lesser extent in the winter months for those countries with winter activities. Older and/or more experienced employees combine contracts to give them year round or near year round employment, and there is often a lifestyle choice regarding the valuing of time for personal outdoors activity.

- *Profile of the outdoor workforce:*

Average ages in the sector are lower than the rest of the economy (though as explained above, the reliability of the data in these areas is not clear). This may be explained by the seasonal nature of employment, which attracts students and other younger, casual staff. Also, the lifestyle related to lower level occupations is attractive to younger people, especially where there is residential provision. Generally the sector loses employees as they age.

Employment in the Outdoor sector is characterised by a number of main traits:

1. rather short careers (10 years or less as an average);
2. transferability of well developed generic skills such as communication and management to other “people industry” areas;
3. high mobility in generally regulated professions;
4. great presence and importance of non formal/informal learning and a high value put on in-house/organisational training and development;
5. strong presence of self development with often poor recognition of excellent competences, especially in soft skills areas.

Many of these points reinforce the importance of the development of lifelong learning, which is seen as a key feature especially in the hard/technical skills areas.

- *Future Skill Needs:*

As the sector continues its success and growth, then the issues of annual recruitment to cope with replacement demand for those who leave employment in the sector each year will become magnified. Furthermore, the seasonal nature of the Outdoors industry operations means that organisations also face training new staff with each annual round of recruitment, with the attendant costs of this activity. It has been recognised that a more defined and promoted career development pathway, populated by examples of training, development and qualifications (and which recognises APEL) would be an important development for the sector along with relevant work-based qualifications and standards in areas such as induction and professional development.

# Occupational Map

The organisation of the outdoor industry is very varied and relatively recent what makes it difficult to distinguish levels in job profiles. Nevertheless it seems to be logic that there is no only one kind of job such as the “outdoor animator”, which is the “subject” of this Leonardo project.

There exist other indications for, apparently different types and professional levels of outdoor jobs: manager, instructor, coach, trainer, teacher, educator, guide and still more other indications in other languages.

The partners in the EQFOA project agreed that the Outdoor Jobs can be differentiated in 8 occupations. There are the “main” jobs and the “related” jobs.

Main Jobs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; <b>Coordinator/supervisor</b></li><li>&gt; <b>Specialised Outdoor Animator</b></li><li>&gt; <b>Outdoor animator</b></li><li>&gt; <b>Assistant Outdoor Animator</b></li></ul>	
<b>Related jobs</b>	
Head of unit / Managing director	
Safety manager	
Sales / Planning person	
Maintenance / Technical / Transport / Logistic person	

This will be elaborated further in the **Occupational Descriptions**.

# Annexe 1

## List of Outdoor activities

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