

# The Active Leisure Alliance and sectoral skills policy context

## 1. The Active Leisure Sector: background and context

**2008 - The “active leisure sector”** was identified as *a combination of the fitness and outdoor sub-sectors*.

**2012 -** EuropeActive and EC-OE signed a cooperation to launch the **Active Leisure Alliance**. A copy of the Memorandum can be found [here](#).

**2013 -** The [Eurofound Study on Representativeness for Sport and Active Leisure](#) confirmed the representativeness of respectively EuropeActive and the European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE) for active leisure. Following the publication of the Eurofound Study on Representativeness in the Sport and Active Leisure sector in 2013 EuropeActive (then called the European Health and Fitness Association – EHFA), undertook to set-up a new not-for-profit association for employers in the European fitness sector: EHFA-e (EHFA-employers). As the representative organisation,

EuropeActive with EHFA-E is cooperating with other stakeholders and representatives organisations and EU institutions, where appropriate, to promote and protect fitness sector in the area of social dialogue and workforce development.

EuropeActive and EC-OE have closely supported and followed the Lifelong Learning Programme and their occupational standards for fitness trainers and outdoor animators which have been developed in the past 6-7

years and have been referenced to the EQF in an informal way.

**During 2014-16** EuropeActive and EC-OE completed the classification of the main occupations of the active leisure sector as part of the ESCO (European Skills Competencies Qualifications and Occupations (1) expert referencing. The ESCO work also confirmed the sector definitions.

**In August 2016**, EuropeActive and EC-OE launched the Sector Skills Alliance for Active Leisure and its website [www.active-leisure-alliance.eu](http://www.active-leisure-alliance.eu). The SSA is comprised of a strategic cooperation between key stakeholders (employers/operators, trade unions, research, education, training institution, and public authorities/civil society organisations).

Since its establishment, the Active Leisure Alliance has been running **three EU-funded actions** supporting the social dialogue test-phase for Sport and Active Leisure ([DIAL](#)), mutual recognition of active leisure qualifications in support of labour market mobility ([SIOAF](#)) and the promotion of education in the sector with special focus on skills development ([BLUEPRINT](#)).

Getting people into work requires tackling some current skill shortages and mismatches in the active leisure sector – but importantly the vision of growth and stability will require an ability to forecast future skills needs.

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

## 2. Activities and initiatives: promoting employment, protecting the sector

Over the past several years, the Active Leisure Alliance has undergone notable development: 3 EU-co-funded projects, referencing work with the European Commission (ESCO) and the launch of the Sector Skills Alliance for Active Leisure in 2016, a significant milestone for the sector.

### a. The Sector Skills Alliance for Active Leisure

To gather relevant labour market intelligence, to understand employer needs to support growth, develop more sustainable jobs and promote entrepreneurship, a **coordinated approach is required**. This will also need to have empathy with the capacity to deliver relevant training programmes through VET, in formal, informal and non-formal settings, and also through partnerships across higher education. EuropeActive supports the development of a broad strategy covering the European concept of a sector skills alliance. The "Sector Skills Alliance" for active leisure, launched in 2016 has the characteristics of:

- to facilitate dialogue between the labour market and education & training stakeholders
- to identify skills needs, gaps and shortages;

- to assist policy makers;
- to improve cooperation and coordination at European and national level for the benefit of the sectors;
- to improve understanding, to increase mobility and to support entrepreneurship.

The proposed structure is a sector alliance where the key members will be representative from **trade unions and employer organisations, as well as members of education and training systems**. Through this open, transversal, cross-border and sectorial approach, the aim is for the stakeholders involved to assist policy makers and the Member states positions.

### b. Meaningful social dialogue for active leisure with the Alliance

The sector skills alliance will also provide the representative organisations for meaningful social dialogue for active leisure,

As the recognised representative organisations for Active Leisure, EuropeActive and EC-OE have been actively supporting the test-phase European Social Dialogue (ESSDC) for Sport and Active Leisure Committee as a sub-committee alongside the sub-committees,

professional sport, non-for-profit sports,

In support of the ESSDC for Sport and Active Leisure, the Active Leisure Alliance has supported an EU funded project (2013-2017) as a partner and successfully organised three round tables in RO, FI and PL, bringing together representative of both employers and employees across member states.

**c. Qualifications that are recognised everywhere: The European Qualification Framework (EQF) and National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs)**

- The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** is a translation tool that helps communication and comparison between qualifications systems in Europe. Its eight common European reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences. This allows any national qualifications systems, national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and qualifications in Europe to relate to the EQF levels. Learners, graduates, providers and employers can use these levels to understand and compare qualifications awarded in different countries and by different education and training systems.
- The **SIQAF project** – Relevance of Sector and International Qualifications and Frameworks to the EQF – brings together a task force of experts from EuropeActive & EC-OE to explore possibilities for industries to take sectoral qualifications through the stages of referencing to NQFs and explores possibility of direct ways of linking to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The overall goal is to support labour market mobility in the active leisure sector and making working and living abroad a real choice through qualifications that are being understood and accepted across the EU.

**d. A strategy for the sector: Blueprint for sectoral qualifications**

- Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills' to improve skills intelligence and address skills shortages in specific economic sectors.
- With the Blueprint for active leisure, EuropeActive will implement over a duration of 3 years its latest co-founded EU project. The consortium seeks to promote education in the sector with special focus on skills development. EuropeActive recognises the need for a system that will allow individual professionals working in active leisure to identify, document, assess and certify (=validate) all forms of their learning and professional experience. The validation of informal and non-formal learning in active leisure will be an integrated part of the Blueprint project to assure the relevance of the qualifications for the sector.

**Appendix 1: ESCO - Sport and Active Leisure classification**

