

Press Release*Viana do Castelo, 24th September 2019***Outdoor sport is a major European power**

The Outdoor Sports Euro'Meet started today at the Cultural Center in Viana do Castelo, with six presentations by leading European experts. Their common goal was the sustainable future development of outdoor sports.

At the national level, two projects were presented: TURNOUT - Outdoor Tourism Development in Northern Portugal and Portuguese Trails - National Cycling & Walking Project.

“TURNOUT aims to enhance the northern region as a sustainable outdoor tourism destination, focusing on: analyzing and evaluating both resources and supply in this area; analyzing and segmenting tourist demand; creating georeferenced information on supply relevant to the demand; identifying and characterizing strategic areas for the development of outdoor tourism; and developing a geographic information system,” said Goretta Silva, project manager and professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo.

Teresa Ferreira, from Turismo de Portugal and coordinator of “Portuguese Trails”, which aims to increase cycling and walking flows for all regions of Portugal, including archipelagos, and to offer experiences throughout the year, thus decreasing seasonality, explained that this project “involves 301 companies, 215 programs and 34 routes, with 425 cycling and walking trails”.

Aurélien Favre, director of the European Observatory for Sport and Employment, presented the ESSA-SPORT project. This is the first research on employability in sport and physical activity in Europe.

“The European Union's labor market in the sports sector employed, in 2018, 1.765.728 people, which means that it grew by 19,2% from 2011 to 2018. 62% of this employment is concentrated in just four countries: United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and France”, said Aurélien Favre, adding “in 2018, there were 54.4% males and 45.6% females. The most employable age group (53%) was between 25 and 49 years old. Full time employment accounted for 55.6% and part time employment for 44.4%”.

He also noted that, between 2011 and 2018, the fastest growing occupancy typology (85%) included sports coaches, instructors and staff.

According to Arne Strate, general secretary of the European Outdoor Group (EOG), consumers are concerned about environmental sustainability and that is why the outdoor industry has to change gradually.

“By 2030, sustainable companies should be able to operate within larger constraints in a sustainable and transparent world,” he said.

He also considers that there are three fundamental pillars of the future outdoor industry: “do business right; preserve the outdoors; get Europe outsider”.

Antoine Le Bellec, of the EUROPARC Federation (European natural and cultural heritage network), presented the code of conduct for outdoor sports in protected natural areas. His main message was: “We must keep the environment in our hearts.”

The last European project of the day was Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society (BOSS). Speakers were Andreas Thomann, of the Technical University of Munich, Germany, Maxime Gregory, of the University, of Sheffield Hallam, and Mike McClure, of Sport Northern Ireland, both in the United Kingdom. They stressed that among the main benefits of outdoor sports are: “mental health and well-being; physical health, active citizenship, education and lifelong learning, support in criminal re-education and the fight against antisocial behavior”.

At the opening conference, Vítor Pataco, president of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ), who also spoke on behalf of the Minister of Education and Sport, Tiago Brandão Rodrigues, said, “Outdoor Sports Euro'Meet 2019 is packed with excellent speakers which will address outdoor sports from the perspective of exercise and physical activity, employment and economics, tourism, environmental sustainability, etc. Different perspectives highlighting the value and positive impact that outdoor sports can have on building a happier and healthier European society”.

José Maria Costa, mayor of Viana do Castelo, said that “Viana do Castelo is a sport-friendly municipality and it intends to be an inclusive and opportunity-based municipality for all”. He also stressed that “the urban requalification and the river and maritime riverside front is an incentive to the practice of sport. The city has the promotion of health and healthy lifestyles in its strategy. It is the founder of the currently designated Portuguese Healthy Cities Network and also belongs to the European Healthy Cities Network”.

The 5th Outdoor Sports Euro'Meet is organized by the City Council of Viana do Castelo, the European Network of Outdoor Sports, the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth, the Porto and Northern Portugal Tourism Entity, the Sports and Leisure Superior School and Surf Clube de Viana.

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