

THE GREAT OUTDOORS IS THE SPORTS ARENA OF THE FUTURE

By **Lars Wiskum**, CEO of SportVenture and NaturStadion International Senior Adviser



An increasing number of people want to be outdoors for leisure time activities, physical activities and sports in Europe. Running, biking, swimming, walking and outdoor fitness activities are listed as the most popular sports today. The need for more physical activity as a part of our daily routines is presenting new business opportunities and new players are entering our industry.

According to statistics, 200 million are doing sports and physical activity on a frequent basis in the EU. 70 million from this group are engaged in sports activities through clubs and 130 million prefer to be physically active without a membership. They want to get new inspiration while they do sports outdoors, join a fitness club with flexible opening hours or be part of self-organized running, biking or fitness communities for outdoor activities. According to Eurobarometer, 48% of EU citizens prefer outdoor exercise to using indoor facilities, when they do sports.

Borders between training routines for sport at all levels and for everyday physical activities are blurring. Grassroot sports are becoming main stream and frequent physical training for a good health and life can combine traditions within sports with new trends of cultural and social habits. Trampolines and bouncy castles for kids, new GPS and tracking devices, motivation enhancing programs for outdoors, inspirational running and biking routes, challenges from social media and many other new areas open new product and business opportunities.

The running industry has experienced tremendous growth in the last decades. Now, the biking industry is expected to move forward as more and more people will be jumping on the bike – whether it may be for transportation, environmental or health reasons. The outdoor industry has benefited from increasing interest and search for experiences in nature. Youth-related activities such as skateboarding,



© Lars Wiskum: New entrepreneurial companies present innovative products - some based on new technology, which motivate and inspire the exercise routine.

parkour, BMX and trial action and street soccer are becoming more visible in urban spaces in cities. Public institutions, research and education centers, user organizations and commercial partners are forming new partnerships to find inspiration for new ways of promoting and supporting innovative and sustainable development through physical activity.

Sports facilities and sports halls have been the traditional center for sports clubs and a frame around sports activities. Today, physical activity is no longer limited by the availability of facilities with walls and ceilings. Nature trails and theme routes, mixed with virtual gaming and technology based products and events offer new outdoor opportunities combining exercise and experiences.

We are facing a worldwide epidemic obesity situation; due to lack of physical activity all stakeholders must find new ways and new products motivating more citizens to a healthy lifestyle and more sports and physical activity. The sporting goods industry can initiate and support initiatives locally and worldwide to build platforms together with sport- and health organizations, NGO's, local communities and others. ■

" Today 40 % of the European Union citizens say they are regularly active. However, in some countries the level is more than 60%. We should have as common goal to close this gap by having 100 million more active in 2020. Such target should be a common goal and including various sectors such as; sport, health, education, urban and outdoor planning, transportation and not least the sporting goods industry," says ISCA President Mogens Kirkeby.