

## A PARTNERSHIP OF



## THE EUROPEAN GOLF ASSOCIATION GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

### WHAT IS GOLF?

It is a sport, a passion, an industry. It generates benefits to health, to the economy and to the environment. Over 60 million people play golf worldwide. The game has generated more economic activity and employment than any other sport and is a byword for good conduct, honesty and integrity – it is one of the very few sports where, even at a professional level, each player is responsible for ensuring his, or her, own compliance with the Rules.

### Social Importance

Golf is a sport enjoyed by millions of Europeans, from all economic and social groups:

- There are approximately 6,800 golf courses in Europe<sup>1</sup>
- There are 4.5 million registered players in Europe<sup>1&2</sup>
- There are an estimated 35-40% of players who are not registered to a national Federation, suggesting the total number of players in Europe is as much as 6.3 million<sup>2</sup>
- Golf has proven health benefits:
  - Walking and playing an 18 hole round of golf burns up to 800 calories per round<sup>3</sup>
  - The death rate for golfers is up to 40% lower than for non-golfers of same sex, age and socio-economic status, with golfers showing up to a five year increase in life expectancy<sup>3</sup>

### Economic Importance

Golf has become more than just a sport – it is now a worldwide industry. It has a significant economic impact to Europe:

- Total economic value of the golf industry in Europe in revenue terms is €48.3 billion<sup>2</sup>
- In 2006, the European golf industry generated €19.6 billion of direct revenues<sup>2</sup>
- Once costs have been subtracted, the value of the industry in GDP terms is €13.3 billion<sup>2</sup>
- The value of golf tourism in Europe in 2006 was €2.2 billion<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 400,000 European jobs are directly related to golf, paying almost €9.4 billion in wages<sup>2</sup>

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### Environmental Importance

Arguably more than any other sport, golf's relationship with the natural world is one of its defining characteristics. All courses have the potential to contribute to nature conservation and the promotion of biodiversity. The permanent turfgrass cover to golf courses can prevent the erosion of soils. Golf courses can contribute to local water management and conservation programmes. But, golf courses are not automatically beneficial: attention to detail during the planning, design, construction and management phases is crucial to their potential environmental value. Genuine environmental value and golf are not mutually exclusive – many would argue they can be synonymous<sup>5</sup>.

- The average golf course takes up 60-70 hectares but typically only approximately 30-50% of this area is closely mown and maintained
- Playing areas are typically made up of 1 hectare of putting green, 2 hectares of teeing ground and 16-18 hectares of fairway
- Up to 70% of a well managed golf course can be used as habitat creation for wildlife
- Pesticide application is often limited to the 1 to 2 hectares of putting green surface
- Irrigation water use is restricted to dry periods and, in cooler climates, tends to be confined to the greens and tees - increasingly, irrigation supply to golf courses is treated sewage effluent
- Golf courses, new or old, can enhance the local biodiversity of an area by providing a greater variety of habitats than intensively managed agricultural areas<sup>4</sup>

### Sources:

1. European Golf Association
2. KPMG Golf Advisory Practice: 'The Economic Value of Golf In Europe' (2006) & 'Golf Benchmark Survey' (2008)
3. Karolinska Institutet, Sweden: Farahmand, B., Broman, G., De Faire, U., Vågerö, D., Ahlbom, A., 'Golf – a game of life and death. Reduced mortality in Swedish golf players', Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports (2008)
4. University of London, School of Biological Sciences: Tanner, R.A., Gange, A.C., 'Effects of golf courses on local biodiversity' Landscape and Urban Planning 71: pp137-146, (2005)
5. Golf Environment Organisation