

# 1. Introduction to Personal Training: A snap shot of recent studies

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## **1.1 Introduction**

In Europe, as in the rest of the world, Personal Training is on the move and developing rapidly. On Personal Training, there are plenty opinions, personal publications, etcetera. It is like football; the whole nation is an expert. But what is known about this profession from independent (scientific) research and which lessons can be learned from studies on Personal Training around the globe? In this chapter, an introduction to Personal Training is presented based on research, discussing topics such as profiles, activities, and success factors of Personal Trainers, plus profiles of Personal Training customers.

## 1.2 Personal Training defined

What is Personal Training? Ask this question to a group of professionals and discussions will explode. Personal Training is a generic name for a palette of activities and is defined in multiple ways. It could be called a container term, because almost everything fits inside. The broad character of Personal Training has advantages, disadvantages, beauties and flaws. The pluralism of this term and this discipline offers room to various angles and shapes. However, this versatility also creates obscurities, confusion and can lead to disappointments for customers. Organizations like ACSM provide definitions on Personal Training and Personal Trainer. In Table 1.1 some ad random selected definitions of a Personal Trainer are summarised.

The definitions or descriptions in Table 1.1 mainly describe what the profession of a Personal Trainer should encompass according to the organisation. As always, all definitions are discussable and have pros and cons. For example, the fact that a Personal Trainer does not explicitly have to perform a paid activity (fee-based) is notable. In Europe, Personal Training is still a relatively new phenomenon for the fitness sector in general and towards consumers.

What should a consumer expect of a Personal Trainer? And when is a person qualified to use the label “Personal Trainer”? There is, and perhaps will never be a dominant and global definition of a Personal Trainer or Personal Training. Of course, this is key to define for

example the Personal Training market, but cohesion on this topic is limited. In this chapter, an umbrella approach of Personal Training will be used, meaning that Personal Training is defined in different ways, depending on the actual study presented.

Until now, the professional title Personal Trainer is not protected in most countries, so anyone can call themselves a Personal Trainer. This process is still in its infancy in Europe, but also in other continents, which is partly due to the broad interpretation given to the profession of Personal Training. EuropeActive (2011) took important steps with the development of standards to more explicitly define this profession (at level 4 within the European Qualification Framework; EQF). And differentiate it from other professions such as fitness instructors (EQF level 3). The standards are an important step but implementing them into the fitness sector and communicating it to a broader public is a long-term process which just has started.

Organisation	Definition or description
<p><b>NSCA (2004)</b></p>	<p>A Personal Trainer is a fitness professional involved in exercise prescription and instruction. They motivate clients by setting goals and providing feedback and accountability to clients. Personal Trainers also measure their client's strengths and weaknesses with fitness assessments. These fitness assessments may also be performed before and after an exercise program to measure their client's improvements in physical fitness. They may also educate their clients in many other aspects of wellness besides exercise, including general health and nutrition guidelines. Qualified Personal Trainers recognise their own areas of expertise. If a Personal Trainer suspects that one of his or her clients has a medical condition that could prevent the client from safe participation in an exercise program, they must refer the client to the proper health professional for prior clearance.</p>
<p><b>ACSM (2007)</b></p>	<p>The ACSM certified Personal Trainer is a fitness professional involved in developing and implementing an individualised approach to exercise leadership in healthy populations and/or those individuals with medical clearance to exercise. Using a variety of teaching techniques, the trainer is proficient in leading and demonstrating safe and effective methods of exercise by applying the fundamental principles of exercise science. The ACSM certified Personal Trainer is proficient in writing appropriate exercise recommendations, leading and demonstrating safe and effective methods of exercise, and motivating individuals to begin and to continue with their healthy behaviours.</p>
<p><b>EuropeActive (2011)</b></p>	<p>A Personal Trainer's role includes designing, implementing and valuating exercise/physical activity programmes for a range of individual clients by collecting and analysing client information to ensure the effectiveness of personal exercise programmes. A Personal Trainer should also actively encourage potential clients/members to participate in and adhere to regular exercise/physical activity programmes, employing appropriate motivational strategies to achieve this.</p>

Table 1.1: Definitions or descriptions of a Personal Trainer.

### 1.3 Personal Training development

Around the globe, Personal Training markets show different levels of development. In general, the United States of America are perceived as a fundamental market for Personal Training. Many point to the

# Portugal

**€ 35**

Price of a 1-on-1  
training session

**2,738**

Inhabitants per  
Personal Trainer

**3,777**

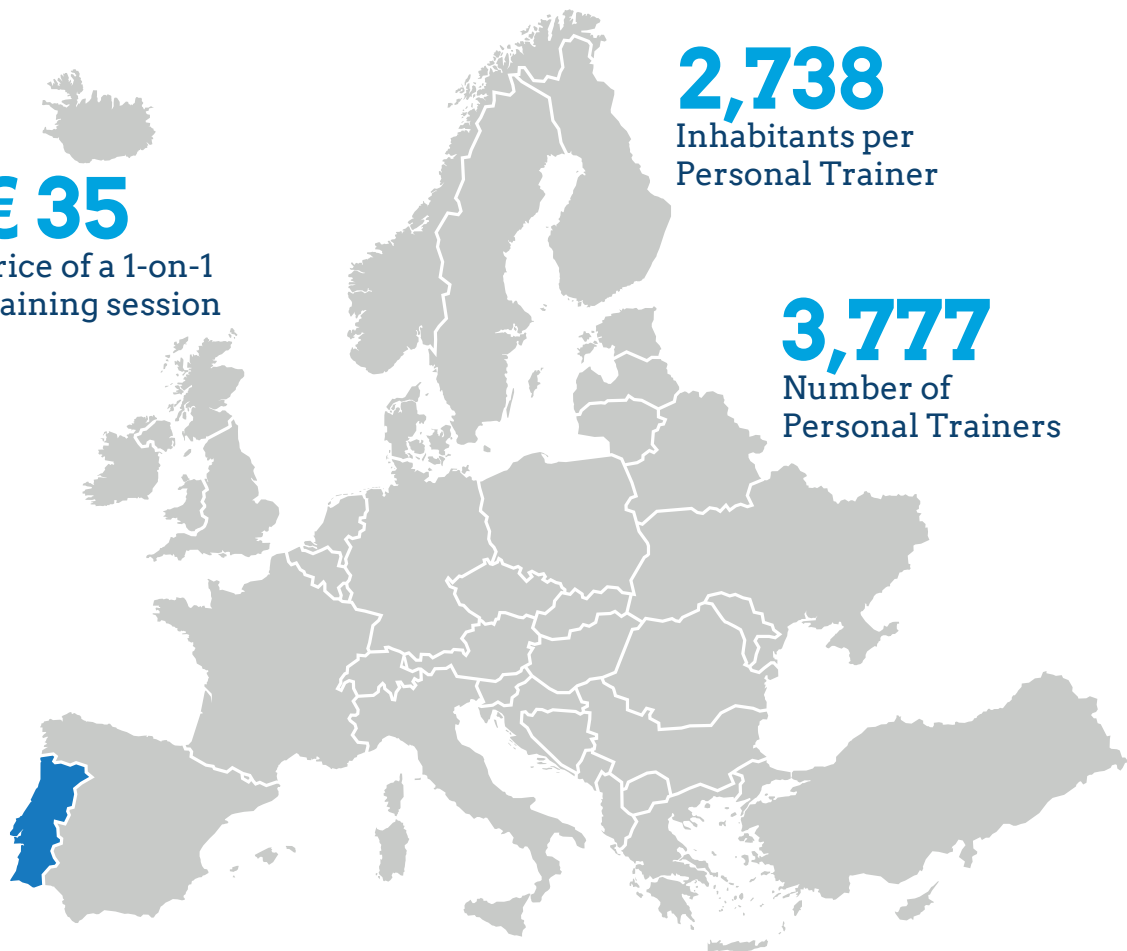
Number of  
Personal Trainers

**51.8%**

Portion of fulltime  
Personal Trainers

**30.5%**

Portion female  
Personal Trainers



General Market Information	
Total general population	10.341.330
Number of Personal Trainers	3.777
Inhabitants per Personal Trainer	2.738
15 countries' average	5.772
Number of participating Personal Trainers	118
Participation rate	3,1%
15 countries' average	4,0%
Market share of cities > 250,000 inhabitants	42,2%
15 countries' average	42,7%
Portion of competition assessment as "strong" or "very strong"	75,9%
15 countries' average	52,7%
Portion of competition prognosis as "increase" or "strong increase"	93,0%
15 countries' average	81,0%

Offering	
Portion of 1-on-1 training	85,3%
Portion of 1-on-2 training	7,5%
Portion of small group training	7,2%
15 countries' average for 1-on-1 training	72,4%
Price of a 1-on-1 training session (in EUR p.p.)	35
Price of a 1-on-2 training session (in EUR p.p.)	25
Price of a small group training session (in EUR p.p.)	19
15 countries' average for the price of a 1-on-1 training session (in EUR p.p.)	53

Personal Trainer	
Portion female Personal Trainers	30,5%
15 countries' average	36,1%
In absolute numbers	1.152
Average age of Personal Trainers (in years)	34
15 countries' average (in years)	34
Portion of fulltime Personal Trainers	51,8%
15 countries' average	46,3%
In absolute numbers	1.955
Portion of self-employed Personal Trainers	75,4%
15 countries' average	73,1%
In absolute numbers	2.850
Average time spent in industry (in years)	10
15 countries' average (in years)	9
Average time working as Personal Trainer (in years)	7
15 countries' average (in years)	6
Portion of Personal Trainers with a bachelor's degree or higher	76,8%
15 countries' average	32,2%
Portion of "very satisfied" Personal Trainers	22,2%
15 countries' average	37,6%
Average monthly net revenue (in EUR)	1.215
15 countries' average (in EUR)	1.894

# Spain

**€ 35**

Price of a 1-on-1  
training session

**17,531**

Inhabitants per  
Personal Trainer

**2,649**

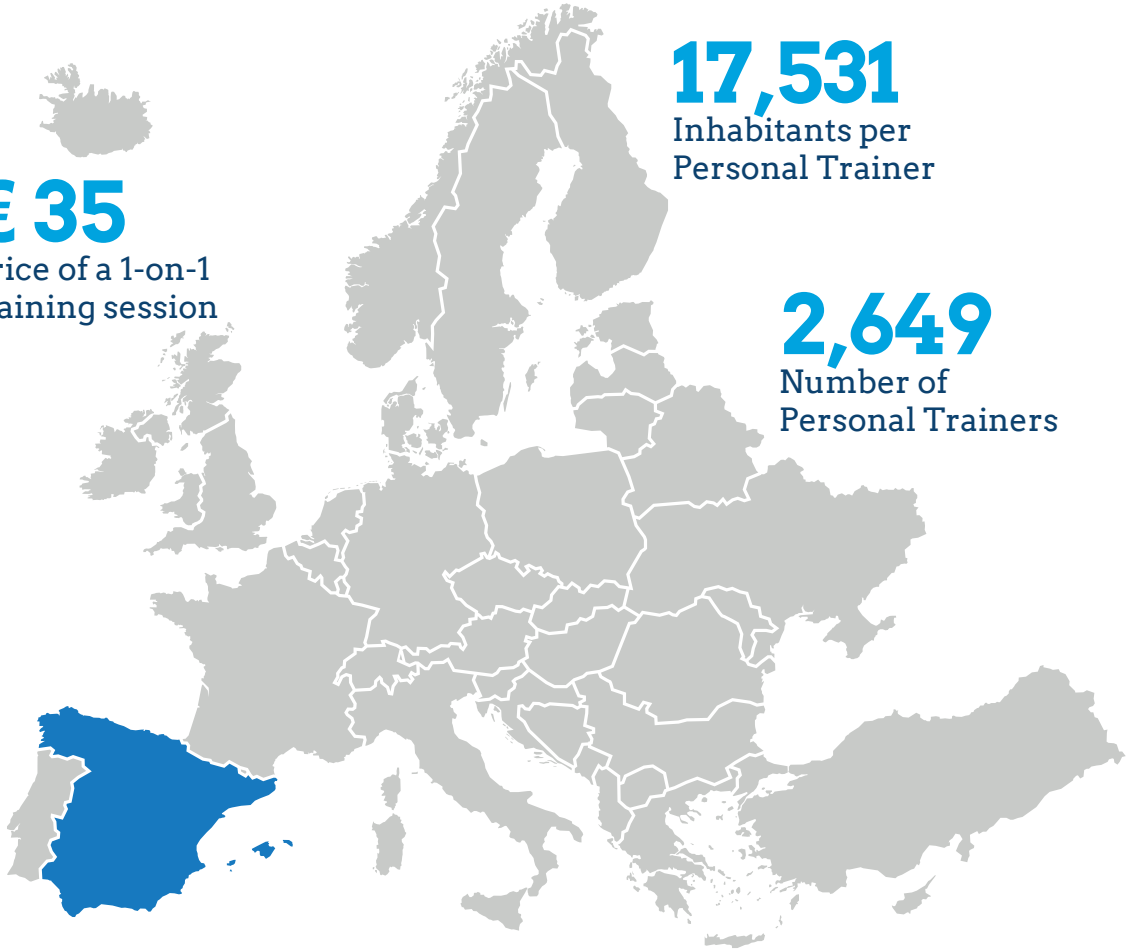
Number of  
Personal Trainers

**38.3%**

Portion of fulltime  
Personal Trainers

**25.1%**

Portion female  
Personal Trainers



General Market Information	
Total general population	46.440.099
Number of Personal Trainers	2.649
Inhabitants per Personal Trainer	17.531
15 countries' average	5.772
Number of participating Personal Trainers	175
Participation rate	6,6%
15 countries' average	4,0%
Market share of cities > 250,000 inhabitants	49,7%
15 countries' average	42,7%
Portion of competition assessment as "strong" or "very strong"	46,3%
15 countries' average	52,7%
Portion of competition prognosis as "increase" or "strong increase"	81,7%
15 countries' average	81,0%

Offering	
Portion of 1-on-1 training	68,5%
Portion of 1-on-2 training	12,6%
Portion of small group training	19,0%
15 countries' average for 1-on-1 training	72,4%
Price of a 1-on-1 training session (in EUR p.p.)	35
Price of a 1-on-2 training session (in EUR p.p.)	25
Price of a small group training session (in EUR p.p.)	19
15 countries' average for the price of a 1-on-1 training session (in EUR p.p.)	53

Personal Trainer	
Portion female Personal Trainers	25,1%
15 countries' average	36,1%
In absolute numbers	666
Average age of Personal Trainers (in years)	35
15 countries' average (in years)	34
Portion of fulltime Personal Trainers	38,3%
15 countries' average	46,3%
In absolute numbers	1.015
Portion of self-employed Personal Trainers	62,7%
15 countries' average	73,1%
In absolute numbers	1.661
Average time spent in industry (in years)	9
15 countries' average (in years)	9
Average time working as Personal Trainer (in years)	6
15 countries' average (in years)	6
Portion of Personal Trainers with a bachelor's degree or higher	46,3%
15 countries' average	32,2%
Portion of "very satisfied" Personal Trainers	37,7%
15 countries' average	37,6%
Average monthly net revenue (in EUR)	1.409
15 countries' average (in EUR)	1.894