

EUMA and ERA Charter on European Hiking and Mountain Trails

European Trails Strategy – Policy Framework for Sustainable Trail Development and Management in Europe - Trails for all.

European walking, hiking and mountain trails are a cornerstone of public health, climate resilience, cultural heritage, and rural revitalisation.

This document by the two leading European trails organisations, the European Mountaineering Associations (EUMA) and the European Hiking Federation (ERA), sets out a joint vision to protect, develop and maintain Europe's walking, hiking and mountain trail network to ensure free access, sustainable management, and recognition of their social and economic value and role.

EUMA and ERA agree that:

Walking, hiking and mountain trails are footpaths of public interest for the purpose of walking, running or climbing. They are located in any kind of landscape, are visible and clearly recognisable in the terrain, and are physically marked and signposted.

In Europe, the vast majority of walking, hiking and mountain trails are part of the network of trails under the umbrella of one of the two leading European trails organisations: the European Mountaineering Associations (EUMA) and the European Hiking Federation, the former European Ramblers' Association (ERA).

Key Principles

1. **Accessibility for all** – Trails must be freely accessible, inclusive, and designated for people of all ages, social status and abilities.
2. **Sustainable management** – Management must minimise ecological impact and support biodiversity, guided by best practice and climate adaptation.
3. **Responsible usage** – Promoting "Leave No Trace" ethics, promotes responsible free access and balances coexistence with landowners, and mitigation of overuse impacts.
4. **Quality Infrastructure** – Trails should be safe, well-marked and maintained using trail managers expertise supported by adequate funding.
5. **Free public access** – Europe's trails are a public good, and access should not be restricted by commercial barriers and private interest.
6. **Protection from sealing and destruction** – Trails and their corridors must be safeguarded from infrastructure development and land sealing.

7. **Adequate funding & climate compensation** – Providing dedicated funding streams including compensation mechanisms for maintenance and trail damage from climate change.
8. **Value of volunteering** – Recognition and support of volunteer trail management and the activities of the trail-responsible hiking and mountaineering associations as a key contribution to Europe's green and social economy.
9. **Digital ownership** - Ensuring adequate visibility through modern technologies, interoperable GIS systems, and open data platforms .
10. **Cross-border connectivity** – Trails are a unique European infrastructure that also transcend borders, strengthen cohesion, and promote European identity.

Societal Foundations

- **Mental and physical health** – Trails support active lifestyles, reduce healthcare costs, and contribute to public well-being.
- **Outdoor activity trend** – Reflecting the growing demand for nature-based recreation, trails promote sustainable tourism and local economies.
- **Non-discrimination** – Trails are for everyone, irrespective of socio-economic status, gender, age, or physical and mental abilities.
- **Sport for everybody** – From walking to mountaineering, trails underpin a wide spectrum of outdoor sports and nature-based education.
- **Education & Youth** – Trails provide opportunities for environmental education, cultural learning, and youth engagement in sustainability.
- **Cultural exchange** – Trails connect people, regions and identities, contributing to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Objectives

1. **Strengthen trail infrastructure** – Ensure robust, climate-resilient, interconnected trail networks.
2. **Secure long-term funding** – Dedicated resources for maintenance, digitalisation and volunteer coordination have to be provided.
3. **Promote accessibility and sustainability** – Trails as an entry point for citizens to experience outdoor activities and nature responsibly.

4. **Position trails as tools for health, climate action and rural (re)vitalisation** – Trails as engines of social well-being, tourism and regional development.
5. **Digitalisation of trail networks** – Establish open, verified, interoperable mapping and data standards to support navigation, accessibility, safety and management.

EUMA and ERA Request

1. **EU Directive on Trails** – Mandating member states to adopt national trail strategies, similar to TEN-T transport networks, with funding and accessibility standards.
2. **Dedicated EU & national funding** – For sustainable management, climate adaptation, and volunteer programmes.
3. **Legal protection** – Prevent sealing or destruction of established trail corridors and ensure climate impact compensation.
4. **Accessibility standards** – Design for universal access, including persons with disabilities and elderly users.
5. **Volunteer support** – Recognise voluntary work through structured programmes, training, and funding.
6. **Integrated mobility** – Promote “Train + Trail” solutions to reduce car dependency and support low-carbon tourism.

EUMA and ERA call on the EU, its member states, and local authorities to act on this document, safeguarding Europe’s trail network for present and future generations while ensuring sustainable growth, public health, and nature protection.

Data Basis & References

- [ERA Project Report](#)
- [EUMA Project Report](#)

European Mountaineering Associations (EUMA) is an umbrella organisation of European mountaineering associations from 30 European countries with approximately 3,3 million individual members.

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European Hiking Federation (ERA) is an umbrella organisation of more than 65 walking organisations from more than 35 European countries. This organisation has a total of more than 2,5 million individual members.

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12 October 2025