

Proposal for a long-distance hiking trail along the European Green Belt

A new partnership is joining forces to designate an official long-distance hiking trail that follows the full length of the European Green Belt, thereby enhancing sustainable tourism, cultural awareness, transboundary collaboration and environmental education!

What is the European Green Belt?

Europe's longest green network along the former Iron Curtain

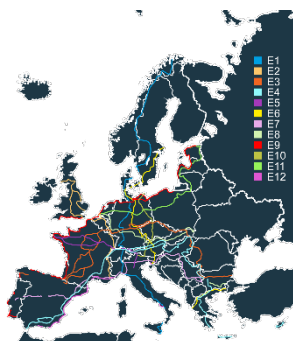


The [European Green Belt](#) is Europe's longest green network, stretching **12,500 km across 24 countries** from the Arctic to the Adriatic, Ionian, and Black Seas. The area runs along the **former Iron Curtain** and comprises more than 7,500 protected areas and a **unique continuity and diversity of natural habitats**, wilderness areas, and cultural landscapes. It thereby safeguards vital habitats and serves as backbone of Europe's green infrastructure. The European Green Belt is **not only key for protecting Europe's biodiversity**, but it is also a unique **memorial landscape** and a **peace project that unites people across the continent, strengthening European diversity**. Due to its outstanding cultural and natural values, the European Green Belt has great potential for a nomination as a **World Heritage site**.

Figure 1: Spatial scope of the European Green Belt © European Green Belt Association (based on Mapbox and OpenStreetMap)

What are E-paths?

Inter-cultural and long-distance hiking trails in Europe



[E-Paths](#) are European **long-distance trails** that link the countries from North Cape to Crete and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Carpathians and the Black Sea. At this point, there are **12 E-Paths**, mostly waymarked and maintained by members of the European Hiking Federation. The E-paths **link national and regional hiking trails** and allow hikers to **explore the natural and cultural**

Figure 2: Map of E-paths. © European Hiking Federation

Why have one or more E-paths along the European Green Belt?

A European Green Belt Hiking Trail under the E-path network is a unique opportunity to:

- Strengthen the **link between cultural and natural treasures of the European Green Belt and highlight its history.**
- Provide an **extraordinary hiking experience** in a unique natural and cultural area.
- Promote **environmental education and stewardship.**
- Support the **conservation of biodiversity** and habitats, e.g. through increased environmental awareness.
- **Boost local economies** through **sustainable tourism** development, especially in disadvantaged European border regions.
- Provide **mental and physical health benefits** to hikers of the new trail.
- Foster **cooperation and unity across the countries** of the former Iron Curtain.

Through a European Green Belt Hiking Trail, all people can explore the unique history, culture and natural wonders of the European Green Belt and contribute to its sustainable development.



[Click here to see a map of existing E-paths and the European Green Belt!](#)

Next steps

A new partnership¹ between the [European Hiking Federation](#), [European Mountaineering Association](#), and [European Green Belt Association](#) was formed to develop the European Green Belt Hiking Trail. Currently mainly implemented on a voluntary basis, the project is entering a two-year planning phase focused on core tasks before involving national and regional stakeholders. Key steps in this phase include:

- Identifying a coherent and inspiring route using expertise in trail development, cultural heritage, nature conservation, sustainable tourism, and green jobs.
- Refining the concept of the trail and developing clear criteria for its designation.
- Coordinating the route alignment with existing trails, protected areas and cultural sites
- Cooperating with national and local partners in all European Green Belt countries.
- Outlining education and interpretation opportunities to raise awareness of the trail's historical, natural, and cultural significance.
- Creating a digital version of the trail route and accompanying descriptions.
- Exploring options for modest funding to support the next phase of development.

After the planning phase, broader implementation will begin in cooperation with national and regional partners. Continued volunteer support and targeted funding will be essential to the trail's future success and long-term management.

¹ **European Green Belt Association (EGBA):** EGBA steers the activities for the protection of Europe's longest green network so that nature and people can grow together alongside the former Iron Curtain. EGBA bridges ecological, cultural and geographical borders to ensure a safe and sustainable future for the European Green Belt.

European Hiking Federation (ERA): ERA is the umbrella organization for national and regional hiking associations across Europe and promotes sustainable hiking, transnational trail development, and cultural exchange through walking. As the coordinator of the 12 E-paths, ERA works to ensure quality standards, accessibility, and cross-border cooperation.

European Mountaineering Association (EUMA): EUMA is the voice of European mountaineers. It advocates responsible access to mountains and climbing areas, while also promoting safety and environmental protection, and is a key dialogue partner for EU institutions, providing networking opportunities, education and collaborative projects.