



## Access to nature - ERA resolution:

### Open up Europe's Natural Environment!

**Free access to the open countryside for all citizens is a fundamental aim of the European Ramblers' Association (ERA). Therefore ERA promotes a Europe wide free and easy access to nature, further investment in the development of marked paths and the integration of walkers' interests in planning and legal regulations.**

The outdoor experiences of walkers are affected by several factors such as:

- the protection of the natural and cultural heritage
- the rights of private and public landowners
- the interests of other users

Negative developments are disturbance by motorized activity, short-sighted planning, access fees and other unjustified limitations to access.

Experiencing the outdoor environment and the cultural landscape induces a greater awareness of nature and a better attitude towards environmental protection.

Walking in the open countryside is a simple, natural and climate friendly way of discovering nature and the cultural heritage of Europe. Therefore access to the countryside for walkers requires special attention and support.

Paths are essential parts of the infrastructure for easy access to nature and form the basis for walking in Europe. The economic effects resulting from this form of activity are substantial in rural development. Moreover, attractive paths have the effect of canalizing visitors to a sustainable use of the natural environment.

The avoidance of conflicts and negative effects requires integrated planning processes for outdoor infrastructure. Early coordination between landowners, outdoor-associations, forestry, conservation organizations and others mitigates such conflicts.

Free access to the natural environment is a benefit which demands proper and responsible behaviour in the natural environment. The ERA acknowledges the interests of landowners and stands for a respectful treatment of nature and Europe's cultural heritage.

Walking in Europe contributes to the greater understanding between the nations and nourishes European integration. Through direct contact with people from other cultures, prejudices can be mitigated and mutual respect encouraged.

In accordance with the aims and goals of the ERA, as stated in its constitution, the members meeting in Hässleholm/Sweden in September 2016 puts forward the following:

- 1. Access to nature must in principle be free of charge so that everyone can experience Europe's natural environment and its cultural heritage.**
- 2. Only transparent justifiable limitations of this right of access can be recognized and accepted.**
- 3. In planning and legal regulations in European countries, the interests of walkers must be taken into account and the regional and national organizations which are part of the ERA network must be involved.**
- 4. The contribution to sustainable development through walking must be recognized and supported through investment in the creation, maintenance and development of marked paths and care for the open countryside.**

*The European Ramblers' Association (ERA) was founded in 1969, comprises 58 ramblers' organizations from 32 European states. ERA members represent more than hundred years of experience in organizing and creating conditions to facilitate walking (path marking, access, construction of huts, viewing towers, campsites etc.). These organisations have a total of over 3 million individual members.*