



Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe and ERA member organisations

General Information:

The standard process of qualifying a trail as LQT

1. An interested region (tourism body, National Park, walking group, etc.) contacts the ERA to start the quality process.
2. The ERA offers a 2-day European-wide uniform course for assessors in the region.
3. The trained persons gather the data necessary for the quality assessment on the trails and assess them initially (analysis of strength and weakness). Thus shortcomings in the quality of the route can be identified quickly and possibilities for upgrades can be found.
4. When the route fulfills the LQT criteria, an application for certification can be applied for with the ERA.
5. The data gathered on the route are independently assessed and analysed by the ERA. Qualified ERA personnel carry out spot checks on the route locally.
6. When the results of the checks are positive, the route gets the certification 'Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe' for the period of 3 years. After this time, the quality of the route has to be tested again. The quality mark can be used in printed matter and on the internet to market the walking route.

The aim:

To involve ERA Member organisations in the process to qualify a trail with the label "Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe" (LQT).

ERA=European Ramblers Association

DWS= Deutscher Wanderverband Service GmbH

MO= ERA Member organisation. If a country has more regional members will the contact be to the local member and cc to the national member.

	MO tasks
The Process in reality:	
The process often starts with a meeting at holiday- or hiking-exhibitions or with a first mail to ask for more information.	

<p>A Trail who wants more information about LQT, may contact one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DWS – who send/give the Trail the relevant leaflets and ask them to contact the local MO to start cooperation. The relevant MO will be <u>informed</u> about the contact. 2. ERA - who send the Trail info to DWS who continue with the procedure above. 3. MO – who appoint a contact person for the Trail and give more info. MO also sends an <u>orientation</u> about the Trail to DWS. 	<p>Must contact the Trail and tell if they want to be involved in the process.</p> <p>MO must educate contact persons to give correct information and know the procedure. Can /must participate in a Workshop.</p>
<p>A Trail who has <u>decided</u> to obtain the qualification to become a LQT may contact one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DWS – who send/give the Trail the relevant leaflets and ask them to contact the local MO to start cooperation. The relevant MO will be <u>orientated</u> about the contact. 2. ERA - who send the Trail info to DWS who continue with the procedure above. 3. MO – who appoint a contact person for the Trail and send an <u>orientation</u> about the trail to DWS to start the process. 	<p>Must contact the Trail and tell if they want to be involved in the process.</p> <p>MO must educate contact persons who can give correct information and know the procedure.</p>
<p>If a MO finds a trail unqualified for the label they must orientate the Trail and DWS and describe their <u>reasons</u>. For example the MO tells DWS if the present waymarking is not according to the “national wide set of guidelines for waymarking”</p>	
<p>If a MO is not concerned to be involved in the LQT program, they must send the Trail directly to DWS, who takes care of info and the whole qualifying process.</p>	
<p>DWS maintain the communication directly to the Trail during the process and decide the timetable for workshops and control together with the Trail.</p>	<p>MO can be part of the steering committee behind the Trails qualification and get the information this way. MO must contact DWS if they want to be involved in another way – or not.</p>
<p>LQT Workshops:</p>	
<p>DWS is offering a LQT workshop on location. The workshop takes 2 days. There will be 2 educated specialists. One of them must always be representing ERA. 8-10 people can participate. The workshop has a theoretical part with transfer of criteria and evaluation and a practical part with two training walks.</p>	<p>MO can have educated specialists. DWS can create a course for coming specialist (cost payed by the MO).</p> <p>The specialists in a workshop will get a salary for the work.</p>

After the workshops the participants are able to gather the necessary data for a trail certification.	
<p>The waymarking must be according to the ERA guidelines for waymarking.</p> <p>If the MO have a national wide set of guidelines for waymarking they must be fulfilled too. A specialist from MO will do that part.</p> <p>Trails who has performed a workshop before 1/1 2017 are not obliged to follow MO-guidelines for waymarking when they are controlled for qualification or re-qualification.</p> <p>But must do efforts to approach the MO guidelines</p>	<p>MO must have a specialist in national guidelines for waymarking if they want this part included.</p> <p>This local specialist will not get a salary.</p>
<p>The workshops will be performed in English, German or French. Translation to a national language is done by the Trail/MO.</p> <p>Translation of the material to a national language is done by the Trail/MO.</p>	<p>The specialists from the MO must be able to speak English.</p>
<p>ERA has all rights to the material (Workbook, Entry sheets and Excel sheets) used in the workshops. The participants can use it for the certifying process.</p>	<p>MO and participants in the workshops has no rights to use the material (Workbook, Entry sheets and Excel sheets) for any other purpose.</p>
Certification:	
<p>The certification is based on an inspection of 30-50 % of the trail on location. DWS is coordinating the inspection. How many days the control takes, depends on the length of the trail. Educated specialists will do the inspection; at least one must be representing ERA.</p>	<p>The control can be performed after MO tell DWS the Trail is fulfilling the national wide set of guidelines for waymarking.</p> <p>MO can have a specialist present too.</p>
<p>If the Trail does not fulfil the requirements, it has to be improved and a documentation of this works has to be delivered to ERA.</p> <p>The educated specialists from ERA have the final decision if a trail is qualified or not.</p>	<p>The MO specialist may assist and advise the Trail in gathering the data. However the MO has no authorization for the certification process.</p>
Re-Certification:	
<p>After 3 years the trail has to undergo a re-certification. Again an inspection of 30-50 % of the trail on location has to take place. DWS is coordinating the inspection. How many days the control takes, depends on the length of the trail. Educated specialists will do the inspection; at least one must be representing ERA.</p>	<p>The control can be performed after MO tell DWS the Trail is fulfilling the national wide set of guidelines for waymarking.</p> <p>MO can have a specialist present too.</p>
Problems / Complaints	
<p>If problems occur or complaints about trail/markings quality are sent to ERA, the Trail will receive a warning message. If the Trail has huge problems in trail/markings quality, which cannot be solved, the certification can be denied.</p>	

<p>The educated specialists from ERA have the final decision if a trail is qualified or not.</p>	
<p>Awarding ceremony / Opening:</p>	
<p>Following a decision of ERA Board the hand-over of LQT certificates will take places during the annual conferences.</p> <p>A Trail can invite representatives from ERA to the “Awarding ceremony / Opening” of the trail on location. In this case all costs for travelling and accommodation will be covered by the Trail.</p> <p>Exceptions concerning the travel costs can be accepted (e.g. the first LQT-BE in the country, a jubilee), but they have to be accepted by ERA Board.</p>	<p>MO pay its own cost if they wants to be present at the opening.</p>
<p>Economy:</p>	
<p>The Trails pay all cost directly to DWS</p>	<p>The cost regarding participants from MO are paid by MO.</p>
<p>DWS reimburse salaries directly to the specialists.</p>	
<p>LQT Light – workshop:</p>	
<p>ERA is offering a LQT light workshop</p> <p>A MO can organise a LQT Light – workshop for local stakeholders.</p>	<p>MO must educate local specialists to organise the workshops.</p>
<p>The workshop takes 4-5 hours. 1½ hour with theory, 2½ hour with training outdoor and 1 hour evaluation.</p>	
<p>If any specialist from ERA or DWS is invited, all costs are charged by the MO.</p>	
<p>The LQT light workshop provides with general information, but does not qualify the participants to gather the necessary data for a trail certification.</p>	
<p>LQT Network:</p>	
<p>ERA invites once a year all LQT (+ Trails very close to be a LQT) to a network meeting. The Trails pay their own cost for accommodation and transportation.</p> <p>ERA, MO and DWS pay their own cost.</p>	<p>The MO – in the region where the meeting is organised – will be invited to send 2 persons as observers to the meeting.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p>	
<p>The analysis and certification of a walking trail is a voluntary effort. Walking trails which are not certified are not automatically worse. The certification offers the walker, particularly the walking tourist, a useful decision making tool in the choice of their travel destination. In regions, where walking is an important tourism</p>	

product, the certificate of LQT and the associated resulting quality improvements, offer a great marketing opportunity.	
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The use and awareness of the criteria of LQT will lead to the constant improvement of the regional walking trail infrastructure.	
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