

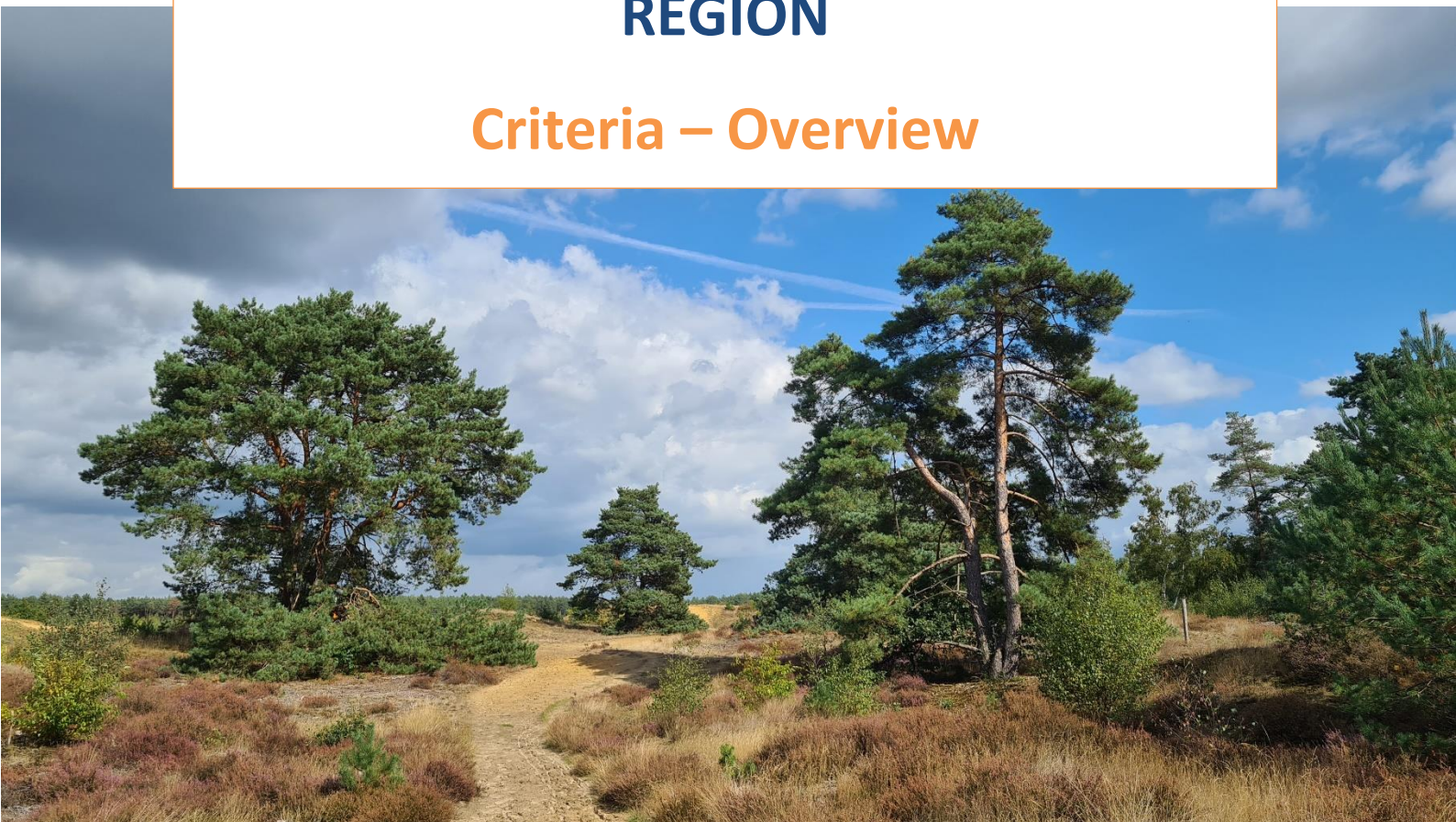


European Quality Region

Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe

REGION

Criteria – Overview



43 Criteria for the European Quality Region

- 13 criteria trails/visitor guidance
- 6 criteria accommodation and catering (hosts)
- 10 criteria service for walkers
- 7 criteria Tourist Office
- 7 criteria organisation

Walking region

Prior to being labelled as a Quality Region, a few conditions must be met. A Quality Region is a region that ...

- ... is totally dedicated to walking in terms of walking trail infrastructure, accommodation and services,
- ... provides a variety of walking trips of at least 5 days,
- ... is perceived by the guest as a closed region,
- ... markets itself as a closed region,
- ... appears as an organized structure,
- ... has the support of its population for the issue of walking.

A Quality Region can of course be part of a greater touristic region, as long as it is well delimited and relatively autonomous. Before any kind of labelling, the status needs to be clarified with the mother region.

On behalf of the European Ramblers' Association

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1.1 Trail Network (internal networking)

Every single starting point, checkpoint and objective inside the region are linked to the network. The network should be whole and contain every identified route.

1.2 Trail Network (external networking)

Every important site located outside of the region – up to 5 km – must be linked to the path network.

1.3 Trail Network: region coverage

The path network must cover at least 75 % of the whole region.

1.4 Trail Network (walker-friendly trail format)

The **net network** must comply with the following limits:

Sealed surfaces	max. 30 % of the network
On busy Roads	max. 5 % of the network max. 300 m in one stretch (in non-urban areas)
Alongside busy roads	max. 10 % of the network max. 3,000 m in one stretch

1.5 Uniform waymarking and signage

The entire hiking trail network is signposted according to a uniform and consistent system for the trails, the markings and the signposts.

1.6 Networking with signage

The walking trail network is signposted at the most important junctions of marked walking trails by signposts with a clear indication of direction (destinations + distance or time) for each walking direction. A detailed concept shows which junctions are signposted with signposts.

Altogether at least 50 % of the junctions are signposted.

1.7 Walker-friendly marking

Every trail of the network must be marked with relevant markers, following the principles of waymarking according to European Ramblers' Association, which ensure easy navigation upon the trails.

1.8 Quality Region starting points: coverage of the region

From the starting points Quality Region all destinations in the region can be reached within a maximum distance of 6 km.

1.9 Quality Region starting points: facilities

All Quality Region starting points for walking trails are equipped with sufficient information for walkers.

The Quality Region starting points are clearly indicated by a sign on through roads or at railroad stations/bus stops.

1.10 Quality Region starting points: connection to gastronomy

For at least 80 % of the Quality Region starting points, an inn or supply point can be reached within a walk on the network of paths of 6 km or at a distance of 1 km (with signposting).

1.11 Walking Trails starting points: facilities

Further starting points for walkers are connected to the walking trail network and equipped with signposts or other means of orientation (trail information boards, etc.).

1.12 Qualified Half-day and Day walks

There have to be sufficient **Qualified Half-day and Day walks** (half day or day tours of at least 5 km, preferably circuits/loop tours) in the region that meet their own set of standards:

- natural trails: min. 35 %
- rough but passable trails: max. 5 %
- sealed surfaces (tarmac, concrete, pavement): max. 20 %
- on busy roads: max. 300 m in a single stretch
- on average at least 1 change in scenery every 2 km (or an attractive natural scenery of at least 2 km replaces one change)

(In extensive landscape zones, e.g. extensive forests or meadows/fields, short interruptions (of at least 25 m), such as clearings or small woods, count as one change in scenery, if this is clearly perceived as a change by the walker.)

- on average a minimum of 1 natural or cultural attraction per 2 km
- on average a minimum of 1 network junction per 2 km

Minimum number: a base number of 3 + amount of (area divided by 50 km²)

If only the minimum number of Qualified Half-day and Day walks is planned, there are additional requirements:

- two tours can only share a maximum of 30 % of their respective paths
- the Qualified Half-day and Day walks may not intersect
- a maximum of 2 Qualified Half-day and Day walks may start from one Quality Region starting point

Qualified Half-day and Day walks start at a Quality Region starting point.

At least one Qualified Half-day and Day walk runs (in parts) along a Leading Quality Trail (see criterion 1.13).

Special rule

If the start is in the middle of a village/town the path to the village border can be taken out of the evaluation – for a maximum of 500 m – . The overall proportion of composite coating of 25 % of the whole path may not be exceeded. The minimum distance of a tour using this special rule is 6 km.

1.13 Leading Quality Trail – Best of Europe

At least one Leading Quality Trail - Best of Europe runs in the walking region.

2 Quality Criteria accommodation and catering



2.1 Variety of the offers

The following accommodation commodities must be found in the walking region:

- hotels
- guesthouses (B&B)
- guest rooms (AirBnB)
- apartments
- group accommodation/youth hostel
- trekking site, camping site or camper van site

From an area of 500 km² at least 1 offer/operation each.

2.2 Distribution throughout the area

At least 1 accommodation option have to be present within 15 km (by road) from a Quality Region starting point.

This requirement must be met by at least 80 % of the starting points.

2.3 Quality Hosts

In the walking region there are on average at least **2** Quality Hosts **per 100 km²** (0.02 per 1 km²), minimum number: **5** Quality Hosts.

2.4 Walking competence hosts: passing on of information

Every host must be informed that there exists a relevant information point in the region that provides expert walking advice. The hosts have to be in possession of material that enables them to refer people to the information point when they ask at the reception.

2.5 Walking competence hosts: walking information

Every host is regularly informed on recent developments in walking matters, modifications in the walking offers of the region and changes in the trail network.

Regularly = at least twice a year

2.6 Walking competence hosts: advanced training

Twice or Once a year, a further training course on walking is offered for hosts within the walking region.

3.1 Diversity of the offers

The walking region must offer various activities for varied target groups. It must provide at least 5 different thematic walks such as:

- ... sporty walks (alpine paths, via ferratas...)
- ... family paths (suitable for kids between 4 and 14)
- ... walks suitable for strollers
- ... health-walks
- ... walks with a culture theme
- ... culinary walks (gastronomy related)
- ... nature experience walks
- ... interactive walks
- ... GPS tours or geocaching walks
- ... walks suitable for disabled people (wheelchairs)
- ... meditative walks (with displays/tips)

This list may be amended.

3.2 Walking map

The whole walking region must be thoroughly mapped and the information available in one or more up-to-date maps.

Requirements:

- ... up to date, consistent with real data
- ... complete and thorough documentation of the whole path network
- ... minimal scaling 1:35,000 (recommended: 1:25,000)

3.3 Walking brochure

A specific brochure describes the region and offers walking ideas.

Requirements:

- ... accurate description of the region and its path network
- ... description of the hiking suggestions with
 - tour description
 - map (the map shows the hiking route and the network of walking trails)
- ... description of the long-distance walks that cross the region
- ... description of at least 2 types of specific theme walks for at least 3 of the themes that have been chosen by the region (criterion 3.1)
- ... at least 5 additional tour suggestions

3 Quality Criteria service for walkers



3.4 Touristic print products

Printed regional touristic brochures must contain detailed and attractively presented information on walking.

3.5 Internet presence walking

On its website, the region must advocate walking as a main activity:

- ... on the landing page, the subject of hiking is visible at first glance
- ... there are special pages devoted to walking, with a presentation of the walking network and individual tour tips
- ... accommodation can be booked online
- ... information on the sustainability of the offer and the region is available. The content and the scope are depending on the regional circumstances: e.g. ecological aspects, waste management, etc.

3.6 Interactive walking map

The website must have an interactive map of the whole region, providing the following information:

- ... comprehensive description of the network
- ... accurate description of each (loop) walk
- ... selection according to starting points and target groups possible
- ... download options for the selected tour

3.7 Mobility

20 % of the starting points Quality Region can be reached daily by public transport during the walking season.

3.8 Walking equipment

The region must offer at least one equipment provider able to sell, rent or repair walking equipment. This point provider should not be farther away than 25 km from any path starting point.

3.9 Guided Walking Tours

In the Quality Region, theme walks must be offered on a regular basis and the information spread accordingly.

25 % of these walks will be organised by certified/trained/state-certified walking guides or nature and landscape guides.

The booking of walking guides is possible.

3.10 Walking packages

The walking region regularly offers special walking packages that are available during the walking season.

4 Quality Criteria Tourist Office



4.1 Tourist Office: region coverage

The region must provide enough Tourist Offices. The maximum distance between a starting point Quality Region to a Tourist Office, that needs to be open on Saturday mornings as well, must not exceed 25 km.

4.2 Location

Tourist Offices must be located centrally and easily accessible.

4.3 Walking competent staff

During opening hours, there should always be at least 1 staff member able to provide relevant information to visiting walkers.

4.4 Presence of the topic walking

The Tourist Office must display visible evidence, both inside and outside, of the region's high interest into walking matters.

4.5 Walking display

The Tourist Office must provide a specific walking area, which includes complete documentation with the most important maps and brochures. The walking area should be immediately visible.

4.6 Current informationen

Current walking information must always be accessible in the Tourist Office.

4.7 Sale of information material

The most useful walking maps should be available for sale in the Tourist Office.

5.1 Framework agreement

A framework agreement will be concluded between all partners in the field of walking to promote and support walking in the region.

5.2 Care for trails and signage/waymarking convention

All partners involved in the walking domain agree to a convention or an agreement defining one's role in the care for path signage and waymarking.

5.3 Protection of nature and sustainable development

The region ensures that the development of the path network and of tourism doesn't threaten the principles of sustainable development. The protection of nature and the guarantees toward signage and path care must be ensured for the duration of the label's validity. Protected areas or natural national areas are to be considered in network planning.

5.4 Closing path regulations

The handling of closures of the walking trails is regulated.

5.5 Security regulations

The care and rescue of crashed walkers is regulated.

5.6 Digital route management

The walking trail network and signposts are digitally managed.

5.7 Walking contact person

In the walking region there are one or two central contact persons for the walking topics "service & hosts" and "path network & signposting".