

ERA STRATEGY 2026

Hiking Europe – Stronger Together

A vision for sustainable, inclusive, connected, and empowered European hiking

The **ERA Strategy 2026** outlines our shared vision for the future of hiking in Europe. As the European Hiking Federation, we stand at a pivotal moment — building on the achievements of Strategy 2025, embracing our renewed identity as *Hiking Europe*, and responding to the changing expectations of hikers, member organizations, and policymakers.

This strategy reflects the collective wisdom and aspirations of our network. It incorporates valuable input from member organizations, and aligns with the ERA's long-standing mission to promote hiking as a sustainable, healthy, and unifying activity across borders.

Over the next period, ERA will focus on six strategic pillars that together aim to strengthen trail quality, advocacy, cultural exchange, youth engagement, digital transformation, and organizational resilience. Through these coordinated efforts, we reaffirm our commitment to making Europe more walkable, connected, and inclusive — for all generations and all walkers.

We invite our members, partners, and stakeholders to walk with us on this strategic path—**stronger together**.

1. Lead with excellence: Trails, standards, and visibility

Objective: Strengthen ERA's role as the European authority on high-quality hiking trails, green chapter initiatives and E-path promotion.

Actions:

- Promote and expand the **Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe (LQT-BE)** and **Day Walks**, including the new **Green Chapter** and **ECO-Award** initiatives.
- Establish a harmonized **ERA Trail Quality Framework**, focusing on consistent signage, accessibility, and digital information standards.
- Identify and promote a portfolio of **flagship E-paths and regional highlights** to showcase trail excellence across Europe.
- Improve coordination among member trail initiatives and publish shared tools for trail development, marketing, and maintenance.
- Develop and promote common European **signage and waymarking principles** to enhance clarity and accessibility across borders.

2. Be the voice of European hikers: Advocacy and policy

Objective: Position ERA as the recognized European NGO and advocate for hiking, nature access, and sustainability with the goal of connecting with national parliaments and promoting

environmental and social benefits of hiking.

Actions:

- Increase engagement with EU institutions (e.g. DG Environment, DG SANTE, Council of Europe) to promote hiking as a sustainable, healthy, and cultural activity.
 - Advocate for the recognition of E-paths in European mobility and tourism policies.
 - Strengthen ties with allied organizations (e.g. EUMA, ENOS and EUROPARC) to form a united voice on biodiversity, access rights, and landscape protection.
 - Set up an internal **ERA Policy Platform** to collect and represent the priorities of member organizations.
 - Pursue **official recognition** by European institutions (e.g. through NGO accreditation or observer status) to enhance ERA's influence on EU policy.
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3. Unite people and cultures: Twinning and trail diplomacy

Objective: Use hiking as a tool to connect people, cultures, and communities across Europe.

Actions:

- Launch a **Twinning Programme** between local hiking clubs: “Euroclub” facilitating cultural exchange and mutual discovery.
 - Organize and promote **cross-border hiking events**, including E-path anniversaries like **E2@2026** and **Eurorando 2026** and encourage **club-level micro-events** to mark European Walking Day and other shared initiatives.
 - Support cultural storytelling along trails, including history, local traditions, and gastronomy.
 - Encourage intergenerational and intercultural dialogue through community hiking events.
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4. Engage the next generation

Objective: Attract and empower young people to shape the future of hiking in Europe.

Actions:

- Create the **ERA Youth Ambassadors** programme to give young leaders a role in ERA activities and advocacy. **Initiate at Eurorando 2026.**
 - Promote outdoor youth exchanges and hiking-themed Erasmus+ projects.
 - Partner with universities and nature education centers to make hiking part of formal and informal learning.
 - Develop accessible, youth-oriented materials and social media content highlighting the fun, freedom, and environmental value of hiking.
 - Develop **Youth Trail Packs** and **ERA youth trail challenges** with gamified activities including digital gamification” and “interactive hiking experiences.
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5. Rethink ERA's model: Governance and funding

Objective: Ensure ERA's long-term sustainability through modern governance and diversified income.

Actions:

- Maintain and expand a **modular governance system**: a strategic board, coordination working groups, and thematic expert groups to increase participation and flexibility.
 - Increase transparency in project planning and create clear pathways for members to lead or join ERA projects.
 - Diversify funding through EU grants (Erasmus+, Interreg, LIFE), sponsorships, and services (e.g. LQT training, trail consulting).
 - Strengthen partnerships with like-minded brands and networks (e.g. Kompass, FALKE, Eurail) to support ERA's mission and visibility.
 - Explore a **shared funding toolbox** for members to access EU and national funding more easily.
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6. Digital, smart, and inclusive

Objective: Become a digitally strong, user-centered federation with inclusive tools and communication including AI and smart technologies and enhanced social media presence.

Actions:

- Launch the **E-paths Smart Map**, featuring the most attractive and accessible trail sections, with trail data, GPX files, accommodation, and transport information.
- Use the domain **hiking-federation.eu** for a new, attractive public portal focusing on hikers, while keeping a members-only backend.
- Integrate AI-powered translation and accessibility tools for wider language inclusion and usability.
- Ensure digital tools, platforms, and resources are easy to use for all age groups and abilities.