



REGULATIONS

12th European Greenways Award, 2025

Presentation

The European Greenways Association (EGWA) was created in 1998 in Namur (Belgium) with the aim of encouraging the creation and promotion of greenways in Europe. It brings together more than 50 different organizations from 16 European countries involved in the development of greenways. More info www.aevv-egwa.org

Established in 2003, the biennial **European Greenways Award (EGA)** is presented to greenway projects that stand out for their excellence and demonstration of best practice.

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Article 1 The greenway concept

"Greenways are independent communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient, and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities. In this respect, canal towpaths and disused railway lines are a highly suitable resource for the development of greenways." (Lille Declaration, 12 September 2000).

The greenways offer a very broad audience access to alternative travel infrastructures, with these main characteristics:

- Comfort, accessibility and safety, since they are separate from motorised traffic.
- Open for use by all, on foot, by bike, roller skates, wheel chairs, etc,
- Services for users along the greenways.

Greenways are also attractive and convivial travel routes. They have a positive impact in many areas:

- Preservation and enhancement of the cultural and industrial heritage: former railways, waterways, civil engineering structures (bridges, tunnels, locks,).
- Increasing active non-motorised commuting and travel for leisure and tourism contributes to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion in towns and to tackling climate change while promoting sustainable mobility.
- Quality of life in urban and suburban areas.
- Preservation of public land.
- Economic, social and sustainable tourist development including disadvantaged regions or neighbourhoods requiring revitalisation.
- Public health and sport.
- Discovery of, and learning about, the environment in urban and natural areas.

- Circular economy by the reuse of infrastructures for new modes of transport, and their mixed use (mobility, sport, leisure, tourism), benefiting residents and visitors.
- Major role during the COVID pandemic in providing safe and accessible infrastructure for outdoor activities, contributing greatly to people's physical and mental well-being.

Article 2 – Organisation terms

To underline and encourage actions conducted to promote greenways in Europe and to co-ordinate initiatives related to this concept as well, the EGWA in cooperation with Basquetour, the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, and the Spanish Railways Foundation, is organising the 12th European Greenways Award 2025. The objective is to promote examples of best practices and to support their replication for other greenways all over Europe. The **European Greenways Award** will be granted only to greenways under the [Lille Declaration](#), as well as to initiatives already in existence.

A Technical Committee will make a preliminary examination of the candidacies, and it likewise assists the jury in its choice. It reserves the right to verify locally the achievements submitted in the applications.

The Technical Committee is composed by representative's members of the EGWA and can be open to partnership entities supporting the award organisation.

The Jury. On the basis of a prior examination done by the Technical Committee, the jury will select the awarded candidacies acknowledging an achievement in greenways related to the 3 categories of the awards. The jury's decisions are not subject to appeal, and are taken by a majority of votes. The jury reserves the right not to award all the prizes.

The chairperson and the secretary of the technical committee will aid the jury, with voice but without vote.

The jury will be composed by representatives of European and other international institutions and qualified personalities competent to identify exemplary achievements in greenways in Europe.

Article 3 – Prize categories

A. Excellence awards

Under this category the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes will be awarded to three exemplary greenways that show the best integration of the various characteristics that define greenways, (art. 1) and which also demonstrate specific strengths which, in the opinion of the jury, make them exemplary. The success of these facilities should be evidenced by their public popularity (by providing data from surveys, counters ...) and demonstrable impact on sustainable development based in an environmentally friendly daily mobility, leisure and tourism.

B. Exemplary initiatives

A 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes will be awarded to the exemplary initiatives carried out in relation to greenways. This category is open to any activity related to greenways in its broadest sense: design, construction, management, promotion, equipments, signposting, emphasising other resources of the

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territory (cultural or natural heritage...), maintenance, citizen implication, etc. Its main objective is to promote good practices and their possible replication for any other European greenway.

As an example, prizes will recompense initiatives related to:

Preservation of cultural heritage; sustainable mobility; services provided to users; landscape treatment and attractiveness; communication (press, video, media); concrete digital innovative actions; actions addressed aimed at making greenways more inclusive and accessible, addressed to specific target groups: youth, children, mobility impaired people, seniors, woman, disadvantaged groups ; regular active leisure programmes, such as walks and bike rides that favour socialisation and well-being; volunteers programs; governance, local involvement and collective participation through a variety of participate process; initiatives promoting co-habitation to share public space in a friendly way on high-use greenways; joint use and integration of the residents and visitors; training and dynamisation actions ; transformation of former stations and buildings for new uses, which generate quality employment; tourism product that expands the offer and the enhancement of cultural, natural and traditional heritage; programmes of activities that promote the greenways, and help to deseasonalise tourism (concerts, festivals, marathons, ...), transformation and valorization of former mining areas integrated into the greenways ecosystem; solutions that enable the realisation of greenways in parallel to active railways; initiatives that favour intermodality through public transport, preferably by train but also other modes of transport, where railway is not available; initiatives addressing climate change impacts and risks effectively, at local, regional or national level.

Initiatives that have built on the lessons learned from the pandemic, in a way that has had a positive impact on the safe use of the greenways for health and wellbeing of the locals and visitors by favouring outdoor activity in greenways, including e.g. actions for improvements in the physical infrastructure, signposting, use of innovative communication channels, and counters that can help to understand visitor flows and plan alternatives in places of highest concentration, (...) for a better future response of greenways to health threats, and to avoid possible tourist crowds.

C. Special award, Green transition in greenways

This special award is part of the activities promoted by EGWA in the co-implementation of the Transition Pathway for Tourism, to recognise initiatives addressing green transition challenges in the greenways ecosystem, and to showcase how the green transition happens on the ground.

Greenways tourism represents a good example of sustainable tourism, being a type of tourism closer to the principles of sustainability, as it is linked to the use of bikes and walking.

Greenways offer a very large public access to alternative travel infrastructures; the transformation of disused railways into greenways is a safe, accessible and inclusive tool to help to reach the EU's decarbonisation goal. The conversion of old railway lines into greenways provides a perfect opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism. Greenways have a transnational dimension and a great development potential especially in rural area; we estimate that only 15-20 % of the disused lines in Europe has been already transformed.

The aim of this special award is to reward specific initiatives that have the clear objective of contributing to the green transition as a distinctive element of the greenway, of the services and/or tourist products linked to the greenway, through actions carried out under the principles of the

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circular economy: less raw material, less waste, fewer emissions, and that clearly show the commitment of the promoters of the initiative to environmental sustainability.

Initiatives may be directed at the infrastructure itself, at the services nearby and/or at tourism products linked to greenways.

In relation to infrastructure, actions may relate to design and construction, including e.g. use of recycled materials, or other natural-based materials environmentally neutral, while maintaining the quality of the infrastructure so that it can be used comfortably by all types of users in all seasons and be durable over time. The consideration of the maintenance of the infrastructure from the design phase, will be also taken into account; also the design that favours ecosystem connectivity, through vegetation on the edges and surroundings of greenways.

Maintenance with sustainable techniques, in particular those related to the management of vegetation on the edges avoiding the use of herbicides, and management programmes that favour the continuity of biodiversity on the edges of greenways; namely actions to restore and promote the use of green infrastructure along the greenways, to connect to especially valuable natural areas such as the Natura 2000 network, and any other type of initiative that favours continuity of the biodiversity, and the fight against climate change or mitigation of its effects, clearly carried out with this objective.

In relation to services linked to greenways, those that have implemented concrete actions that take into account the use of resources, under the principles of the circular economy, previously mentioned, and namely related to those who offer services for cycle tourists, and addressed to reduce the use of energy, waste, water, single-use plastics; promote proximity consumption, and others, and that measure their progress. It can include also substantial actions enabling and improving access to greenways by public transport, especially rail.

Regarding to tourism products linked to greenways, those that demonstrate that in addition to prioritising active means of transport commonly used on greenways, such as cycling, they have local suppliers that offer local products, that integrate the principles of the circular economy, and that measure their progress through the implementation of an environmental management system, whether certified or not.

A single award will be granted to reward actions that contribute to green transition in the greenways ecosystem, and contribute to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Initiatives will be related to the greenway itself, or to greenway-based tourism services or products that integrate sustainability criteria, and aimed at either one or more of these trails.

The Special award will be addressed only to greenways using disused railways, as a special form of circular economy, since they use pre-existing routes built for motorised use, and therefore is no new artificialisation of soil, so their construction leads to a high reduction of greenhouse gas emissions compared to new routes that require earthworks for foundations (1). They are also shared by different types of users (cycling, walking, and wheeling). (1) *Comparaison des revêtements selon leurs impacts sur le climat et la biodiversité* Restitution du groupe de travail sur les revêtements. FNE / AF3V. Webinaire FNE | Mardi 16 Février 2021

This special award aims to:

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- Promote green transition in greenways and SMEs, and disseminate the achievements of SMEs and greenways to inspire new actors and adhesions to sustainability in greenways ecosystem at European level.
- Attract more conscious visitors interested in sustainable travel, through a wider dissemination of the sustainable offer (SMEs and greenways) and thus contribute to the maintenance and jobs creation.
- Show the great potential of greenways tourism ecosystem to favour a green transition, adopting new practices inspired by the key principles of sustainability, and encourage their implementation in new territories.
- Overall to promote greenways using disused railway lines for active and sustainable mode of transport, to contribute to the Union's climate neutrality objective by 2050.

Candidates' application must refer to specific/s greenway/s

The usefulness of the initiative/product as well as its role as a best practice reference for other greenways will be considered.

Article 4– Nature of the awards

Each winner will receive a diploma and a trophy symbolising the objectives pursued by the EGWA. The Award-winners will benefit from the publicity and communication on the award which will be broadcast at a Europe-wide level so as to publicise examples of best practice and 'know-how' in the field of greenways. Also, the award-winning candidates will have their projects exhibited on the EGWA site and promoted internationally as examples of good practices in conferences, social networks and other promotional tools EGWA related.

One representative of each award-winning candidacy will be invited by the organisation to receive the award at the presentation ceremony to be held at Abanto-Zierbena (Bizkaia), Basque country, in Spain, 9th October 2025

Article 5– Conditions for participation

Applications can be submitted by public or private organisations, associations involved with the development of greenways or those that set up exemplary initiatives in the field of greenways, as well as small and medium size enterprises (SME), that work towards the generation of tourism business and the commercialisation of integrated tourism packages based on these trails, likewise companies operating in the cultural and creative sectors (CCIs) in one of the Member States of the European Union, EFTA countries, the official Candidate Countries for European Union membership, as well as other member states of the Council of Europe.

Candidates wishing to apply for more than one category must submit one application per category.

Greenways awarded in the 11th edition of 2023 with any of the Awards given in will not be eligible in this 12th edition.

Greenways awarded in the category of Excellence and Exemplary Initiatives in previous editions should provide new elements that make them worthy of the award again.

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All the information will be available on the 12th EGA website: www.europeangreenwaysaward.org

Participation in the European Greenways Award entails compliance with and acceptance of the conditions of these regulations by the participants.

Article 6– Applications

Only dossiers using an application form, and complying with the procedures set down in this article shall be considered. The Technical Committee will be responsible for verifying that the dossiers transmitted to the jury comply with the eligibility criteria.

The dossiers will consist of:

An application form: That will be submitted in electronic format. Application forms will be available in English through the 12th EGA website and must be only submitted in English The application forms must be received by **29 May 2025 (New Deadline)** at the latest.

Supplementary documents supporting each candidacy (leaflets, photos, maps, publications, gps tracks, videos...) can be sent in any language.

Applicants are encouraged to send their **supplementary documents** via e-mail using eventually a service for large file transfer.

Any complementary information must be received by **29 May 2025 (New Deadline)** at the latest to the address below.

Documents received after this deadline will not be accepted. Incomplete dossiers, or dossiers sent in several parts will not be accepted. Please **indicate** the title of your **candidacy** and a **contact name** when sending the **supplementary documents**.

Supplementary documents must be submitted to the following email: award2025@aevv-egwa.org

Article 7 – Results and Ceremony of the Awards

The jury will decide the winners of the prizes that will be informed by EGWA. The prize-winners are asked not to communicate or use any public reference to the award before the official ceremony.

The **awards ceremony** will be held on **Thursday 9th October 2025** **at Abanto-Zierbena (Bizkaia), Basque Country, Spain.**