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EUROPEAN GREENWAYS ASSOCIATION
ASOCIACIÓN EUROPEA DE VÍAS VERDES

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VÍAS VERDES

Greenways in Europe, contribution to sustainable tourism

International Conference on Greenways as a Tool for Sustainable Industrial Tourism

Abanto-Zierbena / Bizkaia - Basque Country, Spain

9th October, 2025

Mercedes Muñoz Zamora
European Greenways Association



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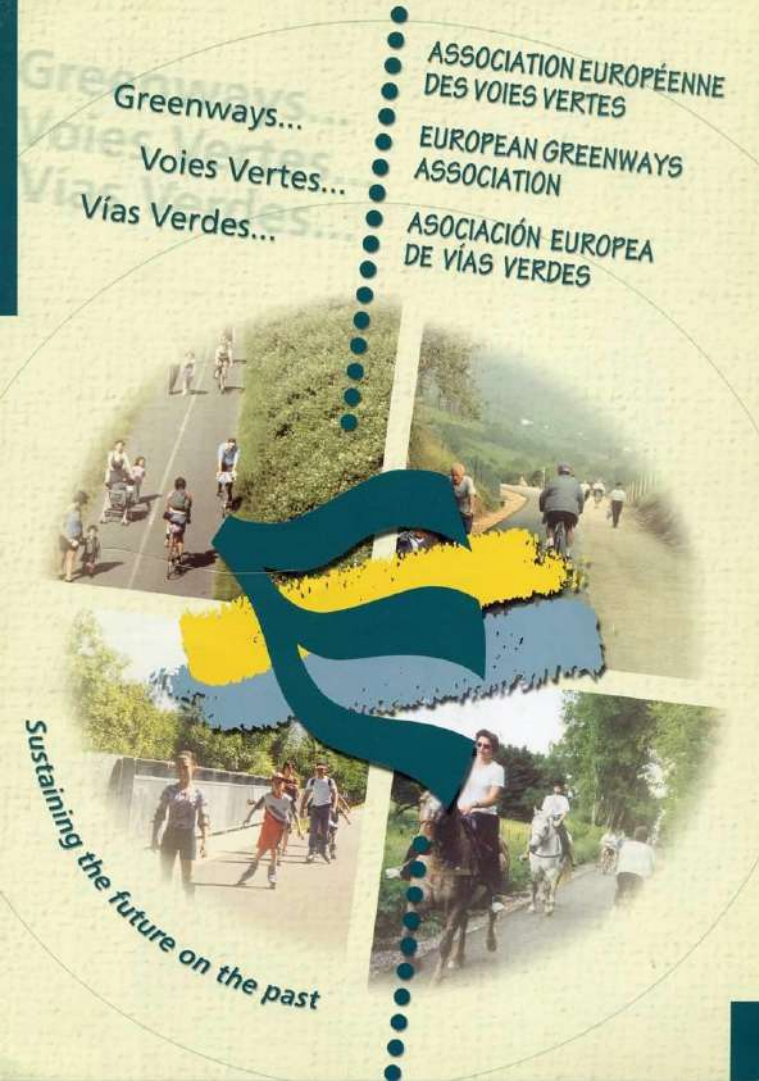
Greenways

- *Communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorized 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

Tarvisio centrale-Moggio greenway
Section of the Alpe – Adria cycleroute



European Greenways Association

Created in 1998 in Namur (Wallonia, Belgium).

Aim: inventory and encourage the creation and promotion of Greenways in Europe

> 50 members from 15 countries + 4 honorary members

Secretariat and executive seat in Madrid (Spain)





European Greenways Association (EGWA) members



Consolidation of the greenways concept and expansion throughout Europe



Greenways are a European initiative

➤ Approx. 20,000 km on disused railways (15-20% of the total)

Sustainable tourism through greenways and no-motorised routes:

Greenways are a key tool for sustainable tourism and the decarbonisation mobility. They are safe, accessible and user friendly non-motorised communication routes, mainly created over disused railway lines and using canal towpaths.



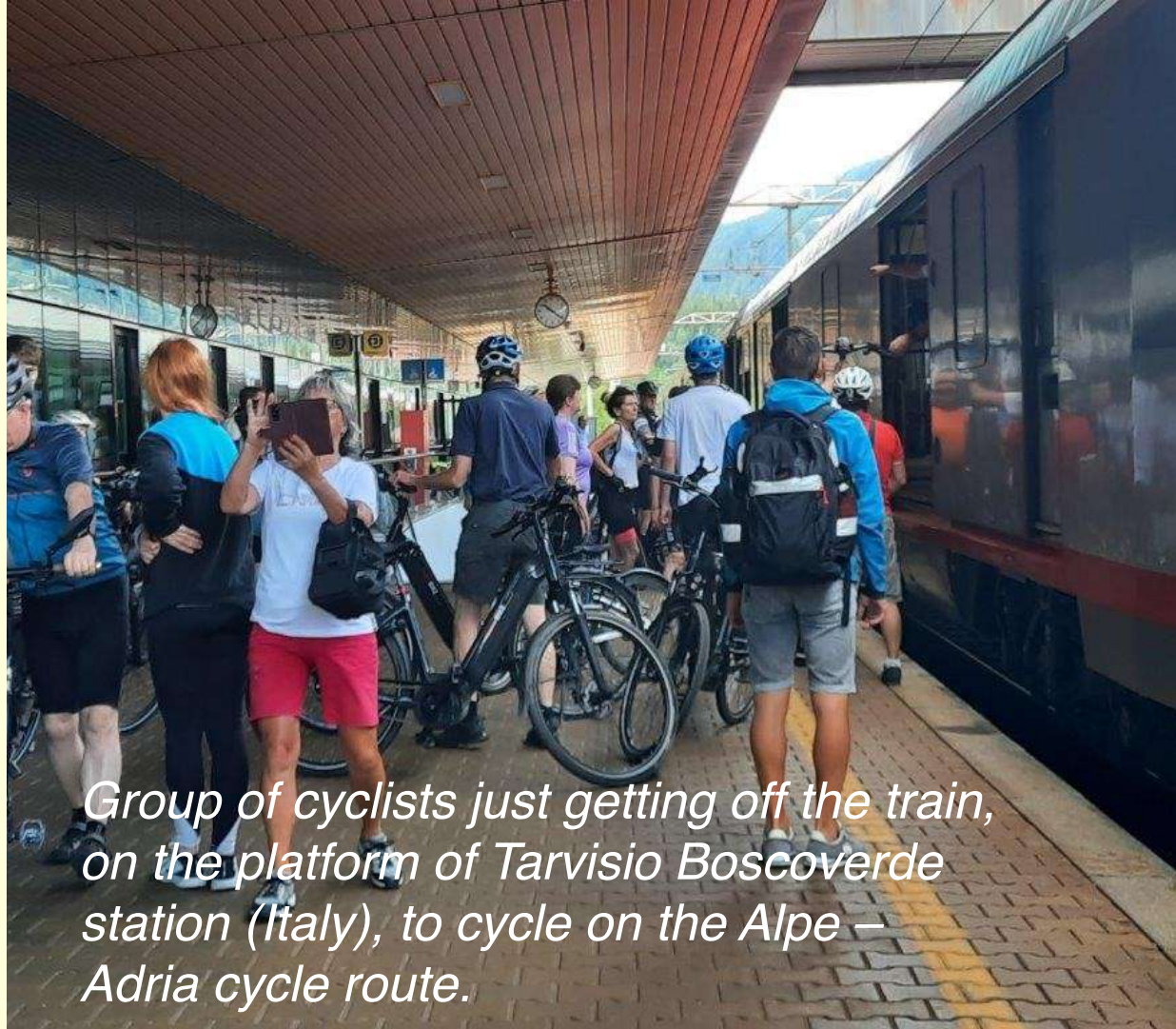
Active mobility for sustainable tourism



Greenways and cycle routes are a key offer to promote sustainable tourism and decarbonise transport by encouraging active mobility, especially by bike, while enjoying nature, culture and local gastronomy.

Intermodality

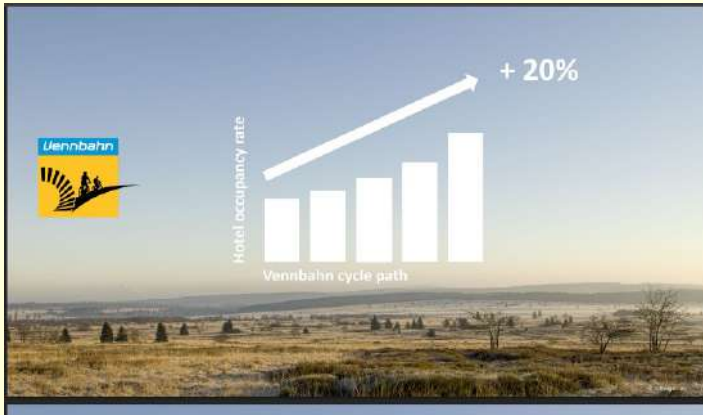
Intermodality and quality infrastructure, services nearby, and the integration of these routes into the sustainable mobility plans are essential to harness their full potential and positive impact in transport decarbonization.



Group of cyclists just getting off the train, on the platform of Tarvisio Boscoverde station (Italy), to cycle on the Alpe – Adria cycle route.

Economic Impact

Greenway tourism, based on active mobility (cycling, walking, wheeling) benefits both local communities and visitors. This type of tourism has a very positive economic impact.



>> Reports show a 20% increase in overnight stays after the opening of the greenway (in 5 years). 125 Km long greenway, 3 countries (Germany/Belgium/Luxembourg).

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500,000 visits to Royal Canal Greenway in first year of operation

Research from Waterways Ireland also finds economic dividend of €17.2m across Westmeath, Longford, Meath and Kildare

Royal Canal Greenway

Key Findings of Primary Research Surveys

Autumn 2021



The bottom of the slide features three logos: TRACSIS on the left, Waterways Ireland in the center, and the Royal Canal Greenway logo on the right. The background of the slide is a photograph of a canal with trees and a path.

Reference from Ireland: <https://www.westmeathindependent.ie/2022/03/25/500000-visits-to-royal-canal-greenway-in-first-year-of-operation/>

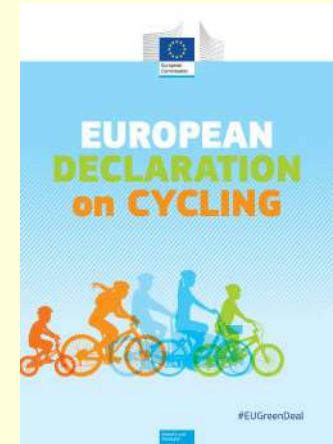
Bike rental & services on the route



Integration from mobility planning and transport network



The European Parliament recommended the transformation of disused railway lines as greenways as part of the [strategy for sustainable tourism](#). The [European Declaration on Cycling](#) promotes safe, accessible and segregated infrastructure for non-motorised use, which is an essential feature of greenways, and the [Brussels Declaration on the mobility of tomorrow](#) puts the spotlight on rail and on harnessing the full potential of active mobility and cycling at European and national level.



Together for EU Tourism (T4T) Expert Group

- Participation in the Green transition Group.
- Task Force 2/ (TF2) Decarbonisation & Competitiveness of the European Tourism Sector, and Horizontal TF- "Unbalanced Tourism"
- new Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism Apostolos Tzitzikostas. The inclusion of tourism in the transport portfolio reflects its growing importance.
- The most important: **contribution for the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism.**
- **Targeted consultation** on the future EU Strategy:
 - EGWA responded [>> here](#) with **Additional evidence to support replies** links to studies, documents, short videos related to the great value and impact of greenways (mobility, tourism, economic impact).
 - T4T Expert Group **Task Force 2** Decarbonisation and Competitiveness, has presented a **joint contribution**



Targeted consultation for an EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy



Targeted consultation for an EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Feedback from the Tourism Transition Pathway's Together for Tourism (T4T) Green Subgroup – TF2 Decarbonisation and Competitiveness

Others

In addition to the challenges listed in the consultation document, the following points are also relevant:

- *Adoption to climate change:* Climate adaptation measures, including nature-based solutions, can strengthen the resilience of tourist areas.
- *Safeguarding biodiversity and natural habitats:* It is essential to preserve the long-term attractiveness and ecological health of European destinations.
- *Better spatial planning:* Uncoordinated tourism growth can have negative effects (e.g., on biodiversity), which require better spatial planning.
- *Sustainable Food:* To tackle the negative effects of food consumption (e.g., food waste) and enhance its positive impact (incl. local value creation).
- *Promote safe and accessible transport by expanding cycling, walking, and wheeling infrastructure—especially greenways on disused railways and canal towpaths.* With only 20% of Europe's potential 150,000 km greenway network developed, further integration of these routes into transport systems will support decarbonization, reduce congestion, extend the tourism season, and diversify rural tourism.

Greenways: A perfect opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism.

- *Alternative travel infrastructures.*
- *Safe, accessible and inclusive tool to help to reach the decarbonisation objective of the EU.*
- *Transnational dimension and a great development potential especially in rural area.*
- *Only 15-20 % of the disused lines in Europe has been already transformed.*



Enjoy Greenways !!

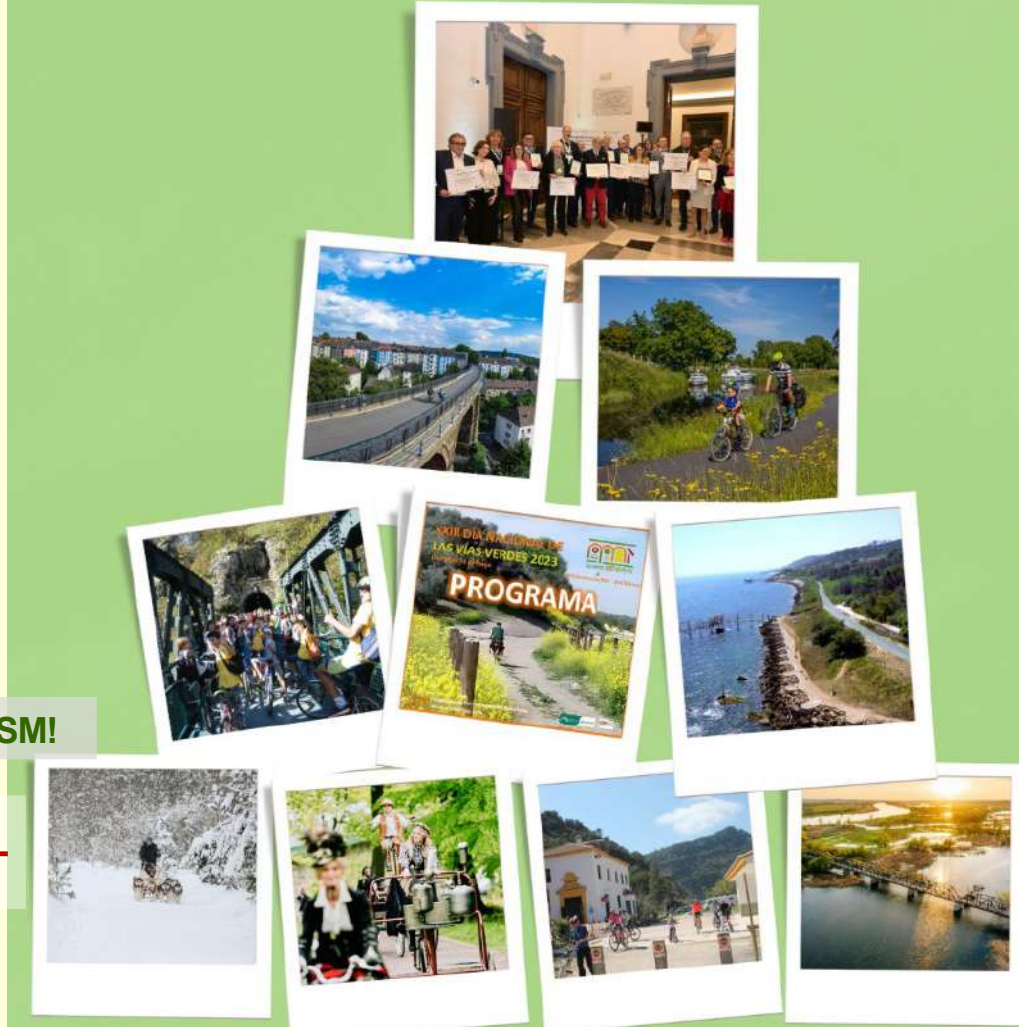
Join EGWA!!



GREENWAYS, A MUST TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM!

www.europeangreenwaysaward.org
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Photos: awarded greenways 11th EGA 2023