

# Proposals for the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy

From the [Active Tourism Coalition](#)

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## I. Definition of Active Tourism:

Active Tourism is a form of tourism focused on accessible physical activity for the purposes of mobility, recreation and leisure. It includes cycling, walking, hiking, water based activities, etc and enables visitors to experience places at a human scale with low environmental impact, high social value and strong connections to local landscapes, cultures and communities. Cycling tourism represented €44 billion economic impact a year in Europe in 2012<sup>1</sup>, Adventure travel represents a trillion-dollar market globally in 2025<sup>2</sup> and the boating industry represents €45 billion turnover in total Europe (incl. tourism, services, marina infrastructure, etc)<sup>3</sup>.

## II. The Active Tourism Coalition proposals for the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy:

1. *Policy* / **Recognise Active Tourism as a cornerstone of European sustainable tourism**, requiring strong support from European and National institutions, and explicit references to Active Tourism and its key tourism products such as long-distance cycle routes, hiking trails and inland or coastal waterway routes.
2. *Tourism mobility, connectivity and accessibility* / **Promote active mobility at destinations**, ensuring that it is fully integrated into sustainable tourism mobility, multimodal access, and last-mile solutions. Encourage active tourism connectivity with other modes of transport, especially rail, bus and inland or coastal waterway connections, with the possibility to transport non-dismantled bicycles, and fair and transparent conditions throughout Europe. Active Tourism ensures the participation of persons with disabilities through universally-designed, accessible infrastructure, services and information, also considering the role of assistive and adaptive technologies, where required, and should equally enable generations (youth,

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<sup>1</sup><https://pro.eurovelo.com/download/document/European%20Cycle%20Route%20Network%20EuroVelo%20study.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://learn.adventuretravel.biz/adventure-travel-market-sizing>

<sup>3</sup> [EBI Economic Index 2026](#)

families, seniors) and economically disadvantaged groups to fully participate through adapted services, clear information, and the development of safe, inclusive offers and targeted programs to ensure equitable access and participation across Europe.

3. *Data / **Include Active Tourism-related data into tourism data hubs*** as they exist now and support the development of more open, interoperable and high-quality data on Active Tourism infrastructure, services, safety and visitor management, quality certification schemes, etc. by providing standards, governance and financial support to Active Tourism data projects. Investments are also needed to monitor the impact of Active Tourism, including its economic, social, and environmental impacts.
4. *Brand Europe-flagship initiatives / **Position Active Tourism (EuroVelo, Greenways, E-Paths, GR footpaths, European inland waterway network) as a flagship element of Brand Europe***, highlighting Europe's landscapes, cultural heritage, long-distance routes and human-scale travel experiences, based on renowned brands and products such as EuroVelo, Greenways, E-Paths, GR footpaths, etc.
5. *Environmental sustainability / **Acknowledge the role of Active Tourism in protecting natural and cultural heritage***, by supporting responsible access, visitor guidance, and long-term stewardship of trails and routes in cooperation with local communities and land managers. Encourage sustainable management of routes, trails and inland and coastal waterways by incentivising climate action plans, measuring GHG emissions, increasing climate resilience and promoting good practices on the contribution of Active Tourism activities, routes, trails and waterways for nature protection and biodiversity preservation.
6. *Economic growth-industry / **Encourage business developments and innovations connected to Active Tourism*** by recognising awarding, recognition and certification schemes (e.g cycling friendly labels), skills and training programmes, digital and AI innovative projects, encourage innovation and industry clusters specialised in Active Tourism, support economic impact studies and standardised methodologies to estimate the volume and impact of Active Tourism and knowledge on market trends. Highlight the contribution of Active Tourism to local and rural economic development, fostering small businesses, local guides, accommodations, and community-led initiatives, thereby enhancing socio-economic resilience.
7. *Governance / **Support integrated territorial governance models for Active Tourism***, bringing together local communities, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), tourism operators, NGOs, land managers, transport operators, media, outdoor sport organisations, etc. Encourage public-private

partnerships developing Active Tourism. Develop good practices and publish recommendations by and for destinations.

8. **Funding / Prioritise investments in Active Tourism projects in the European Union's next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028-2034)**, including:
  - a. Develop long and short-distance cycle routes, hiking trails and inland and coastal waterway networks and associated facilities (new infrastructure, maintenance and rehabilitation, signage, planning, etc.) in both urban and dense areas, and rural, mountainous and peripheral regions.
  - b. Encourage cross-border Active Tourism offers (design, creation, promotion, services, coordination, maintenance, etc.)
  - c. Support innovative solutions encouraging Active Tourism for all with digital tools, personalised and adapted services, new promotion approaches (e.g. digital marketing, BtoC and BtoB, and community-based events), quality, environmental and accessibility certification schemes, and encourage industry innovation (e.g Active Tourism focused clusters).
  - d. Promote activities, campaigns and initiatives on Active Tourism
  - e. Develop multimodal services and offers to encourage access to Active Tourism destinations by public and surface transport. Enabling transportation of non-dismantled bicycles (and other equipment) in sustainable trains, buses and waterway services.
  - f. Encourage Active Tourism as an enabler of nature protection and recovery, access to nature with regenerative purposes, respect of protected landscapes, contribution to preserving sensitive ecosystems and education to foster positive behaviours, and support to cultural heritage, its protection and promotion.
  - g. Support investments in Active Tourism that foster social and solidarity-based initiatives, ensuring equitable access for disadvantaged groups and promoting community-led educational and cultural experiences.
  - h. Prioritise investments that encourage young people's engagement in active tourism: safe routes, inclusive activities, educational programs and job opportunities.
  - i. Develop local capacity building programmes on Active Tourism to support skills of SMEs and local communities on how to cater the needs of active tourists. This should include knowledge and research publications, training programmes and capacity-building including networking at a European, National and Regional level.

### **III. Information on the Active Tourism Coalition and contacts:**

The **Active Tourism Coalition** brings together 20 organisations representing cycling, walking, and hiking and other forms of active travel, working jointly to strengthen the role of Active Tourism in European policies. We believe Active Tourism contributes to the competitiveness and resilience of European tourism and aligns with the Brand Europe and its values. Active Tourism is also a strategic solution to address some of the most pressing challenges of tourism in Europe: unbalanced tourism flows or climate change for example. The Coalition calls for political recognition of Active Tourism in the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

[Link to PDF of Active Tourism Coalition members](#) (updated 6 February 2026).

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