

Project Idea European Trails



FUNDTRAILS - Capacity Building for Sustainable Trail Funding in Europe

Initiating Organization:

- European Trails e.V.

The Challenge:

Across Europe, trail organizations are highly fragmented, largely volunteer-based, and chronically underfunded. While trails generate significant value for the society — the trail organizations rarely receive sufficient funding.

- Lack of knowledge on available funding programs EU, national, and regional levels
- Limited capacity to apply for funding due to volunteer-based structures
- Weak political advocacy structures
- Insufficient mechanisms for user-based financial contributions
- No common European framework for sustainable trail financing

Target Groups (Adult Learners):

- Leaders and board members of trail organizations
- Volunteer coordinators
- Staff and volunteers responsible for fundraising and project management
- Regional hiking associations and Long-distance trail networks

Project Goals:

- Identify and structure existing funding opportunities at European, national, and regional levels and make them more accessible.
- Strengthen the fundraising, project development, and advocacy skills of adult learners within trail organizations.
- Develop practical and transferable financing models, including donation systems, “Adopt a Trail” and “Sponsor a Trail” concepts, and strategies for improved public funding.

Description of project approach:

1. Mapping existing European, national, and regional funding programs.
2. Building fundraising competencies among trail organizations.
3. Developing practical and transferable financing models, including
 - Trail user donation systems
 - “Adopt a Trail” civic engagement models
 - “Sponsor a Trail” business partnership frameworks
 - Political advocacy strategies for new public funding schemes
 - Visitor management and entry fee systems where appropriate
4. Establishing a long-term European knowledge network under European Trails e.V.
5. Creating open-access training materials to support continued adult learning beyond the project duration.

Expected output/products:

- A comprehensive European Trail Funding Framework (handbook) and Database
 - Modular toolkits for different financing strategies
 - A training curriculum for adult education providers
 - Policy recommendations for improved public funding mechanisms
 - Pilot case studies from participating countries
 - A sustainable European network for continued cooperation
- All outputs will be openly accessible and transferable

Targeted funding sources:

- ERASMUS+ Program: Cooperation partnerships in adult education (KA220-ADU)

Target region/ countries:

- Whole Europe

Desired project partners:

- European Trails (DE) **LEAD**
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- We are seeking partners from diverse Erasmus+ program countries who can contribute expertise and experience in trail funding

Maturity level:

- Several studies are made
- Some experiences are collected
- Rough project plan existing

Why we think a funding application for this project idea will be successful:

The project strongly aligns with Erasmus+ Adult Education priorities by:

- Strengthening capacity and professionalization of volunteer-based organizations and supporting lifelong learning and competence development
- Encouraging transnational cooperation and exchange of best practices and creating long-term structural impact beyond the project lifetime

The topic addresses a European challenge with clear added value through cooperation. The combination of research, practical tools, and long-term network building ensures both innovation and sustainability.