

European Certification Standard

Quality criteria for
long-distance cycle routes

European Cyclists' Federation





About ECS

The European Certification Standard (ECS) is a methodology developed by ECF to assess cycling routes, EuroVelo or not, and evaluate their quality. It can be used to survey and assess the quality of national/regional routes, and to certify EuroVelo routes if the criteria are met. It can help set up national standards where they do not exist and harmonise the different regulations in the European states.

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1

Goals, definitions and contents

1.1 Goals of the European Certification Standard

- Improve the quality of EuroVelo, the European cycle route network, and other routes by identifying critical deficiencies and motivating decision-makers to invest in solutions to the identified problems.
- Provide quality control to motivate different target groups with varying levels of experience to use the certified trans-national routes.

1.2 Definitions

EuroVelo – the European cycle route network, initiated by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) to develop a network of high-quality cycling routes linking all countries in Europe. It can be used by long-distance cycle tourists as well as by local people making daily journeys.

Survey – the process of collecting and evaluating route data described in this manual. A survey is always required for the certification of EuroVelo routes, but it can also be used outside the EuroVelo network or at an early development stage to identify investment needs.

Certification – confirmation that the route meets criteria set in the European Certification Standard. Only EuroVelo routes in their entirety or their major sections (at least 300 km long, with clearly defined origins and destinations, e.g. major cities or attractions) can be certified. The certification is valid for five years.

Daily section – unit of data collection corresponding to a logical section of the route, possible to cycle in one day for the target group. Daily sections are usually delimited by settlements with concentrations of services, public transport or other important access points, border crossings or junctions with other major routes. Daily sections are typically between 15 and 90 km in length.

Minor section – unit of data collection corresponding to a section of the route with uniform or nearly uniform characteristics in terms of route component type, traffic speed and volume, surface, width and attractiveness of the area/landscape. Minor sections are typically between 200 m and 5 km long.



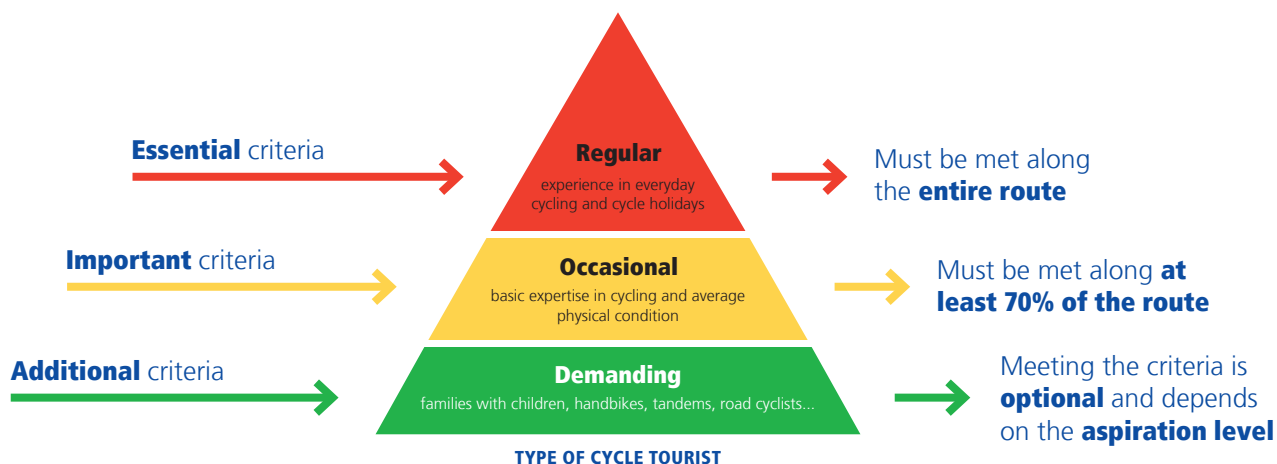
Example of regular cycle tourist
Photo © Celia Benisty



Example of demanding cycle tourists
Photo © Vélo Loisir Provence

1.3 Certification criteria

- The criteria are divided into the following categories: infrastructure, services, promotion.
- A differentiation has been made based on the fitness level, skills, experience and type of bicycle of the users (see below)



Data collected during the survey can be used to calculate numeric scores. The scores can be used to monitor the route development progress or to compare the route quality with other certification systems, such as the ADFC-Qualitätsradrouten. Communication of the score values is optional.



2

Certification criteria per route elements

2.1 Certification criteria – infrastructure

2.1.1 Continuity

Essential criteria

The route does not contain any physical disruptions that make it impossible to travel on. All natural (river, cliff etc.) or artificial (railway, motorway etc.) barriers can be crossed with adequate cycling infrastructure (bridge, ferry, subway etc.). Furthermore, there shall be no legal disruptions (i.e. sections where crossing with bikes or generally entering is forbidden or subject to permissions being granted). Cyclists shall also not be obliged to dismount on more than 1% of a daily section.

Important criteria

If there are stairs on the route (e.g. to access a bridge), they must have a gentle incline and be equipped with ramps or channels.

Additional criteria

The route shall be free of any disruptions (e.g. stairs, steps, gates or chicanes) that would make it impossible to ride for more “demanding” groups of cyclists (e.g. families with trailers, people with reduced mobility etc.). Cyclists shall not be required to dismount at all.



2.1.2 Route components

Minor sections where cyclists ride on the carriageway are assigned to one of five traffic categories: from very low to very high traffic according to the tables below. Minor sections where cyclists are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic (cycle paths, cycle and pedestrian paths, greenways etc.) are considered traffic-free.

Crossings are classified as safe, dangerous or very dangerous, based on the risk and potential severity of an accident.

Essential criteria

The route shall not contain any sections with very high traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section shall be classified as featuring high traffic.

Important criteria

The route shall not contain any sections with high traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section shall be classified as featuring moderate traffic. The route shall not include any crossings classified as very dangerous.

Additional criteria

The route shall not contain any sections with moderate traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section shall be classified as featuring low traffic. The route shall not include any crossings classified as dangerous.

Up to 1% of a daily section can feature traffic one category higher than normally allowed for a given criterion (e.g., moderate traffic on the additional level). A remedy action shall be planned to address this exception and implemented before the next certification.

Traffic category depending on speed and volume of traffic

For cycle lanes painted on the carriageway or asphalted shoulders

Cycling in mixed traffic					For cycle lanes painted on the carriageway or asphalted shoulders				
	30 km/h or lower	31 to 50 km/h	51 to 79 km/h	80 km/h or over		30 km/h or lower	31 to 50 km/h	51 to 79 km/h	80 km/h or over
					minimum width/direction	1.5 m	1.5 m	2.0 m	2.0 m
1-500 units/day	very low	very low	very low	low	1-500 units/day	very low	very low	very low	low
501-2.000 units/day	very low	low	low	moderate	501-2.000 units/day	very low	very low	low	low
2.001-4.000 units/day	low	moderate	moderate	high	2.001-4.000 units/day	very low	very low	low	moderate
4.001-10.000 units/day	moderate	high	high	very high	4.001-10.000 units/day	very low	low	moderate	high
>10.000 units/day	moderate	very high	very high	very high	>10.000 units/day	low	moderate	high	very high



Maximum share of length of different traffic categories on a daily section to fulfil Essential, Important and Additional criteria:

	traffic-free, cycle paths, etc.	Traffic category				
		very low	low	moderate	high	very high
Essential	no limit	no limit	no limit	no limit	max 50% on a daily section	max 1% on a daily section*
Important	no limit	no limit	no limit	max 50% on a daily section	max 1% on a daily section*	not allowed
Additional	no limit	no limit	max 50% on a daily section	max 1% on a daily section*	not allowed	not allowed

* A remedy action needs to be implemented before the next certification.

2.1.3 Surface and width

Essential criteria

The surface shall be suitable for use by cyclists with any type of trekking or touring bike in normal weather conditions during the local cycling season. It shall be smooth and solid enough to ride, so it must either be asphalted or paved with another resistant material. In exceptional circumstances, loose material may be used but must be consolidated. No more than 1% of a daily section shall lead on cobblestone or unimproved surfaces.

Important criteria

At least 50% of any daily section of the route shall be as rideable as high-quality asphalt.

Additional criteria

The surface shall be as rideable as high-quality asphalt. The width shall allow smooth traffic of multitrack bicycles (bikes with two-wheeled trailers, hand bikes etc.) in both directions.



2.1.4 Gradients

Essential criteria

The cumulative elevation gain or loss on a daily section does not exceed 1000 m.

Important criteria

The cumulative elevation gain or loss on a daily section does not exceed 500 m.

Additional criteria

The cumulative elevation change (gain plus loss) on any 1 km of the route does not exceed 60 m. There are no slopes that are too steep to ride for the target groups.

2.1.5 Attractiveness

Essential criteria

There is at least one significant cultural or natural attraction on a daily section. This criterion can also be fulfilled by highly attractive landscapes.

Important criteria

No more than 25% of a daily section expose cyclists to noise, dust, odour or other environmental pollution. There is at least one attraction related to the main theme or subtheme of the route on a daily section.

Additional criteria

No more than 50% of a daily section lead through a monotonous surrounding. The route shall be free of social-safety challenges, e.g. fear of crime in urban areas or dangerous situations caused by animals.

2.1.6 Signing

Essential criteria

The route must be signed in line with the relevant national standards (if they exist) and the EuroVelo guidelines (always).

Important criteria

No signing is missing at main junctions. The signing makes it possible to follow the route by night with standard bicycle lighting (e.g. signs are retroreflective).

Additional criteria

Confirmation signs or horizontal markings are available after every junction and on long sections without junctions (at least every 5 km). The signs include the name of and distance to the next main town or destination at least every 15 km.





2.1.7 Public transport

Essential criteria

Carrying bikes on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 150 km. There shall be at least two reliable services a day during the local cycle tourism season each carrying a minimum of two assembled touring or trekking bikes.

Important criteria

Carrying bikes on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 75 km. There shall be at least six reliable services a day during the local cycle tourism season each carrying a minimum of four assembled touring or trekking bikes.

Additional criteria

Carrying special bikes (trailers, tandems, hand bikes) on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 75 km. There shall be at least six reliable services a day during the local cycle tourism season carrying a minimum of four assembled bikes. It is possible to reserve a space for bike in advance.

The accessibility of public transport stops and stations considered for the above criteria shall meet the continuity criteria on the respective level (e.g. if a train station is considered for the additional criterion, platforms must be accessible by ramps or lifts, not only stairs).

2.2 Certification criteria – services

2.2.1 Accommodation

Essential criteria

Each daily section shall have at least camping, budget or average standard accommodation (simple hotel, home stay, hostel etc.).

Important criteria

The range of accommodation standards on a daily section is not limited to camping.

Additional criteria

At least some accommodation available on the daily section are certified as cyclist-friendly.

2.2.2 Food, drink and rest areas

Essential criteria

Food (e.g. shop, café, restaurant, vending machine) and drinking water is available on every daily section.

Additional criteria

Food or rest areas is available every 15 km. Drinking water is available every 15 km.



2.2.3 Bike services

Essential criteria

At least one bike repair workshop, bike shop, vending machine with spare parts or self-service station is available on every daily section.

Important criteria

At least one bike repair workshop or helpline is available on every daily section.

Additional criteria

At least one bike repair workshop and pedelec charging station is available on every daily section.

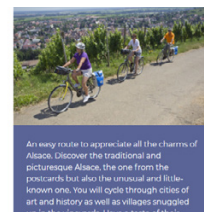
2.2.4 Bookable offers

Important criteria

Each daily section is included in at least one cycling-holiday offer.



14 FRANCE	
Charms of Alsace	
FROM	569 €
DURATION	6 days
DIFFICULTY	Easy
ELEVATION	Flat
TOUR TYPE	Self-guided
FOR	Rideable with children, E-bikes, Touring bikes



An easy route to appreciate all the charms of Alsace. Discover the traditional and picturesque Alsace, the one from the postcards but also the unusual and little-known one. You will cycle through cities of art and history as well as villages snuggled into the vineyards. Have a taste of their

2.3 Certification criteria – marketing and promotion

2.3.1 Web communication

Essential criteria

There are websites providing detailed information about the national and/or regional sections of the route on the national and/or regional level, connected with overview information about the whole route on [www. EuroVelo.com](http://www.EuroVelo.com). The content of any national / regional website at least includes information on the route (including a detailed map), signing, accommodation and public transport connections.

Important criteria

The national / regional websites include interactive maps, points of interests, accommodation databases, integration of public transport timetables and the download of GPS-tracks. This information is easily accessible and readable on a smartphone for checking it on the route.

Additional criteria

The route can be found on at least one smartphone application widely used by cycle tourists in the relevant countries/regions. The information provided on the app is accurate and caters to various categories of cyclists.

2.3.2 Print communication

Essential criteria

At least one guidebook or detailed printed map is available for the whole route (in one or more publications). The map should be detailed enough to provide proper support for orientation.



2.3.3 Information along the route

Important criteria

At least one information board or centre is placed along the route on every daily section.





3

Survey methodology for data collection and evaluation

3.1 Steps of the survey

1. The survey is based on field work and performed by authorised and trained experts traveling by bicycle and documenting the findings.
2. The experts only make use of publicly available resources (websites, public databases, printed documents etc.) to complete information not documented in the field.
3. The main aspects of the collected information are stored in the EuroVelo database. More detailed information (if it is collected) shall be made available to the relevant stakeholders. The certification report is then published on the EuroVelo website.
4. The evaluation of the findings and the certification should follow the current guidelines and the latest version of the Handbook for Route Inspectors, available on demand from ECF.

3.2 Public transport contingency and alternative itineraries

Public transport contingency: If one or more of the essential criteria is not fulfilled but the affected section can be substituted by a public-transport connection meeting at least the important criteria, the route can still be certified, on the condition that the public-transport connection is clearly communicated. This exceptional rule is limited to a total amount of 10% of all certified daily sections of the route.

Public transport as part of the route: If a public-transport connection is an integral part of the route (e.g. a ferry to cross the sea), it should also be evaluated against the public-transport criteria to determine the daily section's certification level, but it does not count towards the limit of 10% of all daily sections.

Alternative itineraries: In exceptional circumstances, the needs of different target groups covered by the additional criteria can be addressed by alternative itineraries (e.g. one route variant for road cyclists and another for families with children). All variants should meet the essential and important criteria and the difference should be clearly communicated. The distance between the variants should generally not exceed 5 km, and it should be clearly specified why this approach is the best solution given the circumstances of the route.

4

Duisburg
Düsseldorf
Köln
Bonn
Koblenz
Wiesbaden

Certification process and communication of the results

4.1 Process and roles

- The certification can only be initiated by a consortium of the relevant partners along the route (National EuroVelo Coordination Centres or Coordinators and their regional / national partners). The request should clearly indicate the itinerary and the partners should provide the funding.
- ECF should be informed about the certification process before it commences.
- The survey according to the ECS methodology can only be performed by experts authorised by ECF. A list of authorised experts is available on the EuroVelo website.
- After the data collection and evaluation is finished, the leader of the consortium should submit a request (including all relevant information) to ECF for the issuing of the official certificate.
- ECF will issue the certificate either for the whole route or for a major section of the route (min. 300 km).
- If certain issues identified during the survey have been remedied (e.g. missing/damaged signs have been replaced, obstacles removed, quality of surface improved etc.), it is possible to update the certification results without resurveying the route up to 2.5 years after the survey. The results of the remedial actions need to be documented by pictures or videos. The updates cannot exceed 5% of the surveyed route, and 10% of any daily section.
- **The validity for any certification is five years.** Within this period, the members of the above-mentioned consortium are responsible for updating information relevant on the trans-national level in the EuroVelo database. After five years, the field work should be repeated.





4.2 Communication

The certification should clearly communicate the geographical coverage of the route.

All the stakeholders along the route can refer in their communication to the route or its certified section in the following way:

- “The EuroVelo [Number] - [Official name] is a certified high-quality route within the European cycle route network” (whole route)
- “The EuroVelo [Number] - [Official name] between [Start] and [Stop] is a certified high-quality route within the European cycle route network” (major section)

The certification should clearly communicate the conditions and indicate if there are any limitations regarding the recommended age, fitness level or bicycle needed to ride the route. These restrictions should be communicated per daily section, i.e.

If a daily section or several subsequent daily sections fulfil...	It can be communicated as:
All Essential, Important and Additional criteria	“The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for all kinds of cycling tourists.”
All Essential and Important criteria	“The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for occasional and regular cycling tourists.”
All Essential criteria	“The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for regular cycling tourists only.”

ECF welcomes new certified sections of the network and regularly updates the overview map on the EuroVelo.com website to highlight when new sections are certified.

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This document and additional resources are available online at www.pro.eurovelo.com

A more thorough document on the ECS, called the Handbook for Route Inspectors, is available on demand. Please contact the ECF for more information.



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