EuroVelo
The European cycle route network

European Certification Standard

Introduction to the methodology to assess the quality of cycle routes

June 2026

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ECF
EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

EuroVelo.com

Contents

1. Goals, definitions and contents

1.1 What is the European Certification Standard (ECS)?

- ECS is a **unique** and **comprehensive methodology** designed to assess the **quality of EuroVelo and other cycle routes**. It is based on a physical field survey undertaken by bicycle, using the ECS app, and focused on the user's perspective. It offers a snapshot of the route as cyclists experience it firsthand.
- ECS can be used as:
  - **A planning tool** – providing requirements to develop a quality cycle route;
  - **An assessment tool** – evaluating the quality of existing cycle routes and planning improvements;
  - **A communication tool** – confirming the high quality of a EuroVelo route through the EuroVelo Certification label, based on the ECS methodology, or by communicating the detailed data collected with ECS to end-users.

1.2 Who is ECS for?

ECS is for:

- National EuroVelo Coordination Centres
- Cycle route managers (of EuroVelo or other cycle routes)
- Infrastructure authorities at national, regional and local level
- EU funded project managers and partners
- Cycling associations and advocacy organisations
- Consultants and academics specialised in urban planning, transport and tourism

Who wish to gain detailed GIS data about a cycle route, identify improvement needs and create action plans with investment priorities, or aim for the EuroVelo Certification label. They can use ECS during the planning of the route to identify the most suitable itinerary, identify strong and weak points of the route by means of a field survey, and in the case of EuroVelo routes, guarantee minimum quality standards to users through the EuroVelo Certification label.

The use of ECS and the associated ECS app requires the purchase of a three-year licence directly from the European Cyclists' Federation. For more information regarding the license, please contact eurovelo@ecf.com.

1.3 Definitions

- **EuroVelo** – a network of long-distance cycle routes that cross and connect Europe. The routes can be used by cycle tourists, as well as by local people making daily journeys. EuroVelo is an initiative of the European Cyclists' Federation developed by national and regional partners.
- **Survey** – the process of collecting and evaluating route data described in the ECS handbook. 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.
- **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.

- **Segment** – 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 attractivity of the area/landscape. Segments are typically between 200 m and 5 km long.
- **EuroVelo Certification** – confirmation that the route meets criteria set in the European Certification Standard. Entire EuroVelo routes or sections of at least 100 km, with clearly defined origins and destinations, e.g. major cities or attractions, can be certified. The EuroVelo Certification is valid for five years.
- **EuroVelo Route Inspector** – experts who have successfully completed a EuroVelo Route Inspectors' training within a given timeframe. Only EuroVelo Route Inspectors are permitted to conduct ECS surveys.
- **ECS Licence** – the licence permits organisations to use ECS and commission or conduct ECS surveys and use the ECS app within a specified geographic area. It can only be purchased from ECF.

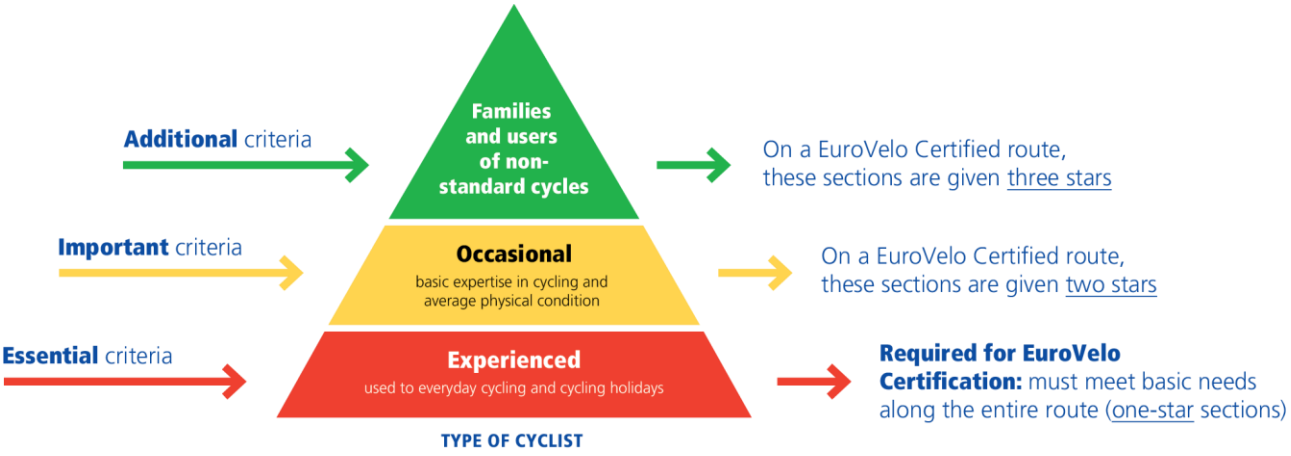
1.4 Quality criteria

The ECS methodology assesses different aspects that define the quality of a cycle route:

- **Infrastructure** – including route continuity, route components, width, traffic volume and speed, surface and signing.
- **Attractiveness –** including the attractivity of the landscapes crossed and the attractions on or close to the cycle route.
- **Public transport access** – including access to the route via train, long-distance bus or ferries.
- **Services** – including accommodation, food and rest areas along the route for each day of cycling, as well as cycle services.
- **Communication** – including easy access to information online and information provided along the route.

These criteria can always be used either as an aspiration (as a clear checklist when developing a cycle route) or verification (as conditions to be met for the route to be considered developed and/or of high-quality).

A differentiation has been made based on the fitness level, skills, experience and type of cycle of the users:



2. Quality criteria per route elements

2.1 Quality criteria – infrastructure

2.1.1 Continuity

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: The route does not contain any physical disruptions that make it impossible to travel on, such as fences, barriers, permanent flooding, big hole, etc. There are no legal disruptions (i.e. sections where entry is forbidden). All natural (river, cliff etc.) or artificial (railway, motorway, tunnel, etc.) barriers can be crossed with adequate cycling infrastructure or service (bridge, underpass, ferry, bus service, etc.). Cyclists are not required to dismount more than 10 times per daily section for a total of maximum 500 m.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: If there are stairs on the route (e.g. to access a bridge), they must qualify as “easy”, i.e.: Have an incline (height to horizontal length ratio) of 25% or lower, be equipped with a comfortable wide ramp or channel, and have enough clearance (distance from wall or other obstacles) to push a loaded cycle.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: The route is free of any disruptions (e.g. stairs, steps, gates or chicanes with less than 1.3 m clearance) and of slopes with a gradient of more than 6% in any direction that would make it impossible to ride for families with trailers and users of non-standard cycles. Cyclists are not required to dismount at all.

2.1.2 Route components

Segments where cyclists ride on the carriageway are assigned to one of five traffic categories: from very low to very high traffic according to tables 1 and 2 (see below, in section 2.1.3 Traffic category depending on speed and volume of traffic). Segments where cyclists are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic (cycle tracks, cycle and pedestrian tracks, 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 does not contain any sections with very high traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section features high traffic. The route does not include any crossing classified as very dangerous.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: The route does not contain any sections with high traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section features moderate traffic.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: The route does not contain any sections with moderate traffic. No more than 50% of the length of a daily section features low traffic. The route does not include any crossings classified as dangerous. The (effective) width allows for a smooth traffic of non-standard cycles everywhere, i.e.:

- One-way cycle lanes are at least 1.5 m wide if motorised traffic speed limits are 50 km/h or less, and 2 m wide if above 50 km/h.
- One-way cycle tracks are at least 1.5 m wide and two-way cycle tracks are at least 2.5 m wide.
- One-way cycle and pedestrian tracks are at least 2 m wide and two-way cycle and pedestrian tracks are at least 3 m wide.

2.1.3 Traffic category depending on speed and volume of traffic

TABLE 1: Cycling in mixed traffic

Cycling in mixed traffic	30 km/h or lower	31 to 50 km/h	51 to 79 km/h	80 km/h or over
1-500 units/day	very low	very low	very low	low
501-2.000 units/day	very low	low	low	moderate
2.001-4.000 units/day	low	moderate	moderate	high
4.001-10.000 units/day	moderate	high	high	very high
>10.000 units/day	moderate	very high	very high	very high

TABLE 2: For cycle lanes painted on the carriageway or asphalted shoulders

Cycling in cycle lanes	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
501-2.000 units/day	very low	very low	low	low
2.001-4.000 units/day	very low	very low	low	moderate
4.001-10.000 units/day	very low	low	moderate	high
>10.000 units/day	low	moderate	high	very high

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

TABLE 3:

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

2.1.5 Surface

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: The surface is at least moderately rideable everywhere, i.e. it allows a comfortable ride on a trekking or gravel bicycle in normal weather conditions and during the local cycling season.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: At least 50% of each daily section of the route is perfectly or well rideable, i.e. it allows a comfortable ride on an urban, touring or light off-road bicycle in most weather conditions.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: The surface is perfectly or well rideable everywhere, i.e. it allows a comfortable ride on an urban, touring or light off-road bicycle in most weather conditions.

Surface quality	Asphalt/concrete	Blocks/slabs/ cobbles	Stabilised gravel	Gravel/dirt
Perfectly rideable	smooth, low rolling resistance	X	X	X
Well rideable	Rough asphalt, raw granulation, slightly bumpy	Even pavement, spaces between blocks or cobbles filled in	smooth, well maintained, fine gravel	X
Moderately rideable	patched, uneven, single potholes	Uneven or broken pavement, major seams	uneven, insufficiently compacted, waterlogged	smooth forest or field road, neither sandy nor muddy
Badly rideable	damaged asphalt, multiple patches or potholes, large cracks	raw cobblestones, missing blocks, broken slabs, longitudinal rifts	deep gravel, loose stones, potholes and puddles	sandy, puddles, roots, loose stones
Not rideable	deep sand, deep mud, large rocks, deep holes			

2.1.6 Elevation

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: The cumulative elevation gain on a daily section does not exceed 1000 m in any direction (north-south and south-north / west-est and east-west).

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: The cumulative elevation gain on a daily section does not exceed 500 m in any direction (north-south and south-north / west-est and east-west).

2.1.7 Signing

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: The route must be signed in line with the relevant national standards (if they exist) and the EuroVelo guidelines (always). A sign confirming the route direction (“simple sign”) can be found at least every 5 km. No sign is missing or badly readable (including EuroVelo route sign if applicable) at main junctions (i.e. with another route that seems as important as the route surveyed), crossings and roundabouts. There is no sign indicating the wrong direction (defect). The route is signed in line with relevant national standards and regulations (if they exist).
For EuroVelo routes: Signs including the EuroVelo route logo can be found at least every 5 km. Continuity signage is accepted on the condition that it is indicated to cyclists every 5 km that in order to follow the EuroVelo route, they have to follow a given national/regional cycle route. Signs respect the correct EuroVelo branding (in terms of design, format, colour and size).

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: There are no missing or badly readable signs (including EuroVelo route sign if applicable) at all. A sign confirming the route direction (“simple sign”) – for EuroVelo routes, including the EuroVelo route logo – can be found at least every 2.5 km. Signs including the name and distance to the next main town (“complete signs”) can be found at least every 15 km.

2.2 Quality criteria – attractiveness

2.2.1 Attractiveness

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: On each daily section, there is at least one significant cultural / natural attraction or highly attractive landscape. The route is free of social-safety challenges, e.g. fear of crime in urban areas or dangerous situations caused by animals, in particular wild dogs.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: No more than 25% of a daily section exposes cyclists to loud or very loud noise, strong dust, bad smells due to rubbish or other environmental pollution.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: No more than 50% of a daily section leads through monotonous / unattractive surroundings. Attractions should be certified cycling-friendly.

2.3 Quality criteria – public transport access

2.3.1 Public transport

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: Carrying a non-dismantled bicycle on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 150 km. There are at least two reliable services a day during the local cycling tourism season each allowing to carry a minimum of four non-dismantled bicycles.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: Carrying a non-dismantled bicycle on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 75 km. There are at least four reliable services a day during the local cycling tourism season each allowing to carry a minimum of four non-dismantled bicycles. If there are stairs to access the platform or enter the ferry, they must qualify as “easy”, i.e.: Have an incline (height to horizontal length ratio) of 25% or lower, be equipped with a comfortable wide ramp or channel, have enough clearance (distance from wall or other obstacles) to push a loaded bicycle.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: Carrying trailers and handbikes on public transport to access the route is legally and physically possible at least every 75 km. There are at least six reliable services a day during the local cycling tourism season each allowing to carry a minimum of four non-dismantled cycles. Cyclists are not required to carry their cycle up/down stairs to access the platform or enter the ferry (i.e. there is a lift wide enough for non-standard cycles or a ramp).

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 criteria, platforms must be accessible by ramps or lifts, not only stairs).

2.4 Quality criteria – services

2.4.1 Accommodation

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: At least one camping, budget or standard accommodation is available on every daily section. Accommodation considered should be available for one-night stays.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: At least budget or standard accommodation is available on every daily section (choice is not limited to camping).

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: At least one accommodation included in a cycling-friendly label is available on every daily section.

2.4.2 Food, drinking water and rest areas

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: It is possible to find reasonably priced food and drinking water on every daily section (i.e. there is at least either a standard restaurant/bar or a snack-bar/café – including supermarkets).

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: There is at least one complete rest area (i.e. including at least table and benches and shelter) on every daily section. There are toilets available at least every 15 km (public or in restaurants/cafés).

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: It is possible to find a reasonably priced warm meal on each daily section (i.e. a standard restaurant/bar). Food (either standard restaurant/bar or snack-bar/café) or a complete rest area is available every 15 km. Drinking water is available every 15 km.

2.4.3 Cycle repair and charge

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: At least one cycle repair shop, shop with spare parts, vending machine with spare parts or self-service station is available on every daily section.

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: At least one cycle repair shop is available on every daily section.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: There is at least one e-cycle charging station, either along the cycle route (e.g. in a rest area), or in a café or restaurant offering free e-cycle battery charging, on every daily section, and it is well communicated.

2.5 Quality criteria – communication

2.5.1 Information along the route

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: On each daily section there is at least one information board including explicit reference to the cycle route under evaluation and URL or QR code linking to the official cycle route website to find up-to-date information. The information on the board should be either provided in multiple languages, including English, or graphically presented in a way that does not require a translation to understand.

2.5.2 Online communication

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA: There are official websites for the cycle route at national/regional level, fulfilling the following conditions: They provide detailed information for each daily section, including at least description, interactive map, elevation, accommodation, description of route signage on the ground, public transport connections and interruptions due to works or hazards; The information is up to date; They offer free downloadable GPX tracks; They allow for a smooth use on mobile or there is an easy way to find an official cycle route app offering the same information; If the cycle route is a EuroVelo route, they include its official name and refer to EuroVelo as a network and brand, with a link to www.EuroVelo.com. The official website is well-referred on search engines, i.e. it appears in the top 5 search results on Google when typing the route name and other keywords (e.g. name of the region or country).

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: Official cycle route websites and apps include information on surface types, segregation from motorised traffic, cycle repair workshops. There is an English version.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA: Official cycle route websites and apps include: Information on accessibility, catering to users of non-standard cycles; Information on rest areas, water access and e-cycle charging locations; A contact form, online chatbot or public email address to contact someone in case of questions.

2.5.3 Guidebooks and printed maps

IMPORTANT CRITERIA: At least one guidebook (printed or online) or detailed printed map is available for the whole route (in one or more publications), fulfilling the following conditions: The information is up to date; The information is available in English; The map scale is suitable for use when cycling; There is a URL or QR-code leading to the cycle route website for updated information.

3. Survey methodology for data collection and evaluation

In order to utilise the ECS methodology, some practical steps must be taken. ECS is a flexible methodology that can be used as a planning tool, an assessment tool, or a communication tool - whether ECS is used to plan the optimal itinerary for a route, to assess the quality of an existing route, or with the aim of obtaining EuroVelo Certification will impact how it will be implemented in practice. Nevertheless, there are some practical elements that remain the same. Who can commission and undertake ECS surveys, what information supplements the survey, and what the ultimate deliverables of a survey are is explained here. They are elaborated on in more detail in the ECS Handbook and more information on these topics can be provided as part of the process of acquiring an ECS licence.

3.1 Steps of the survey

- An ECS licence must be acquired from ECF before ECS surveys can take place. It takes approximately two weeks for ECF to prepare and send an ECS licence offer, and another two weeks for the contract to be finalised and signed. For more information regarding the license, please contact eurovelo@ecf.com. To see which countries have an active licence, consult the interactive map.
- The survey is based on field work and performed by authorised and trained experts, called EuroVelo Route Inspectors, traveling by bicycle and documenting their findings in the ECS app. EuroVelo Route Inspectors' trainings generally take place once a year in Brussels and can also be organised elsewhere on an ad-hoc basis. For more information, please contact eurovelo@ecf.com. To find suitable experts for a survey, please consult the publicly available list of EuroVelo Route Inspectors.
- The experts make use of publicly available resources (websites, public databases, printed documents etc.) to complete information not documented in the field. If available, they use official traffic data to supplement the traffic counts made in the field.
- Surveys can have differing levels of detail depending on the needs of contracting authority. ECS is a flexible methodology that allows for surveys focusing on only the most essential basics of a cycle route, surveys creating a full inventory of signage and services along a route, and anything in between. It is therefore important to define the objectives of a survey before it takes place.
- Surveys generally take around one day per 50 km of route, while the desktop research takes around one day per 2-3 daily sections, and the analysis and writing of the evaluation report another day per daily section.
- The main aspects of the collected information are stored in the ECS database and can be downloaded for further analysis. More detailed information (if it is collected) shall be made available to the relevant stakeholders. For EuroVelo Certified routes, the Certification Report is then published on the EuroVelo website.
- Based on the findings of the survey, Route Inspectors shall draft Route Evaluation Reports and Action Plans, templates for which are provided by ECF. Examples can be found on the Resources page of the EuroVelo website, such as the Transnational Route Evaluation Reports for EuroVelo 10 and EuroVelo 15.

4. EuroVelo Certification

4.1 What is EuroVelo Certification?

The EuroVelo Certification is a quality label that was introduced to increase the visibility of high-quality routes and sections across EuroVelo, based on the ECS methodology and quality criteria. It is the result of a thorough evaluation following the ECS methodology, and a tool to promote the high quality of a EuroVelo route. **The entirety of a EuroVelo route**, as well as **sections of a EuroVelo route (minimum 100 km in length)**, can be **EuroVelo certified**, depending on the organisations involved in the Certification process. The EuroVelo Certification is valid for five years.

Certifying a EuroVelo route brings the following advantages:

- Confirmation that the route meets high quality requirements with a solid brand;
- Clear communication to users, on EuroVelo.com and national/regional platforms, that a route has been assessed to meet their specific needs – hence a promotional tool based on strong evidence gathered in the field;
- Route (section) highlighted on EuroVelo printed and online maps and on EuroVelo communication channels.

Costs associated with EuroVelo Certification:
The EuroVelo Certification fee is paid over two installments. The first installment covers the evaluation costs, while the second installment covers the branding and communication costs. The first half must be paid upon submission of the EuroVelo Certification request, while the second half must be paid after confimration that ECF awards the EuroVelo Certification. The cost for each installment was €2,500 at the time of publication. For more details and the current costs, please contact eurovelo@ecf.com.

4.2 Levels of EuroVelo Certification

The EuroVelo Certification requires a EuroVelo route or section of a route to meet at least essential ECS criteria on 100% of the length of the route/section in question. This ensures that it meets the needs of experienced cyclists, which is the minimum requirement for EuroVelo Certification. Some flexibility is permitted in terms of traffic levels, surface quality, and signage, as well as public transport access, accommodation, and cycle repair services in remote areas.

However, higher quality levels can be reached for certain daily sections, and the EuroVelo Certification can highlight them at the daily section scale. Long-distance cycle routes generally contain sections of varying quality, and while it is not always realistic to expect a long route to meet, for instance, additional ECS criteria everywhere, some daily sections along the route can reach these quality levels, which is useful for cyclists to know.

To reflect this granularity, each certified daily section is classified according to a three-tier rating system.

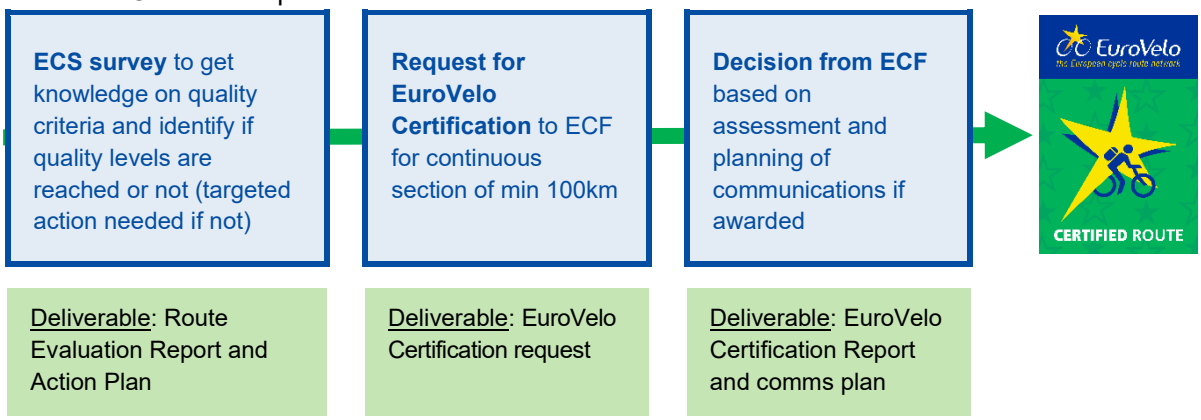
- A **one-star certified section** meets the **essential ECS criteria**, demonstrating it meets the needs of experienced cyclists,
- a **two-star certified section** meets the **important ECS criteria**, demonstrating it meets the needs of occasional cyclists,
- a **three-star certified section** meets the **additional ECS criteria**, demonstrating it meets the needs of families and users of non-standard cycles.

Note that to reach a higher certification level, the criteria for the lower level(s) must also be satisfied – that is, a two-star certified section must also meet the essential criteria, and a three-star certified section must meet the essential and important criteria.

4.3 EuroVelo Certification process and roles

- EuroVelo Certification can only be initiated by a consortium of the relevant partners along the route (National EuroVelo Coordination Centres and their regional / national partners). The request should clearly indicate the itinerary and the partners should provide the funding.
- ECF should be informed via email to eurovelo@ecf.com about the EuroVelo Certification process before it commences.
- EuroVelo Certification can only be obtained on the basis of a Route Evaluation Report and Action Plans based on a field survey using the ECS methodology.
- The survey according to the ECS methodology can only be performed by trained EuroVelo Route Inspectors. 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 EuroVelo Certification request (including all relevant information) to ECF for the issuing of the official EuroVelo Certification.
- ECF will issue the certificate either for the whole route or for a section of the route (min. 100 km).
- The validity for any EuroVelo 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.

The EuroVelo Certification process in a nutshell:



4.4 Indicative Timeline

4.5 Communication

- EuroVelo Certified routes are made visible and promoted through various online channels and printed materials. They are prominently displayed on EuroVelo.com, in the EuroVelo newsletter, on the printed EuroVelo Overview Map, on EuroVelo social media channels, and in a press release.
- All the stakeholders along the route can refer in their communication to the route or its certified section in the following way:
    - *"EuroVelo [Number] - [Official name] is a EuroVelo Certified route within the European cycle route network"* (whole route)
    - *"EuroVelo [Number] - [Official name] between [Start] and [Stop] is a EuroVelo Certified route within the European cycle route network"* (major section)

- When the type of communication allows, it is best to indicate additionally which type of cyclists each daily section is recommended for, highlighting especially the daily sections that reach two or three stars. This can be done in the following way:

If the EuroVelo Certification level of a daily section or several subsequent daily sections is…	It can be communicated as:
Three stars	"The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for all kinds of cyclists, including families and users of non-standard cycles."
Two stars	"The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for occasional and experienced cyclists."
One star	"The section between [start] and [stop] is recommended for experienced cyclists."

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