

**Minutes of the ERA Path Commission held on 23 September 2005
on the occasion of the 36th ERA annual meeting
in Elspeet / Gelderland Province in the Netherlands**

There were **27 participants** present from **17 European countries**

(B, CY, CZ, D, DK, E, EE, F, GB, FIN, H, I, NL, P, PL, SK, SL)

Guests: The ERA Honorary President Hubert Yseboodt and Dr. Lutz Heinemann (Weitwandern, Germany). Also 2 representatives of member organisations of the Deutscher Wanderverband took part.

Beginning: 9.10 Hrs.

Points on the Agenda:

1. The President of the Commission Frank Schlinzig welcomed participants and briefly reviewed the past year. Apart from his participation in the Presidium's meeting in Budapest (H), the visit on the 75th anniversary of the foundation of Dansk Vandrelaug in Copenhagen, walking in Austria and the ERA event "Family Rambling Day / Walking with Neighbours" on the frontiers of D/DK, no other journeys had been undertaken.

2. There were no objections to the minutes of the annual conference in Brilon / Germany.

3. In the afternoon, on the joint session of the Walking Commission and Path Commission, the ERA home page on the web would be presented and then, a lecture on walking with GPS-assisted orientation (WalkOnWeb) would take place.

4. Again, it was deemed urgent to deal with the vital maintenance of the European long-distance footpaths (E-paths). Besides the current maintenance work on the waymarking of sections of the paths, the care and up-dating of information documents and maps were discussed as was the use of the internet. The low "feedback" was a disappointment: this option was used by 25 walkers only in the period of 2004/2005, while some notices had no connection at all with walking. For the future, it was important to appoint contact persons for answering requests concerning individual E-paths. In the previous period, several queries were not dealt with at all, or the answers from the representatives of relevant organisations were too general due to their poor knowledge of the paths. This did not help to resolve the situation. The queries often concerned the structure of the footpaths (the state of the paths, suitable seasons of the year, accommodation possibilities, etc.), maps and path descriptions.

In this respect, what needed attention was the assessment of the state of such sections of those paths which have become routes as a result of the creation of cycling trail networks and new roads and do not conform to the requirements of ramblers anymore. After all, the planning and implementation of E-paths began some 40 years ago and, in the meantime, changes have emerged that do not correspond to the previous concept. This is something we must think about regarding particular areas. The EURORANDO 2006 walks on the routes of the E-paths could also help this and so, as full a participation as possible is asked for at the closing event in South Bohemia.

5. However, the creation of new international footpath networks often happens without the participation of ramblers' organisations. Different concepts appear concerning E-paths, the existence of which is being neglected. On the other hand, concepts are promoted, the need for which might be called into question. As an example we can show the path along the North Sea (Nordsee-Küstenpfad), where the need was not discussed with clubs and organisations taking

care of the given path sections, nor was there a check on natural conditions carried out to see if such a path made any sense. Moreover, the “International Coastal Path (Internationale Küstenweg)” exists there as E9 “The Atlantic Ocean-North Sea-Baltic Sea”, where the possibilities of walking have been considered and where the problematic long routes along the dike were avoided. Actually, even the creation and extension of pilgrim routes caters for the need of multi-day walks. Attention should be directed more towards the improvement of existing footpaths. What continues to show as negative and harmful is the use of footpaths by cyclists and horse riders.

6. In several controversial contributions to the discussion, an intensified initiative for walkers’ interests from the side of ERA was called for, such as unified directives for waymarking, protection of the connection of footpaths and consideration of the topic of free access to the countryside.

Thanks to the members of organisations in Morocco (Fédération Royale Marocaine de Sports de Montagne) and Cyprus (Cyprus Tourism Organisation) the footpaths in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco and E 4 routes in Cyprus were publicised. The representatives of Portugal and Spain again pointed out the wine path across Europe (Ruta de los Viñedos de Europa).)*

The Polish organisation PTTK intends to organise a seminar on the waymarking of footpaths in Podlesica (near Częstochowa) on 25-28 May 2006.)*

A reference to the next ERA commissions’ annual meeting in **Budapest, Hungary** from **28 September – 1 October 2006** is being attached to the Minutes.

The Magyar Természetbarát Szövetség organisation will be the host.

The meeting ended at 12.00 Hrs.

Responsibility for preparation of the Minutes:

Frank Schlinzig

)* Information / information material available from
Fédération Royale Marocaine de Ski & Montagne
Parc de la ligue Arabe – Casa-Maroc (>Projet de Traçage des Pistes de Randonnée dans l’ Atlas Marocain<)

Cyprus Tourism Organisation
Leoforos Lemesou 19, Lefkosia (Nicosia – P.O. Box 24535, CY-1390 Lefkosia (Nicosia)
(>European Long Distance Footpath E4 and other Cyprus Nature Trails<)

FCMP = www.fcmpportugal.com / FEDME = www.fedme
(>Weinwanderweg – Rota dos Vinhos da Europa<)

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ul Jagiellońska 6 PL-31-010Kraków / www.wierchy.pttk.pl
(>2. European Conference of Waymarking<)