

Guidance for Developing National Adventure Racing Structures

Supporting the Growth and Development of Adventure Racing Worldwide

Introduction

The International Adventure Racing Association (IARA) encourages and supports the development of national structures that help coordinate, promote, and grow adventure racing in all countries. This guidance document outlines practical pathways for adventure racing communities seeking to establish national organisations. It includes:

- The benefits of national coordination
- Different levels of organisational development
- Common development pathways
- Practical steps towards forming a National Association or Federation
- Support available from IARA

This document has been compiled by a number of IARA Committee members and adventure racers from around the world. We thank them for the work on this document and contribution to the sport.

National Structures

A National Structure is a general term used to describe an organisation created to support the development, promotion, and coordination of adventure racing within a country.

National structures can take different forms depending on what stage the sport is at in each country:

- An informal collaboration between race organisers and/or racers

- A national association with members and elected representatives
- A recognised federation or National Governing Body (NGB) for Adventure Racing

Regardless of structure, these organisations aim to promote participation, support race organisers, improve communication, represent the sport nationally and internationally, and encourage long-term growth.

Benefits of National Structures

Grow the Sport: Increase visibility, youth development, athlete education, more races, and a national calendar.

Support Race Directors: Knowledge sharing, insurance solutions, sponsorship support, official referees, and best-practice guidance.

Benefit Racers: Higher-quality races, rankings, membership benefits, community development, and training opportunities.

Strengthen Governance: Government recognition, funding opportunities, quality standards, international representation, and strategic planning.

Levels of Adventure Racing Development

IARA has identified three levels of adventure racing activity in countries around the world.

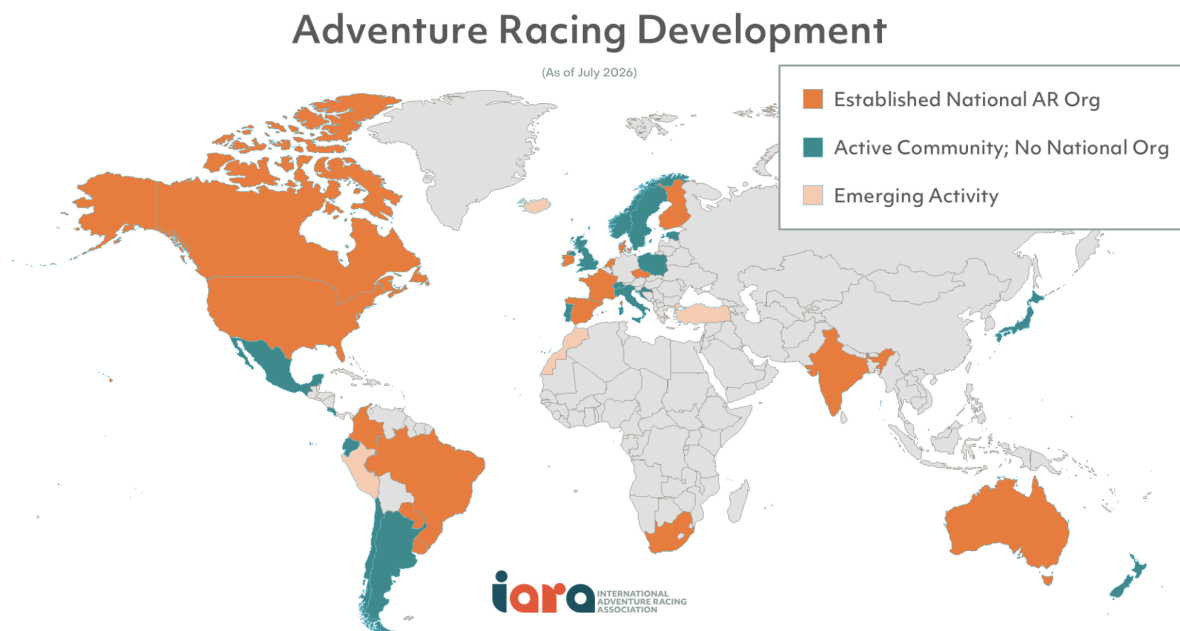
Level 1 – Emerging Activity: Countries with limited adventure racing activity, often characterised by one or a small number of events. Examples include Peru, Morocco, Iceland, and Turkey.

Level 2 – Active Community, No National Structure: Countries with established races and active athletes, but no formal national association or federation. Examples include the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Colombia.

Level 3 – Established National Organisation: Countries with a recognised Adventure Racing Association or Federation operating independently or

within an existing sports governance structure. Examples include France, Spain, Brazil, the USA, and Denmark.

As of July, 2026, 14 countries from around the world have established Adventure Racing Federations or Associations and are members of IARA. An estimated 15–20 countries have active adventure racing communities but no formal national structure. Many countries have some adventure racing activities.



Typical Development Pathway

Based on the experiences of many adventure racing countries, most typically go through different stages of development (evolution) before formally establishing a national structure. These stages are broadly described below.

Stage 1 – First Participation: Athletes participate in races abroad or a first event is organised domestically.

Stage 2 – Community Growth: Additional races emerge and participation increases.

Stage 3 – Competition Coordination: A race calendar, rankings system, or national championship is introduced. More teams begin to compete internationally.

Stage 4 – National Organisation Formation: Race directors, clubs, and athletes come together to establish a formal association.

Stage 5 – Recognition and Representation: The organisation gains recognition from national sports bodies and international organisations such as IARA.

Sustainable national organisations generally emerge where there is an active racing community of racers and organisers, regular events, and committed volunteers.

Next Steps for Developing Countries

The following are suggested steps that can be taken by members of the AR community to develop national structures in their countries.

1. Identify which development level best describes your country.
2. Identify which stage of the development pathway you are currently at.
3. Consider what actions could help establish a national structure.
4. Contact IARA for guidance and support.
5. Connect with key AR stakeholders including race directors, clubs, and athletes.
6. Review the 10 Steps to Establish a National AR Association guideline document from IARA (available on IARA's website)

Success Stories

Just as no two adventure races are alike, the national structures for adventure racing communities vary from one country to the next. Each example below demonstrates how a structure can be created based on the needs and resources of the local adventure racing community.

Success Story: USA

The United States Adventure Racing Association (USARA) was founded in 1998 with the intention of making the sport more accessible to all racers. Now structured as an independent non-profit organisation, USARA provides sanctioning and a race calendar, a points and ranking system and hosts national championships. Other benefits to racers and race organisers includes safety standards, youth development, insurance, sponsor discounts and other programs. USA is a member of IARA.

Success Story: Uruguay

Interest in AR began in the early 2000s with racers competing internationally and local events being organised. The growing AR community established the Asociación Uruguaya de Corredores de Aventura (AUCA) in 2014 with a constitution, logo, and rules. Recognition by Uruguay's Secretary of Sports followed in 2015. Growth has continued with the establishment of regional clubs and a calendar of 8 to 10 races, workshops and an urban race each year. Other benefits to racers and race organisers include insurance, rules and governance structures, a startline inflatable and support of youth development. AUCA is working towards sports federation status to take advantage of the funding and tax benefits.

Success Stories: Spain

The national structure for adventure racing (also known as 'raids') in Spain exists as part of FEDO, the Spanish national orienteering federation. Proposed in the early 2000s as a natural fit with the map-and-compass skills of orienteering, FEDO accepted adventure racing, establishing a five-member sub-committee focused on raids/AR and setting up national ranking, league and championship programs. The strong FEDO club community (60-80 clubs around Spain) organise local and regional events.

How IARA Can Help

- Providing guidance on establishing national adventure racing organisations. See IARA's 10-Step Guide for specific help.
- Sharing examples from successful national associations.
- Facilitating introductions to neighbouring countries with established structures.
- Offering governance resources and examples, including templates for constitution.
- Providing letters of support where appropriate.
- Explaining the steps of the development process, including IARA membership.

Conclusion

Adventure racing thrives on teamwork, resilience, and collaboration. The same principles underpin successful national development. Whether a country is just beginning its adventure racing journey or already has a growing community, establishing a national structure can create opportunities for athletes, race directors, volunteers, and partners alike.

IARA encourages adventure racers in all countries to take the next step - connect with others, build a shared vision, and create a national structure that helps AR development in your community and country. IARA stands ready to support that journey.

How can IARA help? For more information, please contact contact@internationaladventureracing.org