

Sustainable mobility along the newest EuroVelo route, the Iron Curtain Trail



Map of the Iron Curtain Trail



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About the project

History

For almost half a century, Europe was forcibly divided into East and West by the “Iron Curtain”, a border stretching from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. The *Iron Curtain Trail* (ICT) is a European cycle route which invites people to retrace and experience this important part of the continent's history.

The *Iron Curtain Trail* thereby contributes in a lively and very practical way to the creation of a genuine European identity. In 2005, following the initiative of MEP Michael Cramer, the European Parliament recognised the *Iron Curtain Trail* as a model project for sustainable tourism and called upon member states for support.

Thanks to successful preparatory actions, the European Cyclists Federation (ECF) inaugurated **the Iron Curtain Trail as EuroVelo route nr. 13**, in September 2011 with national cycling NGOs and regional development bodies starting work on the realization of the project. ICT project activities are based on the Transnational Action Plan supported by the European Parliament.

The Iron Curtain Trail connects most of the Southeast European (SEE) countries, provides opportunities to learn, to find and to share good solutions for local and regional mobility challenges and to promote sustainable transport (to improve the image of cycling and public transport). The situation is very different in each of the Southeast European countries in terms of the availability of combined public transport (public transport and cycling), long distance cycle routes, daily cycling and cycling tourism.



About the project

Present and future

EuroVelo is a network of 14 long distance cycle routes connecting and uniting the whole European continent. The routes can be used by cycle tourists as well as by local people making daily journeys and it is envisaged that the network will be substantially complete by 2020. One of the network's newest routes is the Iron Curtain Trail, EuroVelo 13, which leads from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea and is more than 10,400 km long (approximately 8,800 km of which is inside the EU and 1,600 km is located outside). The ICT is the longest route of the European cycle route network and it is expected to generate annually 3.3 million daytrips, 849,000 holiday trips and have an economic impact of 355 million Euro when it is fully developed. In order to reach its full potential as the EuroVelo 13 route, we collected and evaluated potential itineraries, services, promotion / marketing conditions, the organisational and financial background of the ICT and defined the necessary actions until 2020. This work was done with the support of the European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry under the Sustainable Tourism Grant. During this work we realised that the southern section of the route needs special attention and more detailed planning, organisational development and further raising of awareness. With the support of the South East Europe Programme the Southern section of the Iron Curtain Trail will be able to catch up to the more developed sections and become the engine of all cycling related development in the region.



About the project

Objectives

1. Improve the accessibility of the SEE regions by bicycle. The Iron Curtain Trail leads through border regions which were separated during the cold war period and the connections (for cyclists as well) were interrupted. Significant improvements have been made in the (motorized) road and railway infrastructure but at the same time new challenges have appeared.

2. Connect cycling and public transport opportunities. Cycling can help to improve traffic by increasing the catchment/gravitation area of the public transport lines in making them more quickly and easily accessible. The ICT project collects best practices and implements pilot actions to improve the bike storage and transportation possibilities connected to public transport. These solutions can help remove obstacles from public transport use!

3. To connect SEE regions by a European long distance cycle route. The EuroVelo Network connects European countries; the Iron Curtain Trail, as part of this network – EuroVelo 13 – provides a visible and tangible connection between SEE countries and regions. The ICT project will single out critical deficiencies in infrastructure along the route and will investigate solutions that can be implemented.

4. Promote cycling and combined sustainable transportation as a means of sustainable mobility. To increase the share of cycling and public transport, offers have to be drawn up and communicated for cyclists that answer their needs. These offers will improve the public image of cycling (particularly in those countries where the share of cycling is low) and motivate end-users, the local population.

5. The ICT project will significantly **improve knowledge, experiences** of the leading regional development bodies and the relevant NGOs in the program area and will lay down the basics of future cooperation.

Project activities

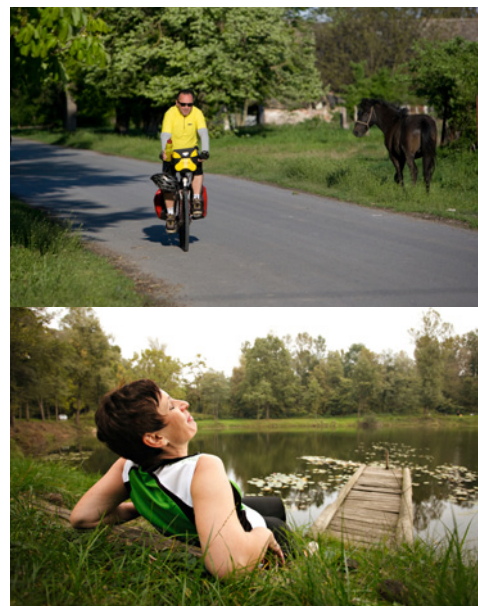
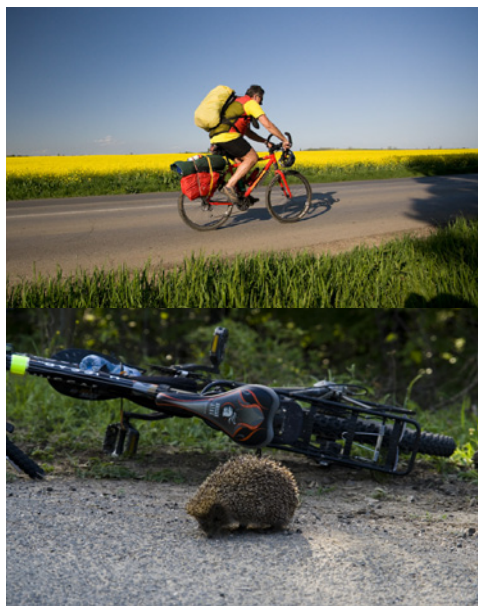
Analysis and planning

This set of activities includes all methodological preparation, surveys, analyses and planning necessary to significantly improve cycling and public transport conditions along the route. The methodology will be based on the latest European knowledge and will take special regional conditions and solutions into consideration. A methodology for analysis and planning will result in feasible solutions and realistic proposals. The project will finish the survey and planning work which was started by other projects financed by the DG ENTR in 2011 and will also cover those countries which were not part of the process. The survey of several route sections will help to finalize the itinerary. Best practices will be collected and a detailed action plan will be drawn up. These will bring the level of services closer and contribute appropriate cycling conditions all along the Iron Curtain Trail. Pilot developments will test the feasibility of cost effective technical solutions.

Sustainable mobility offers

Sustainable mobility offers are tangible outputs of the project which bring the actual implementation of the action plan and the feasibility studies closer. The offers have to be desirable for the end users by providing comfortable, fast and cost effective solutions for daily mobility and/or leisure and have to demonstrate to stakeholders the opportunities related to the combination of cycling and public transport.

Sustainable transport and tourism offers will be developed based on a common methodology and will consider the existing infrastructure, rolling stock, timetables and regulations. Partners will involve public transport providers, local municipalities, service providers, tour operators among others. The offers will be developed on the local, regional, national and transnational levels. Pilot sections will be sought out and promoted to end-users which provide necessary basic infrastructure, signposting, public transport connections and services on an appropriate level.



Project activities

Communication activities

These activities focus on communicating the project and its results to the professional audience as well as on reaching end-users through different communication channels. The professional target is made up of project partners, directly affected local /regional bodies and authorities, organizations and professionals who are not in the core geographical zone (NUTSII regions along the Iron Curtain Trail), but interested for the project results.

The website for the communication for the professional audience is available already at www.ict13.eu.

Promotion and external communication will address potential end users - cyclists and cycling tourists. The Iron Curtain Trail project includes the creation of a common corporate identity and a common marketing and communication plan and will coordinate promotion activities, responsibilities as well as defining the level of cooperation necessary for the joint promotion of the route. National and regional communication tools will provide the basis for a common, sustainable promotional campaign.



Organizational development, evaluation of the results and follow up activities

The ICT project will also ensure the sustainable management of the route. Sustainable management will be a vital aspect of all activities during the whole project. Training courses, study tours, awareness raising activities for national, regional and local authorities as well as a European monitoring and evaluation concept and manual for EuroVelo routes are part of the Iron Curtain Trail project.

Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

West Pannon Regional and Economic Development Nonprofit Ltd, Hungary



The mission of West Pannon Nonprofit Ltd. is to help initiation and implementation of cooperation-based regional and economic development processes in the West Transdanubian Region. Our activities are based on local community building and network cooperation. Our aim is to strengthen networking among the region's municipalities, enterprises and NGOs and thereby increase efficiency of development programmes and help the preparation for the 2014-2020 planning period. Our organisation is based in the cities of Szombathely and Győr.

Regional Government of Burgenland, Austria



The Regional Government of Burgenland is responsible for the development of the regional transport system. Its responsibilities cover all means of transport. Burgenland is interested in further economic development and cooperation with its neighbouring regions. With its long experience in project implementation, especially with a focus on the development of sustainable mobility solutions, Burgenland is a valuable project partner.

Ekopolis Foundation, Slovakia



Ekopolis is the leading environmental foundation in Slovakia, providing grants to NGOs, municipalities and other local groups, delivering professional services, and disseminating good practice. The development of Greenways and improvement of conditions for environmentally-friendly mobility is of special interest to the foundation. Through the operation of specifically designed grant-making schemes for local initiatives, the *Cyclists Welcome* certification scheme and other activities, the foundation strives to contribute to sustainable development in this important area.



Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

Hungarian Cycling Alliance, Hungary



The Hungarian Cycling Alliance (KMSZ) was established in 2008 thanks to one year's cooperation on the Hungarian Cycling Program policy document. After this successful cooperation the various partners decided to build a coalition for the following reasons: to assist the government with the realization of the program, to establish a sphere of discussion for members, to facilitate cycle friendly policy-making locally, and to train decision makers and local NGOs. The Association has members from different backgrounds (environmental protection, recreation, sport, climate change, business, tourism); this diversity gives KMSZ strength and ensures the fact that improvement of cycling is a perfect tool in working towards sustainability, participatory democracy and well-being. Our fields of activity are the following: tourism, policymaking, training, education and the raising of awareness.

Mura Regional Development Agency Ltd. Slovenia



The Mura Regional Development Agency is the leading developmental institution in the Slovenian region of Pomurje, implementing tasks and projects in regional development. The agency's activities are directed towards stimulating progress and development on the regional level, and to fostering public private partnership. By offering our expertise and our technical and administrative support to the regional economy, we enable faster achievement of economic objectives. By being engaged in different EU projects, the Mura Regional Development Agency stimulates international cooperation between companies and so contributes to Pomurje's vision to be integrated in a wider Euroregion.

Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

Bulgarian Cycling Association, Bulgaria



Bulgarian Cycling Association is working for the popularization of cycling in Bulgaria, together with other cycling related organisations in the following directions: preparation and launching of Bulgarian Cycling Strategy, inclusion of Cycling policies in the Plans for Regional Development (INSPIRED), development of the Black Sea Cycling Trail as a EuroVelo route, activities for promoting cycling as a daily means of transport and ecological tourism.

ANTIGONE-Information and Documentation Center on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence, Greece



ANTIGONE is an NGO which primarily aims to improve the living conditions and the quality of life of various social groups deemed “vulnerable” (migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, prisoners, homosexuals, the unemployed, women and young people), who often become target of discrimination. There is a systematic and coordinated effort at every possible level for actions that would contribute to the differentiation, change and finally improvement of the general political conditions that affect the aforementioned groups. Furthermore, ANTIGONE works actively in the field of adult education and carries out activities to inform, make aware, and educate all citizens on issues related to human rights and social ecology, in cooperation with Ecological Movement of Thessaloniki, the National EuroVelo Coordination Centre for Greece.



Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

South Transdanubian Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd., Hungary



The Agency is a Ministry-owned public body operating in the NUTS 2 development region of Hungary covering the counties of Baranya, Somogy and Tolna. Its core activity is the management of the ERDF-funded South Transdanubian Operational Programme that supports – among others – projects of infrastructure and tourism development, including cycling infrastructure. The Agency is also active in cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in accordance with the region's development objectives. The Agency has participated in several bicycle and tourism related projects in the Hungary-Croatia border area, including the Three Rivers Bicycle Route.

Greenways Methodology Association, Hungary



Greenways are managed by local communities. Greenways encourage sustainable development and provide a positive contribution to the local economy. They help to promote and enable healthy and low environmental impact lifestyles and provide a framework for community-based initiatives; Greenways promote nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism and mobility and address needs of locals and visitors. The establishment of the Greenway Methodology Association (ZöME) was an important step in the development of the Greenway program in Hungary. The association was established by the most active Greenway developers, who had been able to launch and develop their Greenways with the support of local communities. Most of these Greenways have become successful, and are actively operating viable routes by now. ZöME organized several activities related to the ICT from 2009 on: cycling tours in the former Iron Curtain region; linking together the tourism stakeholders; conferences and workshops. Our aim is to help the development of the Iron Curtain Trail route into a long-term Greenway with the involvement of local communities.

Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

Association of South-western Municipalities, Bulgaria



Established in 2000, the Association of Southwestern Municipalities (ASWM) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization uniting 26 local authorities in the South-western region of Bulgaria. The goals of the Association are to promote and represent the binding interest of its members at all policy levels; to coordinate the activities of its members in resolving local issues and in developing local government; to provide a variety of quality services; and to promote civil participation at local level. The ASWM has a vast amount of experience running a diverse range of projects related to sustainable development, tourism and organizational development.

Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism, Bulgaria



The Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT) is a non-profit public benefit organization for tourism development and networking. BAAT unifies over 60 members: tour operators for specialized tourism, nature park directorates, family hotels, guest-houses and individuals. BAAT encourages and supports partnerships for the sustainable development of alternative forms of tourism at a regional and local level, in order to preserve natural, cultural and historical heritage and to help Bulgaria become a better place for living and entrepreneurship. BAAT awards a quality mark for sustainable small-scale rural accommodation enterprises (*Green Lodge*) and organises an annual open-air event with a travel show and an organic market in Sofia ('Green Days').



Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

The National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, Romania



The National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (NIRD) has participated in the establishment of various tourism objectives in Romania, by providing permanent, specialised support. NIRD organises 'master plan' projects aimed at enhancing the value of and developing the tourist potential of different areas, tourist resorts and localities by providing business plans, feasibility studies; marketing research, strategies and policy for tourist services. NIRD has established collaborations under various international programmes such as South East Europe (i.e. Datourway, Sagittarius, Iron Curtain Trail), Interreg IVC (i.e. Charts) and Calypso (i.e. Healtour).

NGO My Bike, Croatia



Founded in June 2010 from a previous Bicikl organization that was founded in 2001, the NGO continues all projects and programs of old associations. Our main objective of action is to encourage cycling as a part of daily transport, recreation, and development cycling tourism. We are active members in ECF since 2003, and cooperate with the Ministry of Tourism at the national level and with regional development agencies in Croatia at the regional level. We have good cooperation with the Croatian Railways in the pilot project "With bike on the train". We are holders of the project "Bike & Bed" in Croatia since 2006. Since 2001, we organize every year a Mobility Week and Car Free Day Project "Cycling through the city" that has been made in public-private partnership with Coca Cola HBC Hrvatska and the cities of Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Zadar and Vukovar. For the project "Bike to work" in public-private partnership with Coca-Cola HBC Croatia we received International Award - PR News' CSR.

Iron Curtain Trail Project Partners

Yugo Cycling Campaign, Serbia



YCC is the major Serbian NGO for promoting cycling as an alternative mode of transport. It has more than 400 members and it has been a full member of the ECF since 2000. It has been involved in several projects for cycle tourism: Euro Velo 11, Euro Velo 6, "Pannonian Eight", "Cycling on Kostunici", among others. With almost 15 years' experience in organizing campaigns about sustainable mobility, it has organized dozens of similar events. The most important and well-known activities were: the organization of European Car Free Day, European Mobility Week, bicycle festivals such as *Bike Fest*, the *Danube by bike* tour, the *Biking the Balkans* caravan, the River Sava promotional tour, etc.

Region of East Macedonia & Thrace, Greece



The Region of East Macedonia & Thrace consists of the South-Eastern end of the country, bordering with Turkey and Bulgaria. The region is formulating its development strategy by taking into consideration the basic characteristics of the current state of the Region, as well as the crucial socio-economic condition of the country. It aims to contribute to the overall recovery of the Greek economy, to the preservation of social cohesion and to the protection of the environment. The development strategy of the region will mainly be achieved through the implementation of various points from the 2007-2013 Macedonia – Thrace Operational Programme.



Map of EuroVelo Routes



www.ict13.eu

