

# EuroVelo13

## Iron Curtain Trail

A Trans-national Action Plan for its implementation





### **Mission:**

- The mission of the Iron Curtain Trail (ICT) is to experience the history of Europe and explore and develop the border regions of Europe by cycling.
- The route 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 - EuroVelo<sup>1</sup> – which was initiated by the European Cyclists' Federation 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. The ICT 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<sup>2</sup>.
- In order to reach its full potential as the EuroVelo 13 route, we collected and evaluated the 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 for Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany<sup>3</sup>, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary<sup>4</sup>, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, FYR of Macedonia, Turkey and Greece in 2011, supported by European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry under the Sustainable Tourism Grant.
- The cost of the core activities (including development and operational costs) is 351 million Euro (for 2012 – 2020)! The connecting activities will cost an additional 20 million Euro but they will serve mostly other target groups (mainly not cyclists along the ICT). It is therefore considered worth investing European, national, regional, local public and private resources in the ICT because the yearly total economic impact is more than the whole development and maintenance cost for 2012 - 2020!

### **Goals:**

- This document aims to provide an overview on the current situation, necessary actions and their costs. Detailed information is available on the relevant webportals ([www.eurovelo.org](http://www.eurovelo.org)) for the above mentioned countries.
- We aim for higher official recognition and dedicated resources to implement the actions on the local, regional, national and European levels.

### **This publication summarises the current situation and necessary actions in the following fields:**

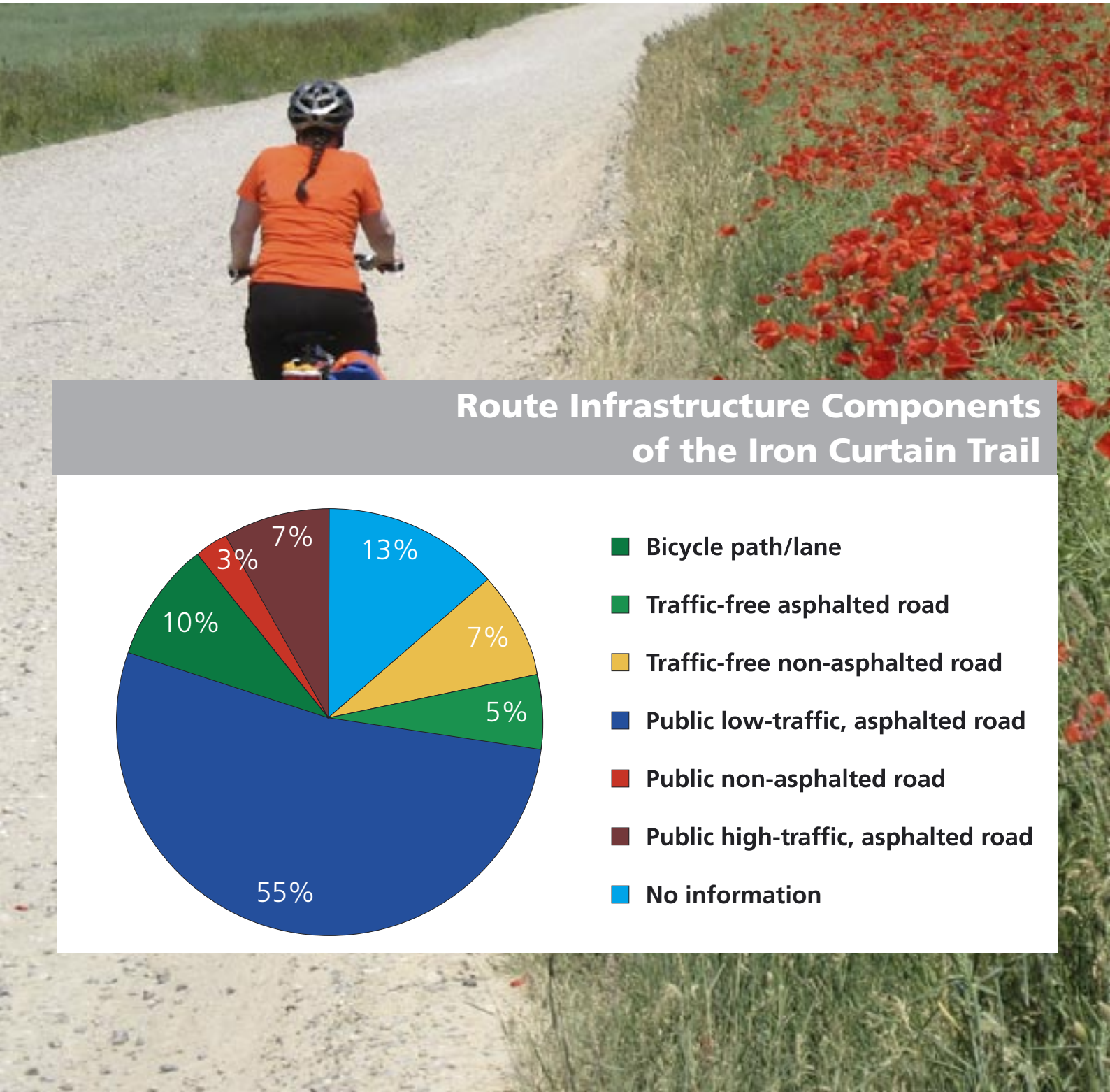
- Route infrastructure
- Services
- Marketing, promotion and communication
- Organisation and financing

<sup>1</sup>More information: [www.eurovelo.org](http://www.eurovelo.org)

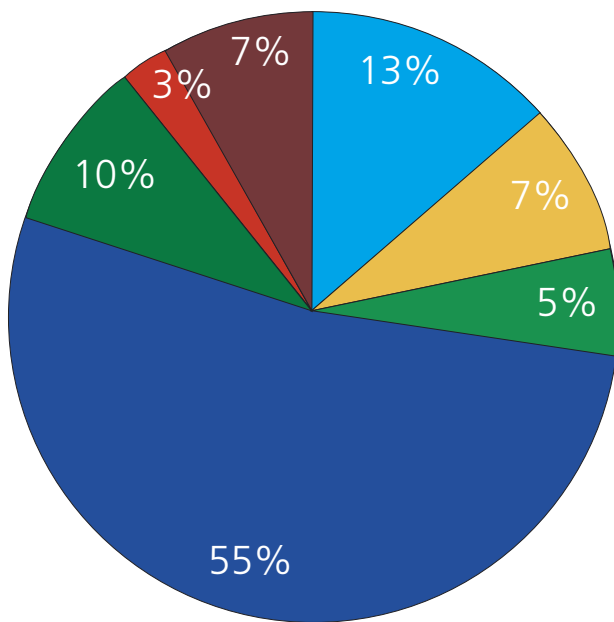
<sup>2</sup>According to the study "EuroVelo Challenges and Opportunities" ordered by the European Parliament.

<sup>3</sup>Except Bavaria and Saxony.

<sup>4</sup>Only for the Austrian – Hungarian border (not for the border of Hungary with Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia)



### Route Infrastructure Components of the Iron Curtain Trail



- Bicycle path/lane
- Traffic-free asphalted road
- Traffic-free non-asphalted road
- Public low-traffic, asphalted road
- Public non-asphalted road
- Public high-traffic, asphalted road
- No information

## Current situation

- The final itinerary is more than 10.400 km, of which 8.800 km is inside the EU. Currently we have information about 87% of the itinerary<sup>5</sup>.
- 80% of the itinerary is on low traffic or traffic free roads and cycle paths but there are serious quality problems with approximately 5% of them. A further 7% are located on high traffic roads (mostly in Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia and Latvia) so 11% of the total itinerary currently has inappropriate conditions where urgent actions (e.g. construction works) are needed.
- 17% is already signed as a national or regional route, 8% as (another) EuroVelo route and 1% as EuroVelo 13 - ICT (in Slovakia and Germany).
- There are some very challenging conditions (for less athletic cyclists) between service points / settlements at either end of the route. In the sparsely-populated North there are very long distances to cover, whilst in the south there are some high elevations in some of the mountainous regions.
- There are national standards for cycling infrastructure in the Northern and Central European countries but they are mostly missing in the South. Route quality and maintenance works are not standardised or controlled.

## Proposed core actions

- Detailed planning is necessary to prepare the construction works. All actions and dimensions mentioned below are only preliminary estimations.
- New segregated cycle paths / cycle lanes or asphalted hard shoulders are needed on close to 900 km of the route. The majority of these developments (400 km of cycle paths) are proposed by the Polish partners but they are also required in Latvia (149 km), Estonia (91 km), Germany (91 km), Bulgaria (68km) and smaller sections are needed in some of the other countries too.
- 300 km requires shared lanes, cycle lane marking and / or traffic calming.
- On more than 600 km it was proposed to renew facilities and / or improve the surface of existing facilities (needed mainly for cyclists).
- Maintenance of the cycling facilities and signing is necessary to sustain the results of the developments and achieve the fullest potential of the route.
- EuroVelo signposting in addition to the existing signs is proposed on 2,200 km and complete (EuroVelo) signing is proposed for 6,900km.
- In the mountainous regions, the establishment of bike delivery capacities and improved conditions on buses and trains is needed. The Polish partners have identified a need for more than 26.000 bike storage units.
- Standards for cycling route infrastructure are needed in 7 counties whilst a handbook for maintenance works and monitoring is needed in every country.
- Automatic counters should be installed on 127 sections. The data should be processed and verified every year until 2020 in all countries.

## Connected route infrastructure development actions (mainly not for cyclists)

- Construction of new public roads is needed on close to 200 km and the repair of the asphalt on public roads / streets is necessary on approximately 500 km, generally for the local population.

<sup>5</sup>No information: Norway, Russia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia (border with Hungary), Hungary (border with Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia). Not complete information: Poland, Bavaria and Saxony (Germany).



### Current situation

- The whole of the ICT was split into 229 'daily' sections and we tried to ensure there is at least basic and/or standard accommodation available at the end of each section. Unfortunately there are 35 sections which were reported as having 'inappropriate' service conditions, mostly in Finland (16 sections) and Poland (19 sections)<sup>6</sup>. In addition, there are 64 sections with serious quality deficiencies ('just appropriate service conditions') along the route (mostly in Latvia and Bulgaria) but it is possible to find basic services on these sections.
- Generally the service providers are cycling friendly in the Northern section of the route but there are no official cycling friendly service systems in place. In the central part there are cycling friendly service systems in every country. In the Southern section, traditional hospitality providers could provide a good basis for the development of such schemes but they do not exist currently.
- Bike repair services are generally available in the central section but there are serious deficiencies in Finland and in the Southern section. E-bike rental and charging services are not developed anywhere along the itinerary.

### Proposed core actions

- Development of basic accommodation is needed on 20 sections in Finland (providing home stays in existing farmhouses) and on 1 section in Romania.
- Transforming accommodation to 'cycling friendly' is needed on 90% of the route. Transforming retail shops and restaurants to cycling friendly was proposed on 162 sections (everywhere, except in Germany), whilst transforming attractions was proposed on 112 sections (only in the North and South). Training and awareness-raising for the staff of services and attractions was proposed in the North (Poland) and in the South.
- It is necessary to establish a label and quality criteria system for cycling friendly services on the national / regional level in every country along the whole ICT, except Poland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, where they exist already (N.B. Slovenia and Croatia also have one) Every country highlighted the need to organise and control the network of cycling friendly services.
- Rest stations were proposed on 118 sections in Finland (38), Germany (22), Poland (22), the Czech Republic (12), Estonia, Latvia, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary.
- Bike repair stations are needed on 73 sections, mostly in Finland (38) but also in Estonia and Latvia, in the Southern (11) and Central (7) sections.
- New bike rental stations are proposed on 66 sections in Finland (43), Latvia (5), Slovakia (1), Hungary (6), Bulgaria (2) and in the Czech Republic (9). The establishment of pedelec stations was proposed on 68 sections in Finland (37), Poland (22) and in the Czech Republic (9).
- A bicycle centre providing complex services was proposed in Lithuania only.
- An help line to aid cyclists in emergency situations was proposed in Finland, Hungary and in every country in the Southern section of the route.

<sup>6</sup>In Poland the route proposed by the PSWE mostly does not follow the touristic Baltic Sea coast but instead discovers remote rural areas. It therefore does not allow for the use of existing touristic services but does open up new opportunities for the rural communities.





## Current situation

- Several regions along the ICT are already well known among cycling (and other) holiday makers, some even as cycling holiday destinations: Tallin in Estonia, the Latvian seaside between Riga and Jurmala, the Lithuanian Seaside Cycle Route, the Baltic Sea coast from Gdansk to Gdynia, the Baltic Sea Cycle route in Germany, Neusiedler See / Fertő area, Harz, Sumava, Elbe-route, Upper and Lower Austria, the Danube Cycle Route (EuroVelo 6) at the Iron Gate and the Black Sea coast. Even those areas that are not necessarily among the touristic hot-spots of Europe, are still well known regionally and can serve as a basis for cycling tourism promotion along the ICT.
- The ICT – EV13 route is usually not mentioned in any official promotion or marketing activities of the above mentioned tourism destinations.
- The Bikeline Guide and Michael Cramer's book and website about the ICT are the main sources of dedicated information for cycling tourists.
- There are 53 sections currently without websites containing any detailed information for cycling tourists, mostly in the South but even some of the Central and Northern sections do not have information available on the internet. Those websites that do exist do not reference each other and are not connected.
- The printed information (e.g. brochures, free maps etc.) available does not properly cover the route, and there are 140 sections where printed promotion tools are missing or not complete.

## Proposed core actions

- A marketing plan for the route and regular surveys of the users and market is needed in every country and on the trans-national level as well.
- The route should be integrated into the existing tourism offers, relevant existing web portals, guidebooks and maps, printed promotion tools, advertisements activities, presentations at fairs, existing social media etc. These activities can be useful in those countries and regions where there are well developed tourism products and promotional tools that can serve as a basis for future development. In case of less frequented touristic destinations we should support the development of cycling tourism offers especially for the EuroVelo13 – Iron Curtain Trail.
- In every country we need an internet portal if there is not a national / regional (cycling) tourism web portal which could easily accommodate detailed information for this special route. These portals have to be connected under the EuroVelo 13 route portal within the EuroVelo.com umbrella on the transnational level. Based on this detailed information we propose to develop applications for smart phones and / or audio guides (which has already been started in Finland).
- We propose to publish printed promotion tools, organise cycling promotion events for the public and study trips for journalists and publish press releases, PR articles and direct advertisements.
- We propose to install info points and info stands on 115 sections along the route.

Countries	Length (km)	Cost in million Euro	Cost per km in Euro
<b>Summary (all sections and costs)</b>	<b>10,463</b>	<b>351.1</b>	<b>33,560</b>
Norway	100 <sup>7</sup>	n.a.	n.a.
Finland	1,744	0.9	491
Russia	600 <sup>8</sup>	n.a.	n.a.
Estonia	1,061	15.7	14,819
Latvia	562	32.3	57,494
Lithuania	106	11.1	104,825
Poland	792	234.5	296,036
Germany	1,706	23.9	13,986
Czech Republic	491	4.7	9,605
Austria	415	1.6	3,803
Slovakia	92	1.0	10,886
Hungary (border with Austria)	163	2.2	13,398
Border between Hungary and Slovenia / Croatia / Serbia	500 <sup>9</sup>	n.a.	n.a.
Serbia (border with Romania)	353	2.3	6,492
Romania	384	1.4	3,764
Bulgaria	1,038	16.3	15,742
FYR of Macedonia	173	0.7	3,977
Greece	55	0.4	7,276
Turkey	128	0.8	6,521
Trans-national activities	All	1.3	127

<sup>7,8,9</sup>Estimation - the itinerary is not defined.

## Current situation:

- The European Parliament accepted a proposal of Michael Cramer and asked “the European Commission and the Member States to consider the EuroVelo-Network and ICT as an opportunity for promoting European trans-border cycling infrastructure networks, supporting soft mobility and sustainable tourism.” It provides a good basis but the ICT (and cycling generally) is not integrated to the tourism, transport, regional development and rural development strategies, programmes and funds.
- Responsibility for the development of the ICT is mostly clear for the Northern section but still largely undefined for the Central and Southern sections.
  - The road authorities have to be responsible for the majority of the route infrastructure development actions together with public transport providers. The National EuroVelo Coordination Centres (NECCs) should be responsible for the monitoring in the future.
  - The tourism boards and the NECCs are responsible for the coordination of services, promotion and marketing. Private enterprises will need to undertake the service development tasks.
  - The management of the EuroVelo routes in every country is a shared responsibility but has to be steered by the NECCs on the national level and by the ECF<sup>10</sup> on the European level.
- Financing possibilities:
  - National, regional, local authorities mostly have very limited resources.
  - There is a serious lack of dedicated European financial resources in the current financing period (2007-2013) but significant potential in the next one (2014 – 2020). In every region (in the EU) the rural development programmes (EAFRD<sup>11</sup>) can co-finance all the local activities. Most of the regions along the ICT in the EU are entitled to receive regional subsidy (ERDF<sup>12</sup>) to provide resources for the investments. The “directly” cross-border route actions can be financed from the cross-border and trans-national programs.

## Proposed core actions:

- Awareness-raising to convince the decision makers and the stakeholders.
- Appointment of the responsible organisations / individuals, the creation of NECCs (where they do not currently exist) and the establishment of trans-national management. Create working groups for route infrastructure, services and marketing and steering groups for route development and strategy.
- Official support for integrating the ICT into relevant strategies and programmes and the implementation of the action plans.
- Allocation of significant financial and human resources on every level.
- Precise survey of the whole itinerary by GPS.
- Training and study tours to improve the special knowledge of professionals.
- Preparation and implementation of individual projects.
- Establish a ranger system to monitor the route conditions.

The summary cost of all the activities along the route is 351 million Euro (for 2012 – 2020). These total costs are equivalent to the construction of only a few km of motorway. It is proposed that 15% of the actions can be carried out in the short term, 29% should be undertaken in the medium term, whilst 55% are long term activities.

<sup>10</sup>European Cyclists' Federation, the coordinator of the European cycle route network

<sup>11</sup>European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

<sup>12</sup>European Regional Development Fund

## Publishing credits

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This publication is part of the ECF EuroVelo publication series. It should be read in conjunction with following publications and with the national status reports and action plans:

- EuroVelo, the European cycle route network
- EuroVelo, the European cycle route network, Development Strategy 2012-2020
- EuroVelo, National Coordination Centres, guidance on application process
- EuroVelo, Signing of EuroVelo cycle routes
- EuroVelo, Corporate design of EuroVelo cycle routes (planned)
- EuroVelo, Web solutions for EuroVelo cycle routes (planned)
- Additional guidelines over time

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