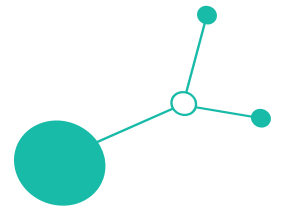
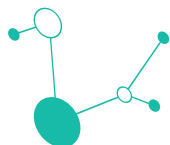


D1.2.1 Design of the pilot testing of the ICTr business Model



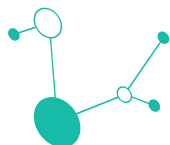
Version 1
02 2024





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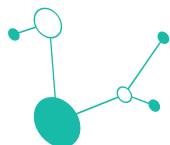


A. The sustainable ICTr Business Model

1. The “Perfect Picture”

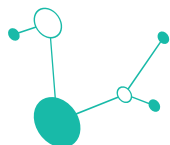
With a length of almost 10,000 km, the Iron Curtain Trail - EuroVelo13 is the longest long-distance cycle route in Europe and a prominent member of the great European long-distance cycle route initiative EuroVelo. In addition to the projects already implemented in the past for the further development of the Iron Curtain Trail, the development of a business model is absolutely essential for the sustainable revitalization of tourism in order to achieve the greatest possible economic benefit, especially for the regions along the Iron Curtain Trail. The project in question has set itself this task, whereby the design of the business model should ideally include the following characteristics:

- **Balanced sustainability:** Cycle tourism in itself can already be described as sustainable tourism. In the context of this project, however, special attention is to be paid to a balanced sustainable design. This means
 - ☐ **Ecological sustainability:** in addition to the fundamental sustainable nature of cycle tourism, the primary aim is to develop and implement bookable products with a particular focus on climate-friendly design. In this project, this challenge is closely linked to work package 2, which aims to combine bookable products with an evidence-based footprint calculator in order to create climate-friendly - and ideally climate-neutral - offers.
 - ☐ **Social sustainability:** the business model should primarily integrate small - ideally family-run and locally owned - service partners from accommodation to producers of regional products and actively involve them in product development. This should provide a significant impetus for the socio-economic development of the often peripheral, structurally weak rural regions along the Iron Curtain Trail.
 - ☐ **Economic sustainability:** the business model must be designed in such a way that it can create economic value in the long term. This should not only put the business model, the Iron Curtain Trail itself and, in particular, the project results on a solid economic footing and thus secure them for a period that extends far beyond the project period. In this context, it is important to mention that economic sustainability cannot be ensured solely with income from travel activities, as many tasks for the trail management go far beyond the actual travel agency activities. Transfer payments in this regard must be taken into account to ensure economic sustainability.
- **Resilient and regionally managed:** the business model must have a clear focus on regional resilience and autonomous management. Resilience can only really be achieved if all stakeholders involved identify with the business model, actively help to shape and develop it and thus accept and manage the Iron Curtain Trail as their own project. The broader this circle of stakeholders - from the private sector to public institutions - is spread, the greater the chance of making the business model resilient. If this is successful, ensuring autonomous management is almost automatically a result. If responsibility is assumed locally - in the destinations along the trail - and a strong network that consistently promotes the Iron Curtain Trail is established, this challenge can be considered mastered. This is because the regions then have a product in their portfolio that has a European dimension and can be offered to resellers with high market power, e.g. international tour operators, by means of a



clearly defined interface. If this does not succeed, there is a risk that tour operators who do not participate in the development of the Iron Curtain Trail and therefore have few regional points of reference and little interest in increasing the impact in the regions will secure the majority of the travel business. This means that not only the ability to shape the product is lost, but also the ability to shape regional development. This creates one-sided dependencies and it is not uncommon for trails to be segmented by tour operators and only their fillet pieces offered. Preventing this dependency is a key task in designing a resilient business model.

- **Participatory and transparent:** from the particular point of view that truly sustainable tourism always goes hand in hand with the sustainable development of the regions along a trail, it is crucial to integrate as many regional service partners as possible into the business model and allow them to participate in it. This requires the development of transparent and fair management models in which each individual service provider must be aware of the terms and conditions of the business model. The terms and conditions must be fair, transparent and the same for everyone involved. On the other hand, this business model cannot be a self-service store, but requires identification, commitment and the will for further development and quality assurance from the regional service partners. After all, the success of linear tourism products in particular always depends on the cooperation and service quality of all service partners involved. In this context, qualification and, if necessary, certification and quality assurance must be integral components of the business model.
- **Innovative:** although there are already examples of the development and implementation of resilient and sustainable participatory management models for sustainable tourism products, the business model in question represents an innovation in certain areas. This business model must be designed in such a way that it functions both transnationally, but also in relation to the pilot regions with a focus on macro-regions, e.g. the SK-CZ section. Another innovation is the challenge of making the business model scalable so that it can be applied not only to the entire Iron Curtain Trail, but also to other EuroVelo long-distance cycle routes. In this context, it is also important to point out - and this can also be described as a major innovation - that the business model should be integrated into the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) management model for the EuroVelo network with as little friction as possible. If it is possible to combine a macro-regional resilient management model with the ECF management model, there are great opportunities for value-adding sustainable management of long-distance cycle paths.
- **Operational applicability:** The best design for a business model is only relevant if it can be applied in practice and is competitive on the market. In addition to the cornerstones for a resilient and participatory design, the most important instruments for its applicability must also be defined. If a trail (or in the case of the Iron Curtain Trail, a specific section) is managed in a resilient and sustainable manner, this is based on a defined owner/manager structure. In addition to project management, this owner/manager structure also has tasks that go beyond private economic purposes (e.g. maintenance of the trail), which is why the actual travel operations must be carried out by a separate booking center, also for reasons of commercial law. Ideally, the booking center is licensed by the project owner to perform defined tasks for a certain period of time and is obliged to meet the highest quality standards under a licensing agreement. The tasks of the booking center can be defined as follows:
 - ☐ Inquiry and booking management
 - ☐ Coordination and management of regional service partners
 - ☐ Ongoing quality assurance and qualification
 - ☐ Ongoing product development



- ☐ Sales to resellers (reselling)
- ☐ Marketing, if applicable (if commissioned by the owner)

The booking center must be equipped accordingly, both in terms of personnel and technology, whereby in particular the inquiry and booking management as well as the service provider management must be equipped with a modern information management and booking system for linear tourism products. Only the establishment of an official booking center will really ensure the regionally controlled, resilient and socio-economically sustainable management of the trail.

Summary: in order to design a long-distance cycle route as a truly sustainable tourism product, an integrated business model is required that focuses on balanced sustainability, resilience, regional autonomous management, transparency and local participation, innovation and scalability as well as its operational feasibility.

2. Possible Models

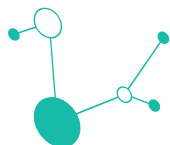
With reference to the perfect picture for an integrated trail business model, two role models can be used which have already been successfully implemented:

- Amazon of Europe Bike Trail: business model with an official licensed booking center
- High Scardus Trail: federal booking center consisting of several local tour operators

1. Amazon of Europe Bike Trail

The Amazon of Europe Bike Trail business model with a licensed booking center is based on the successful model of the Alpe-Adria-Trail. In contrast to the AAT, the Amazon of Europe macro-region does not yet have the necessary strength to strengthen the business model with transfer payments (in addition to the income from travel operations). Nevertheless, an official booking center has been successfully established, which is able to perform all of the above-mentioned tasks of a booking center with great commitment and a very high level of local expertise. The results achieved in the first two years of the booking center's activities are encouraging and point in the right direction. However, two further milestones need to be reached to ensure economic viability, which are also relevant for the Iron Curtain Trail:

- Expansion of the product portfolio in the booking center to achieve greater economic viability. The AoE BT is increasingly being managed as a destination and sustainable products in line with its values are being included in the range of offers. For example, packages and experience modules for other sustainable activities such as canoeing and rafting tours, wildlife watching and protected area hikes, cultural programs, etc. A strategy that can also be recommended for the business model along the Iron Curtain Trail, in that the Iron Curtain Trail is also managed as a destination with many accompanying products. This is all the more appropriate for the Iron Curtain Trail as it is also designated as a European Cultural Route.
- Greater involvement of regional stakeholders, in particular public and semi-public institutions such as DMOs, but also local authorities. Transfer payments are of course desirable here, but if these are not yet realistic or cannot be of a relevant amount, as briefly mentioned above, the contribution of human and material resources (in the maintenance of trails), cooperative marketing and, in addition, general lobbying and networking for the trail are essential. This strategy should also be applied to the Iron Curtain Trail, whereby integration into the ECF



partnership model should also be mentioned here. If the regional stakeholders succeed in recognizing that participation in a tourism product of European dimensions offers essential added value, the contribution of additional resources will also meet with greater understanding.

2. High Scardus Trail

On the High Scardus Trail, a transnational long-distance hiking trail in Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia, a modified, less intensive or lower-threshold business model was implemented. The reasons for this are manifold:

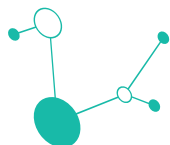
- The project area of the High Scardus Trail in the Western Balkans is characterized by a lack of public and semi-public structures, and despite several initiatives for a single economic area, the (also legal) borders between the countries are very pronounced and not comparable to the EEA. This means that the main burden for designing a business model lies with the private sector.
- Based on this, it is therefore necessary to integrate the private sector as intensively as possible into the trail project and to inspire it for its design and further development. The strategy of licensing a single booking center was therefore doomed to failure from the outset.
- The project area is also characterized by peripheral and extremely structurally weak mountain regions, in which it is urgently necessary to communicate and implement the corresponding capacities and quality requirements at the level of local service providers. This requires the broadest possible alliance of partners - as already mentioned, primarily from the private sector - in order to meet these requirements.

On this basis, a business model was developed that primarily invited local tour operators to actively participate, with the prospect of long-term economic benefits. This cooperation is linked to a qualification and quality management process at the end of which the tour operators are certified as members of the official booking center.

In addition, a system has been developed that implements the requirements of transparency and fairness in the best possible way. This means that all certified tour operators are treated equally in the inquiry and booking process and incoming inquiries and bookings are processed in accordance with a defined set of rules. This procedure is now being implemented professionally by the tour operators under the direction of a steering committee (one tour operator each from KOS, ALB and MKD). In the meantime, the tour operators have also taken the initiative and founded a transnational alliance of sustainable tour operators and put it on a legal footing. It is therefore very optimistic that this business model will not only be demonstrably sustainable and resilient, but will also create economic value in the long term. It is a model that is particularly suitable for regions that currently have a low economic potential and a deficit of public organizations.

The primarily federally participatory business model of the High Scardus Trail can also prove effective on the Iron Curtain Trail. The reasons have already been mentioned. Another reason would be to design the model in such a participatory way that as many tour operators as possible along the Iron Curtain Trail benefit from the travel operations.

It should also be added that, given the length of the Iron Curtain Trail, it is entirely possible to apply both business models in different macro-regions. This can even be advantageous in order to learn during



operational implementation which business model is better suited to the macro-regions along the Iron Curtain Trail.

3. The EuroVelo Partnership Model

The EuroVelo Partnership Model was developed by the European Cyclists' Federation to further develop, revitalize and, above all, promote EuroVelo long-distance cycle routes at European level.

In connection with the Iron Curtain Trail, the aim is to implement the innovative and participatory business model in close coordination with the EuroVelo partner model. The aim is to optimize mutual benefits and make local stakeholders aware of the advantages of an innovative and sustainable tourism product with a European dimension. The cornerstones of the EuroVelo cooperation structure are shown in the following schematic diagrams:

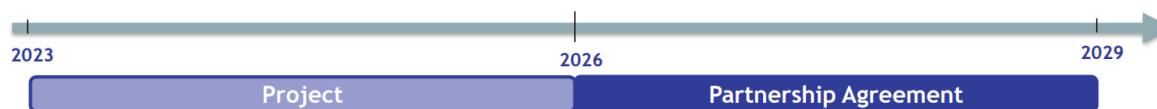
3. APPROACH EUROPEAN SCOPE

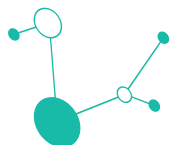
EUROVELO ROUTE PARTNERSHIPS



EuroVelo Partnerships objective: Working together to further develop the route on both national and transnational levels:

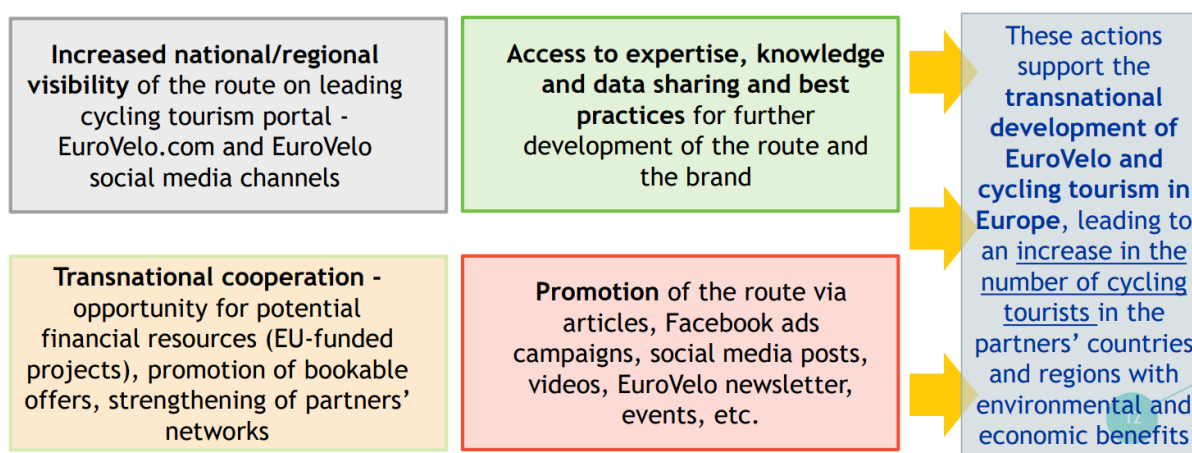
- Coordination and best practices exchange on cycle route **infrastructure and services**
- Common **marketing and communication** activities
- Common **usage monitoring and impact assessment** activities (with the available data)





3. APPROACH EUROPEAN SCOPE

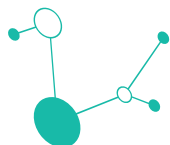
EUROVELO ROUTE PARTNERSHIPS WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?



3. APPROACH EUROPEAN SCOPE

EUROVELO ROUTE PARTNERSHIPS WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?





3. APPROACH NATIONAL SCOPE

EUROVELO 13 IRON CURTAIN TRAIL OPTIONS FOR PARTNERSHIP



EuroVelo 13 Partnership

- Objective to include all 20 countries EuroVelo 13 goes through

EuroVelo 13 Partnership

- Only countries part of the ICTr project join and are represented by an NECC/national partner or a public body

ICTr Alliance

- All ICTr Partners take part

3. APPROACH NATIONAL SCOPE

EUROVELO 13 IRON CURTAIN TRAIL OPTIONS FOR PARTNERSHIP



EuroVelo 13 Partnership

- Objective to include all 20 countries EuroVelo 13 goes through

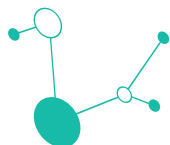
EuroVelo 13 Partnership

- Only countries part of the ICTr project join and are represented by an NECC/national partner or a public body

ICTr Alliance

- All ICTr Partners take part

IMPORTANT: The core task of the ICTr partners will be the support to identify capable national partners (consortiums, NECCs,...) for EuroVelo 13 partnership



3. APPROACH NATIONAL SCOPE

EUROVELO ROUTE PARTNERSHIPS EXPECTED INVOLVEMENT FROM PARTNERS



- Sign the Partnership Agreement and pay the fee in due time
- Participate in 2-4 meetings a year (steering committees and potential working group meetings on Route Infrastructure, Services, Marketing and Communications, etc)
- Jointly develop a **multiyear action plan**, and yearly action plans and allocate the budget accordingly
- Provide feedback on deliverables when necessary
- Collect and share data when necessary
- Lead or contribute to certain activities as defined in the action plan

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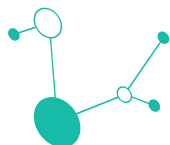
3. APPROACH NATIONAL SCOPE

EUROVELO ROUTE PARTNERSHIPS CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES



- Prove the benefits of the current Partnerships to the partners so they can themselves convince their partners.
- Align objectives with partners' national/ regional priorities
- Prove advantages of partners contributing to Partnership agreement vs those who aren't
- Loss in value for partners as soon as one country/region doesn't join Partnership
- EuroVelo 13 Partnership as an opportunity to rethink existing model and focus on outputs beneficial to partners
- Time within project to discuss and find common interest in Partnership Agreement with partners

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4. Possible Solution for the ICTr

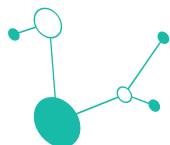
As already mentioned, it is essential to develop a resilient, sustainable and participatory business model for ICT and to implement it in the pilot regions. The cornerstones on which this business model should be based have been explained in detail, and there are two possible design proposals based on our experience:

- A more intensive business model based on the models of the Alpe-Adria-Trail and in particular the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail
- A more promotional and low-threshold business model based on the example of the High Scardus Trail

Based on the interim results of the first pilot actions, there will be an intensive discussion with the regional project partners in order to determine the definitive design of the business model for each macro-region. It is entirely possible that both basic designs, expanded and partially adapted to regional requirements, will be used. After a pilot operation of a business model in the 2025 cycling season (project period 5), the final design of the innovative and participatory business model of the Iron Curtain Trail should then take place in order to provide an impetus for its implementation and long-term sustainable operation along the Iron Curtain Trail.

The adaptation to the partner model of the EuroVelo network is an integral part of the final design and is once again explicitly emphasized here as an essential component of the solution.

Another integral part of the final business model will be the integration of a "Good Impact" or "Valorization" element. The main goal of the "Good Impact" or "Valorization" element should be to share benefits among people and nature. The detailed design is closely linked to the other activities of the present project (e.g. footprint calculator; impact measurement system) and depends on their results, but could be a crucial element of the very final business model of the ICTr and should also preserve its long-term sustainability.



B. Explorer Tours

1. Definition

Explorer tours have been successfully developed by the project partner in previous projects, and the "Explorer Tour" brand has already established itself on the market. Explorer tours aim to test new products under realistic conditions. The products are usually developed according to a "best-off" principle in order to test the attractiveness, feasibility and resilience of as many components of the tourism service chain as possible. In order to be able to test Explorer Tours realistically, it is necessary to acquire real customers for these Explorer Tours in a real market environment. To this end, the following USP of Explorer Tours is communicated to customers:

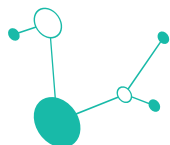
- Be a pioneer and the first to experience or travel this product/trail.
- Experience a best-of product with numerous extra features that you can't get with conventional products on the market
- Become part of the product development team and help us to improve and further develop the product with your criticism and feedback after the Explorer Tour
- Share your experiences during the Explorer Tour with as large a community as possible by communicating them on Social Media or via other channels
- Don't expect everything to go like clockwork on an Explorer Tour because, as said, it is a pioneering journey. For your boldness and cooperation, you will receive a Nice Price, i.e. a significant price reduction. This Nice Price of course only applies to the Explorer Tour, if the product is actually included in the regular product portfolio sooner or later it, it will have a new (higher) price which is in line with the market.

Explorer tours are therefore an essential tool for testing products under real conditions and for the further development of products. Based on previous experience, Explorer Tours are essential in order to be able to offer new products on the market in a high quality and reliable manner.

2. Goals of the Iron Curtain Trail Explorer Tours

At least one Explorer Tour is planned for each of the three pilot regions in the ICTr project. The basic design of these Explorer Tours has already been described above, whereby the objectives should be explicitly emphasized once again:

- To test the products and services developed on the Iron Curtain Trail under real market conditions in the three pilot regions, with a particular focus on climate-friendly cycling tours
- Strengthening the perception of the "Iron Curtain Trail" brand on the market compared to other cycle trails in the regions that have been marketed more strongly to date (this applies in particular to Pilot Area North, where the "Baltic Sea Trail", which runs in a similar direction, has been advertised almost exclusively to date.
- Intensive involvement and cooperation of regional partners in the design of the Explorer tours as part of capacity building for product development and to raise awareness of cycling products and future business models.



- To create the conditions for the further trial operation of the bookable products on the Iron Curtain Trail in the three pilot regions during the project period 5 (cycling season 2025).

3. Conceptualization of the Explorer Tours

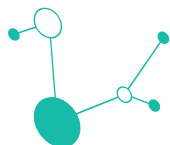
1. Preliminary considerations

When developing the Explorer Tour programs, particular emphasis was placed on two components:

- Surveying and integrating points of interest along the trail that are linked to the "Iron Curtain" theme. These are incorporated into the daily program of the Explorer Tours as "Experiences" and have the following added value:
 - ☐ They are the basis for strengthening the "Iron Curtain Trail" brand. They can be used to tell the stories of the Iron Curtain Trail.
 - ☐ Differentiation from other similar stage/long-distance cycle trails in the region (if available): Only with the inclusion of such additional programs can the Iron Curtain Trail hold its own against better marketed and therefore better-known cycle trails in the Pilot Area North, for example.
 - ☐ Added value for the guest: They not only get a follow-up trip, but also deep insights into the history of the Iron Curtain or other highlights.
- One of the declared aims of this Interreg project is to develop tourism products around the Iron Curtain Trail that have the smallest possible ecological footprint. Special consideration was given to this when designing the Explorer Tours 2024:
 - ☐ Design of the route so that rail travel is easily possible (+ proactive communication of this option in the application)
 - ☐ Requirement: start or destination with good rail connections (ideally start and finish)
 - ☐ Depending on the Explorer Tour, no luggage transfer
 - ☐ Design of the route without shuttles during the trip to bridge stages
 - ☐ If possible, selection of family-run accommodation (if possible also "eco-friendly")

The following additional framework conditions were defined in advance of the conceptualization:

- Duration of the trip approximately one week (between 7 and 9 days including arrival and departure)
- Target group: sporty cyclists who can manage a typical Iron Curtain Trail stage according to the ECF specifications (modified by trail Angels; approx. 40 - 70 km stage length, but also taking into account the altitude difference). The trips without luggage transport (due to the fact that guests must bring their own panniers) are aimed at the more experienced stage cyclists.

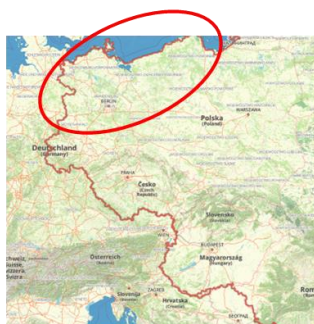


Basis for the Explorer Tours:

A total of three Explorer Tours were designed: one tour each for Pilot Area North, Pilot Area Central and Pilot Area South.

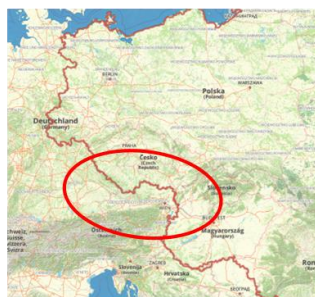
The pilot areas are as follows (incl. project partners involved):

2. DEFINITION OF PILOT AREAS AND INVOLVED PARTNERS



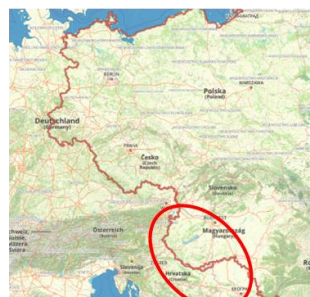
Pilot Area North:

Lead Gdansk (PL)
Participating PTO
(PL) and OETE (DE)



Pilot Area Central:

Lead TA (AT)
Participating
Partnerstvi (CZ) and
Ekopolis (SK)



Pilot Area South:

Lead Iskriva (SI)
Participating
Westpannon, Crost
(HU) and KKZ (HR)

In preparation for the selection of the daily stages for the individual Explorer Tours, the overall route of the Iron Curtain Trail within the pilot areas was divided into feasible daily stages with accommodation options at the stage locations in period 1 of the present Interreg project. This division (see Reporting Period 1) serves as the basis for the design of the Explorer Tours.

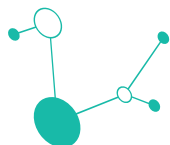
Role model system for the development of the Explorer tour design

In order to establish a standardization process for the design of the Explorer Tours, a role model was first developed using the Explorer Tour "Central" as an example. In other words, the Explorer Tour "Central" was designed first and then the experience gained and the standards and specifications developed were applied to the development of the Explorer Tours in the other two pilot areas.

2. Explorer Tour Central as Role Model

Project partners involved in the process:

- Trail Angels GmbH (Lead Workpackage)
- Ekopolis (SK, Jan Rohác)
- Partnerstvi (CZ, Daniel Mourek)



Date of the Explorer Tour: June 8 - 15, 2024

Responsible tour operator: Trail Angels GmbH

Target group: normal paying guests as "test users"

Specification:

In several meetings, the Explorer Tour Central was specified as follows:

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Specification

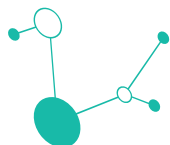
1. One pilot action for 2024 as preparation for
 1. Second pilot action promo tour 2025
 2. Regular travel operations for 2025
2. Length of program: 8 days, 7 overnights, 6 stages (from Saturday to Saturday)
Group Size: maximum 10 customers; 1 guide & 1 project partner (optional)
Date: June or September (first come - first serve ☺): **June 8th - June 15th**
3. Half-board proposed, extra programmes included, Lunch self-paid: **exact specification of services see slides 6 & 7**
4. Specifying best-of program:
 1. Interim shuttles possible, but decision: bike-thru-program with no interim shuttles due to cost reasons
 2. Enriching with additional experience programmes.

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Specification

Included services of the ICT Central Explorer Tour 2024:

- Overnight stays in Hotels or Guesthouses
- Meals: Half board (breakfast & dinner)
- Bike guide (german speaking)
- One main sightseeing attraction/activity beside biking per day (incl. costs if relevant, e.g. additional guide for visit of National Park Thaya or wine tasting)
- Some additional optional sightseeing attractions/activities beside biking per day (excl. costs if relevant)
- Expert for iron curtain for the last 25 km to Bratislava at day 7 (english speaking)



EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Specification

Excluded services of the ICT Central Explorer Tour 2024:

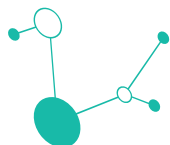
- Back transfer from Bratislava to Slavonice (but optional support in organizing a collective shuttle)
- Lunch
- Costs of additional optional sightseeing attractions/activities (if relevant - see also „included services“)
- Optional city tour Bratislava
- Bike rental
- Beverages
- Additional personal costs
- Travel insurances

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Organization

Additional decisions related to the program:

- Language of Guide German (additional guides can be in english)
- Daniel Mourek will be the bike guide
- No impact fee in season 2024 (no CO2-compensation - this starts at Season 2025)
- No bike rental offered
 - back transfer too expensive and for some guests probably not necessary
 - On request: there are rental shops in Bratislava, but guests have to organize it by themselves (he/she has to pick up the bike in Bratislava before the tour start and bring it to Slavonice)
 - In case of arrival by train: booking centre will support the guests to find a train that is capable to take bikes with



EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Organization

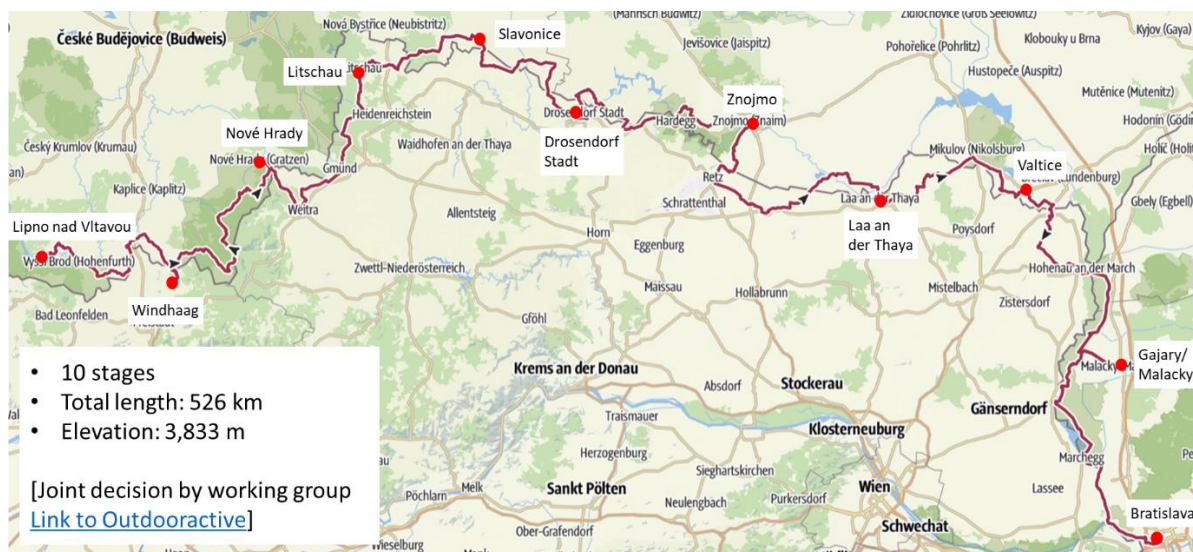
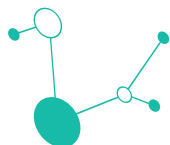
1. Tour Operator: Trail Angels
 1. If required, of course in cooperation with local tour operators;
 2. Cooperation with local TO's will be specified within own process (e.g. based on a MOU)
 3. Selection of local service providers (e.g. accommodations, mobility services, experience programs) by national project partners
2. Selection and organization of experience program by national project partners
3. Point of contact for customers: Trail Angels
 1. Booking management strategy (e.g. reservation of accommodations: specified in next meeting)
4. Pricing strategy:
 1. Customer are paying core services, based on EU package travel directive
 2. There will be no profits for project partners out of the project related travel operations
5. Inclusion of impact project
 1. For 2024 no inclusion of impact project / CO2-compensation
 2. 2025: obligatory (based on carbon footprint)

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA CENTRAL

Marketing

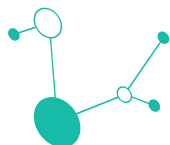
1. Inspirational landingpage (German, English): www.trail-angels.com
 1. Booking landingpage on www.bookyourtrail.com will be implemented for 2025 for regular travel operations
 2. Implementation of pilot action programmes on ECF website
2. Implementation of specified communication tools on referral-pages as much as possible (AUT, CZ, SK)
 1. Has to be managed by national project partners
3. Evaluation of possible/available marketing tools within WP3 of ICTr
4. Integration into Trail Angels ongoing Marketing (outside the ICTr project)

As mentioned above the basis for the specification of the Explorer Tours was the already defined in pilot area central including specified stages and stage destinations:



Stage no.	Start	Stage destination	Link to stage	Length	Ascent
1	Lipno nad Vltavou	Windhaag	LINK	46 km	648 m
2	Windhaag	Nové Hradý	LINK	55 km	856 m
3	Nové Hradý	Litschau	LINK	56 km	416 m
4	Litschau	Slavonice	LINK	32 km	276 m
5	Slavonice	Drosendorf Stadt	LINK	40 km	303 m
6	Drosendorf Stadt	Znojmo	LINK	59 km	616 m
7	Znojmo	Laa an der Thaya	LINK	66 km	278 m
8	Laa an der Thaya	Valtice	LINK	44 km	183 m
9	Valtice	Gajary/Malacky	LINK	64 km	201 m
10	Gajary/Malacky	Bratislava	LINK	67 km	39 m

Based on the stages listed above this program (incl. additional program) was chosen:



Day	Start	End	Length (km)	Program	Additional cycling km program	Duration additional program	Estimated time (stage + program)
1	--	CZE - Slavonice	Arrival				
2	Slavonice	CZE - Vranov n. D./Frayn	64	Guided tour Renaissance Palace	8	1 hr	7 hours
3	Vranov n. D./Frayn	CZE - Znojmo	47	National Parks Podyjí / Thayatal – guided cycling tour	8	1,5 hrs	7 hours
4	Znojmo	AT - Laa an der Thaya/Hevlín	60	guided tour windmill Retz	8	1 hr	7 hours
5	Laa an der Thaya/Hevlín	CZE - Valtice	45	guided tour Lu Tíree herb Garden Valtice	0	1 hr	6 hours
6	Valtice	SLK - Malacky	57	No program	N/A	N/A	5 hours
7	Malacky	SLK - Bratislava	67	last 25 km: Cycling with Iron-Curtain-Expert (german-	0		0 6 hours
8	Bratislava	--	Departure				

Status Quo of the Explorer Tour: Ready for booking

- The tour is fully organized (incl. price)
- The Explorer Tour has been prepared in terms of text and photo material so that it can be booked.
 - ☐ It has been published on the website of the responsible tour operator (<https://www.trail-angels.com/iron-curtain-trail-explorer-tour/>)
- 9 guests have now booked the Explorer Tour

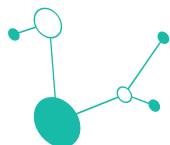
Still open steps:

- Despite the good booking situation, Trail Angels will send all relevant data (texts and photos) to the project partners for integration on their websites and other marketing channels.

3. Explorer Tour South

Project partners involved in the process:

- Trail Angels GmbH (Lead Workpackage)
- ISKRIVA (SI)
- Westpannon (HU)
- CROST (HU)
- KKZ (HR)



Date of the Explorer Tour: September 7 - 15, 2024

Responsible tour operator: Amazon of Europe Booking Center

Target group: normal paying guests as "test users"

Specification:

In several meetings the Explorer Tour South was specified as followed:

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

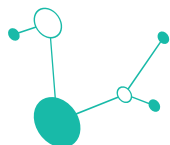
Specification

1. Length of program: 8 days, 7 overnights, 6 stages (from Saturday to Saturday)
2. Date: 7 to 14 September 2024
3. Group Size: min. 6 & max. 10 customers; 1 guide & 1 project partner (optional)
4. Included services: see later in the presentation
5. Tour Operator & point of contact: AoE Booking Center
6. Costs of guide & manpower of TO covered by flat rate of national project partners (no commission of TO)
7. Organization of tour & guide incl. pricing by AoE Booking Center with support of Gábor Benovics
8. Low carbon approach: Promotion/focus on arrival/departure by train/public transport

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Open topics

- Luggage service - yes or no?
 - Decision last meeting: depending on total costs
 - „Nice price“ has priority (for comparison: price tour Central 538 €)
→ Total estimated price calculated by Laura: 885 € (Murska Sobota - Villány)
- Workflow:
 - Agreement Workflow:
 - first calculation total price of whole tour
 - Based on this joint decision by all project partner (e-mail survey)



EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Open topics

Guide

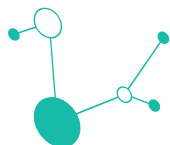
- English speaking guide Legal situation:
 - Legal situation per country:
 - Hungary (Gabor): no license necessary for bike guides, license as tour guide necessary for large groups on cultural trips
 - grey zone „cultural part of guiding“
 - Croatia (Vladimir): similar to Hungary
 - Slovenia: to be clarified
 - Legal situation in general:
 - AoE Booking Center is bound by the EU package travel directive
 - If there is an accident the insurance will keep itself harmless - the TO has to pay
 - The TO can keep itself harmless if the guide has is allowed to guide and has insurance
- In the end AoE Booking Center as official tour operator is responsible for the decision (CROST will help in organization)

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Decisions made so far

Included services of the ICT South Explorer Tour 2024:

- Overnight stays in Hotels or Guesthouses
 - Preferably bike-friendly family-run guesthouses/pensions
 - Alternatively *** hotels
 - Locked bike storage precondition
- Meals: Half board (breakfast & dinner)
 - If dinner not in hotel: max. 25 € p.p.; no beverages included)
 - Lunch package?
- Bike guide (german speaking)
- Supporting vehicle (incl. Luggage transfer)
 - Is a supporting vehicle (with luggage transfer) more expensive than only luggage transfer?
- One main sightseeing attraction/activity beside biking per day (entrance fees, external guides)
- Back transfer
- Expert for Iron Curtain?



EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Decisions made so far

Included services of the ICT South Explorer Tour 2024 joint decisions (part 1 of 3):

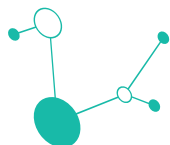
- Overnight stays in Hotels or Guesthouses
 - Preferably bike-friendly family-run guesthouses/pensions
 - Alternatively *** hotels
 - Locked bike storage precondition
→ confirmed
- Meals: Half board (breakfast & dinner)
 - If dinner not in hotel: max. 25 € p.p.; no beverages included)
 - Lunch package:
 - Decision: no lunch package (too complicated) - if possible self-paid lunch approx in the middle of each stage
 - AoE BC will check until 16 Feb the suitable restaurants/bakeries/café's per stage in detail (together with the local project partners).
 - If there are stages where no suitable restaurants is available other possibilities have to be discussed (Trail Angels - AoE BC). Possibilities: Shop in the evening before (either guide will buy for all or each guest for him-/herself)

EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Decisions made so far

Included services of the ICT South Explorer Tour 2024 joint decisions (part 2 of 3):

- One main sightseeing attraction/activity beside biking per day (entrance fees, external guides)
 - Organized by AoE BC, but regional partners should do the first step incl. asking for price to get cheaper prices (direct communication between AoE BC and regional partners)
 - All extra costs (entrance fee, extra guide if necessary) have to be included in the tour price
 - Attention: not all guides/experts at the attractions are able to speak english. Regional partners should check that (e.g. priest of church in Molve & employee in gallery in Hlebina) - if necessary another english-speaking local guide/expert has to be found. Note: the main guide is not able to speak slovenian & croatian so a translation by her is not possible.
 - Fixing of the attractions see itinerary/schedule later in the minutes



EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Decisions made so far

Included services of the ICT South Explorer Tour 2024 joint decisions (part 3 of 3):

- Back transfer
 - Total estimated price calculated by Laura: 500 € (Villány - Murska Sobota)
 - Decision: A back transfer is necessary because at the train between Villány and Pécs it is not possible to take bikes with. It has to be included in the total price.
- Expert for Iron Curtain?
 - Tibor is an expert for the history of iron curtain. It has to be checked if he has time to join the group for one day (only possible for the first stages)
 - Major Molinari is an expert for the Molnari Bunkers, Westpannon will check if he is available for a guided tour
 - In the other countries no expert is known
 - The main guide will be briefed in advance about the topic „iron curtain“

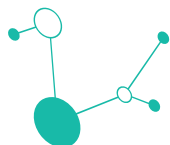
EXPLORER TOUR PILOT AREA SOUTH

Decisions made so far

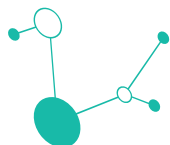
Excluded services of the ICT South Explorer Tour 2024:

- Costs of optional sightseeing attractions/activities additional to the officially communicated program (if relevant - see also „included services“)
- Bike rental
- Beverages
- Additional personal costs
- Travel insurances

As mentioned above, the classification of the stages within the Pilot Area South created as part of the project was used as the basis for the specification of the Explorer Tour:



Stage no.	Start	Stage destination	Link to stage	Length	Ascent	Overlap ICT
1	Szombately	Szentgotthárd	LINK	68 km	411 m	90%
2	Szentgotthárd	Óriszentpéter	LINK	45 km	304 m	90%
3	Óriszentpéter	Lendava	LINK	52 km	307 m	90%
4	Lendava	Letenye	LINK	30 km	29 m	100%
5	Letenye	Koprivnica	LINK	49 km	14 m	100%
6	Koprivnica	Durdevac	LINK	46 km	22 m	85%
7	Durdevac	Drávatamási	LINK	62 km	40 m	70%
8	Drávatamási	Szaporca	LINK	64 km	17 m	100%
9	Szaporca	Villány	LINK	38 km	97 m	100%
10	Villány	Mohács	LINK	43 km	77 m	100%



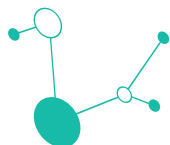
The following program (incl. additional program) was selected from the stages listed above:

DAY 1	Individual arrival to Szentgotthárd (preferably by train).	
7 SEPT	Meeting at 5 pm in Hotel Zsida Panzió or Andante	HUNGARY
SATURDAY	Dinner and short evening walk through Szentgotthárd	

	Bike ICT stage Szentgotthárd - Lendava (61 Km, 532 m ascent) (remarks: until Hodoš not on ICT - more direct route on small roads)	
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start from hotel along small roads to Apátistvánfalva Stop at Iron Curtain Museum Apátistvánfalva (guide only in hungarian language) 	HUNGARY
8 SEPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By bike via Dolenci to Hodoš where ICT route is joined 	SLOVENIA
SUNDAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-paid lunch in Gostilna Pri Lujzi, Dobrovnik Along ICT to Žitkovci Short sidestep to Friendship Memorial Park near Bödeháza Further along ICT to Lendava Accommodation: Hotel Cubis Dinner in Bella Venezia (100m from the hotel) 	

	Bike ICT stage Lendava - Letenye (47 km, 268 m ascent) (remarks: first part via AoE BT, second part via ICT)	
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start at 8:30 am from hotel via AoE BT to Lendava Vinarium Lookout Tower (Stop 1) Further via AoE BT to Lenti and Kerkatesánd Small sidestep to Lovászi Iron Curtain Museum and bunkers (External English speaking guide) (Stop 2, duration 2 hours - 10:30 to 12:30) 	SLOVENIA
9 SEPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-paid lunch in Kantin Gasztrókocsmá next to museum (12:30 - 13:30) Along AoE BT to Kerkaszentkirály, from here along ICT to Muraszemenye Short sidestep to Mura river (Stop 3) Along ICT to Letenye 	HUNGARY
MONDAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation: Radics Panzió Étterem és Pihenő Központ Dinner in the accommodation 	

DAY 4	Bike: ICT stage Letenye - Koprivnica (49 km + 20 km off route)	HUNGARY
10 SEPT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After breakfast biking along small roads to Molnári 	CROATIA
TUESDAY		



- **Guided tour through the bunkers of Molnári** (guide: Major of Molnári (stop 1)
- By bike back to Letenye
- Via ICT towards Koprivnica until Legrad
- Self-paid lunch in [Restoran & Pansion Fakin](#)
- Small sidestep to confluence Mura & Drava (stop 2)
- Via ICT towards Koprivnica
- Optional: small sidestep to Lake Šoderica (stop 3)
- Via ICT to Koprivnica
- Accommodation: Hotel Zlatan
- Dinner in Hotel Zlatan
- Optional in the evening (self-paid): guided city tour in Koprivnica

DAY 5
11 SEPT.
WED.

[Bike: ICT Stage Koprivnica - Durdevac \(63 km\)](#)

- Start from hotel via ICT to Hlebine
- **Guided tour “Galery Hlebine”** (stop 1)
- By bike via ICT to Molve
- Self-paid lunch in [Čingi Lingi Čarda](#)
- Church Molve as symbol of resistance (stop 2)
- By bike via ICT to Durdevac
- Accommodation: Hotel Picok
- Dinner in Hotel Picok
- Old town Durdevac before or after dinner

CROATIA

DAY 6
12 SEPT.
THURSDAY

[Bike: ICT Stage Durdevac - Drávatamási \(62 km minus segment on boat\)](#)

- By bike to Durdevac Sands/Visitor Center just outside of Durdevac (stop 1 max. 45 min)
- By bike via ICT and sidestep to Brodic
- **Boat tour from Brodic to Križnica - topic ecosystem** (with lunch on boat) (External guide from visitor center/tourist board for explanation ecosystem) (stop 2)
- By bike via ICT to Drávatamási
- Accommodation: [Erdődy Vendégház](#), Kastélyosdombó
- Dinner

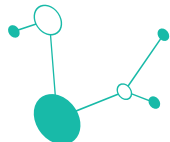
CROATIA
HUNGARY

DAY 7
13 SEPT
FRIDAY

[Bike: ICT stage Drávatamási - Szaporca \(64 km\)](#)

- Start from Hotel by bike via ICT to Revfalu
- Short stop at abandoned village Revfalu (same story as below) (stop 1)
- by bike via ICT to Drávasztara
- Short sidestep Drava view in Felsőszentmárton (stop 2)
- By bike via ICT to Szaporca
- Accommodation: Kolokán Hostel

HUNGARY



- Dinner in Kémes Halászcserda fish carda, a'la carte (limit 25 € w/o beverages)

DAY 8
14 SEPT
SATURDAY

- Bike: ICT stage Szaporca - Villány (38 km)
- After breakfast: **Local Ormansak house in Szaporca** (kind of guided tour about life of turkish invasion) (main guide is guide) (stop 1)
- By bike via ICT to Siklós
- **Castle of Siklos** (1h tour with our guide; entrance fee)
- Self-paid lunch in Siklós: [Két Sirály Étterem vagy a Centrum gasztro](#)
- By bike via ICT to Villány
- Wine tasting at Vylyan villany winery (as 7 km more of cycling it is important not to offer too much wine or to have the wine tasting in Villány)
- Accommodation: [Blum Winery](#)
- **Dinner either by the Blum or the Szende vinery.**

HUNGARY

DAY 9
15 SEPT
SUNDAY

- Transport back to Szentgotthárd after breakfast
- Individual departure

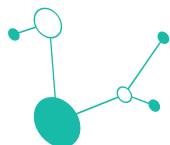
HUNGARY

Status Quo of the Explorer Tour South:

- The tour is fully developed and specified
- The Explorer Tour has been prepared from text and photo material.
- The Explorer Tour is currently being organized by the responsible tour operator (incl. price calculation)

Still open tasks:

- Finalization of organization and price calculation by responsible tour operator
- Integration of the Explorer Tour on www.trail-angels.com
- Sending of all relevant data (texts and photos) to the project partners for integration on their websites and other marketing channels.
- The Explorer Tour is created by the Trail Angels as an offer on the EuroVelo website.
- The promotion of the tour will be promoted by all project partners in coordination with WP 3 of the project in question.



4. Explorer Tour North

Project partners involved in the process:

- Trail Angels GmbH (Lead Workpackage)
- OETE (DE)
- City of Gdansk (PL)
- West Pomeranian Region (PL)

The Pilot Area North has somewhat different conditions than the other two Pilot Areas, especially in terms of size, tourist infrastructure and competition from other similar long-distance cycle routes. It was therefore decided not to organise any Explorer tours with paying guests as test subjects in 2024. Instead, the following tours are planned in order to develop a clear USP compared to competing products:

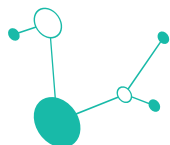
- Explorer Promotion Tour for influencers, bloggers and interested tour operators as test participants (Swinoujście - Gdansk)
- Green cycle tour along German part of the Pilot Area and West Pomeranian Region to explore the possibilities of offering eco-friendly cycle tourism (for project partners and cycling experts)

An Explorer Tour for paying guests will be developed for 2025 based on the feedback from the test subjects of the two tours.

Date of the Explorer Promotion Tour: September 14 - 20, 2024

Date of Green cycle tour: not yet fixed

Responsible tour operator "Explorer Promotion Tour": Tour operator to be defined on behalf of the Municipality of Gdansk



Specification:

In several meetings the Explorer Tour North was specified as followed:

SPECIFICATION SERVICES FOR ICTr EXPLORER TOUR NORTH

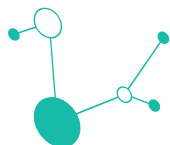
Included Services (part 1):

- + 7 overnight stays in various accommodations along the trail
 - o Selected mid-range hotels (** national categorisation) or guesthouses (double room)
 - o Price based on double rooms - surcharge for single room has to be announced separately
 - o Possibility of locked bike storage obligatory!
 - o Midclass hotels are enough (**), in between lovely simple family-run pensions are preferable (if possible ecofriendly)
- + Boarding: half-board
 - o Dinner either in the accommodation or closeby (not more than 3 course menu & no beverages included in the price)
 - o Please evaluate price for lunch package separately (if affordable we will include it in the total price)

SPECIFICATION SERVICES FOR ICTr EXPLORER TOUR NORTH

Included Services (part 2):

- + Guide:
 - o Guidance of the whole tour by guide who is allowed to guide in Germany & in Poland according to the laws
 - Language: English
 - o Temporary guides for the additional program (e.g. city tours, museum...)
 - Language: if possible german (otherwise English, but we have to know that for the offer)
- + Additional Program:
 - o All costs (e.g. entrances fees, extra guide) included in the total price



SPECIFICATION SERVICES FOR ICTr EXPLORER TOUR NORTH

Included Services (part 3):

- + Luggage transfer (depending on the price)
 - o Please evaluate price for luggage transfer separately (if affordable we will include it in the total price)
- + Interim shuttles
 - o Train (person & bike transport) from Slusk to Gdynia
 - o Additional shuttles discussed in tomorrow's meeting
- + The commission of the (external) Tour Operator (if chosen) paid by the project partners

IMPORTANT:

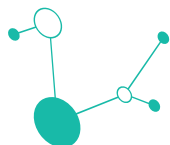
It must be guaranteed that the bicycles can be taken on the trains in question on the respective date (sending the bicycles in advance is not an option).

If this cannot be 100% guaranteed, the possibility of a back transfer to the starting point of the journey must be considered.

SPECIFICATION SERVICES FOR ICTr EXPLORER TOUR NORTH

Excluded services

- + Arrival to starting point
- + Departure from starting point
- + All personal expenses
- + Drinks
- + Personal travel insurance such as international health insurance (please send a copy) and possibly luggage insurance.
- + Additional costs in case of illness, bad weather, etc. are not included



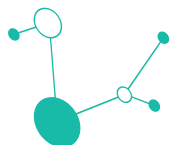
As mentioned above, the classification of the stages within the Pilot Area North created as part of the project was used as the basis for the specification of the Explorer Tour:



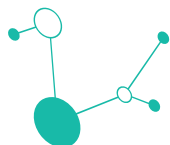
Stage no.	Start	Stage destination	Length	Ascent
1	Gdansk	Gdynia	25 km	39 m
2	Gdynia	Karwia	64 km	142 m
3	Karwia	Leba	59 km	145 m
4	Leba	Ustka	75 km	146 m
5	Ustka	Darlowo	47 km	70 m
6	Darlowo	Mielno	41 km	42 m
7	Mielno	Kolobrzeg	35 km	56 m
8	Kolobrzeg	Dziwnówek	60 km	44 m
9	Dziwnówek	Swinemünde	53 km	173 m
10	Swinemünde	Wolgast	44 km	68 m
11	Wolgast	Greifswald	54 km	52 m
12	Greifswald	Stralsund	39 km	7 m

The following program (incl. additional program) was selected from the stages listed above:

DAY 1	Arrival	GERMANY
14 SEPT	Dinner and evening walk through Swinoujsce	
<hr/>		
DAY 2	<u>Bike: ICT stage Swinoujsce - Poberow (60 km)</u>	POLAND (WEST POMERANIAN)
14 SEPT.	Program: Underground City east of Swinoujsce guided tour (MAIN PROGRAM; extra guide & entrance fee; appr. 2 hrs)	
http://podziemne-miasto.pl		



	Optional (just in case of interest): small V-3 museum 3km from the main route in Międzyzdroje: https://muzeumv3.pl Hotel & dinner in Poberow	
DAY 3 15 SEPT.	<u>Bike: ICT Stage Poberow - Ustronie Morskie (63 km)</u> Program: Military Museum Kolobrzeg guided tour (MAIN PROGRAM; extra guide & entrance fee; approx. 2 hours) http://www.muzeum.kolobrzeg.pl/pl/ Hotel & dinner in Ustronie Morskie	POLAND (WEST POMERANIAN)
DAY 4 16 SEPT.	Bike: ICT Stage Ustronie Morskie - Darlowo (63 km) Small additional stop: just prior to reaching Darłowo in II WW there was artillery test site for the biggest cannons https://andrzej-banach.eu/fortyfikacje/dora/ Program: Pomerian Dukes' Castle Darlowo guided tour (MAIN PROGRAM; extra guide & entrance fee) https://www.zamekdarlowo.pl/zamek.html Hotel & dinner in Darlowo	POLAND (WEST POMERANIAN)
DAY 5 17 SEPT FRIDAY	<u>Bike: ICT stage Darlowo - Ustka (47 km)</u> Optional: self-paid lunch at local restaurant on the way to eat hering visiting the Blucher Bunkers and Old Town guided tour (MAIN PROGRAM; extra guide & entrance fee; 1,5-2 h) Ustka shipyards - like the first place where workers went on strike in 1980. - visible from many points in Ustka so you can include information about it in your Ustka bike tour. hotel and dinner in Ustka (dinner: local food in a local restaurant)	POLAND (WEST POMERANIAN) POLAND (POMORSKIE)
DAY 6 18 SEPT	<u>Bicycle trip from Ustka to Slupsk 18-25 km - about 2-2.5 hours</u> Train Slupsk - Gdynia (start 10:30) + 1,45 h trip (12:20 in Gdynia) Gdynia: Monument to the victims of December '70 - open, free of charge 1 pm: Emigration Museum guided tour - MAIN PROGRAM; approx. 2-2,5 h. price 16-19 PLN/person 3 pm: Bike ICT Stage from Gdynia to Gdansk (25 km)	POLAND (POMORSKIE)



	Dinner & overnight in Gdansk	
	Evening tour of Gdansk on a bike with a guide (part on bike, part on foot)	
	Sightseeing Day Gdansk:	
	Access to the European Solidarnosci Center and the Three Crosses Square + sightseeing / cycling through the shipyard areas where Solidarity lived. Sightseeing (guided tour; extra guide & entrance fee)	
DAY 7 19 SEPT	Westerplatte access and sightseeing about 4 hours (there is a bus that can take the bikes through the tunnel under the "Dead Vistula" river, this will speed up the ride by about 30 min.	POLAND (POMORSKIE)
	Wisloujscie Fortress - a historic, renovated building that is on the route, without sightseeing	
	Supper e.g. at "Browar PG4" with presentation of traditional Gdansk beer recipe	
	Overnight in Gdansk	
DAY 8 20 SEPT	Check out from the hotel	
	Train Gdansk - Berlin 9:30 - 15:30	

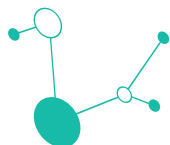
Program "Green Cycle Tour" not yet fixed. The development of this trip just started after decision End of February 2024.

Status Quo of the Explorer Promotion Tour:

- The tour is fully developed and specified
- Preparation of text and photo material is not necessarily due to the target group

Open Tasks:

- Finalization of organization and price calculation: a responsible tour operator is commissioned by the city of Gdansk
- Invitation of potential participants (influencers, bloggers, potential tour operators) by the project partners
- Organization of the trip by the selected tour operator
- After the Explorer Tour:



- ☐ Obtaining and evaluating feedback from participants
- ☐ On the basis of this: Planning of an Explorer Tour for normal paying guests in 2025, organized by a regional tour operator.