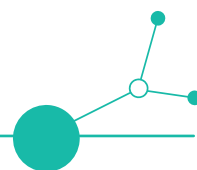


D3.1.2 Mentoring and qualification plan for improving competencies of SMEs & other target groups along ICTr

(ICTr Mentoring plan)



Version 1
07 2024





Contents

1. Background and Objectives.....	2
1.1. General WP3 Objective	2
1.2. Activity 3.1 Enhancing Competencies and Co-Designing Stewardship Along the ICTr	2
1.3. Mentoring and Qualification Plan for Improving Competencies of SMEs & Other Target Groups Along ICTr (ICTr Mentoring plan)	2
1.4. Mentoring Objective.....	2
1.5. Target Group.....	2
1.6. Target Numbers	3
2. Mentoring and Training Modules.....	4
2.1. Module 1: How Can My Business Profit from the Iron Curtain Trail Cyclists: International Business Opportunities Along the ICTr.....	4
2.2 Module 2: Digital and Marketing Literacy for Tourism SMEs	6
2.2.1 Module 2A: Digital and Marketing Literacy for Tourism SMEs	6
2.2.2 Module 2B: Advanced digital and marketing knowledge in tourism	8
2.2.3 Module 2C: Opportunities of artificial intelligence for tourism SMEs	9
2.3 Module 3: Quality of Services and ICTr Heritage to Attract Cycling Tourists	10
2.4 Module 4: Network of EuroVelo Routes and its Opportunities	11
2.5 Module 5: Hospitality and Customer Care in Combination with the Case Study - Practical Training: Visit of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail by Each Partner Organisation and their SMEs.....	13
2.6 Module 6: Tailor-made Mentoring with Selected Service Providers.....	15
3. Planned Budget	16
4. Ensuring Compliance with State-aid Rules.....	16
5. Timeline.....	17
6. Next Steps for Regional Partners	18



1. Background and Objectives

1.1. General WP3 Objective

To ensure uptake and sustainability of developed ICTr solutions and their multiplier effects through improved innovation skills and competencies of the ICTr innovation network and to ensure transferability to other similar products and areas.

1.2. Activity 3.1 Enhancing Competencies and Co-Designing Stewardship Along the ICTr

The aim of this action is to co-design the stewardship along the ICTr. With stewardship, we mean a process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to **maintain the cultural, environmental, and economic integrity of the ICTr**. To achieve this, we will design multiple trainings to develop the needed innovation competencies. Further, we will develop a mentoring program for ICTr service providers to achieve long-term competence upraise in the area. Mentoring will target SMEs with marketing and digital skills, providing them with direct external support to create their presence in social media, new promotion channels and use of digital solutions.

Training on sustainability criteria, quality of services, customer care, marketing and digitisation will be implemented for all ecosystem members.

1.3. Mentoring and Qualification Plan for Improving Competencies of SMEs & Other Target Groups Along ICTr (ICTr Mentoring plan)

Mentoring and qualification plan for the skills upgrade based on the gap analysis that will pay attention to regional and sectorial specifics. The plan will define the know-how, timing and organisational support needed for target groups to successfully participate in the ICTr business ecosystem.

1.4. Mentoring Objective

The mentoring objective is to improve the innovation and tourism skills of SMEs and other stakeholders along the ICTr so that they become an active part of the ICTr participatory business model.

1.5. Target Group

The primary target groups are tourism SMEs/ service providers along the ICTr:

- Accommodations: especially smaller hotels, bed & breakfast - accommodations that also serve at least breakfast as it is very important for cyclists.
- Services and experiences:
 - o Bike rentals
 - o Guided tours and experiences related to the Iron Curtain Heritage
 - o Experiences related to nature and culture etc.
- Tour operators offering cycling tours that will help us implement the guided tours in the future



The secondary target group are tourism business support organisations (BSO):

- Organisations that work on local, regional and international levels (tourism centres and boards, destination management organisations, chambers of commerce, regions, municipalities, public services...)
- Technology parks and incubators that offer direct support to startups and smaller organisations
- Industry-specific support organisations, such as associations of hotels, tour operators and similar.

1.6. Target Numbers

The target is that we reach **40 SMEs per country** (30 new compared to previous activities), in total 320 SMEs. However, we are also targeting BSOs and higher education and research organisations. They are highly invited to participate in the mentoring as well.

We recommend that all identified service providers and BSOs are invited to all trainings. However, each SME may select the trainings according to their needs, it is not necessary that a participating SME joins all the trainings.

Total target numbers in the application form:

SMEs: **400** organizations: accommodations, mobility services, tourism agencies, experience providers tourism guides...

Business support organizations: **36 organisations**: national, regional and local tourism boards, chambers of Commerce...

Higher education and research organizations: **50** organizations

Public institutions: **40**: museums, galleries, visitor centres...



2. Mentoring and Training Modules

2.1. Module 1: How Can My Business Profit from the Iron Curtain Trail Cyclists: International Business Opportunities Along the ICTr

Title	How Can My Business Profit from the Iron Curtain Trail Cyclists: International Business Opportunities Along the ICTr
Objective	- To present the ICTr as a business opportunity for SMEs and BSOs
Topics	1. Introduction: how to turn global tourism challenges into a business opportunity (Iskriva) a. Future of tourism: global vs regional perspective b. How can the ICTr cycling trail become a response to the trends c. Opportunity to become part of an international bookable cycling trail 2. How to better understand the trends to improve the daily business (UP FTS) a. How the travellers' and cyclists' habits change b. Trends in rural tourism c. IT challenges & opportunities for SMEs 3. Presentation of ICTr (Westpannon) a. ICTr as EuroVelo 13 - one of the longest cycling routes in Europe, part of EuroVelo network b. Historical perspective c. Attractions along the route as remembrance monuments 4. How to join the ICTr bookable products (Iskriva) a. International market opportunity b. Requirements to join c. Good practice Model: Amazon of Europe Bike Trail tourism products 5. Q&A session and conclusions
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Iskriva



Cooperating partners	UP FTS, Westpannon
Materials	Training material (slides) prepared by Iskriva. Partners translate them into their languages.
Language	English Partners translate materials into Hungarian, Croatian, German, Polish, Czech, Slovenian and Slovakian
Online or onsite	Online
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Duration	2h
Timing	Between October and November 2024
Estimated budget	NA
State Aid relevance	No



2.2 Module 2: Digital and Marketing Literacy for Tourism SMEs

Module 2 focuses on improving the digital and marketing skills of tourism SMEs. It consists of 3 parts:

- A. Basic digital and marketing literacy for tourism SMEs
- B. Advanced digital skills for experienced SMEs
- C. Joint online module on Opportunities to use artificial intelligence in tourism business.

Each of the submodules is presented below.

2.2.1 Module 2A: Digital and Marketing Literacy for Tourism SMEs

Title	Basic Digital and Marketing Literacy for Tourism SMEs - adjusted by each partner regarding the selected topic
Objective	- To improve basic digital skills of tourism SMEs to bridge the foundational skill gaps
Topics	- Tailored training that addresses the specific digital needs of the tourism sector: a. Digital marketing (social media, emails, influencers...), b. Online booking systems, c. Customer relationship management, d. Setting up an effective website, e. Micro branding, f. Sales in the digital age. - Cultural sensitivity in digital communication: training on cultural nuances and effective digital communication strategies across different cultural contexts.
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Each partner separately
Materials	Materials to be prepared by partner/external experts.
Language	Partners implement the training in their language.
Online or onsite	Onsite
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Duration	Minimum 2h
Timing	Between November 2024 and March 2025



Estimated budget	1.500 € per partner (Module 2: Part A and B) if an external expert is needed
State Aid relevance	Yes



2.2.2 Module 2B: Advanced digital and marketing knowledge in tourism

Title	Advanced Digital and Marketing Knowledge in Tourism - adjusted by each partner regarding the selected topic
Objective	- Training programs focused on advanced digital skills to bridge the foundational skill gaps
Topics	- Emerging technology adoption: Courses on how to utilize and integrate emerging technologies like virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) in tourism services. - E-commerce and social media strategy: Workshops on leveraging e-commerce platforms and developing effective social media strategies to boost the visibility, exposure and sales of tourism business. - Data analysis and management: Training in data handling, analysis, and using data insights for strategic decision-making in tourism.
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Materials	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Language	Partners implement the training in their language.
Online or onsite	Onsite
Type of obligation	Optional
Duration	2h
Timing	Between November 2024 and March 2025
Estimated budget	1.500 € per partner (Module 2: Part A and B)
State Aid relevance	Yes



2.2.3 Module 2C: Opportunities of artificial intelligence for tourism SMEs

Title	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence for Tourism SMEs
Objective	- To increase the skills of tourism SMEs on opportunities to simplify the business process by using AI tools
Topics	- Introduction: what is AI and what is not - Possibilities of using AI in tourism - Good practices of using AI in cycling tourism - How to utilize AI in daily business to be more efficient - What are the key digital skills needed to utilize AI - Q&A
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	UP FTS
Cooperating partners	Iskriva
Materials	Prepared by UP FTS
Language	English
Online or onsite	Online
Type of obligation	Optional (will be available to all SMEs and other participants)
Duration	2h
Timing	Between November and December 2024
Estimated budget	NA
State Aid relevance	No



2.3 Module 3: Quality of Services and ICTr Heritage to Attract Cycling Tourists

Title	Quality of Services and ICTr Heritage to Attract Cycling Tourists - adjusted by each partner regarding the selected topic
Objective	- To inform the SMEs about bike tourism certifications, sustainability certifications and programmes - To present the importance of service quality and opportunities - To inform the SMEs about the location-specific relevant ICTr sites in the region for the promotion of these sites so that they can share this information with the guests
Topics	- Presentation of the relevant national or international bike-friendly certification schemes or sustainable tourism standards - Presentation of quality of services for cycling tourists based on their needs - Presentation of ICTr heritage in the country: relevant sites presenting the ICTr legacy - to inform SMEs and promote these sites to them - Presentation should include: - o List of points of interest - o Short description and pictures
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Cooperating partners	- OETE can provide support to partners if needed (experiences in the ServiceQ system in Germany, which is taken over by Chechia and Slovakia). - ECF can provide support to partners if needed on the cycling-friendly services schemes.
Materials	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Language	All languages
Online or onsite	Onsite
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Duration	Minimum 2h
Timing	Between November 2024 and March 2025
Estimated budget	1.500 € per partner
State Aid relevance	Yes



2.4 Module 4: Network of EuroVelo Routes and its Opportunities

Title	Network of EuroVelo Routes and its Opportunities
Objective	- Introduction to the work of ECF and EuroVelo (branding and promotion, benefits of cooperation) - To present cycling tourism and the needs of cycling tourists - To present the cycling-friendly services scheme
Topics	- Introduce EuroVelo, with a focus on EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail - Cycling tourism and how it is an opportunity for service providers - o Increased interest in cycling tourism ▪ Share some insights from the EuroVelo Data Hub: usage monitoring report, digital statistics report, development status report ▪ New pillar of the EuroVelo Data Hub: the State of cycling tour operators industry (2024) by ECF-EuroVelo, ATTA and Cycle Summit: show key geographical and operational trends while also illuminating challenges businesses face in operating and selling cycling tours. ▪ Economic impact studies and other studies available at a national level: European Parliament study of 2012, ADFC Bicycle Travel Analysis, other national economic impact studies - Who are the cycling tourists - o behaviours, trends, spending, etc. - Tips to better cater for the needs of cycling tourists - o Cycling-friendly approach (behaviour) towards all kinds of cyclists - inclusivity and diversity - o Develop services ▪ Safe place to store the bike for the night or for a visit ▪ Possibility to dry and wash clothes and equipment ▪ One-night stays ▪ Provide nutritious meals ▪ Free access to drinking water and toilets



	▪ Free information about regional cycling routes and offers ▪ Repair kit (incl. manual) and/or cooperation with professional repair service providers ▪ One-way bike rental ▪ etc ○ Joining a cycling-friendly services scheme ○ Use EuroVelo branding ▪ Give pointers on how to use EuroVelo branding, especially on digital promotion ○ Promote services, offers, ... ○ Connect with other stakeholders and exchange knowledge - Q&A
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	ECF
Cooperating partners	Iskriva
Materials	ECF will prepare the materials. Partners will translate in their languages.
Language	English Partners translate into Hungarian, Croatian, German, Polish, Czech, Slovenian and Slovakian
Online or onsite	Online
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Duration	2h
Timing	In January 2025
Estimated budget	NA
State Aid relevance	No



2.5 Module 5: Hospitality and Customer Care in Combination with the Case Study - Practical Training: Visit of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail by Each Partner Organisation and their SMEs

Title	Hospitality and Customer Care in Combination with the Case Study - Practical Training: Visit of the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail
Objective	- To finish the mentoring programme with a practical on-site experience which is most informative for SMEs and tourism boards - To experience the participatory business model in practice - o Joint business model development - o Improving hospitality and customer care - o Opportunities to cooperate with the AoE Booking Center - Visiting service providers along the AoE Bike Trail and networking with SMEs for future collaboration and exchange of ideas.
Topics	- Presentation of the AoE destination business model and development - Networking with SMEs and participants of the practical training
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Iskriva
Materials	NA
Language	English
Online or onsite	Onsite
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Number of participants	The practical study tour training will be implemented as a small group tour for each partner, the planned number is 10 participants: - 6 representatives of SMEs - 2 representatives of BSOs - 2 representatives of project partners. This composition of participants can change depending on the situation in each country.
Duration	3-4 days



Provisional study visit programme	The study visit takes 4 days (3 nights) to ensure optimal experience. The programme might be adapted according to the group size and availability of attractions and services. Day 1: Welcome and presentation of the AoE Bike Trail business model Arrival to Lendava, meeting with AoE Booking Center representative and bike-friendly accommodation, Vinarium tower, dinner, overnight in Lendava Day 2: Cycling along Mura from Lendava to Donji Kraljevec (approx. 34 km) Visit of the visitor centre Between Two Waters - cooperation with nature and cultural experiences along the route Meeting with representatives of the Medjmurje Tourism Board and service providers along the route Overnight in Donji Kraljevec Day 3: Cycling to the Mura-Drava confluence (Donji Kraljevec - Legrad, approx. 30 km) Visit of the Mura-Drava confluence Meeting with representatives of Koprivnica-Križevci County and service providers along the route Boat tour on Drava (conditions permitting) Overnight in Legrad Day 4: Breakfast and farewell Optional additional weekend programme: cycling further along the Drava to Hlebina, Koprivnica, Križevac, Osijek (prepared based on individual request)
Timing	Between March and April 2025
Estimated budget	Up to 5.000 € (approx. 500 € per participant for the programme, excluding arrival and departure travel costs)
State Aid relevance	Yes



2.6 Module 6: Tailor-made Mentoring with Selected Service Providers

Title	Tailor-made Mentoring with Selected Service Providers
Objective	- To motivate SMEs to participate in the mentoring programme and join the ICTr cycling product - Each partner works directly with most motivated SMEs in the area, especially with accommodation and tour operators along the route - The target is that 3 SMEs per daily stage join the ICTr international cycling product.
Topics	- Presentation of the ICTr-CE project and the opportunities (the whole process of identifying SMEs, motivating them to join the ICTr business opportunity, joining the training, supporting them in the areas where they are weak) - Focus on the presentation of the ICTr heritage, maintaining the cultural, environmental, and economic integrity of the ICTr - history and specific ICTr-related sites in our area, cooperation with specific experiences and guides, how to present, sell, communicate this heritage to all generations (a different approach to elderly and young people)
Target group	- Tourism SMEs: tour operators, accommodations, bike rentals etc. - Business support organizations: tourism boards, DMOs etc. - Attractions, experiences, museums etc.
Partner in charge	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Materials	Each partner separately (regional partners)
Language	Partners implement the training in their language
Online or onsite	Onsite directly with SMEs, as well as calls and on-line meetings.
Type of obligation	Obligatory
Duration	Depending on number of involved SMEs and selected topics
Timing	Between October 2024 and May 2025
Estimated budget	Up to 2.000 € (if needed)
State Aid relevance	Yes (if relevant)



3. Planned Budget

The estimated planned budget per regional partner for the implementation is the following:

Module	Responsible	Activity by partners	Planned costs
1. General module about the ICTr	Iskriva	Translation	NA
2. Basic and advanced digital and marketing literacy	All regional partners	Organisation and implementation, External trainers	3.000 €
3. Sustainability criteria and quality of services	All regional partners	Organisation and implementation, External trainers	1.500 €
4. Network of EuroVelo routes and its opportunities	ECF	Translation	NA
5. Hospitality and customer care with a case study visit	Iskriva and regional partners	Travel for 10 participants	Up to 5.000 €
6. Mentoring	All regional partners	Based on individual needs, mostly staff of partners	Up to 2.000 €
		Total	Maximum 11.500 €

4. Ensuring Compliance with State-aid Rules

The mentoring activities must be compliant with the State-aid Rules. Detailed instructions will be provided to partners, based on the feedback by the state aid expert of the Interreg Central Programme.



5. Timeline

Timeline for implementation of the training and mentoring activities:

- Detailed plan prepared by each partner/country: 30. 9. 2024
- Implementation of modules: 1. 10. 2024 - 31. 5. 2025
- Reporting on the implemented trainings: continuously after each implemented module, the latest until 31. 8. 2025. Iskriva will prepare a template for reporting the mentoring activities.
- Preparation of the final report D3.1.4 - Report on implemented mentoring and qualification activities by Iskriva: 30. 11. 2025



6. Next Steps for Regional Partners

Task 1: Identify all relevant business support organisations along the route: national, regional, and local tourism boards, tourism business associations, tour operators' associations etc. that will link partners to SMEs

Task 2: Get the information about relevant SMEs along the route: tour operators, accommodations, attractions, bike rentals etc.

Task 3: Prepare the regional/national plan for mentoring and a list of invited organizations

Task 4: Invite all relevant SMEs and associations to the mentoring activities

Task 5: Implement the mentoring activities

Task 6: Report the mentoring activities