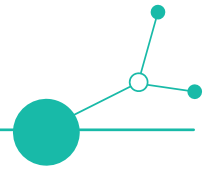


Deliverable 1.5.1: Defining the ICTr Alliance - sustainable ICTr organizational framework



D1.5.1

European Cyclists' Federation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context of EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail

For almost half a century, Europe was divided into East and West by the “Iron Curtain”, a border stretching from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. Where there once stood a wall, which represented separation, there is now a bike trail that connects and allows free crossing of borders. The EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail (ICT) is a European cycle route which invites people to retrace and experience this important part of the continent’s history. It is a long-distance cycling route that spans over 10.000 km and passes through 20 countries. Along the Iron Curtain Trail, cyclists can encounter a wide range of attractions, including border crossings, museums, monuments, and remnants of the Iron Curtain such as watchtowers and barbed wire fences. The trail leads through scenic countryside, national parks, and urban areas, from vineyards in the south of the Czech Republic and northern Austria to the mountainous borders of Bulgaria and Greece. From the bustling ports of the Baltic states to the raw beauty of Lapland, which gives cyclists a unique view of Europe’s past and present and thus represents an attractive cycling route for all tourists.

1.2. Context of ICTr-CE

In the area of the Iron Curtain Trail the ICTr-CE project of the Interreg Central Europe programme (Innovative participatory sustainable business model for cycling along the Iron Curtain Trail) is being implemented, promoting the development of sustainable tourism along the cycling route. The project covers a 3,000-kilometer stretch of the route through Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. Throughout the duration of the project in the years 2024 and 2025, there are various training opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises active in the field of tourism (accommodations, restaurants, tour operators, attractions, bike rentals, transfers, and experiences), fostering co-creation, networking and the development of creative and innovative tourism offers. The aim of the project is to bring together service providers in the area under the umbrella brand EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail, to encourage and support their further development and increase their prominence on the global market.

By embracing the opportunities offered by the ICTr-CE project, tourism providers along the route can expand their reach and have the possibility of extending the tourist season, which ensures sustainable economic growth and vitality. This enables small and medium-sized enterprises along the Iron Curtain Trail to actively contribute to the European Union’s Green Transition initiative by promoting sustainable tourism practices, thereby reducing negative environmental impacts and highlighting their positive social and ecological contributions. National, regional and local tourism organisations and other business support organisations such as chambers of commerce and tourism are also involved in developing a common international tourism offer and supporting small businesses along the route. In this way, the project supports small and medium-sized enterprises, fosters local and international partnerships and strengthens the knowledge and digital skills of businesses. In the long term, the joint promotional efforts of businesses and support organisations along the Iron Curtain Trail will increase the visibility and attractiveness of the cycle route and the tourism offer along the route.

1.3. Introducing the ICTr Alliance and connection with O3.1

The ICTr Alliance has for aim to ensure a governance system for organisations to keep working together and enabling the development of EuroVelo 13. The present D1.5.1 deliverable defines the organisational



structure, membership system, list of activities and responsibilities and financing mechanism for the undertaken activities.

D1.5.1 and part one of O3.1 have many similarities in terms of their content. The main difference is that D1.5.1 solely describes the organisational framework of the ICTr Alliance - EuroVelo 13 Partnership and serve as the partnership contract signed by the ICTr Alliance partners. While O3.1, Sustainability and Transferability Plan (STP) is more descriptive and extensive than the present D.1.5.1 ICTr Alliance. It describes the EuroVelo 13 Partnership, how we came to create it, agreed on the activities, its expected impact and how it contributes to sustaining ICTr-CE activities.

2. Definition of the need: distinguishing ICTr Alliance and EuroVelo 13 Partnership

The further development of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail as an attractive tourism destination and product but also the sustainability of the innovative solutions developed by the project ICTr-CE requires a commitment and governance framework. The experience of ECF brought the pre-existing concept of EuroVelo Route Partnerships, formerly called Long-Term Management Agreements (LTMA), and initially developed within the Interreg North-West-Europe DEMARRAGE project along EuroVelo 15 - Rhine Cycle Route. This EuroVelo 15 Partnership is still ongoing in 2025 and enables joint activities to transnationally promote the route. Partners and financial contributors to the EuroVelo 15 Partnerships are regional authorities, regional tourism boards or NGOs representing regions, provinces or countries.

Initial discussions on the sustainability and transferability of the innovative for the Iron Curtain Trail product solutions (developed in the framework of ICTr-CE project) highlighted the need for transnational coordination and quality management of the route. It also stressed that beneficiaries of the organisational framework would be destinations and local authorities and that they would be the only potential partners able to invest in transnational coordination and quality management, as well as promotion, with the aim to encourage a sustainable business model able to generate self-sustained revenues in the future.

The diversity of project partners of ICTr-CE, mainly NGOs, without the required financial capacity to invest in the long-term organisational framework of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail, but strong supporters of the concept and with valuable expertise in establishing innovative solutions, also raised the need to better define the ICTr Alliance.

The conclusion of an extensive consultation process described further in this document was to distinguish a declarative **ICTr Alliance**, stressing the broad support for establishing a sustainable governance framework for EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail and signed by all project partners and associated strategic partners of ICTr-CE, and an operational and functional framework, **EuroVelo 13 Partnership**, to ensure the transnational coordination of the product and destination involving partners with national contributions, mainly regional authorities or regional tourism boards, with the support from National EuroVelo Coordination Centres (the main governance body for EuroVelo coordination at a national level). The partners of the ICTr-CE project believe that this is the most reliable and only suitable way of cooperation in order to achieve the maintenance of the project results and long-term cooperation along EuroVelo 13.



3. Process of defining a sustainable organisational framework for EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail

Multiple consultations have been conducted to raise awareness of the need for a sustainable organisational framework for EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail, to better understand the needs described above, and to identify the best suitable partners to join the initiative, both within and outside the ICTr-CE partners.

Different steps:

- Regular updates and discussions during ICTr-CE project meetings in-person
- Regular bilateral online meetings with WP1 leader and ICTr-CE lead-partner
- Creation of a contact list fed by the partners
- Online meetings with ICTr-CE partners, National EuroVelo Coordination Centres, contacts provided by partners, Cultural Routes contacts:
 - o 27/06/2024: EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe online event
 - o 10/04/2025: online meetings - South and Central Pilot Area online meetings “EuroVelo 13 Partnership - opportunity to make Iron Curtain Trail grow”.
 - o 29/07/2025: document - “EuroVelo 13 Partnership in brief”
 - o 03/09/2025: online meeting - EuroVelo 13 Partnership meeting
 - o 13/11/2025: online meeting - EuroVelo 13 Partnership meeting follow-up

4. Short description of 01.3 ICTr Alliance Declaration

The Declaration in Support of the Establishment of the ICTr Alliance formalises a collective commitment among ICTr-CE project partners and associate partners to advance the EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail as a model for innovative and sustainable cycling tourism in Central Europe. The Declaration recognises the importance of cross-border cooperation to promote tourism in lagging and peripheral areas, attract cyclists, and raise awareness of the route’s social, economic, and environmental benefits. It acknowledges the achievements of the ICTr-CE project, which established specialised booking centres, an impact measurement system, and a valorisation program to mitigate negative tourism effects, ensuring that EuroVelo 13 remains a sustainable and culturally significant route under the Council of Europe’s Cultural Routes program. It supports the establishment of a sustainable governance framework via a dedicated EuroVelo 13 Partnership and encourage national partners to join the initiative for a successful quality and product management, necessary for the lasting results of the innovative solutions and their further developments.

The actions outlined in the declaration are essential to ensure the long-term governance, continuity and strategic development of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail beyond the implementation period of the ICTr-CE project. Given the transnational character and thematic complexity of the route, sustained cooperation among partners is a prerequisite for maintaining the outputs of the ICTr-CE project over time. The declaration therefore provides a structured framework for continued collaboration, enabling partners to remain actively engaged and institutionally connected after the formal project closure without any strict organizational or financial contribution.

Maintaining regular interaction among partners through mutual invitations to regional, national and international events plays a key role in preserving trust-based relationships and ensuring the visibility of the



route within broader policy, tourism and mobility contexts. Such exchanges not only reinforce existing networks but also create new opportunities for peer learning, alignment of regional development priorities and the identification of synergies with related initiatives. Joint participation in future projects under different European, national or regional funding programmes further contributes to institutional sustainability, allowing partners to build on the results of ICTr-CE, upscale successful approaches and adapt them to new thematic or territorial contexts.

A core element of long-term governance is the continued joint promotion and dissemination of the tools, methodologies and outcomes developed during the project. The communication activities to be done by ICTr-CE project partners and associated strategic partners help ensure that the Impact Measurement System, sustainability assessment approaches and innovative cycling tourism products remain visible, accessible and relevant to a wider range of stakeholders, including booking centres, tourism service providers, public authorities and civil society organisations.

Equally important is the establishment of regular exchange of information, feedback and joint reflection about EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail related topics within the partnership. The sharing of news, methodological updates, practical solutions and regulatory developments enables adaptive governance and supports informed decision-making in the regions along EuroVelo 13. This continuous flow of information helps partners respond effectively to evolving policy frameworks, technological advancements and changing market conditions, while also ensuring alignment with European objectives related to sustainable tourism, climate neutrality and cultural heritage preservation.

By fostering a culture of collaboration, transparency and mutual support, the declaration underpins a governance model that goes beyond project-based cooperation. It contributes to the resilience and responsiveness of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership, ensuring that it remains capable of managing complexity, addressing emerging challenges and leveraging new opportunities. In this way, the ICTr-CE Alliance serves not only as a commitment to continued cooperation, but also as a strategic instrument for safeguarding the long-term relevance, quality and sustainability of EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail as a flagship European cycle route.

All project partners and associate partners of the project ICTr-CE have been invited to sign the Declaration and embrace its commitments and especially promoting the establishment of a EuroVelo 13 Partnership.

These signatures were collected in December 2025 and January 2026 before they were presented in the ICTr-CE Alliance Declaration handover ceremony during the final project meeting on 4 February 2026 in Murska Sobota, Slovenia. As the signatures were all collected in advance, the initially envisioned signing ceremony instead turned into a handover ceremony of the signed contracts. During the ceremony, representatives of the project partners and associated strategic partners formally presented and exchanged the signed copies of the ICTr-CE Alliance Declaration, symbolising their shared commitment to the alliance. The event provided an opportunity to reaffirm the project's achievements, highlight the importance of long-term cooperation, and outline how partners will continue working together to build on the results of the ICTr-CE project through future collaboration and joint initiatives. Furthermore, it presented a welcome opportunity to discuss the launch of the EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership with the present representatives of the countries participating in the partnership.

5. EuroVelo 13 Partnership

5.1. General description

The EuroVelo 13 Partnership defines rights, roles, and responsibilities of signatory partners and serves as a framework to facilitate further development of the EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail through cooperation on a transnational level. It aims to sustain the activities of the ICTr-CE Interreg Project (2023-2026).



The Partnership Agreement has 3 priorities in achieving its ambition:

Priority no. 1: Increase the international visibility and promotion of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail to potential users

Priority no. 2: Support the improvement of quality of offers on EuroVelo 13

Priority no. 3: Manage efficiently the EuroVelo 13 Partnership

Partners' contributions are stated in this Partnership Agreement annex.

5.2. Organisational structure

By the Partnership Agreement on EuroVelo 13, the Secretariat and the project partners shall define the procedural framework for the work to be carried out and the relations that shall govern them within the transnational partnership set up in order to sustain the positive results of the aforementioned project and to realise the ambition and priorities in the 2026-2029 period for EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail.

The roles of the Secretariat, the Project Partners and the Organisational Structure of the partnership are detailed in articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Partnership Agreement, copy-pasted below.

Article 4: Secretariat

4.1 The Secretariat is responsible for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the transnational Partnership Agreement.

4.2 The Secretariat should appoint a project coordinator who has operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall project.

4.3 The Secretariat shall notify the project partners of any factors that may adversely affect implementation of the project activities and/or financial plan.

4.4 The Secretariat is responsible for the preparation of a detailed yearly work and financial plan and a report setting out the tasks to be undertaken as part of the Partnership Agreement and the role of project partners in their implementation. The budget shall be denominated in euros. The annex (referred to in article 2) serves as basis for all plans and reports.

4.5. The Secretariat appoints representatives to the Steering Committee (without voting rights) to take part in its meetings and to organise the Steering Committee meetings.

4.6. The Secretariat is also responsible for any other tasks agreed with the project partners.

Article 5: Project Partners

5.1 Project partners are the organisations that are part of the agreement.

5.2 The project partners will be responsible for 1) providing the match funding every year 2) providing all necessary information and data to the Secretariat 3) notifying the Secretariat of any factors that may adversely affect the implementation of the Partnership Agreement in accordance with the work plan 4) appointing a representative to the Steering Committee to participate in its meetings 5) supporting national or regional developments of EuroVelo 13 in any forms possible to support the relevance of transnational activities.

5.3. In cases of legal succession (e.g. where the project partner changes its legal form), the project partner is obliged to transfer all duties under this contract to the legal successor.

5.4. Accession of additional partners to the EuroVelo 13 Partnership after March 1st 2026 is possible, by signing a dedicated bilateral Partnership Agreement, with equal rights and responsibilities within the Partnership.



Article 6: Organisational Structure of the Partnership

6.1 The Steering Committee will be responsible for monitoring and steering the implementation of the Partnership Agreement. The Steering Committee will be chaired by ECF and includes all signatories of a EuroVelo 13 Partnership Agreement. The Steering Committee shall meet online on *at least one occasion a year*.

6.2 The Steering Committee will have the authority to delegate specific tasks or responsibilities to potential sub-committees as it shall deem appropriate to establish.

6.3. The Steering Committee resolutions are passed by simple majority of the votes present or represented. The Steering Committee shall only deliberate validly if at least 50% of the partners are present or represented or have voted by email. The Steering Committee has powers that are expressly recognised by the present Agreement. Reserved to its competence are, in particular: 1) acceptance of the work and financial report from the previous/ongoing year, 2) acceptance of the detailed activity and budget plan for next year, 3) decision about Partnership's ambition and priorities.

6.4. The agenda together with supporting documentation and the detailed program of sessions will be sent by email at least **six days** before Steering Committee. The steering Committee meeting should take place **before 20 December** of the ongoing year.

6.5. The minutes of the Steering Committee meeting will be prepared and circulated by the Secretariat to all of the project partners within **one month** of the meeting.

6.6. All partners need to agree to increase or decrease the partners' financial contribution, to change the Secretariat or to significantly change ambition, priorities or main tasks of the Partnership Agreement.

5.3. Membership

Project partners sign the EuroVelo 13 Partnership Agreement and commit to provide the match funding every year as stated in 5.2 of the Agreement.

The Membership fees have been calculated per country based on a 500€ fixed fee and a variable fee based on the length of the route in the respective countries relative to the total route length intended to be covered by the partnership. The estimated budget has been established considering a set ambition and action plan. To calculate the fees, the total budget was then divided proportionally based on route length among the countries involved in the initial discussions to join the partnership. These are Czechia, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia. Fees are therefore subject to change depending on the makeup of the partnership.

The initial proposal has been established to define membership fees, but articles in the Partnership Agreement regulate how additional resources could be raised and used:

5.4. Accession of additional partners to the EuroVelo 13 Partnership after March 1st 2026 is possible, by signing a dedicated bilateral Partnership Agreement, with equal rights and responsibilities within the Partnership.

8.3. The annual budget of the Partnership Agreement should match the revenue collected through the partners' contributions.

8.4. Additional income should only be used for more advanced project activities.

8.5. One or more partners can agree voluntarily to increase their contribution in order to implement additional tasks. These activities should be in line with the common standards and strategies and do not replace the most important Partnership Agreement tasks (covered by the obligatory contribution). This voluntary contribution will not be obligatory for all partners (unless all of them agree).

5.4. Responsibilities

Project partners responsibilities are listed in article 5: the project partners will be responsible for



- 1) providing the match funding every year
- 2) providing all necessary information and data to the Secretariat
- 3) notifying the Secretariat of any factors that may adversely affect the implementation of the Partnership Agreement in accordance with the work plan
- 4) appointing a representative to the Steering Committee to participate in its meetings
- 5) supporting national or regional developments of EuroVelo 13 in any forms possible to support the relevance of transnational activities.

The Secretariat responsibilities are listed in article 4:

4.1 The Secretariat is responsible for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the transnational Partnership Agreement.

4.2 The Secretariat should appoint a project coordinator who has operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall project.

4.3 The Secretariat shall notify the project partners of any factors that may adversely affect implementation of the project activities and/or financial plan.

4.4 The Secretariat is responsible for the preparation of a detailed yearly work and financial plan and a report setting out the tasks to be undertaken as part of the Partnership Agreement and the role of project partners in their implementation. The budget shall be denominated in euros. The annex (referred to in article 2) serves as basis for all plans and reports.

4.5. The Secretariat appoints representatives to the Steering Committee (without voting rights) to take part in its meetings and to organise the Steering Committee meetings.

4.6. The Secretariat is also responsible for any other tasks agreed with the project partners.

5.5. Tasks

The tasks of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership 2026-2029 are presented in the annex of the Agreement as part of the Multiannual Action Plan:

EuroVelo 13 Partnership 2026-2029

Ambition: Develop the international visibility of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail as a flagship product in Europe and the regions involved

	2026-2027		2027-2028		2028-2029		3 years	
	HR	EC	HR	EC	HR	EC	HR	EC
#1 Priority: Increase the international visibility and promotion of EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail to potential users								
<i>1.1 Create engaging content to generate more traffic on EuroVelo 13 webportal</i>	3,150 €		3,150 €		3,150 €		9,450 €	
<i>1.2 Create and advertise EuroVelo 13 content on social media channels to raise awareness and bring traffic to the webportal</i>	2,925 €		2,925 €		2,925 €		8,775 €	
<i>1.3 Improve the structure, analytics and effectiveness of EuroVelo.com to attract more visitors on EuroVelo 13 webportal (SEO)</i>	2,025 €	1,775 €	2,025 €	1,775 €	2,025 €	1,775 €	6,075 €	5,325 €
<i>1.4 Management and recertification process of EuroVelo 13 as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe</i>	1,800 €		1,800 €		1,800 €		5,400 €	
#2 Priority: Support the improvement of quality of offers on EuroVelo 13								
<i>2.1 Collect knowledge and support national partners to increase continuous cycling infrastructure and signage</i>	900 €		900 €		900 €		2,700 €	
<i>2.2 Manage the Booking Centres licensing</i>	3,150 €		3,150 €		3,150 €		9,450 €	
#3 Priority: Manage efficiently the EuroVelo 13 Partnership								
<i>3.1 Coordinate the partnership, organise meetings, produce annual report</i>	3,600 €		3,600 €		3,600 €		10,800 €	
<i>3.2 Admin coordination of the partnership</i>	900 €		900 €		900 €		2,700 €	
SUB-TOTAL	18,450 €	1,775 €	18,450 €	1,775 €	18,450 €	1,775 €	55,350 €	5,325 €
TOTAL FOR 3 YEARS	20,225 €		20,225 €		20,225 €		60,675 €	
TOTAL PER YEAR							20,225 €	

5.6. Financing mechanism

The main financing mechanism is based on project partners' annual fees but the business model of ICTr-CE booking centres and other innovative solutions (e.g Good Impact Programme) could provide additional financing contributions to the further development of EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail in the future.

6. Conclusion

The work around a sustainable organisation framework for sustained transnational coordination and developments along EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail and anticipating the continuity of innovation ICTr products after the closure of the project led to establish an ICTr Alliance Declaration open to signature of Project Partners and Associated Partners and closely connected to a EuroVelo 13 Partnership with a specific framework on organisational structure, membership, responsibilities, tasks and financing mechanism. The Declaration shall be signed by all project partners and associated partners by January 2026, whereas the EuroVelo 13 Partnership is expected to be launched in March 2026 for an initial three-year period.



7. Annexes

7.1. Text of the ICTr Alliance Declaration

Declaration in support of establishment of the ICTr Alliance

The partners mentioned above:

Recognise

Firstly,

the need for cooperation along EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail to further innovative and sustainable tourism, generate awareness of its impacts and benefits, attract cyclists to lagging areas, and strengthen tourism in peripheral areas of Central Europe.

Secondly,

that the ICTr-CE project has put in place measures to promote and develop cycling tourism along EuroVelo 13 within the 8 counties and 3,000 km crossed by the project's territory. This has been achieved by creating an innovative cycling tourism product offered through specialised booking centres, an impact measurement system which examines environmental footprint as well as social and economic factors, and a good impact valorisation programme which offsets negative impacts caused by tourism on EuroVelo 13.

Thirdly,

that the EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership is based on an already tried and tested framework for establishing a form of governance along long-distance cycle routes that can ensure the sustainability of ICTr-CE project outputs, develops and promotes EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail further, and maintains and strengthens EuroVelo 13 as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

The EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership is intended to be led by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) as coordinator and secretariat, overseeing and implementing the activities defined by the multiannual action plan and the yearly action plans. The partnership agreement will have an initial term of validity of 3 years from the date of signature.

Members of the partnership are intended to provide inputs on objectives and actions of the partnership, approve action plans and the partnership agreement, and actively participate in partnership tasks where required.

The consortium is intended to be made up of national and regional partners, constituting ministries, regional authorities, destination management organisations, National EuroVelo Coordination Centres, and other appropriate bodies.

The partnership is intended to be financed by the payments of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership consortium members. Present Declaration does not constitute a payment obligation for the project consortium members



(PPs and ASPs), the payment fees are agreed with each EuroVelo 13 Partnership consortium member in separate agreements.

Commit

Firstly,

to continue promoting and developing EuroVelo 13 - Iron Curtain Trail in an appropriate and sustainable manner. In order to achieve this, the partners will work together with the aim of establishing new projects related to EuroVelo 13, with a particular focus on Interreg Danube, Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE, Interreg Baltic Sea Region, and geographically applicable Interreg Cross-border programmes. They will furthermore aim to participate in cycling-related events such as Velo-city and the EuroVelo & Cycling Tourism Conference, will disseminate the results of the projects at all appropriate regional, national, and transnational levels, will promote EuroVelo 13 and the related cycling tourism products, will maintain open lines of communication among all project partners and aim to participate jointly in relevant events, and jointly submit feedback and input ahead of the annual EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership steering committee meeting.

Secondly,

to continue the work of the ICTr-CE project in maintaining the innovative tourism product, the impact measurement programme, and good impact valorisation programme, in line with organisational capacities. In addition to this, the partners will aim to focus on developing cycling-related tourism products, with a particular focus on carbon neutral travel, maintaining EuroVelo 13 as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, connecting EuroVelo 13 to European Greenway projects, and the broader promotion and marketing of cycling on EuroVelo 13.

Thirdly,

to support the creation of a EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership and to assist with this in whatever way feasible.

Fourthly,

to encourage and facilitate the membership of relevant national or regional bodies in the EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership.

The partners mentioned on the first page hereby sign this agreement.



7.2. Text of the EuroVelo 13 Route Partnership Agreements

Article 1: The Objectives of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership

This Partnership Agreement defines rights, roles, and responsibilities of partners and serves as a framework to facilitate further development of the EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail through cooperation on a transnational level. Historically, its aim is to sustain the activities of the ICTr-CE Interreg Project (2023-2026).

The Partnership Agreement has 3 priorities in achieving its ambition:

Priority no. 1: Increase the international visibility and promotion of EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail to potential users

Priority no. 2: Support the improvement of quality of offers on EuroVelo 13

Priority no. 3: Manage efficiently the EuroVelo 13 Partnership

Partners' contributions are stated in this Partnership Agreement annex.

Article 2: Subject of the Partnership Agreement

By this Partnership Agreement, the Secretariat and the project partners shall define the procedural framework for the work to be carried out and the relations that shall govern them within the transnational partnership set up in order to sustain the positive results of the aforementioned project and to realise the ambition and priorities in the 2026-2029 period for EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail.

The annex comprises:

- The overview description of the indicative multiannual Action plan and financial plan for the transnational partnership.

The annex is an integral part of this Partnership Agreement.

Article 3: Duration of the Agreement

3.1 This Partnership Agreement shall take effect on 1st March 2026. It shall remain in force until 28th February 2029. The partners can agree on another three-year extension by way of an addendum to the current agreement.

Article 4: Secretariat

4.1 The Secretariat is responsible for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the transnational Partnership Agreement.

4.2 The Secretariat should appoint a project coordinator who has operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall project.

4.3 The Secretariat shall notify the project partners of any factors that may adversely affect implementation of the project activities and/or financial plan.



4.4 The Secretariat is responsible for the preparation of a detailed yearly work and financial plan and a report setting out the tasks to be undertaken as part of the Partnership Agreement and the role of project partners in their implementation. The budget shall be denominated in euros. The annex (referred to in article 2) serves as basis for all plans and reports.

4.5. The Secretariat appoints representatives to the Steering Committee (without voting rights) to take part in its meetings and to organise the Steering Committee meetings.

4.6. The Secretariat is also responsible for any other tasks agreed with the project partners.

Article 5: Project Partners

5.1 Project partners are the organisations that are part of the agreement.

5.2 The project partners will be responsible for 1) providing the match funding every year 2) providing all necessary information and data to the Secretariat 3) notifying the Secretariat of any factors that may adversely affect the implementation of the Partnership Agreement in accordance with the work plan 4) appointing a representative to the Steering Committee to participate in its meetings 5) supporting national or regional developments of EuroVelo 13 in any forms possible to support the relevance of transnational activities.

5.3. In cases of legal succession (e.g. where the project partner changes its legal form), the project partner is obliged to transfer all duties under this contract to the legal successor.

5.4. Accession of additional partners to the EuroVelo 13 Partnership after March 1st 2026 is possible, by signing a dedicated bilateral Partnership Agreement, with equal rights and responsibilities within the Partnership.

Article 6: Organisational Structure of the Partnership

6.1 The Steering Committee will be responsible for monitoring and steering the implementation of the Partnership Agreement. The Steering Committee will be chaired by ECF and includes all signatories of a EuroVelo 13 Partnership Agreement. The Steering Committee shall meet online on *at least one occasion a year*.

6.2 The Steering Committee will have the authority to delegate specific tasks or responsibilities to potential sub-committees as it shall deem appropriate to establish.

6.3. The Steering Committee resolutions are passed by simple majority of the votes present or represented. The Steering Committee shall only deliberate validly if at least 50% of the partners are present or represented or have voted by email. The Steering Committee has powers that are expressly recognised by the present Agreement. Reserved to its competence are, in particular: 1) acceptance of the work and financial report from the previous/ongoing year, 2) acceptance of the detailed activity and budget plan for next year, 3) decision about Partnership's ambition and priorities.

6.4. The agenda together with supporting documentation and the detailed program of sessions will be sent by email at least **six days** before Steering Committee. The steering Committee meeting should take place **before 20 December** of the ongoing year.

6.5. The minutes of the Steering Committee meeting will be prepared and circulated by the Secretariat to all of the project partners within **one month** of the meeting.

6.6. All partners need to agree to increase or decrease the partners' financial contribution, to change the Secretariat or to significantly change ambition, priorities or main tasks of the Partnership Agreement.

Article 7: Cooperation with third parties



7.1 In case of cooperation with third parties, including subcontractors, delegation of part of the activities or of outsourcing, the Secretariat shall remain solely responsible to the project partners concerning compliance with its obligations as set out in this Partnership Agreement. The project partners shall be informed by the Secretariat about the subject of any contract concluded with a third party.

7.2 No project partner or the secretariat shall have the right to transfer its rights and obligations under this Partnership Agreement without the prior consent of the other project partners.

7.3 Cooperation with third parties in the frame of this agreement, including subcontractors, shall be undertaken in accordance with the procedures set out in EU public procurement directives as well as with the Secretariat's own policies and procedures.

Article 8: Financial regulations

8.1 The eligibility of expenditure will be determined based on the work and financial plan and national laws. Eligible expenditure must be: 1) directly related to the subject matter of the Partnership Agreement 2) necessary for the Partnership Agreement management and reasonable and consistent with the principles of operational efficiency and economy; 3) actually incurred and are identifiable and verifiable in the accounting and taxation records of the Secretariat.

8.2. The match funding shall be paid into the account of the Secretariat **by 30th June** every year in case their official, approved budget contains the necessary contribution to the Partnership Agreement.

8.3. The annual budget of the Partnership Agreement should match the revenue collected through the partners' contributions.

8.4. Additional income should only be used for more advanced project activities.

8.5. One or more partners can agree voluntarily to increase their contribution in order to implement additional tasks. These activities should be in line with the common standards and strategies and do not replace the most important Partnership Agreement tasks (covered by the obligatory contribution). This voluntary contribution will not be obligatory for all partners (unless all of them agree).

Article 9: Reporting, planning, accounting

9.1. The Secretariat is responsible for the yearly reports to the project partners. The yearly reports together with the yearly plans should be developed and sent to the project partners by **31st May** every year. The project partners can give feedback until **15 June**.

9.2. The Secretariat must keep and file all accounting documents and other documents for a period of three years from the date of the affected year.

9.3. The Secretariat is responsible for the project's overall accounts, to be distinguished from its own accounts.

Article 10: Communication, dissemination and Intellectual Property Rights

10.1. The Secretariat and the project partners shall ensure that all products developed within the framework of the project are, subject to the provisions of national laws regarding intellectual property, kept free of all rights.

10.2. The result of the joint activities covered by the agreement, no matter whether they are disseminated free of charge or commercially, are the joint property of the project partners.



10.3. Although the nature of the implementation of this project is public, it has been agreed that part of the information exchanged in the context of its implementation between the project partners themselves or with Secretariat can be confidential. Only documents and other elements explicitly provided with the statement “confidential” shall be regarded as such.

Article 11: Modifications, Withdrawals and Disputes

11.1 Any modification to the present Partnership Agreement shall form the subject of an additional clause to this contract, which shall be approved by all the project partners.

11.2 The Secretariat and the project partners agree not to withdraw from the Partnership Agreement unless there are clear and unavoidable reasons for it. If this were nonetheless to occur, the Secretariat shall adjust the financial and work plans to ensure a balanced budget.

11.3 In case of any disputes among themselves, the project partners and Secretariat commit to working towards an amicable settlement. Disputes will be referred to the Steering Committee. If efforts to achieve an amicable settlement should fail, the project partners are obliged to seek an out-of-court arbitration procedure.

Article 12: Non-fulfilment of Obligations or Delay

In cases where the non-fulfilment of a project partner's or the Secretariat's obligations has financial consequences for the funding of the Partnership Agreement, the project partners or the Secretariat may demand compensation to cover the sum involved. Non-fulfilment could mean not paying the contribution in case of the project partners or not implementing the action plan in case of the Secretariat.

Article 13: Working Language

The working language of this Partnership shall be *English (language of the Partnership Agreement)*. In case of translation of this document into another language, the English language version shall be the binding one.

Article 14: Legislation

This Partnership Agreement is governed by Belgian Law, being the law of the country of the Secretariat. Written in *4 digital* copies.



7.3. Pictures from the ICTr Alliance Declaration Handover Ceremony



ICTr-CE Project Partners and Associated Strategic Partners pose with the signed ICTr Alliance Declarations.



The festive cake celebrating the signing of the Alliance Declaration and the end of the project.