



A. Long article:

INSPIRING CYCLING HOLIDAYS CROSSING EUROPE ALONG THE IRON CURTAIN TRAIL – EUROVELO 13

New Business Cooperation Supported by The Interreg Central Europe Project ICTr-CE

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 Iron Curtain Trail (ICTr), also known as the EuroVelo 13, 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 route, 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.

Rich cultural and natural heritage

The Iron Curtain Trail promotes sustainability, environmental awareness, and cross-border cooperation, as well as the preservation of cultural, historical, and ecological values. It has been certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2019 where you can visit 14 UNESCO World Heritage Sites along the route or in its immediate vicinity. In the Czech Republic, the cycle trail passes through the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, a former private park of the Liechtenstein family. In addition to protected natural and cultural areas (Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape, Curonian spit, Pirin National Park, etc.), the route's UNESCO attractions also include old towns (Riga, Lübeck) and religious sites (Early Christian Necropolis of Sopianae, Selim Mosque, Rila Monastery, etc.). What is more, the Iron Curtain Trail extends along the Green Belt, representing an initiative of the European Union to protect natural heritage and areas such as forests, moors, mountains and river valleys. The Green Belt is also a habitat for many endangered species of flora and fauna. You can cycle along it, but you must be respectful and careful, as it is home to animals such as bears and lynxes, among others.

New opportunities for SMEs

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 ICTr (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 Cycle Route will increase the visibility and attractiveness of the cycle route and the tourism offer along the route.



B. Short article:

INSPIRING CYCLING HOLIDAYS CROSSING EUROPE ALONG THE IRON CURTAIN TRAIL – EUROVELO 13

New Business Cooperation Supported by The Interreg Central Europe Project ICTr-CE

Iron Curtain Trail (ICTr) - EuroVelo 13 - is a long-distance cycling trail that follows the path of the former Iron Curtain. It is one of the longest cycling trails in Europe and one of the most recognised brands for cyclists. Along the route, cyclists 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 passes through scenic countryside, national parks, and urban areas, providing cyclists with a unique perspective on Europe's past and present. Besides offering a rich tapestry of cultural and natural wonders to explore, the trail promotes sustainable travel and mobility practices, as well as fostering awareness of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the journeys, ultimately contributing to a more responsible and enriching tourism experience.

In the area of the ICTr, the Interreg Central Europe programme project Innovative participatory sustainable business model for cycling along the Iron Curtain Trail (ICTr-CE) 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 8 involved countries: Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland.

- The ICTr-CE project contributes to sustainable business development by:
- Creating and promoting cycling vacation packages targeted at cyclists looking for unique cycling holidays.
- Connecting tourism service providers (accommodations, restaurants, tour operators, attractions, bike rentals, transfers, and experiences) along the ICTr under the joint umbrella brand Iron Curtain Trail to enable their marketing across Europe.
- Improving local and international partnerships by fostering collaboration among the SMEs, national, regional and local tourism boards, and other business support organizations.
- Offering various training opportunities for tourism SMEs in the years 2024 and 2025, enhancing their knowledge and digital skills, fostering co-creation, networking and new tourism offer development.
- Utilizing a strong partnership with the European Cycling Federation that provides support to over one million cyclists from all over Europe in achieving its goals.



Through participation in project activities, SMEs can extend their reach and profitability by creating a compelling online presence to showcase their offerings to a global audience and have the potential for prolonged tourist seasons, ensuring sustained economic growth and vitality. Moreover, SMEs along the Iron Curtain Trail can actively contribute to the EU's green transition agenda by championing sustainable tourism practices, thereby reducing the negative environmental impact of travel while accentuating its positive societal and ecological contributions.



C. The shortest version:

Iron Curtain Trail (EuroVelo 13) is a long-distance cycling route that follows the path of the former Iron Curtain, spanning across Europe and offering cyclists a journey through history, culture, and nature. Along the route, cyclists encounter various attractions, including historic border crossings, museums, and remnants of the Iron Curtain, all set against the backdrop of scenic landscapes and urban areas. The trail also serves as a platform for promoting sustainable travel and raising awareness of its environmental, economic, and social impacts.

The ICTr-CE project, part of the Interreg Central Europe programme, is focused on developing sustainable tourism along a 3,000-kilometer section of this trail, which passes through eight countries: Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland.

The project aims to:

- Create and promote unique cycling vacation packages.
- Unite tourism service providers (accommodations, restaurants, attractions, etc.) along ICTr under the Iron Curtain Trail brand for better marketing across Europe.
- Strengthen local and international partnerships by fostering collaboration among SMEs, tourism boards, and other business support organizations.
- Provide training to tourism SMEs to enhance their digital skills and foster co-creation, networking and new tourism offer development.

By engaging in the ICTr-CE project, SMEs along the trail can increase their visibility, extend the tourist season, and actively contribute to sustainable tourism practices such as reducing the negative environmental impact of travel while accentuating its positive societal and ecological contributions, aligning with the EU's green transition goals.