

D.1.2.3 Concept of a Sustainable Cross-Border Cycling Destination Management Model

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1. Introduction and Purpose of the Document

The Innovative Cycling Destination Management Model was developed for the Slovenian–Hungarian border region with the aim of providing a common, sustainable, and practically applicable framework for the development and long-term effective management of cycling tourism in the area.

Previous initiatives – particularly the IronCurtainCycling and Amazon of Europe Bike Trail projects – highlighted that the successful operation of cross-border cycling trails and thematic products is not solely a matter of infrastructure development, maintenance, and upkeep, but also requires coordination, cooperation, and management. Behind a destination that appears as a unified experience to visitors, there are typically different institutions, diverse stakeholders, and varying capacities, the alignment of which requires a deliberate and strategic approach.

The ICDM Project, funded under the Interreg VI-A Slovenia–Hungary Programme, was launched in response to this challenge with the objective of developing an innovative, cooperation-based destination management model that:

- takes into account the specific characteristics of cross-border operations and builds on the involvement of relevant stakeholders;
- is aligned with existing trails and initiatives;
- and can address the management needs of a new thematic cycling product – a trail based on the theme of spirituality.

This document is neither a strategy nor a regulatory instrument, but rather an operational framework that defines:

- the role of destination management within the ICDM Project;
- the levels and types of tasks involved;
- cooperation among stakeholders;
- and the possible ways of applying the model developed during the project.

During the preparation of this document, the project partners placed strong emphasis on ensuring that the model would not remain a theoretical concept, but would become a system applicable in practice. To achieve this, the destination management model is based on the results of workshops, professional consultations, and discussions on the jointly developed distribution of tasks and responsibilities carried out within the framework of the ICDM Project. The close cooperation among partners, together with the active involvement of participating municipalities, professional organisations, and service providers, ensured that the model responds to the real needs and characteristics of the region, while considering the individual objectives and opportunities of the stakeholders.

The purpose of this document is to present the structure and operation of the cross-border destination management model in a transparent and well-structured manner, while also creating a foundation for its continuation beyond the project period and for its adaptation to other themes or regions.

2. The Role and Objectives of Destination Management in the ICDM Project

2.1. What Do We Mean by Destination Management?¹

Destination management refers to the conscious, coordinated, and long-term management of the tourism offer of a specific destination area – such as a municipality or a region. Its objective is to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainable operation of the given area, while ensuring that the economic, social, and environmental benefits generated by tourism are realised. Destination management is based on the cooperation of local stakeholders and includes strategic planning, the development of tourism products and experiences, joint brand management, and the strengthening of coordination among stakeholders.

At the core of the destination management model lies the above-mentioned cooperation, meaning the collaboration of municipalities, professional organisations, service providers, civil society actors, and other relevant stakeholders around common goals. Within this framework, management is responsible for strengthening relationships among stakeholders, ensuring the flow of information, and continuously improving and maintaining the quality of the tourism offer. A fundamental element of this approach is long-term thinking, which, alongside short-term results, also considers the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainability.

2.2. Why is a cross-border cycling destination special?

In the case of cross-border cycling destinations, such as the Slovenian-Hungarian border region, the role of destination management is of particular importance, as the trails and services that visitors experience as a unified whole are backed by different institutional, legal, and organizational frameworks. Despite national and regional differences, cyclists generally expect continuity in the trails, consistent information, and uniform quality of services.

A characteristic feature and strength of cycling tourism is that the experience is linked not to a single location, but to a chain of trails and regions. Consequently, the evaluation of the destination cannot be separated from the condition of the existing infrastructure, the accessibility and quality of related services, digital and physical navigation options,

¹ Source: [https://www.kisdunamente.hu/mi-is-az-a-tdm-/](https://www.kisdunamente.hu/mi-is-az-a-tdm/)

and thematic content. In a cross-border environment, all of this can only be ensured if the activities of stakeholders at different territorial levels are coordinated.

Another feature of cross-border cycling destinations is that they often connect less frequented, peripheral areas. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge due to the differing capacities and resources, but it also presents an opportunity, as through destination management, lesser-known local values, services, and communities can be integrated into the tourism offer. The region's characteristics, such as the proximity of rivers and the preserved, highly diverse flora and fauna due to the former Iron Curtain, are of particular value in sustainable, nature-based tourism.

2.3. The goal of the ICDM model

The main goal of the destination management model developed within the ICDM project is to provide a common, transparent, and applicable operational framework for cycling tourism initiatives that have been implemented or are to be implemented in the Slovenian-Hungarian border region. **The key feature of the model is that it does not aim to create a new organization, but instead seeks to connect the activities of existing stakeholders through clear principles and tasks, as well as their distribution, for the purpose of long-term, sustainable, and conscious cycling development.**

Another goal of the model is **to define the tasks and roles, particularly through the distinction between joint and coordinated activities** – a detailed presentation of this will be provided in Chapter 4. This allows stakeholders involved in cross-border cooperation to clearly see their own responsibilities while ensuring a unified appearance and operation. The approach helps reduce redundancies and promotes the more efficient use of existing resources.

An additional objective is to establish a foundation for long-term (co)operation. To achieve this, the model is based on workshops, professional consultations, and joint planning processes carried out during the project and takes into account the actual capacities and operational conditions of the participating regions. The goal is to create a flexible framework that remains applicable after the project concludes and is capable of responding to future development directions, new thematic elements, and further collaborations.

2.4. Cycling trails affected by the model

The destination management model is built upon existing or developing cycling trails. The region features several trails with different backgrounds, themes, and development levels, yet they all operate within the same cross-border area.

The model integrates the operation and development of these trails into a coordinated framework, ensuring that a unified and easily understandable offer is created for visitors.

To achieve this, it is important to briefly present the thematic cycling trails that the model directly builds upon.

Below, we provide a brief overview of the affected trails.

- The Amazon of Europe cycling trail (Figure 1) follows the Mura, Drava, and Danube rivers and is split into two branches. The northern trail is 550 km long, while the southern section extends for 700 km, offering numerous attractions and experiences along the rivers. The two main trails are divided into daily sections. The northern trail has 11 sections, while the southern trail consists of 16, making a total of 27 sections. The starting point of the trail is located in Mureck, Austria (near Graz), and the endpoint is in Mohács, Hungary (near Pécs).



Figure 1: Trail alignment of the AoE Bike Trail ²

- The EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail (Figure 2) follows the path of the former Iron Curtain. This cycling trail, which stretches across Europe for approximately 9,950 km, also passes through the Slovenian-Hungarian border region. The trail connects border towns and natural landmarks. Due to the former border closure, many areas in the region have preserved their natural state, offering significant appeal for cycling and eco-tourism today. Along the EV13 trail, the SI-HU region

² Source: <https://podravinaprigorjebike.com/en/amazon-of-europe-bike-trail-route/>

boasts both historical and natural values, while the trail also integrates local service providers into an international network. The tourism promotion and experience-based communication of the trail is supported by the Danube Cycling Storyportal, a digital platform showcasing related local stories, sights, and services.

Figure 2: Trail alignment of EV13 in the Slovenian-Hungarian border region³

³ Source: <https://en.eurovelo.com/ev13/slovenia>

The trail passes through Vas and Zala counties, as well as the Pomurje and Podravje regions.

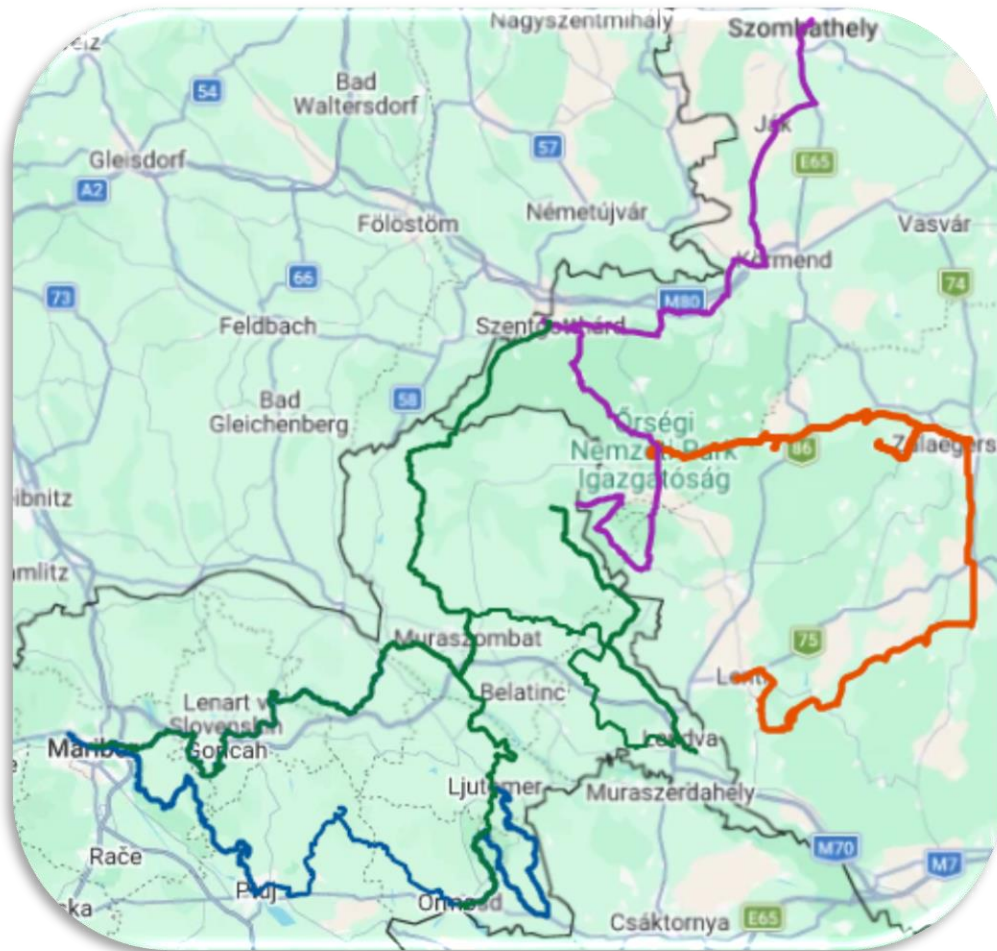


Figure 3: Trail alignment of the Aura Bike Trail ⁴

The differing character and development levels of the three trails justify the approach of the ICDM destination management model, which simultaneously provides a common operational framework while allowing for the consideration of the unique characteristics of each trail.

⁴ Source: Own edit

3. The Principles and Operational Logic of the ICDM Destination Management Model

The developed model defines a conceptual and operational framework that serves as a reference for the development and management of cross-border cycling destinations. This chapter presents the principles and operational levels that define the nature of the model and the framework for its application.

3.1. Principles

The foundation of the model is based on a collaboration-driven approach. A cross-border cycling destination can only be successfully developed and managed if the involved stakeholders participate in the process. Cooperation does not mean occasional consultations, but rather a continuous operation in which stakeholders contribute to the shared development and maintenance of the destination by building on each other's activities.

The operation of the model is not based on hierarchical relationships, but on partnerships, where each participant takes part according to their role. Stakeholders have different tasks, competencies, and resources, which complement each other to achieve the common goals. This approach promotes the flow of information, the sharing of experiences and best practices, and the more efficient use of existing capacities across the destination.

The functional perspective is also important, meaning that the operation should not be carried out within institutional frameworks, but rather interpreted according to specific tasks and the methods of their implementation. The focus is on how each activity is carried out at what level and in what form of cooperation, rather than on the formal role of a particular organization. This approach allows the model to flexibly adapt to different institutional environments and operational practices.

A key consideration during the model's development was ensuring long-term sustainability and applicability. To achieve this, the ICDM destination management model is based on existing organizations, proven practices, and available resources, and does not require the creation of new resources. This creates an opportunity for gradual development and ensures that the operation can continue after the project's conclusion, adapting to the current capacities and needs.

3.2. Levels of the Model

The destination management model can be interpreted at several interrelated operational/territorial levels. Together, these levels ensure the unified appearance and operation of the cross-border cycling destination, while also allowing flexible adaptation to local specificities.

At the **cross-border destination level**, the principles and frameworks that apply to the entire Slovenian-Hungarian border region as a cycling destination are defined. This is the level at which the unified approach, the common direction, and the foundations for cooperation are established, ensuring operation based on a shared perspective.

The **trail and thematic level** bring together the operation related to individual cycling trails and thematic products. This level ensures that the existing cycling trails, as well as the spirituality-based thematic trail developed within the ICDM project, operate in harmony with one another while preserving their own character and content elements.

The **local implementation level** forms the basis of the model's practical operation. This is where activities directly related to infrastructure, services, local communities, and events are carried out. Operation at this level is coordinated, but not centrally managed; rather, it is based on the active involvement of local stakeholders.

Together, the principles and operational levels define the character of the ICDM destination management model and create the framework on which the specific division of tasks and roles presented in the following chapters is based.

The figure below illustrates the interrelated operational levels of the ICDM destination management model, as well as the main tasks and areas of responsibility associated with each level.



Figure 4: The operational structure of the destination management model

4. System of joint and coordinated tasks

One of the fundamental elements of the model is the separation of tasks. Based on the experience gained from previous projects, as well as the workshops and professional consultations carried out within the ICDM project, it has become clear that not all tasks require the same level of joint action for the operation of a cross-border cycling destination. For some activities, a unified approach is essential, while in other areas, preserving local specificities and applying a more loosely coordinated, flexible implementation is a prerequisite for effective operation.

Accordingly, the ICDM model classifies destination management tasks into two types: **joint tasks** and **coordinated tasks**.

The purpose of this distinction is not merely to classify tasks, but to ensure that each activity is implemented at the most appropriate level from the perspective of cross-border cooperation.

Joint tasks are activities for which a unified approach is essential. They directly influence the image, perception, and quality of the destination as a whole; therefore, their implementation can only be envisaged within common principles and frameworks. Joint tasks ensure that the cross-border cycling destination appears to visitors as a unified experience, regardless of regional or national specificities.

Joint tasks include, among others, the branding and management of the destination and the related trails; the joint definition, consistent interpretation, and application of quality expectations; the definition of the thematic cycling product — in this case, the spirituality-based trail — in terms of the values, experience, and content it conveys; the development of a common narrative and content framework; and the unified definition of digital presence.

The tasks listed above require a joint approach; however, their implementation does not necessarily imply centralized execution, but rather cooperation based on commonly agreed frameworks.

Coordinated tasks, by contrast, are activities that are typically implemented at local or regional level, but require consultation and alignment with the common principles to function effectively. In the case of these tasks, joint implementation would not necessarily be appropriate or efficient; however, the coordination of information and experience is essential. This approach allows local stakeholders to retain their room for manoeuvre while ensuring that their activities fit into the operation of the destination as a whole.

Coordinated tasks at local and regional level may include, for example, the maintenance and continuous monitoring of trail infrastructure; the development of local services and the service provider network; the organization of, or connection to, local and regional

events; the regular updating of information; and the implementation of training and capacity-building activities.

Coordinated tasks allow local stakeholders to respond independently to the needs of their own area or to international tourism trends, while ensuring that their activities remain aligned with the overall operation of the cross-border destination.

The distinction between joint and coordinated tasks does not mean separation, but rather a conscious division of responsibilities: it ensures a unified destination presence while leaving room for local initiatives and flexible implementation.



Figure 5: System of joint and coordinated tasks in the ICDM model

5. Division of tasks and roles in the ICDM model

The following chapter presents the system of tasks and roles related to the regional destination and trail management defined within the project. The division is based on the results of professional consultations and follows the logic of the previously presented **joint (J)** and **coordinated (C)** tasks. The aim of this chapter is not to allocate tasks among specific organizations, but to define the operational levels and forms of cooperation.

5.1. Strategic coordination and planning at destination level (J)

This task is one of the core functions of the ICDM destination management model. Its aim is to ensure that cross-border cooperation operates within a transparent, plannable, and predictable framework, and that the activities of the participating stakeholders are implemented along common directions, reinforcing one another. The joint nature of this task group is justified by the fact that planning, consultation, and evaluation provide an operational framework that supports the coherence of the destination as a whole.



Figure 6: Annual coordination cycle

The tasks listed below define the “annual cycle” of the destination’s operation, namely joint planning, regular consultation, and feedback through reporting.

- Preparation of an annual destination work plan (activity plan) defining the joint tasks for the given year, the main areas of cooperation, and the relevant points of connection.
- Organization and implementation of destination management meetings, as well as participation in them at pre-planned dates. These meetings ensure the coordination of tasks and the prompt clarification of emerging issues. Participants contribute to joint planning and evaluation by providing information, feedback, and proposals related to their own areas.
- Preparation of an annual report on the activities, summarizing the steps implemented, the experiences gained from cooperation, and the development directions for the next period. The report supports the sustainable and transparent operation of the model.

5.2. Trail infrastructure and maintenance (C)

Trail infrastructure and its maintenance are fundamental elements of the operation of a cycling destination. Due to their nature, they need to be addressed at local and regional level. For this reason, this task group can be defined as a coordinated task.

The tasks related to infrastructure include the physical condition of cycling trails, the availability and quality of signage and information elements, as well as the operation of related supplementary infrastructure, such as rest areas, information points, and connecting services. In practice, these activities are implemented in different legal, institutional, and financing environments; therefore, centralized, uniform management would not be appropriate.

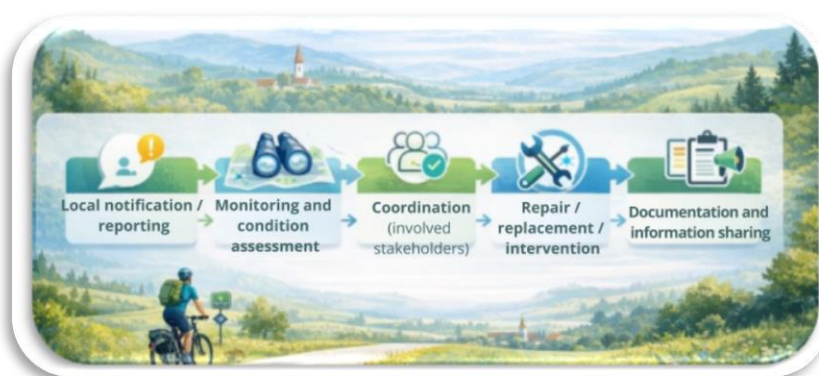


Figure 7: Trail infrastructure – maintenance

These tasks may include:

- regular inspection of the condition of trails, including cycle paths and designated roads suitable for cycling, their maintenance through the identification and correction of any deficiencies, damage, or obstacles, and, where appropriate, the assessment and designation of new alternative trails,
- maintenance of trail signage and information elements, as well as their replacement where necessary,
- monitoring of infrastructure related to the trail, including rest areas and connecting facilities, and planning the establishment of new rest areas,
- regular sharing of information related to infrastructure with the other stakeholders of the destination management system.

5.3. Brand management (J)

A cross-border cycling destination can present itself consistently and authentically to visitors only if the underlying messages, visual elements, and content are defined and applied within a unified framework. In this context, the brand is not merely a matter of visual identity but represents the overall approach and experience promise of the destination. Joint management of the brand is essential, as the destination can only be recognized by visitors if its appearance is consistent. Fragmented communication and identity weaken this recognizability. If different stakeholders in the region use divergent messages, narratives, or visual solutions, the overall recognizability and credibility of the

destination is diminished. To prevent this, fundamental decisions related to the brand must be handled at a joint level.

Within the project, a destination branding strategy was developed, including associated visual identity elements – such as the logo – and the common brand and name for the spirituality-based trail, the Aura Bike Trail. These elements form the practical basis of brand management (J) within the model, ensuring that the destination and thematic products are presented in a unified and recognizable manner.

Tasks within brand management may include:

- defining the core brand framework of the destination and cycling trails, including key messages, values, and positioning;
- developing a common narrative and storytelling framework to ensure the destination is presented consistently to visitors;
- establishing the visual identity elements to which various communication and promotional materials adhere;
- defining the content and interpretive framework for thematic cycling products, particularly the spirituality-based trail.

It is important to note that joint brand management does not restrict the creativity of local stakeholders. The aim of the model is not to mandate uniform execution, but to create a common framework that local and regional actors can align with, allowing the destination to be both cohesive and diverse. Programs implemented within the project provide opportunities for local tourism service providers to familiarize themselves with the narrative and storyline of the Aura Bike Trail, as well as its professional content. This is particularly important, as service providers are in direct contact with visitors and play a key role in ensuring

that the messages and values of the cycling trail are communicated consistently. The events contribute to ensuring that service providers represent the Aura Bike Trail consistently and authentically, while actively supporting the promotion of the destination.



Figure 8: Brand management system

5.4. Communication and promotion (J + C)

Communication and promotion are areas within the management model where both joint and coordinated tasks are present. The successful operation of the cross-border cycling destination requires both the aforementioned unified appearance and activities implemented at local and regional levels that are tailored to the specific characteristics of each area.

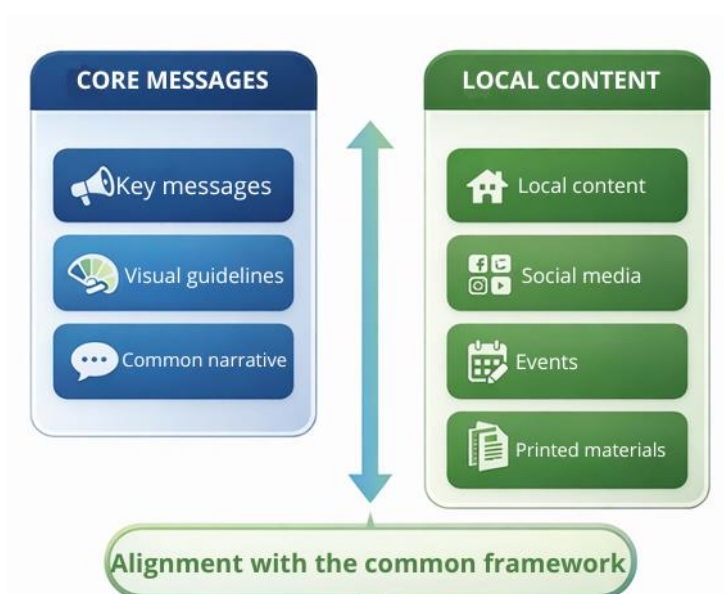


Figure 9: Communication and promotion

Effective communication and promotion ensure that the destination is visible, recognizable, consistent, and interpretable for visitors. These tasks are closely linked to the brand management presented in the previous subsection and are built upon its framework. Joint tasks include defining the communication principles and key messages, applying the destination-level narrative, and establishing unified content and visual guidelines.

At the same time, a significant portion of communication and promotion takes place at the local and regional level. This includes producing specific content, creating visibility for local events, services, and attractions, and managing various communication channels, such as websites, social media, and printed materials. These activities are effective when they align with the jointly established framework while allowing space to showcase local particularities.

5.5. Quality development and capacity building (J + C)

Quality assurance is primarily achieved through improving the professional preparedness and approach of service providers. The model does not link quality solely to formal certification systems but builds it on continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and capacity development.



Figure 10: Quality management

principles,

- make their tourism services environmentally sustainable,
- consciously develop their digital and online presence.

The regular training and mentoring sessions organized within the model ensure the continuous updating of professional knowledge and provide both theoretical and practical support for the development of new products. Promoting these training opportunities and encouraging participation are also key elements of quality development. Where possible, the organization of training and mentoring processes can be supported by online automated administrative solutions, yet the emphasis remains on content quality, demand-oriented organization, and practical applicability. These sessions are important tools for strengthening the network and collaborative relationships of tourism stakeholders.

In this way, quality development is not a one-off activity but a systematic capacity-building process, contributing to the provision of a high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive experience for visitors to the cross-border cycling destination.

The joint (J) elements of this task group include defining training and mentoring directions, setting annual training priorities, and aligning professional content with the overall goals of the destination. Within the project, a proposal was developed for a common destination quality standard for cycling-friendly, green, and accessible services, which can serve as a guideline for defining quality expectations. The model, however, places primary emphasis on preparing service providers and on the practical development of quality.

The coordinated (C) tasks relate to the practical implementation of training and mentoring activities. Their aim is to enable service providers in the region to:

- deliver and develop cycling-friendly services,
- apply accessibility and inclusivity

6. Specific task plan for the Slovenian-Hungarian cross-border destination, 2026–27

This chapter summarizes the specific tasks planned for the Slovenian-Hungarian cross-border cycling destination for 2026–27, focusing on the three key trails – AoE Bike Trail, EV13, and Aura Bike Trail. The designation of tasks builds on existing partnerships as well as available or planned resources, with particular attention to the collaborations established through the ICTr-CE (Innovative participatory sustainable business model for cycling along the Iron Curtain Trail – Interreg Central Europe project) and ICDM projects.

Among the organizations participating in implementation are active contributors who are already involved in coordination, development, and communication (Westpannon, ZALA – Zala County Government, ZKTŠ MS - Zavod za kulturo, turizem in šport Murska Sobota, Bistra Ptuj, AMFK – Active Hungary Development Center, MAKETUSZ – Hungarian Cycling Tourism Association, Crost, AoE BC – Amazon of Europe Booking Center, EV13 BC – EuroVelo13 Booking Center, etc.), as well as potential contributors (municipalities, national and nature parks, VMÖ – Vas County Government Office, etc.), who may participate in certain tasks later based on their professional or territorial relevance. Accordingly, this chapter frames the tasks not only by activity type but also in terms of the intensity of cooperation required and the feasibility of implementation.

6.1. Tasks related to regional destination and trail management

Preparation of the annual destination work plan

The purpose of this task is to plan the annual operation of the destination, defining joint activities, points of cooperation, and priorities.

Coordination: Westpannon

Contributing stakeholders: ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, AMFK, MAKETUSZ

Implementation level: SI-HU destination, as it affects all trails and stakeholders.

Human resources – approximately 3 working days per year (preparation, consultation, finalization).

Organization of destination management meetings

Ensuring coordination among stakeholders. The meetings provide an opportunity for information exchange, addressing emerging issues, and jointly defining development directions. The meeting is scheduled after the end of the cycling season and before the start of the following season, ideally during the November–March period.

Coordination: ZALA

Contributing stakeholders: Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: destination level

Human resources – approximately 3 working days per year (for organization and facilitation); **financial** – catering; **in-kind contribution** – provision of the meeting room.

Active stakeholder participation in destination and trail management meetings

The aim is for participating organizations to engage in the coordination processes and contribute to the preparation and implementation of joint decisions.

Coordination: At the destination level: ZALA; at the trail level: the respective trail managers.

Contributing stakeholders: Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, AMFK. MAKETUSZ

Implementation level: Destination and trail levels (AoE, EV13, Aura Bike Trail)

Human resources – approximately 1 working day per year; **in-kind contribution** – participation in the coordination meetings.

Preparation of the annual activity report

An annual summary of activities, presenting the results achieved, experiences gained, and challenges encountered. The report contributes to planning for the following period and ensures transparent information sharing among partners.

Coordination: Westpannon

Contributing stakeholders: ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, AMFK, MAKETUSZ

Implementation level: Destination and trail levels (AoE, EV13, Aura Bike Trail)

Human resources – approximately 2 working days per year; **in-kind contribution** – data and information provided by the partners.

6.2. Trail infrastructure – maintenance

The Booking Center (BC) is a travel organizer with international certifications that plays a coordination role in the operation and tourism marketing of the cycling trail. It provides information on the trail's condition to relevant stakeholders, functions as a primary information point, cooperates with local service providers, and sells and develops cycling packages under the licensed brand. On the Hungarian side, the Helian NaTour, a travel organizer based in Pécs, is currently responsible for the Booking Center tasks for the EuroVelo 13 Iron Curtain Trail (between Szombathely and Mohács) and the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail (Mureck – Mohács).

Monitoring the condition of trail surfaces

Regular inspection of trail surfaces, ensuring timely identification of any defects or deficiencies. This allows for the necessary corrective actions to be taken. Issues reported by local stakeholders and users are also taken into account.

Coordination: For the SI-HU destination: Westpannon; for the trails: the respective trail managers (AoE BC, EV13 BC), in collaboration with partners, local municipalities, and the road authorities, involving MAKETUSZ and AMFK.

Implementation level: Trail level, as it is linked to specific sections and the assessment is carried out locally.

Human resources: approximately 2 working days per year (for inspections). **Financial requirement:** low, as the activity is primarily monitoring-based. **In-kind contribution:** involvement of local stakeholders.

Maintenance of rest areas

Ensuring that rest areas along the trail – such as benches, shelters, and information points – are maintained in proper technical and aesthetic condition.

Coordination: For trails, this is relevant, and the respective trail managers (AoE BC, EV13 BC) are responsible, in collaboration with partners (Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, ZALA, SMVA, BFNPI, Crost, and potentially AMFK and MAKETUSZ), as well as with local municipalities and land managers.

Implementation level: trail level – AoE, EV13

Both **human resources and financial resources** are required for this task: human resources for regular maintenance (approximately 2 working days per year) and financial resources at a low to medium level for repairs, replacements, and equipment. The **in-kind contribution** consists of the involvement of local stakeholders.

Maintenance of trail signage

Ensuring the continuous visibility, legibility, and technical condition of installed directional and information signs. Repairing, replacing, or renewing any damaged, missing, or outdated signs.

Coordination: For trails, this is relevant, and the respective trail managers (AoE BC, EV13 BC) are responsible, in collaboration with partners (Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, ZALA, SMVKA – Somogy County Entrepreneurial Center Foundation, BFNPI, Crost, and potentially AMFK and MAKETUSZ), as well as with local municipalities and land managers.

Implementation level: trail level – AoE, EV13

Both **human resources and financial resources** are required for this task: human resources for regular maintenance tasks (approximately 2 working days per year) and financial resources at a medium level for sign production, replacement, and installation. The **in-kind contribution** consists of the involvement of local stakeholders.

6.3. Updating trail- and area-related informational materials

Updating and maintaining the content of the Amazon of Europe (AoE) website

Keeping the online information related to the AoE cycling trail up to date, taking into account any changes along the trail, available services, and visitor information.

Coordination: AoE BC; **contributing stakeholders:** Westpannon, Crost, ZALA.

Implementation level: Trail level, as it is linked to a specific trail.

Human resources: required for website maintenance, including implementing updates, corrections, and suggestions – approximately 3 working days per year. **Financial resources:** low, covering operation and any minor developments. **In-kind contribution:** provision of content elements by partners.

Updating and maintaining the EV13 website (storyportal, eurovelo.com)

Keeping the online information related to the EuroVelo 13 trail up to date across various platforms (e.g., eurovelo.com, Storyportal). Updates cover the trail itself, services, and tourism-related information.

The Storyportal is a digital tourism and communication platform created under the Innovative Cycling Border (IBC) project led by Westpannon. It collects experiences, local stories, service providers, and attractions related to the trails (EuroVelo 13 and Aura Bike Trail) in one place. Its aim is to present the trail not merely as a trail but as a comprehensive product.

The [Danube Cycling Storyportal](#) also supports the presentation of cycling trails along the Danube and border regions – such as the Aura Bike Trail and the EuroVelo 13 Iron Curtain Trail. The platform provides interactive trail planning, local stories, producers, and tourism information, thereby enhancing the trails' visibility, unique identity, and attractiveness.

Coordination: EV13 BC and Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** internationally – ECF; nationally – e.g., AMFK, Slovenian EV coordinator, ZALA, VMÖ, RCMS.

Implementation level: trail level, as it is linked to a specific trail.

Human resources: required for website maintenance, including data updates and corrections – approximately 3 working days per year. **In-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs.

Updating and maintaining the website related to the Aura Bike Trail

Keeping the online information related to the Aura Bike Trail up to date, with particular focus on the trail itself, services, thematic content, and visitor information.

As the Aura Bike Trail is a thematic trail created within the ICDM project, content management is closely linked to destination-level brand management and communication.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: trail level, as it is linked to a specific trail.

Human resources: approximately 3 working days per year; **financial resources:** required for developments and content production. **In-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs.

Updating and maintaining the applications

Keeping the trail information available in the digital applications of the AoE and EV13 (e.g., map apps, tour planning systems) up to date.

Coordination: AoE BC, and ECF; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, Crost, AMFK, MAKETUSZ

Implementation level: trail level, as it is linked to a specific trail

Human resources: approximately 1–3 working days per year; **financial resources:** required for developments and content production, **in-kind contribution:** data updates.

Keeping trail maps up to date

Continuous updating of map-related information for the trails, including trail guidance, sections, and associated services.

Coordination: AoE BC, AMFK, Bistra Ptuj; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, Crost, Trail Angels, ZALA, VMÖ, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: trail level, as it is linked to specific trails and updated individually.

Human resources: approximately 1 working day per year; **financial resources:** low, covering updates as needed, **in-kind contribution:** provision of data.

Keeping the printed destination map up to date

Continuous updating of the content of the printed map presenting the destination.

Coordination: Bistra Ptuj; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, ZALA, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: destination level, as it integrates multiple trails.

Human resources: approximately 1 working day per year; **financial resources:** low, covering updates as needed, **in-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs.

Printing of trail maps

Printing maps related to the trails. Printing is typically done on demand, following updates.

Coordination: AoE BC, EV13 BC, Bistra Ptuj; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, Crost, Trail Angels, ZALA, VMÖ, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: trail level, as it is linked to specific trails and updated individually.

Human resources: low, approximately 1 working day; **financial resources:** medium, covering printing costs.

Printing of the SI-HU cross-border cycling destination map

This task involves reprinting the map presenting the SI-HU cross-border destination.

Coordination: Bistra Ptuj; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, ZALA, ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: destination level

Human resources: low, approximately 1 working day; **financial resources:** medium, covering printing costs.

6.4. Brand management

Collection and summary of market trends in cycling tourism

Regular monitoring and summarizing of key market trends affecting cycling tourism, with particular attention to changes in demand, visitor needs, and emerging tourism habits.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** Iskriva, ECF, AMFK, MAKETUSZ, Crost, ZKTŠ MS, Bistra Ptuj

Implementation level: destination level, as it supports the positioning of the entire region

Human resources: low, approximately 3 working days per year; **financial resources:** minimal, **in-kind contribution:** professional input provided by the partners

Proposals for brand updates

Continuous development and updating of the brands, taking into account market trends and visitor needs. The proposals may include modifications to visual identity, communication messages, and thematic content.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** Iskriva, ECF, AMFK, MAKETUSZ, Crost, ZKTŠ MS, Bistra Ptuj

Implementation level: destination level, as the brand provides a unified framework and covers multiple trails

Human resources: low, approximately 1 working day per year, **in-kind contribution:** professional input provided by the contributing organizations

6.5. Communication and promotion

One of the key tools for brand communication of the destination and its associated trails is thematic events (local, regional, cross-border). These events effectively contribute to increasing the visibility of the trails, enhancing the visitor experience, and actively engaging participants. Programs can be directly linked to the specific trail and its thematic elements – for example, natural, cultural, gastronomic, or historical values – while also showcasing the shared identity and tourism offerings of the entire cross-border destination. Such events strengthen the region's visibility, encourage collaboration among local stakeholders, and contribute to increasing visitor numbers.

Compilation and continuous updating of the event calendar for the SI-HU cross-border cycling destination

Collecting, organizing, and presenting cycling and related tourism events taking place in the destination in a unified format. The event calendar contributes to program coordination and provides visitors with clear and easily accessible information.

Coordination: ZKTŠ MS; **contributing organizations:** ZALA, VMÖ, Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj

Implementation level: destination level, as it consolidates events across the entire region and the associated trails into a single platform

Human resources: approximately 3 working days per year (collection and updates)

Financial resources: minimal, **in-kind contribution:** provision of data by partners

Social media communication about destination cycling events

The aim is to increase the visibility of cycling events on social media, promote programs, reach visitors, and present the region as active and attractive.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** ZALA, VMÖ, ZKTŠ MS, Bistra Ptuj, AMFK

Implementation level: destination level, as this is joint communication covering the entire region and requiring a unified presentation

Human resources: approximately 6 working days per year, including content creation and posting, **financial resources:** low to medium, depending on whether advertising is used, **in-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs

Automated management of events (autopilot system)

Automating data management and communication processes related to events, with particular attention to the connections between the event calendar, web platforms, and social media.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organization:** ZKTŠ MS

Implementation level: destination level – system-wide solution

Human resources: 4 working days, required for setup and operation, **financial resources:** dependent on the tool used, **in-kind contribution:** provision of technical infrastructure

Organization of targeted online promotional campaigns

Increasing the visibility of the destination and cycling trails through targeted online campaigns. Campaigns focus on different target groups (e.g., international markets, active tourism enthusiasts).

Coordination: AoE BC, EV13 BC, ZKTŠ MS; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, Crost, Trail Angels, AMFK, ECF, MAKETUSZ, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, VMÖ

Implementation level: destination level and trail level, depending on the promotion focus

Human resources: approximately 4 working days per year (planning and execution),
financial resources: medium to high, covering advertisements and creative production,
in-kind contribution: provision of content inputs

Organization of at least one local cycling event per year with brand-building impact

Organizing cycling events that contribute to strengthening the destination's brand and increasing the region's visibility. These events are typically organized locally, while destination-level coordination supports their communication and alignment with the common brand.

Coordination: ZALA, ZKTŠ MS; **contributing organizations:** ÖNPI, Zalai Tekergők, Túrabirodalom, local municipalities (Lenti, Letenye, Körmend, Ják, Szalafő, Óriszentpéter, etc.), Vasvári Népfőiskola, Vasi Hegyhát Rábamente, Westpannon, Bistra Ptuj

Implementation level: trail level, with destination-level support

Human resources: higher at local level due to event organization; low at destination level for coordination (approximately 3 working days), **financial resources:** medium, covering event costs, **in-kind contribution:** partnership cooperation

Organization of at least one regional, cross-border cycling event per year with brand-building impact

Implementing a cross-border cycling event that contributes to increasing the international visibility of the destination and strengthening the common brand. The event would be carried out through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders in the region and provides a key opportunity to showcase the destination.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, VMÖ, AoE BC, EV13 BC, ÖNPI, Zalai Tekergők, Túrabirodalom, local municipalities (Lenti, Letenye, Körmend, Ják, Szalafő, Óriszentpéter), Vasvári Népfőiskola, Vasi Hegyhát Rábamente

Implementation level: destination level, as it is cross-border, involves multiple trails, and requires a unified brand

Human resources: medium, approximately 7 working days, including coordination and support for organization, **financial resources:** medium to high, depending on the scale of the event, **in-kind contribution:** partnership cooperation

Content creation for national and European web portals and channels (EuroVelo, Aktív Magyarország, Slovenia Info, etc.)

Ensuring a unified, attractive, and up-to-date presence of the destination on national and international tourism and cycling platforms (e.g., EuroVelo, Aktív Magyarország, Slovenia Info).

Coordination: Westpannon, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, EV13 BC; **contributing organizations:** ZALA, VMÖ, Bistra Ptuj, AMFK, Crost, ECF, RCMS

Implementation level: destination level and trail level, as it is cross-border and covers multiple trails

Human resources: medium, approximately 3 working days, including content creation,

financial resources: low to medium; the regularity of updates is an important resource factor, **in-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs

Creation and promotion of content related to the destination and trails on social media channels

The aim is to increase visibility and encourage visitors through social media channels. This includes regularly creating and publishing content tailored to target groups (e.g., experience-based presentations, trail recommendations, events, local service providers), as well as planning and executing paid advertising campaigns.

Coordination: AoE BC, EV13 BC; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, Crost, Trail Angels, ECF, AMFK, MAKETUSZ

Implementation level: trail level, as different trails are addressed on each platform

Human resources: medium, approximately 3 working days, depending on the quality and volume of content production, **financial resources:** medium, potentially higher due to advertising costs **in-kind contribution:** provision of content inputs

Participation in tourism fairs

Increasing the visibility of the destination and its associated cycling trails and facilitating market access for tourism products through participation in domestic and international tourism fairs.

Coordination: AoE BC, EV13 BC, Bistra Ptuj; **contributing organizations:** RCMS, ZKTŠ MS, Iskriva, AMFK, MAKETUSZ, Lenti Füüdő, Lendava Spa, Moravske Toplice Spa, Szentgotthárd Füüdő

Implementation level: destination and trail level, as different trails and areas are involved

Human resources: medium, approximately 5 working days, including preparation and participation, **financial resources:** medium to high, covering booth setup, travel, and production of materials; it is recommended to coordinate with other destination, **in-kind contribution:** provision of flyers and publications.

6.6. Capacity building

Encouraging participation in service provider training and mentoring opportunities for quality development

Engaging service providers in the region in training and mentoring programs, thereby improving service quality and supporting the development of new tourism products.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** ECF, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, EV13 BC, VMÖ

Implementation level: destination level, as the region's service providers are targeted

Human resources: low, approximately 2 working days, **financial resources:** low

Training and mentoring – cycling-friendly services (annual)

Preparing service providers in the region to develop and deliver services that meet the needs of cycling tourists.

Coordination: MAKETUSZ; **contributing organizations:** Westpannon, ECF, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, EV13 BC, VMÖ

Implementation level: destination level, as the training targets service providers in the region

Human resources: medium, approximately 3 working days, including organization and execution, **financial resources:** low to medium (venue, speaker fees, catering); the program can be partially self-sustaining through participant fees

Training – Accessibility and inclusivity in tourism (annual)

Preparing service providers in the region to develop accessible and inclusive tourism services.

Coordination: Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** MAKETUSZ, ECF, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, ZKTŠ MS, AoE BC, EV13 BC, VMÖ

Implementation level: destination level, as the training targets service providers in the region

Human resources: at least 2 working days, including organization and execution, **financial resources:** low to medium (venue, speaker fees, catering); the program can be partially self-sustaining through participant fees

Training – Making tourism services more environmentally friendly (annual)

Preparing service providers in the region for environmentally conscious and sustainable operations, as well as reducing the environmental impacts of tourism services. The training contributes to the sustainable development of the destination, and the creation of a service offer that considers environmental aspects.

Coordination: ZKTŠ MS; **contributing organizations:** MAKETUSZ, ECF, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, AoE BC, EV13 BC, VMÖ, Westpannon

Implementation level: destination level, as the training targets service providers in the region

Human resources: at least 2 working days, including organization and execution, **financial resources:** low to medium (venue, speaker fees, catering); the program can be partially self-sustaining through participant fees

Training on digital and online skills for service providers

Preparing service providers in the region to use digital tools effectively and develop their online presence. The training helps providers become more accessible to potential visitors and actively participate in the destination's digital communication and sales processes.

Coordination: ZKTŠ MS, Westpannon; **contributing organizations:** MAKETUSZ, ECF, ZALA, Bistra Ptuj, AoE BC, EV13 BC, VMÖ

Implementation level: destination level, as the training targets service providers in the region

Human resources: at least 2 working days, including organization and execution, **financial resources:** low to medium (venue, speaker fees, catering); the program can be partially self-sustaining through participant fees

7. Application, sustainability, and further development of the model

7.1. Application of the model in the ICDM project

The model was not developed solely on a theoretical basis but builds on the results of two Slovenian and two Hungarian workshops carried out during the project, professional consultations with partners and relevant organizations, and a joint planning process. Certain elements are already being applied during project implementation, particularly the distinction between joint and coordinated tasks, the strengthening of cooperation among stakeholders, and training activities.

The practical application of the model is closely linked to the activities implemented within the project, especially service provider training, communication and promotional activities, and the development and operation of the thematic trail, the Aura Bike Trail. Together, these processes ensure that the model appears not only as a theoretical framework, but also as a solution that functions in practice.

7.2. Sustainability after project closure

The most important characteristic of the model is that it does not require the creation of a new institutional structure but builds on the cooperation and capacities of existing stakeholders. As a result, the operation of the model can be ensured after project closure without the involvement of significant additional resources.

The operation of the model is primarily coordination- and cooperation-based, maintained through the annual planning and consultation cycle, as well as regular information sharing. The clear distinction between joint and coordinated tasks enables participating organizations to contribute to the operation in line with their own resources, while maintaining a unified destination approach and appearance.

Sustainability is further strengthened by the fact that the model is closely linked to existing cycling trails and to the thematic product developed during the project, meaning that its elements can also be applied by being integrated into existing systems.

7.3. Further development opportunities

Due to its flexible structure, the model is suitable for future expansion with new thematic elements, trails, or forms of cooperation. Its framework allows for the integration of additional tourism products, as well as adaptation in other regions.

Future developments may include strengthening digital solutions, further deepening cooperation among service providers, and improving the international positioning of the destination. The model should therefore be understood not as a static system, but as a

continuously evolving framework capable of adapting to the changing tourism environment.

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