Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

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ICTr-CE

O2.3. ICTR GOOD IMPACT PROGRAM

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Content

1. INTRODUCTION

Cycling tourism is a branch of tourism that is growing in Europe, with the continent being both the largest destination and source market today. This growth is driven by a mix of several factors favorable to cycling tourism: good infrastructure for cycling tourism, services increasingly adapted to cyclists, diverse and interesting nature and landscapes, rich culture and history, safety, and the growing consideration of drivers towards cyclists. Also, public transport is to some extent friendly to cyclists and it also plays a role. Additionally, the reputation of cycling tourism as an environmentally friendly and sustainable mode of tourism further contributes to its rise. Worthy to mention, that cycling tourism is a form of tourism that takes place mainly in peri-urban and rural areas, in open landscapes.

The ICTr-CE project focuses on unlocking the tourism potential of the EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail in Central Europe. This long-distance cycling route stretches from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea, following the corridor of the European Green Belt and connecting regions rich in natural and cultural heritage.

The main goal of the project is to strengthen the economic viability of the trail by developing innovative tourism products. The innovativeness lies in several components, such as the application of tools to assess the sustainability of the product, the implementation of the Good Impact Program, and the use of a participatory business model that enhances the innovation capacity of local businesses and encourages cross-border cooperation. Through this approach, ICTr-CE aims to transform the Iron Curtain Trail into a more attractive and sustainable tourism destination.

2. GIP PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

2.1. Purpose of GIP

Cycling tourism is the tourism sectors with relatively low impact on environment and society. It is usually a more dispersed form of tourism, rather than mass tourism that concentrates an excessive number of visitors in one place, causing significant environmental and social impacts in the destination. The infrastructure required for cycling tourism does not involve major interventions in the landscape, unlike infrastructure for ski tourism, seaside tourism, golf, and similar activities.

On the contrary, cycling tourists tend to spread out across the destination, using roads and trails that mostly already exist or require only minimal constructions. Riding of bicycle generates little to no carbon footprint, associated life-cycle emissions (e.g. bicycle production, logistics, infrastructure, fuel energy) are relatively small against other modes of tourism. Additionally, cycling tourism distributes social and economic benefits more evenly across the region. Unlike mosts tourists, cycle tourists are among those who visit not only main attractions and travel along major transport routes but also explore less-visited areas.

Nevertheless, cycling tourism is not a sector without negative environmental impacts. At the very least, the very nature of travel generates environmental consequences, primarily through greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. This also applies to cycling tourism – it produces minimal emissions on its own, however, when cyclists travel to and from destinations by car, the associated emissions can be relatively significant.

When designing the GIP, we did not consider the greenhouse gas emissions generated by transportation to and from the destination (i.e., the starting and ending points). This does not mean that we consider them unimportant; however, for the purposes of this concept within the ICTr project, we assume that cycling tourists travel to and from the starting and ending points of ICTr products using public transportation, which is common for long-distance cycling tourism. Therefore, greenhouse gas emissions are not significant in this context.

However, if the GIP is applied at the destination level rather than at the long-distance route level, transportation emissions to and from accommodations must be considered, as it is assumed that most visitors will arrive by car (it is of course not the desired status quo, and the aim is to gradually achieve that more and more cycling visitors arrive by public transport).

Overall, the negative impacts can be divided into three main categories:

- Environmental impacts
- Social impacts
- Economic impacts

Examples of the negative impacts of cycling tourism are presented in Table 1.

The purpose of the GIP is to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of the regions through which the route passes. It would not only reduce the negative impacts of cycling tourism on the environment and society in the areas where it takes place, but it mainly leads the cycling tourism in given areas to the regenerative way – it takes sustainability a step further by seeking to actively enhance the destinations visited. Its vision is to leave places in a better state than they were found, by restoring ecosystems, supporting local communities, and nurturing cultural life, with a focus on generating positive impacts for people, the environment, and local economies through holistic, site-specific practices.

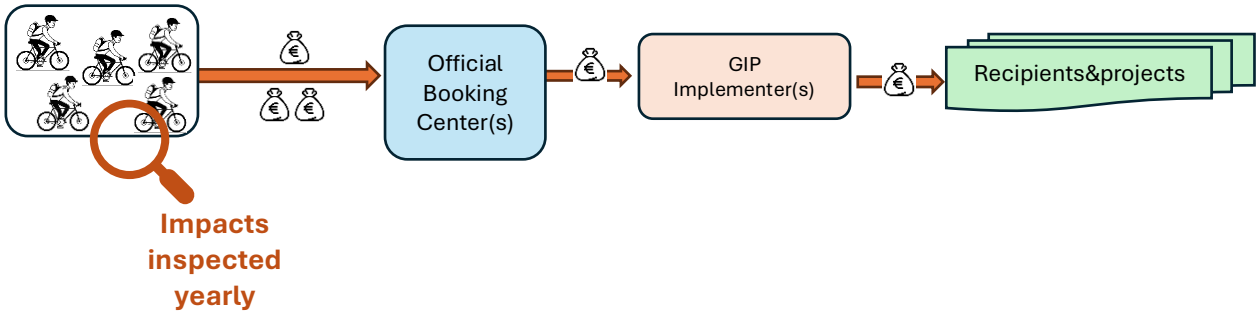
2.2. Principle of GIP

The GIP is part of a broader framework, whose components are essential for achieving its objectives. This means that for the successful implementation of the GIP, the following components must also be in place:

- **Cycling tourism destination or route board** – an alliance of stakeholders who benefit from the destination or route and/or are responsible for its development and management.
- **Data collection system** – either at the destination level or at the product/booking center level.
- **System for impact assessment** – used to quantify the negative impacts of cycling tourism in the destination or along the route.

These components are addressed in other deliverables of the ICTr project—*D.1.5.1 ICTr Alliance, D.2.2.1 Upgraded and optimised environmental footprint calculator for ICTr* and *D.2.3.1 Concept of Impact Measurement System*.

The principle of the GIP is that the client pays a surcharge, which represents the financial equivalent of their negative environmental impact. This surcharge is then used to fund projects that mitigate the effects of cycling tourism in the given destination or along the specific route.



2.3. Implementation of GIP – General considerations

At the current stage, the implementation of the GIP is feasible **exclusively for organized cycling tourism products**, whether guided or self-guided. This applies to products that are designed, sold, and operated within a clearly defined structure. Implementation at the level of independent (non-organized) cycle tourists is **not envisaged within the ICTr framework**.

This limitation is not a technical shortcoming but a **deliberate design choice**, based on the following conditions:

- For organized cycling tourism products, **structured, product-related data** are available, allowing an assessment of the services included in the product and their sustainability performance. Such structured data do not exist for independent cycling tourism at route level in a form that would allow consistent application of IMS and GIP.
- The GIP surcharge is an integral part of the product price. For independent cycle tourists, there is currently **no appropriate mechanism** to integrate such a surcharge into the travel decision in a transparent and consistent manner.

These constraints do not apply to organized cycling tourism products sold by tour operators or booking centres. In such cases, the itinerary and included services are defined in advance, enabling a systematic assessment of the product design and the sustainability characteristics of the services provided. Data can be collected through established reporting mechanisms involving service providers, tour documentation, and post-trip feedback, without focusing on or monitoring individual traveller behaviour.

Anyway, the long-term vision is to apply GIP and its tools also to unorganized, individual cycle tourists. This is, however, a different topic that certainly deserves further development in the future.

Further methodological background is provided in Deliverable D.2.2.1 *Upgraded and Optimised Environmental Footprint Calculator for ICTr* and Deliverable D.2.3.1 *Concept of Impact Measurement System*.

The concrete implementation of GIP will vary depending on the **governance structures in place** and the **legislative and socio-economic context**, as well as on whether implementation takes place at destination level or along a long-distance route. This distinction is important.

In a single tourist destination, the application of Carmacal, IMS, and GIP is generally less complex. Cycle tourists typically stay within a defined area, and governance structures such as destination management organizations or similar coordinating bodies often already exist. Stakeholder coordination and engagement of tourism operators can therefore be organised more easily.

For **long-distance cycling routes**, such as EuroVelo 13, implementation is inherently more complex. Routes extend across large geographical areas, often crossing national borders with different legal frameworks, languages, and institutional settings. Coordinating governance structures therefore need to be established at route level, and implementation relies on cooperation between multiple actors rather than on a single destination-based body.

2.4. Implementation of GIP within the ITCr products

This document has been created as part of the ICTr project and describes the proposed pilot implementation within the products and territories of the ICTr project.

In the following text, we describe a model specific to three pilot regions in eight countries along EV13 within the ICTr project, where we anticipate the sale of cycling tourism products as defined in deliverable D.1.3.1 Integrated Product Development for ICTr:

- North: Poland – Germany
- Central: Czechia – Austria – Slovakia
- South: Hungary – Slovenia – Croatia

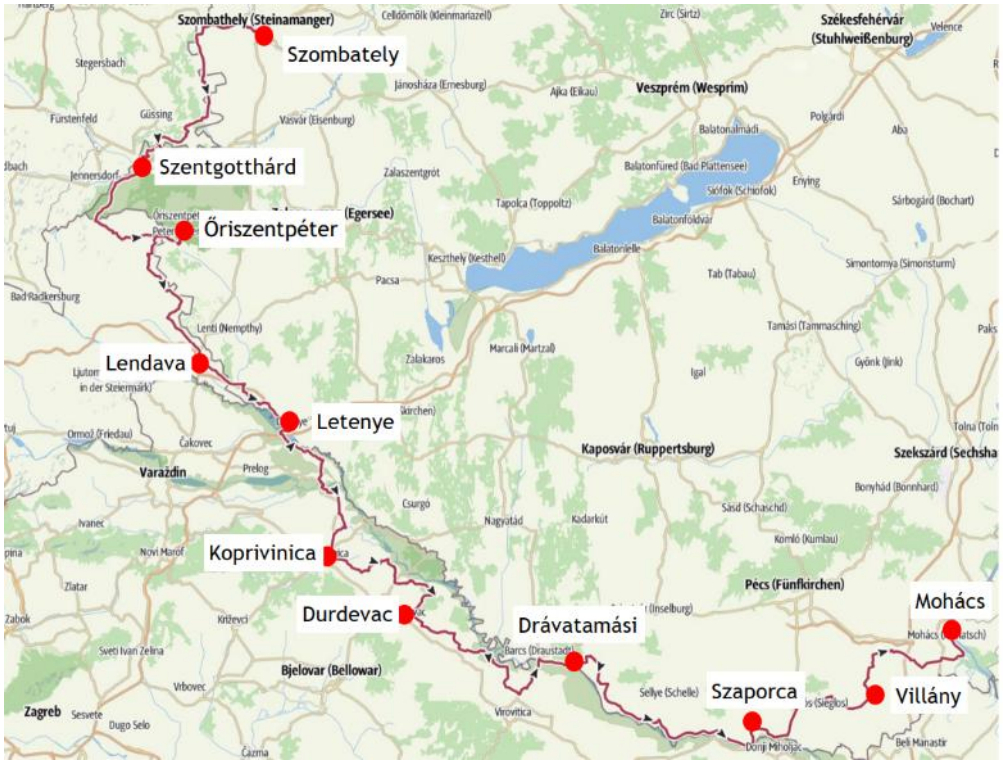
Remark: It is important to note that the innovative cycling product will not be launched in the North Pilot Area any soon after the project ends, as the ICTr-CE business model has only been developed for the Center and South regions so far. The North Pilot Area is currently testing results and gathering feedback for wider implementation. Since the GIP is funded by surcharges collected by the booking centers selling the ICTr cycling product, it will be implemented in the North Pilot Area after the business model is fully developed.

ICTr pilot area and cycling tourism product North:

- 12 stages
- Total length: 597 km
- Elevation: 784 m

ICTr pilot area and cycling tourism product Central:

ICTr pilot area and cycling tourism product South:



- 10 stages
- Total length: 496 km
- Elevation: 1,237 m

Although GIP is not implemented and tested during the ICTr project, we anticipate its launch (in the South and Central regions) in the first year after the project's completion, when cycling tourism products in the ICTr pilot areas will enter the market as a follow-up to the project. By that time, we expect the establishment of the *EuroVelo 13 Partnership* and the contracting of official booking centers. In the North pilot region, the situation is different. The GIP will not be launched yet, as the ICTr-CE business model on which the GIP depends will not be in place immediately after the project ends. Its development is expected at a later stage, and once established, the GIP will naturally become part of the system.

2.5. Two phases of GIP

The GIP cannot be launched in its full scope from the very beginning. Our objective is to initiate the GIP already in the first year of the launch of the ICTr cycling tourism products; however - it can be expected that in the initial years, when the number of ICTr clients is still low, the products will not generate sufficient financial resources to ensure the full operation of the GIP. In this phase, it would not make sense to seek a dedicated GIP implementer, as the available funds will likely be sufficient to support only one or two projects in the given region.

For this reason, we have divided the implementation of the GIP into two phases:

Start-up phase – according to our estimates, the first two to three years, during which ICTr cycling tourism products will generate only a limited volume of financial resources from GIP surcharges. This phase will also allow the GIP framework and processes to be refined, the availability of suitable projects in the relevant areas to be assessed, and practical implementation experience to be gained.

Full operation – implementation in full scope, as generally described in this document. We assume that this phase will be reached after two to three years of operation of the ICTr products, once they have been purchased by a sufficient number of clients to generate GIP surcharges at a level that enables full-scale operation. Based on experience with other grant programmes, we assume that the threshold sufficient to launch the full operation phase is an annual amount of €12,000 generated by clients through the GIP surcharge.

So, in the following text, wherever appropriate, we will distinguish between these two phases by using the designations **Start-up phase** and **Full operation**.

3. GIP FRAMEWORK

In the following text, we define the necessary structural framework for the implementation of GIP, focusing— in line with the application form—on its implementation within the ICTr project and its follow-up.

3.1. Route Board

The highest authority responsible for defining the details of GIP is the route board.

In case of the EuroVelo 13 it is the *EuroVelo 13 Partnership* — a formal association of stakeholders along the EuroVelo 13 route, tasked with coordinating key activities, communication, and marketing of the route. The founding members of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership will be the important stakeholders along the EuroVelo 13.

The EuroVelo 13 Partnership will be (in the full operation phase) responsible for selecting and appointing organizations to operate both the *ICTr cycling tourism products* along the route (official booking centers) and the organizations that will serve as *GIP implementers*. These competencies, however, will not be applied during the start-up phase, in which the GIP implementers are appointed by the ICTr project consortium. The role of the *Partnership* in this phase will consist mainly of familiarising its members with the GIP process and approving reports submitted by the GIP implementers.

The establishment of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership is the subject of deliverable *D.1.5.1 ICTr Alliance*, led by the European Cyclists' Federation, which has experience with similar alliances on other routes.

In the context of the GIP concept, it is important to emphasize that the route board must have an executive body (e.g., a secretariat) with sufficient capacity to ensure effective communication with the GIP implementer.

3.2. Official Booking Center

Official Booking Centers (OBC) are commercial companies entrusted, for a fixed period (expected to be three years), with the operation of organized tourism products that are officially promoted by ICTr Alliance members. They are selected by the ICTr project partners first and then, in full operation phase, they are officially licensed by the EuroVelo 13 Partnership through the European Cyclist Federation which performs the role of the partnership secretariat.

For OBCs, this role comes with not only rights and benefits but also obligations. Among of these obligations is participation in the GIP in two ways:

- communication of the GIP to public, mainly to the appropriate market segments and to the clients;
- collection of GIP surcharge (see below) and transfer of collected funds to the organization responsible for implementing GIP.

3.3. System for measuring and assessing impacts

The impacts of cycling tourism will be measured using two tools – the Carmacal carbon footprint calculator and the Impact Measurement System (IMS). As mentioned above, these tools are currently implementable only for organized cycle tours, where data can be obtained in advance from the product itinerary and after the tour either from the guide or directly from the client (e.g. through a post-tour assessment form).

Collecting such data is not possible in the case of unorganized cycle tourists, as the IMS implementer has no information about their movements, behavior, or services used. Therefore, IMS is currently implementable only for organized tourism products – cycling packages/offers.

Both tools are used by the trained staff of the official booking center before the start of each season.

3.3.1. Carmacal carbon footprint calculator

To assess the carbon footprint of a cycling tourism product, the ICTr project uses the Carmacal application, developed by ECEAT and Travelife for Tour Operators (see deliverable *D.2.2.1 Upgraded and optimised environmental footprint calculator for ICTr*). It is a specialized carbon footprint calculator designed for the travel and tourism industry, allowing tour operators, travel agencies, or destination managers to estimate CO_2 emissions (in kilograms or tons) for entire travel packages, including flights, local transport, accommodations, meal and even activities.

The tool features extensive global datasets, covering over 700,000 accommodations, 35 million flights, 29 modes of transport, and 47 types of activities. It also enables the estimation of emissions for facilities not included in the database—either through a simple approximation based on the facility's category or by entering detailed operational data manually (through the tool HCMI Table).

The result of the Carmacal assessment, which then enters to the GIP surcharge calculation, is the number of kilograms of the CO2 emissions generated by a person (a client) who purchase and complete a cycling product.

3.3.2. Impact Measurement System (IMS)

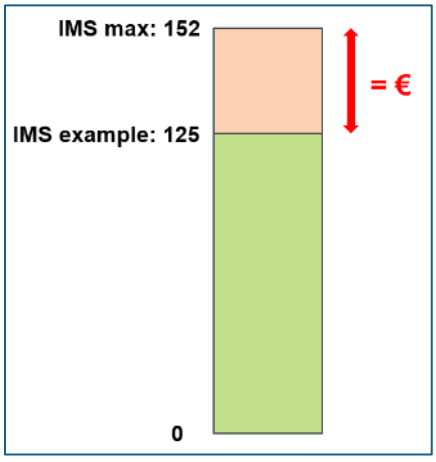
The Impact Measurement System (IMS) is a methodological framework developed within the ICTr project (Deliverable D.2.3.1 Concept of Impact Measurement System) to assess the sustainability performance of cycling tourism products. IMS supports evidence-based decision-making by systematically evaluating how tourism services and product components contribute to environmental, social, economic, and cultural sustainability objectives.

Within the ICTr project, IMS is currently developed and applied exclusively to organized cycling tourism products, i.e. predefined tour packages sold by tour operators. In the case of ICTr-derived products, these operators are the designated Official Booking Centers (BCs). This scope limitation reflects a deliberate methodological choice: IMS is designed to assess clearly defined tourism products with known itineraries and contracted services, rather than individual tourists.

IMS is based on the structured collection and evaluation of data related to the services and goods included in a cycling tourism product, such as accommodation, catering, transportation, activities, guiding, and booking services. The system does not aim to monitor or predict individual tourist behavior. Instead, it assesses the sustainability performance of the product design and service configuration as implemented along the itinerary.

For non-organized (independent) cycle tourists, such an assessment is currently not feasible within the IMS framework, as there is no defined product structure, no predefined service bundle, and no contractual basis for systematic data collection. The limitation therefore lies in the absence of a product-based reference framework, not in the inability or intention to track individual movements or behavior.

The IMS evaluation framework consists of 49 indicators covering key areas of sustainability, including accommodation, dining, transport, activities, and the services provided by booking centers and guides. Each indicator is scored based on predefined sustainability criteria. The maximum achievable score is 152 points, representing full compliance with the sustainability standards defined in the IMS.



The resulting score reflects the overall sustainability performance of the cycling tourism product. Lower scores indicate greater potential for sustainability improvement, rather than quantified environmental damage or negative impacts in a strict sense. The value of IMS lies not only in the aggregate score but also in the indicator-level results, which provide a detailed and structured overview of strengths and weaknesses across different service areas.

These differentiated results form a critical input for the Green Impact Programme (GIP). By identifying where sustainability performance is weakest or where improvements can generate the greatest benefit, IMS supports the targeted use of GIP funds to enhance the long-term sustainability of cycling tourism products along the route.

3.4. Financial Value of CO_2 emissions and IMS Points

After calculating the amount of emissions in Carmacal, a financial value is assigned to them, based on the market price on the emissions trading exchange. Based on the European Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and taking into account further expected developments, we have set the value of 1 ton of CO_2 emissions at 70 €. This price may change in time.

Calculating the financial value of IMS points follows different logic. Initially, the value is set 0.5 € per 1 point and was established based on IMS assessments of test bicycle tours along the route (field trips and guided explorer tours), determining a point price that ensures GIP financing while remaining acceptable to clients once included in the GIP surcharge.

The determination of the value of CO_2 emissions and of IMS point lies within the competence of the official booking centre, in close consultation with the GIP imp0lementer (if already appointed).

The value of a kilogram of CO_2 and of an IMS point will be reviewed once per year, always prior to the launch of the product for the new season, in order to ensure that the price remains consistent throughout the year.

The total GIP surcharge is then calculated as the sum of the financial value of CO_2 emissions and the value of the "missing" IMS points.

Value of clients's CO_2 emissions + **Value of IMS „missing" points** = **GIP surcharge**

Example:
In 2025, a test cycling tour along the cycling product route in the Central Pilot Area was organised within the ICTr-CE project. This trip was assessed using the IMS system, with the following results (values per person).

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Guided Explorer Tour_Central - GET_Central

Global Indicator	Scoring	Max scoring
Booking Centre Services	0	20
Accommodation	33.34	45
Food and Beverages	14.33	17
Transportation on site and related services	5	5
Activities	25	30
Tour Operator / Tour Guide	35	35
TOTAL IMS score	**112.67**	**152**
TOTAL CO2 emission	**290 kg CO2 emission**	

How GIP Surcharge is Calculated?

→ **Step 1: CO_2-based surcharge**
- The cyclist generated 290 kg of CO_2 emissions.
- The financial value of emissions is set at 70 € per tonne of CO_2.

CO_2-based surcharge: 0.29 t × 70 € = **29.00 €**

→ **Step 2: IMS-based surcharge**
- The cycling product achieved 112.67 IMS points, rounded to 113 points.
- The full reference value is 152 IMS points.
- The missing 39 points are monetised at 0.50 € per point.

IMS-based surcharge: 39 points × 0.50 € = **19.50 €**

→ **Step 3: Total GIP Surcharge**
19.50 € (IMS) + 29.00 € (CO_2) = **48.50 €**

3.5. GIP implementer

It is the organization assigned by to implement of GIP.
Its tasks are:

- Identifying projects in the territory that will be supported by GIP
- Receiving funds from OBC, generated by collecting GIP surcharge from clients;
- Distributing these funds to projects and ensuring their implementation and reporting;
- Reporting GIP to the Official Booking Centre (and to the EuroVelo 13 Partnership)

In the Start-up phase:
GIP implementers for the individual pilot areas will be designated directly from among the members of the ICTr project consortium (only for the Startup phase). Their role will be to receive GIP funds from the official booking centre and to distribute them in a timely manner to appropriate projects during the first two to three years of implementation of the ICTr products until the number of clients (i.e. the total amount generated by the GIP surcharge paid by clients) increases to a level at which it becomes appropriate to launch full-scale GIP funding and select a regular GIP implementer, as described below.

In the Full operation phase:
The GIP implementer will be appointed by the EuroVelo 13 Partnership and will be entrusted for a fixed period of 3 years.
Characteristics of the organization:

- Non-profit, non-governmental organization;
- A good reputation and a proven track record of an organisation that demonstrably respects ethical principles and operates in a trustworthy and transparent manner.
- Strong knowledge of organizations and projects in the territory, especially in the field of environmental and cultural heritage protection;
- Expertise in selecting projects that enhancing sustainability and resilience of the areas along the route;
- Experience with grant-making (process, grant & financial management, reporting);
- Ability to issue invoices (has got the business licence);
- An advantage if it is entitled to receive income tax assignation (if such a mechanism exists in the country).

The GIP implementer may be a member of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership.
The GIP implementer is entitled to a margin of up to 15 % of the collected GIP funds to cover the costs of GIP management.

3.6. Eligible projects

The essence of GIP lies in projects that improve the sustainability performance and resilience of cycling tourism products and routes, specifically on the EuroVelo 13 route within its ICTr pilot areas. Defining the specific and appropriate focus of the eligible projects, as well as selecting projects that fit this focus, is the responsibility of the GIP implementer. In doing so, the implementer will take into account local conditions along the route, the availability of suitable organizations for project implementation, and the focus of their activities. As this is a highly complex topic, the GIP implementer may involve relevant experts both in defining the focus of eligible projects and in selecting projects for support. This may include, for example, consultations or participation in a selection committee.

Table 1 provides several examples of potential projects in relation to the impacts they aim to mitigate:

Category	Focus	Possible project
Natural	Habitat fragmentation, wildlife disturbance	Closing of critical sections and marking&signposting of bypass
	Littering	Awareness raising, waste management
	Emission GHG*	Tree planting, preferably along the route Purchase&operation of electric support cars Measures in public transport (e.g. bike carriers)
	Soil erosion, vegetation trampling, damage of trails	Closing of critical section and marking&signposting of bypasses Adjusting of surface – anti-erosion measures, paving, small trail/route infrastructure
	Any impacts, mainly related to a specific site	Natural heritage interpretation with special focus on the protection necessity, explanation of measures above
	Overcrowding in protected areas, not respecting marked routes	Rotating trail closures (signing), allowing overused areas time to recover. Awareness raising.
Social	Overcrowding on recreational cycle routes and public spaces used by locals	Motivation to politeness, awareness raising, education. Bicycle traffic calming in critical places
	Multi-user conflicts - trails	Separating of users. Bicycle traffic calming in critical places Motivation to politeness, awareness raising, education.
	Multi-user conflicts - roads	Traffic calming - street design, traffic signing Motivation to politeness, awareness raising, education.
	Invasion of residents' privacy	Traffic calming. Temporary or permanent bypasses Motivation to politeness, awareness raising, education.
	Invasion of field/forest/construction workplaces	Traffic calming. Temporary or permanent bypasses Motivation to politeness, awareness raising, education.
	Cultural dilution or over-commercialization	Support to promotion and prioritazing of local heritage and culture.
Economic	Tax & profit leakage from region	Trainings of SME. Funding of small measures for local tourism related SMEs to be able to provide services for cycle tourists (in specific cases). Seed (co)funding for local SME. Support of local SME coordination and cooperation
	Restrictions of land use (e.g., farming, grazing) due to prioritization of cycling trails and infrastructure	“Time-sharing” systems - certain trails are prioritized for local use during specific time periods
	Seasonal dependency, inconsistent income	Diversification of offers (e.g. promoting hiking, cultural tourism, etc.). Development of an off-season offer and incentives for visitors with bicycles

* Incorporating the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by transport to and from the starting and ending points of ICTr cycling tourism products remains an open question for various reasons. Currently, in the pilot phases, we include some average values (based on model train travel) to obtain more realistic results compared to omitting this factor entirely.
However, these emissions should be taken into account in a case for cycling tourism at the destination level (not applicable to ICTr), as the vast majority of visitors arrive at the destination by car.

3.6.1. Framework Criteria for Project Selection

We can preliminarily define several main criteria for selecting eligible projects:

- Through its focus and practical implementation, the project should reduce the negative impacts of cycling tourism, ideally addressing the specific negative impacts of the given cycling tourism product. Alternatively, the project should enhance sustainability performance or increase resilience to threats that tourism may generate. Table 1 provides examples of project types that contribute to relevant themes.
    - An advantage is that the given cycling tourism product undergoes an IMS audit, which may indicate what to focus the project on.
- The project should have a long-term focus and should not consist of one-time activities. However, support will be granted on an annual basis, so project activities should be structured by year.
    - With a well-founded justification, the project can also focus on a one-time activity or measure. However, in the case of such one-time support, it is necessary to demonstrate the long-term impact of the project, as well as the maintenance, operation, and other aspects of its results.
- The project budget must be structured within a pre-defined budget.
- The project should involve volunteer work. This condition does not have to be mandatory, but it may serve as a supporting argument when selecting a given project.
- GIP support should not be the sole source of funding for the project, multi-source financing leverage the impact of the project. This is not a mandatory requirement, but it gives the project an advantage.
- The project should primarily be implemented by a local organization, or at the very least, actively and equally involve a local organization.
- The funds that the project receives within GIP should provable remain in the local area of the project (excluding legal contributions and taxes).
- If multiple projects are selected for support in one region, they should be demonstrably different in focus and/or location.
- Cross-border projects will be given preference, if available and of sufficient quality.
- The project should be presentable to the client, should they show interest—whether online or through a visit to a suitable location. A significant, though not mandatory, advantage is the possibility of involving clients in the implementation of the project, should they wish to participate.

3.7. Geographical aspect

In principle, we can consider three models for the geographical distribution of GIP funds within the countries where GIP will be implemented along the route:

1. Joint distribution for all participating countries.
2. Individual distribution in each country, where funds are divided based on the length of the segment in the respective country. (If a rest day is included in the itinerary, this should be reflected in the distribution of funds.)
3. Rotating distribution, where the entire collected sum is allocated in one country, but each year it is distributed in a different country.

For ICTr follow-up, we will use model No. 2, meaning that GIP funds will be distributed individually in each country through the respective GIP implementers, in approximate proportion to the length of the EuroVelo 13 sections within them (naturally, this is subject to the condition that suitable projects exist within the eligible areas in individual countries).
The model may be adjusted within 3-year cycles upon agreement within the EuroVelo 13 Partnership.

However, in the start-up phase, when the GIP-generated funds are expected to be still very limited, we assume support for only one project in each pilot region; therefore, none of the above-mentioned principles will be applied at this stage.

4. GIP PROCESS

In describing the GIP process, we consider, as already stated, two phases—the start-up phase and the full operation phase (see beginning of the chapter 3. GIP Framework).

In general, when describing GIP processes (read below), we assume that its framework, as described in the chapter 3. GIP Framework, along the route already exist (in the case of the ICTr project, they are at least the official booking centers in the start-up phase and the EuroVelo 13 Partnership in the full operation phase).

4.1. Step 1: Setting and Communicating the Surcharge

The calculation of the GIP surcharge is described in Chapter 3.4; therefore, only a brief summary is provided here.

The surcharge will be determined based on two inputs:

1. Carbon Footprint

The carbon footprint of the product is calculated using the CARMACAL carbon footprint calculator. As already stated above, we set the financial value of 1 tonne of CO_2 emissions at €70 (loosely based on the European Emissions Trading System, EU ETS).

2. IMS points

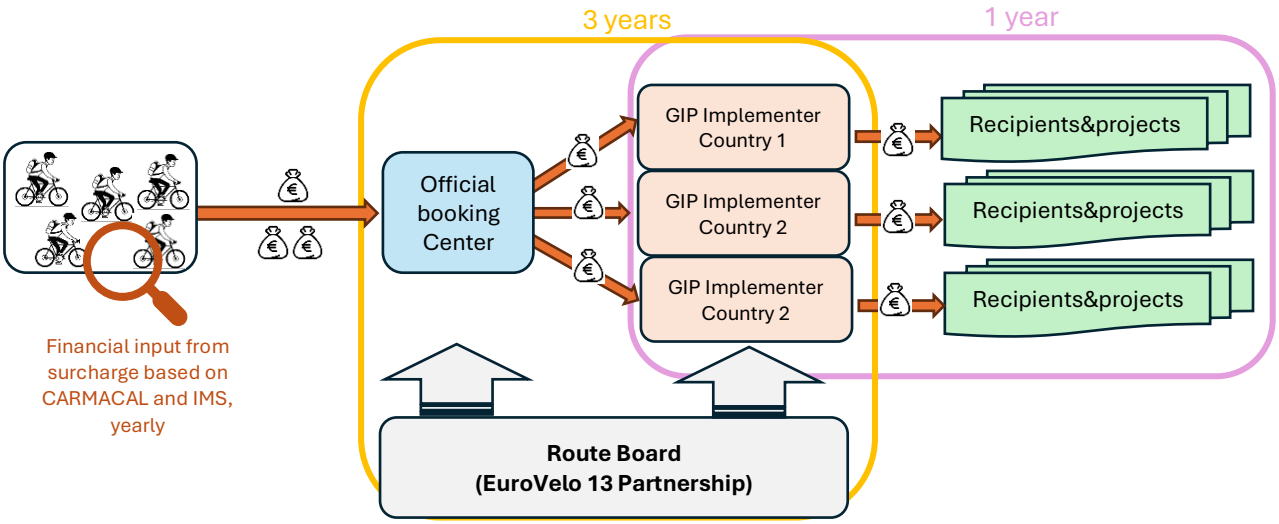
The number of "missing" IMS points is calculated as the difference between the maximum possible score of 152 points and the score achieved by the product in the IMS assessment. The financial value of "missing" point is 0,50 € in the the Start-up phase (based on experience of the ICTr-CE project team and IMS assessment of the pilot trips carried out within the ICTr-CE project in 2025.

The official booking centre determines the minimum **GIP surcharge** that the client must pay in addition to the base price of the product, calculated as the sum of the financial value of CO_2 emissions and the IMS points. (see Chapter 3.4).

Value of clients's CO_2 emissions + **Value of IMS „missing" points** = **GIP surcharge**

This must be done before the product is introduced to the market for the next season, ideally in the autumn of the preceding year, to ensure that the product is offered with its full price, including the surcharge.

The product cannot be purchased without the surcharge; the official booking centre will not offer such an option. However, the surcharge must be clearly and transparently separated within the price so that the client is aware it is included.



The communication of the surcharge is essentially a separate project activity (*A.3.2 Raising awareness with impact communication about the ICTr and its unique collective memory*). Therefore, in the following text and in Chapter 5.8, we provide only a few notes on communication.

At first glance, increasing the product price may seem counterproductive and could reduce purchase interest. However, based on experience, we assert that if the increase is not significant relative to the total price and is well communicated, it can actually enhance sales, primarily for two reasons:

- A higher price can create a perception of higher quality and/or value of the product (and possibly the brand), which clients may consider when making a purchase decision—especially if marketing targets markets with sufficiently high purchasing power.
- Cycling tourism clients are usually environmentally conscious and aware of sustainability issues, making the price increase through the surcharge—aimed at increasing sustainability and resilience of the areas along the route —an attractive feature for them.

Clients of the Austrian travel agency Trail Angels are, according to a survey, willing to pay an **additional fee for a climate-neutral product** as follows:
- no surcharge: 19 % of clients
- 5-10% surcharge: 35%
- 10-20% surcharge: 31%
- more than 20%: 4 %

Result: 70% of the guests would accept a surcharge **5% surcharge for a climate-neutral product** and **35% would accept even 10% surcharge,** according to the survey by Trail Angels.

To avoid greenwashing, it is crucial to carefully manage communication and project selection. This includes:

- **Avoiding misleading terminology:** When communicating the surcharge, terms like *"elimination of impacts," "offset,"* or *"impact compensation"* should be avoided. At least in the initial phases, we should also acknowledge that we are not yet able to quantify the reduction in impacts or the level of improvements.
- **Carefully selecting supported projects:** GIP-supported projects must demonstrably contribute to the increase of sustainability and resilience of the regions along the route.

Clients must be informed that the product price includes a surcharge *before* they decide to purchase. This is essential for transparency but, more importantly, for marketing, since— as noted earlier— the surcharge may increase the product's appeal to the target audience. Additionally, at the time of purchase, clients should also know which projects will be supported by GIP (and thus by their contribution), which can further enhance interest in the product (fulfilling this condition is not required during the start-up phase).

Value Added Tax - VAT

If the official booking centre is a VAT payer, which is highly likely, the surcharge charged to it must be increased by the applicable VAT. Clients must be clearly informed about this increase so that they understand that not the entire surcharge amount will go to the GIP, and that a portion will be paid to the state budget as the VAT.

Voluntary Surcharge Increase

As part of the purchasing process, clients will be offered the option to voluntarily increase the surcharge. The format of this offer will depend on the purchasing process itself. For example, it may include selecting a checkbox for 0%, 25%, 75%, or 100% surcharge increase, or manually entering a custom amount.

4.2. Step 2: Assigning of GIP implementer

A GIP implementer will be designated in each country where pilot sections of EuroVelo 13 are located and the product operated (Poland, Germany, Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia). It is not excluded that a single GIP implementer may operate in multiple countries.

Each GIP implementer will be appointed for a fixed period of 3 years.

Start-up phase: GIP implementers for the individual pilot areas will be designated directly from among the members of the ICTr project consortium. Their role will be to receive GIP funds from the official booking centre and to distribute them in a timely manner to appropriate projects during the first two to three years of implementation of the ICTr products, until the number of clients increases to a level at which it becomes appropriate to select full-operation GIP implementers.

The selection of the GIP implementer falls (in the full operation phase) under the authority of the EuroVelo 13 Partnership. There are two possible scenarios for appointing a GIP implementer:

- A pre-identified organization – for example, a partner in the ICTr project. This has the advantage that the organization is already aligned with the program, understands its mission, and vice versa— EuroVelo 13 Partnership is familiar with the organization and can assess its suitability for the role.
- An external organization – in this case, EuroVelo 13 Partnership will conduct a tender to select the GIP implementer.

Once selected, the EuroVelo 13 Partnership will formally appoint the organization and ensure appropriate communication so that the public, stakeholders in the affected regions, and clients are well-informed.

The GIP implementer will then sign an implementation contract with the official booking center (OBC) responsible for the respective section of the route in that country. The contract will will set out, among other things, the obligations of the GIP implementer regarding project selection, financial transfers, reporting, and other necessary provisions (see the details below).

4.3. Step 3. Transfer of GIP Funds from the Official Booking Center to the GIP Implementer

At the beginning of each 3-year cycle, the official booking center (OBC) will sign a contract with the GIP Implementer regarding the transfer of GIP funds. Based on this contract, the GIP Implementer will request payment from the official booking center for the implementation of GIP in the respective country after each cycling season for the following year.

Start-up phase: Temporary GIP implementer (see in the Chapter 4.2) will not sign 3-years contract with the OBC. Collected GIP funds will be transfered from the OBC annually on ad-hoc contract.

Where possible, the invoicing or any other suitable transfer method should be applied to avoid income tax liability, for example, through charitable advertising, tax-deductible donations, or similar mechanisms. However, if no such mechanism exists in a given country, the GIP fund transfer will likely be subject to income tax on the part of the GIP Implementer. The exact tax-deductibility options and/or exemptions from income tax depend on the legislation of the countries where GIP is implemented and fall outside the scope of this document.

The OBC will inform the GIP Implementer of the allocated amount for the given year as soon as it is determined, so that the GIP Implementer can begin preparing the redistribution of GIP funds as early as possible, even before the funds are transferred by the OBC.

4.4. Step 4. Project Selection for financial support

The selection of projects that will be supported by GIP is the responsibility of the GIP Implementer. Since the GIP Implementer should be an organization with experience in grant-making, the project selection process is within its competence, following its expertise, internal rules, and national legislation.

Clients who contribute to GIP will not have the option to select specific projects for funding, because long-term experience of grant-making organisations shows that as soon as project selection is left to public rather than experts, two things may happen:

- financial support may become fragmented in a meaningless and illogical way, significantly reducing the overall impact of the projects.
- the process turns into a “beauty contest” (appeal to the public) rather than a competition based on quality and real value.

However, clients have to be informed about the projects that are chosen for support.

Regardless of other formal requirements, each applicant must submit a framework application for GIP project support, which must include at least:

- Project objectives
- Activities and timeline
- Planned outputs
- Structured budget
- Project continuation plan after the support ends, or, if relevant, the method of ensuring maintenance or operation of the project’s results
- Communication plan about the project and its results, as well as about obligatory communication of the support from GIP.

Start-up phase: We assume that one project will be selected for support from GIP in a given year within a pilot area. In the initial years, the cycling tourism product will not generate enough funds to support more projects yearly. However, if needed and/or if sufficient funds are available, additional projects may also be supported.

The GIP implementer will conclude a support agreement with the organization whose project has been selected, in accordance with applicable legislation and in the most appropriate form depending on the financial mechanism used. This may include a grant agreement, a contract for work, a cooperation agreement, etc., with the choice of the appropriate form being fully within the competence of the GIP implementer.

The agreement must define at a minimum not only the project's activities, outcomes, and budget but also publicity rules and the obligation to provide photo documentation.

The GIP implementer will inform the EuroVelo 13 Partnership and OBC about the selected projects and will also publish them through standard channels.

4.5. Step 5. Transfer of funding from GIP implementer, implementation of projects

The GIP implementer, upon receiving the funds from OBC, will transfer them to the recipient in accordance with the agreement.

Support, whether in the form of a grant or a payment for goods and services, must be provided in at least two instalments—one after signing the relevant agreement and another after submitting the financial report and final project report. This means that the recipient will pre-finance a portion of the budget (equivalent to the final payment). While this may seem like a complication for the recipient, it is a necessary safeguard for the GIP implementer to ensure the successful completion of the project. Moreover, the recipient should be an proven organization for which pre-financing a small part of the project does not pose a problem.

The GIP implementer will monitor project implementation to ensure the project is implemented in accordance with the project application and any issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

During the project's duration, the recipient must be able to welcome a client at a suitable project location upon request and present the project. Alternatively, there must be a regularly updated website providing information about the project.

4.6. Step 6. Project reporting

After the supported period ends, the recipient must compile a final report and financial statement for the given period and submit it to the GIP implementer. This report must include the activities carried out, the results achieved, and a structured budget table for the implemented project. Additionally, the recipient must provide photographic documentation of the activities and project outcomes.

Upon approval of these documents, the GIP implementer will release the final payment.

The exact reporting details follow the standard practices of the GIP implementer and the legislation of the respective country.

4.7. Step 7. Program reporting

The GIP implementer is obligated, under the agreement with OBC, to prepare a comprehensive final report by a specified deadline. Therefore, the GIP implementer is responsible for collecting information from Recipients & Projects, including a summary of completed activities, a description of achieved results, details on project communication, an overview of measures taken for the sustainability of project outcomes, financial reporting, and, if relevant, a description of follow-up activities after the project's completion.

Based on this collected information, the GIP implementer compiles the comprehensive final report by the designated deadline. This report must be suitable for:

- OBC, in accordance with contractual terms, primarily for administrative purposes related to the provided funding.
- EuroVelo 13 Partnership, for central GIP management, promotional purposes, and evaluation.

4.8. GIP Communication

External communication

Good communication about GIP is essential for several reasons, such as:

- Competitive advantage – GIP creates a competitive advantage for the cycling tourism product, making it a valuable marketing tool.
- Customer awareness – Clients purchasing the product must be informed that a portion of the price contributes to GIP.
- Public perception – The public needs to be aware of the positive aspects of GIP which brings proactive sustainability enhancement and responsible product design in a future.
- Program transparency – Ensuring openness and accountability in the GIP program.

GIP communication operates on two levels: the program level and the project level.

Communication at the programme level is carried out primarily by the official booking centre, as it is responsible for communicating and marketing the cycling product as such, and the GIP is de facto an part of it it. Certain communication activities should also be undertaken by the EuroVelo 13 Partnership within its broader communication activities, in particular raising awareness about the GIP. Relevant stakeholders, such as DMOs, the

ECF, and others, should also contribute to communication efforts.
Communication objectives at the program level are realized:

- To inform the public in the affected region that cycling tourism provides benefits and opportunities and increase resilience of their GIP against potential threats.
- To inform markets and potential clients about GIP, its purpose, and methods, and show that GIP is the reason why clients should choose our cycling tourism product.
- To raise public awareness in the region about the impacts of cycling tourism and tourism in general.
- To recognize clients for purchasing the product, even if it is more expensive than the commercial price and appreciate their contribution to sustainable development of regions along the route.
- To support GIP fundraising efforts.

Communication at the project level is carried out by the supported project implementer and is a mandatory component of the project. Communication objectives at the project level:

- To inform the public at the project site that the project was realized thanks to cycling tourism, with an emphasis on the fact that the funds come from clients through GIP.
- To explain how the project helps increase sustainability and resilience of the area and society, what are benefits of the project.

The establishment of communication methods, channels, and specific content for GIP is not the purpose of this conceptual document; it will be more precisely defined during the launch of GIP. Below are some basic communication ideas for GIP that should be considered during its implementation and preparation:

- GIP will have its own domain and website, where the purpose and principles of GIP will be explained in an accessible format, and all projects selected for support, both current and past, will be listed. This website will be promoted in any communication of the related cycling tourism products to the public.
- The GIP logo with a link to the website, as well as a brief description of GIP, may be part of the OBC reservation page (e.g., BookYourTrail, etc.), ECF (EuroVelo page, etc. and will also appear on subpages of individual products (of course, this provision depends on the agreed communication and marketing approach of the OBC, the ECF/Eurovelo, etc., which is the subject of another activities and negotiations). This aspect is the object of another ICTr project activities.
- Clients who purchase the product will receive information about GIP as part of their welcome file and will also have it explained during the briefing (if applicable). Clients will receive a GIP certificate as recognition of their contribution to sustainability and responsible tourism. Consideration should also be given to distributing an appropriate give-away.

5. FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN FOR GIP IMPLEMENTATION

The method of implementing the GIP largely depends on how the necessary preceding steps and prerequisites are carried out, such as the EuroVelo 13 Partnership, official booking centre, cycling tourism product, and others.

However, in principle, we can define a basic sequence of several key full operations steps, which are described above:

Activity / Quarter	Yr 0		Yr 1				Yr 2				Yr 3			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1. Product selling, GIP surcharge communication														
2. Assigning of GIP implementers														
3. Transfer €€ from OBC to GIP														
4. Project selection														
5. Implementation of projects														
6. Projects reporting														
7. Program reporting														
Communication of GIP														

- outlined above sequence of steps is then repeated at three-year intervals (assuming acceptance of the proposed three-year mandate for the official booking centre);

Start-up phase: the chart above does not apply to the start-up phase, during which the GIP will be implemented in a simplified manner through temporary GIP implementers, with the assumption that only one project per pilot area will be supported per year. The plan within the start-up phase will most likely be as follows:

Activity/Month	2026				2027				2028 (= Yr 0)			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1. Product selling, GIP surcharge communication												
2. Assigning of temporary GIP implementers*											Full operation	
3. Transfer €€ from OBC to GIP												
4. Project selection **												
5. Implementation of projects												
6. Projects reporting ***												
7. Program reporting ***												
Communication of GIP												

* - appointed by the ICTr project consortium for each applicable cycle product

** - we suppose only one project supported per a pilot region

*** - very simple reporting supposed

6. FINAL REMARKS

6.1. Transferability of GIP

The Good Impact Program is, in principle, transferable to other long-distance cycling tourism routes. However, its transferability depends on the presence of a set of clearly defined structural and operational conditions. The GIP cannot be replicated as a stand-alone measure; it requires an enabling environment that allows it to function as an integrated part of the route's governance and business model.

A key precondition for transferability is the existence of a basic organisational structure along the route, comparable to the one developed within the ICTr project (see Chapter 3. GIP Framework). Three core components are essential and must be in place prior to any transfer of the GIP:

- **A route partnership or route management body** that is capable of taking strategic decisions on behalf of the route. This body must be able to formally decide on the establishment of the GIP, define its scope and basic rules, and express a shared commitment of stakeholders to reinvest part of the economic value generated by cycling tourism into sustainability and resilience measures along the route.
- **An official booking center** with a sufficient level of market presence and operational capacity. Transferability of the GIP presupposes the existence of bookable offers that can incorporate the GIP surcharge in a transparent and standardised way. The booking center must be able to collect the surcharge from clients, transfer the funds to the GIP implementer, and communicate the GIP consistently as part of the product's value proposition.
- **The application of a carbon footprint calculation and impact measurement system** to the relevant bookable offers. These tools are critical for determining of the GIP surcharge, which is inevitable part of th GIP. Of course, first and foremost, they make it possible to assess the environmental performance of the product. They also make possible comparability, transparency, and credibility across different routes and allow the GIP to be linked to measurable impacts and enable basic reporting, which is particularly important when transferring the concept to new territorial and institutional contexts.

Only if these three components are present can the GIP be meaningfully developed on the route. If one or more of them is missing, the transfer would remain purely theoretical and would not lead to a functional implementation.

Additional elements required for transferability include the availability of suitable organisations that can act as GIP implementers and a sufficient pipeline of projects that contribute to sustainability and resilience objectives. In most cases, these elements already exist at local or regional level, even if they are not explicitly linked to cycling tourism. Transferability therefore does not depend on creating entirely new structures, but rather on identifying, connecting, and gradually integrating existing actors and initiatives into the GIP framework.

In this sense, the GIP represents a transferable governance and financing mechanism rather than a fixed, one-size-fits-all solution. Its successful transfer to other routes requires adaptation to local conditions, capacities, and institutional arrangements, while maintaining the core principles and logic developed within the ICTr project.

6.2. Various

This document presents the concept of GIP; it is not an exhaustive plan for launching GIP but rather an outline of the basic frameworks and possible initial relationships for this program. For a more precise planning of GIP, several conditions need to be met, especially:

- The existence of the necessary structure (see section 4. GIP framework);
- Real operation of the cycling tourism products, including impact assessment, to obtain at least an approximate understanding of the potential range of the GIP surcharge in the future.

In practice, this means that if the pilot sale of the ICTr cycling tourism product begins in winter 2026 and its operation runs through the 2026 tourist season, then based on the initial findings, more precise planning for the establishment of the Full operation phase of the GIP can start in the second half of 2026. However, we assume

that neither in 2026 nor in 2027 will sufficient funds be generated to enable the full operation of the GIP, which we therefore expect to commence from 2028.
It is important to keep in mind that after gaining initial practical experience from operating the ICTr cycling tourism product, some aspects of this concept may change—for example, the GIP framework, timelines, and so forth. It is also certain that the “price” of an IMS point will be variable from year to year, based on