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Research "Development of EuroVelo routes in Latvia"

Summary

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Introduction

According to UN World Tourism Organisation research and predictions, there is an increasing demand for travel and tourism opportunities that have to do with nature and the outdoors. This conclusion is also supported tourism market research carried out by Latvia's State Tourism Development Agency.

Latvia has the necessary resources and largely unexploited opportunities for active tourism, nevertheless, the current active tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped and the level of services is limited and fragmented at best. As a result, Latvia is unable to offer the most in demand active tourism product – multi-day cycling routes.

In comparison with many other European countries, Latvia has almost no developed cycle tourism infrastructure or products. Cycle tourism product development is based on supporting tourism resources, material-technical means and service infrastructure. Depending on the current conditions and quality of these requirements, cycle tourism product popularity increases both locally and abroad. In supporting cycle tourism development, support for the development of local service providers (lodging, cafes and restaurants, attractions, museums, stores and shops and entertainment facilities) is also provided.

In 1995, the European Cyclists Federation approved the EuroVelo Project in an effort to create a cycling network within Europe which would cover the entire continent. Thanks to this project, cyclists in Europe can get from one country to the next on well-marked cycling routes. In Europe, EuroVelo is well-recognised among cyclists and, for this reason, the lack of a formal EuroVelo cycling route within Latvia creates false impressions about the potential for cycling tourism in the country. Not joining this network means that Latvia is left out of the information network, is excluded from international cycling maps and would lack recognisable cycling signage for foreign cycling tourists.[1]

Research goals:

To analyse the EuroVelo route possibilities in Latvia and make recommendations for concrete cycle routes.

Main research objectives:[2]

- **Practical route evaluation** (tourist attractions, analysis of tourism infrastructure on local and regional cycling tourism routes, digital photography of areas, GPS coordinate determination and marking on JS Baltija map materials);
- **Road evaluation and characteristics** (types, condition, accessibility, traffic intensity) and related analysis with international transport networks;
- Current and territorial plan for scheduled **cycle paths and cycling infrastructure recognition in municipal territories;**

[1] NK Consulting and LR Ministry of Economics contract Nr. 2007/86 technical specification.
[2] In accordance with NK Consulting and LR Ministry of Economics contract. 2007/86 technical specification, see Appendix 1.

- EuroVelo route **implementation, maintenance and development experience** in Estonia, Great Britain and Denmark;
- **Land owner identification** (where possible) and route permission and coordination with owners;
- **Route identification in accordance** with existing Latvian traffic safety regulations, environmental protection legislation, municipal planning and other documents;
- **Preparation of recommendations** for cycle route signage implementation;
- **Research administration** (work meetings, coordination, internal communication, final presentation).

The research has been structured in 10 sections:

- Section 1 outlines investigative work and description of research methods;
- Section 2 outlines general EuroVelo implementation principles and guidelines;
- Section 3 provides statistical data regarding cyclists and examines cycle transport policies and legislative aspects;
- Section 4 contains compiled research results and quantitative – qualitative analyses of EV10, EV11 un NV1 cycle routes tourism resources and cycling infrastructure. Analysed infrastructures include signage, information stands, parking, rest areas, lodging, food services, and public transportation including transport network applicability and potential for use. Compiled information about local and regional cycle routes and their potential inclusion in a EuroVelo route.
- Section 5 contains research and analyses of potential EV10, EV11 and NV1 routes and their applicability for cycle tourism and road safety;
- Section 6 compiles information regarding current and planned municipal work in the area of cycle transport development (including in territorial planning);
- Section 7 compiles information from the EuroVelo routes in Denmark, Estonia and Great Britain (implementation, maintenance and development experience);
- Section 8 provides conclusions regarding tourism resources and infrastructure, cycle tourism infrastructure and products, road safety and design, territorial planning and foreign experience in the creation of the EuroVelo network;
- Section 9 makes recommendations for actions and necessary events in the creation of EuroVelo routes and cycling infrastructure;
- Section 10 cites references and information sources;

This research comprises of 92 pages, including 70 pictures, 10 tables and 28 appendices.

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Based on the investigation time and compiled research results as well as the long-time practical cycling and cycling tourism experience of the authors, the following recommendations for the further development of EuroVelo routes and potential EuroVelo EV10, EV11 and NV1 routes, signage quantity and signage placement have been made.

Prospects for further development of EuroVelo routes

1. Considering conclusions regarding tourism and cycling tourism infrastructure, safety and other areas (see Section 5), the research authors recommend potential and planned financial resources to be devoted and directed toward the further development and implementation of the EuroVelo network (at both the municipal and state levels) and directed towards **new, qualitative cycling trail construction** which is separated from auto transport traffic;
2. Initially, cycle trail development should begin in inhabited areas (currently, several cities have shown good practice in this respect). The next step would be cycle route direction outside major cities (Liepāja, Ventspils, Jūrmala, Rīga, Daugavpils, Rēzekne) and regional cities (Kuldīga, Talsi, Tukums, Saulkrasti, Limbaži, Ainaži, Valka, Smiltene, Cēsis, Sigulda, Ērgļi, Viļāni, Dagda, Krāslava). Next steps would be to join the mentioned routes between more densely inhabited areas where the infrastructure is as important to local inhabitants for commuting potential as it is to tourists;
3. Considering foreign experience, it is advisable to focus attention to the development of national cycling trails. This would be priority in the Rīga region as well as towards popular tourism and recreation areas such as Rīga – Saulkrasti and Rīga - Sigulda. In developing the trails from the capital, it is advisable to base the development on maximum projected numbers of cyclists.

4. Considering **EuroVelo marking (signage)** sign wear and characteristic Latvian vandalism practices, the authors do not see the placement of signage according to the plan as beneficial at this time, if significant effort is not made to change the situation. This would not significantly improve state and EuroVelo cycle transport infrastructure associated issues;
5. EuroVelo route markers should be placed only when and where all has been done to maximally ensure cyclist safety and associated issues.
6. It would be possible in the future to construct asphalt paths for EV10 and EV11 which would be separated from all other traffic:
   - It is advisable to construct a two lane trails on a one way path of ~3 m wide. This is in keeping with EV principles where two cyclists can safely ride next to each other on a trail of this width. Cycling lanes are not as safe an option – this is more for two way commuting paths and not so applicable to tourism trails;
   - Cycling trail should be developed on the side of the road where the highest concentration of tourist attractions and services are located so that it is not necessary to cross traffic often. It is advisable to create crossings in inhabited areas wherever possible (where speed limits do not exceed 50 km/h) and to combine these with current pedestrian crossings;
   - Outside of inhabited areas, the best options for crossings are two level solutions such as tunnels or overpasses for cyclists, otherwise it is necessary to impose speed limits, install speed lights or speed bumps and extra lighting;
   - The priority areas for new cycling trails are areas where the intensity of traffic is high and where there is a higher potential for traffic accidents involving cyclists, as well as areas of low visibility, winding road, hilly terrain and poor road surfacing.
7. In areas where it is impossible to create a separate cycle path, the following short term improvements which do not require large investment could be made:
   - Road side maintenance to improve visibility in certain areas where bushes and trees are overgrown;
   - Speed limits of 50 km/h (in dangerous areas - at the same time impose safer speeds for auto drivers as well);
   - Regular road cover maintenance to avoid development of large potholes;
   - Road closures to cars (in areas that don't connect residential areas, country farmsteads, etc,) where possible.
8. It is vital to have the support and understanding of all applicable state, municipal and non-governmental agencies in order to achieve the development of a cycle route network in Latvia.

Potential EuroVelo routes

Recommendations for EV 10 route[3]

Lithuanian/Latvian border - Rucava (through Rucava's centre) – Nīca – Bernāti (through Bernāti's centre) – Liepāja (*Klaipēdas Street – Jūrmalas Park – Zvejnieku aleja – Roņu Street – Uliha Street – Promenāde - Jūras Street – Raiņa Street – Kaiju Street – Kapsētas Street – O. Kalpaka Street – Kalpaka bridge (once it has been renewed) – Atmodas bulvāris – Tērvetes Street – Viestura Street*) – Saraiķi – Ziemupe (centre) – Highway P 111 – Saka – **Pāvilosta** (*Dzintaru Street – Tirgus Street – Smilšu Street - Kalna Street – Dzintaru Street*) – Ulmale – **Jūrkalne – Alsunga – Ēdole – Īvande – Kuldīga**[4] (*Planīcas Street – Liepājas Street – Baznīcas Street – Senais tilts – Kaļķu Street – Ventspils Street – Virkas Street – Lapegļu Street – Ventspils Street*) – Ventava – **Ventspils** (*Zvaigžņu Street – Kuldīgas Street – Lielais prospekts – Vasarnīcu Street – Ostas Street – Vecpilsēta – Lielais prospekts – Dzintaru Street – Lidotāju Street – Talsu Street*) – Būšnieki – Irbene – Rinda – Ance – Pāce – **Dundaga** (*Pāces Street – Talsu Street – Pils Street – E. Dinsberģa Street – Talsu Street – Šlīteres Street)* – Neveja – Šlītere – Mazirbe – Košrags – Pitrags – Saunags – Vaide – Kolkas rags – Kolka – Melnsils – Ģipka – **Roja** (*Jūras Street – Plūdoņa Street*) – **Valdemārpils** (*Lielā Street – Talsu Street or Raiņa Street – Kalna Street - Parka Street – Dzirnavu Street – Talsu Street*) – Valdgale – **Talsi**[5] (*Dundaga Street – K. Valdemāra Street – Zvaigžņu Street – Fabrikas Street – Saules Street – Stendes Street*) – Dižstende – Stende – **Sabile** (*Meža Street – Talsu Street, Rīgas vai Ventspils Street– Kuldīgas Street – Brīvības Street*) **– Kandava – Pūre –** Vecmokas – **Tukums** (*Talsu Street – Revolūcijas Street – Lielā Street – Pils Street – Pasta Street – Dzelzceļa Street – Rīgas Street*) – Milzkalne – Klapkalnciems – Ragaciems – Lapmežciems – Kauguri – **Jūrmala** (*Asaru prospekts – Kāpu Street – Strēlnieku prospekts – Z. Meirovica prospekts – bike path*) – **Rīga** (*along current bike path to Mežaparks*) – **Trīsciems – Kalngale – Garciems – Carnikava** *(Rīgas Street - O. Vācieša Street – Rūpnieku Street – Līduma Street – path along the Gauja river)* **- ... Lilaste – Saulkrasti** (*Rīgas Street – Ainažu Street – Bīriņu Street*) – Bīriņi - Igate – Lādezers – **Limbaži** (*Rīgas Street – Jaunā Street – Parka Street – Cēsu Street – Stacijas Street*) – Pāle –**Salacgrīva – Ainaži** (*Brīvības Street – Dārza Street – K. Barona Street – K. Valdemāra Street*)

Route length: ~**770** km.

[3] City routes were prepared in accordance with municipal contributions and city territorial planning.;
[4] Kurzeme Tourism Association recommended routes through Kuldīga;
[5] Talsi TIC recommended routes through Talsi.

Recommendations for EV 11 route[6]

Valka (*Rīgas Street – Vienības gatve*) – Vijciems – Bilska – **Smiltene** (*Valkas Street – Daugava Street – Baznīcas Square - Raiņa Street – Gaujas Street - Rīgas Street*) – Branti – Rauna – Priekuļi – **Cēsis** (*Jāņa Poruka Street – Valmieras Street – Maija parks - Rīgas Street*) – Āraiši – Kārļi – Līgatne – Vildoga – **Sigulda** (*Nurmižu ceļš – Dārza Street – K. Barona Street – Pils Street – Raiņa Street – Pils Street – Ausekļa Street – Stacijas Street – Gāles Street*) – Jūdaži – More – Nītaure – Ģērķēni – Skujene – Spuldzēni – **Vecpiebalga** – Ineši – Jumurda – **Ērgļi** (*Piebalgas Street – Rīgas Street to the centre – Vestienas Street*) – Vestiena – Gaiziņkalns – Viesiena – Zelgauska – **Madona** (*Augu Street – Martas Riekstas Street – Skolas Street – Valmieras Street – Saieta laukums – Blaumaņa Street – Poruka Street – Saules Street – Lazdonas Street – Rūpniecības Street – path around Sala lake*) – Stalidzāni – Gaigalieši – Degumnieki – Īdeņa – Nagļi – Piliskolns – **Viļāni** (*Rīgas Street – Kultūras laukums – Brīvības Street – Ceriņu Street*) – Strupļi – Ciskādi – Ozolmuiža – **Rēzekne** (*Torņa Street – Viļānu Street – Brīvības Street – Atbrīvošanas aleja – Pulkveža Brieža Street – Dārzu Street – Latgales Street – Ludzas Street – Rēznas Street*) – Sprūževa – Stoļerova – Auziņi – **Ludza** *(Krāslavas Street – Latgales Street – Baznīcas Street – Latgales Street – Ludzas Street*) – Ņukši – Pilda- Ezernieki – **Dagda** (*Daugavpils Street – Lāčplēša Street – Asūnes Street – Alejas Street*) – Jaunokra – **Aglona** (*Dagdas Street – Krāslavas Street*) – Grāveri – Kombuļi – Krāslavas Station – **Krāslava** (*Stacijas Street – Pils Street – Grāfu Plāteru Street – Rīgas Street – Lāčplēša Street – Brīvības Street – Rīgas Street – Augusta Street*) – Daugavas loku route *(Skerškāni – Vilmaņi – Augustiniški – Tartaks – Žuravki – Zapoļniki – Šlutiški – Rudāni – Diļeviči – Juzefova*) – **Daugavpils** (*18. novembra Street – Viestura Street – Imantas Street – Cietokšņa Street – Daugavas Street)* – Ļūbaste – Urbanišķi – Bundišķi - Svente – Juneļi - Medumi (along Sventes and Medumu Lakes, not highway A 13!) – Latvia/Lithuania border point.

Route length: ~ **684** km.

On the EV 11 route from Valka – Smiltene – Cēsis, we also recommend an alternative route: **Valka** – Vijciems – **Valmiera** – **Cēsis**.

Recommendation for NV 1 route

Sigulda (*Gaujas Street – Turaidas Street*) **– Turaida – Ragana** - Bīriņi

Route length: ~ **22** km.

In the future, as an alternative to join the EV route to national cycle route and create new infrastructure, we recommend the **Rīga – Sigulda** route.

[6] City routes were prepared in accordance with municipal contributions and city territorial planning.

Picture 1. EV 10, EV11 and NV1 route recommendations.[7]
Map from "Jāņa Sēta."

[7] See Appendix 25. Picture "EV10, EV11 and NV1 route recommendations". Routes marked in JS Baltija cartographic material.

Signage location and numbers

Route EV 10 recommended length ~ 770 km and EV11~ 684 km, NV1 – 22 km. Considering EuroVelo recommendations and foreign experience, the **minimum** number of signs for route EV10 should be ~ 536, EV11 ~ 466 and NV1 ~ 32.

Without taking into account cities, there are a total of 280 significant junctions on the routes.

Picture 2. Locations of fixed junctions on the recommended cycle routes.
Map from “Jāņa Sēta.”

Cycle route signage

It would be good for the Baltics to have a coordinated and recognisable EuroVelo signage style and form. So that Latvia would not be excluded from this, it is recommended that the EuroVelo signage style that is currently in use in Lithuania and Estonia, as shown in pictures 68-70 below, be adopted for Latvia as well.

Cycle route signage recommendations

Bicycle pictogram in white on a blue background. Route numbers in white on a red background.

Picture 3. Cycle route and EV road signage in Estonia.[8]

[8] www.bicycle.ee