



AtlanticOnBike Project extension, Work Package 2

Transnational Marketing Strategy

European Cyclists' Federation

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www.eurovelo.com



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Introduction and aims

The present document aims at outlining a marketing strategy for EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, in order to make it a recognisable and interesting tourism product, ultimately attracting investments and tourists to the route and promoting its further development.

Methodology

This strategy is based on the extensive diagnosis strategy formulated in the original AtlanticOnBike project in 2021. The present document summarises the main outputs of the strategy and adapts the results to the most recent developments on the route to make it easier to use it by the partners on a day-to-day basis.

The study that was conducted in the original project followed a methodology consisting of three main aspects:

- Analysis: desk research on cycle tourism market's surveys, database of 30,000 questionnaires and bulletin boards on long-distance cyclists
- Interviews: tour operators, publishers, territorial managers and service providers
- Benchmark of EuroVelo marketing and governance.

Based on the data collected, the offer of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route was evaluated against the expectations of cycle tourists, and its potential as an inspiring cycle tourism destination was assessed. A SWOT analysis was performed in order to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the route. The present document contains a summary of this extensive study's results.



Considering the 2021 analysis, it is important to remember the route developments that have been carried out as part of the AtlanticOnBike project extension and the growth of cycling tourism attractivity following the Covid-19 pandemic. Differences in the cost of living across countries persist, but they are susceptible to change over time.

Moreover, the route has a bigger scope than a concentrated market; despite the French and German markets being the biggest in Europe, the strategy is to target a different type of audience that is spread across the continent. More information on the target groups is to be found in the following section.

For more information and detailed results, the initial version of the marketing strategy can be found [here](#).

Target groups

Cyclists and consumers

The Atlantic Coast Route has assets that make it unique and very appealing for cycling tourists:

- **Stunning nature and some of the best landscapes in Europe**; running largely along the coast, scenic views are very common, while the landscape changes moving from north to south, from the Nordic to the continental and Mediterranean climate. Together with the landscape, biodiversity changes sensibly, as well as culture, traditions, and heritage.
- Being a remote destination, the Atlantic coast offers the right experience for people looking for **adventure**, escaping from busy cities and daily life, and wanting to get closer to rural environments and the local population.

Therefore, the Atlantic Coast Route as a transnational tourism product should:

- Target a **specific audience** of cycling tourists and bikepackers, experienced and lovers of the outdoors, adventure and nature, and not so much families or beginners – although some sections of the route, such as La Vélodyssée, can target families and beginners on a local/national level. It is a niche market, but bikepacking is gaining popularity in recent years, following the pandemic.
- Value and highlight the **richness and variety of nature, experiences and landscapes**, making it worth taking such a detour from busy cities and other centres.
- Take into account the **diversity of the offer** along the route in order to better reflect the nature of the transnational product being offered.



STRATEGY / TARGETS

Targets

YES



YES



Very long distance

YES



Light and fast

YES



Gravel bikers

YES / NO



Families

NO



Beginners



The diagnosis strategy also points out important weaknesses of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, which leads to the conclusion that it is not the conventional cycling tourism product for every cycling tourist:

- It is a **long** cycle route largely in **remote** areas, sometimes difficult to reach with public transport, scarcely populated and, therefore, with fewer cycling-friendly services compared to other areas of Europe that are known for cycling and tourism. It is outside of the radar of the main or best-known cycle routes.
- The Atlantic brings plenty of **wind and rain** in most route stretches, and colder temperatures compared to other, more conventional cycle destinations in Europe. In inland Spain, the temperatures can be very hot in the summer. The route cannot be cycled all year long due to weather conditions.
- The terrain can be challenging, with a **moderate elevation**. Infrastructure and signposting are not uniform and coherent across the route, with different types of road surface. Some parts require **crossing seas** by ferry.

Businesses and stakeholders – demonstrating the potential of the Atlantic Coast Route to attract investments

To market the Atlantic Coast Route and make it a successful tourism product, it is important to raise awareness of it with the tourism industry, publishers and editors, and local and national policymakers. A better knowledge of the potential and assets of the route will make it higher on the agendas to improve and market it from a local to a national level, as well as attract investments to improve route infrastructure, signposting, services and attractivity.

It is important to note that different countries or regions covered by the route may have different needs in terms of attracting investments: the most advanced ones, i.e. where the route is developed and signed, will require investments in the touristic promotion of the product and on the maintenance of the infrastructure and services, while less-developed route stretches will first require investments to improve route infrastructure, and tourist promotion efforts only at a second stage.

In order to secure investments, public administrations – from the local to the national scale – have to be persuaded of the value of the Atlantic Coast Route and of the benefits of developing it, both for the local community and for tourists.

Roles and responsibilities

It is crucial to define roles in promoting the tourism product, as well as ensuring that there is consistent and common planning, in order to deliver a coherent message.

European stakeholders

At the European level, ECF manages EuroVelo, including the EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route. ECF facilitates the transnational dialogue between the organisations that manage the route at a national level but also all stakeholders having an interest in the transnational aspects of EuroVelo routes (tour operators, editors, transnational organisations, etc). It creates shared materials about the route, which include a common branding, logo, an [image bank](#), a [press kit](#), a [promotional schematic map](#), and the present marketing strategy. ECF helps coordinate the management of the route with the concept of EuroVelo Partnership, which aims to promote the product in a unified way and therefore make the most of the strategy (former [Long-term management agreement](#)).

Projects such as AtlanticOnBike are instrumental in the creation of a single tourism product, establishing or producing some of the key promotional tools – strategies, content, etc. Moreover, ECF is responsible for the



promotion of the route on the EuroVelo website www.EuroVelo1.com and communication channels, which have a large reach and give constant visibility to the route throughout the year. Lastly, ECF supports higher quality standards of EuroVelo routes through its [European Certification Standard](#) methodology to survey and certify cycling routes, but also by publishing official manuals such as a Transnational Signing Manual and Guidelines on Rest Areas (which are conceived in the framework of the AtlanticOnBike project extension and will be accessible in the EuroVelo website's [Resources section](#)).

National stakeholders

[National EuroVelo Coordination Centres](#) play a crucial role in the promotion and development of EuroVelo routes at a national level, as they are the main contact point for the EuroVelo Management Team. They are responsible for liaising with the rest of the national stakeholders to provide the correct updated information on the route for the EuroVelo website, news about the network, and ensure that the portal is updated. In this respect, National EuroVelo Coordination Centres are a key element of connection between the international and national aspects and a successful touristic promotion strategy should include them.

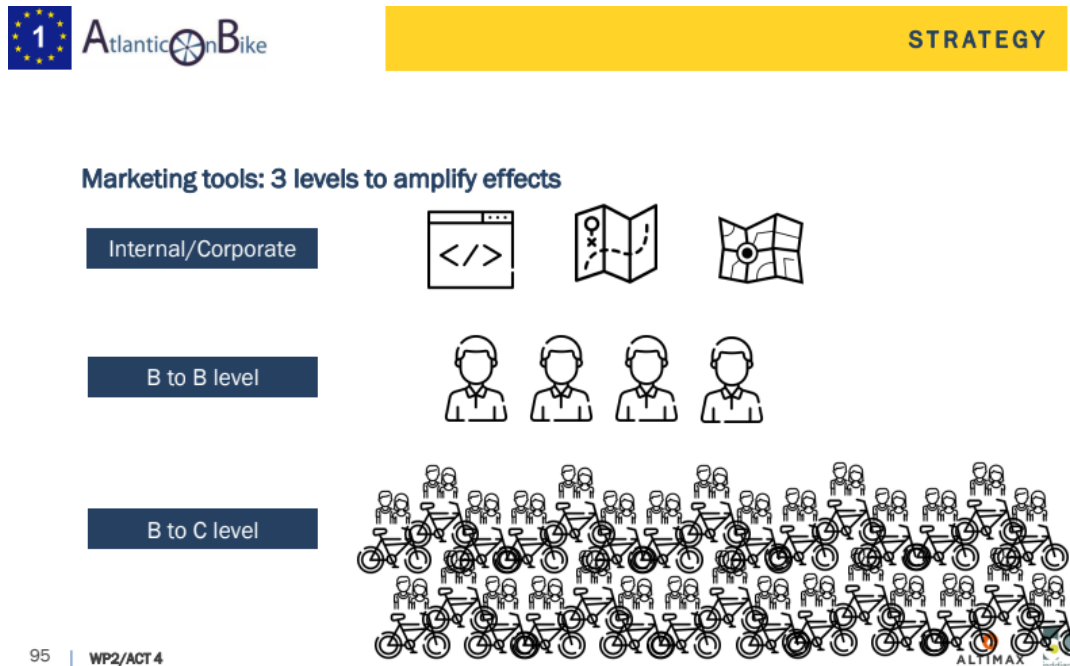
National stakeholders, especially those specific to the national section of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, have the role of promoting their section of the route in their own country, using their own language and targeting users, media and press, national publishers, tour operators, etc. They are also generally responsible for the outreach to national and local decision-makers. They may also promote the route to international users by focusing on their national section of the route.

It is important to note that tourist promotion may be devolved to the regional level in some countries, e.g. federal states. Such division of competencies generally results in different strategies to promote the route, based on different regions and their priorities. When this is the case, an instrument such as the EuroVelo Partnership (described in the next section) is essential to ensure that the tourist product is uniform.

Regional and local stakeholders

Regional and local stakeholders along the route have the role of promoting their section of route in their own country and region, in addition to the national promotion. Their competencies and budgets can vary between countries. These stakeholders are also responsible for the outreach to local decision-makers and people who live on the route, and should be aware of the route passing by their homes and regions.

Marketing the route transnationally: concrete actions



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EuroVelo Partnership as the backbone of the marketing strategy

To put the marketing strategy in place and make the most of the deliverables of the AtlanticOnBike project, a transnational partnership for the route is crucial. Such a consortium, including all project partners and potentially other national or regional stakeholders, gives shape to the marketing and promotion efforts, and ensures that there is continuity, and a strategy, with annual planning, budget and targets for the tourism product development, and a division of tasks between the various members of the partnership. A ready-to-use tool is available: EuroVelo Partnership which has been already implemented [for the period 2021-2023](#); open discussions to renew it are ongoing when this document is being written.

The partnership format allows ECF and national stakeholders to meet to coordinate and discuss priorities and issues, as well as to exchange experiences and best practices. Dialogue and exchange are key elements for the success of a unified international tourism product such as the Atlantic Coast Route.

Digital promotion

In a heavily digitalised world, more and more cycling tourists surf the internet for inspiration for their trips and on destinations. Investing in digital tools is therefore a key element to promote a tourism product. This is especially true in this case given that the Atlantic Coast Route is largely crossing remote and sparsely populated areas, away from large cities, and consequently a smaller number of cyclists will find themselves on the route. Indeed, people will have to engage and actively make the choice to travel a bit further to cycle on EuroVelo 1, planning their trip based on the information available online. As a transnational cycle route, the [EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route website](#) should therefore be the most up-to-date and the reference location for information and GPX tracks.



Search Engine Optimisation (**SEO**) is another important feature to make sure that the Atlantic Coast Route website can be easily reached by more web users. This ensures that users get the most relevant and up-to-date information about the route, including the EuroVelo GPX tracks, when searching for information on the web.

Promotional content such as articles about the route and what it offers should be produced regularly for the EuroVelo website and for national or local websites. When possible, the articles and content should be translated in languages other than English – the local languages, or the other languages of the EuroVelo website (French and German). Other regional, nice-to-have campaigns can target specific markets.

Social media presence should be ensured for improved awareness. For this, it is key to capitalise on the existing asset of the Atlantic Coast Route: scenic views and landscapes – two very attractive visual elements for social media. In this respect, an [updated image bank](#) and/or a list of resources that are free to use to promote the routes is important (for example infographics and icons produced during the AtlanticOnBike project extension). Social media presence should come both from the transnational side of ECF (promoting the route or the content about it) and from the national and/or regional parties involved in the promotion of the product. In order to gain more visibility, the use of **advertising** on social media is advised, especially at the transnational level.

Press and editors

Press work to raise awareness of the route can give an important boost to visibility. However, press outreach requires effort and time, and it is not easy to get coverage in large media for a niche product. The press kit and resources developed for EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route should be kept updated, but the approach to press should be targeted to the niche market of cycling tourists who would go bikepacking on the route, at least at the transnational level. In this respect and keeping in mind the role of social media in promoting destinations, it can be interesting to work with **influencers**, even locally, to promote the route or some of its stretches to a public that is already interested in bikepacking, cycling, and experiencing nature and wilderness. Similarly to press outreach, building a network of editors, publishers and tour operators requires time and effort and a positive outcome is not guaranteed. It is recommended that, in the case of EuroVelo 1, the transnational focus is put on large publishers of transnational guides, while a desirable effort is to target national publishers, which should be done by national partners.

It is important to note that at a national and transnational level, coherence is crucial. National organisations involved in the marketing of the route should make sure to engage with various tourism marketing stakeholders and check that there is awareness of the pre-existing materials, that branding is uniform (the **EuroVelo Brand Guide**, outlining the brand guidelines, is available upon request to the EuroVelo Management Team), and that guidelines are respected (EuroVelo manuals are available in the [Resources section](#) of the EuroVelo website, and are regularly updated in the frame of European projects).

Events

Events such as fairs are still important to promote the route at national and international levels. Given the growth in interest for outdoor experiences, bikepacking, and long-distance slow travelling such as cycling, it may be interesting to promote EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route at adventure travel, cycling tourism fairs and events. Such presence allows targeting a niche but growing audience, with better chances to attract already interested visitors than large and general tourism fairs.

However, for business-to-business relations, events such as large tourism fairs (such as [ITB Berlin](#)) can be a good way to bring general awareness and get in touch with publishers, tour operators and other stakeholders. It is recommended that EuroVelo 1 is represented at larger transnational events, but always as part of the general network, in order to make the most of the recognition of the EuroVelo brand at the European level.

Conclusion

Following the first marketing diagnosis of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, general recommendations can be implemented in the frame of a EuroVelo Partnership, gathering all national partners to implement a transnational action plan. A next step towards a well-structured marketing strategy should be to continue the work on three different pillars:

- The marketing assets and identity of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route as a unique cycling tourism project;
- The main target audiences of the routes in terms of interests, age, countries of origin and expectations. Further work on personas could help to prioritise marketing activities at the transnational level;
- The ambition and marketing targets of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route as a product to monitor the strategy and adapt it if needed.



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