

## **END-OF-DEGREE PROJECT**

# **Cycling in a cross-border tourism territory: the case of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre (NAEN) Euroregion.**

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## **Abstract**

*This End-Of-Degree project analyses cycle tourism in the Euroregional framework of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre (NAEN).*

*This analysis has been carried out within the framework of the Strategic Plan of the region 2021-2027 with the intention of analysing the capacity of cycle tourism as a socially cohesive and sustainable tourism product of great differential and innovative value for the NAEN Euroregion.*

*To do this, firstly, the literature on this subject has been analysed and first-hand information has been collected, using qualitative techniques. This was followed by a SWOT analysis, from which proposals were made to promote cycle tourism in the NAEN Euroregion, in line with the objectives of the Strategic Plan.*

*The analysis shows that there are major difficulties in promoting a project of this type, but at the same time, it could bring significant benefits to the Euroregion.*

*Keywords: cycle tourism, NAEN Euroregion, Strategic Plan.*

## **Laburpena**

*Gradu amaierako lan honetan zikloturismoaren analisisa egiten da Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarra (NAEN) Euroeskualdean.*

*Analisi hori Euroeskualdearen 2021-2027rako Plan Estrategikoaren markoan egin da, zikloturismoak, produktu turistiko gisa, kohesio soziala handitzeko, jasangarritasuna bultzatzeko eta Euroeskualdearen balio diferentziala handitzeko duen gaitasuna aztertzeke asmoz.*

*Horretarako, lehenbizi, gai honen inguruko literatura aztertu da eta lehen eskuko informazioa jaso da, teknika kualitatiboak erabiliz. Jarraian AMIA analisisa egin da, eta hura oinarritzat hartuz, zikloturismoa Euroeskualdean bultzatzeko proposamenak egin dira, beti ere plan estrategikoaren helburuak lortze aldera.*

*Egindako analisiak agerian uzten du horrelako proiektu bat sustatzeko zailtasunak handiak direla baina, aldi berean, onura nabarmenak ekar diezazkiola Euroeskualdeari.*

*Hitz gakoak: zikloturismoa, NAEN Euroeskualdea, Plan Estrategikoa.*

## **Resumen**

*En este trabajo de fin de grado se realiza un análisis del cicloturismo en el marco Euroregional Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarra (NAEN).*

*Este análisis se ha realizado en el marco del Plan Estratégico de la comarca 2021-2027 con intención de analizar la capacidad del cicloturismo como un producto turístico socialmente cohesionado y sostenible de gran valor diferencial e innovador para la Eurorregión NAEN.*

*Para ello, en primer lugar, se ha analizado la literatura sobre este tema y se ha recogido información de primera mano, utilizando técnicas cualitativas. A continuación, se realiza el análisis DAFO; a partir del cual se han realizado propuestas para promover el cicloturismo en la Eurorregión NAEN, y acorde con los objetivos del plan estratégico.*

*El análisis muestra que existen grandes dificultades para impulsar un proyecto de este tipo, pero al mismo tiempo podría traer importantes beneficios a la Euroregión.*

*Palabras clave: cicloturismo, Euroregión NAEN, Plan Estratégico.*

## **Abstrait**

*Ce projet de fin d'études analyse le cyclotourisme dans le cadre Eurorégional de Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre (NAEN).*

*Cette analyse a été réalisée dans le cadre du Plan Stratégique de la région 2021-2027 avec l'intention d'analyser la capacité du cyclotourisme en tant que produit touristique durable et socialement cohésif d'une grande valeur différentielle et innovante pour l'Eurorégion NAEN.*

*Pour ce faire, nous avons tout d'abord analysé la littérature sur ce sujet et recueilli des informations de première main, en utilisant des techniques qualitatives. Cette étape a été suivie d'une analyse FODA, à partir de laquelle des propositions ont été faites pour promouvoir le cyclotourisme dans l'Eurorégion NAEN, conformément aux objectifs du plan stratégique.*

*L'analyse montre qu'il est très difficile de promouvoir un projet de ce type, mais qu'en même temps, il pourrait apporter des avantages importants à l'Eurorégion.*

*Mots clés: cyclotourisme, Eurorégion NAEN, Plan Stratégique.*

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## Cycling in a cross-border tourism territory: the case of NAEN Euroregion

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Traveling by bicycle to get to know and explore a territory, a city... is undoubtedly a reason for an increasing number of people to travel. As a result, their main motivating element of the trip is the practice of cycle tourism.

Cycle tourism is an environmentally friendly activity that contributes to the tourist attractiveness of a destination and to its tourist economy.

Many of these opportunities derive from a way in which tourism has the possibility to differentiate itself from the competition and to gain competitive advantages over other holiday destinations.

The use of cycling as a form of leisure and tourism is on the increase, both among young people and adults; this is thanks to the help of the extension of a network of routes such as the national greenways. Another example, which I will defend later, is the proposed Eurovelo Network, a network of European cycle routes.

Nowadays, as a consequence of the pandemic and crisis stage that the world is going through, it is more than necessary to develop new forms of tourism, and cycle tourism is one of the modalities that is growing in most European countries.

The sector has to adapt as well as possible to this environment, attending to the new needs of visitors and anticipating them, in order to take advantage of the opportunities. That is why; I believe that offering a product such as cycle tourism would be a very good alternative, as it has the necessary ingredients to provide tourists with an experience.

The commitment to this type of tourism is still underdeveloped in the NAEN Euroregion. The Basque Country and the Aquitaine area have a series of characteristics that favour the development of cycle tourism; all of which makes it possible to enjoy a wide variety of landscapes, culture and many other aspects.

The Strategic Plan of the Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre EGTC will be also analysed in the framework of how the cycle tourism can help in order to achieve some aims of the plan.

### 1.1 Objectives of the research study

The general objective of this work is to evaluate and propose cycle tourism as a socially cohesive and sustainable tourism product of great differential and innovative value for the NAEN Euroregion.

The specific objectives of this work are the following:

- To analyse cycle tourism in a broad sense.
- To study the NAEN Euroregion and its Strategic Plan.

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- To analyse cycle tourism in the NAEN Euroregion and examine whether it can act as a bridge for the Euroregion's strategic objectives by focusing on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- To make proposals to boost cross-border cycle tourism.

The commitment to this type of tourism in the Basque Country and the Aquitaine area has a series of characteristics that favour the development of cycle tourism, as it is an area between two neighbouring countries. The relevant cycling events and races that the province has, both nationally and internationally, which I will defend later, make it possible to enjoy a wide variety of landscapes, culture... in the Euroregion area, promoting a sustainable activity.

### **1.2 Personal achievement**

The proposal I would like to include would be about the creation of a cycling policy or a model that is not based ONLY on infrastructure. A comprehensive cycling policy, including the whole range of measures that allow to deal with the border barriers that cycling mobility currently encounters. I want to show that this activity has a number of advantages that will be very positive for tourism companies working in the field of cycle tourism, as it is a tool that enhances public-private collaboration. It could be beneficial for the citizens of the Euroregion because it leads to a more facilitating link for the citizens of the area.

### **1.3 Justification of the research study**

I have been fortunate enough to work on a project called Transport(s), in close cooperation with MSHA (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine). The project Transport(s), studies sports and leisure practices, in the broad sense, in European cross-border areas, particularly in the context of public action for European territorial cooperation.

The subject I had to deal with was cycle touring. Cycle touring in full. At first, I did not have much idea of what this practice really was. It was not even a term I had heard before either.

Regarding the Euroregion, I had never heard this term before, it was not even familiar to me until the day I started this end-of-degree project. I did not know that I belonged to a Euroregion just because I lived in Gipuzkoa.

I will be honest: I have never really liked cycling. I have always preferred running or walking in the mountains. On the other hand, I found the traveling cyclists, loaded with their saddlebags, interesting and curious at the same time.

Without any doubt, this project has taught me that since we live on a very close border with France, there are more opportunities in terms of work, culture and social life than disadvantages.

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I will also share my project in Bordeaux on the 1st of July at an International Congress where I will have the privilege to listen to the other partners of the project but from different frameworks on sport who have been involved in the project.



*Illustration 1. In Bordeaux explaining some approaches about the project.  
Source: own elaboration.*

### 1.4 Methodology

To meet the objectives set out in the previous point, the following methodology has been defined:

- Literary sources: information from books, magazines and articles, both sources using both national and international.
- Reports: prepared by different agencies and public bodies.
- Interview: informal and semi-structured interviews with different agents.
- Two observational studies.

The proposal of this project is, through experiential and collaborative learning, to analyse cross-border cycle tourism in a broad sense; examining the use of the area, services, entities, possible projects and so on.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this work is to study cycle tourism in the NAEN Euroregion within the framework of the 2021-27 Strategic Plan. For this reason, in this chapter I will analyse the cycle tourism in a broad sense, the concept and characteristics of the NAEN Euroregion as well as its Strategic Plan for the coming years.

### 2.1 Concept and scope of cycle tourism

In this section, I will go deeper into the concept of cycle tourism in order to know what is it, the profile of the cycle tourist and the benefits this activity has in order to better understand the rest of the concepts that will be developed later.

#### 2.1.1 Concept of cycle tourism

As María Moral already said in her article on cycle tourism as a sustainable model, "*In recent years, the use of bicycles as a means of transport or for sport and leisure is gradually increasing [...] a new sustainable tourism mode, cycle tourism*". Indeed, the bicycle is an extraordinary device for perceiving the world, which requires above all a perfect understanding of oneself and one's surroundings (Moral, 2016).

From the article recently read by Jose Maria Oliva Melgar, on cycle tourism; sport and culture on the bicycle, he named this term as "*the practice of cycling that unites sport and culture, physical exercise and training*". A form of cycling that can also provide great days of friendship, which in turn, contains a great variety and options for all types of cyclists. It includes both cycling a few kilometers from home and long-distance trips with perfectly planned sporting and touristic objectives (Oliva, 1986).

In the research on the concept of cycle tourism and the definitions provided by the various authors who have investigated the subject, it has been found that the concept can be analysed from different perspectives, and can therefore be understood in one way or another depending on the elements that are analysed. This makes it very difficult to have a valid and universal definition of the concept, as it is surrounded by several aspects that some authors have given more importance than others.

Simonsen, Jorgensen and Robbins (1998) in their research on cycle tourism in two regions of Denmark say exactly: "*it is difficult to define accurately what makes up the cycling tourism product*".

Therefore, they make it clear that the definition of the concept of cycle tourism can encompass many different meanings. In their book on cycle tourism, Simonsen (1998) state that cycle tourism is the use of the bicycle as a means of transport during a trip, which for the tourist is an essential part of his or her holiday. According to these authors, people who use the bicycle for racing and sporting

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competitions during their trip are also excluded, since the main purpose of their trip is competition, and therefore they make a more restrictive interpretation of the concept of cycle tourism.

Next, Lumsdon (1996, cited by Lamont, 2009) proposes the definition of cycle tourism as the set of activities and phenomena related to cycling that are a major element of the tourist's trip outside their immediate environment.

Cycle tourism includes any activity, with or without the specific use of bicycles, undertaken by any person who spends a minimum of 24 hours (Ritchie, 1998). This type of trip can be either organized by the tourist on their own, or included in a package tour together with other services such as transport support or accommodation.

Lamont (2009) states that in his view cycle tourism encompasses any trip to another location at least 40 km away from the tourist's home, whether with or without an overnight stay, where cycling and cycling are the main motive, whether for holiday, recreational and/or competitive purposes. Thus, it also includes trips to attend cycling events or competitions in the term cycle tourism.

However, Ritchie and Dodd (2008) accept that anyone who travels for cycling purposes, whether to observe or participate in cycling, is a cycle tourist. However, they emphasize that tourist who decide to use a bicycle on an impromptu basis during their trip because it was not the main reason for their trip should be excluded.

According to the study on the Economic Impact of Cycle Tourism in Europe (Mató and Troyano, 2014), four main subgroups can be distinguished, which are analysed separately on this topic.

- **Cycling holidays:** The duration includes one night or more away from home and cycling is the main purpose and activity of the holiday. A touring cyclist is referred to as a touring cyclist when cycling between accommodation and accommodation. In a more graphic way, touring cyclists would be those who travel with a saddlebag and pannier.
- **Cycling on holiday:** Includes cycling trips from the place of accommodation or from another point. It is part of the holiday but not necessarily the only activity.
- **Day cycling trips:** Cycling trips of more than 3 hours' duration made from the usual place of residence mainly for leisure purposes. The term excursionists is used for this group.
- **Sport cycling:** A sport cyclist is a cyclist who uses specific equipment and makes relatively long (+ 50 km) day trips. This group includes both road cycling and mountain biking and can be included in any of the three previous groups.

Thus, we can see that there are different concepts and meanings of cycle touring, attributing different characteristics and peculiarities to it. The most relevant aspect of this article is that the term "**competitive cycling**" is totally excluded from the group of cycle touring.

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In summary, it can be seen that cycle tourism is generally understood as a broad concept, a type of tourism that functions as an umbrella, encompassing various typologies and three different modalities: tourism, sport and leisure. In this way, it is certain that the bicycle is not just a means of transport, but also an integral part of the travel experience; the journey is as important as the destination, and in some cases, the journey is the destination.

### 2.1.2 The cycle tourists: profile and motivations

The cycle tourist profile can be very different depending on the type of cycle tourism they practise, the country where they do it or the motivation they have when traveling. Thus, the study on the Economic Impact of Cycle Tourism in Europe (Mató and Troyano, 2014) made an approximation of the user profile:

- **Average age:** 45-55 years old.
- **Sex:** 40% women and 60% men.
- **Social status:** high social status with secondary and university education.
- **Income level:** between 2.000 € and 3.000 € per month.
- **Seasonality:** One of the most important elements for cycle tourists is the climate. For this reason, in countries such as Germany or the United Kingdom, 79% of cycle tourism trips take place in the summer months.
- **Duration:** The tours have an average duration of one week.
- **Accommodation:** The main type of accommodation at a European level is mostly hotels and pensions, “bed and breakfasts” to a lesser extent, campsites and hostels.



*Illustration 3. Cycling holidays.*  
Source: Pedalia.



*Illustration 2. Sport cycling.*  
Source: pixabay.

Taking into account the expenditure per day and the average number of days of the trips, the average expenditure per trip for a cycle tourist is per trip in cycle tourism is higher than in tourism in general (Mató and Troyano, 2014).

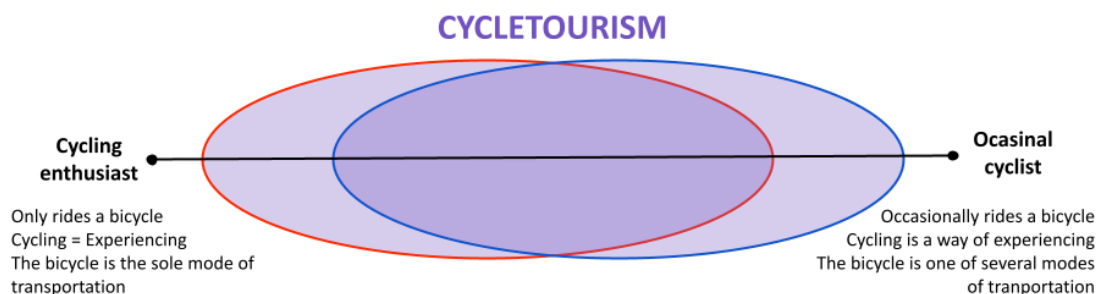
A proposal relaunched by Simonsen, Jorgensen and Robbins (1998) distinguishes between two typologies of cycle tourists according to their level of involvement with cycling and the end of cycling during their holidays.

On the one hand, we find the **hardcore cyclist or cycling enthusiast**, who has the highest level of involvement in cycling. The main motive and objective of this cyclist is to cycle on holiday.

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On the other side of the scheme, we can find the **occasional cyclist**, the one who at a given moment of his holiday will decide to cycle, but only for a few days and not for the whole duration of the trip. Cycling is only seen as an option and a means of transport to visit the destination they are traveling to, but they only use it if the weather conditions allow it.

Graph 1. Typologies of cycle tourism.



Source: own elaboration based on Simonsen (1998).

By this scheme, cycle tourists engage in a number of common activities, but at the same time have very different reasons for choosing a cycling holiday. Consequently, cycle tourists can be considered a homogeneous group because they cycle on holiday, while they are less homogeneous in other respects (Simonsen, 1998).

Moreover, taking into account a study carried out by Ignacio Ayesa, he separated the types of cycle tourists into three blocks (Ayesa, 2016).

- **Day trippers:** they cycle 40 km a day and spend 10 € a day.
- **Cycling holiday:** cycling 40km per day and spending 45 € per day.
- **Cycling holiday:** cycling 60km per day and spending 72 € per day.

Besides, Ayesa (2016) in his published study, created a table in which he related the percentage of cycle tourists with the length of their holidays. In conclusion, it can be seen that most of the cycle tourists travel with the bicycle for approximately 10 days.

Table 1. Percentage of cycle tourists according to the length of their holidays.

Duration of holidays	% of cycle tourists
2-4 days	30%
5-7 days	30%
8-14 days	32%
More than 15 days	8%

Source: own elaboration based on Ayesa study (2016).

Once we have decided the profile of cycle tourists, we will focus on their motivations. Ignacio Ayesa, in his study of the cycling economy in Navarre, indicates that the main

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reasons for choosing a cycling holiday destination ranked in order of importance (Ayesa, 2016):

1. Route with low traffic density or reserved for cyclists.
2. Sufficient and appropriate signage.
3. Variety of routes in a cyclist-friendly environment.
4. Asphalted Road surface.
5. Adequate accommodation for cyclists.
6. Provisioning opportunities on the routes.
7. Guides with information available.
8. Access by public transport.
9. Density of routes.
10. Rest areas along the route.
11. Cycle workshops along the route.

Likewise, Lumsdon talks about the motivations of cycle tourists, and indicates that they can vary depending on the typology, such as health and wellness, entertainment, leisure...among others.

Besides, he argues that one of the elements that seems to be most important for the majority of cycle tourists is the **safety on the destination's roads**. With this, cycle tourists are more likely to choose destinations where roads or paths have been made safer and more accessible to cyclists (Lumsdon 2000).

### 2.1.3 The benefits and needs of cycle tourism

Sanz Alduán (2016), author of the book "*cycling and local governments*" (own translation) argues that it is becoming less and less necessary to argue in favour of cycling and to underline the importance of giving it an important role in mobility.

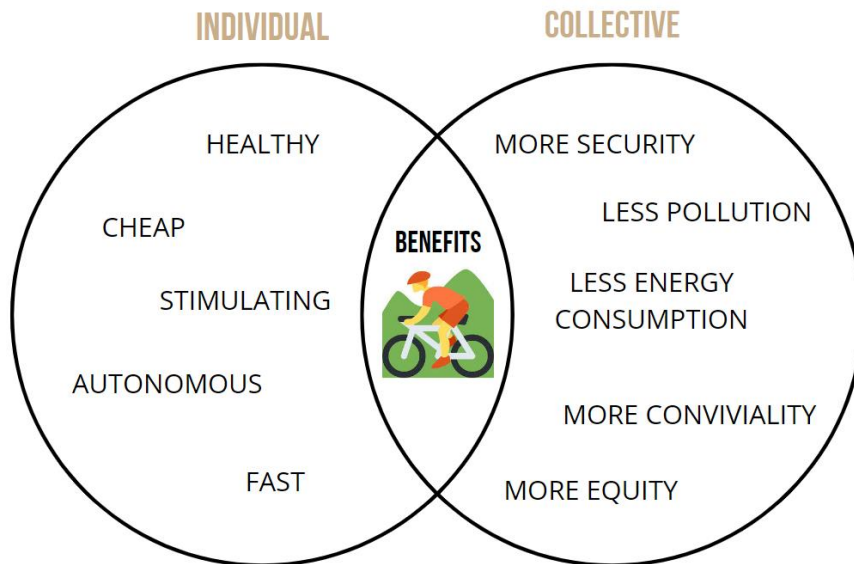
These collective benefits go to the heart of the major social, environmental and economic challenges facing local governments and other levels of governance. He continues saying; "*the virtues of cycling can be read from an individual point of view, but are reinforced by policies for their contribution to collective benefit*" (Sanz Alduán, 2016; own translation).

Finally, Sanz Alduán (2016) investigated some of the harms of cycling like "*it is risky*", "*I would arrive sweating*", "*I go out or arrive at night*", "*I am old or I am not fit*". Moreover, some of the individual barriers argue that are "*I can't afford to buy or repair a bike*", "*I don't know how to ride a bike in traffic*", "*I cannot keep my bike at home*", "*I don't know how to ride a bike*". It is possible to demystify many of the disadvantages that are argued against the use of bicycles; such as orography and climate (Mató and Troyano, 2014).



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Graph 2. Benefits as an outline.



Source: own elaboration based on Sanz Alduán (2016).

But apart from providing benefits, cycle tourism has its own needs, as explained below. Cycling policy has to take into account a plurality of needs, which means knowing the reasons why different people imagine cycling. In this sense, cycling infrastructures must be thought of and designed based on the needs of the people and bicycles that will use them (Bergua, 2020).

The key ingredient is that the visitor perceives cycling as an integral part of an excursion or holiday, i.e., as a positive way to enhance leisure time. An examination of tourist transport at the resort or destination area level could be more fruitful in determining how the principles of sustainable development could be more easily applied within a tourist transport network (Lumsdon, 2000).

Vicart (1971) argued that it would be desirable for cyclists to be able to cycle freely and unhindered, but always at their own risk, on forest roads that are sometimes closed to general traffic. Special measures should therefore be taken to protect places where cycle touring is possible. These outdoor sports compensate for the well-known negative effects of community life and concentration in highly urbanized areas and thus contribute to maintaining the balance of human organic functions, i.e., to physical and mental health.

According to a study in PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America), it is clear that there is a cohesion between infrastructure and cycling. This study is based on data from March to July 2020 in 106 European cities and concluded that in cities where the network of cycle paths had been extended, cycling had increased by between 11% and 48% more than in cities that had not.

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### **2.2. The Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre**

In this section, I am going to study the borders in their entirety and I will go little by little closer to the Franco-Spanish border, analysing deeply and giving space and importance to the Euroregion NAEN.

#### **2.2.1 The nature of borders**

Borders are dynamic by nature and are often subject to more complicated and severe transformations than in other countries.

When talking about borders in a cross-border aspect, it is necessary to emphasize that most international borders have been marked on the ground in various ways as tangible lines separating societies and political systems from their neighbours. International borders have traditionally been seen as barriers to various forms of human interaction. Indeed, one of their main purposes has been to hinder the flow of goods, people and ideas between nations for ideological and economic reasons (Timothy, 1995).

While tourism may indeed influence the landscapes, functions and constraints of borders, it is borders that influence the functions, landscapes and forms of tourism.

Political divisions affect tourism in at least three ways:

First, they act as barriers to travel (Timothy, 1995). For some people, borders create perceived barriers to travel, especially when a different language is spoken or when cultural values and political traditions are different on the opposite side.

Secondly, borders often function as attractions. Borders themselves and the way they are marked can be tourist objects. Activities such as shopping develop when prices and taxes are lower in one region than in an adjacent area.

The third influence of borders is the modification of the tourist landscape. When vice and shopping tourism develops at borders, as highlighted above, the structure of urban border areas changes. In some border areas, tourism infrastructure is developed next to the busiest border crossings of the busiest border crossings, so that foreign visitors do not have to travel far into the country to enjoy themselves.

The traditional role of borders as barriers is diminishing a concept that is evident in the recent liberalization of international relations, such as the establishment of multinational economic communities and trade alliances, such as the European Union.

#### **2.2.2 Cross-border cooperation**

Given that we live on the border with two different countries, cross-border cooperation, i.e. more or less institutionalized cooperation between the authorities of two or more adjacent states and/or sub-national entities, aimed at harmonizing policies and actions is one of the strategies of cross-border regional construction (Oliveras, 2013).

Cross-border pathways have the particularity of crossing the international border of states once or several times. However, this type of sport-tourism product faces a set of specific constraints such as:

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Legal asymmetry at the legal and regulatory level: despite the gradual homogenisation of rules within the European area, there are still matrices that limit mobility and hinder collective action, particularly in terms of taxation. In some states, footpaths are a municipal competence, in others they are a provincial competence but under state control, in some cases the regional government controls them...

The asymmetry of information: in order to carry out a cross-border project, all actors must be informed of all the data throughout the implementation process, which is not easy.

Economic asymmetry: The resources available in each European region are different. Despite EU support, there are serious limitations in implementing a project between a richer and a poorer territory because the funding of the programme will be adjusted to the capacity of the weaker (Timothy, 1998).

Despite these threats, it is also true that by accessing the two territories, it is possible to benefit from the positive aspects of two territories instead of one in a small space. In concrete terms, this means: two cuisines, two languages, two cultures, etc., which are always attractive to potential customers (Timothy, 1995).

The complex nature of cross-border cooperation and the development of border regions gives rise to a wide and interesting field of interdisciplinary research (Newman & Paasi, 1998). Border regions are regions of contact and are shaped by processes and phenomena that take place on both sides of the border.

The Council of Europe defines cross-border cooperation as “*any concerted action to strengthen and develop neighbourly relations between territorial communities or authorities [...] and the conclusion of agreements and appropriate arrangements to that end [...]. Such cooperation shall be exercised within the framework of the competences of the territorial communities or authorities [...]*” (Nadalutti, 2013).

### **2.2.3 The NAEN Euroregion**

The region in which the research is carried out is the Euroregion. This region is made up of three regions, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi, Navarre; two countries, Spain and France and a common territory.

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*Illustration 4. Map of the Euroregion.  
Source: official page of the Euroregion.*

### 2.2.3.1. Origin of the Euroregion.

On 3 October 1989, the Basque Autonomous Community and the Aquitaine region signed a collaboration protocol with the aim of establishing a European Atlantic interregional cooperative agreement. The aim of this agreement was to facilitate and share information on respective policies in the economic and social fields, as well as to give added value to the cultural and linguistic heritage of both regions.

Subsequently, both protocols were superseded by the Protocol of Cooperation between the Aquitaine Region, the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and the Autonomous Community of Navarre on 13 February 1992, which created the Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Cross-border Community, including Navarre until 1999.

On 12 December 2011, the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was created with the main objective of facilitating and promoting cross-border, transnational and/or interregional cooperation, henceforth called territorial cooperation, between the regions of Aquitaine and the Basque Country, with the exclusive aim of strengthening economic and social cohesion. The Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion EGTC undertook the elaboration of a Strategic Plan 2014-2020 in order to have a reference document at the service of all the actors of the Aquitaine-Euskadi territorial cooperation. This Strategic Plan has guided the different activities and strategies since 2014.

Accession of Navarre, approved on 18 March 2016 by the Assembly of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion and which comes into force on 6 March 2017. The Euroregion Strategy shares the dual objective of continuing to overcome the obstacles to progress in a cross-border continuum and to promote the Atlantic Arc as an area of sustainable human development in Europe.

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### 2.2.3.2 Demography and Governance of the Euroregion

The NAEN Euroregion, as it is made up of two countries out of three regions, has equal representation. It has an assembly of 18 members and an executive committee of 6.

Taking into account the quantitative demographic data, Euskadi registers approximately 2,189,372 inhabitants, Navarre approximately 656,836 inhabitants and finally New Aquitaine approximately 5,808,594 inhabitants. In total, about 8,654,802 inhabitants are living the NAEN Euroregion. Which means that in proportions of the three territories of 25,29 per cent for Euskadi, 7,6 per cent for Navarre and finally 67,11 per cent for New Aquitaine. Moreover, it is constituted as a multicultural and diverse territory in which four languages (French, Spanish, Basque and Occitan) coexist.

The president of Euskadi, Iñigo Urkullu, the president of Navarre, María Chivite and the president of Nouvelle Aquitaine, Alain Rousset are the presidents of this Euroregion. The presidency is biannual and is held alternately by each of the regions. Euskadi holds the presidency from 2020 to 2022.

Promoting multilevel governance and project management acts as facilitators of cross-border cooperation. The technical team works to provide advice and assistance in terms of European funding, areas of opportunity, but also as a project facilitator (partner search, information ....).

The NAEN Euroregion is organised by a number of working groups that are responsible for creating networks that serve as a focal point for stakeholders to share actions on the projects carried out. At present, there are several working groups: forest-wood, social and solidarity economy, culture, youth, transport...

### 2.2.3.3 The Strategic Plan 2021-27

The Strategic Plan of the Euroregion Euroregion New-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre EGTC 2021-2027 is organized into 5 strategic axes:

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*Illustration 5. Structure of the Strategic Plan.*

*Source: Strategic Plan of the Euroregion Nueva-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra EGTC 2021-2027.*

Axis one is responsible for promoting the concept of Euroregional citizenship as a key element of the Euroregion, strengthening the “Euroregional feeling”. The second axis works to support, from a local and cross-border perspective, the generation of the Euroregion’s competitiveness, through knowledge, innovation and the commitment to the circular economy. Promoting cross-border cooperation in the fields of ecological transition, transport and the use of resources for the Euroregion is what the third axis aims on. Then, the objective of the fourth axis is to develop a model of multilevel cross-border governance from a participatory approach that promotes the values of cohesion, multilingualism, diversity and equality. Finally, the fifth axis is working to provide positioning and data-based management tools that will make it possible to valorise and publicize the importance of the Euroregion for the three territories that make it up.

After studying the Strategic Plan of the Euroregion NAEN, I consider that cycle tourism can act as a bridge for the Strategic objectives included in some of its axes, particularly Axis 1, Axis 2 and Axis 3.

### 2.2.3.3.1 Axis 1: Euroregional citizenship.

The aim is to promote multilingualism, which is considered to be the natural wealth of the territory. However, it is a barrier to cross-border cooperation. The language barrier is a very relevant and at the same time fundamental challenge for the development of common projects. For the promotion of the linguistic wealth existing in the Euroregion's territory, the presence of a common language stands out: Basque.

Another objective is to strengthen the sense of Euroregional belonging through youth, developing cross-border projects that promote interaction between young people in the territory based on diversity and equality, and that promote a healthy lifestyle.

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The EGTC therefore hopes to advance social cohesion through the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, to contribute to generating a shared Euroregional identity based on common values (including sport) and to facilitate the implementation of cross-border cooperation projects.

As a result, society has not yet developed a “Euroregional feeling” and knowledge of what it is to belong to a Euroregion. In this case, this may be due to a cultural and political factor related to the territory of the Basque country. Therefore, there is such a big difference between the poor knowledge of French language in the Basque country compared to the knowledge of Spanish language in Aquitaine.

The cycle tourism can contribute to the Axis 1 because it allows different citizens to encounter the language of others, increasing social interactions and contributing to cohesion.

### **2.2.3.3.2 Axis 2: intelligent, competitive, inclusive and sustainable development.**

The goal is to boost the strategic sectors of the three territories, to promote Euroregional trade exchanges, focus on digitisation, strength the information channel for cross-border workers promoting the Euroregional higher education model (universities and vocational training).

The EGTC has an important field of action to promote exchanges trade in the Euroregional space and weave collaboration networks to reinforce the importance of local consumption. This would strength the competitiveness of the Euroregion through the promotion of commercial exchanges, boosting the local economy and promoting mutual knowledge of the offer of products and services of the territory.

Within the framework of the European Green Deal, the circular economy appears as one of the main elements to guarantee the sustainable growth. That is why; the contribution of the EGTC in this line is to build a network of agents that allows progress in the field of the circular economy. Deploying specific communication work that helps raise awareness among people and betting on a circular economy model that facilitates the development of a more efficient and sustainable use of the resources of the Euroregional territory.

In the more integrated cross-border areas, both economic and academic exchanges are characterised by the gradual intertwining of fields. Economic and technological economic and technological specialisation could thus, in the long term, be reflected in joint training provision and cross-border research projects such as this one.

With all this, cycle tourism can act as an instrument to increase the competitiveness of the territory, taking advantage of synergies and highlighting the differential elements of the Euroregion.

### **2.2.3.3.3 Axis 3: territory’s sustainability and cohesion.**

The objective is to promote cross-border cooperation in the fields of ecological transition, management of shared space, transport and use of resources to achieve a sustainable, interconnected and cohesive territory. Another objective is to promote the configuration of a Euroregional tourist offer based on sustainability and

## **Cycling in a cross-border tourism territory: the case of NAEN Euroregion**

the enhancement of the resources available in the territory, facilitating the necessary meeting spaces for this.

Climate change is an increasing threat to the development of territories and the well-being of citizens, and one of the objectives is to contribute to the fight against climate change in the Euroregion by promoting the implementation of initiatives that respond to the challenges of the ecological transition. In this context, the work of the EGTC is fundamental as a meeting point and, for this reason, it should work to raise awareness.

To guarantee, consolidate, optimise and extend the transport offer and the provision of mobility infrastructures in the cross-border area in order to contribute to territorial cohesion and dynamism from a sustainable and multimodal approach.

The EGTC will assume a facilitating role to make progress in improving the supply of cross-border multimodal transport. Finally, the important environmental impact of transport and the need to plan its development in a sustainable way cannot be overlooked either.

In particular, the implementation of Transfermuga project, that it is mentioned in the next chapter, has made a significant contribution to improving cross-border and local mobility.

Moreover, nowadays, sustainable tourism seeks to develop its activity generating a minimum impact on the environment. Cycle tourism, being sustainable mobility and the bicycle as a fundamental tool, makes it possible to move around cities over short or long distances and has no environmental impact.



# 3. ANALYSIS OF THE CYCLE TOURISM IN THE NAEN EUROREGION

The axes of the Euroregion's Strategic Plan (particularly Axis 1, Axis 2 and Axis 3) provide us with the necessary perspective to carry out the analysis of the cycle tourism in the NAEN Euroregion. Therefore, in this chapter, I will analyse the capacity of cycle tourism product of great differential and innovative value for the NAEN Euroregion.

## 3.1 Projects to promote cycle tourism

This section will look at a number of cross-border projects, a cross-border race and different networks in order to provide cycle tourism activity.

### 3.1.1 Eurovelo

EuroVelo is a network of 17 long-distance cycle routes connecting and linking the entire European continent. Both cycle tourists and local people on their daily commute can use the routes.

The objectives of EuroVelo are:

- Promote sustainable travel in economic, environmental and social care.
- To improve the quality of EuroVelo routes in all participating European countries.
- To promote the branding of EuroVelo routes according to published standards.
- Provide Europe-wide information on EuroVelo routes and national cycle routes.
- Support the development of national coordination centres for the EuroVelo route and national routes.
- Encourage the exchange of experiences and best practices between European states and regions, stimulating high quality cycle strategies and infrastructures.

Characteristics of the Eurovelo network:

- A gradient of less than 6% (except for short sections).
- Sufficient width to allow at least two bicycles to pass. Most traffic-free paths are at least 2 m wide in rural areas and 3 m wide in urban areas, to accommodate the likely use of the path.
- Average motorized traffic less than 1,000 vehicles/day or non-existent.
- Paved for at least 80% of its length.
- The route should remain open all year round.

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- It should offer refreshments every 30 km, accommodation every 50 km and public transport that accepts bicycles every 150 km.
- The major EuroVelo routes should connect cities in all European countries and pass through their urban centres.
- European countries and pass through their urban centres.
- Signage is common, although it can coexist with existing signage in each country.
- Specific, reliable and up-to-date Route Guides and maps must be available.



*Illustration 6. The 17 different EuroVelo routes.  
Source: official webpage of EuroVelo.*

#### 3.1.1.1 Eurovelo 1

According to Eurovelo/Spain's own website, the first route starts from Cabo Norte (Norway) and ends in Caminha (Portugal).

As for the Euroregion area, in France the EuroVelo 1 route is known as the Vélodyssée. The whole route is developed and signposted EuroVelo.56. It passes through the towns of Roscoff, Nantes, La Rochelle, Rochefort, Arcachon, Bayonne and Hendaye.

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Entering from France via the Bidasoa bridge EuroVelo 1 connects with the Bidasoa Greenway in Irun on the way to the region of Navarre. The Bidasoa River is a small river that forms a border with France and it is precisely its border character that gives it its peculiar identity. The Bidasoa Greenway recovers a large part of the route and offers an unforgettable 42 km route through villages in Gipuzkoa and Navarre on the banks of the Bidasoa, the first stage of which is 9 km long. An easy and pleasant route, with a practically flat profile thanks to its origins as a railway line.



Illustration 8. Euro Velo route 1.  
Source: official webpage of Eurovelo.



Illustration 7. Euro Velo route 1 in the border of Spain and France.  
Source: official webpage of Eurovelo

### 3.1.1.2 Eurovelo 3

According to EuroVelo/Spain's own website, the third route starts from Trondheim, (Norway) and ends in Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

As for the Euroregion area, in France the EuroVelo 3 route is known as the Scandibérique. The entire route is developed and marked with EuroVelo signs, except in the vicinity of Paris which is developed. Passing through the places of Bordeaux, San Juan Pie de Puerto.

EuroVelo 3 enters Spain from French Aquitaine via the “Coll d'Olgambide” towards Roncesvalles. This first section of the EuroVelo 3 route in Navarre allows you to enjoy places such as Burgete, Espinal, Lusarreta...

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Illustration 10. Euro Velo route 3.  
Source: official webpage of Eurovelo.



Illustration 9. Euro Velo route 3 in the border of Spain and France.  
Source: official webpage of Eurovelo.

### 3.1.2 Ederbidea

The cross-border Ederbidea project, coordinated by the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department, will create a cycle loop between Baiona, Iruña/Pamplona and Donostia/San Sebastian. Thanks to European funding (POCTEFA), new cycle paths have been or will be created between Baiona, Iruña and Donostia.

The project consists in linking the cycle paths of the three capitals, Donostia, Bayonne and Pamplona, with a mobility part, with the missing parts and another objective of this route is to raise awareness in favor of cycling and committed to cycling mobility and sustainable tourism.

The cross-border Ederbidea project, coordinated by the Pyrénées Atlantiques department, will create a cycling loop between Baiona, Iruña/Pamplona and Donostia/San Sebastian and its aim is to promote and develop tourism in the Baztan-Bidasoa region and to represent the interests of the professional sector.

Aware that tourism is one of the main economic engines of the region, its challenge is to make this engine roar with guarantee and quality. Baztan-Bidasoa Turismoa currently has around 80 members. They are expanding and their main idea is to continue growing.

According to the news, the partners of the Ederbidea cross-border project met on 24 November 2021 at the departmental council office in Baiona for the closing of this important investment in sustainable mobility. The words of Emmanuel Alzuri, departmental counsellor responsible for cycling has said that *"along the 240 kilometres the roads have been made safer and joint signage has been carried out, as well as the introduction of self-service bicycles. It has been a very positive experience"* (own translation). Ederbidea is embodied in a cross-border bicycle plan that establishes "a common strategy for the development of bicycle mobility". In particular, it makes it possible to "resolve the passages classified as delicate" between Biarritz and Bidarte or Behobia-Irun for example. On the Basque coast, 14 kilometres of cycle lanes have been developed at a cost of 4.4 million euros. Training and

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awareness-raising initiatives are being carried out, especially in secondary schools. It can be said that Ederbidea is paving the way for other ideas to develop cycling.



Illustration 11. The map of the Eder bidea.  
Source: diario de Navarra.

### 3.1.3 Bici Mugi

The Bici Mugi project aims to promote bicycle mobility, with the dynamics of developing and improving environmentally friendly and low-carbon transport systems. In order to achieve this objective, Nasuvinsa, partner of the Bici Mugi project, will develop an extensive awareness-raising programme for different target groups around the EuroVelo 3 route during the months of September 2021 to May 2022. The target groups to be addressed by the awareness programme are: students, women, seniors, and people with functional diversity.

This programme includes cycling trips on the created route, Eurovelo 3, which is adapted to different audiences with the aim of cycling along the cycling route as well as practical workshops to familiarize them with the use of bicycles.

The aim is to raise awareness and encourage the use of bicycles as a regular means of transport and as a healthy and enriching leisure option. Finally, it also conveys the need to make local changes to contribute to global change.

### 3.1.4 Transfermuga

The provision of sustainable cross-border transport is also a factor to be taken into account. The movement and mobility of people and goods within the Euroregion is the main objective of the Transfermuga project.

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The project, co-financed with European Poctefa funds and led by the EGTC, had a first phase that started in 2013, which allowed to identify the demand for cross-border mobility and to present some operational proposals:

- Extension of a bus line to Irún.
- Extension of the new “Hegobus” network to the other side of the border.
- Creation of combined tickets; launch of a station project in Hendaye.
- The creation of a passenger information portal and a route calculator.

To this end, the project has worked on the creation of a cross-border web platform enabling all operators to access open data in order to improve passenger information. Specific studies have also been carried out for bus and train, which will allow the activation of new projects on the ground.

### 3.1.5 Cross-border race

Donostia-Baiona-Donostia is a non-competitive cross-border cycling tour. That is, without classification and whose objective is to enjoy a day of cycling tourism next to the contrast of landscapes that combine the inland green (Jaizkibel mountain) with the blue of the coast. It has a signposted route of 123 km, and as an alternative there is a shorter route of 83 km along the same route.

This year the race celebrates 20 years. It started in the year 2000 and due to the pandemic and another year that was not planned, this race is becoming more popular. The event is organized by the Club Deportivo Bera Bera de Donostia with the collaboration of the Club Aviron Bayonnais of Baiona.

This year the participants were 1500 people. More than 300 people from Aquitania and Paris and the rest or the majority were still from Euskadi.

Despite an accident, the race managed to be very successful, accompanied by good weather and a good lunch after the race where all the cycle tourists meet and a different atmosphere was created.



*Illustration 12. Cross Border race DBD.  
Source: own elaboration.*

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Overall, it is certain that there are several cross-border projects in the NAEN Euroregion with different strategies, objectives and cycle tourist profiles, but they all have something in common, which is the promotion of cross-border cycle tourism activity.

### 3.2 Services for cycle tourist

The services must be adapted to the needs of cycle tourists, given the significant contribution that this modality represents for tourism diversification and sustainability. In this chapter, we will show some services for the NAEN Euroregional region.

The common objective of services for cycle tourists is to offer an additional travel option, in theory to reduce the number of car journeys; to make visible and multiply the presence of cyclists; and to disseminate the advantages of cycling as a means of transport (Sanz Alduán, 2016).

#### 3.2.1 Bicycle centres and bicycle registration

These spaces offer all the services imaginable for this means of transport, from bicycle parking, rental, repairs, sale of accessories and even a place for people who use bicycles to meet up. Besides, in spite of the fact that all vehicles have a theft dynamic; bicycles are especially vulnerable to theft due to their characteristics.

##### 3.2.1.1 Txirrind'ola bicycle workshop

This association from Baiona, promotes cycling and eco-mobility in general. The association organizes collaborative workshops for members to learn how to maintain and repair bicycles. It also collaborates in recovering and recycling second-hand bicycles and parts, develops bike-school programmes and participates in citizens' debates on mobility.



*Illustration 13. Official logo of Txirrind'ola.  
Source: official page of Txirrind'ola.*

##### 3.2. 1.2 Bicitronic

Bicycle registration consists of the marking of the vehicle and its subsequent inclusion in a computer system of all the details of the bicycle, including a photo and those of its user. A voluntary registration is intended to be a deterrent for bicycle thieves. In this way, in the event of theft, the detection and identification mechanisms can be used to facilitate the return of the vehicle in the event of theft.

The private company Bicycode selected by the French Federation of bicycle users, is used in half a dozen cities, including Donostia and Zarautz, owns Bicitronic, which is the registration system.

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### 3.2.2 Mobility services

Mobility services are important to develop sustainable, active and affordable services for the society. In this part Renfe, Euskotren and TGV are going to be presented as three transport companies that allow the bicycle in terms of mobility for transport.

#### 3.2.2.1 Renfe

Renfe is a passenger and freight rail transport company and a benchmark in the mobility sector in Spain. Moreover, it is the leading company in the least polluting means of public transport. In terms of sustainability work, Renfe, as a rail transport company, plays an important role, as many cycle tourists use it to start their routes, finish their journeys or move around...

If the train, as the most sustainable means of public transport, is combined with the bicycle, the advantages for the environment are multiplied. The combination of cycling with public transport offers the opportunity to multiply the destinations and the radius of action of cycling mobility, but it also depends, obviously, on the quality of the existing networks and services as well as the service of the option of parking at terminals or transporting bicycles in vehicles.

Renfe has a Train+Bike combination that is key to smooth and clean urban mobility. According to the company itself, Renfe trains are the ideal means of combining cycle tourism and offering an effective solution for taking the love of this sport and, for many, a way of life, even further. For this reason, they have created a logo to identify them. It is planned to start its inclusion in digital media, stations and trains.



*Illustration 14. Official logo of Renfe.  
Source: official webpage of Renfe.*

#### 3.2.2.2 Euskotren

Euskotren, also known as “topo” or “metro”, is a metropolitan railway system that serves the town of Gipuzkoa, nearby towns and villages in the province of Gipuzkoa and the Iparralde area (Hendaye).

Euskotren also allows the possibility of free access to bicycles to all units, according to the following general conditions:

- One bicycle per person and ticket.
- Access is denied in the event of overcrowding or breakdowns.
- Each train incorporates two devices with capacity for three bicycles each.

Stations with bicycle parking:



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In Gipuzkoa, Euskotren has the “Amara car park” with a capacity for 144 bicycles and the Irún-Colón car park with a capacity for 55 bicycles. Both are covered and their use is reserved for Euskotren users.

In Bizkaia, the Zamudio car park has 50 bicycles and can be used with the BAT, Mugi and Barik cards. Bicycles can also be taken up on the Larreineta funicular railway until 20.00 hours.



*Illustration 15. Cycle tourist entering to the train.  
Source: official webpage of Euskotren.*

#### 3.2.2.3 TGV

The Train à Grande Vitesse, or more commonly known as the TGV, is the brand name used by the French national railway company SNCF.

In France, certain TGV lines accept bicycles on board in specific compartments or carriages. This service is chargeable (10 euros) and booking is compulsory. The SNCF Travel website allows you to book your bike seat online and you do not need to fold or dismantle your bike.

However, not all trains have bike seats, if there is a bike symbol next to the train; it means that the TGV has bike seats.



*Illustration 16. Cycle tourists with bicycles.  
Source: official webpage of TGV.*

In summary, mobility companies have been able to adapt a little more to cyclists, but the option for high-distance trains still needs to be incorporated, since they demand many requirements. That is why these companies have not yet been able to adapt to the client's demands as much as possible.

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### 3.2.3 Quality seals

In the world of cycle tourism, the seals have a great value as they serve to locate territories, cities or companies that face the demands of society in new challenges such as the promotion of cycling as transport, tourism and sustainability. It was promoted by some entities whose aim is to offer promotional actions, better infrastructures and services for the practice of cycle tourism.

#### 3.2.3.1 Bikefriendly

The Bikefriendly Quality Seal, specializing in the cycle tourism and cycling sector, belonging to the Bikefriendly Group, has exceeded the figure of 250 accommodation units in Spain, Andorra and Portugal. A catalogue that ranges from rural accommodation and campsites to 5-star G.L. hotels. And all of them have a common denominator: preferential treatment for cycle tourists and their bicycles.

Minimum and free services offered by Bikefriendly accommodation:

- Bike storage space.
- Workshop area.
- Washing area.
- Information on routes around the area.

Additional services:

- Bicycle rental.
- Sale of spare parts.
- Extensive kitchen opening hours.
- Physiotherapy.

The aim of this seal of approval is to guarantee accommodation for cycle tourists so that they are satisfied, achieving greater loyalty and increasing the number of visitors. According to the association, cycle tourism is booming and every day more and more people travel with their bikes and cannot find adequate accommodation facilities.

On the website, it can be read that along with the more than 250 tourist accommodations in Spain, Andorra and Portugal that make up the Bikefriendly network, other types of companies are joining the unstoppable bicycle movement. Such is the case of bike shops, cafés, bars and restaurants. Joining the Bikefriendly Quality Seal gives them visibility in the eyes of cyclists and a communication channel with a specific customer profile: people who cycle.



*Illustration 17. Official logo of Bikefriendly.  
Source: official webpage of Bikefriendly.*

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### 3.2.3.2 Accueil Vélo

At the height of the cycle tourism boom, the Accueil Vélo brand was created to guarantee a welcome and services adapted to the needs and expectations of cycle tourists. This French label also allows tourism professionals to improve their visibility to a clientele that has grown considerably in recent years.

This seal allows cyclists to identify establishments and sites suitable for cycle touring within 5 km of the Canal du Midi, and thus benefit from a welcome and appropriate services.

Currently, 6 categories of professionals can join the Accueil Vélo system if they meet the mandatory criteria of the reference system for their category:

1. Tourist accommodation.
2. Professional bicycle rental companies.
3. Bicycle repairers.
4. Tourist offices.
5. Tourist sites.
6. Restaurants.



*Illustration 18. Official logo of Accueil Vélo.  
Source: official webpage of Accueil Vélo.*

### 3.2.3.3 Bett + Bike

Bett+Bike is an ADFC directory of cycling-friendly hotels in Germany. It currently includes more than 5800 entries in Germany and occasionally in neighbouring countries.

Using fixed evaluation criteria, the companies that are interested, are assessed and certified with regard to their suitability as bicycle-friendly accommodation.

These criteria include:

- Bookable single nights.
- Secure parking for bicycles.
- Possibility of drying wet bicycle clothes.
- Breakfast offer.
- Information about the surroundings.
- Tool for minor repairs.

Additional criteria on type and location of accommodation can be used for further categorisation:

- Bed+bike accommodation.

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- Camping bed+bike.
- Holiday flat bed+bike.
- Bed+bike E-Bike.
- City bed+bike.

Certification is chargeable for companies and is valid for two years. Certified companies are listed in the printed regional directories as well as on the “bett und bike” online portal, and cyclists can find them on the go via a mobile app.



*Illustration 19. Official logo of Bett + Bike.  
Source: official webpage of Bett + Bike.*

In short, I do believe that not only quality seals can help in the promotion of cycling activity (because it guarantees minimum services for cycling tourists), but also help in the economy of the hotel industry and tourism in general. However, the fact that each country has a different one with different service requirements makes it difficult and hinders the client since he has to adapt to the destination seal with the requirements that each country has assigned to the seal.

### 3.3 Empirical study

The empirical study is based in three sections that will analyse more deeply the methodology of the first-hand information, interviews with experts on the material and finally the observational study.

#### 3.3.1 Interviews with relevant agents

When I started the study, I asked people close to me to soak up the subject. Eneko Iparragirre, Beñat Felipe, Onintza Agirrezabala and Amaia Imaz were some of the people that told me about their experience in the world of cycle tourism.

Later, I called Abraham Olano (Spanish cyclist and director of the Gipuzkoa cycling federation) and Iker Oleaga (director of the Bizkaia cycling federation) to find out about their relationship with cycle touring.

Several interviews have been initiated with different private and public organizations in the French part of the Aquitaine area and the Basque Country area, in order to better understand the differences between the two countries within the same Euroregional framework.

**Cycling in a cross-border tourism territory: the case of NAEN Euroregion***Table 2. Interviewees, characteristics, interview date and duration.*

<b>PERSON INTERVIEWED</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	<b>DURATION</b>
Edorta Bergua	Expert in cycle tourism.	2022/03/03	56 min
Ignacio Ayesa	Partner/founder of the Navarra cycle touring association.	2022/03/07	1h 06 min
Peio Barrenetxea	Technician in mobility and sustainable territory projects.	2022/03/17	37 min
Marie Heguy-Urain	Manager of "Euroregional citizenship" projects (culture, education, youth, sport, multilingualism).	2022/03/23	16 min
Patxi Sáenz Lazkano	Head of Section of Tourism Products and Territorial Sustainability.	2022/03/24	47 min
Jesus Blazquez	Manager of Pangea Routes.	2022/04/08	51 min
Jean de Piere	Agency for Tourism Attraction and Development of the Béarn Pays Basque region.	2022/04/19	20 min
Elisabeth Picaut	President of the New Aquitaine cycling tourism association.	2022/04/21	53 min
Sabine Etchevarria	Cycling Mobility Manager (Pyrénées-Atlantiques Department).	2022/05/05	40 min
Igor Etxeberria	General director of the Bera Bera club and organizer of the Donostia-Baiona-Donostia race.	2022/05/11	37 min

*Source: Own elaboration.*

Most of the interviews were carried out by using the Zoom platform, as the pandemic meant that risks had to be avoided. Others were conducted face-to-face. The interview guide with which the study started can be found in the Annex I.

The main theme was to concretise what is cycle tourism and all that it entails, the NAEN Euroregion and the feeling of belonging to it and finally about the borders and cross-border cooperation. It was very enriching to be able to listen to each of them because they were able to explain the reality very well.

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### 3.3.2 Interviews with cycle tourists

On the 14th of May, the cross-border cycling race, Donostia-Baiona-Donostia, was held. I decided to go with a friend of mine from the university to Donostia to watch the race and then ask some questions to the participants about some of the issues already analysed in this study. For the study on cross-border cycle tourism, it seemed to me a unique opportunity to get to know the atmosphere, as there were many people from all over the Euroregion.

In the morning, I watched the race in Lezo, as the cycle tourists were passing through there and crossing to the other side, via Jaizkibel mountain. Then, later, I went to Donostia, met up with Aner and went to see the final stretch of this march.

At 11:30 approx, the first cyclists arrived to do the long route, there was music, people cheering and the weather helped a lot. The cyclists arrived and left their bikes tied up in an area. Then, at Mateo's gym, they had lunch and there was a very good atmosphere.

Aner had a camera with a microphone, which was very useful for us to be able to interview our protagonists. At the beginning, we took several shots of the landscape and the environment. Then we prepared and rehearsed the interview guide and talked about which people we would be interested in interviewing.

We had already studied the cycle tourists' profile and that is why we looked for people of different sexes, different ages and people from both Iparralde part and Hegoalde part. I have to admit that it was quite difficult to find people from the North Basque Country, but we managed to do it. I must also confessed that some of the people were not willing to answer our questions because they were embarrassed that we were filming them, so they did not want to take part in the interview.

The conclusions obtained were more than clear regarding the Euroregion, since only one of the participants knew what it was and was able to indicate it by looking at the map, while the rest could neither recognise it nor locate it on the map. Therefore, it is very clear that there is no feeling of belonging to the NAEN Euroregion.

As for what cycle tourism was, we were told that it is an activity that is NOT competitive towards others, but that one only competes against oneself. Most people had no complaints whatsoever about the race, in fact, most of them said that they enjoyed it very much and that the views were spectacular.

Finally, the participants confessed that they rarely trained in Aquitaine. Some of them because of the distance they lived and others. Even though they lived near the border, they told us that in general French drivers do not respect cyclists on the road, that is, sport cyclists, so they do not feel safe and that is why they prefer to go to Hegoalde part when training, although they are aware of the good landscapes on the other side of the border.

Aner Unanue has edited a summary of that day that is available via this link: <https://yotutu.be/7ILgiKoidhE>.

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*Table 3. Interviewees, age, place of birth and characteristic.*

<b>PERSON INTERVIEWED</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>
Eugenio Olaizola	51	Orereta / Errenteria	Participant in the race.
Igor Etxeberria	50	Donostia	Organizer of the race.

*Source: own elaboration.*

The answers obtained are not statistically demonstrable due to the lack of a more exhaustive study, but they did help me to get a first-hand knowledge of the reality of this modality in the Euroregional framework.



*Illustration 20. Aner and me.*

*Source: own elaboration.*

*Table 4. Interviewees, age, place of birth and their interview.*

<b>PERSON INTERVIEWED</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	<b>LINK TO THE INTERVIEW</b>
Mattin Larrea	28	Donostia	<a href="https://youtu.be/u5zPz0t-rnU">https://youtu.be/u5zPz0t-rnU</a>
Jesus Larrea	63	Donostia	
Lukas Lopez	22	Urretxu	<a href="https://youtu.be/Ca-PRZw7CUA">https://youtu.be/Ca-PRZw7CUA</a>
Xabier Iza	45	Donostia	<a href="https://youtu.be/EpVObONSj2c">https://youtu.be/EpVObONSj2c</a>
Eva	45	Ciudad Rodrigo	<a href="https://youtu.be/NsySJA_qjgs">https://youtu.be/NsySJA_qjgs</a>
Ramon Merino	46	Ciudad Rodrigo	
David	48	Baiona	<a href="https://youtu.be/Qv7aL1ySA54">https://youtu.be/Qv7aL1ySA54</a>
Leire	46	Orereta / Errenteria	<a href="https://youtu.be/bkjri4ydppE">https://youtu.be/bkjri4ydppE</a>
Veronica	46	Pasaia	

*Source: own elaboration.*

Some conclusions obtained from that day. Firstly, it is important to highlight the general lack of knowledge about the relationship between cycle tourism and its connection with the Euroregions. Most of the interviewees are aware of what cycle

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tourism is, but do not recognise the Euroregion Nouvelle Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre.

It has been observed in the various interviews with the participants that French drivers are not in the habit of respecting the safety distance and tend to get annoyed more frequently. In addition, the interviewees agreed on the motivations that lead them to take part in one race rather than another. The participants stated that one of the most necessary characteristics for a good route is that the route should be low in traffic density and that space should be made available for them on the road itself, giving them greater comfort and safety.

Last conclusion drawn from the interviews is the difference in cycling associations between France and Spain. To begin with, while France has its own federation that considers cycle touring as a tourist activity, in Spain this activity is not institutionally recognised. In Spain, the federations are understood as sports clubs for professionals. This means that people in Spain, join private sports clubs if they intend to practise sport cycling with the aim of competing whereas not so much when it is something more sporadic and like a hobby.

#### **3.3.3 Observational study**

I decided to take my bicycle and go from my village Orereta/Errenteria to Hendaye. For this research project on cross-border cycle tourism, I thought it would be very interesting to check or corroborate for myself the route along the border. So that I could analyse the routes, signposting, route conditions, difficulties... in a calm and relaxed way. This provided me an extraordinary opportunity to create spaces to build meaningful learning from self-exploration and experimentation.

That is why I set off with two friends of mine, Amaia and Naiara Imaz, former cyclists, to ride the route from my village to Hendaye, thus crossing the border. To give you an idea, my village is 7 kilometres from Donostia (Gipuzkoa), and from Donostia to Orereta/Errenteria there is a cycle path that is very well signposted and can be followed without any difficulty.

As for afterwards, to go from Orereta/Errenteria to Hendaye, after two kilometers it is come to the GI-636 road. The GI-636 is a road that runs through the province of Guipúzcoa. It starts in Orereta/Errentería where it joins the GI-20 and ends in Behobia, Irún, on the border with the French town of Urruña. It is a first category regional road, which means that, according to the CNAE, these roads are the most important in each Autonomous Community and usually carry a high level of traffic. They are usually longer and can sometimes be divided into dual carriageways.

I remember this route very vividly. Thanks to my two friends who have competed in cycling, they knew how to manage these roads and were able to explain to me how I had to ride this road. I did not feel completely safe riding on those roads, as there were many lorries and a lot of traffic.

The immediate conclusion I drew was that there is no cycling route as far as cross-border cycling is concerned. It is also true that from Irun (Basque territory) you can cross the border to Hendaye without any problem, as there is a cycle path. Nevertheless, in spite of everything, in the absence of a cycle route, it is not possible to cycle from Donostia to Irun safely.



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Then, I thought about it and reflected on the following: if I had a hard time (even though I have two friends who are cyclists), imagine how hard it would be for people from other countries who know nothing about our Euroregion if they dared to cycle across the border.

As far as signposting is concerned, I have to say that on the Aquitaine side, in my opinion everything was very well signposted and well maintained. The cycle paths are wide and run along the beach, which makes the route even more pleasant.



*Illustration 21. A poster from the border.  
Source: own elaboration.*



*Illustration 22. Me entering to Hendaye.  
Source: own elaboration.*



*Illustration 23. The GI-636 road.  
Source: google maps.*

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3.4 SWOT analyse

In this section, I will analyse through a SWOT from which proposals have been made to promote cycling tourism in the NAEN Euroregion, and in accordance with the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

*Table 5. SWOT.*

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This activity is becoming increasingly popular.</li> <li>▪ Consolidated image of the NAEN Euroregion area, separately.</li> <li>▪ Existence of a series of itineraries suitable for cycle tourists.</li> <li>▪ Accessible to a wide range of users, regardless of age or physical capacity.</li> <li>▪ Cycle tourism as a socially cohesive sports activity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Little information and culture on cycle tourism.</li> <li>▪ Different perception of cycle tourism on both sides of the border.</li> <li>▪ There is no relationship between cycle touring and the federation.</li> <li>▪ Non-existence of a cycle tourism association in Euskadi.</li> <li>▪ Little awareness of the NAEN Euroregion.</li> <li>▪ A lack of cycle tourism Euroregional seal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Euroregion as a whole.</li> <li>▪ Possibility of sustainable and enriching mobility.</li> <li>▪ Enhancing the value of natural and rural areas linked to the roads.</li> <li>▪ Alternative of a more relaxed atmosphere in Hegoalde and a more hectic atmosphere in Iparralde.</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Differences between the laws regulating cycle tourism in the different countries of the Euroregion.</li> <li>▪ Slowness in bureaucratic procedures.</li> <li>▪ Orography of the border (port).</li> <li>▪ Road insecurity at the border.</li> <li>▪ Lack of infrastructure in some places.</li> </ul>

*Source: own elaboration.*

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### 3.4.1 Strength

When talking about strengths, it is indisputable to say that cycle tourism is growing more and more. This is due to the fact that there is a clear change of lifestyle. Jesus Blazquez expressed that *"the pandemic has clearly been a catalyst that has promoted more of this outdoor activity, outside of an enclosed area in environments that are considered safe in that sense"* (own translation).

The existence of cross-border routes and projects and their connections is possible to cross the border. For example, Eder Bidea or Transfermuga.... Besides, EuroVelo 1 and EuroVelo 3 pass through the border and that somehow enriches and facilitates this passage.

When talking about strengths, reference should be made to the consolidated image of the Euroregion area, but separately. The Basque Country attracts many sport cyclists because of its roads and mountain passes, while the French part of the Euroregion is very favorable for occasional cyclists. Nevertheless, the whole area of the Euroregion is very rich in tourism because of its culture and gastronomy.

Cycle tourism can also help to create social cohesion, being a socially cohesive activity; it can ensure social interaction. The existence of a series of itineraries that are suitable for each of the cycle tourist, regardless of age or physical capacity, can promote NAEN Euroregional citizenship.

### 3.4.2 Opportunities

The Euroregion as a whole is an opportunity since two countries and three territories create it. Marie Higuain expressed *"I don't like to talk about the border as a challenge, it always coincides with problems. I honestly believe that there are a lot of opportunities"* (own translation).

Moreover, it is worth highlighting the development of the *"Poctefa empleo"* project, which sought to convert the three territories into a dynamic area of economic opportunity, for both companies and the active population. Thus, it is committed to knowledge and innovation as key levers for economic development and the creation of employment opportunities, particularly among young people.

Cycle tourism does not pollute, encourages the use of public transport and is an opportunity to boost local economies. Cycling in general offers new opportunities to change commuting patterns as well. In a joint effort between the parties: administration, business and workers. Regional and local governments also have opportunities to develop promotional plans and strategies in their areas of competence.

### 3.4.3 Weaknesses

As far as weaknesses are concerned, they refer to the lack of information or culture regarding cycle tourism. Jean de Riviere commented that in general, in

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Euskadi it is very difficult to find information on services and routes about cycle tourism; he argued that all the information ends in Hendaye. Edorta Bergua argued the following: *"I would introduce information as one of the pillars for intermodality. The whole issue of access, the issue of parking and the issue of boarding ... that people know what rights they have, what conditions they have, what services are provided and what conditions they have ..."* (own translation).

The lack of information on this modality may be linked to the fact that there is no association dedicated to cycle tourism in Euskadi, as there is in Navarre or Aquitaine. Moreover, in Euskadi the federation is associated with el cycling and although it has a section dedicated to cycle tourism, there is hardly any relationship between them. Elisabeth Picaut, the president of New Aquitaine cycle tourism association, argued, *"I know that in Spain or even in Portugal, they would very much like to have a federation like ours in France. Moreover, there are many cycling federations, racing federations, competition federations, and I know that they would like to create a federation like ours for sports federations, but not for competitions"* (own translation).

### 3.4.4 Threats

Regarding the helmet, Spain is the only European country with mandatory use on interurban roads. Within this category, it is included in use on secondary highways, paths and greenways... and this can be a rejection for foreign tourists when they travel through the NAEN Euroregion.

Ignacio Ayesa concluded that the orography might not facilitate mobility to the French part from Navarre, given that as it is a mountainous area, the mountainous terrain can sometimes be an added problem when promoting this modality, as it requires a certain amount of preparation and not everyone is prepared to climb it. Besides, there are some areas where the infrastructure is not yet finished, which is why it is impossible to cross some parts of the road safely.

Slow bureaucratic procedures are the biggest threat to the promotion of cycle tourism in the Euroregion area and in general to the promotion of any cross-border project. Abraham Olano and Igor Etxeberria agreed on that it is very difficult to organise cross-border cycle touring and competitive races because there are so many obstacles of permits, of crossings, of costs. In the end the fact that we have to take out two insurances, makes the demand much higher. The fact that you have to cover yourself because you are going to ride in France, can also mean that people think that they are not going to take out the international insurance because it is more profitable stay with the regional insurance.

In my case, too, I have had several problems in making the internship agreement for this cross-border project. I had have many problems and in the end that meant that, I worked from home and not from Bordeaux, which was the original plan of MSHA (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine).

## **4. PROPOSALS FOR BOOSTING CYCLE TOURISM IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROREGION'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

After the study carried out in terms of the cycle tourism in the Euroregion, the following measures are proposed for the improvement of cycle tourism as a socially cohesive and sustainable tourism product of great differential and innovative value for the NAEN Euroregion based on the Strategic Plan.

The first measure deals with the legal framework. It is proposed to standardize the laws related to cycle tourism to the entire European community with the aim of promoting Eurovelo routes without having legal barriers to practice them. One example would be the minimum distance of one meter and a half between vehicles and cyclists on the road. This measure would make cycle tourism an attractive product for families and sustainable for the environment, as well as raising awareness in society.

The second measure deals with the relationship between the public and private sector. It is proposed that an association be set up to link the two sectors present in the two regions to promote cycle tourism in a more coordinated way and to encourage measures to increase the "Euroregional feeling" among citizens. One measure would be to create material incentives such as the extension of routes with the same public transport card. This would raise awareness of the value of belonging to a Euroregion and the advantages of other areas such as Aquitaine. Moreover, this association would create communicational campaigns with the aim to promote "NAEN cycle tourism" concept and create a "Euroregional feeling culture" among citizens.

Another measure is related to infrastructure. One proposal would be to extend the roads connecting Donostia with Hendaye in order to improve and make cross-border routes more attractive. The possibility of analysing a route of brevets, with the aim of crossing the entire NAEN Euroregion, is being considered. From Bordeaux to Bilbao, passing through Pamplona and Donostia. The brevets are long-distance road cycling stages (minimum 200 km), non-competitive, which take place on roads open to traffic, and which have to be completed in a predetermined maximum time. In addition to the stage, the association's aim would be to promote tourist experiences, offering discounts and or incentives at different stages to visit local places enhancing the nature of rural areas.

The last measure would be to create a NAEN Euroregional seal together with other seals, in short, the creation of a co-branding strategy, so that, both would support each other. This would encourage cross-border mobility and benefit all countries by improving the flow of cross-border tourists.

# **5.**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE LINES FOR INVESTIGATION**

This chapter deals with the different conclusions drawn from the general objective and the specific objectives mentioned previously in this study with the aim of proposing advances to promote cross-border cycle tourism in the Euroregion.

Once the cycle tourism have been analysed in a broad sense, it can be seen that it is generally understood as a broad concept, a type of tourism that functions as an umbrella, encompassing various typologies and characteristics that vary depending on the elements taken into account.

In France, the term cycle tourist, it is generally understood as a tourist activity, i.e. a more relaxed and family-oriented activity where cyclists ride on greenways or roads paved for this type of public. However, in Spain, the same term encompasses the habit of cycling on the road and at higher speeds and this implies a lack of information and a habit of cycling without looking for a return on investment.

As for the Euroregion, it has been observed that it has a great cultural and natural wealth that is not “consumed” due to lack of knowledge. To generate awareness of this framework, it is necessary to provide some incentives for the population. For example, the extension of routes with the same public transport card. This would raise awareness of the value of belonging to a Euroregion and thus in a way, make known the importance.

Moreover, it is believed that cycle tourism can act as a “bridge” between the two countries, but for this, it is necessary relationship between the public and private sector. It is proposed that a body be set up to link the two sectors present in the two regions to promote cycle tourism in a more coordinated way and to encourage measures to increase the “Euroregional feeling” among citizens. Perhaps a common association of cycle tourism of the NAEN Euroregion would be part of the solution since it would focus on promoting projects that are in force and new common projects as well.

Taking into account the conclusions obtained in this study, it is recommended for the future students and researches to analyse more deeply the macroeconomic and microeconomic variables and its development in the NAEN Euroregion. As for the macroeconomic perspective such as language, cultural and political factors and for the microeconomic variable, a more in-depth analysis of the competition compared to other Euroregions, as well as to each territory.

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# 7. ● ANNEXES

In the last chapter, the interview guides that have been carried out during this study are available. The first one was used for the semi-structured interviews but it should be noted that it varied depending on the interviewee while the second one was carried out on the day of the cross-border race.

## 7.1 Annex 1: interview guide of semistructures interview

### Introduction to the session

First of all, I would like to thank you for wanting to participate in this project. As I already told you by email, this research project entitled "*Transport(s)-Les sports et loisirs dans le contexte de la coopération territoriale européenne: action publique, pratiques et usages*", is directed and coordinated by Yannick Hernandez, lecturer-researcher at the University of Bordeaux Montaigne. This project is funded by a competitive call from the Réseau national des Maisons des Sciences de l'Homme (RnMSH) and the Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre.

My name is Udane Alfonso and I am a trainee.

Through the in-depth interviews, I would like to address some of the issues related to your personal and professional experience on the subject.

As we have already told you, the idea is to record the interview, which is why I am asking for your informed consent. Please note that the information obtained in this interview will only be used in the context of the research, and that you can request to stop the recording at any time, as well as to stop the recording in the future.

- Do you agree with the interview being recorded?
- We ask you to introduce yourself.
- What is your relationship to the cycle tourism?

### Interview script

Given that, the purpose of our research is to know the reality of the practice of cycle tourism and of the policies of management-promotion of cycle tourism in the cross-border context. What would you say is the reality?

- Participants.
- Policies to promote cycling tourism.
- Financial regimes.
- The border and cycle tourism, how they interact.
- What has been the evolution of cycle tourism?
- What needs to be done to achieve an "ideal"?

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- There is a certain cohesion between the “Euroregional feeling” and cycle tourism.
- You wanted to say more; do you want to add to what has already been said?

Thanks to the interviewee

Thank you and best regards

I must thank you for your time and cooperation.

I invite you to an International Congress in Pessac on 30 June and 1 July. “*Cross-border sport and leisure: actions, practices and public uses in Europe and in the world*”.

### **7.2 Annex 2: DBD career participant interview guide**

1. Name, age and place of birth.
2. How long have you been taking part in this cycle tourism event?
3. How did you hear about it?
4. Environment / Tell us about your feeling
5. What is cycle touring?
6. Do you cross the border with frequency?
7. Why do you think there is not that tendency many times?
8. Have you had any bad experiences when crossing the border?
9. If you had power, how would you promote cycle tourism in an attractive leisure cross border activity?
10. Are you federated? From where?
11. What motivates you the most to practice cycle tourism? (Give several possible motivations and choose the most important ones).
12. When you see this image, what do you see first? Is there a specific name that comes to mind that captures the whole image? (Show the photo of the Euroregion).

#### **Possible motivations:**

- Route with low traffic density or reserved for cyclists.
- Sufficient and appropriate signage.
- Variety of routes in a cyclist-friendly environment.
- Asphalted road surface.
- Adequate accommodation for cyclists.
- Provisioning opportunities on routes.
- Guides with information available.
- Access by public transport.
- Density of routes.
- Cycling workshops along the route.
- Rest areas along the route.

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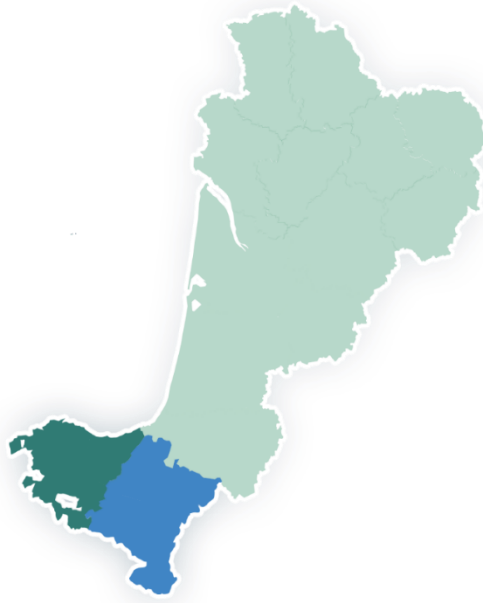


Illustration 24. Map of the Euroregion edited.

Source: own elaboration.