

# Cycling tourism and cross-border cooperation: The case of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín

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**Abstract** | The use of bicycles in tourism is gaining an increased number of supporters around the world. It is clear that cycling tourism has a significant potential for tourism and territorial dynamization. This article aims to identify the potential of cycling tourism in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, focusing on several areas: cycling routes, accommodation and restaurants, activities and events, and bike-friendly entities. An analysis was performed in the territory located in the North Region of Portugal and Galicia (Spain) – the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, which is a pioneer in cross-border cooperation. The methodology used for this work was qualitative, namely content analysis of interviews and tourist brochures. The results demonstrate that the organisations are aware of the importance of this type of tourism in the territory and its capacities for cycling tourism. However, it was found that there are still limitations, especially in accommodation and restaurants, and the integration of bike-friendly entities that are aware of the cycling market. This study revealed interesting contributions to cycling tourism in this territory, allowing a better perception of this market in academic and territorial terms.

**Keywords** | Cycling tourism, bicycle, cycle-touring routes, cross-border cooperation, Eurocity Chaves-Verín

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## 1. Introduction

The Tourism is an important economic activity, encouraging the development of territories (Cabugueira, 2005). In this context, the 'nature' factor is increasingly relevant in activities related to tourism and leisure (Rodrigues et al., 2009). Furthermore, tourism in cross-border territories promotes cohesion and development, especially in more isolated areas (López-Guzmán et al., 2015; Timothy, 1995). Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the potential of cross-border destinations for tourism development.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of cycling tourism (e.g., Bell, 2018; Lamont, 2009; Lee & Huang, 2014; Lumsdon, 2000; Nikolic et al., 2005; Vujko et al., 2013; Vujko & Gajic, 2014; Vujko & Plavša, 2013), especially in the cross-border context. However, studies about the dynamics linking both the phenomena – tourism and cross-border destinations, are still lacking (see Gelbman, 2008; Lagiewski & Revelas, 2004; Maiz-Bar et al., 2015; Prokkola, 2007, 2008, 2010; Studzieniecki, 2016; Timothy, 1995, 1999, 2001). Therefore, this work intends to contribute to the study of cycling tourism in a cross-border destination context. More specifically, it aims to identify the potential of cycling tourism in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, focusing on specific dimensions: cycling routes, accommodation and restaurants, activities and events, and bike-friendly entities.

The Eurocity Chaves-Verín is constituted by the municipality of Chaves in the North Region of Portugal, and the municipality of Verín in Galicia, Spain. According to the AECT (2021), it "is a pioneering project in the Iberian Peninsula and Europe, starting a new second-generation cooperation model, which is beyond the institutional collaboration and the simple sum of cooperation programs and initiatives, proving that it is possible to adopt a new model of European citizenship". This cross-border territory has been established on solid cooperation between the municipalities of both

countries. Therefore, it seems to be an interesting setting to analyze the potential of cycling tourism to consolidate this dynamic and lead to tourism development.

This article is divided into five sections. Besides this introductory section, there is a literature review section focused on cycling tourism and cross-border cooperation. Subsequently, the methodology used for the study and the destination under study are described in more detail, and, finally, research findings are reported and discussed, and their implications for the industry are highlighted.

## 2. Cycling tourism and cross-border cooperation

### 2.1. Cycling tourism as a promoter of destination development and cooperation networks

Tourism promotes sustainable development and revitalization of destinations (Almeida & Abranja, 2009). When associated with the bicycle – an increasingly popular vehicle in destinations – , it can be synonymous with sustainability and well-being (Carvalho, 2016; Černá et al., 2014). This enables benefits and helps to promote destinations and local communities (Neves & Esperança, 2011; Pratte, 2006), especially in underdeveloped and low-density areas, which can be boosted through tourism (Cope et al., 1998).

Cycling tourism gained notoriety worldwide (Chen & Lee, 2017), and the European Commission is aware of the importance and potential of bicycle use (European Commission, 2000). Gantar et al. (2012) identify the advantages of using 'cycling' as a tourist product: "It is a form of soft recreational tourism that yields many positive results: it is environmentally friendly, promotes a healthy lifestyle and uses a low-cost means of transport" (p. 15). Cycling in a particular destination

promotes intermodality and public transport. Therefore, public transportation systems must have areas adapted for bicycles (Faulks et al., 2006; Palós & Troyano, 2014; Vassi & Vlastos, 2014). However, not all destinations have available public transport, such as trains, which are compatible with the bicycle (Piket et al., 2013). When this does not happen, it is another barrier to cycling (Weston & Mota, 2012).

Destinations that invest in cycling tourism must be prepared with infrastructure adapted for this purpose (Lee & Huang, 2014). It is essential to promote the bicycle destination through marketing campaigns; however, the local tourism supply, both in terms of infrastructures and services (such as accommodation and infrastructures for bicycles, attractions, brochure information, and public transportation, among others), needs to be adequate to promote the development of cycling tourism in a given destination (Faulks et al., 2006; Pratte, 2006). An example is the reuse of old railway lines for eco-lanes, promoting the presence of cycling tourism in the territories, and its revitalisation (Bakogiannis et al., 2014; Reis & Jellum, 2012). Cycling routes attract tourists to destinations (Cope et al., 1998) and the cycling tourism phenomenon can promote benefits: economical (Bull, 2006; Weed et al., 2014; Bell, 2018; Blondiau et al., 2016; Mota et al., 2011); environmental (Heinen, Maat, & Wee, 2011; Lee, 2015); social (European Commission, 2000; Mota et al., 2011); political and ecological (European Commission, 2000); among others (Bell, 2018; Blondiau et al., 2016).

Even though several authors define and approach the concept of cycling tourism (Lumsdon, 2000; McKibbin, 2014; Nikolic et al., 2005; Simonsen et al., 1998; Weston & Mota, 2012), it is clear that additional research is needed (Deenihan & Caulfield, 2015).

Globally, entities are aware of the importance and potential of this phenomenon in destinations (Ritchie & Hall, 1999). It is fundamental

that there are integrative and versatile strategies that allow the development of cycling tourism in a destination, positively affecting the local economy (Beierle, 2011; Vujko et al., 2013). Ruschel (2008) demonstrates the importance of promoting cycling destinations for the use of bicycles. In cycling tourism, according to Downward and Lumsdon (2001), the use of bicycles is included in the destination tourist experience. Transport infrastructure plays a key role in the development of a country's tourism industry. Investments in public transport can help reduce the environmental impact of tourism (Karimov et al., 2023). Thus, a quality, intermodal transport infrastructure contributes to a positive experience, allowing tourists to take their bikes with them.

Cycling tourists prefer lesser-known territories (Gazzola et al., 2018) and more integrative experiences with communities (Beierle, 2011). Thus, destinations should focus on creating the conditions for the establishment of cycling tourism companies providing supply and necessary equipment, and valuing the whole experience (e.g., guided tours, transport for equipment and luggage, among others) (Faulks et al., 2006).

## 2.2. The importance of cross-border regions cooperation and tourism development

In the European context, increasing relevance is given to cross-border cooperation, with available support schemes and funds. This type of cooperation allows the implementation of joint actions and stimulates the need and existence of policies between destinations that share this cooperation (Pardellas de Blas & Fabeiro, 2012; Studzieniecki, 2016; Trillo Santamaría & González, 2011). Furthermore, these territories allow the cooperative involvement of other entities, promoting the emergence of these cross-border regions and cooperation networks (Laranjeira, 2014; Trillo Santamaría & González, 2011). Therefore, sustainability must be prioritised (Kwanisai et al., 2014).

Cross-border cooperation enhances the development of border territories (Liberato et al., 2017). However challenging, cooperation between cross-border regions is fundamental because it involves different territories (Fricke, 2015; Liberato et al., 2016). The tourism sector enables these destinations' economic development and promotion (Ritchie & Hall, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to embrace sustainability (Gonçalves, 2005; Gonçalves & Costa, 2023; Liberato et al., 2017). To have cross-border tourism, "it is first necessary to have a process of integration between territories and society, where tourism is established as a significant part of this integration" (Paixão, 2006, p. 72). Therefore, involving the agents and the local community of these territories is vital to collaborate in cross-border cooperation and help formulate this process with the tourism sector (Pereira & Pereiro, 2014). Tourism needs to develop in a sustainable but competitive way. Therefore, the creation and development of tourism products must be imaginative and pioneering. Instead of simply replicating what already exists, new and innovative ways of attracting visitors should be pursued (Gonçalves & Costa, 2023; Islam et al., 2023).

### 3. Methods

This article aims to identify the potential of cycling tourism in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, focusing on several areas: cycling routes, accommodation and restaurants, activities and events, and bike-friendly entities. A qualitative and exploratory approach was adopted using the WebQDA software. Content analysis was performed in semi-structured interviews (entities linked to the territory and cycling tourism) and in tourist brochures of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín.

Interviews are considered a relevant tool (Gonçalves, 2004; Jennings, 2001; Jiménez, 2012; Veal, 2006). Prior studies linked with the topic un-

der study also used interviews in their methodology (e.g., Liberato et al., 2016; Vujko & Plavša, 2013). Tourist brochures of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín were also analyzed, in addition to interviews with entities. These materials are critical to helping tourists know the territories they are visiting (Rodrigues et al., 2009), giving essential information about the primary resources in the destinations (Salim, 2017).

#### 3.1. Primary data: Interview survey

In the initial phase, the entities selected for the interview had to be linked to cross-border cooperation or cycling tourism or have good knowledge of the territory. When contacted via email or telephone, they also provided the contacts of other entities that fit the profile. After the selection process of the interviewees, six interviews were carried out with the representatives of public sector institutions (EGTC<sup>1</sup> Chaves-Verin, Chaves municipality/ 'BTT Clube de Chaves', 'Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal', and 'Turismo da Galiza') and to other entities that know the potential of cycling tourism (Bike Tours Portugal and Bikotel). On average, the five recorded interviews lasted approximately 17 minutes, and one of them was received via email. The interviews were conducted with organizations with territorial development and management roles and with knowledge of bicycles and their market. A brief analysis of respondents shows that (see also Table 1):

- (i) All of them are Portuguese or Spanish;
- (ii) Male respondents predominate, corresponding to 67% of the total;
- (iii) Four representatives are from public entities and two from the private sector;
- (iv) Three entities are from regions of Portugal (North, Center and Algarve) and two in Spain (Galicia).

<sup>1</sup>European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

Table 1 | Analysis of respondents

Interviews	Entities
Interview #1	Chaves municipality / 'BTT Clube de Chaves'
Interview #2	'Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal'
Interview #3	EGTC Chaves-Verín
Interview #4	'Turismo da Galiza'
Interview #5	Bike Tours Portugal
Interview #6	Bikotel

Source: Own elaboration

After conducting the interviews and transcribing them, the WebQDA software was used to carry out the content analysis. First, categories

were defined (Figure 1), and then responses were coded.

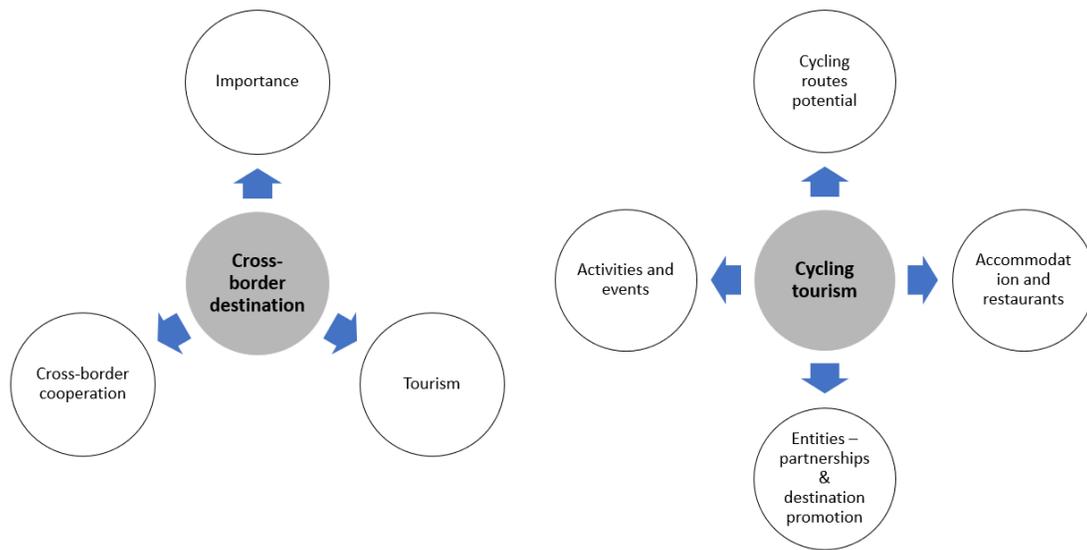


Figure 1 | Interview codes  
Source: Own elaboration

### 3.2. Secondary data collection: Tourist brochures of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín

Part of the tourist brochures was available in digital format on the website 'Visit Chaves Verín'. Those in a physical format were collected upon a visit to the destination. The criterion for choosing them was the theme of cross-border cooperation and cycling tourism. Therefore, only brochures related to the Eurocity Chaves-Verín were selected. In total, five brochures were analyzed, available in Portuguese and Spanish, with none exclusively for

cycling tourists.

For the analysis of the tourist brochures, several keywords were selected that were related to the cross-border context and cycling tourism. Thus, the frequency with which they appeared throughout the five brochures analyzed was counted, and they were divided into three categories of analysis, which relate to cycling routes, accommodation and restaurants, activities and events, and entities:

- (i) Analysis I: 'Bike'; 'MTB'; and 'Route(s)'.
- (ii) Analysis II: 'Accommodation'; 'Hotels'; 'Hostals'; 'Pensions'; 'Rural Tourism House'; 'Sleeping'; 'Restaurant(s)' and 'Eating'.
- (iii) Analysis III: 'Entity(ies)' and 'Bike-friendly'.

### 3.3. The Eurocity Chaves-Verín

This Eurocity is located in the Euroregion of Galicia-North Portugal (Figure 2), two regions that border Portugal and Spain. Its project is within the scope of cross-border cooperation - POCTEP, 2007-2013, and is currently a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation<sup>2</sup> (EGTCs) (Liberato et al., 2017; Lois, 2013; Ribeiro & Marques, 2016). Eurocities are also known as 'twin cities' (Trillo Santamaría et al., 2015), and there are several authors who study the Eurocity Chaves-Verín (Liberato et al., 2017; Lois, 2013; Pardellas de Blas & Fabeiro, 2013; Trillo Santamaría et al., 2015).

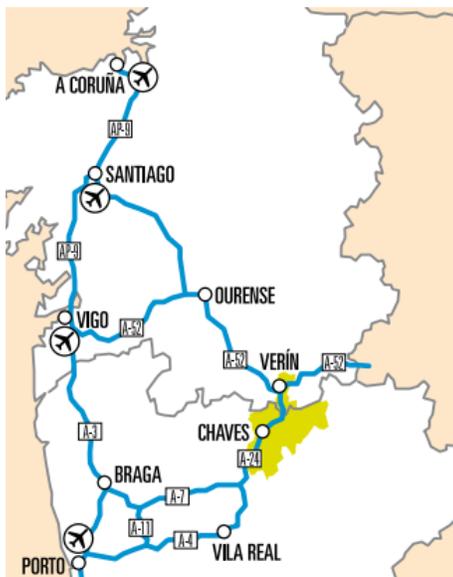


Figure 2 | Location of Eurocity Chaves-Verín  
Source: 'Visit Chaves-Verín' website

## 4. Results for the development of cycling tourism in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín

### 4.1. Cross-border destination

Despite being a low population density territory, it has great potential for cross-border cooperation and cycling tourism. Cross-border cooperation in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín is crucial as it enables territorial development. The association of the 'Portugal and Spain brand' is significant. The interviewed entities considered tourism essential, having the potential to develop natural and cultural resources, especially the 'thermal culture' and heritage in the territory (see Table 2).

Table 2 | Results for 'Cross-border destination'

Interviews	Cross-border destination
Interview #2	"A sustainable Eurocity is a city with tourist interest, that is concerned with the environment [...] concerned with urban requalification."
Interview #3	"Tourism is central, [...] because tourism is transversal, implies many actions, urban planning, the sustainability of the environment, the requalification of heritage."
Interview #5	"[...] associating the Portugal brand with the Spain brand [...] it is very important [...] it is another product that opens up and is a product communicated in a completely different way."

Source: Own Elaboration

### 4.2. Cycling tourism

#### 4.2.1. Cycling routes' potential

The Eurocity has the potential to develop cycling tourism. The two territories' characteristics are suitable for cycling and mountain biking. In addition to the necessary infrastructure and equipment, it is essential to invest in a permanent animation structure and programs & experiences. Several routes can be done by bicycle in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, namely the 'Ecovia do Tâ-

<sup>2</sup>"[...] were set up to facilitate cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation between Member States or their regional and local authorities. EGTCs enable these partners to implement joint projects, share expertise and improve coordination of spatial planning" (European Parliament, 2021).

mega', 'Caminhos de Santiago', and the 'Thermal and Water Route'. 'Nacional 2' has a huge tourist potential that connects Chaves to Faro in Portugal, and is a tourist route to be chosen, especially in road cycling. The 'Corgo route' is also

an investment for cycling tourism from Régua to Chaves in the Corgo old train line. It is also essential to include cycling tourism in routes that interconnect gastronomy, spas, nature and ethnography (see Table 3).

Table 3 | Results for 'Cycling routes potential'

Interviews	Other infrastructures
Interview #1	"[The road] 'Nacional 2' is a great challenge now, and there is more and more demand [...] we want to bet on the Corgo route."
Interview #2	"The Portuguese Inland Road to Santiago in Chaves-Verín passes here, which comes from Viseu and passes Vila Real and continues to Chaves. In Verín there is a crossroad, which is the 'Via de Prata', which comes from southern Spain, with the Portuguese Inland Road to Santiago in Chaves-Verín." "The 'Thermal and Water Route', which is a very long route, goes from Verín to Vidago, is designed to be a touring [...] but it also gives the possibility to go by bicycle, if it is for days or a week."
Interview #3	"The entire North Region has potential [...] in the field of cycling, it is evident that Chaves, and the territory around Chaves, has good conditions for cycling."
Interview #4	"Very interesting to include cycling in gastronomic, thermal and natural routes, as well as the creation of ethnographic routes."
Interview #6	"First, the paths, then the existence of local structures, whether equipment, for example, permanent animation [...] we have to create the conditions [...] this may imply developing programs, which are in the nature... by trails, by mountain bike."

Source: Own Elaboration

The entities interviewed pointed out that the territory must include adequate infrastructures that enable cycling tourism, including bike-friendly accommodation, mountain bike centres, bicycle parking, and cycling routes, among others. The existence of safe parking lots or storage places for bicycles and the creation of a Mountain Bike Centre enhance cross-border cooperation (highlighted by the interviewees). However, routes must be

adequately signposted. Rest areas and repair shops to support bicycles were also marked as support equipment. In addition, a bicycle counting system is necessary to know how many people choose to use the bicycle. They are also working on the shared bicycle system, which they consider essential in the routes for the cycling destination (see Table 4).

Table 4 | Results for 'Other infrastructures'

Interviews	Other infrastructures
Interview #1	"Exclusive for bicycles [...] no...there is no (parking)."
	"There are always rest areas, both Chaves and Verín have bicycle support areas."
	"The repair shops. Here in Chaves we have 4-5 and Verín has at least 3...4, there are 4 that give support to these people."
Interview #2	"There is no counting system, there is simply the markings on the ground, here we have the informative material [...] the tracks are available on the Internet. Anyone who wants to do it follows the signs or follows the geographic identification."
	"Bicycle parking in urban areas, yes; on routes, no."
Interview #4	"The routes are perfectly signposted, prepared to go by bicycle, to prevent cars from entering these routes."
	"There are repair shops that provide services."
Interview #6	"It could be extended to Portugal to set up a shared international mountain bike centre."
	"We are developing the 'Portas de Galicia' mountain bike centre and we have joined the Eurovelo European program so that the great European routes reach Galicia."
Interview #6	"People arrive and then don't have a suitable place to store their bikes, or if they come it's to make a crossing or a longer route, and they would need, for example, to wash their clothes or want to get up early to enjoy the first hours of the day. Hotels sometimes are not very flexible."

Source: Own Elaboration

In the six analysed brochures, it was noticed that several routes could be done by bicycle in the two municipalities (interviewees also mention some of them). These routes have a great potential to be better adapted to cycling tourism:

Analysis I: 'Bike'; 'MTB'; and 'Route(s)'.

- (i) Chaves cycle route;
- (ii) Urban Route of Chaves;
- (iii) Urban Route of Vidago;
- (iv) Route of the 'nascentes de Verín';
- (v) Route of the 'Poço do Demo';
- (vi) Eurocity Chaves-Verín Thermal and Water Route;
- (vii) Tourist itinerary ('Ecovia do Tâmega'; Portuguese Inland Road to Santiago in Chaves-Verín; BTT route 'Fortalezas da Raia');
- (viii) 'Via de Prata'; and
- (ix) Tâmega bird watching guide ('Lagoas de Chaves' route; 'A Raia' route; and Tamaguelos-Mourazos route).

For 'good practice', it is essential for those who ride a bicycle, especially on long routes, signage

and the necessary infrastructure for the journey and stops: urban furniture, such as benches, drinking fountains, bicycle parking<sup>3</sup>, and rubbish bins. It is also crucial to select the most suitable and safe routes for cycling tourists to use by the competent authorities. The lack of definition and adequate planning of these issues may cause insecurity for the cycling tourists in the destination. The existence of an automatic counting system for cycling tourists, such as the 'Eco-counter', is imperative as a way of counting tourists and realising the economic importance that this market has in the destination. It is imperative to have a bike-sharing system, such as the one in Bragança – 'Xispas'. It is also vital that a mountain bike centre can be developed, as the cross-border destination has great potential.

#### 4.2.2. Accommodation and restaurants

According to the interviewees, there is not many 'bike-friendly' seal in hotels and restaurants; however, businessmen help tourists in these situations (e.g., by finding places to leave bicycles). There is a solution for hotel establishments to join Bikotel and guarantee the mandatory requirements for those travelling by bicycle (see Table 5).

Table 5 | Results for 'Accommodation and restaurants'

Interviews	Accommodation and restaurants'
Interview #1	"You can see more hotels and restaurants adapting to new realities, because usually people come with a bicycle and they were not prepared for that, and [...] they do not have a sign on the door saying they are bike-friendly but do it spontaneously."
Interview #2	"I also know hotel establishments, in the Spanish and Portuguese part of Chaves-Verín that rent bicycles, I already know less about restaurants... which are bike-friendly, with a bike-friendly seal, I do not know."
Interview #4	"It must offer services to ease the arrival of cyclists and their accommodation, such as tracks and specific places for the bicycles."
Interview #5	"And for bike-friendly accommodation, there are solutions, such as Bikotel. The Bikotel brand [...] encourages all hotel units to address this issue of bike-friendly and guide cyclists' stays for what they need."
Interview #6	"We will probably have two accommodations (Bikotel) there in the area that will join our network and that we are working on."

Source: Own Elaboration

<sup>3</sup>According to the Portuguese Federation of Cycle Tourism and Bicycle Users, the simplest and most reliable model for bicycle parking is Sheffield or inverted "U" type, to ensure the safety of the bicycle.

Regarding the accommodation establishments in Chaves and Verín, it was found in the analysed brochures that there are 65 establishments (53 in Chaves and 12 in Verín). It was noticed that there is no 'bike-friendly' accommodation seal in the two municipalities. However, the accommodation units will be aware of the needs of cycling tourists. It is also essential that these establishments are equipped with the minimum conditions for storing bicycles. There are mentioned 210 restaurants and similar establishments in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín. Of this vast number of restaurants, none had a bike-friendly label, and it is essential that anyone riding a bicycle can leave their bicycle in a safe place. It is relevant that there is a parking place near the restaurants for bicycles.

In addition to cycling routes, other infrastructures that support the offer for this market should exist, namely accommodation and restaurants, have the appropriate services for cycling tou-

rists, with the 'bike-friendly' seal or join the Bikotel project<sup>4</sup>. According to the Portuguese Cycling Federation, restaurants should include, for example, menus suitable for those who ride a bicycle and places to temporarily store the bicycle (Portuguese Cycling Federation, 2016).

#### 4.2.3. Activities and events

Some associations encourage cycling through events. The use of bicycles for tourism turns out to be very important in destinations. It boosts the development of the territory, and gives tourists a different way of getting to know the territory, having a unique experience that promotes 'slow tourism'. Therefore, it is necessary to promote cycling tourism in the territory via activities and events, intermodality, and integration of the tourist offer in the destination (see Table 6).

Table 6 | Results for 'Activities and events'

Interviews	Activities and events'
Interview #2	"[...] many bike clubs on both sides [...] there are mountain bike clubs."
Interview #4	"The bicycle is important because we created these routes to go by bike, 'taking time' to see what Eurocity offers [...] so all cycling experiences are important."
Interview #5	"It allows a more effective promotion of cycle tourism and mountain bike to attract cyclists to the territory."
	"The bicycle is culture above all [...] if it is not part of the culture, of a particular country, of a particular region [...] it is more complicated for these people to choose a type of cycling tourism."
Interview #6	"The bicycle turns out to be an enhancer for the appearance of market niches that makes a lot of sense to associate with tourist production."
	"We also invest in combined products, and I believe that the bicycle can easily be included in these aspects."

Source: Own Elaboration

One of the best-known events involving a bicycle is 'Ham Route of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín'. It is highlighted and promoted in the main channels and has a duration of a weekend. This event has much potential for cycling tourism, as it combi-

nes the use of bicycles with experience and gastronomy, making it possible to know the destination better and interact with the local community (see Table 7).

<sup>4</sup>"Is a lodging that offers specific amenities to satisfy the needs of those who consider cycling the best thing in life (road or mountain biking)" (Bikotel, 2015).

Table 7 | Results for the ‘Ham Route of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín’

Interviews	Ham Route of the Eurocity Chaves-Verín
Interview #1	“People are looking for the weekend to take the Ham Route.”
Interview #2	“The Ham Route attracts many tourists, many bicycle enthusiasts.”
Interview #4	“More than 5,000 cyclists have been able to get to know part of the Eurocity to participate in different sports events.” “They are visitors, especially on weekends, and they spend one of the days at the destination.”
Interview #6	“It is very important to activate the destination with the calendar with events, whether sports, recreational, cultural associated with cycling, or in gastronomic terms.”

Source: Own Elaboration

Activities and events linked to cycling are essential to attract tourists to destinations. However, no event directly linked to cycling was found in the brochures. These activities should be included in tourist brochures or specific leaflets for the cycling route. Among the best known is the Ham Route of the Eurocidade Chaves-Verín.

We propose for ‘good practices’ that the competent entities organise activities and events so that there is a diversified offer in the destination for the correct development of cycling tourism. This type of event shows great economic potential, bringing together tourists and the local community. It would also be important to intertwine them with

the existing tourist offer in the territory (namely gastronomy, spas, wine tourism, nature, among others).

#### 4.2.4. Entities – partnerships and destination promotion

In addition to the entities, promoting cycling in communities is essential as a way of valuing the culture of the bicycle. Cooperation between public and private entities is essential in this cross-border destination, avoiding ‘competition’, fostering partnerships, and working in a cooperation network (see Table 8).

Table 8 | ‘Entities - partnerships & destination promotion’

Interviews	‘Entities - partnerships & destination promotion’
Interview #5	“We are all private companies, all from the same market, but instead of having a strategy or a philosophy of competition, we chose to have a strategy and philosophy and a concept of partnership. [...] Partnerships are very important, whether with public entities, associations or private entities, and especially in such a small country.”
Interview #6	“Our concern is exactly that, to form a community of people who really like to share and ride a bike.” “[...] working in a network with companies with accommodation, with restaurants, with travel agencies, taxis... it will generate economic production, I think it is very important [...] we work a lot in partnership and with connection, and we try to develop these destinations.”

Source: Own Elaboration

Based on their knowledge of cycling tourists, the interviewed entities know they do more recreational and leisure activities (contact with nature and local communities), travel in small groups or individually, and have high economic income and educational qualifications. The motivations presented by the interviewees reveal that cycling tourists give importance to physical and emotional well-being, price, environmental characteris-

tics, and attributes of the destination. One of the barriers mentioned by the interviewees was the insecurity that bicycle users on Portuguese roads still experience. According to the sector entities, the duration of the stay for cycling tourists showed that it varies between 5 and 14 days, potentially generating more revenue for the destination (see Table 9).

Table 9 | Results for 'Typology of cycling tourists'

Interviews	'Entities - partnerships & destination promotion'
Interview #5	"[...] 60% with recreational or leisure motivation."
	"[...] motivations come first [...] physical well-being, emotional well-being and cycling is a sport that can ensure this, cycling is a fashion. The environmental part is eco-friendly, then we have motivations such as the destination of Portugal and its regions and we started to go into various points: such as gastronomy, wines, culture. I would say that these points that I mentioned, the most important are the biggest motivations and the price [...] the price is fundamental. [...] People will first do what is best known ... Italy, France, Austria, Danube, Spain and only after having done all these regions that are very famous in cycling tourism, will discover Portugal."
	"[...] big barriers that we found more at the beginning, but we continue to find, it is that Portugal continues to be a destination for a cyclist [...] possibly the fourth or fifth choice." "Tourists stay with us for five to seven days."
Interview #6	"They are mostly young people in their 50s, but essentially they are people who come in small groups or couples, or sometimes they come solo, they usually have higher education, they are people with some economic and financial capacity [...] they are people who want to know, want to explore, want contact with nature, culture and local people and also in a very recreational aspect." "[...] between eight days, sometimes twelve to fourteen. At least eight days [...] they are not very concerned about the weather, they do not have strict schedules, they are very flexible, very interested in exploring unusual places, which put them in contact with more alternative things."

Source: Own Elaboration

Bike-friendly entities are not mentioned in the tourist brochures, but there are at least three ('BTT Clube de Chaves'; 'Club BTT Verín', and 'Club BTT Casa Do Pessoal at Hospital de Chaves').

For the development of cycling tourism, in addition to a structured offer, the competent entities (public and private) that contribute to the development and growth of tourism in the territory must cooperate. Several companies have the potential to promote and develop cycling tourism (e.g., Bike Tours Portugal and Portugal A2Z), Bikotel in hotels, bicycle and mountain bike associations have a fundamental role, especially in the dissemination and organisation of activities and events (BTT Clube de Chaves and Club BTT Verín). Tourism promotion and territorial cooperation entities, such as 'Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal' and 'Turismo da Galicia', and the EGTC itself, are fundamental in this regard. It is also essential that the entities know the typology of cycling tourists in the destination to define their programs and events to adapt them to the market's needs.

## 5. Conclusion

Cycling tourism is growing more and more in the world, and, as such, destination planning is

important to organize the supply. According to Ritchie and Hall (1999), bicycles promote sustainability as a means of transport and integrate the tourist experience. Cycling is a crucial tourist product with economic value (Gantar et al., 2012). The main findings show that the entities consider cycling tourism significant in the Chaves-Verín Eurocity and has growth potential. Border territories are becoming increasingly relevant due to the power of attraction they can have for tourism. It is fundamental that there are public-private partnerships in the destination for sharing and generating knowledge about cycling tourism in a border environment, especially that link routes and the respective necessary infrastructure, accommodation and restaurants, activities and events. The Eurocity has the potential for cycling tourism and mountain biking, allowing contact with nature and heritage. However, it needs promotion and development by tour operators. The study of cycling tourism and cross-border cooperation at an academic level showed that the market for cycling tourists is quite complex, segmented and multi-diversified. The supply from both sides of the municipalities needs to cooperate in developing cycling tourism through establishing bike-friendly accommodation and restaurants, improving routes with the necessary infrastructure, and organizing activities and events in the field of cycling tourism.

The content analysis of tourist brochures was crucial to understanding the territory's composition and what it offers for cycling tourism. There is a need for brochures only for cycling tourism.

This study contributes to a better perception in academic and territorial terms of the importance of cycling in the Eurocity Chaves-Verín, realizing that there must be specific infrastructures and other offer structures directly linked to the bicycle in the territory.

There were several limitations in this work: not many studies linking the topic of cycling tourism with the cross-border aspect; being able to carry out interviews with all entities contacted; and some of the brochures lacked consistency in terms of information. Understanding the profile of cycling tourists who visits the Eurocity Chaves-Verín would complement this work.

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