



FEDERAȚIA ROMÂNĂ DE ORIENTARE

Str.V.Conta Nr.16,
Sector 2, 020954,
București,
România

Tel: 021 317 49 99
Fax: 021 317 49 99
E-mail: frorientare@gmail.com
Web: www.fro.ro

Cod Fiscal: 4400824
Cont IBAN:
RO79RNCB0074029203640001
B.C.R. Sector 3



Dear Orienteering Friends,

A couple of weeks ago I received a phone call from a Romanian former orienteer and current mapper, Marian Cotarta, sharing with me this great idea: Danubian Championship or Danubian Cup in a very interesting way. As we all try to make orienteering more attractive, I embraced the idea totally, discussed it with Romanian Federation Council and we decided to propose it to all the Orienteering Federations from the countries touched by the Danube.

Here is the proposed project:

The Danube, among other things, is also known as the river that unites Europe's destinies, loaded with history along its 2858 km length. The facts below may be known by everybody, but let me remind you of some technical details about the Danube:

- It originates in the Black Forest mountains in Germany and it empties in the Black Sea through the Danube Delta
- It's the second longest river in Europe after the Volga
- It is the only river in the world that passes through or touches the borders of 10 countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine.
- It is the only river in the world that passes through four capital cities (Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade)
- It has a length of 2858 km, out of which more than 2400 km are navigable.
- The Danube is connected through other waterways to important European rivers, the biggest one being the Rhine–Main–Danube Canal which basically connects the North Sea to the Black Sea.

The idea of this project is to use the Danube to strengthen the connection between all the neighbouring countries and mostly to use the Danube as a waterway for passenger ships to transport people to orienteering events along its course.

Using the Danube as a waterway to transport people to events has many advantages which we will try to outline below:

1. This will replace other lengthy and crowded transportation methods with a pleasure cruise.
2. It will solve many logistical issues. Transport lodging and meals can be done all in one place, on the ships. Orienteers need to bring only their gear.
3. A great variety of cruises can be organized over many years, with the possibility to organize 7-day events in 7 different countries for example. Each year the cruise can be done in different areas while maintaining the goal of visiting multiple countries.
4. Carbon footprint for such an event would be vastly reduced when compared with a normal event. This way of travelling is more efficient, cheaper and Eco friendly.
5. The atmosphere on a cruise ship housing around 200-300 athletes for 4-8 10 days would be a special one and almost celebratory I could say. Many of us travel long distances to international events so we can meet our friends and adversaries even for only a few moments. Usually, the athletes are housed in different locations and they rarely meet outside the competition venue.
6. Cruising around to different locations will serve as good publicity for our sport. You can imagine what effect the arrival of such a cruise ship loaded with competitors animated by the same passion will have on destination cities.
7. Local organizers will benefit from an international exposure and the orienteering events will become very attractive not only for the local competitors but also for others around the world.
8. Such travel arrangements will ideally combine Orienteering with tourism, allowing visitors to conveniently visit landmarks and discover different cultures.



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9. There is a massive potential for developing this idea. If this project is viable and takes off, in a few years this model could be used to organize great international events such as a World Sprint Championship in 4 European capitals or a World Masters Championship in 4 countries. (Or others) Small countries which would never have an opportunity to organize such events will be able to organize big Orienteering meets together as some of the logistical issues will be easier to tackle and only the technical side would need to be solved.

10. Cost is probably the most important aspect. Like any project, this would need to make sense from a financial perspective. Generally speaking, such river cruises can be fairly expensive and their cost differs widely depending on route, distance travelled, ship amenities, etc..

As an example, an 8-day, Passau-Budapest-Passau cruise starts from **€1000**, on a return route that is about **1000km** long, all inclusive:

<https://www.tourradar.com/t/79180#p=4>

Another 6-day cruise on the same route starts at **€475**:

https://www.tourradar.com/t/125591?qclid=EAlalQobChMI14-N4rrm3glVCj5PCh1y4QRjEAEYASACEgJmjvD_BwE

Another example is an 8-day, **1650km** length return cruise between Vienna - Bratislava – Budapest – Belgrade – Calafat (Romania) , all inclusive (including on shore visits) negotiated at **€500/pers**, on a 4 star cruise ship booked as a charter through a tour operator.

We are currently in talks with another travel agency to investigate other cost effective options. We can estimate that on a **1000 km** chartered return trip, the cost per person can be negotiated to under **€350**, which means that with good planning and management the cost per person can be comparable or cheaper than the classic travel arrangements.

Attached are a few pictures of a cruise ship on Danube.

Ten countries and ten reasons to start working on this project together

How do we see this project brought to life? For the greatest chances of success, considering its complexity and given the considerable length of the navigable Danube waterway, we propose to break down the entire length in 4 sections:

- 1 Western European (Germany, Austria and other western European countries)
- 2 Central European (Austria, Slovakia, Hungary)
- 3 Central Eastern-European (Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria)
- 4 Eastern European (Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine)

Of course, any combination could be considered as long as there is enough interest and it makes financial sense, including cruises to the North Sea.

If more orienteering federations subscribe to this proposal, we could start working on a framework next. Ideally, all interested federations should have representatives discuss technical details face to face, during an international event or in a special meeting in one of the Danube capitals, like Bratislava for example. We will choose a Directing Committee (one person from each country plus an IOF board member), we will exchange ideas about this project, we will come up with Operating Rules. Two formulas would work best: a Danubian Championship open to all countries touched by the Danube, or by its drainage basin (so almost all of Europe), or a Danube Cup open to everybody. Other formulas can be considered and of course we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Representatives from each interested country in this project could form an Initiative Committee tasked to



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plan and manage the project. Ideally the presidency of this committee rotates between each of the members every year. A personal initiative is not incompatible with an international collaboration in this project, on the contrary, we think it can bring a new impetus to developing the sport of orienteering.

How it will work

Orienteers from participating countries will travel to orienteering events on cruise ships. They could get to the cruise ships by any means of transportation, bus, train plane or by car. Ideally, organized transportation from participating countries would be preferred. Then, the competitors can be transferred by bus from the port of call to the event area, where they will be joined by the orienteer's from the local clubs. Other means could be considered and further studied. For a more efficient collaboration, each federation will need to provide addresses of Orienteering clubs interested in participating in this project (ideally situated within a reasonable distance from a Danube port) and agree to schedule an international competition (WRE) on the days when the cruise ships will transit the area. If the clubs do not agree or are not interested in the project, the Initiative Committee or the National Federation could take over the task of organizing the event instead. Ideally, each National Federation should be able to identify all mapped areas or potential competition zones within a 30-45 minute bus trip from a Danube port. The events can be organized by each National Federation or by a professional team which can manage all technical aspects of an orienteering event (maps, timing, course planning, promotion, etc..) with up to one year before the actual event takes place and executed by a field team that will precede the cruise ships.

The Initiative Committee agrees to identify all Danube ports and find out the following:

Capacity and number of cruise ships available in each country. For example in Passau there are about 35 river cruise ships, Vienna has over 40.

Identify all Danube ports and their technical information – capacity, how many ships can anchor at the same time, whether they can anchor away from ports, etc.

Gather information from tour operators and travel agencies about cost, ship amenities, number of ships available for charter and present it once a date and itinerary have been penciled in.

This year, on Nov 1st, Romania has taken over the rotating presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). This gives me hopes that we'll get support with the Danubian project.

Let us all unite together around this Danube Project and give a new original impetus to the sport of Orienteering in the Danube region. Let us not worry about borders, let us view Europe and the rest of the world as one big family, like the big family of Orienteering. Let us make this happen.

We hope that this proposal will pique your interest and together we will make it come true.

Initiative Committee

Deaconescu Natalia (FRO President) – Romania

Cotirta Marian (Initiator) – Romania

Ionut Zinca (Performance athlete) – Romania

Christian Ivanciuc (Former Romanian orienteer) – Canada

Radoslav Jonas (member of the board of Slovak Orienteering Association) - Slovakia

Natalia Deaconescu
President of Romanian Orienteering Federation