

## Connections between scientific research and education in the field of tourism and leisure in Belarus

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### Abstract

The development of tourism research and training for the tourism industry started in Belarus in the 1970s. This was due to the need for recreational sectors of the economy, which in turn was caused by the increasing demand for tourism and recreation on behalf of the population. Tourism research has its origins in theory of recreational geography, which was best suited to the needs of a planned economy. During the economic crisis in the 1990s, a stagnation in tourism research took place. In the early 2000s, owing to the intensification of international tourism, development of market relations and the improvement of the economy, tourism research gained new impetus. However, the methodology of recreational geography was not enough: there appeared a need for a close cooperation with foreign scientific schools and universities. The drive for mutual cooperation between Belarus and the EU in tourism science and education has resulted in TEMPUS projects. This article reviews the history of tourism development, tourism, scientific research and tourism education in Belarus. It characterizes the state tourism industry and describes the problems that could erupt with further development of the tourism business in Belarus. The analysis is based on the topics of a Doctoral thesis which has been defended in tourism in Belarus.

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### Introduction

Belarus is situated in Eastern Europe and is among the countries with a transitive economy. The country has flat relief and does not have access to the sea; hence, there are no large regions of the traditional tourism attractions

such as beach-bathing or mountain skiing. The main tourist resorts are Minsk, Vitebsk, Grodno, Polotsk and Brest, possessing lots of objects of cognitive and business tourism on the one hand, and well-developed tourist infrastructure on the other. Natural objects of

tourism are the national parks Belovezhskaya pushcha, Braslav Lakes, Naroch, Pripyat and Berezinski Reserve. A separate group of destinations (attractions) form Belarusian Castles such as Mirski, Nesvizhski, Lidski and others. Slavyanski Bazar, the festival of arts, stands out in the market of event tourism. In 2014 Belarus was hosted the World Hockey Championship, which is expected to gave impetus to the development of the tourism industry. According to the statistical reports of hotels, tourist flow to Belarus comes mostly from Russia (61.3%), followed by Ukraine; however, the percentage difference is significant (7.0%), Poland (4.4%), Germany (3.6%), Lithuania (3.2%), Latvia (2.2%) and Italy (2.1%). The tourist flow from other countries is insignificant (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>, 2014). In 2014 there were 530 hotels in Belarus. Among these there are only three five-star hotels, six four-star hotels, 32 three-star hotels and 489 hotels with no category (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>). On the whole, the hotel industry needs new investments, and hotels in provincial towns are in need of renovation and repair.

The objective of this paper is to characterize the development of tourism in Belarus and the orientation of the tourism research and education in the particular period of the development of the country.

### **Development of tourism in Belarus**

The history of tourism development in Belarus consists of three phases: each is characterized by fundamentally different economic models providing functioning of the tourism industry and the nature of the factors of tourism development (Gaidukevich, Tarasionak, Reshetnikov, Poleschuk, 2001).

The first stage was the period when the tourism in Belarus appeared as a new socioeconomic phenomenon (at the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1918). The second stage was the period of tourism development within the framework of the socialist economic model (1919–91). The third stage was the development of tourism in Belarus as an independent state and the establishment of market relations (1992).

During the first stage, the development of Belarusian tourism took place under the influence of economic processes inherent in the Russian Empire, whose constituent part Belarus was. At that time, the formation of railway transport infrastructure took place, and there appeared a demand for travel and resort services by the middle class. It was also in that time that the first local histories and bicycle clubs appeared. In the early twentieth century the first balnearies and climatic spas functioned in Barkovschina (Ushachsky district), Dubrovno, Cherven (Igumen) and Zhdanovichy. However, the agrarian way of life of the Belarusian economy, which stably formed while Belarus was a part of the Russian Empire, impeded the development of the tourism industry.

In the period when socialist economic model dominated, (the second stage) the development of tourism was uneven; there can be distinguished three periods in the development: 1919–41, 1945–70 and 1971–91. In general, this was the time when all the tourist complexes of the USSR, and Belarus in particular, was under rigid centralized control. Market mechanisms of development in the tourism industry were ignored and were subject to ideological, political and even military-strategic interests of the Soviet Union. Therefore, in the period of 1919–41 there was practically no development of the tourism industry in Belarus, despite the enormous success of the so-called ‘proletarian tourism’, which was apparent in the development of tourism industry in the metropolitan regions of the Crimea and the Caucasus. Belarus was held hostage due to its border military-strategic position, which pushed the priorities of the planned development of a tourist complex in favor of the militarization of the region.

In the period of 1945 to the 1970s, its frontier position was no longer a deterrent for administrative planning of the tourist complex of Belarus, and the ideological and military-strategic frontier of the USSR were transferred to the West, to the GDR and Czechoslovakia in particular. However, the tourism industry was held back due to the necessity to reconstruct the destroyed economy and meet the priority needs of the population for food, essential

goods, clothing, housing and so on. However, it was also a time of vigorous industrialization and urbanization, which eventually led to the qualitative and quantitative growth of tourism and recreational needs of the population. Consequently, the next period (1971–91) was characterized by intensive development of tourism in Belarus, which was based on the principles of command and administrative planning.

Social demand appeared to develop the scientific base of research and modelling processes of tourism development, the tourism industry and the recreational needs of the population. Such a base was founded on the principles of recreational geography, with its key concept of territorial recreation system (TRS), which was formulated by V. Preobrazhenski and his colleagues in 1969. By 1991, Belarus had established its tourist complex, which included a network of special areas (resorts and recreation areas) chosen for the development of the tourism industry (more than 8% of the territory of Belarus). Also, there was created a system of therapeutic, recreational and sightseeing resorts Belarusturist, tour operators of international tourism Sputnik and Intourist and their branches, a number of departmental enterprises carrying out spa treatment, recreation and tourism. During the period of the 1970s to the 1990s, the volume of tourist services in Belarus increased from 0.3 million to 2.3 million, and the number of tourists from 1.3 million to 10.2 million (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>).

The stage of tourism development in independent Belarus in 1992 was accompanied by contradictory processes. On the one hand, the tourist industry started developing according to market laws, but on the other hand, the organization of the tourism business model was inherited from Soviet times and maintained. Private businesses are now well represented on the market by tourism companies and agri-tourism estates. At the same time there is a state monopoly and pseudo-state monopoly for basic tourist infrastructure – health resorts of different departmental possession, hotels, the Ministry of Housing, Tourism Industry, 'Belarusturist' (holiday homes, motels, and hotels), tourist

facilities of national parks. Private capital investment into the hospitality industry was mainly presented in Minsk, as well as in major cities. It should be noted, however, that in recent years a monopoly of the state has been weakening, and private investors, who are mainly represented by business from the Middle East and the Far East come to the hospitality market.

At present, the Ministry of Sports and Tourism is in charge of tourism management in the Republic of Belarus. The ministry has also created the Department of Tourism. These government bodies conduct the state policy in tourism and coordinate the activities of other central bodies of state administration in the field of tourism, working out a state program of tourism development. The Council of Ministers set up an interdepartmental coordination-expert council on tourism, whose efforts are aimed at improving cooperation between state, public and private entities to create a favourable environment for tourism development. To manage the process of forming a regional tourism product there was created 27 tourist zones covering the entire country.

A retrospective look at the Belarusian tourism policy (or the management of tourism industry) in recent years shows that it is still in the process of self-discovery. From the perspective of the state, Belarus has all the important institutions and structures for effective national policy of tourism. However, it is debatable to what extent these institutions and structures can cope with the tasks assigned to them, and are also able to promote tourism in accordance with the requirements of the time. First, government officials often lack the expertise and knowledge on current trends of the tourism market and the experience of successful tourist destinations; this hinders the development of appropriate instruments and measures for the success of the national tourism policy.

In addition, the organizational-economic and political-administrative model of Belarus hinders the full participation of public representatives and tourism enterprises in shaping and implementing the national policy of tourism. Recommendations and suggestions of representatives of the tourism industry and

unions on improving the general conditions for the development of tourism are taken into account only to a certain extent by public institutions. Tourism development programs have an administrative-planned character and do not have a clear vision that takes into account market mechanisms. The process of discussion of these programs does not pay proper attention to innovative ideas of the tourism businesses and public tourist organizations.

Despite the relatively similar initial situation with neighbouring countries (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia) in the early 1990s, during the last 20 years, Belarus has made relatively little use of its potential for tourism development. The reasons for this can be found in the unequal political and economic framework conditions for tourism development, which for a major part determined the use and development of existing opportunities as well as creation of competitive infrastructure for tourism and recreation. To sum it up, a long-lasting unattractive business environment, government regulation of prices for the services of hotels and restaurants, the existence of preferences for state tourism enterprises and so on restricts healthy competition in the Belarusian tourist market (Nikitsin, 2009).

Also due to these reasons, the Belarusian tourism industry managed to work out a competitive tourism product and to position the country as an attractive destination of the European or the international tourist market on only a limited basis. This fact affects the quality and diversity of supply as well as the development of demand for tourism product in Belarus. The following factors have had a negative impact on the development of demand:

- a negative political image of Belarus abroad, which completely supplants the tourist image
- a poor reputation of the country in the international tourism market, as well as the lack of a unique selling proposition (USP)
- the existing visa regime, in combination with complex registration procedures
- mandatory health insurance for foreigners in the Belarusian insurance agency at the entrance to Belarus, even if they possess

international health insurance, recognized in all developed countries (except Belarus)

- poorly developed infrastructure and recreational infrastructure
- poor quality of service, as well as inadequate quality–price ratio and so on.

Given the increasing competition in international tourism destinations, forming a clear image for the destination is becoming increasingly important. A positive image of Belarus in the European and international tourist market is lacking, as a new tourist destination. Certain thematic areas for tourism development in Belarus, as well as products and offers developed, are easily replaceable and neglected in the variety of proposals in comparison with neighboring countries.

Through the intensification of international cooperation and exchange, there can be found new approaches to solve existing problems in the tourism industry of Belarus. However, without the introduction of the fundamental principles of democracy, without a profound change in economic policy in the direction of greater liberalization, as well as non-restrictive measures in the field of tourism, we should not expect significant improvements in the development of tourism. In this regard, all the investments into tourism made by the state in recent decades will not have the expected result, as long as there are no significant improvements of conditions for doing small and medium business in the tourism, hospitality and entertainment sectors.

### **The development of tourism and recreation research in Belarus**

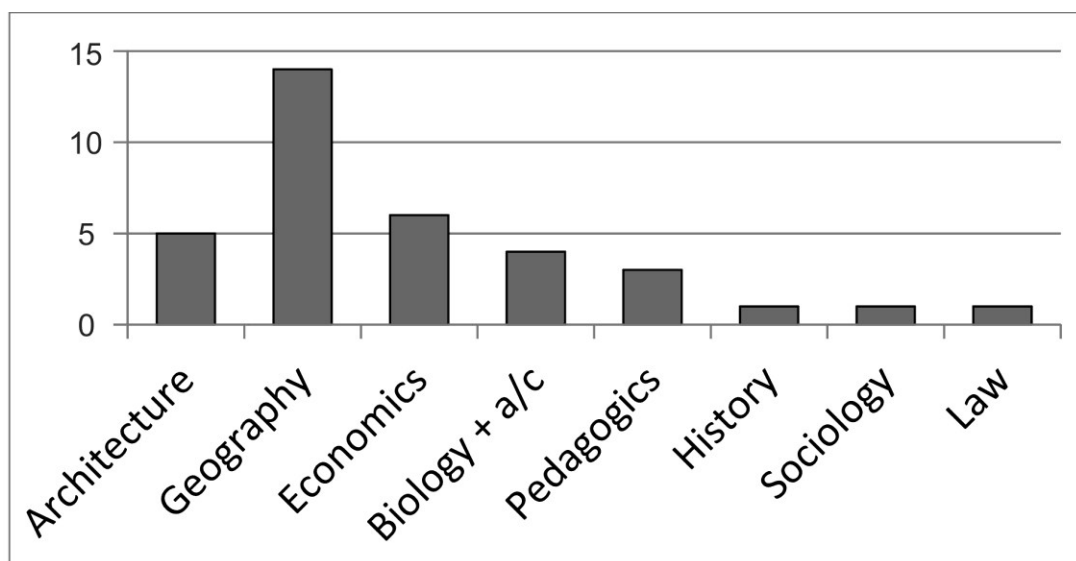
The rapid growth of social needs in the creation of leisure, recreation and tourist-excursion services for the public in the 1960s led to the increase in research of Belarusian tourism and recreation since the early 1970s (see further reading in the reference section). Still, the topical aspects of the tourism and travel industry were constantly alternated each other, posing problems for various scientific areas and focusing their attention on these new areas of research. The problem-scientific field of tourism and recreation required researchers to use either the traditional methods in relation to new objects of research, or to develop new

methodologies for studying and modeling the already known processes that have their own specific features in tourism and recreation (Tarasionak, 2011).

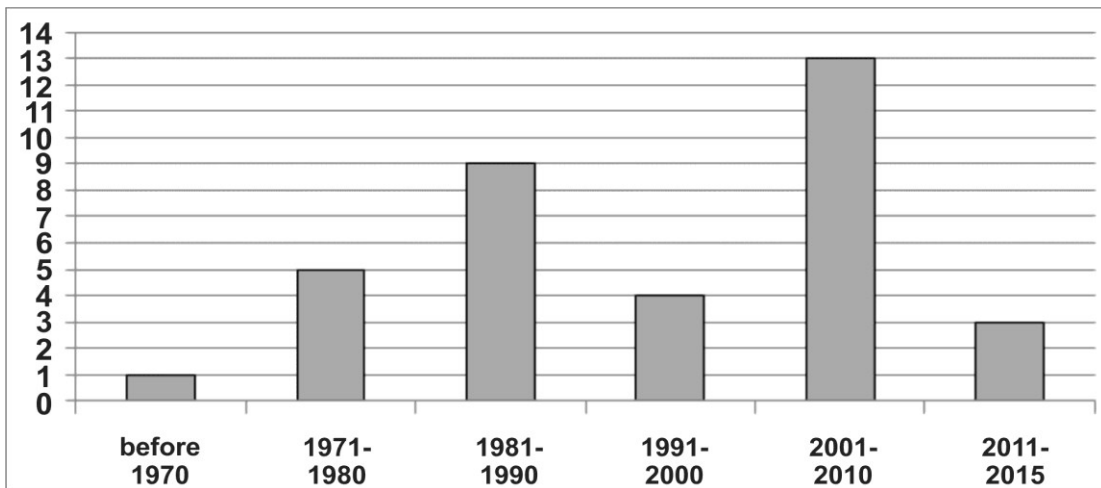
The following section analyses the history of the topical directions of the Belarusian tourism and recreation science in retrospect studying theses, because they are the kind of research characterized by scientific novelty, and their results are recognized in scientific circles.

The first thesis on tourism and recreation issues in Belarus was defended in 1964, and over the period of 1960–2015, 35 theses in candidacy of a PhD degree or Doctor of Science were defended. The structure of scientific knowledge on which the theses were defended (Figure 1) shows a predominant interest in tourism and recreation from the point of view of recreational geography. This situation is not accidental. Today we can say that Belarus has developed a fully-fledged school of recreational geography, which specializes in studies of problematic aspects of tourism and recreation, and that it has developed research methodology based on the concept of territorial recreation system and is supported by systematic and scientific competence.

The research school of recreational geography was formed at the Belarusian State University, the Department of Geography in the 1970s under the leadership of I. Pirozhnik. The first research was focused on the assessment of recreational and tourist potential in Belarus, the valuation of natural and geographical areas for the organization of summer and winter recreation and tourism, the rationale for the tourist-recreational zoning of Belarus. In the 1980s recreational geography focused on certain types of territorial recreational systems, the territorial organization of suburban leisure, excursion tourism, caravanning, recreational landscapes. The largest contribution to the development of the methodology of the Belarusian recreational geography over the period of the 1970s to the 1990s was made by I. Pirozhnik, V. Zaitsev, T. Fedortsova and others. Recreational geography became a scientific basis for further research over the period of 1991–2010. The scope of research covered such topic as tourist rents and ecological tourism, international tourism. Thus, it was the Department of Geography at the Belarusian State University that formed one of the strongest centers researching problems of tourism in Belarus, whose origins were in the scientific school of recreational geography.



**Figure 1** The structure of defended theses in the period 1960–2015 (number of theses)



**Figure 2** Dynamics of theses defended on the problems of tourism and recreation (number of theses)

The topicality of the problems in the sphere of tourism and recreation changed in different periods, as evidenced by the long-term dynamics of theses (Figure 2). So, a growing interest in tourism and recreation issues during the 1970s to the 1980s decreased in the 1990s, which was associated with a profound socioeconomic crisis and the shift of research interests of society toward areas that were more significant in terms of social needs of the crisis the period.

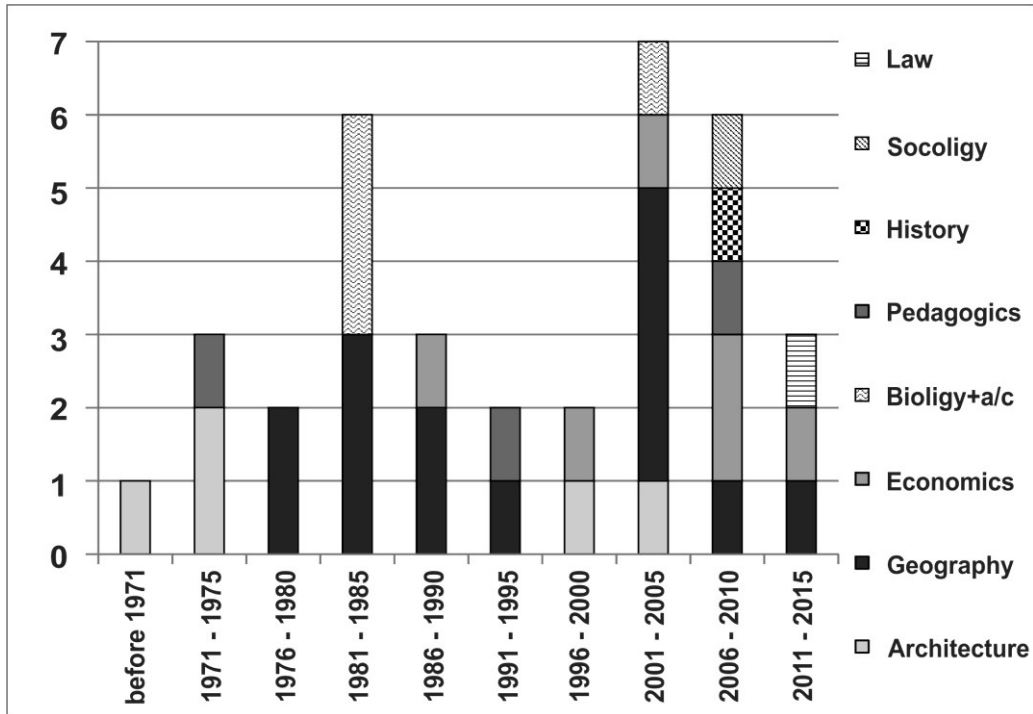
Replacement of some topical issues of tourism and recreation by led to ups and downs in growth of interest on behalf of various scientific fields. Thus, a pioneer in the study of tourism and recreation in Belarus was architecture, the field of study in which first three theses were defended. The reason was that the growing recreational needs of the population of the BSSR (and the Soviet Union as a whole) necessitated focusing on problems associated with the need to create a spatial basis for tourism and recreation economy of the country, which could make it possible to clearly organize the development of infrastructure necessary for recreation, rest and treatment of workers. Relevant aspects for that time concerned the regional planning of the tourist and recreational complex, as well as architectural and planning solutions for some recreational areas. The

Centre for Research and Development planning became the Belarusian Research Institute of Urban Development (BelNIIPgradostroitelstva). In the 1970s the school of landscape architecture and recreation under the guidance of A. Sycheva and G. Potaev at the Department of Urban Development Belarusian National Technical University (formerly the Belorussian Polytechnic Institute) started to take shape.

In the second half of the 1970s major attention was paid to geographical science, which was due to the mainstreaming of the territorial organization of the tourist economy, tourism and recreation zoning, the formation of organized and unorganized tourist flows, the spatial organization of excursion activities, assessment of landscape and recreational potential of the country and so on.

In the first half of 1980s the conservation of natural systems from the ravages of mass tourism and recreation became a topical problem, which led to defending theses on biological and agricultural sciences.

After the recession of the 1990s, when it was defended only 4 thesis, early 2000s, there came a 'geographic renaissance' of research, but the objects of study were related to



**Figure 3** Dynamics and structure of scientific theses on tourism and recreation

international tourism, the management of recreational resources, tourism rent and ecotourism. In the 2000s economics took a special interest in the problems of tourism due to the development of the tourism industry and updating market mechanisms of the tourist complex functioning. At the same time, new research areas for tourism were activated due to the need for in-depth study of certain aspects of the sociology, history, agriculture, economics, architecture and law.

The structure of tourist and recreational subject research is dominated by aspects of the territorial organization of the tourist industry, but the interest in them on behalf of the science falls. Throughout the whole period of tourism and recreation research, issues on optimizing the use of tourist and recreational resources have always been topical. To update market-based mechanisms for the development of tourist industry and promote national tourism product, the problematic field of research and business sectors of tourism industry and international tourism were expanded.

In general, the peculiarities of tourism research in Belarus are:

- dominance of geographical research
- scientific activity peaks occur in the 1980s and 2000s
- in the 2000s, there is a diversification of sciences, exploring the problems of tourism.

The analysis shows that tourism in Belarus has been researched by a number of scientific disciplines. As tourism and recreation is a complex phenomenon, the consideration of this sphere in terms of only one scientific discipline cannot provide a complete picture of the industry. Only taking into account the results of tourism study based on all the disciplines in the context of an interdisciplinary studies of tourism, it became possible to study and discuss more thoroughly the topical problems of the entire tourism industry. As a result, it is possible to achieve such outcomes in research that will be applied more widely in practice.

Funding of tourism research is conducted within the state program of tourism

development in the Republic of Belarus for the years 2011–15. It is stipulated that the state will spend 260 million rubles (€24,000) on the target research in this field, which is quite insufficient for the tourist industry. Therefore, research in tourism is funded from other sources within the individual research topics and programs functioning in the institutes of the National Academy of Sciences and universities.

In this context, it is important to intensify scientific exchange and cooperation with scientists and researchers of tourism in central and eastern Europe. These countries have largely completed the process of social transformation and have some results in studies of tourism, as well as practical developments that have been implemented in practice, and may be useful for Belarus. At the moment, the cooperation in this area is part of the Central European Initiative (CEI), as well as other programs that are funded by governments in central and eastern Europe and supported by the European Commission.

### Education in tourism

Training for tourism in Belarus has been developing since 1974 when the Department of Geography at the BSU within the major of geography the specialization local history, technique and organization of tourist and excursion business was introduced. Until the

1990s, college and university training for tourism had not been conducted in any of the other universities of Belarus. Preparation of guides was carried out within the framework of Belarusturist agency, and as for guides-interpreters, they were trained in the system of the Belinturist agency. In the 1990s, the number of universities that trained personnel for the tourism industry began to grow and, since 2000, training of tourism personnel has been carried out in 20 Belarusian universities. Until 2008, there were only tourist specializations within the frame of different majors. In 2008, two tourism majors were introduced: Economics and the Tourism Industry in the Higher School of Tourism of the Belarus State Economic University and Tourism and Hospitality at the Institute of Tourism of the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture. Table 1 presents the specialties for which in tourism majors train.

Training, professional development and retraining of personnel for the tourism industry is concentrated mainly in Minsk. Most graduates remain in the capital, which leads to a high concentration of tourism specialists in Minsk and consequently, there is a shortage of skilled personnel in the regions of Belarus. Regional and local tourism management, tourist centers, national parks, tourist offices, hotels and gastronomy business in Belarusian

**Table 1.** *Institutions of higher education in Belarus, preparing personnel for the tourist industry*

Specialty	University
Tourism and Hospitality	Belarusian State University of Physical Culture(Minsk), Poleski State University(Pinsk), State University of Grodno, Brest State University
Economics and management of tourist industry	Belarus State Economic University (Minsk), Baranovichi State University
Management	Belarusian State University
Geography	Belarusian State University, Belarusian State Pedagogical University(Minsk), Brest State University, Gomel State University, Mogilev State University
Museums and protection of historical and cultural heritage	Belarusian State University, Vitebsk State University
Physical culture	Belarusian State University of Physical Education, Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Brest State University, Mozyr State University, Grodno State University, Mogilev State University
Intercultural communication	Minsk State Linguistic University, Belarus State Economic University (Minsk), Institute of Modern Knowledge, Grodno State University
Tourism and nature management	Belarusian State Technological University (Minsk)



regions particularly suffer from the lack of highly qualified professionals.

The current situation can be changed if training programs for tourism are implemented in the regional universities. Thus, specialists for tourist industry could be trained directly in the regions. In addition, during the last two to three years, a lot of training for the tourism industry has been carried out at vocational schools, colleges and technical schools, which, to a certain extent, has brought about personnel oversupply at the university level. The graduates often find it hard to get employment in their specialty. In this situation, major attention is paid to the quality of training, professional development and retraining of personnel for the tourism industry.

As before, almost all the educational institutions of Belarus that prepare personnel for the tourism industry are still in the public domain. There is some competition between public institutions of higher education, but the establishment of private educational institutions is difficult because of their low profitability and weak public support. Low competition in the tourism education hinders improvement of its quality in Belarus. Insufficient supply of highly qualified teachers for regional educational institutions of Belarus, the lack of modern educational literature on tourism, as well as the dominant structural and substantive incompatibility of educational programs in tourism (for example, with European university programs) are inhibiting factors for the improvement of training for the tourism industry.

The theoretical component dominates educational programs on tourism in the Belarusian universities; there is little focus on the real needs for the tourism industry. Afterwards, the graduates of tourist schools face such problems as, for example, developing and promoting of high-quality tourism products and services. It is quite a difficult and responsible task to perform, which requires good preparation. In view of these requirements, there is a need for an efficient and flexible system of education in tourism, which includes all levels of training, retraining and skills – from vocational to academic. This system should be well suited for the constantly

changing situation in the tourism market, and to respond to its demands offering relevant proposals in training, retraining and skills development. These proposals must first meet the interests and needs of people who are employed in the tourism industry and are interested in learning throughout the life.

Nevertheless, the difficulties of interaction between Belarus and the European community restrict the opportunities for international cooperation in the field of tourism education and to know-how. Still, until 2015 Belarus was the only country in Europe which has not yet signed the Bologna agreement, which in turn inhibits the academic exchange between Belarus and the EU. Experience has shown that improving the current situation in the field of tourism education and research in this direction is only possible with the intensification of international cooperation.

However, starting from 2005, with the support of the European Commission in Belarus, there were two projects carried out (the other two are currently developed) within the TEMPUS program, which were designed to promote the reform of tourism education in Belarus:

1. TEMPUS\_IB\_JEP\_23015-2002: 'Creation of the professional improvement centre for the personnel working in tourism industry of the Republic of Belarus' (07/2005-06/2008). In cooperation with tourism organizations and Belarusian, European universities within the framework of this project there were developed and implemented activities to improve the quality of the tourism sector.
2. 144 522-TEMPUS-2008-DE-JPCR – MIBET: 'Modernization and implementation of business education programs for training specialists in the tourism industry of the Republic of Belarus' (15.01.2009-14.01.2012). Initiated and organized with the help of the first project, after its completion, the training consortium was expanded to regional colleges and universities of Belarus and the EU. Within this project the existing academic training programs for tourism in the Belarusian universities that took part in program were modernized (two-level programs Bachelors and Masters, ECTS.).
3. 158 739-TEMPUS-2009-DE-JPHES – WeNeT: 'The network of electronic distance learning for training in tourism: Belarus,

Georgia and Ukraine' (15.01.2010–14.01.2013). According to this project, which is under implementation, an interstate network of portals was formed; besides, there was developed and implemented programs and courses of distance learning (e-learning, blended learning) aimed at specialists of tourism industry in the countries-participants. The particular attention of this project is paid to establishing and strengthening of cooperation between universities and tourism industry of countries-participants in the field of academic training, retraining and professional improvement, as well as tourism research.

4. 516 630-TEMPUS-2011-DE-JPHES – TETVET: 'Training and professional development of personnel teaching courses on tourism in the Republic of Belarus' (15.10.2011-14.10.2014). This project sought to create a national system of training and professional development of personnel teaching tourism discipline in the Republic of Belarus. Creating a national system of lifelong learning for teachers of tourism disciplines was solved the problem of tour operators that lack highly qualified staff. The system is include all levels of tourism education to secure a professional exchange between teachers at all levels of training. Thus, they was able to work together to create new programs and coordinate training and teacher development courses on tourism at all educational levels. The project TETVET was facilitated the convergence of university and vocational education, establishment of sustainable cooperation between these two levels of education.

All four projects are aimed at supporting reform of tourism education in Belarus, expansion of cooperation between EU and Belarus, educational institutions, ministries, enterprises and tourism associations. Their target is exchange, integration and the use of know-how of European and Belarusian partners. European universities, which have rich experience of training specialists for tourism are (were) involved in this project at different stages. They are the University of Paderborn (Germany), the University of Bremen (Germany), the Dual Graduate School of Ravensburg (Germany), the University of Mateja Bela (Banska Bystrica, Slovakia), Prague University of Economics (Czech

Republic), the Vienna University of Economics (Austria) and the European Academy Bozen/Bolzano (Italy). The Belarusian side was presented by Belarus State Economic University (Minsk), Belarusian State University (Minsk), and other five universities in Belarus, as well as colleges, technical schools and vocational schools, which provide the training and professional development in tourism specialties. In order to strengthen the practice-oriented component of the educational process, the consortium included the Republican Institute of Vocational Education, Department of Tourism, which is part of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus, National Tourism Agency, as well as tourism associations and organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis shows that tourism in Belarus has been researched by a number of scientific disciplines. The theoretical component dominates educational programs on tourism in the Belarusian universities; there is little focus on the real needs for the tourism industry. Afterwards, the graduates of tourist schools face such problems as, for example, developing and promoting of high-quality tourism products and services. The difficulties of interaction between Belarus and the European community restrict the opportunities for international cooperation in the field of tourism education and to know-how. Still, until 2015 Belarus was the only country in Europe which has not yet signed the Bologna agreement, which in turn inhibits the academic exchange between Belarus and the EU. The four EU projects focused on the education in tourism and hospitality have contributed to the establishment of scientific contacts between university teachers in Belarus and the EU. In the course of the project, teachers get acquainted with the scientific schools, traditions, methods and current topics of fundamental and applied research tourism, as well as their practical application in the tourism industry. Scientific cooperation within the framework of these projects has the greatest benefit for the younger generation of researchers with the possibility of direct exchange with colleagues from the EU (due to the knowledge of foreign languages). Scientific contacts with universities in the EU established

by their Belarusian colleagues allow them in the long run not only improve the educational process at their universities, but also to promote the reform of the tourism industry and improve the tourism product in Belarus.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> TEMPUS is the European Union's program which supports the modernization of higher education in the EU's surrounding area. Tempus promotes institutional cooperation that involves the European Union and partner countries, and focuses on the reform and modernization of higher education systems in the partner countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region. It also aims to promote voluntary convergence of the higher education systems in the partner countries with EU developments in the field of higher education. In addition to promoting cooperation between institutions. Tempus also promotes a people-to-people approach. Tempus provides support to consortia of institutions composed mainly of universities or university associations. Non-academic partners can also be part of a consortium.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/index_en.php). Tempus programme periods: Tempus I — 1990-1994; Tempus II — 1994–1998; Tempus II bis — 1998–2000; Tempus III — 2000–2006, TEMPUS IV – 2007–2013.

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