

## STRATEGIC PLANNING OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS: NEW APPROACH TOWARDS TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF TOURISM IN BELARUS

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**Abstract.** Within the framework of the USAID/UNDP project “Local Entrepreneurship and Economic Development” coordinated by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus a concept of creating tourist destinations has been implemented. By means of strategic planning 17 tourist destinations were created that have contributed to the established system of tourism territorial organization in Belarus. The strategic planning process involved the local community represented by private businesses, public organizations and public authorities. At the moment we can speak about the success of six tourist destinations that are new regional subjects for competition on Belarusian tourism market. Experience in creation of tourist destinations in Belarus can be useful for solving problems in constructive geography.

References 13. Fig. 1, Tables 3. In English, summary in Lithuanian.

**Keywords:** tourist destination, strategic planning, territorial organization of tourism, recreational regional park, Belarus.

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### Introduction

Territorial organization of tourism is a consistently positioned complex of large tourist centers, specialized resort and tourist regions with high level of infrastructure concentration inclined to transport corridors or small settlements, etc. Key elements for tourism organization in Belarus are as follows:

- resorts and recreation areas with tourist establishments;
- national parks along with other protected areas;
- big cities – tourist centers;
- tourist zones covering separate regions.

Territorial organization of the network of tourist destinations is initially determined by the structure and location of tourist resources. However in Belarus natural, cultural and historical factors do not determine the concentration of tourism at the national level. In general, location of tourist resources of the country promotes the formation of a relatively uniform territorial structure of tourist facilities across the country (Tarasionak, 2009).

National territorial organization of tourism in Belarus is determined by socio-economic and state-management factors and is adjusted by radiation and ecological situation. Network of resort and recreational facilities inclines to zones of influence of large cities. Health resorts and sanatory

facilities are located at designated recreation areas and resorts. Belarus has a total of 214 resorts, recreation and tourism areas of national and local significance (7.6% of the country), which have long been allocated in accordance with the “General scheme of the location and development of resorts and recreation areas of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic” (1981) and generally maintain the inherited configuration.

Relatively new in the territorial structure of tourism are the national parks “Narochanskiy”, “Braslavskiye Ozera”, “Belovezhskaya Pushcha” and “Pripyatskiy” created in the 1990s on the territory of over 350 thousand hectares. National parks and other types of protected areas are the objects of ecological tourism.

In territorial organization of tourism large cities stand out with their relatively developed hotel, cultural and entertainment infrastructure, which due to the concentration of economic resources have high potential for tourism functions autonomous development.

The existing system of territorial organization of tourism has two major problems: poor efficiency of tourist complex territorial administration and low territorial status of the recreational function (or tourist function takes secondary role).

The first problem is due to departmental and administrative fragmentation of the elements of the territorial organization of tourism. The most vulnerable elements are the areas of recreation and tourism due to the fact that unlike national parks and cities they do not have effective instruments for administrative management. No recreation area has a body for tourism management, although it does have recreation establishments which are administered by different organizations.

The second problem of the territorial organization of tourism in Belarus is non-compliance of the status of the recreational areas' function with modern trends in the economy and the needs of the tourist market, namely its' secondary role as compared to the other functions envisaged by the land use legislation. This is due to the fact that the status of recreation and tourist areas is not well specified in legislation, the composition of the lands for recreational use is not officially defined and from the legal point of view the recreational function of land is viewed exclusively as additional (Pirozhnik et al., 2005).

In practice, the secondary role of tourist functions of specific areas is the main reason for consideration and perception of tourism by the governmental bodies at various administrative levels as secondary subject.

Therefore, in present conditions of limited investment resources tourism infrastructure development is taking place with whatever funds remain, at the same time local authorities treat tourist development targets in an incomplete way and at times just formally.

Both problems remain relevant as public ownership of land dominates in Belarus, and therefore administrative methods of management of the development of the tourist industry are of great importance. Economic and market methods are used to a smaller extent. Territory status value is very high in the context of the administrative-command system of land resources management and the rule of state ownership for land. Therefore, for the formation of a developed network of tourist areas in Belarus it is necessary to create specialized natural and recreational areas with an increased territorial status of tourist and recreational function. To optimize the territorial organization of the network of tourist destinations it is advisable to create landscape (landscape and tourism or natural and recreational) parks as specialized natural and recreational areas. They will contribute to the spatial concentration of recreational functions and, as a result, the formation of tourist destinations. Analysis of location Belarusian nature protectional and recreational territories (Tarasionak, 2003) in terms of the landscape polarization concept (Rodoman, 1974) that areas for recreation and tourism (allocated by “General scheme . . . , 1981), but not conservation areas have to become the basis for the network of landscape (natural and recreational) parks.

The experience of Lithuania (Kavaliauskas, Jasinaviciute, 2012) shows that development of recreational functions of protected areas (regional parks) poses a threat to the aesthetic resources of the landscapes, which requires a transfer of tourist activity beyond to the unprotected areas.

In Belarus, solution of the problem of the status of recreation and tourist areas and lands is one of the key issues in ensuring the success of a tourist complex. This requires introduction of special notions to statutory and regulatory use: *Tourist territory* (territory with resource potential for production of tourism services; the territory includes recreational lands occupied by tourist service companies, their infrastructure and recreational facilities), *recreational land* (land used by tourist establishments, tourists and holidayers as beaches and bathing waters, tourist and sports ranges, mountain and ski trails, bicycle paths, parks for public festivals, campgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields and other facilities for recreational activities; the objects have a special regulatory regime), *landscape park* (legal entity carrying out activities on providing cost-effective services to holidayers, ensuring tourists' environmental safety and recreational leisure efficiency, rational use of recreational resources and conservation of natural systems, involvement of the local population and social structures in tourist service) (Pirozhnik et al., 2005).

At the same time, there have already been attempts to create specialized tourist and recreation areas in Belarus. In order to create favorable conditions for the development of tourism and tourist infrastructure on the territory adjacent to the Belarusian part of the Augustow Canal and the Neman River bed, a special tourist and recreational park "Augustow Canal" was created. Functions and rights on administration of the park are entrusted to the management of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest". The territory of the park "Augustow Canal" is 5750 hectares, it consists of 4 sectors in Grodno and the Grodno region: "Augustow Canal, the Neman River", "Radzivilki", "Sopotskin", "Svyatsk". Residents of the park are granted tax and customs exemptions for investment projects: for companies resident tax burden is reduced on average by 70%. Nevertheless, no breakthrough in the development of the tourism industry in the area occurs. The number of tourism and hospitality objects is not significantly growing while tourist flow is not large. And this is despite the fact that tourist and recreational specialization of the Augustow Canal Park is stipulated in legislation, availability of administrative means of control over the territory, huge investments in reconstruction of the channel and incentives provided for investment in the tourism industry. Thus, the experience gained through creation of tourist and recreational park is the evidence of the problematic implementation of effective projects only by raising the status of tourist and recreational territory function. In addition it requires a change of the mechanism of the organization of the tourism industry in a particular region.

Therefore, *the purpose of this article is to show new approaches towards territorial organization of tourism, based on strategic planning and partnership of tourism industry representatives*. Under market conditions the territorial organization of tourism is based on the laws of tourist destinations formation – specific targeted geographic objects for certain segments of tourists. *Objectives of the article*: to describe destinations as self-organizing element in tourism territorial structure and to analyse the practice of creating tourist destinations in Belarus.

## **Tourist destinations as key self-organizing element in tourism territorial structure**

The doctrine of the destinations developed in the 1970–90s (eg Kaspar, 1979; Althof, 1996). Having summarized the available points of view on this issue T. Bieger gave this notion a comprehensive definition in the beginning of the XXI century (Bieger, 2002). Destination is a geographi-

cal area (place, area, region, country) that is the purpose of travel of a visitor (or segment of visitors) with the necessary infrastructure for accommodation, catering, entertainment, informative and recreational activities, which is subject for competition on the market of inbound tourism and strategic subject for entrepreneurship. Thus, destination appears as a *geographical area, the purpose of travel for a particular segment of tourists, tourism product, subject for competition and subject for entrepreneurship*. Speaking on the implementation of destination approach into practice of tourist complex management on country level and the level of specific regions, the most important properties of a destination are destination as the subject for competition and strategic business object. Destination as the subject for competition requires assessment of the competitive advantages and improvement of competitiveness. In this case, two groups of competitors are identified: other destinations and local economic and geographical systems. The first group competes mainly for markets and investments, while the second for the preferences and resources (human and natural). To avoid external competition, destinations tend to form monopolistic tourist products. Objectively, this is demonstrated by specialization and concentration of recreational functions of individual localities. Destination as *strategic business object* is considered by individual tourist businesses. In this context the main goal is to develop tools ensuring attractiveness of a destination for doing business and investing in the tourism industry. It is strategically important for enterprises which are a part of a destination to fit in the destination with their services as in tourist product. In this case we are talking about *co-operation of destination's tourism enterprises specializing in different spheres*. Their co-operation with the purpose of creating a single tourist product is the strategically important condition for successful long-term activities on the market.

Strategic planning of the development of tourist destinations is part of the Destination Management and aims to increase competitiveness of tourism product (eg, The guide to best practice Destination Management, 2012). Strategic planning is conducted on local, regional and national levels. Local level of tourist centers and localities has the greatest practical importance, which is the focus of the applied science of tourist destination (Pechlaner et al., 2006). The main attention is focused on the creation of networks (clusters) of tourist enterprises providing services to tourists. I.e. destination is a network entity, the success of which depends primarily on the motivation of business to solve common tasks on promotion of regional tourism products. Ultimately, the management should be effective in positioning a local destination on the market of consumers and its integration into the regional inter-sectoral tourist complex. At the same time, it is important that the developed management strategy, its methods and programs on the one hand would adjust to the existing system of regional and sectoral management, and on the other complement and stimulate its progressive development.

**Strategic planning of tourist destination's development** is the process of modeling the effective functioning of its tourist complex for a certain period. Understanding of the factors, parameters and stages of strategic planning with account of the specific character of the tourism industry is the basic competence needed to manage a local tourist destination (Pechlaner et al., 2006). Strategic planning of the local tourist destination apart from general economic environment factors is affected by the specific factors that as a whole are unique to the field of tourism only:

- general features of tourist services as an object of sales and production (immateriality, coincidence in time of production and consumption, the effect in the form of sensations instead of purchase of ownership, etc.);
- integrity of the product, consisting of heterogeneous services;
- network nature of production (for the production and consumption of services a network of different companies interconnected by communications infrastructure is required).

This implies requirements for destinations' management:

- 1) ability to perform the function of cooperation with the account of cross-sectoral nature of the tourist product production;
- 2) availability of not only vertical and horizontal, but also diagonal binding in the management system (to overcome the barrier of the interagency uncontrollability and reduce the time between the moment of decision making and its implementation to practice);
- 3) minimum directive instruments, since the success of the development of the service sector depends on the success of private business management;
- 4) ensuring territorial planning and management of tourist flows – the main elements in the strategy based on geographic characteristics of a tourist product.

During conceptual strategic planning it is necessary to observe *a most important condition*: the planning process should be viewed in accordance with the internal and external networks (clusters) of tourism enterprises.

For successful strategy implementation it is crucial to take into account not only the interests of individual community groups, but also their legitimacy, scope and opportunities in both supporting a strategy and its moderation. In this context, it is important to build an effective public-private dialogue.

The internal structure of a destination has to be created in the form of **tourism clusters**. A new scientific sphere at the confluence of geography and economics of tourism is formed around the concept of tourism clusters. It is based on modern principles of studying the phenomenon of territorial concentration within the production system. M. Porter defines clusters as follows: clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field (Porter, 1998). *Tourist cluster* is a set of enterprises and organizations specializing in different fields, united by common cycles of providing services for tourists and involved in assurance of these cycles. For example, micro-cluster is formed by: agroestate, which accommodates tourists; cafe, where they feed; museum, which is visited by the same tourists and other enterprises providing services for tourists. Thus, tourist cluster includes entities that serve the same tourist segments. A cluster can vary from city to region, state and even international region. Companies that form the cluster are treated as producers of goods and services for tourism consumption (travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, etc.), and for organizations ensuring functioning of the commercial sector (governmental institutions, universities, research institutes and other). At the same time, cluster members not only cooperate, but also come into competition, which is the driving force for cluster development.

## **Practice of creating tourist destinations in Belarus based on the principles of self-organization and sustainability**

In practice, creation of tourist destinations as self-organizing systems begins with assessment of the local potential for cooperation between the representatives of the tourism business, governmental bodies and public for the sake of tourism development. The most effective way for conducting such an assessment is holding a competition of local initiatives in this area. Holding such a competition (Accepting of Applications ..., 2014) requires certain resources; in Belarus these resources were provided within the framework of the project of international technical assistance USAID/UNDP "Local Entrepreneurship and Economic Development", which is coordinated by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus. The project is registered with the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus on 10 08 2013 under #2/12/000555 and is being

implemented within Brest and Grodno region. Criteria for selection of promising destinations are determined by the needs to hold an assessment of the capacity of regions with a focus on three basic elements: the potential for forming clusters (public-private partnership, co-operation), competent potential and the potential for sustainable tourism. Clustering is a key process in tourist destinations' formation as subjects for competition and strategic business objects, as discussed above. Competences are currently the key factor for successful development of the tourism industry as a whole (Tarasionak, 2009). Potential for sustainable tourism development on the principles of the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism is very important in the context of the modern trend for environmentalization of tourism market and taking into account the tourism and recreation potential of Belarus. Therefore, in the course of the competition the potential tourist destinations were evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Business idea of the destination (formulation of the business idea, description of local tourism development problems and solutions, availability of the business idea implementation plan, indication of the real sources of funding and co-funding of the business idea);
- Availability of an active public-private dialogue;
- Availability of key business subjects in the field of tourism and hospitality;
- Availability of key tourist objects;
- Public participation in tourism planning and decision-making;
- Availability of protected areas;
- Advertising and informational activity of the tourism subjects of the potential destination;
- Availability of local strategies / plans / programs for sustainable development;
- Ecological problems to be solved with the help of tourism;
- Availability of environmental protection activities;
- Cooperation with local educational institutions in the field of tourism and hospitality.

Residents of Brest or Grodno region were among the initiators of the tourist destinations' creation:

- representatives of the private business in tourism and hospitality;
- representatives of non-governmental organizations;
- local authorities and self-governance.

As partners of applicants representing a tourist destination, in a number of cases there were representatives of the private business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local authorities (district, village, settlement), state environmental agencies, educational institutions, forestry enterprises, museums, information centers and etc.

48 initiative groups from Grodno and Brest regions participated in the competition of tourist destinations of the project. The contest was completed in January 2013. Most of the applications were of creative nature, they were accompanied by compelling motivation letters and documents attesting to the desire to develop public-private partnership.

As a result of the contest there were established 17 pilot (Fig. 1) tourist destinations (Seventeen, the Lucky ..., 2014). The destinations formed may be conditionally divided into three geographical groups: Polessye region, Belovezhskaya Pushcha region, Ponemansko-Litvinsky region (Table 1). During the competition some initiative groups merged into larger communities to develop a unified strategy for destinations' development (Gedymin's Heritage, Northern Vector of Grodno Region, Green Amulet Grodno, Shchuchin destination).

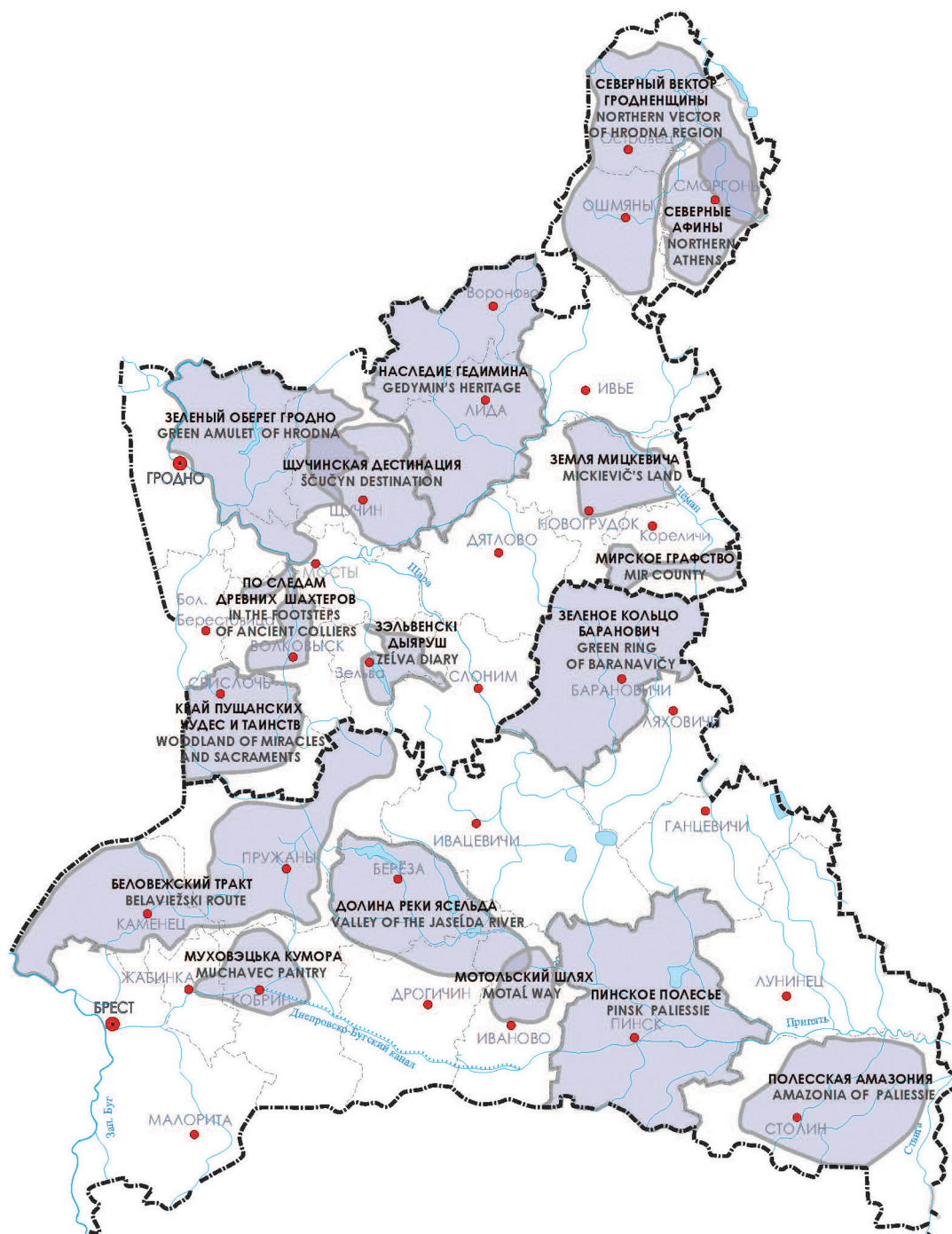


Fig. 1. Regions, which have implemented initiatives to create tourism destinations

Strengthening networking and expanding opportunities for cooperation in destinations was taking place during the strategic planning process, the process involved participation of representatives of governmental bodies, public organizations, private sector (Table 2). In general, for effective launch of self-organization processes of tourist destinations a series of measures in four areas have been taken:

- assistance in development of ecotourism strategies aimed at ensuring sustainable development of the local economy and increasing the number and role of local small and medium-sized enterprises operating in tourism and hospitality;
- expert evaluation and recommendations for the development of tourist destinations;
- training for representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, manufacturers of goods and tourist services, organizations promoting development of tourism and business in specially designed educational programs in Belarus and abroad (Lithuania, Poland, Estonia);
- funding of local initiatives in order to increase the attractiveness of the local tourism products and build effective tourism clusters (32 grants).

**Table 1.** Conditional geographic typology of destinations

Polessye region	Pushcha region	Ponemansko-Litvinsky region	
		Single	Combined during the contest
1. Den of Mukhovets 2. Valley of the Yaselda River 3. Motal Way 4. Pinsk Polesye 5. Amazon of Polessye	1. Belovezhsky path 2. Woodland of miracles and sacraments	1. Northern Athens 2. Mitskevich' Land 3. Mir County 4. Zelva Diary 5. In the wake of ancient colliers 6. Green Ring of the Baranovich	1. Gedymin's Heritage 2. Northern Vector of Grodno Region 3. Green Amulet Grodno 4. Shchuchin destination

**Table 2.** Initiatives of tourist destinations, supported within the framework of the project "Local entrepreneurship and economic development"

	Destination name	Initial number of initiative groups' partners		
		Governmental bodies, self-governance, governmental establishments	Public organizations	Private business
1	Belovezhsky path (Беловежский тракт)	5	3	10
2	Den of Mukhovets (Муховэцька кумора)	1	2	6
3	Valley of the Yaselda River (Долина реки Ясельда)	8	1	1
4	Motal Way (Мотольский шлях)	1	0	3
5	Pinsk Polesye (Пинское Полесье)	6	0	3
6	Amazon of Polessye (Полесская Амазония)	4	2	2
7	Green Ring of the Baranovich (Зеленое кольцо Барановичей)	2	1	7
8	Northern Vector of Grodno Region (Северный вектор Гродненщины)	8	2	3
9	Northern Athens (Северные Афины)	3	3	1
10	Gedymin's Heritage (Наследие Гедимина)	6	2	9
11	Shchuchin destination (Шучинская дестинация)	9	2	9
12	Green Amulet Grodno (Зеленый оберег Гродно)	7	3	7
13	Mitskevich' Land (Земля Мицкевича)	12	1	2
14	Mir County (Мирское Графство)	4	0	6
15	In the wake of ancient colliers (По следам древних шахтеров)	9	0	10
16	Zelva Diary (Зельвенский дыяруш)	4	0	4
17	Woodland of miracles and sacraments (Край пуццанских чудес и таинств)	1	0	5

Strategies for development of 17 tourist destinations, information on their geographical location in Brest and Grodno regions and the initial composition of the initiative groups is posted at



United Nations Development Programme in the Republic of Belarus web page (Tourist Destinations ..., 2014). A year after completion of the process of strategies' development of ecotourism one can acknowledge the success of 6 destinations created, process of clusters' self-organization has slowed down in 5 cases, in 6 cases strategic planning ended up with creation of a formal strategy document only (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The success of the process of destinations creating

The most successful projects	Successful projects	Not developing projects	
		"Canned"	Unsuccessful
1. Den of Mukhovets 2. Green Amulet Grodno	1. Mir County 2. Zelva Diary 3. Belovezhsky path 4. Woodland of miracles and sacraments	1. Gedymin's Heritage 2. Valley of the Yaselda River 3. Motal Way 4. In the wake of ancient colliers 5. Amazon of Polessye	1. Pinsk Polesye 2. Northern Vector of Grodno Region 3. Northern Athens 4. Mitskevich' Land 5. Green Ring of the Baranovichi 6. Shchuchin destination

Polling of strategic planning participants carried out in September 2014 on the whole demonstrated positive results for local community (81 participants interviewed). Skills gained during project activities (trainings on writing applications for the competition, training with international and national experts, foreign study tours, working meetings of the initiative groups) were evaluated by participants as useful and very helpful. Almost 80% of respondents noted that during the strategic planning process there was established constructive partnership between cluster members and there were developed skills for team work on regional plans. 67% reported that they will be able to apply their skills in other areas of planning, 56% indicated that they had improved project thinking. Over a half of the respondents view the developed strategies' documents as a guide for action in managerial decision making and set of recommendations for conducting business or regional planning.

## Conclusion

Key elements for tourism organization in Belarus are as follows: resorts and recreation areas with tourist establishments, national parks along with other protected areas, big cities – tourist centers, tourist zones covering separate regions. In Belarus natural, cultural and historical factors do not determine the concentration of tourism at the national level. In general, location of tourist resources of the country promotes the formation of a relatively uniform territorial structure of tourist facilities across the country. The existing system of territorial organization of tourism has two major problems: poor efficiency of tourist complex territorial administration and low territorial status of the recreational function (or tourist function takes secondary role). The first problem is due to departmental and administrative fragmentation of the elements of the territorial organization of tourism. The most vulnerable elements are the areas of recreation and tourism due to the fact that unlike national parks and cities they do not have effective instruments for administrative management. The second problem of the territorial organization of tourism in Belarus is non-compliance of the status of the recreational areas' function with modern trends in the economy and the needs of the tourist market, namely its' secondary role as compared to the other functions envisaged by the land use legislation. This is due to the fact that the status of recreation and tourist areas is not well specified in legislation, the composition of the lands for recreational use is not officially defined and from the legal point of view the recreational function

of land is viewed exclusively as additional. Both problems remain relevant as public ownership of land dominates in Belarus, and therefore administrative methods of management of the development of the tourist industry are of great importance. Economic and market methods are used to a smaller extent. Territory status value is very high in the context of the administrative-command system of land resources management and the rule of state ownership for land.

Under market conditions the territorial organization of tourism is based on the laws of tourist destinations formation – specific targeted geographic objects for certain segments of tourists. Destination is a geographical area (place, area, region, country) that is the purpose of travel of a visitor (or segment of visitors) with the necessary infrastructure for accommodation, catering, entertainment, informative and recreational activities, which is subject for competition on the market of inbound tourism and strategic subject for entrepreneurship. Destination as the subject for competition requires assessment of the competitive advantages and improvement of competitiveness. Strategic planning of the development of tourist destinations aims to increase competitiveness of tourism product. The main attention is focused on the creation of networks (clusters) of tourist enterprises providing services to tourists.

Creation of tourist destinations as self-organizing systems begins with assessment of the local potential for cooperation between the representatives of the tourism business, governmental bodies and public for the sake of tourism development. The most effective way for conducting such an assessment is holding a competition of local initiatives in this area. Holding such a competition requires certain resources; in Belarus these resources were provided within the framework of the project of international technical assistance. Criteria for selection of promising destinations are determined by the needs to hold an assessment of the capacity of regions with a focus on three basic elements: the potential for forming clusters (public-private partnership, co-operation), competent potential and the potential for sustainable tourism. 48 initiative groups from Grodno and Brest regions participated in the competition of tourist destinations of the project. As a result of the contest there were established 17 pilot tourist destinations.

A year after completion of the process of strategies' development of ecotourism one can acknowledge the success of 6 destinations created, process of clusters' self-organization has slowed down in 5 cases, in 6 cases strategic planning ended up with creation of a formal strategy document only. During the strategic planning process there was established constructive partnership between cluster members and there were developed skills for team work on regional plans. They had improved project thinking and view the developed strategies' documents as a guide for action in managerial decision making and set of recommendations for conducting business or regional planning.

Thus, in Belarus on the basis of the scientific doctrine on destinations a new impulse was given for tourist complex development. Activation of the processes of tourism industry self-organization was achieved in some regions based on the principles of co-operation of tourism businesses, organization of sustainable ecotourism and encouragement of competence growth in this sector. Territorial organization of tourism in Belarus has been supplemented with new elements in the form of tourist destinations, which are a network of tourism and hospitality businesses united by the idea of creating a single regional tourism product. Strategic planning of tourist destinations allows implementing market instruments into practice of the tourism regional management in Belarus, which are an alternative to the command and administrative management approaches for tourist and recreational areas. Creation of regional tourism destinations has become the practical embodiment of constructive geography.

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## TURISTINIŲ VIETŲ STRATEGINIS PLANAVIMAS: NAUJAS POŽIŪRIS Į TERITORINĮ TURIZMO PLANAVIMĄ BALTARUSIJOJE

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**Santrauka**

Pagrindiniai turizmo objektai Baltarusijoje yra šie: poilsio ir rekreacijos vietos su turistams skirta infrastruktūra, nacionaliniai parkai kartu su kitomis saugomomis teritorijomis, dideli miestai – turistiniai centrai, turistinės zonos apimančios skirtingus regionus. Baltarusijos gamtiniai, kultūriniai ir istoriniai veiksniai nenulemia turistų koncentraciją nacionaliniu lygmeniu. Šalies turistinių išteklių vietos skatina palyginus tolygų teritorinį turistinių komponentų struktūros formavimąsi visoje šalyje.

Šiuo metu esanti turistinių vietų organizavimo sistema turi dvi pagrindines problemas: mažas kompleksinis teritorinis turizmo administravimo veiksmingumas ir mažas dėmesys rekreacinei funkcijai. Pirmoji problema yra susijusi su administracinės sistemos susiskaldymu planuojant turistines vietas. Labiausiai pažeidžiamos yra rekreacinės ir turistinės vietovės, kadangi priešingai

nei nacionaliniai parkai ir miestai, jos neturi efektyvių administracinių valdymo priemonių. Antrą turizmo teritorinio organizavimo problemą Baltarusijoje yra rekreacinių vietų statuso neišryškėjimas šiuolaikinėje modernioje ekonomikoje ir turizmo rinkoje. Rekreacinė funkcija teisės aktuose pateikiama kaip antraeilė lyginant su kitomis žemės naudojimo funkcijomis. Abi problemos išlieka aktualios, nes Baltarusijoje dominuoja viešosios nuosavybės žemė ir dėl to administraciniai valdymo metodai plečiant turizmo industriją yra labai svarbūs. Ekonominiai ir rinkos metodai yra naudojami mažiau. Teritorijos statuso vertė yra labai svarbi administracinio žemės išteklių reguliavimo sistemos ir valstybinės žemės nuosavybės teisės kontekste.

Pagal rinkos sąlygas, turizmo teritorinis planavimas yra paremtas turistinių vietų formavimo įstatymais – specialiai nustatyti geografiniai objektai tam tikroms turistinėms vietovėms formuoti. Teisės aktuose turistinė vietovė suprantama kaip geografinė vieta (sritis, regionas, šalis), kuri yra lankytojo kelionės tikslas su pritaikyta infrastruktūra apgyvendinimui, viešuoju maitinimu, pramogomis, informacinėmis ir rekreacijos veiklomis. Strateginiu turizmo vietovių planavimu siekiama padidinti turizmo konkurencingumą. Pagrindinis dėmesys skiriamas turistinių įmonių tinklų kūrimui (klasteriams), siūlančių paslaugas turistams.

Praktikoje, turistinių krypčių, kaip savarankiškai organizuotos sistemos, kūrimas prasideda nuo lokalaus bendradarbiavimo tarp turizmo verslo atstovų, vyriausybės organizacijų ir visuomenės. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad efektyviausias būdas atlikti turistinių vietovių vertinimą yra surengti vietinių iniciatorių konkursą šioje srityje. Konkurso rengimas reikalauja tam tikrų išteklių. Baltarusijoje šie ištekliai buvo nustatyti tarptautinio projekto USAID/UNDP „Vietos verslumas ir ekonominis vystymasis“ („Local Entrepreneurship and Economic Development“) metu. Projektas koordinuojamas Baltarusijos Respublikos Sporto ir turizmo ministerijos. 48 iniciatyvinės grupės iš Grodno ir Bresto srities dalyvavo projekto turistinių krypčių formavimo konkurse. Konkurso rezultate buvo įkurta 17 bandomųjų turistinių vietovių.

Praėjus metams po ekoturizmo strategijų vystymo proceso užbaigimo, galima pripažinti 6 sėkmingų sričių sėkmę, klasterių savarankiško organizavimo procesas sulėtėjo 5 atvejais, 6 atvejais strateginis planavimas baigėsi tik formalaus strateginio dokumento sukūrimu. Strateginio planavimo proceso metu buvo sudaryta konstruktyvi partnerystė tarp klasterių narių ir buvo išplėtoti komandinio darbo įgūdžiai kuriant regioninius planus.

Baltarusijoje, remiantis moksline turistinių vietovių kūrimo doktrina, buvo duota nauja pasakata kompleksinei turizmo plėtrai. Turizmo industrijos saviorganizacijos aktyvinimo procesas buvo įgyvendintas keliuose regionuose pagal turizmo įmonių bendradarbiavimo principus, tvaraus ekologiško turizmo organizavimą ir konkurencingumo augimą šiame sektoriuje. Teritorinis turizmo organizavimas Baltarusijoje buvo papildytas naujais elementais atsižvelgiant į turistines kryptis. Regioninis turistinių vietovių kūrimas tapo praktišku konstruktyvios geografijos įkūnimu.