

EXPORT OF TOURIST SERVICES OF BELARUS TO CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the institutional foundations of mutually beneficial Belarusian-Chinese tourism cooperation. The research aims to explore the state, problems, and prospects for the development of the tourism industry in China and Belarus and to develop proposals for the development of tourism export services to China. The authors examine the structure of the tourism industry in Belarus and China, the inductive prerequisites for the development of the tourism sector of the two countries, as well as global trends in the field of tourism related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Special attention was paid to developing promising types of tourism in Belarus and China, such as "red," rural, folklore, digital, and "winter" tourism. The case of the Republic of Belarus, which may be helpful for Central and Eastern Europe countries, illustrates the possible directions for the growth of tourism export services to China, thanks to the optimisation of measures to prevent and control COVID-19. This optimisation contributed to the cross-border movement of Chinese citizens and opened up opportunities to attract Chinese tourists to the Belarusian market and the markets of Central and Eastern Europe. We have emphasised that for Belarus, achieving significant results in the development of the export of tourist services to China involves solving some essential tasks: conducting large-scale and ongoing advertising and informational campaigns to increase the awareness of foreign audiences about tourism products and recognition of the country as an attractive tourist destination; development and implementation of an incentive system for tour operators from China; performance of activities to adapt the service in hotels, airports, train stations, restaurants, museums to the individual characteristics and specific needs of tourists from China; improving the tax-free system to increase the interest of citizens from China in visiting Belarus.

Keywords: *tourism industry of Belarus and China, tourism development trends, types of tourism, Belarusian-Chinese tourism cooperation, export of tourism services, and government support of tourism*

Articolul pune în discuție aspectele instituționale ale cooperării beloruso-chineze reciproc avantajoase în domeniul turismului. Scopul cercetării este de a studia starea, problemele și perspectivele de dezvoltare a industriei turismului în China și Belarus și de a elabora propuneri pentru dezvoltarea exporturilor de servicii turistice în China. Autorii examinează structura industriei turismului din Belarus și China, premisele obiective pentru dezvoltarea sectorului turistic din cele două țări, precum și tendințele globale în domeniul turismului, influențate de pandemia COVID-19. O atenție deosebită este acordată dezvoltării unor tipuri promițătoare de turism în Belarus și China: „roșu”, rural, folcloric, digital și de iarnă. Cazul Republicii Belarus, care poate fi util pentru țările din Europa Centrală și de Est, ilustrează posibilele direcții de creștere a exporturilor de servicii turistice către China, în contextul de optimizare a măsurilor de prevenire și control al COVID-19. Această optimizare a contribuit la circulația transfrontalieră a cetățenilor chinezi, ceea ce a deschis oportunități de a atrage turiști chinezi pe piața belorusă, precum și pe piețele din Europa Centrală și de Est. Se subliniază că, pentru Belarus, obținerea unor rezultate semnificative în creșterea exportului de servicii turistice către China implică rezolvarea unui număr de sarcini cheie: desfășurarea de campanii de publicitate și informare pe scară largă și continuă pentru a crește gradul de conștientizare a publicului străin cu privire la produsele turistice și recunoașterea țării ca destinație turistică atractivă; dezvoltarea și implementarea unui sistem de stimulare pentru operatorii de turism din China; desfășurarea de activități de adaptare a serviciului în hoteluri, aeroporturi, gări, restaurante, muzee la caracteristicile individuale și nevoile specifice ale turiștilor din China; îmbunătățirea sistemului de scutire de taxe pentru a crește interesul cetățenilor din China de a vizita Belarus.

Cuvinte cheie: *industria turismului din Belarus și China, tendințe de dezvoltare a turismului, tipuri de turism, cooperare turistică belorusă-chineză, export de servicii turistice, sprijin guvernamental pentru turism*

В статье рассматриваются институциональные основы взаимовыгодного белорусско-китайского взаимодействия в области туризма. Цель исследования – изучение состояния, проблем и перспектив развития туристической отрасли КНР и Беларуси, выработка предложений по развитию экспорта туристических услуг Беларуси в Китай. В соответствии с данной целью авторы исследуют структуру туристической отрасли Беларуси и Китая, объективные предпосылки развития туристической сферы двух стран, а также мировые тенденции в области туризма в контексте изменений, вызванных пандемией COVID-19. Отдельное внимание уделено развитию перспективных видов туризма в Беларуси и в Китае: «красному», сельскому, фольклорному, цифровому и зимнему туризму. Пример Беларуси может быть полезен для стран Центральной и Восточной Европы, иллюстрирует возможные направления роста экспорта туристических услуг в КНР, в контексте оптимизации

китайскими властями в январе 2023 года мер по профилактике и контролю над COVID-19. Оптимизация способствовала беспрепятственному и упорядоченному трансграничному перемещению китайских граждан, что открывает возможности привлечения китайских туристов на белорусский рынок, а также на рынки стран Центральной и Восточной Европы. Рассматриваются вопросы, а также структура государственной поддержки туристической отрасли в Республике Беларусь. Подчеркивается, что для Беларуси достижение значимых результатов в наращивании экспорта туристических услуг в Китай предполагает решение ряда ключевых задач: проведение масштабной и постоянной рекламной и информационной кампаний для повышения осведомленности зарубежной аудитории о туристических продуктах и узнаваемости страны как привлекательного туристического направления; разработка и внедрение системы стимулирования туроператоров из Китая; проведение мероприятий по адаптации сервиса в гостиницах, аэропортах, вокзалах, ресторанах, музеях под индивидуальные особенности и специфические потребности туристов из Китая; совершенствование системы tax free для повышения заинтересованности граждан из Китая в посещении Беларуси.

Ключевые слова: туристическая отрасль Беларуси и КНР, тенденции развития туризма, виды туризма, белорусско-китайское туристическое сотрудничество, экспорт туристических услуг, государственная поддержка туризма

INTRODUCTION

On September 15, 2022, at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Samarkand, the Heads of the Belarusian and Chinese states signed the "Joint Declaration of the establishment of all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership." In recent years, the Belarusian-Chinese diplomatic relations levelled up several times - from "friendly relations of cooperation," "relations of comprehensive strategic partnership," "relations of trusting comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation" to the current "relations of all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership."

It is expected that the current increase in the level of Belarusian-Chinese relations will take the interaction between the two states to a higher stage of development, opening up new prospects in various areas of the life of Belarusian and Chinese societies. In the signed document, the priority tasks of cooperation are the deepening of trade, economic, financial, and interbank cooperation, the acceleration of technological and investment cooperation,

and the expansion of interregional relations. Separately, in paragraph 16 of the Declaration, both sides express their readiness to expand cooperation in education, culture, sports, and tourism. At the same time, it is emphasised that countries are ready to develop contacts between Chinese and Belarusian tour operators, improve the infrastructure for Chinese tourists in Belarus, and promote new tourism products and destinations.

Undoubtedly, expanding cooperation with the Chinese side in the tourism sector will require industry experts to conduct an in-depth study of the Chinese market, its state, structure, and development trends, as well as to study the capabilities, needs, and psychology of the subjects of this market. It will allow researchers from the Republic of Belarus and Central and Eastern Europe to determine the main directions of export of tourism services to the Middle Kingdom to formulate the most critical stages of digitalisation of this process.

The above-mentioned indicates the relevance of the topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical basis for studying the tourism industry was the works of leading scientists from the post-Soviet space ([Sobolenko&Gansky, 2017](#); [Matzel, 2020](#); [Fedorovsky&Shvydko, 2020](#); [Zaklyazminskaya, 2021](#); [Voronovich, 2022](#); [Davydenko, 2022](#)). The authors also relied on the work of leading Western researchers on Chinese and international tourism ([Lew A.,](#)

[2001](#); [Ap John&Yu Lawrence, 2002](#); [Wen J. & Tisdell A., 2011](#); [Dai Bin & Jiang Yi, 2013](#); [Wolfgang Georg Arlt, 2017](#)). The writings of Chinese scholars dealing with economic policy in the tourism sector have become essential sources ([Zhang Hanqin Qiu & Chong King, 2002](#); [Xiao, Honggen, 2006](#); [Kaye Sung Chon & Zhang Guangrui, 2002](#); [Zhang Hui, 2016](#)). Issues

concerning the need, structure, and scale of state support for the tourism industry have been carefully studied.

The article's authors relied on the findings of many national researchers who consider that the success of tourism development directly depends on how this industry is perceived at the state level and how much it enjoys state support. Also, the article focuses on an important detail highlighted by foreign authors: building the image of the country - a purposefully formed image of the territory, which has particular valuable characteristics and is designed to influence consumers of tourism services to develop inbound tourism.

At the same time, according to the national and foreign studies, the mechanisms for exporting tourism services to China are not fully developed due to the specifics of the socio-political and socio-economic development of China, as well as cultural and historical features and daily preferences of the Chinese population. In this regard, the authors consider the issue of studying the institutional environment of China as the most crucial component of the potential success in the development of exports of tourism services to any country, including the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Given the above, the authors in this study provide the necessary information about the characteristics of the tourism market development in China.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS USED

The research methodology relies on the study and interpretation of open sources that reflect the trends, prospects, and specifics of the development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China. The subject area of the research predetermined the choice of methods and tools based on quantitative analysis and qualitative synthesis of input information. The process of collecting initial materials

for the study relies on official documents, collections, and bulletins of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus and the National Bureau of Statistics of China. To increase the reliability of the results obtained during the study, techniques such as review, continuity of observation, analysis of initial data, including statistical ones, and rejection of conflicting data were used.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CHINA

The continuous growth in wealth of the Chinese population and the victory over poverty, announced in 2021, were the objective prerequisites for the development of Chinese tourism and increase in the number of tourist trips, including those outside the PRC. Hence, since 2013, according to the World Tourism Organization, China has become the leader in the number of tourists travelling outside the country, surpassing the United States in this parameter. In 2019, 169 million people left China for tourism purposes, suggesting that citizens of the PRC made every tenth tourist trip in the world ([Fedorovsky&Shvydko, 2020](#)).

The main driving force of China's tourism industry in the coming future will be the middle class. If, for example, by the beginning of 2021,

there were about 400 million people in China who are attributed to this population category, then by 2035, as part of long-term planning, their number is expected to double to 800 million. All of them will need high-quality tourist services, and consequently, the domestic tourism market's volume and tour operators' income will increase.

According to Belarusian tour operators, it is possible to attract tourists to Belarus from China only by offering them the level and the form of tourist service familiar to the Chinese consumer, which involves studying the tourism business characteristics of China. In particular, digital tourism is becoming increasingly popular in China:

- online visits to museums, vernissages, and various exhibitions;
- online visits to theatre productions and world premieres;
- online listening to lectures and viewing live broadcasts of iconic events.

The digital twin has covered almost every tourist attraction in China. The development of digital tourism in Belarus will contribute not only to the information content of tourist routes for the

Chinese but also to their initial acquaintance with the points of attractions and the possible tours to Belarus.

Today, in China, with more than 40 thousand travel companies, a wide variety of types of tourism are developing. Recently, one of the most common types is the so-called "red" tourism, which consists of visiting places of military and revolutionary glory. Now "red" tourism is experiencing a significant increase, which allows Belarusian tour operators to use this peculiarity of China's tourism business to attract organised groups of tourists from China.

In 2021, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China presented 100 "red" tourism routes. All routes (Table 1) are divided into three main

thematic categories: "Remember the history of the Revolution and inherit the spirit of struggle" (52 tours), "Keep the great country's values and the Motherland's power" (20 times) and "See the achievements in the eradication of poverty and lifting villages" (28 rounds). In this regard, it is noteworthy that in Belarus, state tourist operators took advantage of the opportunity to receive Chinese tourists as part of the "red" tourism services. They are offering them not only to include an excursion to the House-Museum of the 1st Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party in the program of stay of Chinese tourists, but also recommended to the Chinese side to integrate this subject into one of the Chinese "red" routes, including visits to the historical subjects of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party – All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – Communist Party of the Soviet Union – Communist Party of China, Russia and Belarus.

Table 1:

Routes of "red" tourism in China

Number and thematic category of the route	The content of the thematic category of the route
1. "Remember the history of the Revolution and inherit the spirit of struggle."	Among the excursions of this thematic focus, the route called "The Great Road - a contemporary of history" stands out, which begins in the central square of the Chinese capital Tiananmen, goes along the Monument to the People's Heroes, the National Museum of China, the Memorial Museum dedicated to the movement for a New Culture, the house-museum of Li Dazhao (one of the founders of the Communist Party of China, one of the first Chinese Marxists and Communists), the Memorial Museum of Chinese People's Resistance to the Japanese Invaders, the Lugouqiao Bridge and the February 7 Memorial Museum. The route considers all the major historical events that took place in Beijing after the May 4th Movement (1919), as well as important milestones in the history of the Chinese revolution and the history of building New China, demonstrating the achievements of the PRC in state building.
2. "Keep the great country's values and the Motherland's power."	<p>The routes of this thematic category are dedicated to China's world-famous achievements in science, technology, and infrastructure construction. A significant location here is the Hongqi (Red Banner) Canal in Henan Province, which is more than 70 km long. Residents dug this unique hydraulic structure.</p> <p>The spirit of the Hongqi Canal has gone down in the Communist Party of China's history as a symbol of self-reliance, hard work, unity, cooperation, and selfless contribution.</p> <p>Other significant objects in this thematic category are the world's largest hydraulic structure on the Yangtze River, "Three Gorges" (Hubei Province), as well as a spherical radio telescope with a five-hundred-meter aperture FAST / Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope /, which is the most sensitive radio telescope in the world and which unofficially called the "Heavenly Eye of China" (Guizhou Province).</p>
3. "See the achievements in eradicating poverty and lifting villages."	The theme group tours showcase China's progress in poverty reduction, rural revitalisation, and environmental improvement. The tours of this group are closely related to rural tourism and tell how, during the years of reform and opening up (from 1978 to 2021), the Chinese Communist Party lifted 770 million Chinese rural residents out of poverty, which is 70% of all the needy in the world. It also includes folklore tours to get acquainted with the rich cultural heritage, unique architecture, and customs of the small nations of China (56 nationalities live in the country).

The successful hosting of the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing in 2022 stimulated the development of winter tourism programs. This rather expensive holiday is now becoming increasingly popular among Chinese tourists. We also emphasise that the presence in the Republic of Belarus of a modern base for ski tourism in the city of Logoisk (Belarusian Switzerland) allows us to count on the interest of Chinese tourists in this matter too.

In early January 2023, the Chinese authorities streamlined COVID-19 prevention and control measures, contributing to a smooth and orderly cross-border movement of Chinese and foreign citizens. The outbound tourism market in China, which had been practically non-functional for the past three years, began to recover rapidly, especially during the holidays, during the Chinese Spring Festival, which again opened up opportunities to attract Chinese tourists to the Belarusian tourism market.

PROSPECTS FOR EXPORT OF TOURIST SERVICES OF BELARUS FOR CHINA

In recent years the tourism industry of the Republic of Belarus has experienced the same difficulties as the tourism market in the People's Republic of China. As for organised tourism, in the pre-pandemic period (2017-2019), the number of foreign tourists and excursionists who visited the Republic of Belarus has steadily increased: 282.7 thousand people in 2017, 365.5 thousand people in 2018 and 405.5 thousand people in 2019. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the flow of foreign tourists is significantly reduced: 81.0 thousand people in 2020 and 71.4 thousand people in 2021. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the number of organisations engaged

in tourism activities in the republic is also decreasing: in 2019, there were 1544 of them (315 organisations involved in tour operator activities, 833 organisations engaged in travel agency activities and 396 organisations involved in tour operator and travel agency activities), while in 2021, 1315 (292; 776 and 247 organisations, respectively) ([National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2022](#)).

At the same time, in 2020 - 2021, following the trends in the development of the world tourism market indicated by us above, in Belarus, there is a reorientation of tourists-citizens of the republic to the domestic market. Hence, in 2021, it has been noticed:

- The cost of tours paid by tourists and visitors for domestic tourism amounted to 54.1 million Belarusian rubles (in 2020 - 21.7 million rubles);
- the number of organised tourists and visitors - citizens of the Republic of Belarus, sent on tours within the territory of the country amounted to 1,187.9 thousand people (growth rate by 2020 - 207.9%);
- the number of persons accommodated in hotels and similar accommodation facilities - citizens of the Republic of Belarus, amounted to 1,072.6 thousand people (growth rate by 2020 - 142.9%);
- the number of persons accommodated in sanatoriums, health resorts, and other specialised accommodation facilities - citizens of the Republic of Belarus, amounted to 749.6 thousand people (growth rate by 2020 - 135.2%);
- the number of tourists served in agricultural-eco-estates, citizens of the Republic of Belarus, amounted to 548.8 thousand people (the growth rate by 2020 is 130.0%);
- attendance of special protected natural areas increased by 1.5 times;
- the number of events held for gastronomic tourism increased by 1.6 times ([Voronovich, 2022](#)).

The measures taken by the Chinese authorities in early January 2023 to ensure the smooth and orderly cross-border movement of Chinese citizens open up additional opportunities for Belarusian tourism organisations. Successful work with the Chinese tourism market can be

accomplished through a range of mechanisms for increasing the export of tourism services to China. Using the example of Belarus, let us list the main directions for promoting tourism services.

Agricultural eco-tourism is one of the most popular types of tourism in the Republic of Belarus. Moreover, this type of tourism has recently become, to some degree, a brand of the Republic of Belarus (repeatedly awarded the prestigious international performance "National Geographic Traveller Awards"). In 2021, half a million people visited Agricultural eco-farms, of which 15,000 were foreigners. More than three thousand agricultural-eco-tourism entities were registered in January 2022 in Belarus.

On October 5, 2022, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko signed Decree No. 351, "On the development of agricultural eco-tourism". The document aims to improve the regulation of activities in agricultural Eco-tourism, improve the quality of services, and eliminate the possibility of running a hotel or restaurant business under the guise of agricultural eco-tourism and protecting the rights of citizens living in their neighbourhood. The decree clarified the requirements for agricultural-eco-tourism objects. In particular,

Recreational tourism. The development of recreational (health-improving) tourism ensured the recovery growth of all the leading indicators regarding the activity of the system of sanatorium-and-spa treatment and health improvement. According to operational data,

Educational tourism - more than 20 thousand foreign citizens from 107 countries study in the educational institutions in Belarus, including

Sports tourismn - before the pandemic, the number of major international sports events held in Belarus grew, with Chinese

Ecological tourism includes excursions on swamp ledges and swamps; photo hunting; trailing traces of wild animals and looking them; ornithological tours; diving; water trips on rafts and kayaking; rental of a floating cottage and a pontoon boat. Several directions for the development of ecological tourism are

Event tourism is a promising and dynamically developing tourism in the Republic of Belarus. It is becoming more and more popular for foreign tourists, including tourists from China. The number of exhibitions, fairs, festivals,

Autotourism - to develop camping and caravanning, there are 40 parking lots, and

Culinary tourism - in Belarus, there are about two hundred specialised catering facilities based on the traditions of the Belarusian national cuisine, fifty of which are located in

this concerns the number of living rooms for agricultural eco-tourists, where there should be at most ten of them. There is also a specification on the conduct of personal subsidiary plots and the number of services provided - at least two.

The list of services is supplemented by holding master classes aimed at familiarising visitors with the crafts and national traditions of the region. The responsibility of the owners of agricultural estates for violation (including by visitors) of public order or the peace of citizens, non-compliance with legislation in the field of sanitary and epidemiological welfare of the population, and environmental and fire safety requirements has been established. Restrictions have been introduced on holding presentations, anniversaries, banquets, and other events in neighbouring residential buildings. The need to obtain permission from the district executive committees to conduct activities in the field of agricultural eco-tourism has been established. Operating farmsteads must obtain such consent before July 1, 2023.

in the first half of 2022, compared to the same period in 2021, the average occupancy level of the country's health resorts was about 75%. The number of foreign citizens provided with Belarusian medical and health services increased by 22.3% and amounted 63.1 thousand people.

the necessary base to provide educational services to Chinese citizens.

citizens becoming enthusiastic fans and active participants in sports events.

unique and accessible only in the territory of Belarus. As part of environmental tourism, four national parks (Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Braslav Lakes, Narochinsky, Pripyatsky) and the Berezinsky Reserve in the first half of 2022 were visited by 300 thousands of tourists and visitors.

concerts, sports, and cultural events in Belarus is increasing yearly. Event tourism activities stimulate the revival of local cultural traditions, customs, and folk-art development.

international rallies are held, which can be exciting and informative for tourists from China.

Minsk. In 2021, compared to the previous year, the number of gastronomic events in the country increased from 139 to 224 (more than 1.5 times).

Hunting tourism - hunting is allowed for fifty of mammals and 29 species of birds, some of species of wild animals, including 21 species which are unique.

Industrial tourism - the development of industrial tourism serves as an additional advertisement for domestic products, and many Belarusian enterprises are receiving and serving excursion groups.

Military historical tourism - The Republic of Belarus is rich in military history: the Brest Fortress and the Stalin Line, the battlefields of the First World War, monuments in honour of the battles with the French and Swedes, and memorials about the battles of the distant Middle Ages. Medieval festivals are also held in Belarus ("The Age of Chivalry", "Our Grunwald", "Knights of the Four Epochs", "Gonaru Prodkaj", "The Way of the Vikings", "Mensk Starazhytny"). Due to common ideological approaches, tourists from China are susceptible to the military-historical heritage of the territory of Belarus; they actively study Belarusian history as part of the history of the Soviet Union.

Religious tourism - the traditions of East and West are intertwined in Belarus, and each religion has left its spiritual and material mark on the Belarusian land. There are 26 religious denominations and directions registered in the country. The total number of religious buildings operating in Belarus is over 2.6 thousand.

Medical tourism - Belarus has the necessary base for providing medical services to Chinese patients. In the country, the export of medical services is realised due to the activity of state medical institutions, scientific and practical centres, private medical centres, and individual entrepreneurs. The number of foreign citizens provided with medical services is constantly increasing. About 160 thousand foreign patients visit Belarus annually, and conditions have been created to attract patients from China for treatment. It also indicates a high level of the national healthcare system that can compete in the global services medical market.

As part of medical tourism, potentially attractive destinations for Chinese tourists can be:

- **transplantation of organs and tissues** (regarding the number of organ transplants, the Republic of Belarus is in the first place and is ahead of all CIS countries. Thus, 18 operations per 1 million population are carried out in the country, while in Russia and Ukraine, there are 9.2 and 2.2, respectively. High transplantation activity in the republic also persists in the transplantation of hematopoietic stem cells and bone marrow. Foreign patients to the Republic of Belarus, including Chinese, come from all over the world for organ and tissue transplantation. Every year surgeons perform hundreds of transplants on patients and tissue and human stem cell transplants);
- **dentistry** (foreign patients, including Chinese, are provided with all types of services: therapeutic, surgical, and orthodontic care in both public and private medical clinics);
- **oncology** (in the Republic of Belarus, new treatment methods have been introduced, such as thermo-chemo-therapy for advanced lung cancer, photodynamic therapy for patients with cervical dysplasia, and transplantation of hematopoietic stem cells. In the Republican Scientific and Practical Center for Pediatric Oncology, Hematology and Immunology, seven percent of patients are foreign, including Chinese);
- **traumatology and orthopaedics** (some of the interventions performed by Belarusian specialists are unique. Since 2009, in addition to arthroplasty of the knee and hip joints, endoprosthesis of the shoulder and ankle joints have been performed; arthroscopic interventions on large joints, mainly on the knee, operations for transverse flat feet in women, hand surgery and pediatric orthopaedics);
- **otorhinolaryngology** (restoration of the lumen of the larynx and trachea in children under one-year-old, microsurgical operations to correct the nasal septum, cochlear implantation);
- **gynaecology** (in the World Maternity Ranking, the Republic of Belarus ranks 26th among all world countries, ahead of the USA, Japan, and Israel. The ranking takes into account several parameters of national health development, including infant and maternal mortality rates, which are among the lowest in the world);

- **sanatorium-resort treatment and rehabilitation.** The Republic of Belarus has unique opportunities for body restoration. There are 324 certified sanatorium-resort and health-improving organisations for 67.4 thousand beds, including 113 sanatorium-resort organisations for 28.9 thousand beds and 211 health-improving organisations for 38.5 thousand places.
- **attracting patients from China with unique services – speleotherapy.** The only spelaria in the CIS operates in the Republic of Belarus (one day in a speleotherapy hospital costs a foreign patient from 45 to 80 US dollars).

As a result, in recent years, the above directions have been implemented and continue to be implemented in the following projects.

Firstly, the expansion of “China-friendly” system in the country. For example, the Minsk Hotel was the first to receive the China Friendly certificate in Minsk. The Crowne Plaza Hotel has received an analogue of such a certificate - Welcome Chinese certification - an exclusive standard of hospitality for Chinese travellers, issued by the Chinese Tourism Academy (CTA), a committee of the National Tourism Administration of China (CNTA) and the international holding group Select Holding Ltd. The eight other hotels in Minsk have met the program's requirements.

In addition, an important task is to expand the software and hardware infrastructure facilities, in which it is possible to execute transactions using bank payment cards of the international payment system, China Union Pay.

Secondly, versions of national sites are created. For example, the portals belarus.travel and vetliva.by in the Chinese language have been created in Belarus to popularise travel opportunities for the Chinese population.

Thirdly, several travel companies in the Minsk region have developed tourist routes from China. The courses include visits to the following objects of the Minsk region: the memorial complex “Khatyn”, the memorial complex “Mound of Glory”, the historical and cultural object “Stalin's Line”, the centre of ecological tourism “Stankovo”, the architectural and cultural complex in the city of Nesvizh, the ethnographic complex “Dudutki”, ethnocultural complex “Nanosy-Novosele”, interactive history park “Sula”, and also farmsteads.

Fourthly, in the frame of the urban spatial orientation system for pedestrians in Minsk, works have been done to translate the names of complexes, streets, and main sights of the city into the Chinese language for further use, including via the navigation system. Visual orientation systems, information boards, monitors, and announcements were translated into Chinese at Minsk National Airport, and the airport website was supplemented with a version in the Chinese language. Information structures in the tourist areas “Upper City”,

“Nemiga”, “Trinity Suburb”, and “Station Square” are equipped with elements of tourist navigation in Chinese. The “Minsk City Tour” excursion project audio guide is also broadcast in Chinese.

Similar work is also underway in the regions. Thus, in the cities of Vitebsk, Grodno, and Bobruisk, advertising and information stands on route orientation have been installed, which have been translated into the Chinese language.

For the main tourist sites of Belarus, information in Chinese has been provided with the assistance of the EU Project “Support for Sustainable Tourism Development in Belarus”.

Audio guides in Chinese are also used at the permanent expositions of the largest museums in Belarus - the National Art Museum, the National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve “Nesvizh”, the Museum “Castle Complex Mir”, the Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War, the State Literary Museum of Yanka Kupala, Museum of the Defense of the Brest Fortress, and others.

Fifth, concerning the objects of historical and cultural heritage and museums, constant work is held to open new access points to the WI-FI network using QR codes with information in the Chinese language.

Finally, presentations of the tourism opportunities of the Republic of Belarus in China are held, including within the framework of the exhibitions: COTTM (Beijing), ITB China (Shanghai), and International Exhibition for trade in services (Beijing), as well as study tours for representatives of travel companies, specialised media, and educational institutions of Belarus and China with tourism orientation programs.

In the future, representatives of the Chinese media will create programs about the tourism potential of Belarus and broadcast these materials on Chinese television and in print media. On average, each journalist prepares 5-9 publications, which, given the size of the Chinese audience, is a fail-safe method for promoting Belarusian tourism services.

Summing up some of the above, we especially emphasise that the effectiveness of tourism activities largely depends on state regulation. The experience of different countries shows that the success of tourism development directly depends on how this industry is perceived at the state level and how much it enjoys state support.

In the Republic of Belarus, the state supports this type of activity. On April 17, 2019, the composition of the Interdepartmental Expert and Coordinating Council for Tourism working groups under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus was approved. Seventeen working groups for developing different areas of activity and types of tourism are assigned to specific executive bodies.

The head of the working group approves roadmaps for developing types of tourism based on the incoming proposals of its members, including the analysis of problematic issues. Working groups interact with leading Belarusian tour operators and public associations in the tourism field, cover their media activities and make proposals for draft regulatory documents. Specific positions and recommendations developed as a result of the activities of the working groups form the basis of innovations in legislation.

By analogy with the republican Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, local

coordinating councils for tourism have been created at the level of regions and districts, to develop a joint position in specific types of tourism, including the issues of reducing the resort fee and other local taxes, rental payments, etc.

The Belarusian-Chinese investment forum on tourism, held at the end of October 2022, was a clear expression of the close attention and support of the Belarusian state to the country's tourism industry. The event was organised by the Belarusian Embassy in China together with the Ministry of Sports and Tourism and the Ministry of Economy of Belarus with the active support of business circles, business associations of China, and the Hong Kong Chinese Special Administrative Region. It aims to present the tourism potential of the Republic of Belarus, to attract Chinese investment in the cultural and tourism sectors and to identify new areas of cooperation in the tourism sector, including medical, health, environmental, events and business tourism.

The forum emphasised that, firstly, in the pre-pandemic period, Belarus was at the top list of tourist destinations in Eastern Europe for Chinese tourists. Secondly, the reconstruction of existing and construction of new tourism infrastructure facilities in Belarus, including by attracting Chinese investments, will significantly expand the possibilities of receiving tourists from China in the post-pandemic period.

CONCLUSION

At present, it is essential to resist the temptation to interrupt active work on forming new strategies for tourism recovery after the pandemic and the development of its main directions.

For Belarus, achieving significant results in increasing the export of tourist services to the East, including China, involves solving the following essential tasks:

- realizing a large-scale and continuous advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness of foreign audiences about tourism products and recognition of the country as an attractive tourist destination;
- development and implementation of an incentive system for tour operators from China to attract foreign tourists;
- carrying out activities to adapt the service in hotels, airports, train stations, restaurants, museums, etc., to the individual characteristics and specific needs of tourists from China (projects such as China Friendly);
- improving the tax-free system to increase the interest of citizens from China in visiting Belarus.

It is also essential to build a country image - a purposefully formed image of the territory, which has particular value characteristics and is designed to influence consumers to develop inbound tourism.

As we see it, the Republic of Belarus is consistently moving in solving the above tasks, which can serve as a specific guideline for many countries, particularly those of the post-Soviet space.

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