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## **EXPERIENCE AND PROSPECTS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE SPHERE OF TOURISM BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AND THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM<sup>1</sup>**

*The article is devoted to the analysis of bilateral relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Socialist Vietnam Republic in the sphere of tourism. The main trends in the development of tourism at the present stage are identified, an analysis of the tourist flows of the EAEU is carried out, a characteristic of the tourism industry of the Republic of Belarus is given, and ways of developing relations between Vietnam and Belarus in the sphere of tourism are proposed.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Republic of Belarus, visa-free regime, Eurasian Economic Union, single market of services.*

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## **ОПЫТ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ДВУСТОРОННИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В ОБЛАСТИ ТУРИЗМА МЕЖДУ РЕСПУБЛИКОЙ БЕЛАРУСЬ И СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКОЙ ВЬЕТНАМ**

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*Статья посвящена анализу двусторонних отношений Республики Беларусь и Социалистической Вьетнамской Республики в сфере туризма. Выделены основные тенденции развития туризма на современном этапе, проведен анализ туристических потоков ЕАЭС, дана характеристика туристической индустрии Республики Беларусь, предложены пути развития отношений Вьетнама и Республики Беларусь в сфере туризма.*

**Ключевые слова:** туризм, Социалистическая Республика Вьетнам, Республика Беларусь, безвизовый режим, Евразийский экономический союз, единый рынок услуг.

**Introduction.** Currently, the tourism and travel industry is one of the main drivers of the global economy. According to experts of the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), global tourism industry revenues amount to \$ 8.8 trillion, account for 10.4% of world GDP and have high growth rates (3.9% in 2018), ahead of global economic growth (3.2%). International tourism provides 30% of world exports of services and 7% of total exports of goods and services. WTTC experts predict that over the next decade, the share of the tourism and travel industry in global GDP will increase to 11.7% [1].

International tourism provides 30% of world exports of services and 7% of total exports of goods and services. According to expert estimates by The World Travel & Tourism Council and Eurostat, between 2015 and 2025 the volume of investments in the development of the tourism and travel industry in Europe will amount to 2.1 trillion euro including in the region of Eastern Europe for 237 billion euro [2].

The tourism industry provides employment for every tenth worker in the world (319 million jobs in 2019), while in the last decade tourism has created 1/5 of new jobs. International experience shows that attracting 30 new tourists is accompanied by the creation of 1 new workplace. [1].

Modern tourism is not only an economic phenomenon stimulating income growth, creating new jobs, improving infrastructure and developing a new creative economy but also helps to strengthen peace and mutual understanding between nations, maintain a healthy lifestyle, open local communities, create a positive image of destinations, understanding values and the preservation of cultural and biodiversity, tolerance, supports the inclusive participation in society of all groups of the population, which together ensures the implementation of sustainable development goals.

The development of international tourism is characterized by significant regional irregularity.

Despite the low growth rate, the European macro-region is leading. It receives 672 million arrivals of foreign visitors or 51% of the global volume. Europe accounts for the bulk of international tourism revenue \$519 billion, or 39% of the world's total. The average amount of income per 1 arrival of a foreign visitor in the European macro-region reached \$ 772 [3].

The Asia-Pacific macro-region accounts for 323 million arrivals of foreign visitors or 24% of the global volume, the volume of income from international tourism - 390 billion dollars or 29% of the global indicator [3].

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, tourism is one of the most affected sectors of the economy. Available data indicate decrease of 22% in the first quarter of 2020, and the number of international tourists in March fell by 57%. This resulted in a decrease of 67 million international arrivals and about \$ 80 billion in tourism revenue. International arrivals are supposed to decline from 58% to 78% in 2020, depending on the duration of restrictions on movement and border closure [4].

**The main part.** Analyzing the Top 10 leading countries for inbound tourism in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, it should be noted that in 2018 they were mainly countries of the Asia-Pacific region (China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia), from all member countries of EAEU in the statistical reports were only citizens of the Russian Federation - 606.637 people [5].

The number of international arrivals in Vietnam fell by 98.2 percent per year, reaching the lowest rate of 26.2 thousand in April 2020 against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic of the coronavirus. The number of tourists from Asia decreased by (-97.8 percent), mainly from China (-94.9 percent), South Korea (-99.7 percent), Japan (-98.9 percent); America (-99.8 percent), namely the United States (-99.1 percent); Europe (-99.5 percent), of which Russia (-98.9 percent), the UK (-99.9 percent) and France (-99.7 percent); and Australia (-99.3 percent). Taking into account the first four months of the year, the number of tourists

decreased by 37.8% compared to the same period in 2019 [6].

In the Republic of Belarus, the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development for the Period until 2030 defines the development of the tourism industry as one of the most important directions. In 2019, 1544 organizations provided travel services, and accommodation services – 1089 collective accommodation facilities, including 597 hotels, 492 SPA-resorts, health organizations and other specialized accommodation facilities. Activities in the field of ecotourism are carried out by 2760 subjects [7]. But despite the efforts made to develop domestic and inbound tourism, significant resource potential of tourism are not used effectively enough. Belarusian outbound tourism exceeds inbound one.

Analyzing departures of tourists and excursionists from Belarus abroad in 2019 we can conclude that Vietnam is in category of other countries which is just 7,4 percent. So the share in overall departures is not very significant (Figure)

Having compared outbound tourism expenditures over GDP% in both countries Belarus and Vietnam it is noticeable they are very similar (Table1).

The number of Belarusian tourists arriving in Vietnam has increased sharply, since from July 1, 2015, a visa-free regime in Vietnam for

citizens of Belarus for up to 15 days has been in effect. From 2016 to 2018, an average of more than 10,000 Belarusians came to Vietnam annually, in 2019, this figure reached 8,000 people [7].

There is the positive dynamic of arrivals of tourists from Vietnam to Belarus but the quantity of tourists is very miserable (Table 2).

The Vietnamese government decided to extend the visa-free regime for citizens of Belarus until December 31, 2022. For Belarusian tourists, Vietnam is currently the second most attractive destination in Southeast Asia after Thailand [10].

On January 9, 2017, a decree was signed on the abolition of visas for citizens of 80 countries for up to 5 days, on July 24, 2018, the period of visa-free stay of foreign citizens in Belarus was increased to 30 days on condition of their entry into the country and subsequent departure through the state border at the Minsk National Airport. For citizens of Vietnam, Haiti, Gambia, India, Lebanon, Namibia and Samoa, a mandatory additional requirement is the presence in the passport of a valid multiple-entry visa of the EU or Schengen states with a mark on entry into their territory, as well as tickets confirming departure from Minsk National Airport within 30 days from the date of entry [11].

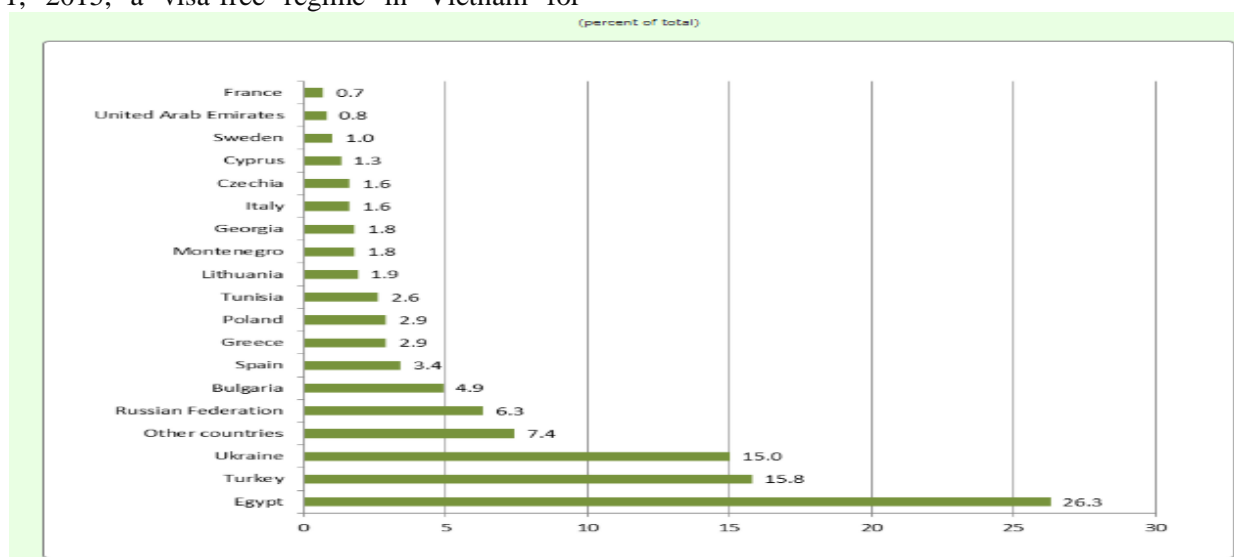


Figure – Departures of tourists and excursionists from Belarus abroad in 2019

Source: [8].

Table 1 – Outbound tourism expenditures over GDP%

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Belarus	1,3	1,2	1,4	1,8	1,7	1,8	1,9	2,0	1,9
Vietnam	1,3	1,3	1,2	1,2	1,4	1,9	2,2	2,3	2,4

Source: [9].

With the signing in May 2014 of an agreement of the Eurasian Economic Union, along with such benefits as increased production, increased return on new technologies, increased GDP, mutual cooperation was expected to develop and promote a tourist product, the development of a business, cultural, historical, and medical and sports tourism.

According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, the volume of inbound tourists to the countries of the Eurasian Union has increased. For example, in the Republic of Belarus, the number of inbound tourist trips of foreign citizens increased from 5350.0 in 2014 to 11501.6 in 2018 (Table 3).

The number of outbound tourist trips from the Eurasian Union of all member countries, with the exception of the Russian Federation, to foreign countries has also increased. So, 2062.2 more tourists left the Republic of Belarus in 2018 than in 2014 (Table 4).

Among the achievements of the EAEU, it is possible to distinguish the single customs territory, the presence of a single market for goods, services and labor. The Eurasian agenda should expand to include areas such as tourism,

science, education, sports, and culture. The provision of tourism services within the framework of the Single market of services will be carried out in accordance with the legislation of a member state of the Union.

By a decision of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council dated December 26, 2016 No. 23, a tourism liberalization plan was approved according to which the final deadline for the start of operation of the single services market was determined in 2019 [14].

In all the member states of the Union special industry regulatory legal acts have been adopted in the field of tourism services, the implementation of which is ensured by the relevant state bodies, namely the State Committee on Tourism of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investment of the Republic of Armenia, the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

Table 2. – Arrivals of tourists from Vietnam to Belarus

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Market share 2018	Change 2018-2017
Tourists (number of people)	13	44	11	107	105	0,03	-1,87

Source: [9].

Table 3. – The number of inbound trips of foreign citizens (thousand trips)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	729,3	832,7	963,0	1082,0	1203,7	1192,1	1259,7	1,498	1610,4
Belarus <sup>1</sup>	5673,8	5877,2	6127,5	6240,4	5350,0	4357,2	10935,4	11060,1	11501,6
Kazakhstan	4097,4	5685,1	6163,2	6841,1	6332,7	6430,2	6509,4	7701,2	8789,3
Kyrgyzstan	854,9	2277,5	2406,0	4418,6	4418,6	4335,2	4147,4	4662,0	7057,1
Russia <sup>2</sup>	8266	9194	10175	25438	25438	26852	24570,5	24390,0	24550,9

<sup>1</sup> Since 2016, the data are given taking into account citizens crossing the Belarusian-Russian section of the border

<sup>2</sup> Data for 2010-2013 are given on inbound tourist trips from non-CIS countries

Source: [12].

Table 4. – The number of outbound trips of foreign citizens (thousand trips)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	715,5	830,5	965,4	1080,0	1198,1	1187,4	1262,7	1481,8	1590,5
Belarus <sup>1</sup>	7464,2	7541,6	8426,7	8840,8	7236,3	6962,4	8339,6	9208,6	9325,9
Kazakhstan <sup>2</sup>	6019,2	8020,4	9065,6	10143,7	10450,0	11302,5	9775,6	10260,8	10646,2
Kyrgyzstan	597,1	931,2	1326,3	1401,5	1441,7	1719,7	2128,8	4631,0	6930,9
Russia <sup>3</sup>	25487	29271	33142	38521	42921	34390	31658,7	39628,5	41963,5

<sup>1</sup> Since 2016, the data are given taking into account citizens crossing the Belarusian-Russian section of the border

<sup>2</sup> For 2010-2016 - estimated data

<sup>3</sup> Data for 2010-2013 are given on inbound tourist trips from non-CIS countries

Source: [13].

So, the main regulatory legal acts of the Member States of the Union are:

- the law "On Tourism and Tourism Activities" in the Republic of Armenia;
- the laws "On Tourism" in the Republic of Belarus and the Kyrgyz Republic;
- the law "On Tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan" in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- the law "On the basics of tourism in the Russian Federation".

An analysis of the regulatory framework of the member states shows that the regulation system of tourism services in member states is similar in content but different in terms of regulatory mechanism. Currently, only in the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation there is a licensing system.

The provision of tourism services within the framework of the Single market of services of the Eurasian Economic Union will be carried out in accordance with the legislation of a Member State of the Union in the field of protection of the rights of consumers (recipients) of tourism services, including the requirements for the formation of reserve (insurance) funds and (or) the use of other financial instruments that ensure the responsibility of a service provider Member States to consumers (recipients) of services that are persons of another Member State.

In order to solve the problems associated with the implementation of this sector, a special Working Group has been created to ensure the functioning of a single market for services within the Union. After the sector is transferred to the single market for services (that is, starting from 01.01.2020) and the completion of the liberalization plan is completed, additional work will also be carried out on the Eurasian Economic Commission site as part of the single market working group and the corresponding subgroup specially created for these purposes.

However, representatives of the tourism community of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia are currently poorly informed about the ongoing unification processes. Including, tourism industry experts, announced by the group members, do not have complete information on the creation of the single market of services within the EAEU. In addition, the timing of the transition to a single market for services was previously postponed for years, and in 2020 the situation was complicated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Tourist services under the single market are:

a) the provision of travel tickets, accommodation and sale of package tours on a fee or contract basis;

b) organization and holding of integrated tours (transportation of passengers and baggage, accommodation, sightseeing), as well as services provided during the integrated tour.

It remains unclear how air transport will be regulated within the framework of a single market of services. There are giant airlines in Russia which can be brought to the markets of Belarus and Kazakhstan and this fact will radically change the current balance of power. It should be noted that the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Republic of Belarus and Armenia are not members of it. The joint tourism development program was adopted at the XV summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member countries. The program is aimed at intensifying tourist exchanges, increasing income received from this area by all Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states, creating new jobs, improving the level and quality of life of citizens.

**Conclusion.** The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is one of the main areas of cooperation within the EAEU including the tourism sector. The member-countries within the framework of the EAEU have a lot of work to bring the legislative framework in the field of tourism in accordance with the requirements set forth in the EAEU Agreement. Mutual cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Belarus in the tourism sector has much more prospects if it is carried out within the framework of the EAEU common market. After stopping the coronavirus pandemic there will be other challenges and the tourism isn't going to be as global as it was before. So such trend as regionalization will be in the future. And there are 2 conditions for the Eurasian market of touristic services to be successful: to harmonize legislation, differences in standardization within the Union; the Eurasian Union should be treated as one touristic region by foreign visitors.

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