

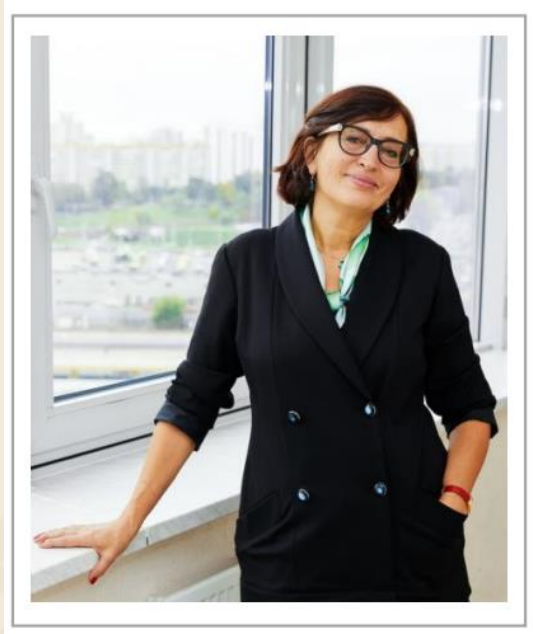
Role of Nongovernmental Organisations in Rural Tourism Development: Case from Eastern Europe

Dr. Valeria Klitsounova

Vice-president of GAN

Darya Pukas, MBA

Colorado State University



Valeria Klitsounova



Work experience:

- 2023 – present** - Global Agritourism network (since 2024 Vice-president)
- 1999 – 2024** - Associate professor of the Belarusian State University
- 2002 – 2023** - Chairwoman of the Board of the Belarusian Association “Country Escape”
- 1997 – 2011** - Director for excursion programs, Dudutky-Tours travel agency
- 1992 – 1997** - Director of private Museum of Rural Culture “Dudutky”

Education:

- 2013 – 2014** - Fulbright Scholarship in US, George Mason University (Nature and Culture Heritage Interpretation)
- 2000 – 2003** - Professional Training in the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK. Certificated Graduate in Marketing.
- 1989** - Upholding a thesis on environment issues (certified degree of Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences).
- 1976 – 1981** - Graduated from Belarusian State University, the Faculty of Geography.

Awards:

- 2011** - Awarded Bill Maynes Fellowship, Eurasia Foundation (Washington, USA).
- 2009** - Award “Person of the year” in the nomination “The best implementation of a business idea” (by version of Ministry of Economy and the magazine “Business”).

Publications:

Books about rural tourism, greenways, ecotourism clusters, experience economy, articles and ‘**Tourism Development in Post-Soviet Nations: From Communism to Capitalism Hardcover**’.





Main activities of rural tourism NGO's

- Represent and lobby interests of rural tourism providers.
 - Promote rural tourism among different stakeholders (local population, authorities, media, social media, travel agencies, experts, etc.).
 - Educate of rural tourism providers (trainings, seminars, webinars, educational tours, festivals, conferences, tourism fairs, open doors day, etc.).
 - Develop Rural tourism product through innovations, creativities, self identities, environmental friendliness, accessibility, etc.
 - Provide quality, standards, certification in rural tourism.
 - Do marketing (websites, social media, magazines, professional fairs, press tours, mailing, etc.), international projects .
 - Develop cooperation, networking, teambuilding.
- 




Different institutional levels of NGO's in rural tourism

1. **Global institutional level** (Global Agritourism Network - www.globalagritourismnetwork.org).
 2. **Interregional level** (Eurogite – European Federation of rural tourism, 28 countries).
 3. **National institutional level** (Rural/Agritourism national associations in independent countries).
 4. **Regional institutional level** (different tourism clusters (Hungary, Belarus, Estonia, Romania, Ukraine, etc.), greenways (Belarus, Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia, etc.), thematic routes (all countries)).
 5. **Local institutional level** (thematic villages (Poland, Ukraine), eco museums (Poland, Czechia, Belarus), local tourism public councils (Russia), local tourism activity groups (Poland), festivals).
- 

National Rural tourism Associations (National institutional level)

- Latvian Country Tourism Association “Lauku Celotajs”, 1993.
- Polish Federation of Rural Tourism “Guest Farms”, 1996.
- Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine, 1996.
- Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia, 1997.
- Lithuania Association of Rural Tourism, 1997.
- The National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism in Moldova, 2000.
- **Belarusian Association of Agro- and Ecotourism, 2002-2022.**
- Estonian Rural tourism association- Eesti Maaturism, 2002.
- Rural Tour - European Federation of Rural Tourism, 2004.
- National Association of Rural and Ecotourism of Russia, 2013.
- Kazakh Association of Agro- and Rural Tourism, 2019.
- Association of Agritourism Albania, 2022.
- Azerbaijan Agritourism Association, 2023.





Belarusian Association of Agro and Ecotourism

“Country Escape” is non-profit organization established in 2002

Our goal is to develop the economic and social activity of rural
population through tourism

500 members

40 international projects

1000 seminars, trainings,
webinars

100 education and promotional
materials

15 international conferences

10 greenways

5 tourism clusters



History of BACE for 20 years (typical for most Eastern European countries)



- We have united people through media and word of mouth officially registered - Belarusian Association Country Escape (BACE), 2002
- We have organised the First Agritourism Conference with participation of international experts, 2002
- Developed together with governmental entities special law - Decree 318 of President about Agritourism development
- Introduced together with Agroprombank special loan program for agritourism providers
- Developed educational program (**Laboratory of Rural tourism**) for different levels (basic, advanced, special topics)
- Develop standards and certification system for rural tourism based on European experience



History of BACE for 20 years (typical for most Eastern European countries)



- Developed regional tourism products based on local traditions (regional tourism clusters, greenways, festivals, touristic village, etc.).
- Realised 40 projects and set up partnership with international rural tourism organisations.
- Realised active marketing campaign based on integrated marketing communication concept.
- Issued 20 annual magazines, regular quoter newsletters, our own Youtube Channel, 15 international agritourism conferences, websites, instagram, Facebook page, etc.
- Introduced different innovations and inspiring cases to our stakeholders.
- Created brand “Belarus is a rural tourism country”.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How did you start this organization?
2. How many people worked for the organization?
3. What was the structure of organization?
4. What was the budget for starting?
5. How would you manage to survive for 20 years!



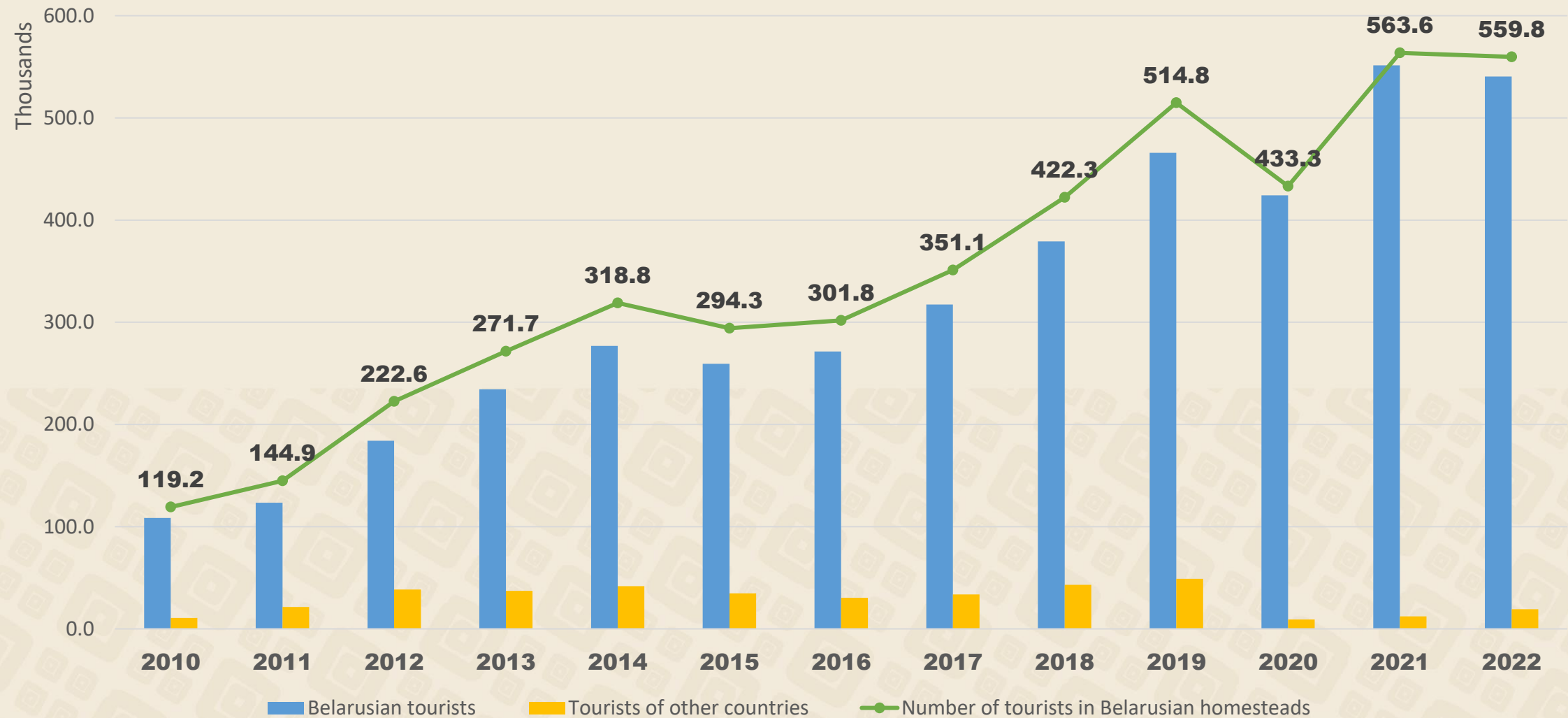
Where did funding come from?

1. Membership fee
2. Grants
3. International projects
4. Volunteers work
5. Inkind
6. Donations
7. Personal savings



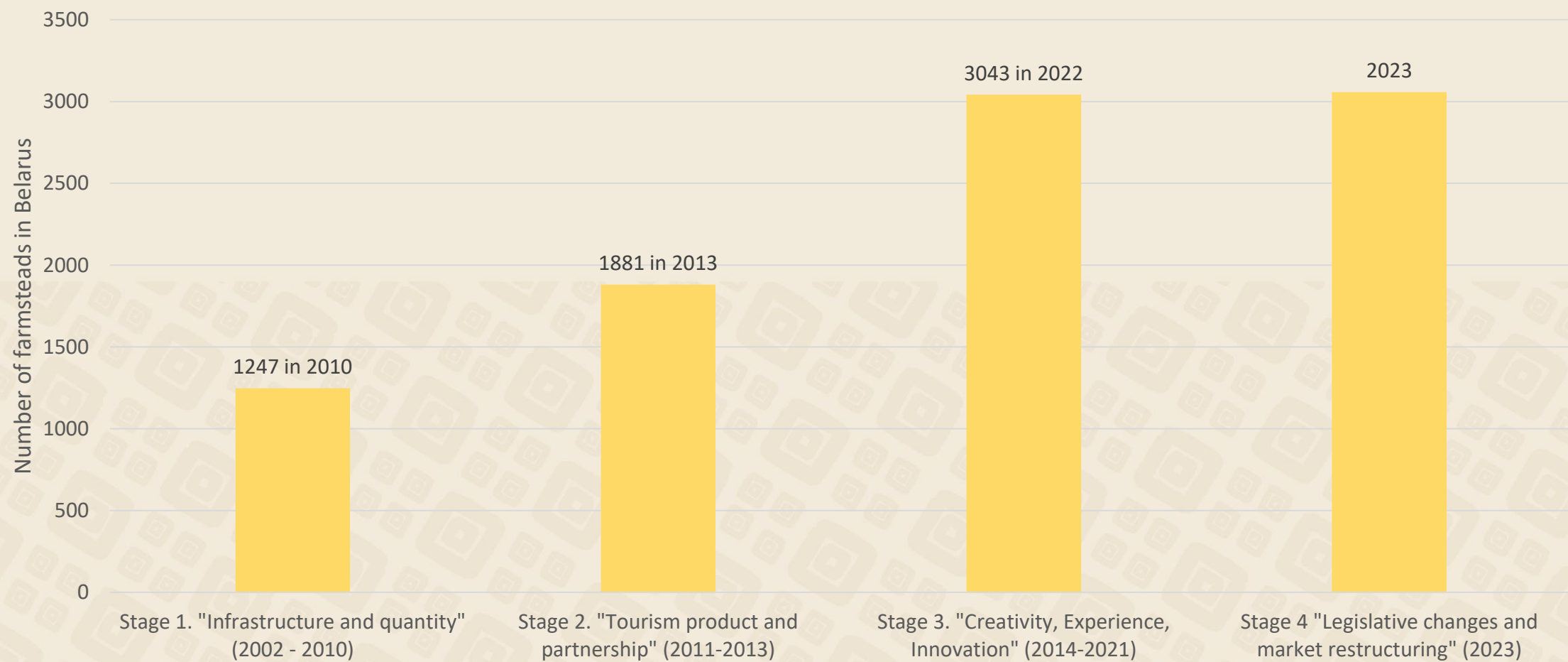
Dynamics of homesteads growth

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Brest region | 4 | 32 | 75 | 124 | 151 | 178 | 199 | 253 | 296 | 346 | 343 | 368 | 388 | 423 | 434 | 462 | 429 |
| Vitebsk region | 5 | 50 | 157 | 222 | 322 | 359 | 401 | 449 | 502 | 605 | 606 | 609 | 601 | 647 | 670 | 732 | 699 |
| Gomel region | 5 | 11 | 31 | 60 | 131 | 332 | 358 | 289 | 228 | 196 | 180 | 161 | 156 | 171 | 182 | 206 | 188 |
| Grodno region | 11 | 33 | 70 | 181 | 180 | 185 | 229 | 246 | 281 | 303 | 324 | 327 | 356 | 399 | 433 | 455 | 447 |
| Minsk region | 7 | 48 | 125 | 214 | 255 | 304 | 412 | 482 | 541 | 597 | 639 | 662 | 763 | 891 | 972 | 1054 | 1056 |
| Mogilev region | 2 | 14 | 16 | 75 | 208 | 218 | 176 | 162 | 189 | 216 | 187 | 192 | 209 | 229 | 245 | 245 | 224 |
| Total | 34 | 188 | 474 | 884 | 1247 | 1576 | 1775 | 1881 | 2037 | 2263 | 2279 | 2317 | 2473 | 2760 | 2936 | 3150 | 3043 |



Number of tourists in Belarusian homesteads

Main stages of rural tourism development in Belarus





Belarus took the first place in the category "Rural Tourism" according to the results of the annual voting conducted by the National Geographic Traveler Awards in 2016,2018



Has been canceled because of COVID-19

UNWTO FORUM ON TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
BUILDING BETTER LIVES FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

May 10-13, 2020

The main trends in Belarusian rural tourism



Creativity and innovation



Youth participation



Ecological safety



Accessibility

The main trends in Belarusian rural tourism



Gastronomy



Cooperation with tour operators



Thematic festivals



Selling of farm products through farmsteads and in-house production

Greenways as a regional institutional level of NGOs

How we understand Greenways in Belarus?

Greenways are heritage trails leading along green corridors - rivers, historic trade routes, natural corridors managed together with local people to protect their ecological function, bring tourism and recreational activities and promote healthy lifestyle and non-motorized transport means.

Greenways act as a catalyst for promoting sustainable development, conservation of resources and provide economic benefits for rural communities through increasing livelihood chances.

Five necessary Greenways elements

- “Backbone trail” for non-motorized transport;
- Network of different thematic local trail/loops, belong to backbone trail;
- Eco-tourism product based on local resources (natural and cultural heritage);
- Partnership in region and travel coordinator;
- Local heritage initiatives.

Each Greenway has its own identification system including **name and logo**.

ЗЯЛЕНЬЯ ШЛЯХІ БЕЛАРУСІ
ЗЕЛЕНЬЕ МАРШРУТЫ БЕЛАРУСІ
GREENWAYS IN BELARUS



Greenway “Volozhin Routs”

- based on informal networking between friends, relatives, neighbors and partners,
- initiated by group of 20 active people - homestay owners, craftsmen, farmers, historians, representative of nature resorts, artist, musicians,
- based on fundamental concept of greenways when tourists are moving through the landscape by non-motorise transport (walking, bicycling, paddling, horse riding), along leaner routs and visit sites of natural, historic and cultural significance, farmers and villagers,
- planed to design the ideal visitor experience which help to touch all visitor’s senses in a deep and memorable way through interpretation,
- formalisation and growth of this cluster were connected with recently created NGO «Cooperative of Rural tourism development»,
- the destination has received 60 000 tourists including 230 organised groups last year.





МИРПЧЕЛ.БЕЛ



ВАЛОЖЫНСКАЯ
ГАСЦІНЦЫ



Greenway 'Vilohynskye routs' (memorabilia)



Some cases about rural tourism providers development

1. From farming to agritourism

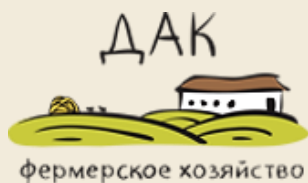
Story of farm “Viliya Agro”

- created in 2003
- 1760 ha, 450 cows, 500 sheep,
- two shops for selling their products,
- mini Zoo,
- big guesthouse,
- festivals and other events,
- culinary master classes
- thematic tours, seminars, etc.



Construction of farmstead





2. Adaptation farm for tourists

Goat's Farm "Lisa's farm":

800 goats, 100 ha of pasture, certified land, cheese production unit.



ДАК
фермерское хозяйство

Мы производим
ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ЧИСТЫЕ ПРОДУКТЫ,
для здоровья и изысканного удовольствия
наших клиентов.

**Фермерские продукты
Для здоровья**

Козье молоко

Сыр
"Лизаветинский"
полутвердый

Сыр козий
"Лизаветинский"
в пряно-масляной
заливке

CERTIFICATE

dak.by



CERTIFICATE

Документальное подтверждение:
№ 14-0190-03

UA-BIO-108

MANDATOR: DAK, FARM ENTERPRISE, TIAVLOVO VILLAGE, DZERZHYNISK DISTRICT, MINSK REGION, 222722, REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
 Заказчик: К(Ф)Х «ДАК», д. Тiавлово, Дзержинский р-н, Минская обл., 222722, Республика Беларусь

OPERATOR: DAK, FARM ENTERPRISE, TIAVLOVO VILLAGE, DZERZHYNISK DISTRICT, MINSK REGION, 222722, REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
 Оператор: К(Ф)Х «ДАК», д. Тiавлово, Дзержинский р-н, Минская обл., 222722, Республика Беларусь

According to: EQUIVALENT EUROPEAN UNION ORGANIC PRODUCTION & PROCESSING STANDARD FOR THIRD COUNTRIES
 Согласно: СТАНДАРТУ ОРГАНИЧЕСКОГО ПРОИЗВОДСТВА И ПЕРЕРАБОТКИ ДЛЯ ТРЕТЬИХ СТРАН РАДИОЗНАЧНЫЙ СТАНДАРТУ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО СОЮЗА

The above mentioned Operator has submitted its activity under control of Organic Standard (OS). Hereby OS confirms that the declared operator was inspected and certified analogue to the control procedures as outlined in Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and Regulation (EC) No 853/2008 and that the below listed activities and products were found to be in compliance equivalent to the production rules defined in said Regulations. It is the certificate holder who is responsible for permanent compliance with the applicable requirements.

Деятельность вышеуказанного Оператора контролируется Органик Стандарт (ОС). Этот ОС подтверждает, что указанный Оператор был проинспектирован и сертифицирован согласно требованиям, изложенным в Регулации Совета (ЕС) № 834/2007 и Регулации Совета (ЕС) № 853/2008. Ниже перечисленная деятельность и продукция признаны такими, что соответствуют принципам производства, вышеуказанным Регулацией. Собственник сертификата ответственен за соблюдение соответствующих требований.

Certified Activity: Organic Agricultural Production
 Сертифицированная деятельность: Производство органической с.-х. продукции

Product Groups and Quality: / Вид продукции и качество:

| | |
|---|--|
| Plant and plant products ORGANIC : Продукция растениеводства ОРГАНИЧЕСКАЯ : | Pea, oats, radish(raphanus), alfalfa, cabbage, red beet, carrot Горох, овес, редька масличная, люцерна, капуста, свекла столовая, морковь |
| Plant and plant PRODUCTS IN-CONVERSION : Продукция растениеводства ПЕРЕХОДНОГО ПЕРИОДА : | Permanent grasses Многолетние травы |

*Products are considered organic in case they meet the food safety parameters in accordance with the sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary national legislation/ Продукция считается органической при условии соответствия показателям продовольственной безопасности и соответствия с законодательством: санитарно-гигиеническим, фитосанитарным и ветеринарным.

Date of inspection(s): 30.07.2014
 Дата инспекции(й): 30.07.2014

Date of issuing of Certificate: 17.09.2014
 Дата выдачи Сертификата: 17.09.2014

Validity: Сертификат действителен с 17.02.2016 по 17.02.2016

Данный Сертификат, оформленный и действительный по результатам ежегодной инспекции Органик Стандарт. Он может быть приостановлен, изменен или отозван в любой момент, если будут выявлены несоответствия вышеуказанному Стандарту. Данное подтверждение не может быть использовано как сертификат торгового соглашения.

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 WWW.ORGANICSTANDARD.COM.UA, OFFICE@ORGANICSTANDARD.COM.UA, TEL: 8(44)-200-62-16

3. From hospitality - to farming.

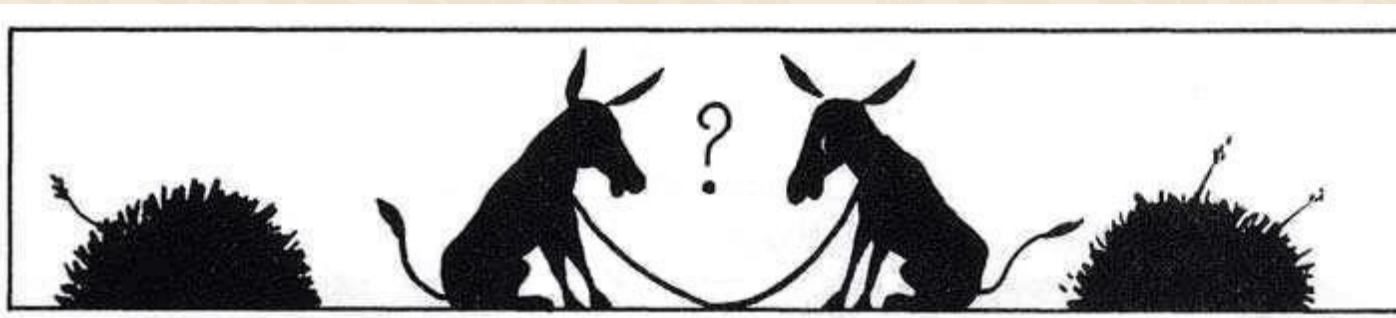
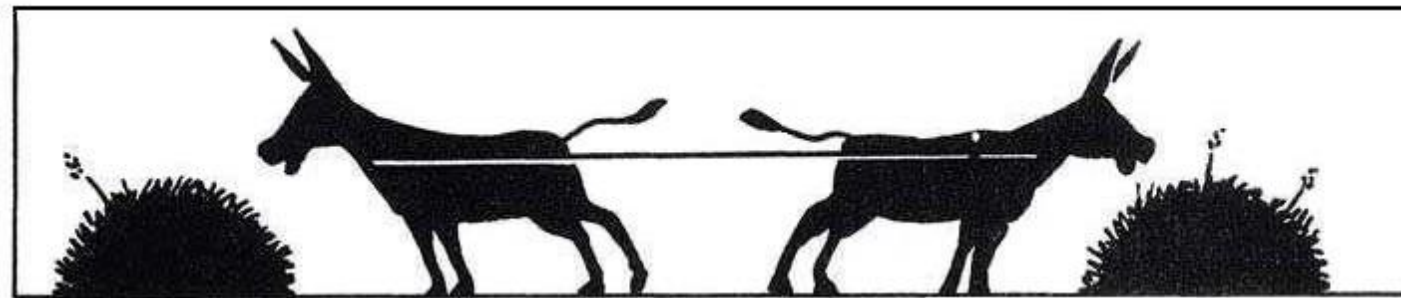
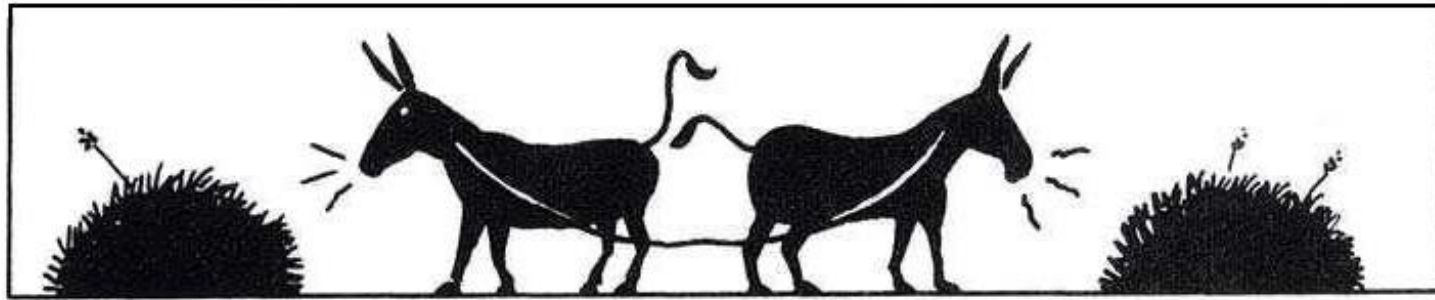
Farmstead Hanka

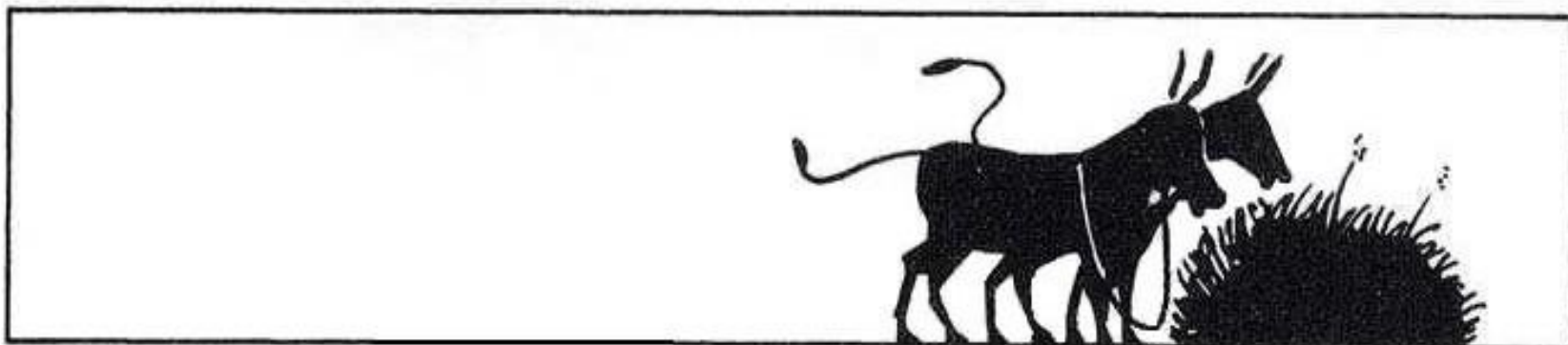
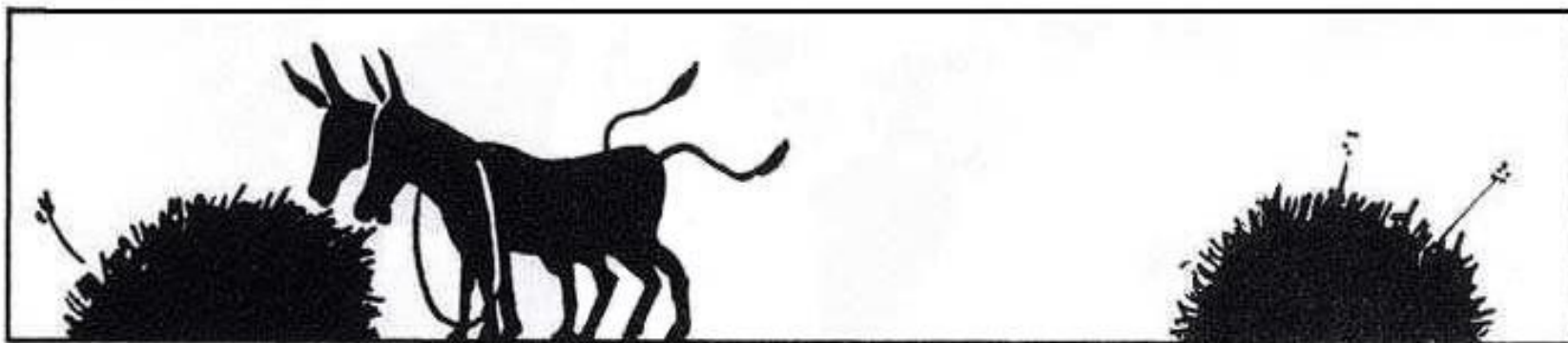
The owner moved from Minsk with his family. They started from lodging, wedding, puppet theatre, and later - bread making school, farming - cereals, pasture, grass land.





Typical problem when you work together





Partnership is the best!

THANK YOU



www.globalagritourismnetwork.org



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ABOUT ME



Work Experience

2016-2022 – Project Manager at Belarusian Association “Country Escape”

2018-2019 - Invited Professor at Belarusian State University

2021-2023 – Consultant for UNDP, US Forest Service Projects

2024– Marketing and Product Design Fellow at Grassroots Carbon

Education

2012-2017 – Belarusian State University, Management (minor in Tourism)

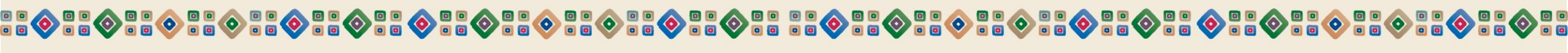
2017-2018 – Belarusian State University, MS in Economics and Management

2019-2020 – Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland (Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program, research on food tourism)

2023-2024 – Colorado State University, Impact MBA (Fulbright Foreign Student Program)



SOME FACTS ABOUT AGRITOURISM IN BELARUS

- Communities play a vital role in driving agritourism, often coming together to form informal organizations.
 - The rural lifestyle in Belarus is very traditional. While many rural dwellers are not farmers in the traditional sense, they often have small plots of land for personal use and self-sufficiency.
 - Tourism services provided at homestays are typically the primary source of income, with agriculture as a secondary contributor.
 - Limited financial support fosters creativity in the development of tourism services and products.
 - A strong private-public partnership supports the growth of the agritourism sector.
- 



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN FARMING, RURAL TOURISM AND CRAFTS

Project implemented by Belarusian Association of Agro- and Ecotourism
“Country Escape”





Who was the project aimed at?

Women in difficult financial situations living in rural areas.

Goals:

- Train project participants on different topics, including legislation, strategic planning, accounting, and promotion.
- Support participants in starting and developing their own businesses.
- Assist with the sale of their services or products.
- Attract customers through promotional activities.



Within the project we...



Educated **500**
women living in rural
area



Conducted **12**
seminars and
consulting sessions as
well as **12** webinars



Selected **50** best
business-initiatives
which received
financial support



Seminars and trainings



Study visit



Business-initiatives





ЖЕНЩИНЫ В ДЕЛЕ



Социальный проект
ПОДДЕРЖКА ЖЕНЩИН В ФЕРМЕРСТВЕ,
АГРОТУРИЗМЕ И РЕМЕСЛЕННОСТИ



Promotional booklet

ПОДДЕРЖКА ЖЕНЩИН В ФЕРМЕРСТВЕ, АГРОТУРИЗМЕ И РЕМЕСЛЕННОСТИ

Лариса БЫЦКО



Пружанский район

ИНИЦИАТИВА «СОЗДАНИЕ
ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОГО ПРОДУКТА
В ВИДЕ КУКОЛЬНОГО СПЕК-
ТАКЛЯ В ЖАНРЕ БАТЛЕЙКИ»



Хозяйка агроусадьбы «Стулы» – единственный официально прописанный житель деревни Стойлы Пружанского района. В этой деревне жил и работал мастер Николай Тарасюк, чьи деревянные скульптуры известны во всем мире. Они в свое время потрясли Ларису и определили сферу

ее интересов и специализацию усадьбы. Миссия усадьбы – сохранение и популяризация традиционной культуры. Личный девиз Ларисы – «Дакранёмся да каранёў!».

Изюминкой усадьбы является семейный театр в жанре батлейки с резными деревянными куклами в стиле Николая Тарасюка. Уже есть три постановки: классический спектакль в рождественский период «Царь Ирод», «Полесская батлейка» на западно-полесском диалекте, а также спектакль «Прытулак памяці» об истории деревни Стулы и Николая Тарасюка. Идея инициативы Ларисы – создание спектакля «Прыгоды ката Самі у Белавежской пушчы», который можно показывать на протяжении всего года для публики любых возрастов. Пьеса, которая будет доступно рассказывать о фауне Беловежской пушчи, уже готова. Для реализации за-

думанного куплена батлеечная «скрыня» и 14 кукол от народного мастера Беларуси Владимира Чиквина.

Помимо спектакля, Лариса создала эксклюзивный туристический продукт, в который входят экскурсия-квест по деревне Стойлы, мастер-класс по традиционным ремеслам, региональная кухня. Потенциальными клиентами усадьбы могут быть детские группы, организации, семьи, иностранные туристы и пр.

Контакты:

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д. Стойлы, д. 8

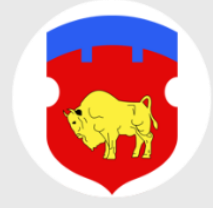
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Фейсбук: @agrasyadzibastuly

Инстаграм: @agrasiadziba_stuly





We are grieving people, we are baking thorny bread (folk song)



Lessons learned

- Don't be afraid to connect different stakeholders
- Local partnerships are essential.
- Select promotional tools and audience wisely.
- Maintain constant contact with project participants.
- Organize formal and informal networking activities among participants to ensure sustainable results after the project ends.

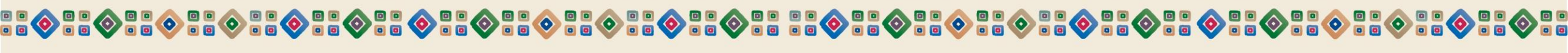


Local Tourism Cluster as a Tool for Promotion of Crafted and Ecological Products in Rural Area: Case from Belarus

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project "Cluster model "Navakolle": creating and promoting domestic, organic and craft products" was implemented in the frame of EU/UNDP Project "Support to Economic Development at the Local Level in the Republic of Belarus".

The main idea: Belarus has a rich cultural and natural heritage, preserved and promoted by local craftsmen, farmers, and homestay owners. But many of them face challenges such as isolation, lack of experience, or limited visibility. To address these issues and enhance their competitiveness, we brought together craftsmen, farmers, and homestay owners from a specific region, uniting them into a local cluster under a single brand.



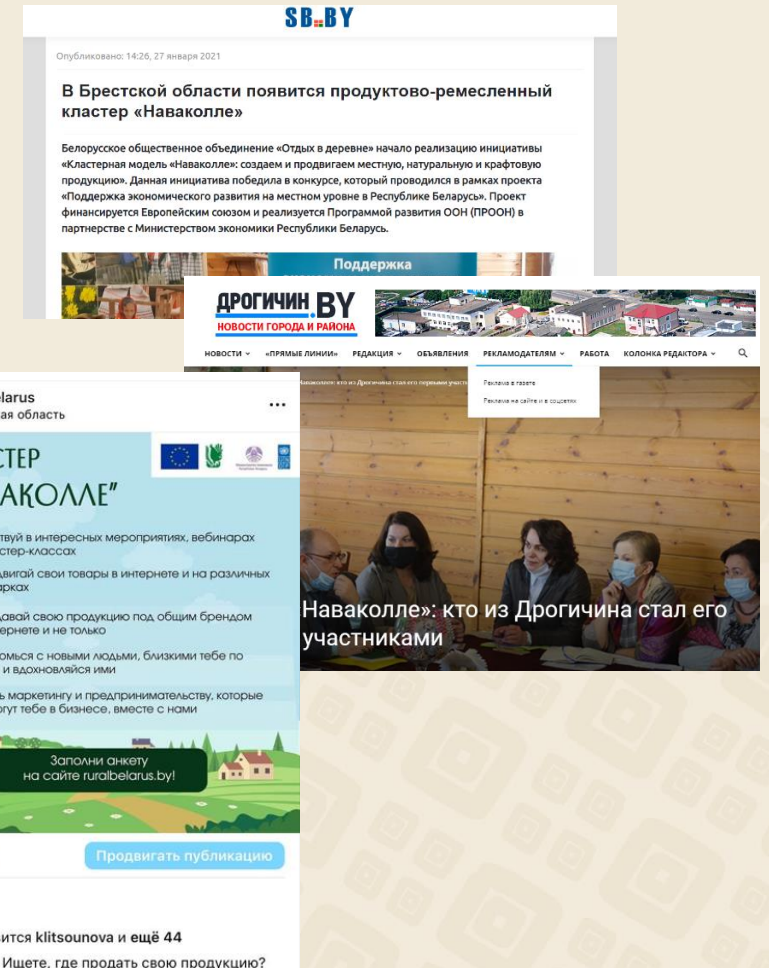
HOW WE FOUND CLUSTER MEMBERS

- Project announcements in local newspapers
- Publications in the national press
- Posts on project partners' websites and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook)

CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANTS:

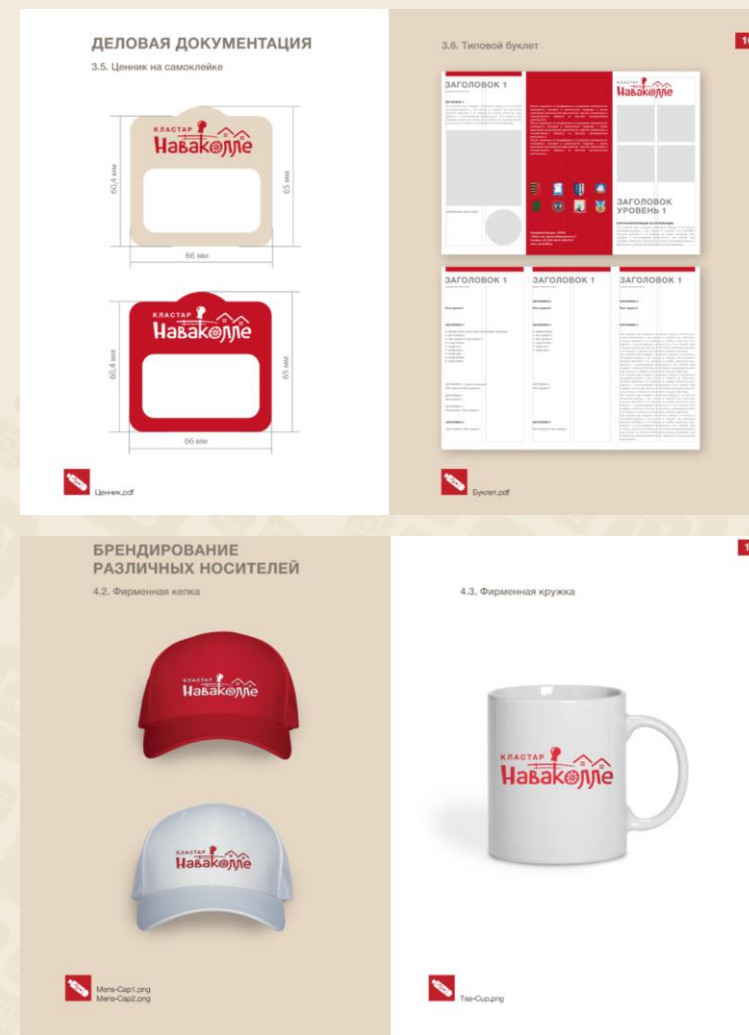
- locality
- craftiness
- environmental friendliness

This was the first experience of creating such a cluster in Belarus.



BRAND CONCEPT AND LOGO

- **Mission:** To deliver high-quality local craft products to customers quickly and efficiently through modern sales and promotion methods.
- **Vision:** To become the leading brand of craft products in Belarus, offering items from craftsmen and farmers in the Brest region through popular platforms and locations across the country.
- **Slogan:** Just one step from "Navakolle" products to your home.





EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

2 trainings, 10 webinars and study tour were conducted.

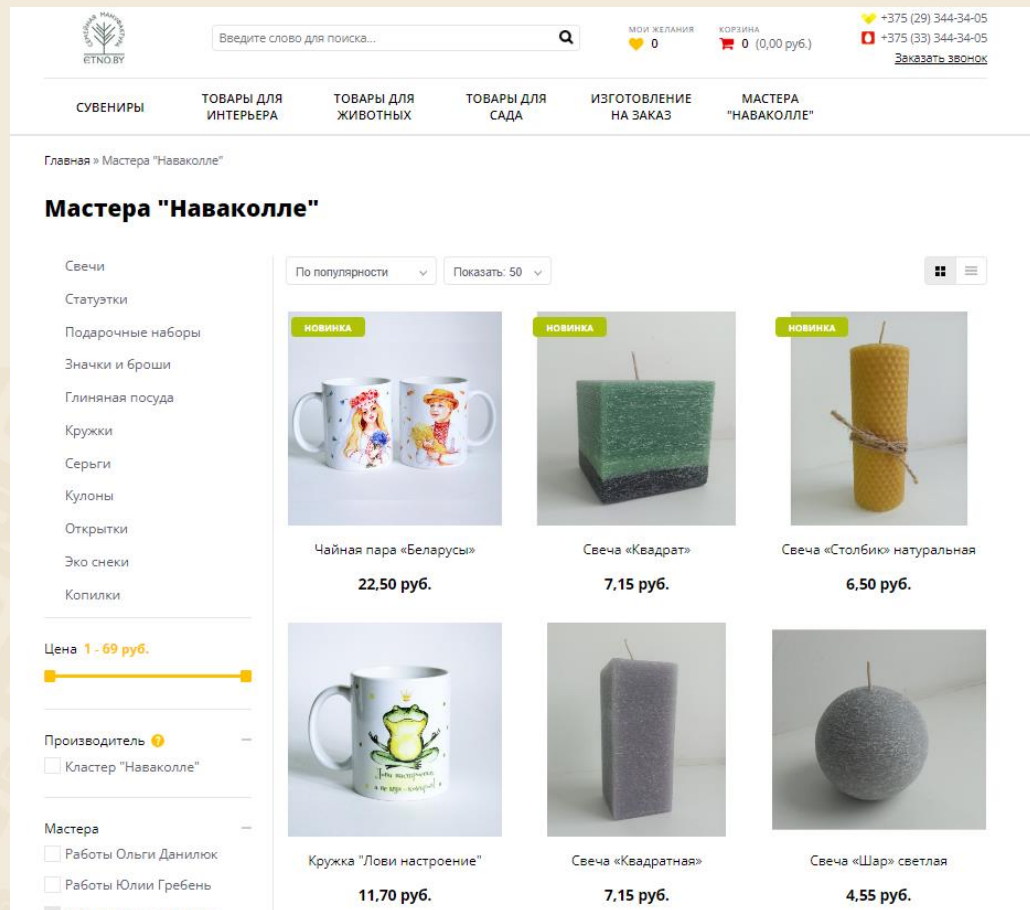
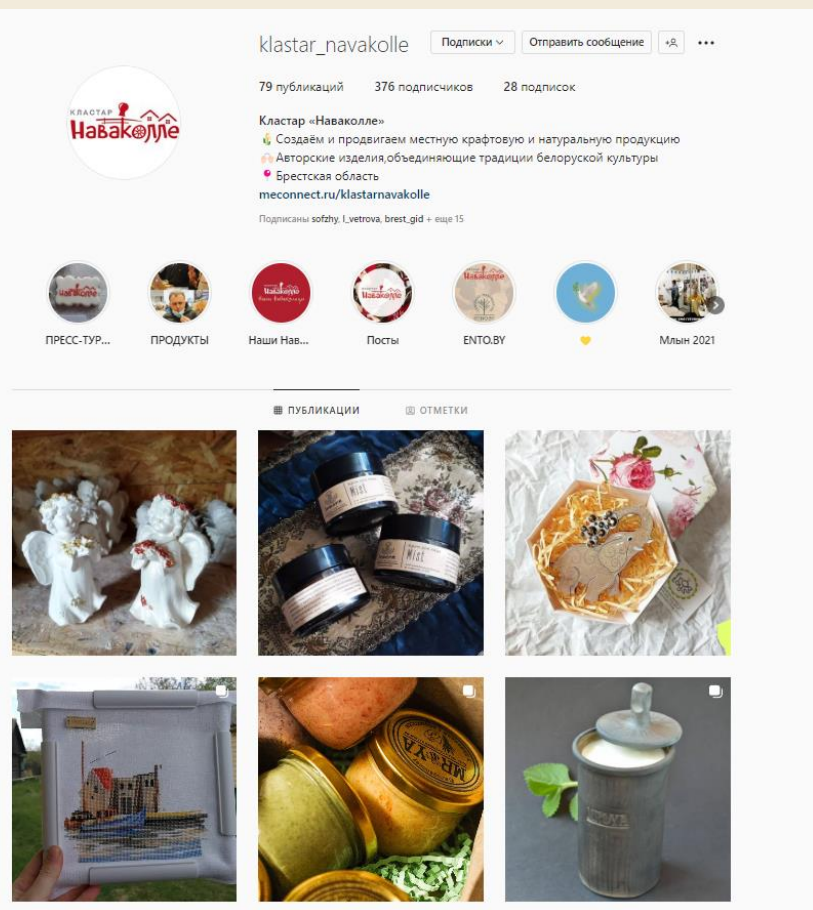


PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Cluster members were participated in one international festival, two craft fairs; press-tour was organized.



DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

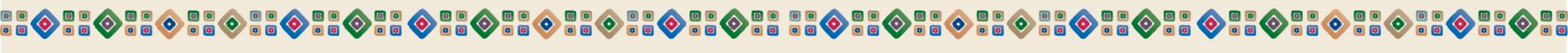


RESULTS

- The "Navakolle" cluster united 25 artisans, farmers, and homestay owners from the Brest region.
- A variety of products and services are now being sold.
- New distribution channels have been established.
- A national promotional campaign was organized.
- New collaborations between cluster members were formed and continue to thrive. A new tourist route, "Navakolle," has been created.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Involve cluster members consistently in all project activities.
 - Maintain formal and informal networking to ensure the effectiveness of any formal or informal structure as a cluster
 - Respond to educational needs by adapting if necessary.
 - Invest in building a strong brand - it's essential and worth the effort.
 - Balance the size of cluster/route carefully - too many members can cause initial chaos, while too few may lead to insufficient engagement.
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BELLA CULTURA: Preservation and Promotion of Culinary Heritage and Traditional Craft Skills



This programme is funded
by the European Union



LATVIA
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
2014-2020

3 COUNTRIES – SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT

Latvia



Lithuania



Belarus



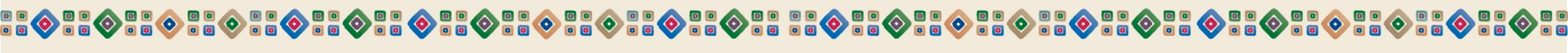


PROJECT BACKGROUND

OBJECTIVE:

To promote and preserve regional culinary heritage and craft traditions in the cross-border region, thereby strengthening regional identity and a sense of belonging, and positively affecting local economic activities

TARGET GROUPS AND FINAL BENEFICIARIES:

- Culinary heritage businesses, craftsmen
 - Tourism and heritage professionals, artisans
 - Tourists and local inhabitants
 - Culinary Heritage Center in Kraslava
 - Kraslava and Ludza municipalities
 - Anykščiai and Kupiškis District municipalities
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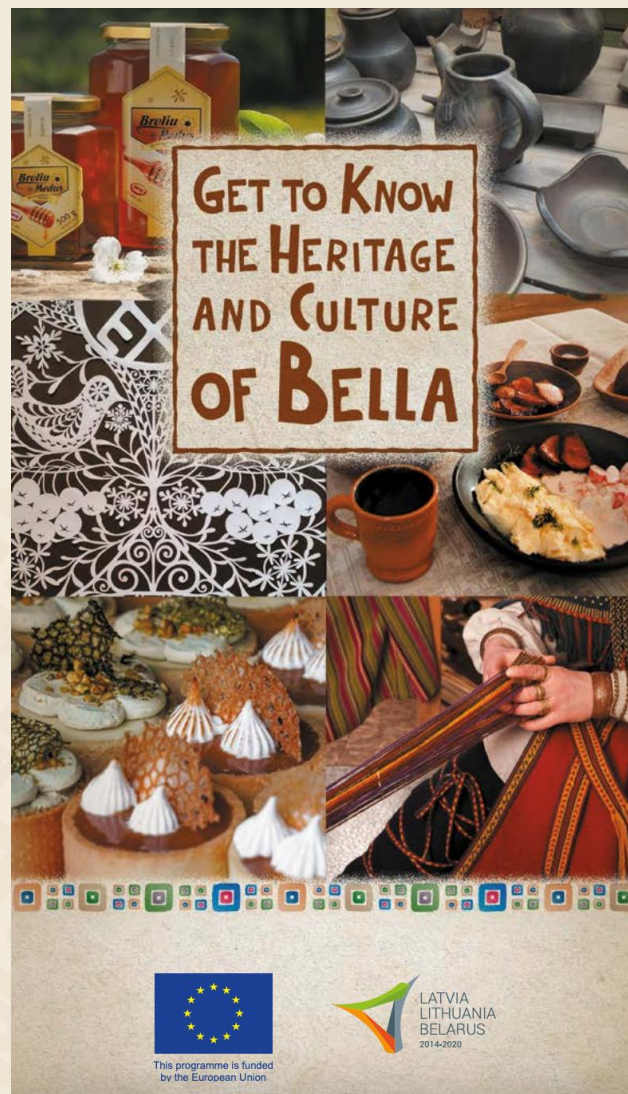
PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Publications: Get to Know the Heritage and Culture of Bella (brochure about craftsmen. Local producers, and homestays from project regions), Latgale Cookbook, Old Lithuanian Recipes, Belarusian Cookbook
- Promotion of culinary heritage, crafts, and tourism via media, social platforms, and clips
- Festivals: Cultural and Historical Festival in Lithuania, Culinary Heritage Festival in Latvia
- Study tours and training for craftsmen and culinary heritage businesses. Educational videos and workshops on cultural heritage and crafts.
- Renovation of workrooms (pottery, weaving, woodworking, culinary) | purchase of culinary equipment and ethnographic costumes for project areas' cultural centers.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES





The Magic of Vytsinanka

A Piece of Advice from the Craftswoman

It is convenient to have templates of future work during masterclasses. This helps to understand how to fold paper, how to make a cut and how to use scissors. Please note that your scissors must slide on paper instead of biting it.

Elena Khodikova

THE HOBBY THAT HAS BECOME A PROFESSION

Elena Khodikova is a member of the Union of Folk Artists of Belarus, a member of the folk club Rodnasts at Polotsk Regional Centre of Crafts and National Culture and a researcher at the National Polotsk Historical and Cultural Museum and Reserve.

Elena Khodikova became interested in vytsinanka at school, in the 90s when only a few artists were engaged in this craft. Vytsinanka is a kind of magic. When you start cutting, you forget about the time. Most often the artist cuts from black paper. It makes her works more graphic. Elena's work is characterized by scenes depicting the Tree of Life, birds and flowers, such folk festivals as Kupalye, Gukanne vlasna and Kalyada. Elena carved out architectural monuments of Polotsk. The image of St. Euphrosyne and four main temples became her diploma work at the university. The artist especially loves images of birds and uses images of people in national costumes. There is a series of small vytsinankas created in a popular print style and dedicated to cats. Only scissors are not enough for the artist. Both a knife and a special cutter are used, because there are many thin and small details.

Ancient Musical Instruments and the Museum of Shmakovka

THE MUSICIAN AND HIS ENSEMBLE

Folk music accompanies Gunars Igaunis throughout his life. Gunars, his wife and three daughters are a real musical ensemble. Each of them is good at playing three or four musical instruments. The family is often invited to local and international musical projects, as well as to private events. Gunars is a certified music teacher, a graduate of the Latvian Academy of Music. His love of music and an appeal to local folklore prompted him to make the crucial decision: "There was a time when there were not enough musical instruments at school. I started making them myself". His first instruments were a metalophone, a xylophone, a kokle, and drums. "Every time I make or restore an instrument, I feel the joy of creation. It's very inspiring," the master notes.

Gunars Igaunis

THE MUSEUM OF ANCIENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The Balt Harmonia studio was established in 2007. You will find a wide range of old Latgalian handmade musical instruments here. Strings, percussion, and wind instruments include cymbals, xylophones, wooden flutes, rattles, bells, violins and many others. Each instrument is suitable for learning, for personal and professional use. Repair of musical instruments is possible upon request. The Igaunis family provides consultations and music lessons for schools, groups and individuals. The Museum of Ancient Musical Instruments was organized here later. The exposition includes more than 100 instruments: accordions, zithers, local kokles, balalajkas, harps, etc. Tourists will find a fascinating story about the instruments that have been played in Latvia for the last 150 years.

The Museum of Shmakovka (the local moonshine) was created at the other end of the same building in 2015.

Darya Pukas

THANK YOU



Darya Pukas



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