Experience of Belarusian State University in accessible tourism training and research

Natallia Barysenka-Klepach
Senior Lecturer
International Tourism Department

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Accessible tourism in Belarus
People with access needs
• There are more than 550,000 people with disabilities in Belarus (around 6% of the population)

• Around 1.9 bln people over 60 years

• Around 25% of adults are obese

No less than 1/3 of the population needs accessibility
Legislation

• The Constitution

• Act on the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities

• State Program on Social Protection and Promotion of Employment for 2016 – 2020

• Around 20 technical regulatory acts in the field of architecture and construction

• Task 2. Creating conditions for the integration of people with disabilities in all spheres of society:

17. Taking measures to create conditions and increase the participation of persons with disabilities in tourism, sports and leisure activities
Challenge #1: Information

Very little or no information about accessible travel
Challenge #2: Infrastructure
Infrastructure & Services

• The percentage of accessible rooms in Minsk hotels is 1,5%

• In sanatoriums – 1,6% of rooms are accessible for wheelchair users

• Three sanatorium «Belaja Vezha» (Brest region), «Jaselda» (Brest region) and «Vjazhuti» (Minsk region).
Infrastructure & Services

• **423 rooms in sanatoriums** for people using wheelchair
  (in 2016 - 273 rooms, in 2010 - 40)

• **63 rooms in 30 Minsk hotels in 2019**
  (in 2016 - 55 rooms в 24 hotels)

• **185 rooms** in hotels all over Belarus (2017)

• Around **20 farmsteads** provide some accessible services

• **3-4 travel agencies**
The list of travel agencies, farmsteads and hotels that provide services for people with disabilities

64% Hotels
16% Travel agencies
15% Farmsteads
5% Sanatorium
Most widespread services (%)

- Accommodation in adapted rooms: 40.4%
- Accommodation in standard rooms: 17.4%
- Excursions and tours for people with disabilities: 11.5%
- Accommodation with service dogs: 2.3%
- Ippotherapy: 1.8%
- Dietary menu: 1.8%
Transport accessibility

National Airport ‘Minsk’ is quite accessible
Belarusian Railway

- 30 railway stations
- 20 railway carriages
- 25 trains
Accessible tourism projects

- ‘Volozhin without barriers’ project
- Financially supported by the EU
- Involved 4 partners (Local authorities and NGOs)
Accessible rural tourism

• 5 farmsteads received small grants for developing accessible tourism products
Accessible eco-trail

- 1.3 km long
- 9 interactive stands
- 6 tactile maps
- 3 accessible shelters
- 3 accessible toilets
Challenge #3: Tourism providers

Believe that accessibility makes tourist sites more attractive to visitors

BUT

Only 34.7% are ready to invest in accessibility
Key barriers

- Lack of finances for improvement (81.8%)
- Lack of information about the requirements of people with access needs (71.3%)
- Lack of barrier-free environment (69.9%)
Challenge #4: Training

- Non-governmental organizations
- Belarusian State University
Belarusian State University

• Main Belarusian University
• 100 year old
• 27 faculties
• 28.5 thousands of students
Faculty of International Relations

• International Tourism Department
  – one of 13 departments
• 22 years old
• Bachelor and Master’s programs in tourism and event-management
ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Training
- Bachelor program
  - Accessible tourism: practice and solutions
- Master program
  - Making events accessible for all

Research
- Student research laboratory
- Individual research
  - Cooperation with NGO's and public institutions
Accessible tourism: practice and solutions

• Since 2016
• In frames of bachelor program in International tourism management
• The first such discipline at the level of higher education in Belarus
• More than 200 students went though this course at the moment
Practical training within the course
Practical training within the course
«Making events accessible for all»

• Since 2019

• In terms of Master’s Program in Event Management

• 45 students went though this course at the moment
Student Research Laboratory
«Innovative technologies in tourism»

• Works since 2013

• Since 2016 students are actively involved in accessible tourism research

• In average 10-15 students are involved yearly

• Was acknowledged as one of the best student research laboratories in BSU
Activities of the Student Research Laboratory

• Creation of the video "Tourism for All"

• Participation in annual Accessibility Week organized by disability NGO’s

• Organization and participation in various events
  (conferences, round tables, discussions, meetings with experts in the field of accessible tourism, etc.)
Research areas

• Accessibility assessment of tourist sites in partnership with the "Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (NGO)

• Readiness of Belarusian tourism market to provide accessibility

• Economic impact of accessible tourism

• Access to information about cultural events and services for people with disabilities in the national Internet segment
Independent monitoring of accessibility

2014
Before the World Hockey Championship

2016
Minsk tourism infrastructure

2018
Accessibility of event venues

2019
II European Games

In general around 15% of tourist sites and infrastructure have basic level of accessibility
Main achievements of BSU

• Raising awareness of various tourism stakeholders (research community, representatives of governmental institutions, tourism providers) about accessibility and inclusion

• Training for future specialists in tourism and event-management

• Proposals on improvement of tourism legislation

• Cooperation with key disability NGOs in Belarus

• Ministry of sports and tourism contacts us when they organize events dedicated to accessible tourism
Thank you for your attention!

Natallia Barysenka-Klepach

E-mail: barysenka@bsu.by, n_borisenko@mail.ru