

Секция 6.

The world in the 21 century: Tourism and Hospitality Issues

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PRESERVATION OF CASTLES IN BELARUS: A WHIM OR NECESSITY?

Belarus is the country of castles and palaces. In old days travellers gave our country such name as one could see a castle every 15 or 30 km. According to historians, in different periods of times 150 castles were built within the Belarusian territory. Some of the oldest buildings date from the Middle Ages. Influences of both eastern and western cultures are reflected in the diverse architectural styles of Belarusian churches, castles, palaces and fortresses.

Throughout its history, Belarus was the scene of many destructive wars, which left their traces on the walls of the castles. Some of them were totally ruined. But despite the turbulent history of destruction, many architectural treasures and attractions of Belarus have survived to tell the history of this fascinating country. Now most of the “survivors” are in a bad state and there is a question what to do with them.

In January 2012, the Belarusian Council of Ministers approved the development programme “Castles of Belarus” for 2012-2018 (SB, 15.01.2012). The programme stimulates the revival and preservation of historical and cultural heritage of Belarus, including restoration, conservation and exposition of 38 castles. 131 billion rubles are allocated for this purpose.

The point is that within the scope of the provided money for the programme it is better to start restoring only 2-4 castles, those ones which are in satisfactory state and to preserve others without reconstruction. But restoration should be carried out in perfect way. In that case our country can even get an award and receive money. As far as conservation is concerned, it is cheaper, and it will prevent deterioration and won't destroy the authenticity of other castles.

Several key problems concerning the future of Belarusian castles can be highlighted: lack of financial resources, knowledge, qualified professionals and awareness of preserving cultural heritage.

Lack of money resources can be noticed from the government programme. Only 12,500 euro is provided to restore 38 castles. In comparison, the cost of Bratislava castle restoration in Slovakia will be 47 million euro. To solve this problem we should try to get grants from UNESCO and to attract foreign investors. Returning of castles to their historical owners can be another solution.

The knowledge in the sphere of restoration is a grave shortcoming. There are mistakes in the theory as well as in the practice. It can be seen by way of Mir and Nesvizh restoration example. In order to solve the problem several restoration principles should be observed: close acquaintance with the relations and history of the place, stress on the authenticity of both the complete and the details and search for preferably conservation (not reconstruction) methods. All the principles touch upon the level of restorers' professionalism.

Initial steps have been made towards professional development of restorers. In 2008 the school of restorers was founded in BNTU. Professional restorers should be involved in all projects of restoration and conservation.

Probably, one of the most important factors is the awareness of preserving cultural heritage. People should understand the real value of our culture. Pupils in school should have a subject "Our national heritage", because one can't understand the present without knowing the past. In that case national self-consciousness will be developed and the problem of money deficiency could be worked out. Some restoration funds can be created as it was done for the National library building.

Do Belarusian castles have any future? Nowadays they are in a critical state and have to be cared after. To do that everybody should understand their significance and their role in our culture, history and identity. The system of spiritual values should be formed and developed in order to raise national awareness. The castles are our past. And they must have future.