



Foreign ambassadors present their credentials to the President of Belarus

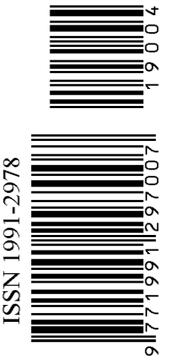


First National Forum on Sustainable Development brings together in Minsk more than 400 people



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Dancing pirouettes to the ecstatic cries of delighted fans

From January 21st-27th, Minsk has hosted the European Figure Skating Championship

→ **3, 11**



A successful mission

Foreign ambassadors present their credentials to the President of Belarus

By Vladimir Velikhov

Ten new ambassadors have begun their work in Belarus, with heads of the diplomatic missions of Austria, Armenia, Bahrain, Vietnam, Ghana, Canada, Tunisia, Montenegro, the Czech Republic and El-Salvador presenting their credentials to the President of Belarus. Welcoming the diplomats, the President spoke about a key principle of Belarusian foreign policy, "Belarus is ready for interaction with the West and East, the North and South if it's built on the principles of respect, sincerity and decency."

Considering its geographical location, the President noted that Minsk, like no where else in the world, is interested in stability, as well as non-conflict and efficient partnership, "Only through equal dialogue are stereotypes eliminated and misunderstandings destroyed."

Alexander Lukashenko noted key aspects of Belarusian policy, "Belarus has already assured its status as one of the initiators and active participants of integration processes within the Eurasian space. I'm deeply convinced that Minsk can become a place for a new large-scale dialogue on the security of the states in the Euro-Atlantic region and Eurasia. We'll initiate more peaceful and unifying co-operation projects. Of course, we'll also support all good initiatives from your side."

The President underlined the fact that the international situation is rapidly changing today, and it's often difficult to forecast, "The global economy is facing tougher competition. Under these complicated conditions all states are eager to work out a strategy of counteracting traditional and new challenges and surprises."

The President is confident that while working in Belarus, the diplomats will see that our country is undergoing a serious transformation, primarily in the economic area, "Attention is focused on liberalisation in this sphere, as well as on the creation of a favourable investment climate and conditions for doing business. We attract business from abroad and develop advanced technologies while also expanding sales markets for domestic goods which are known for their high quality. Belarus places no less importance on the development of education, science, medicine and sport. Human capital is an investment in the future of our state, a guarantee of its success and prosperity. We've accumulated significant experience in all of the abovementioned fields, and we can share this with our foreign friends."

As is traditional, the President briefly described Belarus' expectations regarding the development of relations with each country presented at the ceremony.

Consequent enhancement of the level and intensity of political contacts with Austria testifies to

a new quality of inter-state interaction, "We highly appreciate Vienna's efforts to decrease tension in Europe and worldwide, and to build bridges between key geopolitical players. In this regard, the approaches of our states are absolutely in sync. We're interested in the strengthening of beneficial and constructive co-operation, primarily, in trade and investments.

DIRECT SPEECH

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Meanwhile, Armenia was and remains a reliable partner for Minsk, with which it's connected by multifaceted collaboration.

An extremely open and pragmatic dialogue has been established between Belarus and the Czech Republic, while there are enough points of coincidence to become the foundation for expanding a bilateral agenda with Montenegro. "Belarusian tourists often choose Montenegro

as their vacation destination. We hope that your people will also like Belarus' wonderful nature, its cultural and historical legacy," noted the Head of State.

The President remarked that Belarus and Canada not only share a love for ice hockey but also maintain many years of friendship. "Canadians were among those who extended a helping hand to Belarus in difficult times after the Chernobyl accident. Your country was the first country in the West to fully abolish trade restrictions in relation to Belarus. This is a guarantee of the further positive development of co-operation and a very good example for some other partners. We're prepared for the expansion of fruitful and mutually beneficial collaboration with Canada across all areas," he added.

The closest dialogue with Vietnam at all levels will facilitate the efficient solution of acute problems of the bilateral agenda.

The country is keen on the comprehensive and large-scale development of ties with Bahrain. Moreover, we already have positive examples of co-operation with the countries of the Persian Gulf.

The African region is acquiring an ever more important meaning, with potash fertilisers and Belarusian metal goods being well known in the agricultural and construction branches of Ghana. Belarus sees good prospects for the significant expansion of interaction, firstly in industrial co-operation.

The President believes that it's necessary to activate contacts at all levels with Tunisia.

Belarus views El-Salvador as a promising partner in Central America, "We are interested in developing bilateral dialogue and enhancing trade-economic interaction while also expanding co-operation in agriculture, including the chemical industry. We know your country very well. But, unfortunately, relations between our countries are still underdeveloped. I think we'll be able to intensify them with your participation. We need a strong platform of states in America to establish collaboration with neighbouring countries."

The President sincerely wished the new ambassadors success in fulfilling their responsible diplomatic missions and emphasised, "I hope that your experience and professionalism will become a solid foundation for constructive interaction between our states, while practical results will soon follow. However, while solving strategic issues, don't miss an opportunity to learn more about Belarus, to be open to its beauty and uniqueness, to fully appreciate the warmth and hospitality of the nation, to learn about our culture and history and, of course, the modern way of life of our people. I'm confident that we'll find a common language with you. Your initiatives will be supported and through our joint efforts we'll be able to promote our relations to a higher level."

First place occupied in the trust rating of Russians

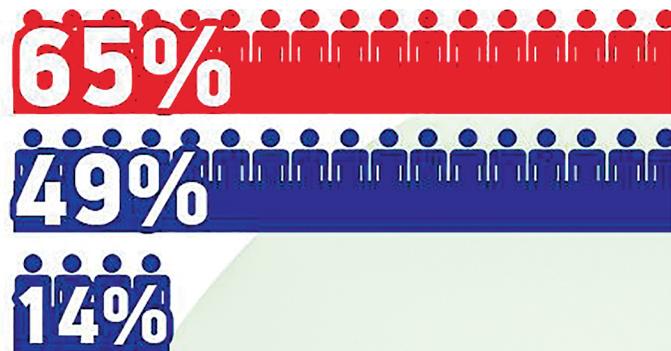
By Olga Korneeva

Alexander Lukashenko is most trusted state leader within the CIS, according to sociological poll conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, with results presented at press conference in Moscow

In the trust rating, Alexander Lukashenko occupies first place, with 65 percent of Russians polled giving their trust approval. He is followed by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev (with 49 percent). Russian trust in other CIS leaders is much lower: the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, enjoys just 14 percent, while the Pres-

ident of Armenia has 8 percent and Igor Dodon has 7 percent. The leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Georgia received fewer than 4 percent each.

The Russian Public Opinion Research Centre conducted its research by phone interview, polling 1,600 respondents of a random Russian sample.



It was a true holiday

By Vladimir Mikhailov

Belarus is enthusiastic about sport and is ready to stage the World Figure Skating Championship, notes Alexander Lukashenko at the closing ceremony of the 111th European Figure Skating Championship, during which more than a hundred figure skaters competed for medals on the ice of Minsk-Arena

The European Figure Skating Championship in Minsk ended with a beautiful gala-performance, with the closing ceremony attended by the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. The Head of State appeared on the ice after the figure skaters' outstanding performance and accompanied the winners of the tournament when they stood together to bid farewell to the spectators. The President was also wearing his ice skates. "Before appearing on the ice, I mainly thought about how brave I would need to be! Having been on ice for my whole life, taking my first steps unprotected — I found I was a little bit afraid and thought about how they rotate, jump and make such great pirouettes with so little clothing to protect them. I think it's figure skaters rather than ice hockey players who are the most courageous people," said the President.

He commented that amateurs, while observing the skaters at the European Championship in Minsk, often forgot about other large competitions: the Grand Slam tournament in Australia, the Biathlon World Cup event in Italy and the Bandy World Championship in Sweden. We've forgotten about everything else! What will happen when you leave? I believe that you Belarusians know what I mean by the atmosphere at Minsk-Arena and 'frenzied' state of Belarusian society this week. We've deserved praise (I'm speaking of



Selfie taken with the President

the organisers), we have proved that we can host even a world championship."

On behalf of the Belarusians and guests of the capital, the President thanked the International Skating Union for the privilege entrusted to Belarus to conduct the European Championship for the first time in its history.

"I'm hearing only positive comments, and this is again proving that we're able to do more. If you decide to organise here something even greater, I promise you won't regret it," assured the Head of State. The President also noted that the participants of the championship gave a wonderful spectacle to the Belarusian spectators, the whole of Europe and the world.

The Belarusian Head of State also ad-

ressed the judges, underlining their professionalism. "I'm grateful to the judges not just for their correct judgements. Everyone can make a mistake, plus or minus half a point, a tenth of the point — anything can happen. However, you haven't killed the heart of this competition. We saw the emotions, tragedies and rise of great athletes who have devoted their whole life to this sport. This is worth a great deal!"

Mr. Lukashenko also addressed words of gratitude to the coaches and other specialists. "This event wouldn't have been possible without them! Come again to Belarus! It's a good thing you arrived, allowing us to perform at the same high level," concluded the President.

The Head of State again warmly greeted and chatted with athletes, making several memorable photos with them. As a gift from the President, the prize winners of the event were each given a package of sweets.

The European Championship, held on the European continent since 1891, has been hosted by 24 countries already, with Switzerland enjoying the greatest number, at twenty. As far as cities are concerned, the European Figure Skating Championship was most often organised in Davos and Vienna, with ten times each. Over the whole history of these spectacular events, forty-nine European cities were given an opportunity to welcome this event, with Minsk now joining them.

Only good impressions are left behind

By Oleg Bogomazov

A gala performance, featuring the major stars of the competition, was the final highlight of the tournament on Minsk-Arena ice

Our country has hosted the European Figure Skating Championships for the first time. It's interesting to hear the feedback about it.

Experts have already voiced their first impressions; the Vice President of the International Skating Union, Alexander Lakemik, said "The European Championship in Minsk was well organised. Wonderful Minsk-Arena and crowded stands — what else do we need? I was pleased to see that the competitions were held in a friendly atmosphere. I think this tournament should be the impetus for the development of figure skating in Belarus."

The Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Belarusian Skating Union's Figure Skating Directorate, Alexander Morozov, commented, "Many services and specialists taking part in the preparation for the 2012 World Junior Figure Skating Championship were involved in the preparation for the European Championship. The tournament was held successfully, and this European Championship has once again proven that we're among the countries able to conduct international competitions in figure skating."

Athletes who struggled for European Figure Skating Championship medals on the Minsk-Arena ice also thanked



Everything was great!

the organisers of the event for their warm reception. Russian figure skaters, Alexandra Stepanova and Ivan Bukin, claiming silver medals, noted, "We were performing in the Minsk-Arena for the second time: first, at the World Junior Figure Skating Championship and now at the European Championship. Each time we arrive in Belarus we feel at home. It's very comfortable here and the audience is fabulous! The organisation of the event was wonderful, and we'd like to thank all those who took part in preparing the arena for the competitions. Everything was made very convenient and both main and training arenas boasted perfect ice. Moreover, the fans were simply superb!"

Fans who arrived in Minsk for the European Figure Skating Championship also leave Belarus with good impressions. Those keen on figure skating from Russia, Ukraine, Croatia, Germany and other states were often heard to comment that the tournament was so interesting and exciting that they would like to return to Minsk to visit the World Figure Skating Championship. According to the Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Belarusian Skating Union's Figure Skating Directorate, Alexander Morozov, there's a possibility that this event may also take place in our country, "Before the start of the European Championship we were cautiously hoping that if the competitions went well, we'd try to make

an application to the International Skating Union for the world championship. When the event began, we knew that this could become a reality and even representatives of the International Skating Union recommended that we apply. If Belarus is among the candidates bidding for the right to host the World Championship, it will be one more big step in the development of figure skating in our country."

Athletes share their impressions about European Figure Skating Championship in Minsk

Alexandra Boikova and Dmitry Kozlovsky of Russia:

We've greatly enjoyed performing in Minsk and the support from the stands was colossal. This European Championship will always remain in our memory. For us it was our debut success, bringing bronze medals.

Alexander Samarin of Russia:

I have the most glowing impression from this European Championship. I've enjoyed everything, including the wonderful arena and admirable audience.

Viveka Lindfors of Finland:

I will always remember this European Championship, since I earned my first high-level bronze award at the tournament. The organisation was wonderful and, of course, I enjoyed the fans. I will take back to Finland impressions of the tournament and of Belarus, as well as gifts from Minsk spectators.

FOCUS

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Legislation to benefit society

New bills from Parliament: swastika demonstrations will lead to criminal liability; mail is being digitised; and auditors are to gain a new collegial body

By Svetlana Isaenok

The House of Representatives' deputies and ministers have been discussing a vital bill, which aims to battle the propaganda of Nazism and extremism. The Minister for Internal Affairs, Igor Shunevich, notes that over the past three years, public demonstrations featuring fascist symbols have increased 15-fold. He comments on the shocking fact, saying, "Adherents of this ideology go beyond membership of gangs and having tattoos. They threaten public safety and private property."

Speaking of the need to protect the moral values of our country, he explains that Article 130 of the Criminal Code is being amended, to criminalise the deliberate promotion of Nazism and the incitement of racial or other social hatred. There are to be a number of changes to articles of the Administrative Code.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation has

initiated amendments to the Law 'On Postal Communication', supported by deputies. Andrey Yunitsyn, a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Fuel and Energy, Transport and Communications, helped develop the bill, telling us, "We need to keep up with new technologies. The document proposes legislation to cover an electronic national postal system, post office, and e-mail, ensuring the transfer, reception and storage of written correspondence by modern methods and means. The national information system, including e-mail, is being set up and needs an adequate legislative basis."

Audit companies operating in Belarus sometimes have difficulty in entering the international market so a bill is being introduced to apply international standards to Belarusian auditors. A state register of audit organisations is to be created, with all firms obliged to register. Failure to do so while continuing to provide ser-



vices will be viewed as illegal. Another important proposal is the creation of an audit chamber — a self-governing body of such organisations. The draft law was

adopted at the first reading but deputies are keen to involve those using such services, to represent their interests rather than solely those of audit companies.

Steady contact is made!

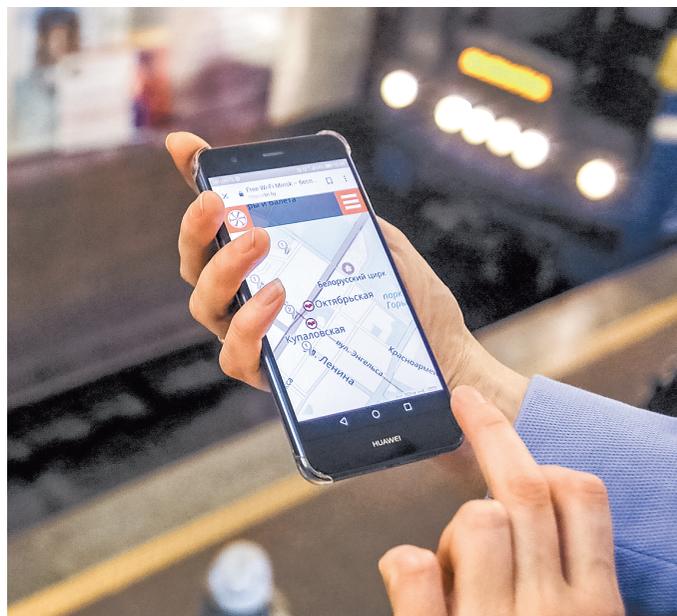
Where and when free Wi-Fi zones will appear in Minsk



By Olga Korneeva

The 2nd European Games soon to take place in Minsk are a significant stimulus to the development of the city. For example, widespread free access to the Internet is developing. It has been possible to connect to Wi-Fi on the platforms of Oktyabrskaya and Kupalovskaya metro stations since the end of the last summer, by the start of the Games, the oldest Internet provider will equip the platforms of the following metro stations: Petrovshchina, Uruchie, Ploshchad Lenina, Avtozavodskaya, Pervomaiskaya and Nemiga. By the end of 2019, Wi-Fi will also appear at Mogilevskaya, Kamennaya Gorka, Ploshchad Yakuba Kolasa and Akademiya Nauk stations.

A Free Wi-Fi public network currently exists in Minsk with more than 100 access points



available. It's easy to connect to it in many large trade centres. The good news is that access to the free Internet service will also be available near Svobody Square and the Sports Palace.

"We're going to significantly expand free Wi-Fi coverage in Minsk, while also considerably enhancing the level of servicing, with access points working in two ranges: 2.4GHz and 5GHz;

mobile devices receive the signal at this frequency," noted Director General of the Internet provider, Pavel Alexeenko. "We've also become an official provider of Free Wi-Fi during the 2nd European Games in Minsk. During the competitions, the Student Village will turn into the Village of Athletes to accommodate delegations and sportsmen. For them, the Internet will be free of charge. We've already laid fibre optic cable and both students and athletes will be able to use the Internet."

Belarus is an IT country and we should have a fast and efficient connection to the Internet with good technical support, stress specialists. In the Student Village, in campuses within the limits of Dzerzhinsky Avenue, Semashko Street, Loshitsa River and Chyurlenis Street, a high-speed Internet service will be provided, working at a speed of 100 Mbits.

These are not the only innovations. Students will be able to sign an agreement to join the Internet using a specially created web application, i.e. the younger generation now has no need to visit the office of the Internet provider, have a Wi-Fi router and sign an agreement. In the application, students will be able to select and change tariff plans, the speed of Internet and even the number of days of usage. Wi-Fi points will be installed across the whole area of the Student Village, providing seamless coverage, enabling students to always be online, even if they go to other rooms, across the whole area of the Village. It's a unique project which hasn't previously been implemented in the country.

P.S. Public Wi-Fi will soon appear in the National Library, with work on the project currently underway.

The global goal which should unite everyone

First National Forum on Sustainable Development brings together in Minsk more than 400 people

By Vasily Kharitonov

The national experience of Belarus dealing with the achievement of SDGs was presented and implementation of the national strategy for sustainable socio-economic development until 2030 was considered, as was the preparation of the national sustainable development strategy for the period to 2035. Special attention was paid to Belarus' realisation of the recommendations of UN experts on acceleration of the SDG achievement and interaction with international partners.

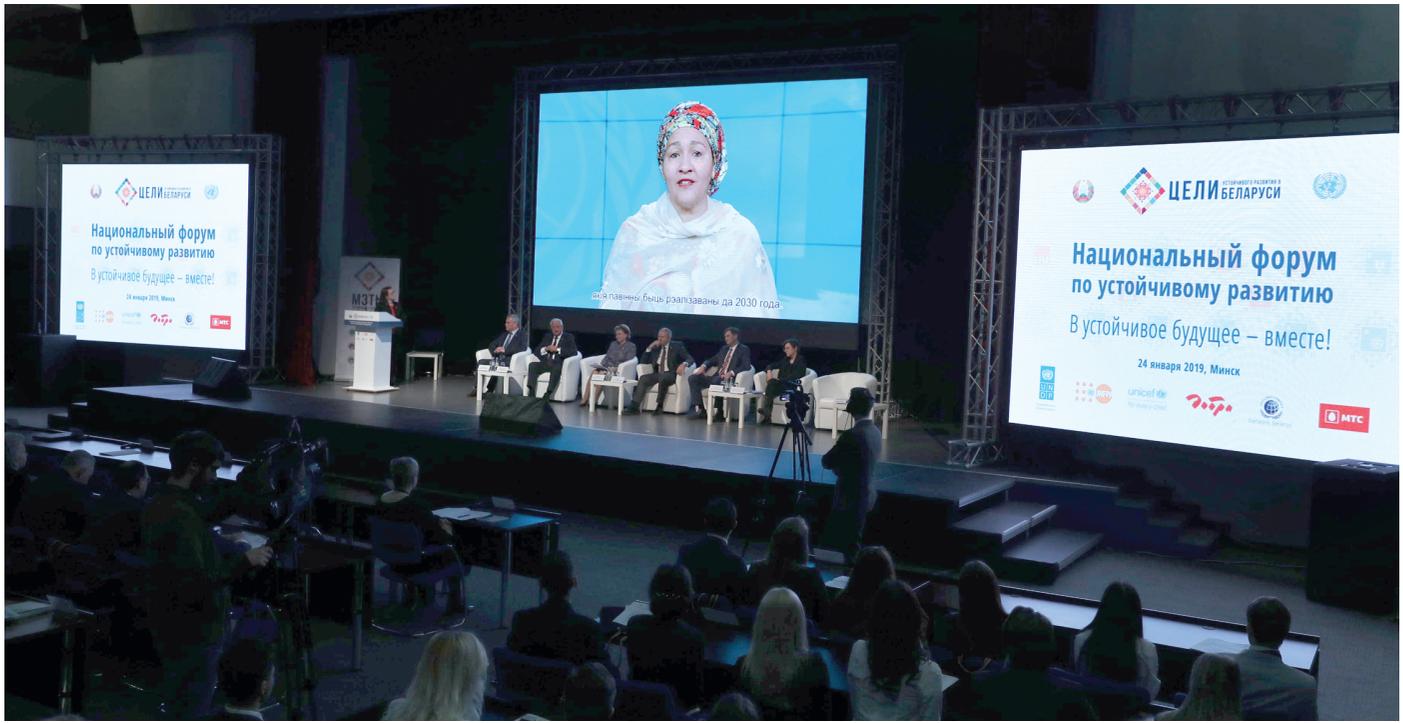
Tasks of the Agenda-2030 were set in Belarus at state level long before its adoption. This was mentioned in the speech by President Alexander Lukashenko, in which he set out details of the First National Forum on Sustainable Development.

"All achievements in the sphere of healthcare, education, food security, gender equality, a responsible attitude towards the environment and support to those on low incomes have been widely recognised and are an integral part of the global goals which assess the progress of our state," Mr. Lukashenko noted.

Belarus has achieved impressive results in implementing Agenda-2030, its work and experience, as well as adherence towards Sustainable Development Goals are highly appreciated at a global level, noted the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina J. Mohammed, in her video address at the forum.

Amina J. Mohammed underlined a high level of coordination between all stakeholders in drafting a report on the implementation of Agenda-2030 in Belarus, which was presented at the global forum in 2017. She particularly emphasised the country's ambitious programmes in developing an inclusive society and providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

She also admitted that ongoing exchange of best practices between the UN and national authorities, for example, in terms of improving care for sick and disabled people and preventing various forms of violence, is inspiring hope. Ms. Mohammed welcomed work on the national sustainable development strategy to 2035. "I'm confident that we will be able to provide comprehensive support to the country in shaping this strategy and implementing the country's vision at a global level. Belarus will continue to play an important role in the subsequent processes, including at a high level," said Amina J. Mohammed.



Video address of the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina J. Mohammed



Co-operation with Belarus is extremely important for the UN. The organisation is grateful to the Belarusian side for its decisive efforts in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Assistant Administrator of UNDP, and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, told journalists.

She thanked the Belarusian side for efforts in implementing SDGs and their nationalisation. Speaking about the First National Forum on Sustainable Development, the Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau noted that such events are vital as they serve as a dialogue platform for representatives of state authorities, science, civil society and the private sector. "For them, it's an opportunity to get together and discuss how to use SDGs for the population's benefit," noted Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. She added that, thanks to such forums, the awareness of citizens about SDGs and their meaning is increasing.

The national sustainable development strategy of Belarus' to 2035 will be completed by the end of 2019, said Belarus' PM, Sergei Rumas, at the Forum. "We made a plan of action to

ACCENT
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achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and integrated this work into the strategic and policy documents of the country. The national sustainable development strategy to 2035 will be drawn up this year. The document will be a link between the priorities of sustainable development at national level and global goals in this field," noted Mr. Rumas.

According to the PM, the issues of implementing the UN agenda and achieving SDGs are an important government priority and are a focus of the Council of Ministers. Work is currently underway on a number of strategic documents in Belarus. Their implementation will help promote the sustainable development of forestry and tourism while also harmonising national standards with international ones.

Belarus views Agenda-2030 as a unique basis for a new global policy in the sphere of sustainable development, said the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Mikhail Myasnikov. Mr. Myasnikov commented that national legislation is one of the conditions for the successful achievement of SDGs. The Belarusian Parliament will work on this in detail. In 2018, several laws aimed at achieving the SDGs were adopted, among them was the law on specially protected natural areas and for

the production and circulation of organic products. This work will be continued in 2019. The Parliament also plans to consider bills relating to healthcare and the rights of people with disabilities.

The unity of society is key for the sustainable development of Belarus, asserted the Chairman of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko. Civil peace in the country, as well as the absence of ethnic or religious conflicts are the main indicators of the unity of Belarusian society and its improved legal and economic culture. "For the further development of Belarus, it's essential to preserve the unity of the nation and people's trust in the authorities," he added. "Our priorities stay the same: ensuring stability, security and a high quality of life for Belarusians."

The National Coordinator for SDGs and Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic, Marianna Shchetkina, told journalists that the national architecture of managing the SDGs achievement process is praised by many countries. She emphasised that, in the work on the Sustainable Development Goals, three levels are recommended: global, national and regional. "As far as the international level is concerned, our country has already presented its report in 2017. As to the regional level, we held a large-scale conference involving participants from Europe and the CIS and put forward an initiative to set up a partner network of national coordinators to achieve the goals. The proposal was supported in Europe and by the UN. Now we are holding a national forum to review the work of the last one and a half years and outline plans for the future," noted Ms. Shchetkina. "We've come a long way in this time. We have set up a national SDGs reporting

platform and relevant tasks have been distributed among various government agencies. This structure has been praised by many, and we are glad to share our expertise and knowledge."

According to Ms. Shchetkina, any country can offer valuable experience in delivering the SDGs, because each has its own way to achieve them. If a country has already come up with efficient solutions, its partners will not have to reinvent the wheel. "Borders are quite notional today. We cannot divide air, water and other resources, like rivers, seas and the atmosphere — they are common to us all. Everyone wants to live in good conditions, be healthy and well-off, get an education and have a good job," she added.

It should be mentioned that, in 2015, the UN member states adopted the agenda in the sphere of sustainable development until 2030, which includes a list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These aim to liquidate poverty and hunger, to counteract inequality and injustice, to settle problems connected with climatic changes. Agenda-2030 is a comprehensive strategy of enhancing the quality of life of people, development and consumption without damage for future generations. All seventeen goals are adapted for Belarus. The National Coordinator for SDGs achievement is working on this, alongside the Council on Sustainable Development, which unites representatives of all state bodies, from both civil society and international organisations. These proposals will be reflected in the national sustainable development strategy for the period to 2035. Moreover, the programme documents and legal acts will also rely on the Agenda-2030 goals.



Suitcase mood, or the future for tourists

By Alexander Nesterov

In Belarus, the peak of inbound tourism will be in June: in early summer, Minsk will host the 2nd European Games. Primarily, guests from Russia are expected. The Chairman of the Board of the Republican Union of Tourism Industry — Filipp Guly — has recently returned from Moscow. He tells us that representatives of the tourist industry of the neighbouring country receive requests from residents of the Russian regions for tours lasting 5-7 days with a mandatory visit to the competition. Russians show the greatest interest in wrestling, swimming, badminton and cycling. The demand is great also because Belavia has ensured non-stop air communication with Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar, Nizhny Novgorod, Sochi, Kaliningrad, Kazan, Rostov-on-Don and Voronezh in advance. Flights to Murmansk are likely to be launched soon.

“We also see interest in the 2nd European Games from the countries of South-East Asia and China,” Mr. Guly notes. “Guests from there are mostly interested in badminton.”

Last year, the most popular countries for summer holidays among Belarusian tourists were Turkey, Egypt, Ukraine and Russia, according to the Tourism Department at the Sports and Tourism Ministry. Mean-

Experts speak of the main trends of the current tourist season



while, tourist companies add that, in the last two years, Belarusians have also been greatly interested in Georgia and Albania: these states are not expensive and require no visas.

“As regards early booking and demand, the situation is almost unchanged from 2018. At the same time, the flight programme has been increased, including from the regions,” the official notes.

The Belarusian tourist industry depends in part on major Russian and Ukrainian opera-

REFERENCE
In Belarus, the peak of inbound tourism, will be in June: in early summer, Minsk hosts 2nd European Games

tors. Mr. Guly has investigated the situation in Russia and admits: the demand for foreign holidays has not changed. “We will see new proposals as soon as the tour operators update their catalogues,” he says. “The insider information will appear on February 25th-26th but offers will be widely available on the eve of the world’s leading

tourism exhibition — *ITB Berlin 2019* — which will open on March 6th.”

The expert predicts that Turkish Cyprus is likely to enjoy popularity in the upcoming season. More flights to Italy are also expected.

Many have ambiguous memories of the 2018 season. Some, for example, were

worried by the cancellation of permits of the Russian Natalie Tours company and the default of obligations to clients buying permits with departures from Ukraine. To protect the rights of consumers, the Sports and Tourism Ministry initiated amendments to the law on tourism in autumn. “The planned changes in the Law on Tourism are global. We hope to prepare the document for the autumn session in Parliament,” says the Deputy Director of the Tourism Department and the Head of the Sports and Tourism Ministry’s Department for Planning and Organisation of Tourism Activities — Vitaly Gritsevich. “I think it will be repeatedly refined and edited afterwards.”

To avoid conflicts between travellers and travel agencies, industry professionals recommend people always comply with some simple rules. “Firstly, pay attention to both pictures and text in the booklet or on the website and what is written in the contract,” says Mr. Guly. “Secondly, use the services of time-tested companies and recommendations of other tourists. It is desirable, of course, that these are Belarusian economic entities, because it is difficult to influence businesses from neighbouring countries. Thirdly, carefully read the contract, especially the small print: often there are written conditions that infringe the rights of the client.”

From antiquity to modernity

By Vladimir Mikhailov

First book of the five-volume edition about the history of Belarusian statehood presented in Minsk

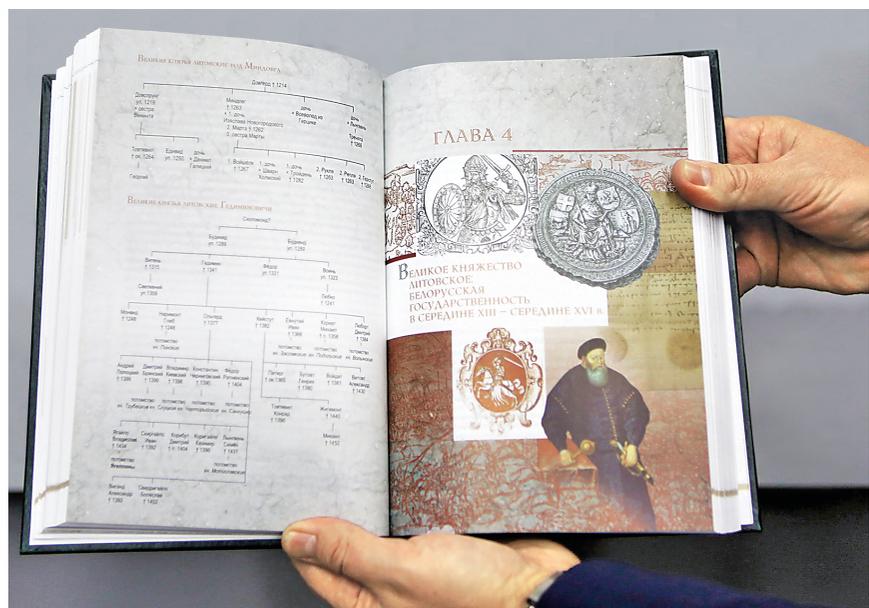
This is the publication of the first volume of the unique scientific work entitled *Belarusian Statehood History. Belarusian Statehood: From the Origins to the End of the 18th Century*. “Scholars of the History Institute at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, in co-operation with colleagues from

Belarusian universities, have long studied the history of Belarusian statehood. We describe this important process from an historical perspective during different periods. Today we’re launching the first volume of the generalised history of Belarusian statehood. It reflects the period from antiquity to the end of the 18th century,” explains Director of the History Institute, Vyacheslav Danilovich.

For the first time in historiography, Belarusian scientists have analysed the first settlements on Belarusian lands, tribal principalities, the first historical

forms of Belarusian statehood (Principality of Polotsk and Principality of Turov, Kievan Rus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rzecz Pospolita). Using extensive historical data and various sources, the authors analysed the status of the Belarusian lands in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Rzecz Pospolita and the fight of the Belarusian political elite for state sovereignty in the 16th-18th centuries.

“Historical materials show that, over more than a thousand years, Belarus has never been a colonial territory. Being part of the Kievan Rus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Rzecz Pospolita and the Russian Empire, the Belarusian ethnos was always an integral part of the state-forming process. We’ve managed to prove this and to cite the richest archaeological material, archives of European countries and Russia, in order to support this idea. We are not just a tolerant nation, we are people who, despite all the difficulties, preserved a native language, culture, traditions, customs and gained our statehood,” said Alexander Kovalenya, Academician-Secretary of the Department of Humanitarian Sciences and Arts at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.



Twenty-nine authors worked on the first volume, including scholars of the History Institute of NAS and a range of universities, including the Belarusian State University, Yanka Kupala Grodno State University, and Mogilev State University (named after Kuleshov). The book was published by the Belaruskaya Nauka Publishing House and is already available in bookstores.

All in all, five volumes will be published. The second volume will describe the period when the Belarusian lands

were part of the Russian Empire (late 18th century-early 20th century). It will be released soon. The third book will be dedicated to the history of the Belarusian statehood in 1917-1939, while the fourth describes the WWII period, the Great Patriotic War and post-war reconstruction. The fifth volume will describe events from 1954 to the present.

Plans are in place to translate the five-volume project about the history of Belarusian statehood into English, French and other languages.



Marvellous land of blue rivers and lakes or five reasons to go to Ushachi

By German Moskalenko

Plunge into the tears of angels

Officially, this town in the Vitebsk Region is about five hundred years old. However, Stone Age sites found near the villages of Putilkovich and Sloveni, as well as amazing boulders in the shape of crosses, which seem to grow out of the earth, testify to the ancient history of the land. There are around 1,500 burial mounds and cemeteries in surrounding fields and forests.

The majestic walls of three-hundred-year-old St. Veronica Roman Catholic Church tower above the village of Selishchi. The imposing church is equivalent in height to ten storeys and was once the heart of the Bernardine Monastery: now in ruins, though still impressive.

There are at least two hundred rivers and lakes in the district, said to be caused by angels' tears over the long-suffering fate of these places. One of the reservoirs, Sverzno, is believed to be sacred, boasting pure water in which no one has ever (apparently) drowned.



Reconstruction of the wedding rite

Visit the Partisan art gallery

During the war years, Ushachi was a hub of partisan activity. In autumn 1942, partisans liberated the district centre and restored Soviet power. The Ushachi Museum of People's Glory has much to tell its visitors about those heroic years,

via its Partisan Picture Gallery. Two soldiers, Nikolay Gutiev and Nikolay Obrinba, sketched battles and everyday life, also drawing caricatures of Hitler. In one battle, they captured a set of brushes and paints, allowing them to paint with oil, creating *Chapaev in Battle*, *Departure of Dubov's Brigade for the Task and Fight near Pyshno*.

The command even provided a house in which to display the works and these went to Moscow in 1943, by air, for exhibit in the Tretyakov Gallery. When a museum opened in Ushachi, the canvases were returned.

Learn how to break through walls

In the spring of 1944, fifteen partisan brigades were based in local forests. To pro-

tect the rear, the Nazis brought 60,000 of their soldiers to battle against 17,000 of the people's avengers: six SS divisions with tanks and aircraft. The huge Polotsk-Lepel partisan zone crumpled along the borders of the Matyryn fores (with an 8km perimeter) over the course of several weeks, becoming surrounded by the enemy.

On the night of May 5th, the commander of one partisan unit, Vladimir Lobanok, decided to breakthrough. Despite huge losses, they created a narrow gap in the enemy line and led out 15,000 residents. The Breakthrough Memorial is now situ-

ated on the site of that terrible night battle. Its central figure is a partisan breaking a concrete wall — symbolising the heroism achieved through efforts beyond common bravery.

Drink water from the healing spring

Barkovshchina springs, near Ushachi, have been known since ancient times, being marked on European maps in the 16th century. In the mid-19th century, German physician and chemist Yant studied their chemical composition, declaring the water to be unique in composition and therapeutic effect — akin to that of the famous resort of Matsesta. Those suffering from rheumatism and paralysis of the nervous system find it particularly soothing. The first Belarusian spa was built on the site 160 years ago, in the Barkovshchina area, with patients arriving from the Russian provinces, Germany, France and Switzerland. At present, the Lesnye Oзера (Forest Lakes) spa welcomes guests to its six healing springs.

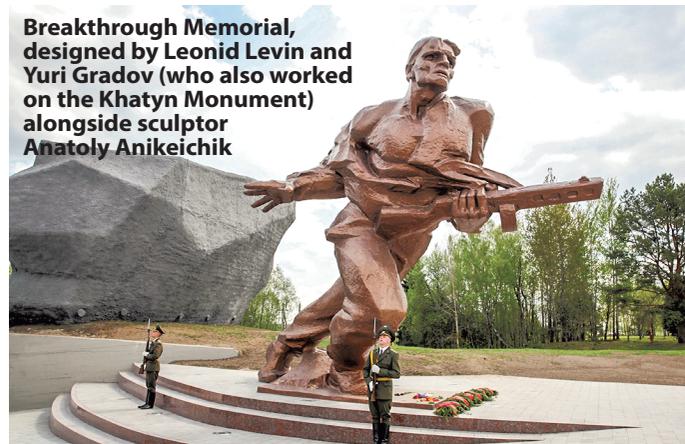
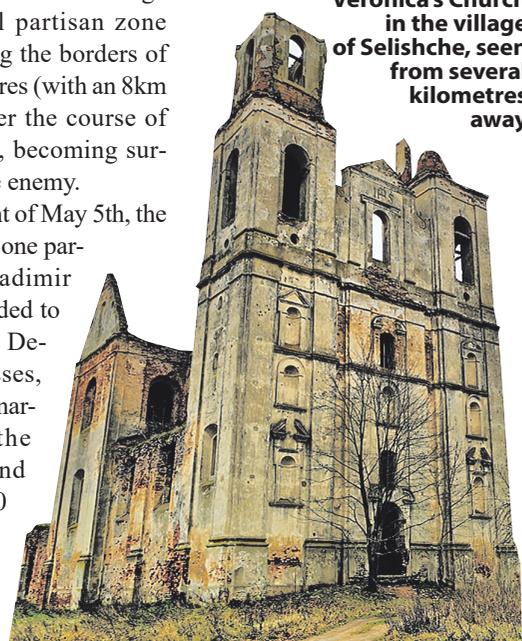
Even more interesting is the miraculous well in the forest near the village of Staiki. St. Ilya's Church was originally nearby but, before the war, was dismantled and converted to stables. People from surrounding villages gathered each year, however, for St. Ilya's Day, on July 20th.

Visit 'Soviet Remarque'

Sign of Trouble, *Crane Scream*, *Obelisk* and other famous stories are set around here. It was in Ushachi's village of Bychki that Vasil Bykov was born, called the 'Soviet Remarque' for his brilliant military prose. Based on his *Sotnikov*, Larisa Shepitko shot her film *Ascent*, which later received a State Award as one of the best portrayals of the war.

As a boy, Vasil was inspired by local landscapes and decided to become a painter rather than a writer. He studied drawing and, after completing his eighth year at school, entered Vitebsk Art College. However, all his plans were altered by the war, guiding his work. The house in which Mr. Bykov had been born didn't survive the war, and neither did his village. However, it was later restored to house the museum of our great countryman.

Majestic ruins of St. Veronica's Church in the village of Selishche, seen from several kilometres away



Breakthrough Memorial, designed by Leonid Levin and Yuri Gradov (who also worked on the Khatyn Monument) alongside sculptor Anatoly Anikeichik



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Founder and Executive Chairman of the WEF Klaus Schwab

Angela Merkel calls for multilateralism in Davos

International institutions, many formed post-WWII, should be modernised to reflect current global realities rather than created anew, said German Chancellor Merkel

“Multilateral institutions are indispensable if we want to live well in the world of tomorrow,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

In a fractured world characterised by multifarious risks spanning climate change, terrorism, natural disasters and cyber-attacks, the German Chancellor called for international institutions to be modernised and transformed rather than usurped and replaced anew.

Acknowledging that some

international trade and financial organisations have been slow to reform to meet development needs and the pace of economic growth in the developing world, Merkel said it is time to ‘call a spade a spade’ and see an international architecture revamped so that it reflects current realities and power dynamics.

“From our part of the world, influenced by Western values, we should be ready to look at established institutions and see the balance of power realistically reflected with them,” Merkel remarked. “We have to accept new realities and reforms, and

a new approach that will address those who harbour doubts about the international system.”

The existing architecture, born out of the horrors of the Second World War, still forms the basis of the international system and has had much success, noted Merkel. Extreme poverty has been drastically reduced in recent decades, with Europe’s de facto leader saying she is confident it could be overcome by 2030.

A remodelling of the global architecture, Merkel told participants at the meeting, carries one critical caveat, “I must say

unequivocally, a global architecture will only work if we are willing to compromise.”

In an increasingly unilateral world, the enormity of the task did not go unrecognised. “Multilateralism is not all that easy but I always have to think of the possible alternatives. We have populist and nationalist challenges and we have to stand up against them,” stressed the German leader. “With my colleagues, I will come out strongly in favour of a multilateral world order and one that gives good answers of the challenges of tomorrow.”

IMF warns trade tensions could hit growth



The International Monetary Fund has warned that escalating trade tensions could undermine global economic growth

In a new report on the world economic outlook, the IMF also warns of risks from a no-deal Brexit. For the world economy, the IMF is now predicting growth of 3.5 percent in 2019. In October, it forecast 3.7 percent.

For the UK, the report predicts growth of about 1.5 percent this year and next, but it also says there is substantial uncertainty around that figure.

Tariff increases imposed by the Trump administration in the US and its counterpart in Beijing have already contributed to a previous downgrade.

The IMF also expects China’s slowdown to continue. The forecast for this year and next is 6.2 percent.

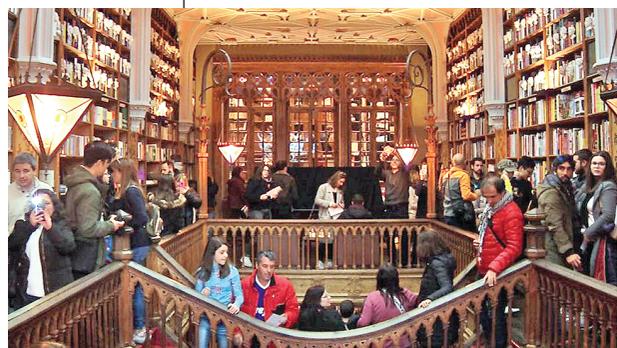
In this new assessment, there are revisions for the developed economies, particularly the Eurozone. That reflects disruptions to the motor industry in Germany from new fuel emissions standards.

There are also concerns about Italy, where financial markets have been unsettled by government plans to expand spending. There are continued weaknesses in the country’s banking system as well.

Trade tensions appear to be the biggest worry and they have been a recurrent theme in recent IMF assessments of the economic outlook. That is reflected in the IMF’s call for action from its member countries’ governments.

Harry Potter bookstore celebrates 113th birthday

Nothing is better for passing on history to future generations like a good book



The Minsk Times Thursday January 31 2019

The Lello Bookshop in Porto, Portugal, is bursting with both books and history. Scores of travellers from Europe, Asia and beyond stop off to see what might be one of the most beautiful bookshops in the world But what is it about Lello that has people captivated? According to legend, Harry Potter was born here, when British author JK Rowling lived and worked in Porto as a teacher in the 1990’s.

Famous, for its spiral stairway, the bookshop — which opened in 1906 — welcomes more than 1 million visitors per year, selling around 1,200 books per day.

The magical shop now charges visitors a 5-Euro voucher (that can be redeemed against books) to manage the seemingly endless flow of customers. They come from all corners of the world.

For its 113th anniversary, the bookstore is offering customers hundreds of thousands of Euros to buy some very rare first editions of books. The bookshop has also made a public announcement that it’s looking to buy copies of the first Portuguese newspaper *Gazeta da Restauração*. It also is offering up 70,000 Euros for copies of the first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*.



Bulgarian Plovdiv is officially European Capital of Culture

Plovdiv, the oldest city in Bulgaria, has been officially inaugurated as the European Capital of Culture for 2019

Squeezed between the Balkan and the Rodopi Mountains, Bulgaria’s second-largest city has survived for thousands of years on the crossroads between Western Europe and the Middle East.

Plovdiv claims to be the oldest continually inhabited European city, with more than 6,000 years of history. Evidence of that can be seen in many ar-

chitectural landmarks dating back to Thracian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman times.

To celebrate the ancient heritage and its multi-cultural past and present, Plovdiv chose the motto ‘Together’ for this year as Europe’s Capital of Culture. Some 350 cultural events are scheduled in Plovdiv this year, including an exhibition featuring fragments of the Berlin Wall to mark 30 years since its fall.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



See what words cannot convey

Naked Feelings: Sacred Sense retrospective exhibition of Honoured Artist of Belarus, holder of the President's *For Spiritual Revival Award* — Vladimir Kozhukh — was recently held at the National Art Museum, inspiring much discussion among professional critics while also arousing genuine interest among all those who are interested in real artists' paintings

By Veniamin Mikheev

Vladimir Kozhukh is a subtle colourist who excelled at drawing. His paintings were characterised by compositional perfection, expressive images, the philosophy and metaphors of the author's thoughts. He painted thematic pictures, landscapes, portraits and still life but his virtuoso works hid a daily, laborious process. The master had no days off: he devoted all his time to the easel and canvas.

Last year, he would have turned 65 had he not prematurely passed away. The retrospective exhibition — *Naked Feelings: Sacred Sense* — is a tribute of memory and respect for the artistic talent from his colleagues, friends, relatives and all lovers of his art. The works of Vladimir Kozhukh from the archives of the National Art Museum, the National Centre of Contemporary Arts, the Belarusian Union of Artists, as well as from private collections and the family collection share a single exhibition space. These are iconic works devoted to social issues, national revival, Christianity, national holidays, the Belarusian landscape and the image of women.

Though modest in ordinary life, Mr. Kozhukh proved to be an innovator in his work: he was a picturesque composer. His rich artistic heritage unites the artist's melody of kindness and dreams, the spirit of faith, light and purity that he felt and was forever depicted on the canvas.

The artist's studio was situated in the centre of Minsk, and it was here that Vladimir



Kozhukh created works in a lyrical symbolic style. In the joining of women and nature he saw harmony with his inner world.

Mr. Kozhukh was indifferent to the glamour of his role, however, saying, "If I notice that something turns out like that, I try to change it." He had no intention to philosophise on the topic of beauty and its place in people's lives. The artist joked that he was destined to reflect on this theme in his works. After all, he was born on the eve of International Women's Day: March 7th.

In the 1990s, in the era of publicity when artists began to get involved in current issues, Mr. Kozhukh turned to romanticism. He painted landscapes and still life and created a series of works devoted to Christian

festivals. The master continued to work on his gallery of muses.

The painter never copied anyone, even himself. The Great Patriotic War, Afghanistan and Chernobyl, women's portraits, landscapes, mythological and biblical subjects... Each topic was seen differently by him. Each new series of works aroused a wave of articles stating: 'This is Kozhukh as we've never known'. People say that, in the last years of his life, Vladimir lost the desire to finish his paintings. He became disappointed in the profession and the public who were showing less interest in art. It's true that many unfinished paintings and primed canvases were found in his studio but Mr. Kozhukh worked not just for the public. It would be more

correct to say that he lived through each of his works. Like paint, he put his emotions on canvas — sealing them in the complex palette: as a result, his original pictures exude life. Even an artist, however, sometimes gets tired of emotions. It is impossible to maintain the same mood for as long as a picture is being painted. When others relied on proven techniques and professionalism, Mr. Kozhukh turned to another canvas and another topic. Only when enough 'paint' was accumulated in his soul, did he return to the unfinished plot. It's impossible to accurately portray this emotion in copied works, this is probably the main reason why he is seen as an undervalued artist.

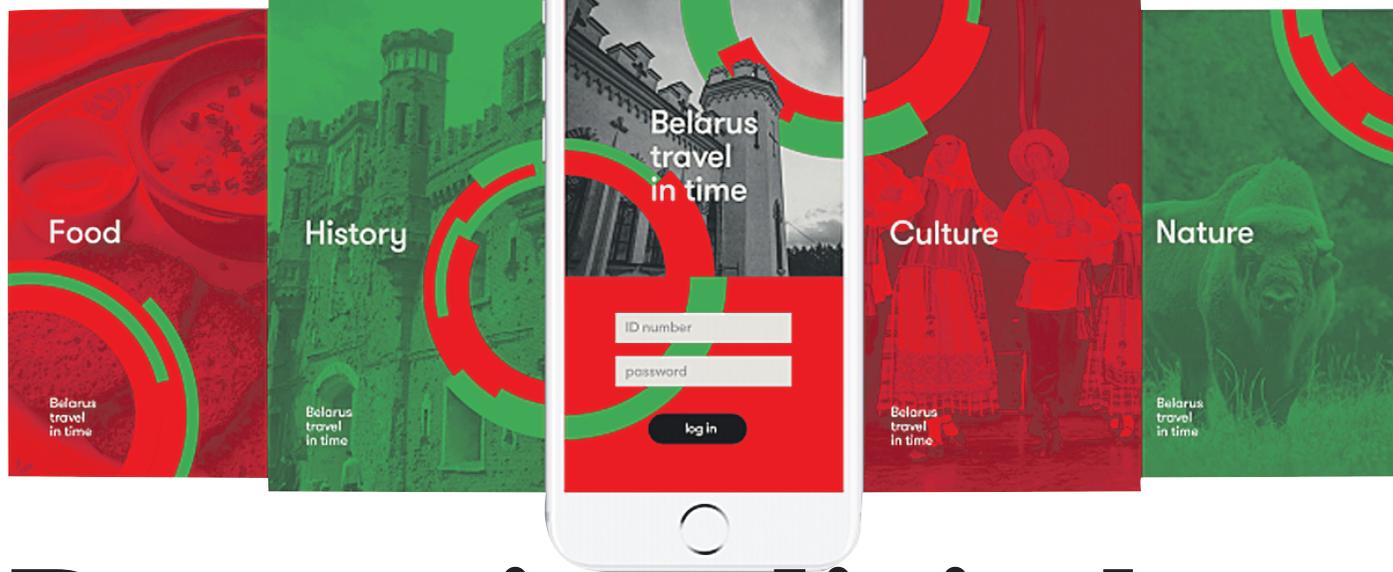
His paintings have been exhibited in Switzerland, Aus-

tria, the USA, Finland and elsewhere but he preferred to stay in the studio himself and not waste time on trips. Books were enough for him. For a long time, he had a workshop in Minsk's Troitsky Suburb, next to a book fair where the artist bought something almost daily.

It was he who led a group of artists to Chernobyl a year after the accident. He drew a series of paintings, for which he received an authoritative award. Mr. Kozhukh agreed to let the artists as close as possible to the reactor. However, it was not the reactor which impressed him most of all. It was that spring and apple trees were blooming while the previous year's apples had not fallen off: they were mummified on the branches amongst the new flowers. People also lived there — returning to their houses despite all the prohibitions.

Belarusfilm's *I Remember* film — which national TV channels traditionally include in their programme on the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster — begins with the works of Vladimir Kozhukh. The main character of the film is an artist who returned to his Chernobyl village twenty years later. By the end of the movie, he has a child and new topics for his works. A year after the expedition, Vladimir's youngest daughter was born, and his art became different — deeper and more serious. It was penetrated with a subtle echo of ancient legends and archaic symbols yet looked to the future. His muses then appeared: glowing, soulful characters of dreams. They somehow resembled the women from Belarusian villages who had already become a memory.

Mr. Kozhukh had no enemies — even though for many years he chaired the painting section of the Belarusian Union of Artists. It was impossible to argue with his talented painting. His paintings have never been the cause of controversy, and Vladimir himself was too intelligent to advertise his own work. There will certainly be more exhibitions by this talented and outstanding artist. Don't miss the opportunity to see what words cannot convey.



Promoting digital detox and time travel

Open voting concludes on our tourist brand concept, with expert council selecting best of three, to become business card for beautiful and blue-eyed Belarus

By Anna Popova

Powerful auroch and tender cornflower

It was hard to know where to look first, as all the concepts presented at the contest were so very interesting: from the 'fern flower' and ornamental embroidery, to a flying dove and cranes bending their heads towards

one another. There was also a gracefully moving auroch and a tender cornflower, all designed to touch the heart and signify 'Belarus'.

Contest entrants did well, with most mentioning their view of Belarus as being at the crossroads of western

and Slavonic cultures, with its own rich cultural heritage. It's a country of hospitality and natural beauty, in which it's easy to relax.

Welcoming with open arms

Of twenty-four concepts, only seventeen went through to the voting round in mid-November, with over 25,000 people casting their vote. Denis Misyulya, the Director of the Moloko Creative Agency, tells us, "People in Belarus always welcome their guests with open arms. Visitors are quickly embraced by the atmosphere and receive bright impressions. Belarusian residents love to help guests learn something new and 'Belarus' is accompanied by variations of the slogan: 'Be with us'."

Some entrants offered several ideas. Nikita Ustinovich, the founder of DAB Creative Agency, tells us, "One of our

concepts is based on the fact that Belarus is a little-known and unexplored country for many, while another concept stresses having a 'digital detox' in Belarus. Despite the growing IT sector, Belarus boasts virgin landscapes in its tourist arsenal, as well as unique leisure sites in which to relax."

Russian agencies also sent proposals. Dmitry Chistov, who heads Moscow's AdWorm Agency, comments, "Having a tourist brand enables us to verbally position the country. It's vital to understand your target audience and how to communicate effectively. We've been to Belarus several times and have developed the 'Time Travel' concept." His agency presents Belarus as an open-air museum combining the past, present and future.

Voting continues, with the expert council, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus, Igor Petrishenko, still to choose a winner from three finalists.

Not 'wherever the road takes you' but using a 'tourist off roader'

Minsk tops the list of The Best European Cities to Visit in 2019 compiled by British Independent



By Svetlana Yevgenieva

Experts explain their choice by the fact that a 30-day visa-free regime is operating in the Republic, the capital is known for its cleanliness and safety while people are friendly and hospitable. However, the most important is that in June Minsk is hosting the grandiose sporting holiday — 2nd European Games. Meanwhile, a spoon of tar was added in a barrel of honey, as not everyone speaks English in the Belarusian capital. This list also includes Rome, Venice, Rotterdam, Belgrade, Bristol, Sitges, Arles and Sarajevo. In order foreigners don't walk using a principle 'wherever the road takes you' the Belarusian capital has developed a branded Guest Map — some kind of 'tourist off roader', offering discounts and bonuses on public transport, in museums, zoo, hotels and other venues — popular among travellers.



BBC and The New York Times Company are potential partners

By Svetlana Savelieva

Belarus' tourist opportunities to be promoted via famous world media holdings

Vitaly Gritsevich, the Deputy Director of the Tourism Department and Head of Planning and Tourism Activities at the Sports and Tourism Ministry, told journalists, "We're planning to work with the BBC. We are conducting negotiations on content placement with the Expedia Group — one of the biggest online booking channels in the world. Moreover, we're negotiating with The New York Times Company which is also ready to offer us services to pro-

mote Belarus' tourism."

The representative of the Sports and Tourism Ministry of Belarus recalled that in 2018, videos about Belarus were shown on the Euronews TV Channel. This channel will also help to advertise the 2nd European Games, with a corresponding agreement signed at the end of last year.

In addition, the airline companies Etihad Airways, Air China and Turkish Airlines also showed tourism videos about Belarus on their routes last year. Mr. Gritsevich said that these companies provide services to millions of people who may consider visiting Belarus thanks to advertising.



Mir Castle

Dancing pirouettes on ice

Minsk has hosted European Figure Skating Championship

By Alexander Pimenov

Activity at Minsk-Arena began well before the official start, as the organisers prepared the arena for the arrival of leading figure skaters, while the major stars of the tournament began to practise their programmes on the Minsk ice. The Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Belarusian Skating Union's Figure Skating Directorate, Alexander Morozov, noted that, "Coordinators of the International Skating Union are happy that everything was well-prepared for the championship."

It's pleasing that the figure skaters training at Minsk-Arena also had no complaints. Their skating brought lots of spectators to the stands, including famous Belarusian athletes such as Melitina Stanyuta. "My mother is very keen on figure skating. When I was small, she wanted me to practice the sport, but artistic gymnastics came into my life earlier," she said.

During the competition, the stands saw lots of fans, and not only Belarusians, with Russians and Ukrainians (who bought many tickets for the competition), arriving in Minsk, in addition to representatives of foreign states. The press centre, organised at Minsk-Arena, also spoke various languages, as around 400 journalists from different countries covered the event.

The first awards of the European Championship were in the pairs skating, with the French couple, Vanessa James and Morgan Sypre, being the favourites in this area of the programme. At the end of last year, they took gold in the Grand Prix finals and finished fourth at the 2018 European Figure Skating Championship. Their major rivals were Yevgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov of Russia.

The medals podium in Minsk remained the same. The French sporting duo took gold, followed by Russians Yevgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov, while bronze went to their teammates, Alexandra Boikova and Dmitry Kozlovsky also of Russia.

In the men's singles, the favourite for gold was Javier Fernández, with the Spaniard planning to finish his sporting career on a high. The figure skater admitted that he would like to earn his seventh gold medal in Minsk at the European Championship and to match the Russian, Yevgeny Plyushchenko in the number of gold medals. Though it was not without difficulty, Fernández managed to achieve his goal.

In the women's singles, the PyeongChang Olympic champion, Alina Zagitova was aiming for victory but failed, taking the silver medal, while her teammate Sofia Samodurova became champion.



Javier Fernández of Spain



Mastery and grace dance



Winners and prize winners

The Figure Skating Championship was completed by ice dancing. The major stars were Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron, three-time world champions, four-time European champions and silver medallists of the Olympic Games in PyeongChang. In Minsk they also managed to win gold.

Minsk spectators also saw on the ice such stars of figure skating as three-time European champion and world champion, Brian Joubert of France, European champion Tomáš Verner of the Czech Republic, and two-time world champion, Stéphane Lambiel of Switzerland. Though they were all present in Minsk in a coaching capacity.

Leading figure skaters from more than thirty countries presented their most complex programmes, full of delicacy and grace. While the struggle for

medals was on in the arena, those beyond its borders were discussing how well Minsk fit the role of the capital of European figure skating.

The Olympic champion and four-time world champion, Alexey Yagudin, often visits Minsk and the sportsman performed on the Minsk-Arena ice several times. "Athletes I spoke to during the European Championship are happy with absolutely everything and especially with the quality of the ice," he said. "It's great that Belarus is hosting a tournament like this. Even during the first days of the event, Minsk-Arena was almost filled with spectators and this shows that the fans were looking forward to the tournament and they do have a great interest in figure skating."

The Olympic ice dance champion, Natalia Bestemy-

anova, who has come to the tournament with her husband, Igor Bobrin, was at the Minsk-Arena for the first time, "I have only positive things to say! The championship was organised at the highest level and the strongest figure skaters have come to Belarus, so the competition is very high."

For many top figure skaters, Minsk can be a memorable place, for example, the winners in the pairs, Vanessa James and Morgan Sypre of France, who have become the second French duo in history to claim gold at the European Championship.

"We've enjoyed the city very much. During the competitions, great support was felt from the fans and the organisation of the championship was perfect. The atmosphere is wonderful, and we've earned our first gold medal at the tournament at such a level, Minsk-Arena and Belarus will forever remain in our memory. Looking on the organisation of the European Championship it's difficult to believe that figure skating is only developing in your country. The infrastructure is wonderful, and we were greatly impressed with the ice venue and the training arena. We'd like to once again thank all Minsk fans who supported us during the competition. We would definitely like to return to Minsk!"

Javier Fernández will have another reason to remember Minsk. The seven-time European champion finished his sport-

ing career here. The legendary Spaniard has gathered a true fan club at the Minsk-Arena, saying, "I will remember Minsk for the fact that the European Championship, held here, is a wonderful competition and the city itself is a perfect place. It's my first time here and am astonished by what I see: wonderful hotels, magnificent buildings and sports facilities. They remind me of those used at the Olympic Games. I'm very pleased to be here, among the people who support me."

Meanwhile, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Austria to the Republic of Belarus, H.E. Ms. Aloisia Wörgetter, declared that Austria plans to borrow the experience of our country as far as the conduct of large sporting events is concerned, "We see what attention is paid to sport in your country and what interest sporting events arouse here. The way the European Figure Skating Championship was organised and the level of the IIHF World Championship (held here), as well as other top tournaments, and finally the fact that Minsk was entrusted to conduct the 2nd European Games, proves that your country has already accumulated valuable experience in this sphere. We hope that next year, Graz will be hosting the 2020 ISU European Figure Skating Championship and the excitement will be no less. Though we don't have such a wonderful sports complex as Minsk-Arena we will also try to surprise the fans."

Festival of the week



International rally-festival of fans of rideable sports, *Northern Dogs*, held in the Minsk Region

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS
20 Lenin Street
Until 31st February. *Contemporaries of the 20th Century: Centenary of the Belarusian Portrait*
Until 1st March. Collection of Singer Lidia Ruslanova

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM
12 Karl Marx Street
Until 3rd February. *Lyubcha Land. People and Time*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS
116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 31st January. *Maly Trostenets: exhibition-chronicles of large-scale massacre*
Until 1st February. *Shop with Cites*
Until 15th March. *Manifest of Republic*
Until 7th April. *Fantasy Land*

LOSHITSA ESTATE
8-2 Chizhevskikh Lane
Until 17th March. *Beauty of Southern Kurzeme*
Until 31st March. *Circle of Time*

VLADISLAV GOLUBOK PARLOUR
14 Starovilenskaya Street
Until 3rd February. *Best USSR Toys*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY
15 Svobody Square
Until 31st February. *Iza Zaslounova and Leonid Galperin*
Until 3rd February. Art project of Gleb Otchik and Vasily Zenko: *Frames of Time*

LIBRA
37 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 31st January. *Somewhere to the West of Minsk: Daily Life of Western Belarus*
Until 18th February. *Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso*

MAXIM BOGDANOVICH LITERARY MUSEUM
7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 15th February. *Adam Bogdanovich. Yevgeny Chirikov. Maxim Gorky: At the Crossroads of Fates*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
3 Nekrasov Street
Until 23rd February. *Mark Rothko 2018: We're Writing our Future Together*

ZAIR AZGUR MUSEUM-WORKSHOP
8 Zair Azgur Street
Until 31st January. *Benjamin Basov: In and Out of Context*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE
1 Parizhskey Komuny Square
31.01. La Traviata
01.02. The Nutcracker
02.02. Madame Butterfly
03.02. Anyuta; Music for All Times
05.02. Macbeth
06.02. Le Corsaire; Viva la Mamma!
07.02. Romeo and Juliet

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE
7 Engels Street
31.01 and 03.02. The Government Inspector
01.02. People of the Marshes
01 and 07.02. Elza's Land
02 and 03.02. Paulinka
02 and 03.02. Radio Prudok
05 and 06.02. Hangmen
07.02. Pinsk Gentry

YOUTH THEATRE
17 Kozlov Street
31.01 and 06.02. Zhmurik; The Bigamist
01.02. Celestino's Career
02.02. The Goat's Island
03.02. Leaving Nature
05.02. Dowryless
07.02. Vanyushin's Children

PUPPET THEATRE
20 Engels Street
31.01 and 01.02. Pension Belvedere

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS
13 Pobediteley Avenue
31.01. Aisedora. A Love Dance
01.02. Robbery at Midnight
02.02. Pygmalion
03.02. The Mechanical Man
05.02. Evening of A.P. Chekhov's Miniatures
06.02. ...Forgetting Herostratos!
07.02. Abduction of Yelena

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE
44 Kropotkin Street
31.01. Quiet Whisper of Leaving Steps
02.02. Dzed
03.02. Doctor Raus' Career
05.02. Mudromer
06.02. Adam's Jokes
07.02. Ticket to Brest Train

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE
5 Volodarsky Street
31.01. Taming of the Shrew
01.02. An Ideal Husband
02.02. How to Become Rich
03.02. Bridegrooms
05.02. Dangerous Liaisons; He and She
06.02. OblomOFF
07.02. Red Hot Mamas

YOUNG SPECTATORS' THEATRE
26 Engels Street
31.01. Romeo and Juliet