

Acronym: **B2B**

1. PRIORITY: FACILITATION OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Support strand: Facilitation of socioeconomic development and support for entrepreneurship

Project applicant: Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Riga, Latvia)

Project partners: Belarussian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Minsk, Belarus), Panevezys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Panevezys, Lithuania), Daugavpils University (Daugavpils, Latvia)

Financial support: LATVIA, LITHUANIA and BELARUS Cross-border Cooperation programme within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership instrument of 2007

Aim – to facilitate long-term cross-border cooperation and common innovative entrepreneurship, to balance the general conditions for regional business development, development of cross-border exchanges of good practices as well as the increase of circulation of goods and services.

One of the project activities is a cross-border experience exchange, participation in activities that facilitate entrepreneurship in Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus.



PARTNERSHIP OF NEIGHBOURS



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PANEVĖŽIO PREKYBOS,
PRAMONĖS IR AMATŲ RŪMAI



Experience exchange in Belarus and views on our common development tendencies, cross-border cooperation and neighbourhood policy

Belarussian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mihail Mjatlikov, Head

The project is important and interesting for us because we need practical cooperation. Many projects are being implemented in Europe, but most of them are theoretical, touching subjects not so important for entrepreneurship. In this project we see specific subjects and specific people involved, one can feel the difference. That's why the highest value firstly is the experience exchange, secondly — common regional interests of all three countries, such as nature, ecology, economics. The Baltic partners have a chance to enter the eastern market, for Belarus, however, it is a chance to get to know European market. Latvia and Lithuania are our neighbours and we traditionally have been partners. We are destined to cooperate. In this model of micro-cooperation we facilitate the development of small and medium size businesses.

This project creates a base for further cooperation with an aim to facilitate entrepreneurship in all three countries. As a result we acquire experience exchange, new contacts, we will create an e-cooperation platform and will open business support and information centres.

Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Raimonds Ozolins, Commercial Director

This project will advance closer cooperation among the three countries. In Belarus agritourism receives a considerable state aid. In addition they have developed successful mechanism where financial support is provided by the banks. It is completely different environment, different public administration and taxation system.

Panevezys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts Visvaldas Matkevichius, General Director Angelija Zokaitiene, Head of the International Relations Department

The project is an opportunity to exchange views, to gain new experience with the partners from Latvia and Belarus. Forum that takes place in each country is useful for entrepreneurs — they meet and expand their network. The project partners get along very well and instantly sort out any issues. If an entrepreneur needs some information, we quickly find it. Network among the countries is



functioning already, because we can obtain information that we need from each other.

Valeria Klitsounova Belarussian Association of Rural and Ecotourism “Country Escape”, Chairman of the Board

The most valuable are the networks we create among people, who met in the framework of the project. Here we can meet people and partners that we like and thus we can continue our partnership. This is an opportunity to exchange our experiences, to learn different development models implemented by the participating countries. It is important to take part in international projects, so that our people see the experiences of the neighbouring countries, learn

about innovative agritourism. We have common history and traditions, it is interesting to see how the other countries use their experiences. Even though we differ, once visa question is sorted, we could position ourselves as one tourism region offering agritourism opportunities.

In an international context we can learn a lot. Neighbouring countries in Europe are way ahead of us, observing them we can see what the situation will be here after some years have passed. Generational problems — children do not want to live in the countryside, motivation of work is based on profit, loss of traditions — these are the risks that most of the European countries face when developing an authentic tourism offer. We see these potential problems and try to avoid this happening.

We would like to emphasise the Belarusian sincerity and hospitality. Community feeling and family-like attitude towards the guests — this has to be preserved. We begin to pay attention to food. It has to be Belarusian cuisine — ecological and homemade, that cannot be found in Europe, such as *spek*, smoked meat, homemade drinks. We should seek traditional dishes of the Belarusian regions, see what is typical to each place, but has been forgotten. Our intangible heritage, such as rituals and festivals, and tangible too has been to the large extent destroyed during the revolution and socialism. We need an alternative and innovative approach to the heritage that has been preserved, what they call interpretation of cultural heritage — creative economics that people can develop with little investment, but with good ideas.

Belarussian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mihail Mjatlikov, Head

Latvians and Lithuanians see how tourism works in Belarus. Tourism is developing in Belarus, as it is in Latvia and Lithuania. One can see, that in Belarus it is growing, it has a large potential. This industry is unique, important and interesting in our country. It is the industry where small and medium size businesses develop.

In Belarus a tourism development programme has been implemented, by which families working in agritourism and guest house business are being supported. We have nature — unique forests, UNESCO sites. One can see here how a forest looked like in the times of Robin Hood. Nowhere else in the world it is possible. We have our own brands, such as the festival “Slavjanskij Bazar” and other large events that have become popular. We also have castles. Belarus is positioned on the transit crossroads, which boosts the tourism industry.

We see more and more tourists from the European countries. During the World Hockey Championship we had a visa-free regime. Little by little we are getting there. We are feeling mutual understanding with Europe.