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International project activities in the development of regional tourism: Karelian practice

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Аннотация

The article describes an approach to the consideration of international project activities of tourism orientation in the Republic of Karelia as a significant tool for the development of regional tourism. 80 international tourism projects for the period 1990-2020 were analyzed, supported by various Programs: TACIS, INTERREG, ENPI CBC Karelia, ENI CBC Karelia, as well as other Programs (for example, Nordic Council, World Wide Fund for Nature, etc.). The research made it possible to identify the main (enlarged) areas of project activity in the field of tourism in the region from 1990 to 2020: eco-tourism, promotion of tourism and cultural tourism. The results of international projects implementation during the study period in the selected enlarged areas are analyzed. The high significance of international project activities in the development of regional tourism in the Republic of Karelia is proved. Significant results of international projects in the Republic of Karelia for the development of regional tourism are highlighted, such as development of strategic documents for the tourism sector, creation of new tourist infrastructure (tourist display facilities, tourist information centers, visitor centers, accommodation infrastructure, etc.), creation of new tourist products and services, marketing promotion of the territory, training and retraining of specialists, development of a network of contacts.

Ключевые слова: international project, Republic of Karelia, tourism, ENPI CBC Karelia, ENI CBC Karelia, TACIS, INTERREG

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¹ **Introduction.** Nowadays tourism is one of the advanced and priority areas of direction of socio-economical development of the Republic of Karelia. Considering that tourism as an area of economic activity of the new business and industry area began to develop just in 1990's [2; 3], its successful development needed new competences about its operation and management both at regional and municipal levels, as well as at the level of a single enterprise. The possibility to implement tourism orientated international projects in border Republic of Karelia, allowed from one side to raise necessary financial resources to implement available know how and ideas, and from the other side to gain an experience of the best foreign practices from abroad in area of tourism development by implementing common transboundary projects.

² The **goal of the research** is defining the importance of international project activities in border Republic of Karelia in development of regional tourism. To achieve that goal the following tasks were addressed: 1) the main (integrated) directions of the project activities in the area of tourism development during 1990-2020 were defined; 2) the results of implementation of international projects in the Republic of Karelia for the regional tourism development in the defined directions were summarized.

³ **Information base and level of prior studies of the problem.** Scientific society gained a considerable theoretical and practical capacity on the problems of international project activities in the area of tourism in border-zone.

⁴ Due to specificity of the state development in historical retrospective, the research of the Russian scientists, dealing with different aspects of the problem started to appear only in beginning of 2000's. Rather in-depth analysis of issues on transboundary cooperation in the area of tourism was presented by the scientists by Baltic Federal University named after I. Kant (Kaliningrad) within the Program of border cooperation in Russian-Polish border zone [1; 9; 10].

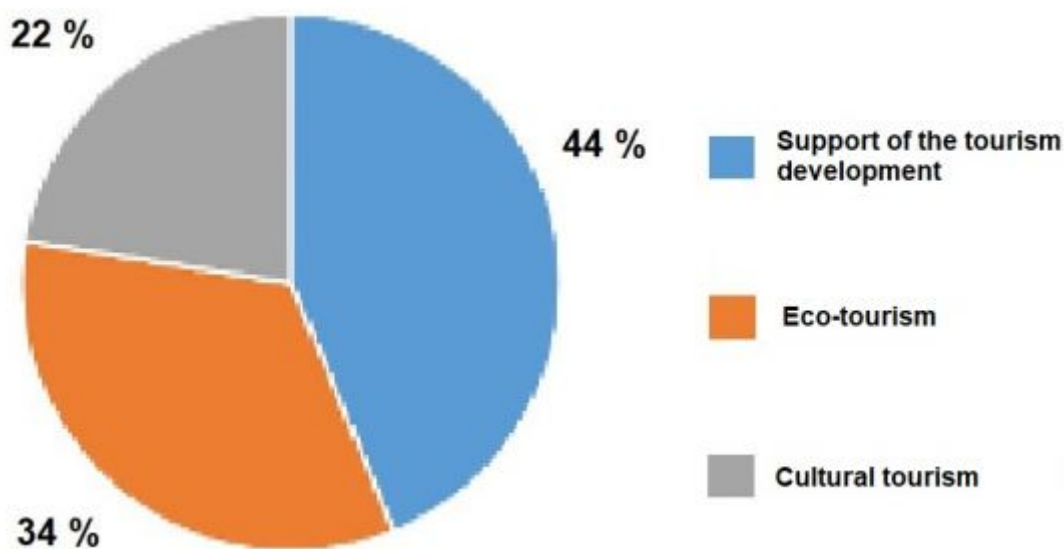
⁵ Talking about Karelian border zone, one of the first works presenting international projects in the area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia was the publication by State committee on physical education, sport and tourism [7]. It needs to be mentioned that the existing practices of the issues under investigation mainly described some aspects of implementation and/or summarized the results of international projects in the area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia [4; 8; 11; 14; 15].

However, we need to mention the studies, which analyzed transboundary cooperation, Program of border cooperation of Karelia as a border-zone region [5; 6; 12; 13].

⁶ **Methodology and novelty of the research.** The study summarizes the results of implementation of 80 international projects in the Republic of Karelia in the area of tourism during the period of 1999-2020, supported by different programs (TACIS, INTERREG, ENPI CBC Karelia and ENI CBC Karelia, as well as some others like for example, Nordic Council, World Wide Fund for Nature, etc. The study is based upon open Internet sources of the Program of border cooperation of the Republic of Karelia, official sites of the international projects, implemented in Karelia, as well as scientific developments of Russian scientists on the issue of research. During the study the methods of generalization, comparison and analogue method were applied. The study did not count supported international projects in the area of tourism by ENI CBC Karelia to be implemented in 2020-2022.

⁷ **Distribution of international projects in the area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia during 1990-2020 by integrated directions.** The largest share of international projects in the area of tourism implemented under various Programs (TACIS, INTERREG, ENPI CBC Karelia and ENI CBC Karelia) during the period of 1990-2020 in the Republic of Karelia were dealing with a support of regional tourism development (pic.). It is important to notice that in this case the method of generalization was applied, which means the integration of the data and referring the project to the main and most important direction if there are several.

⁸



Pic. Distribution of international projects in the area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia by the integrated directions during the period of 1990–2020, %

⁹ It needs to be mentioned that during the researched period there was a change of priorities in the implementation of the project activities in the tourism from eco-tourism in 1990-2006 to the support of cultural tourism in 2007-2020 (table).

¹⁰ *Table* Distribution of international projects in the area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia on periods, %

No	Integrated directions of the project activities	1990–2006	2007–2020
1	Eco-tourism	47	13
2	Support of the tourism development	41	48
3	Cultural tourism	12	39

¹¹ Direction of “eco-tourism” includes international projects, dealing with development of eco-tourism both at the territories of protected areas of the region and in separated municipalities of the Republic of Karelia, including other projects of environmental direction (water tourism, fishing tourism, event tourism etc.). The direction of “cultural tourism” includes some projects focusing on development of cultural and educational tourism in the region, as well as the projects dealing with the that issue (e.g. focusing on traditional cuisine and traditions, museum expositions etc.). The share of those projects in the framework of the Program of cross-border cooperation Karelia increased considerably comparing with the first period (1990-2006). The group of projects supporting of tourism included the projects in which that direction was the main goal of the implementation and the rest of the projects that were not included in the two above-mentioned groups (e.g. on development of agricultural tourism, staff training, development of tourism in specific municipalities of the region based on cultural and nature heritages etc.).

¹² **International project activities of the Republic of Karelia in the area of tourism: results of the implementation.** International project activities in eth area of tourism in the Republic of Karelia in 1990–2020 will be seen in this section in the context of the mentioned directions: eco-tourism, support of tourism development and cultural tourism.

¹³ ***Direction of “eco-tourism”.*** A significant international project dealing among other goals with development of eco-tourism in the Republic of Karelia was a Large-scale project of TACIS “*Management of forest resources in the North-west of Russia. Karelian project*”, implemented in 1997-1999 with a total financing of about 2.5 million EUR. Within the framework of the project there was an eco-tourism general development plan elaborated for the territory of National park “Vodlozersky”, two tourist centers, a sailing ship were constructed, a modern visit center of the park was opened in the capital of the region, necessary tools and equipment were purchased, as well as more than 200 experts on eco-tourism were trained in cooperation with Finnish Training Center of Kuru, a promotional marketing of the territory was implemented.

¹⁴ The next significant project was “*Development of specially protected nature areas in border zone of the Republic of Karelia*” that was also implemented with the financial support of TACIS Program in 1999-2001. It aimed at development of specially protected nature areas in the region and allowed to elaborate a feasibility study and action plans for four created national and nature parks in the Republic of Karelia, and to prepare a Strategy of tourism development in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. Besides the specialists in the area of eco-tourism were trained for the National Park “Paanajarvi”, new touristic routs and services were developed, marketing campaign was conducted.

¹⁵ A special emphasis should be put on implementation of local projects: “*Suojarvsky area – case study for sustainable development on basis of creation of*

international biosphere nature reserve” (1998-2000, TACIS), *“Development of fishing tourism in the area of the river Hiitola”* (2001-2002, TACIS), *“Eco-tourism on service of development of Muezersky area and strengthening of nature preservation”* (2001-2003, TACIS).

¹⁶ The projects, implemented in the framework of financing by other Programs, there can be mentioned *“Nature center of Green Belt”* (2002-2005, INTERREG), aimed at creation of a center on cooperation of natural and cultural heritages of the territories in Russian-Finnish border zone, promotion of this heritage and its involvement in business activities based on principals of sustainable development. With support from ENPI CBC of Karelia (2007-2014) there were several international projects implemented aimed at sustainable development tourism at the territory of Green Belt of Fennoscandia.

¹⁷ ***“Support of the tourism development” direction.*** The largest share of touristic projects during the period of 1990-2020 comes to the integrated (enlarged) direction on support of the tourism development (44 %).

¹⁸ The first project of TACIS program directly aimed at development of tourism in the region, was the project *“Development of border tourism on the Russian part of Barents Euro-Arctic region”*, implemented in 2001-2003 with total budget of 1.1 million EUR. Sustainable development of economics and social sector on the North-West of Russia due to development of touristic industry and creation of new workspaces was the aim of the project [7].

¹⁹ The project *“Training of hospitality staff in the Republic of Karelia according to European standards”*, supported by European Commission allowed to develop and implement an effective model of training, promoting raise of professional levels of managers and employees of hotels, as well as the tourist industry itself.

²⁰ A special emphasis deserve projects aimed at organization and development of transboundary touristic routes in Russian-Finnish border zone. Opening of an international car check points Vjartsilja – Niirala in 1990 set the stage for creation of the first in the region transboundary touristic route “Blue road”, joining the countries of Northern Europe through the Republic of Karelia with inner parts of Russia¹. At the basis of the Blue Road in the region there were implemented several significant international projects with creation of new transboundary touristic routes of different topics. We also must mention the project *“White Road”* (2012–2014, CBC ENPI Karelia), joining provinces of Northern Finland and northern municipalities of the Republic of Karelia based on like-named transboundary touristic route. Aimed at development of tourism in the northern areas of the Republic of Karelia, the project allowed to give an informational and methodological support to the businessmen in the touristic industry, experience exchange between the representatives of the tourism industry, investors and representatives of neighboring states. Besides, an important result of it was the opening of six information touristic centers in the areas of the Republic of Karelia².

²¹ As an international project, supported by CBC ENI Karelia during 2018-2019 we can mention a project *“A service of cottages booking in Karelia and Finland Wildacha”*³, which provides wider possibilities for the rest in cottages and guest houses

of Karelia, neighboring countries and Finland at the basis on bilingual service of on-line booking. We must admit that it was for the first time for 1990-2020, when an international project in the area of tourism covered all the municipalities in Karelia.

²² **“Development of cultural tourism” direction.** Considering that development of transboundary touristic routs within the framework of international projects implementation is becoming one of the popular tools of promoting border zones of neighboring countries and developing regional tourism, we can examine several cases of cultural tourism development. The first project to be mentioned was *“The road of mining”* (2012-2014, CBC ENPI Karelia), one of the main results at the territory of Karelia was creation of a new touristic site of a Mining Park “Tulmozerye” with an area of 3 ha (opened on 03.08.2014) with adjacent area of 8 ha, where there are created some excursion and recreational zones on ruins of 18th century “Tulmozersk” Ironworks. Now one can visit Mining Park “Tulmozerye” in a part of a tourist group or alone. At the moment Mining Park “Tulmozerye” is considered as a perspective object of tourist attraction with an expected number of annual visitors about 20-30 thousand people [4; 14].

²³ One of the latest projects currently implemented is a transboundary gastronomic route, joining the territories of Republic of Karelia (Russia) and North Karelia (Finland) at the basis of a unique Karelia cuisine, and is implemented within the framework of the project *“Kalitka – development of transboundary gastronomic tourism”* (2018-2020, CBC ENI Karelia). Besides, within the project there is a triple-language mobile application “Gastronomic map of Karelia” being elaborated, it unites unique Karelian cuisine of the border zone of the states (Republic of Karelia, RF and North Karelia, Finland) and it will be free of charge both for the businessmen and for the users of the service. The mobile application will allow guests and local residents to find out their location of the objects of the visit, which are connected to the local cuisine, including exhibition and tasting sites, shops with gastronomic souvenirs and places of gastronomic events⁴.

²⁴ Considering that museums are active participants in the implementation of international projects, the new modern museum products, information systems that support the development of touristic and recreational potential of Karelia and supporting the development of regional tourism are being created. So, one of the main results of the project *“Euroregion of Karelia: museum hypertext”* (2013-2014, CBC ENPI Karelia) became an information system “Open Karelia”, a specific guide on the region, joining museum collections, cultural heritage, traditions and way of life, historical facts about Karelia on both side of the border⁵. Currently implemented international project *“InterActive history”* (2018–2020, CBC ENI Karelia) aimed at implemented on new interactive forms of interaction with visitors, new museum services and interpretation of local heritage. Thus, there will be created special digital products, mobile applications using 3D modelling technologies, including elements of additional reality, showing new possibilities for development of the regional tourism⁶.

²⁵ **Conclusion.** Summarizing the results of international project activities implementation in the area of tourism we can mention its high importance for development of regional tourism and strengthening of cross-border cooperation. Within

the implementation of international projects in the area of tourism in the republic of Karelia in through historical perspective there can be observed a steady transition from educational and personnel development to introduction of the best practices in the area of tourism, from development of technical documentations to implementation of infrastructure projects.

²⁶ Among the considerable results of implementation of 80 international projects in the Republic of Karelia with the support of different Programs (TACIS, INTERREG, CBC ENPI Karelia and CBC ENI Karelia etc.) during the period of 1990-2020, we can mention the following:

1) elaboration of strategic documents on development of tourism in the region, including feasibility studies, Strategies and plans of development of tourism on regional and local levels;

2) creation of new touristic sites in the region (e.g., Mining Park “Tulmozerye”);

3) creation of information and tourist centers in Petrozavodsk city and municipalities of the Republic of Karelia;

4) opening of modern information and exhibition visit-centers for specially protected nature areas (e.g., National Park “Vodlozersky” in Petrozavodsk and National Park “Paanajarvi” in Pjaozesk settlement);

5) training, re-training and personnel development of specialists in the area of tourism, mainly in eco-tourism for working at the territory of specially protected nature areas in Republic of Karelia, hospitality staff and touristic enterprises;

6) construction and development of touristic infrastructure (residence, food), objects of road-side infrastructure and water infrastructure;

7) promotional marketing of the territory, including development of marketing concepts and territorial brands, creation of webpages, publication of booklets and other advertising materials; creation of films etc.;

8) elaboration of mobile services and applications in aid of tourists and guests of the region;

9) development of new tourist products and services, including elaboration of transboundary touristic routes (“White Road”, “The road of mining”, “Delicate taste of Karelia” etc.), museum services etc.;

10) purchasing of necessary equipment and tools;

11) development of the cooperation network.

Примечания:

1. Touristic route “Blue road”. Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access 30.04.2020.).

2. White road. Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access 24.04.2020.).

3. Cottage booking service in Karelia and Finland Wildacha (KA1020). Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access 30.04.2020.).

4. KALITKA (KA4007). Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access: 27.04.2020).

5. Euroregion of Karelia: museum hypertext. Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access: 27.04.2020).

6. InterActive history (KA3022). Official site of the project. [Electronic resource]: URL: [>>>>](#) (date of access: 27.04.2020).

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Abstract

The article describes an approach to the consideration of international project activities of tourism orientation in the Republic of Karelia as a significant tool for the development of regional tourism. 80 international tourism projects for the period 1990-2020 were analyzed, supported by various Programs: TACIS, INTERREG, ENPI CBC Karelia, ENI CBC Karelia, as well as other Programs (for example, Nordic Council, World Wide Fund for Nature, etc.). The research made it possible to identify the main (enlarged) areas of project activity in the field of tourism in the region from 1990 to 2020: eco-tourism, promotion of tourism and cultural tourism. The results of international projects implementation during the study period in the selected enlarged areas are analyzed. The high significance of international project activities in the development of regional tourism in the Republic of Karelia is proved. Significant results of international projects in the Republic of Karelia for the development of regional tourism are highlighted, such as development of strategic documents for the tourism sector, creation of new tourist infrastructure (tourist display facilities, tourist information centers, visitor centers, accommodation infrastructure, etc.), creation of new tourist products and services, marketing promotion of the territory, training and retraining of specialists, development of a network of contacts.

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