**МИНИСТЕРСТВО СЕЛЬСКОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА**

 **И ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ**

УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ «БЕЛОРУССКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ АГРАНЫЙ ТЕХНИЧЕСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ»

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***Belarus: Key Facts***

**Full name:** the Republic of Belarus

**Government type:** presidential republic

**President:** Alexander Lukashenko

**Capital:** Minsk (1 million 814 thousand as of January 1, 2008)

**Population:** 9 million 689,7 thousand as of January 1, 2008)

**Major language:** Russian, Belarusian (both official)

**Monetary unit:** Belarusian ruble (Br) (since July 26, 1993)

**Economy**

In 2007, Belarus’ GDP grew by 8.2% (the government forecast was 8-9%). The GDP energy intensity fell by 7.9% (6-7%). The growth of labour efficiency reached 7.7% (7-8.6% as projected by the government).

In 2007, the industrial output in Belarus upped by 8.5% from 2006, which meets the upper forecast margin.

In 2007, the production of consumer goods ramped up by 8.2% from 2006 (8.5-9.5% as projected), including the production of foodstuffs 4.2% (9-10%), the production of nonfoods 11.7% (8-9%). Some companies reported higher rate of growth of productivity of labour than on average country-wide. 14.4% of these companies belonged to the Ministry of Industry, 10.6% to the Bellesbumprom and 15.4% to the Belbiopharm concerns.

In 2007, the production of agricultural products at enterprises of all categories was 4.1% up from 2006, while the forecast predicted a 6-7.5% growth. The production of grain rose by 21.8%, flax by 33.1%, potatoes by 5%.

**History**

The core of the first state formation emerged in the land of the Krivichi tribe (in what is now Belarusian territory) in the 9th-12th centuries. Known as the Principality of Polotsk with the center in Polotsk, it was first mentioned in chronicles in 862. Rogvolod was the first Polotsk Duke mentioned in chronicles in the late 10th century. The Principality of Polotsk reached its golden age under the rule of Duke Vseslav of Polotsk known as Vseslav the Sorcerer. The Principality of Turov with the center in Turov emerged in the late 10th century. (More: http://news.belta.by/en/bel/history)

The Republic of Belarus is a member of the United Nations Organization and its institutions, Organization for Security ad Cooperation in Europe, Central European Initiative, Non-Aligned Movement. Belarus cooperates with the European Union, countries of the Asian-Pacific Region, South-East Asia, Middle East, Africa, North and Latin America.

**Tourism**

Belarus is the country of rich history and unique culture. Many historical places are located in the territory of Belarus. For example, this is Novogrudok, the first capital of the Great Principality of Lithuania, Polotsk, the capital of the Principality of Polotsk, Turov and Grodno, the centers of the Slavic principalities of the 9th -12th centuries, Mstislavl, the center of a big voivodeship of the 16th century. Old temples and monasteries, palaces and castles, valuable historical and cultural sites survive in many towns of Belarus.

**Sport**

The national team of Belarus took part in seven Olympic Games. Belarusian athletes won 53 Olympic medals.

***Belarusian Culture***

Belarusians stand out for their original culture rooted back in pagan, pre-Christian days.

The Belarusian culture has enormously benefited from the fact that when the Slavic nations came to inhabit these lands they did not destroy the achievements of their predecessors who are believed to be Baltic and Finno-Ugric tribes.

First, like any other East Slavic tribe, our ancestors were pagan. This form of religious perception existed for quite a long time and profoundly influenced the Belarusian culture. Now there is no doubt that Belarusians had written language already in the pagan period (earlier the emergence of the written language was attributed to the advent of Christianity).

Literature was a privilege of the rich, well-to-do people. Secular literature appeared very early, almost simultaneously with the dogmatic literature. The books were rewritten in Christian monasteries and convents. Euphrosyne of Polotsk consecrated her life to this activity. Apart from her, Kiril of Turov venerated among the Slavs as second Chrysostom for his brilliant oratorical skills, also made a great contribution in this sphere.

Formation of the Great Principality of Lithuania in the 13th century created favourable conditions for the cultural development. The ancient Belarusian language became state language which was legally fixed in the second wording of the Statute of the Great Principality of Lithuania adopted in 1566.

Proximity of the Great Principality of Lithuania to other countries of Central and Western Europe, high spiritual development of its inhabitants fostered progressive ideas of Renaissance and Reformation. Many outstanding people were born then. One of them is Frantsysk Skaryna, the enlightener, writer, translator and the first East Slavic printer. In 1517-1519 in Prague, he translated and printed 23 books of the Bible in ancient Belarusian. Prior to that, the Bible was translated to German (1445) and Czech (1448) only. Equally famous were Skaryna’s counterparts Nikolai Gusovsky, the author of “The Song about the Bison” written in Latin and published in 1523 in Krakow, and Symon Budny, the author of many works in ancient Belarusian, Polish and Latin.

Tatars and Jews were allowed to freely settle in the Great Principality of Lithuania and local authorities did not impede dissemination of their culture, including construction of religious and secular buildings. A mosque in the village of Davbuchishki which was first mentioned in Lithuanian Metric in 1558 is one of the ancient mosques in Europe.

Regardless devastating wars, Belarusians managed to create dozens of outstanding specimens of architecture which combined national and foreign styles. The predominant architectural style of Belarus was baroque. Sapega’s Palaces in Ruzhany, Khreptovichi’s Palace in Schorsy, Radziwill’s Palace in Nesvizh, St Nicolas Church and Carmelite Roman-Catholic Church in Mogilev, Nesvizh and Grodno Roman-Catholic Churches, Sts Peter and Paul’s Cathedral in Vitebsk are fine specimen of baroque architecture. It is noteworthy that in the late 16th century Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł invited famous Italian architect Giovanni Bernardoni to construct Jesuit Church and College in Nesvizh.

After the three partitions of the Rzecz Pospolita in 1772, 1793 and 1795 when Belarus became part of the Russian Empire, the conditions for cultural development were far from being perfect. Together with Polish influences, first covert, then overt Russification started taking hold of the Belarusian culture. However, even in such unfavorable environment Belarus managed to foster a myriad of talented people such as Adam Mitskevich, Stanislav Manyushka, Mikhail Aginsky, Ignaty Dameiko, Mikhail Glinka, Josef Gashkevich, Ivan Chersky.

After the 1863-1864 rebellion it was prohibited to print Belarusian books in Poland, Belarus and Lithuania. Nonetheless, scientists and writers among whom are Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich and Frantishek Bogushevich continued to develop the Belarusian culture.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked with the renaissance of the Belarusian national traditions and intensification of the Belarusian national movement. This was the heyday of the Belarusian classic literature marked by works of now renowned Belarusian writers Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Maxim Bogdanovich. The newspaper Nasha Niva made a valuable contribution to promotion of the Belarusian culture as well.

In the 1920s schools providing training in the Belarusian language were opened. In 1929 the Institute of the Belarusian Culture was transformed into the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. However, the process was interrupted in the 1930s when severe ideological repression began. Many prominent figures of Belarusian culture and science were subjected to the repression by the state.

The war of the Nazi Germany against the USSR (1941-1945) also dealt a severe blow to the Belarusian culture. The vast majority of Belarusian writers, scientists and culture workers were killed on the front.

In the postwar period till the 1980s there was little development of the Belarusian culture as it was restrained by tough ideology and control from the Communist Party. Nonetheless, quite a number of talented writers and painters appeared, such as Ales Adamovich, Vasil Bukov, Rugor Baradulin, Gennady Buravkin, Alexander Vertinsky, Vasil Zuenok, Ivan Naumenko, Boris Sachenko, Ivan Chigrinov, Ivan Shamyakin, Mikhail Savitsky, Zair Azgur, Sergei Selikhanov. The network of cultural and educational establishments was growing, amateur talent groups were developing.

Glasnost prompted liberation of the Belarusian culture from the ideological dictate and promoted revival of Belarusian customs and traditions. The situation with the Belarusian language started changing especially since the law on languages of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was adopted in 1990. The number of Belarusian theater companies rose.

***State policy in the spheres of culture and public life***

Belarus is not home to any aggressive nationalistic ideas but rather a land where the centuries-old bilingualism, spirituality, traditional religions and all forms of art are given strong governmental support.

The state pursues consistent policy aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of the Belarusians and their best moral traits which are respect for people of different ethnic origins and religious beliefs, tolerance, humanism and peacefulness.

The state and the state budget are consistent guarantors of financial support of culture and arts. The principle of continuity in the cultural policy shows itself through the preservation of the infrastructure of cultural establishments.

The core of the state policy is loyalty to the historical memory of the people – the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The loyalty to the memory has been reflected in the decision taken by the country’s leadership to introduce a new subject in education establishments of Belarus – “The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People”.

Belarus pursues consistent policy aimed at shaping ideology of the Belarusian state, crystallising the Belarusian national idea. The shortest and most accurate expression of the national idea has been voiced by the President of the Republic of Belarus: “For a strong and prosperous Belarus!”

***Источники:***

http://news.belta.by/en/bel/culture

http://news.belta.by/en/bel/history