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## Rural green tourism standardization and certification system building within the European integration context

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**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research* is to determine the organizational, legislative and regulatory framework for the standardization and certification of the rural green tourism as an unconventional business pattern and a type of environmental services. *Methods.* In the process of research, systematic and integrated approaches were used, which provided a comprehensive study of the problem and the achievement of scientific results. Methodological basis of the research are general theoretical methods of scientific knowledge, in particular dialectic method, system analysis, fundamental positions of general economic theory. The graphical method was used to visualize the structural diagrams. In addition, general scientific and special methods were used in the study such as dialectical, monographic, non-lethal, induction and deduction, which allowed them to be used to determine the organizational, legislative and regulatory framework for the standardization and certification of the rural green tourism. *Results.* The article discusses issues concerning the legislative and regulatory framework for the standardization and certification of the rural green tourism in Ukraine. Methodological approaches how to standardize and certify the rural ecotourism are presented too. Innovative factors, having an impact on the rural green tourism evolution in the Ukrainian regions, have been indicated herein. Some attention has been focused on the need for the ecological certification and audit of the various territories, administrative regions, natural and economic systems of the country in general. The necessity of using marks for the legal protection of geographical indications has been determined. It has been proven that the voluntary ecological certification certifies some compliance with the requirements of laws, technical regulations, best practices, good rules, national and industry standards both for the tourism and, in general, for the adherence of requirements as to the environment quality maintenance. *Practical meaning.* A rural ecological tourism standardization and certification system, accelerating the adaptation of the Ukrainian regulatory and legislative framework to the EU standards, improving the tourism product quality, based on European

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standards and environmental regulations, helping attract foreign investments and develop the rural green tourism infrastructure and material bases, has been built grounding on the deep study of the present issues. *Prospects for further research.* The results obtained herein determine the need for the further improvement of the methodological criteria developed for the certification of rural green tourism farmsteads. It will lead to the market promotion of environmental services, to the increase in the number of foreign tourists and to the rise in the competitiveness of Ukraine as the player of the international market of tourist services.

**Keywords:** rural green tourism, agro-noble house, rural areas, environmental audit, standardization and certification.

JEL Classification: E42, L15, Q19, Z32.

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## Формування системи стандартизації та сертифікації сільського «зеленого» туризму в умовах європейської інтеграції

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**Анотація.** *Мета статті* полягає у визначенні організаційних та законодавчо-нормативних засад стандартизації та сертифікації сільського зеленого туризму як нетрадиційної форми господарювання та виду екологічних послуг. *Методи.* У ході дослідження використано системний і комплексний підходи, що забезпечило всебічне дослідження проблеми й одержання наукових результатів. Методологічною основою дослідження є загальнотеоретичні методи наукового пізнання, зокрема діалектичний метод, системний аналіз, фундаментальні положення загальної економічної теорії. Графічний метод використано для наочного зображення структурних схем. Окрім того, в дослідженні застосовано загальнонаукові та спеціальні методи, такі як діалектичний, монографічний, абстрактно-логічний, індукції та дедукції, що дозволило використати їх для визначення організаційних та законодавчо-нормативних засад стандартизації та сертифікації сільського зеленого туризму. *Результати.* У статті розглянуто законодавчо-нормативні засади стандартизації та сертифікації сільського зеленого туризму в Україні. Наведено методологічні підходи до стандартизації й сертифікації сільського зеленого туризму. Зазначено інноваційні чинники, що впливають на розвиток сільського зеленого туризму у регіонах України. Акцентована увага на необхідності проведення екологічного аудиту та екологічної сертифікації окремих територій, адміністративних районів, природно-господарських систем в цілому. Визначено необхідність використання знаків маркування правової охорони географічних зазначень. Доведено, що добровільна екологічна сертифікація засвідчує відповідність до виконання вимог законів, технічних регламентів, кращих практик, добрих правил, національних й галузевих стандартів як до туризму так і до дотримання вимог збереження якості довкілля загалом. *Практичне значення.* На основі проведеного аналізу сформовано систему стандартизації та сертифікації сільського

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«зеленого» туризму, яка пришвидшить адаптацію нормативно-законодавчої бази України до стандартів ЄС, підвищить якість туристичного продукту на основі європейських норм та екологічних положень, сприятиме залученню іноземних інвестицій та розвитку інфраструктури і матеріально-технічної бази сільського зеленого туризму. *Перспективи подальших досліджень.* Отримані результати визначають необхідність подальшого вдосконалення критеріїв методики для сертифікації садиб сільського «зеленого» туризму, що сприятиме розвитку ринку екологічних послуг, збільшить кількість іноземних туристів та підвищить конкурентоспроможність України на міжнародному ринку туристичних послуг.

**Ключові слова:** сільський «зелений» туризм, агросадиба, сільські території, екологічний аудит, стандартизація та сертифікація.

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### **1. Introduction.**

The rural green tourism is one of the universal means of diversifying sources of income of the agricultural population and at the same time an effective method of deepening tourists' knowledge as to the natural, historical, gastronomic, ethnographic features of the Ukrainian regions. Complexity key factors in the rural green tourism progress involve the market situation and its significant uncertainty; the seasonal instability of demand for services; the lack of government programs supporting its development; the volatility of consumer demands. Additionally, it is the competition, which increasingly grows among institutions and other organizational forms of mass recreation, providing regional market services, as well as limited financial resources and socio-economic situation in the country.

One of the tasks of the regional enlargement is to organize and implement the rural green tourism, as well as to create its clusters in the communities. Its network formation will make possible to develop local industries, to organize job places and rise its life quality through the diversification of economic activities, and more completely use and preserve the natural environment (NE) quality and the potential of rural areas.

### **2. Literature review.**

Most foreign and domestic scholarly works are devoted to the market, grouping and developing in the area of tourist services. Their authors have studied issues concerning the

generalization of the foreign experience how the state can stimulate the tourism blossoming (Bratyuk, 2012, p. 65) and avoid difficulties concerning the Ukrainian tourist market generation and enlargement (Povorozniuk (ed.), 2019). Moreover, they have paid attention to the current state of the tourist market in Ukraine (Sirenko, 2010, p. 72; Teletov and Kosolap, 2012, p. 26), its marketing tools and methods in the context of individual territories and in general (Kotler, Asplund, Rein and Haider, 1999; Kudla, 2011; Pankrukhin, 2005; Shulhina, 2005). Some of them have concentrated on the innovative tourism product market formation and promotion (Miliutina, 2012, p. 371); economic aspects of tourism in individual countries and regions (Kidirbekuli, Sizdykbaieva, Raimbekov and Kupalova, 2012, p. 349); tourism management at different levels of its generalization (Shvedun, 2012, p. 78); green tourism difficulties (Diuk and Burlaka, 2018); methodological grounds for using the sustainable development potential (including tourism) of countries and regions (Melnik, 2009), etc.

S. Iliashenko believes that the market grouping tourist services in Ukraine occurs haphazardly, mainly only in the Crimea, the Carpathians, the Azov region and some Polesian regions, whilst other country regions, where tourist services, especially environmentally oriented prevail, are less studied. The available scientifically-based developments mainly consider the marketing of the tourism

specific types and do not allow to systematically evaluate and determine the ways of the green tourism market potential, realizing in Ukraine and quite significant today (*Illishenko, 2015, p. 121*).

Additionally to the forgoing, V. Byrkovych defines the rural green tourism as a specific form of the recreation in private farms of the rural areas, involving the property and labor resources of a personal peasant, subsidiary or farm estate, natural and recreational features of the area and the cultural, historical and ethnographic heritage of the region (*Byrkovych, 2008, p. 142*).

### **3. Methodology.**

In the process of research, systematic and integrated approaches were used, which provided a comprehensive study of the problem and the achievement of scientific results. Methodological basis of the research are general theoretical methods of scientific knowledge, in particular dialectic method, system analysis, fundamental positions of general economic theory. The graphical method was used to visualize the structural diagrams. In addition, general scientific and special methods were used in the study such as dialectical, monographic, non-lethal, induction and deduction, which allowed them to be used to determine the organizational, legislative and regulatory framework for the standardization and certification of the rural green tourism.

### **4. Research objectives.**

*The purpose of the article* is to determine the organizational, legislative, and regulatory framework for the rural green tourism standardization and certification both as an unconventional form of management and as a type of environmental services.

### **5. Results and discussions.**

The green tourism management in Ukraine is still using the experience of the Eastern European countries. However, significant achievements for the state can be obtained while taking into consideration the domestic economic realities and innovations. One of the environmental management tools is the environmental audit with the certification. For this

purpose, it is advisable to use the standardization and certification methodology in various areas of the economy, including ecological certification and standardization of the production and logistics of environmentally friendly and organic products, and the certification for the rural green tourism, etc. (*Skrypchuk, 2011*).

The Program for the voluntary categorization of individual and collective non-hotel accommodation facilities is one of the known in Ukraine. The present Program applies to the individual and collective non-hotel accommodation facilities, whose owners are members of the government organization called the Union for the Promotion of the Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine, as well as to the network of Ukrainian Hospitable Homestead. The Program establishes requirements for various categories of accommodation facilities suitable for the rural tourism and the procedure for their assignment. The Program requirements apply to the business entities, providing services for individual and collective non-hotel accommodation facilities (*Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism Development in Ukraine, 2020*).

Currently, there are methodological approaches to the categorization of rural green tourism estates (*Skrypchuk, 2011*). However, as a rule, the present and other developments are aimed at the household aspects of the agricultural estates and do not take into consideration the systemic solution of issues in general and those which are related to the socio-ecological and economic aspects of the specified business.

The Law of Ukraine "On Tourism" (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1995*), interstate standards for tourist and excursion services and similar standards of the member countries of the European Federation of Rural and Farm Tourism EUROGITIS (Austria, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic) have become initial for the Voluntary Categorization Program ("Ukrainian Hospitable Homestead") and corresponding requirements within the rural green tourism area. Voluntary categorization preferences have been grouped in accordance with the

requirements of DSTU 4268: 2003 “Tourist services. Accommodation facilities. General requirements” (*Ukrainian Research and Training Center of Standardization, Certification and Quality, 2003a*), regulatory documents and basic standards of individual and collective non-hotel accommodation facilities in European countries and Ukraine, Laws of Ukraine: “On Farming” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2003a*), “On personal peasant economy” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2003b*), “On technical regulations and conformity assessment” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015*), “On approval of the procedure for the provision of services in case of the temporary accommodation (residence)” (*Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2006*), DSTU 4269:2003 “Tourist Services. Accommodation Facilities. Classification of Hotels” (*Ukrainian Research and Training Center of Standardization, Certification and Quality, 2003b*); State Sanitary Rules and Regulations for Maintaining the Territories of Populated Areas, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (*2011*).

Considering the actualization of the ecological and organic agricultural production development and the corresponding system, providing services, it is economically profitable, environmentally sound and socially responsible for the introduction of innovations in the rural green tourism industry. Hence, the development of methodological innovative approaches are required to the standardization and certification of rural green tourism in Ukraine and internationally, based on principles of the environmental management, information and environmental economics, digitalization in communications and the determination of indicators of the state of the NE to certify new society requests for goods and services in communities and tourism. Practical experience is demonstrated by such companies as “Karpatski Polonyny”, “Zelenyi Hlobus”, “Zelenyi Kliuch”, “Krashche v Pryrodi”, etc. When developing a methodology for the rural green tourism certification, the innovations in

the production of goods and services, as well as digitalization advantages in the regional economy on online observations, when choosing a tourism objects, logistics and accessibility, comparison of characteristics and prices, and the like, have been taken into consideration. Simultaneously, the key task of the rural green tourism strategic management comes down to prioritizing goals and ranking them in time.

There are known methodological developments of the voluntary categorization in the field of rural green tourism under the title of the “Ukrainian Hospitable Homestead” and categorizing requirements. Both of them are carried out on the basis of the Law of Ukraine “On tourism”, “On the protection of consumer rights”, as well as on the interstate standards for tourist and excursion services, and similar standards of member-countries of the European Federation of Rural and Farm Tourism EUROGITES (*Kosanovskyi et al., 2009*).

In Ukraine, provisions of the Program “Ukrainian Hospitable Homestead”, having four categories and the Union for the Promotion of the Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine, have introduced requirements for the placement and labeling of agricultural estates with the sign “Green Estate”. The certification of services for the temporary accommodation (residence) is carried out in the interests of the tourists’ life and health safety, the protection of their property and the protection of the NE. Any certification is regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On technical regulations and conformity assessment”, which concerns only individual entrepreneurs and rules of the mandatory certification of catering services provided by the subjects of tourism activities in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Tourism”. Both to attract foreign guests and to create the proper conditions for the tourism in rural agro-estates, we carry out the categorization or certification. Voluntary categorization demands are developed in accordance with the requirements of DSTU 4268: 2003 “Tourist Services. Accommodation Facilities. General

Requirements”, normative documents and basic standards of individual and collective non-hotel accommodation facilities in European countries. Innovative factors for the rural green tourism developing in regions of Ukraine have become:

- regulatory framework harmonization with the EU instructions, for example, the European Federation of Rural and Farm Tourism EUROGITIS;

- further development of the regulatory framework and concepts for the expansion of the rural green tourism in the regions;

- digitalization and GIS-technologies in the whole aspects of the rural green tourism in regions and communities;

- systematic approach to the management of regions and communities to create a socio-ecological and economic effect through the procedure applicable for the natural environment ecological audit;

- organic production development in the regions of Ukraine;

- recreational industry development and the reproduction of the society productive forces;

- restoration and expansion of the activities of social and cultural institutions in the tourist and recreational industries, which will gradually form the sphere of non-traditional types of entrepreneurial activities for the countryside within the hospitality and entertainment.

Considering the European vector of its development relevant for Ukraine, and greening services and population needs, we have formed methodological approaches to the environmental standardization and certification in the area of the rural green tourism. That is the environmental standardization goal, which is to ensure the provision of the range of quality services within the tourism industry by rural estates, determined on the multi-factor basis. Such a certification purpose is to verify the provision of services for the rural green tourism going with legislative and regulatory documents of Ukraine. The ecological certification is to preserve the quality of the NE during

the management procedure at tourism sites and surrounding areas.

Rural green tourism certification major tasks involve the certification (including environmental) of all the constituent objects, resources, territories and in general – NE under their developments. Moreover, they aimed at the assistance in case of the consumers' conscious choice of a range of tourist services at the declared price and categories, and, simultaneously, at the conformity audit of constituent elements and the whole range of rural green tourism services and the prevention of the sale of services dangerous to human life, health and property. Additionally, they requires some compliance with mandatory standards, rules, requirements for the protection of oil pumping stations, the use of natural resources and environmental safety in the provision of tourist services; and the confirmation of the adequacy of the life cycle of tourist services and the like.

The list of tourist services subject to the mandatory certification regarding the human life and health safety, protection of their property and NE, the certification procedure for services in the field of tourist activities are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Tourism”.

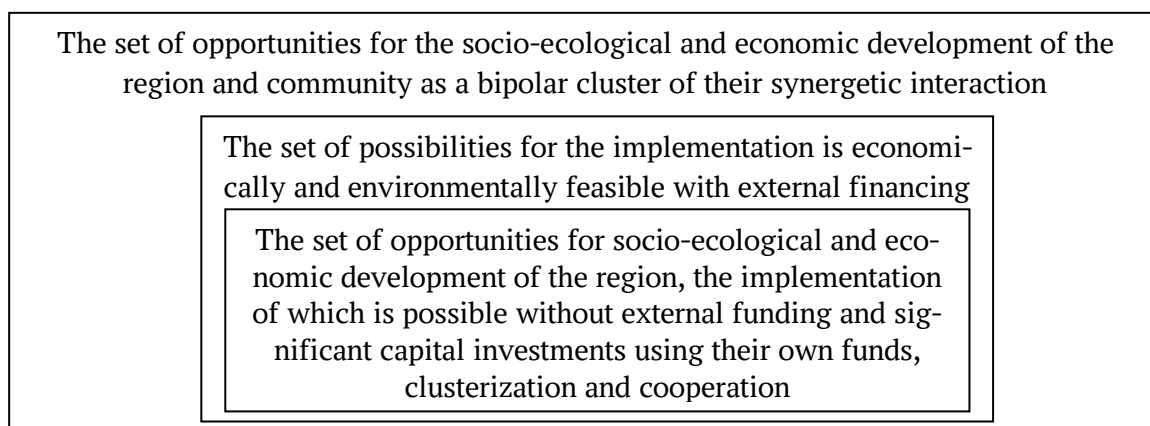
The voluntary ecological certification certifies its compliance with the requirements of laws, technical regulations, best practices, good rules, national and industry standards both for the tourism and for some compliance with the requirements for maintaining the NE quality. The rural estate ecological certification is carried out on a voluntary basis. Any inspection of the rural estate is voluntary too and performed under an Application from its owner.

The main executors of work on the environmental standardization and certification system development, the inspection of rural estates (or rural green tourism) and the provision of the appropriate category, marketing information to the population of the region (community) can be independent auditors, experts

and employees of the Department of External Relations, Investment Attractions, Tourism and Resorts in the Regions. They can form Commissions for the standardization and certification of rural estates, providing tourist services and, in the future, independent certification agencies. Under the term “ecological certification”, we mean a procedure that confirms the compliance of a rural estate (the rural green tourism object), providing tourist services, with the requirements of the construction, maintenance, food, within the NE quality compliance at an agricultural estate (in a

community, forest, lake and anywhere else apart and combined). Financing costs associated with the certification and standardization process is performed at the expense of customers, regional (community) development programs, sponsorship funds, grants and other sources unforbidden by applicable law.

The set of possibilities for the socio-ecological and economic development of the region, society, and the implementation of which is possible without external funding and significant capital investments, is shown below (*Figure 1*).



**Fig. 1. The set of opportunities for the socio-economic and ecological development of the region, community as a result of environmental audit and certification procedures in the field of rural green tourism**

*Source: Formed by the authors.*

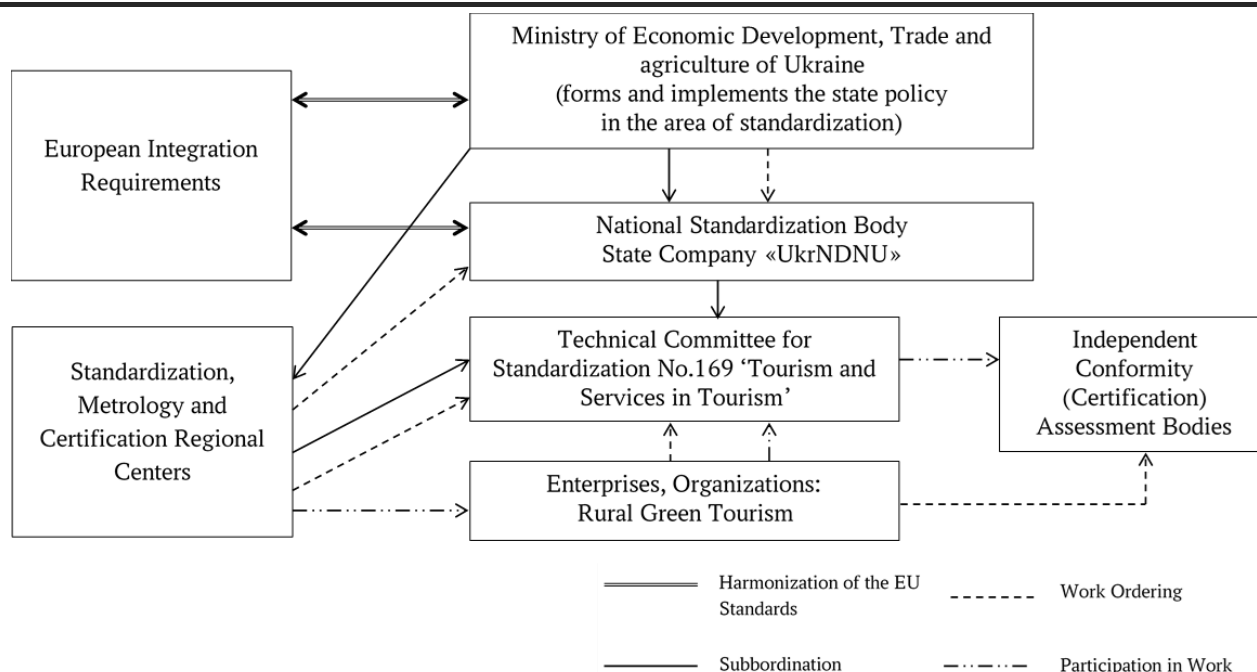
The economic effect resulting in the environmental audit is to improve the NE quality, to use scientifically grounded management decisions, and to perform the ecological certification of individual territories, administrative districts, natural and economic systems in general.

It is advisable for Ukrainian regions to use the method of the certification applying for rural green tourism estates, a feature of which is the use of GIS-technologies, provisions of the digitalization of the economy, including the service sector. According to the methodology, it is necessary to use the ecological certification requirements in accordance with the first level – 70 %, the second level – 85 % and the third level – 100 % as the highest.

The rural green tourism is a specific part of economic activity in a region or community.

An innovation for its implementation is the adoption of the Laws of Ukraine “On peculiarities of the legal protection of geographical indications”, “Protection of rights to guaranteed traditional features and the use of quality schemes for agricultural and food Products”. We consider that peculiarities of natural conditions and the quality of the NE resources (water, atmospheric air, original medicinal properties in the territory of the community, etc.) are necessary to use.

To develop the rural green tourism as a type of environmental services and to ensure the economic growth of rural areas of Ukraine, we have generated a system of the rural green tourism standardization and certification within the European integration context (*Figure 2*).



**Fig. 2. The system of the rural green tourism standardization and certification within the European integration context**

Source: Formed by the authors.

## 6. Conclusions.

Thus, existing in the present, the rural green tourism remains a highly promising branch of the tourism sector, and being important for the Ukrainian economy, it attracts not only domestic, but also foreign tourists, contributes to the establishment of foreign economic relations with European states.

Significant disadvantages of the rural tourism progress, as we see it, include the market situation uncertainty; seasonal instability of demands for travel services; high competition in the market of tourist services compared with institutions of other mass recreation organizational forms; limited financial resources; variability of demands (requests) of services by consumers; socio-economic

situation in the country and the like. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the rural green tourism with the promotion and popularization of environmental services, the guarantee of an environmentally safe NE, organic production, preservation of the national cultural values, and the development of educational programs. The development of departmental standards for auditors certifying rural green tourism objects is also relevant.

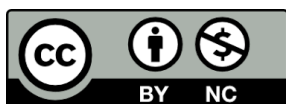
Summing up, we conclude that the promotion of the rural tourism development is a promising and priority area of tourist activity, aimed at solving social, economic and financial difficulties of rural areas and their development.

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