

# Rural green tourism in Ukraine: organization and development issues

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**Abstract.** The study examines the basic principles of development and specifics of activities in the field of rural green tourism in Ukraine, a special integrated area of recreational activity. The situational aspects related to the organization of entrepreneurial activity in rural green tourism, which is currently in the initial stage, are analyzed. Based on the analysis of tourism statistics and reports, it was found that approximately 2,000 rural estates in Ukraine provide sustainable tourism services (STS). The Lviv Regional Union for the Promotion of Green Tourism offers about 200 agro-houses, the Ivano-Frankivsk Union offers more than 300, the Zakarpattia Union offers more than 360 estates, and the Chernivtsi Union offers about 80. Further activities in the field of rural green tourism in Ukraine are impossible without the introduction of an effective marketing management system at the local and regional levels. The calculation of the period required to reach the break-even point of a rural estate, depending on the pricing strategy and level of use of the facility, showed that 50% (optimistic option) payback of the project would be 2 years, 40% (realistic option) 2.5 years, 30% (pessimistic option) 3.25 years.

## 1 Introduction

The share of tourism in global GDP is about 10%. The tourism industry accounts for about 6% of total and 30% of global exports of services. Every 11th job in the world is in the tourism sector and in 2023 the number of international tourists was more than 1 billion people. It is predicted that this figure will grow shortly, and by 2030, the income from tourism activities is expected to increase to USD 1.8 billion [1]. One of the areas of economic development in the world is the search for innovative forms of entrepreneurship, including in the tourism business. Ukraine has significant opportunities and recreational resources for the development of business activities in the field of rural green tourism (RGT). Occupying one of the key positions in the tourism industry, in particular from the point of view of low investment and quick profit, rural green tourism in Ukraine is also currently one of the most promising sectors of economic development. The above aspect confirms the relevance of the chosen topic and indicates the need for a detailed study of rural green tourism development in Ukraine.

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## 2 Literature review

Among the scientific publications that address the issues of tourism development and tourism activities, it is worth noting the works of such scientists as Naseem S. [2], Lin X. et al. [3], Sokol T. [4], Peng Z., Zhang H. and Wang Y. [5], Badulescu A. et al. [6]. Thus, Naseem S. points out that in recent decades, tourism in the world has become one of the most important economic factors, and its services have become an organized sector of the economy in many countries. Today, tourism is an integral component of the world's economic potential and contributes to positive changes in socio-economic life. Increasingly, broader segments of the population are involved in the tourist movement, thereby turning tourism into a mass phenomenon [2].

Lin X. et al. [3] point out that tourism as a phenomenon has existed since ancient times, but it acquired its modern commercial form in the mid-nineteenth century and its mass character in the mid-twentieth century after the Second World War. This was facilitated by a number of economic (development of the service sector, growth of population incomes, emergence of the middle class, consumer culture), demographic (population growth and life expectancy, urbanization, change of values), political (globalization, intergovernmental agreements on simplification of tourist formalities), technological (improvement of transport, information and communication technologies) factors [3].

All of these factors and other global trends have had a positive impact on the development of the tourism industry and have created a need to develop new tourism products and services. Sokol T. believes that in Ukraine, during the post-war recovery period, along with traditional types of tourism, such as recreational, educational (sightseeing), and active tourism, medical and inclusive tourism for people who have suffered physical and psychological trauma will become increasingly important. Ukraine needs to restore a number of important historical, cultural and natural monuments damaged by the war. This can stimulate the emergence of completely new innovative types of tourism caused by the war [4]. Peng Z., Zhang H., Wang Y. [5] believe that tourism is influenced by the general laws of development of human society. Badulescu A. et al. [6] argue that tourism plays a significant role in stimulating economic development.

Many Ukrainian scholars have studied the issues and problems of rural green tourism development, have defined its concept, essence and organization features. For example, researchers Korkuna O. et al. [7] believe that rural green tourism is an economic activity in the field of tourism services, which consists of such components as providing a place to stay in the lap of nature. Kuzio N. and Kosar N. consider rural tourism as "a recreational type of tourism" [8]. Lamia J. understands rural green tourism as conducting business activities based on rural agricultural dwellings (agro-homesteads) [9]. Khan et al. [10] believe that rural green tourism should be considered "as a form of non-agricultural (i.e. alternative and additional to the main agricultural activity), namely, recreational and tourist non-professional entrepreneurship in rural areas, which is organically combined with other types of tourism - ecological, gastronomic, extreme, ethnographic, agritourism, event tourism, etc."

Perović L. et al. [11] pay considerable attention to the study of the peculiarities of rural green tourism development in Ukraine. The authors analysed the concepts of "rural tourism", "ecological tourism", "agrotourism"; identified the factors that contribute to the development of rural tourism in Ukraine; analysed the current features and trends of rural green tourism in Ukraine.

## 3 Materials and methods.

According to the analysis of scientific research and publications, scientists are actively researching issues related to tourism development.

However, despite a significant number of publications on this topic, the issue of entrepreneurial activity in the field of rural green tourism remains poorly understood and therefore requires further detailed study.

The article aims to study the organisational aspects and key problems of rural green tourism development as a promising type of tourism activity in Ukraine.

The objectives of the study are to analyse the situation related to the organisational aspects of doing business in the field of rural green tourism and to identify the main obstacles to its development in Ukraine.

In conducting the study on organizational aspects and key problems of rural green tourism development as a promising type of tourism activity in Ukraine, the following methods were used: method of theoretical generalization with elements of analysis - to determine the essence of the definition of "rural green tourism"; method of synthesis and systematization - to determine and characterise the periodization of rural green tourism development in Ukraine; method of data display - to demonstrate the results of the study; method of logical generalization and systematic approach - to formulate conclusions and identify areas for further research.

## 4 Results

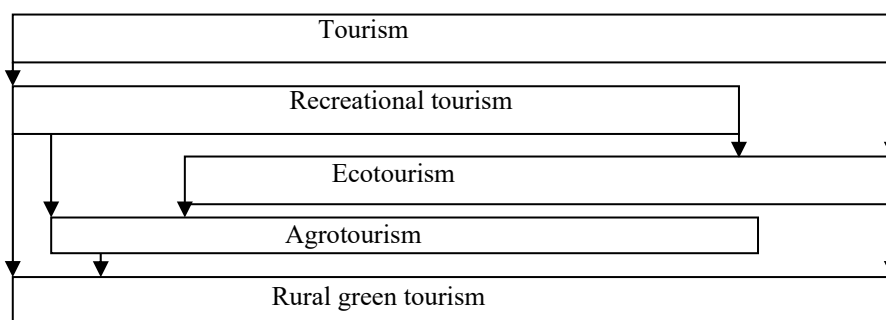
There has been an interest in innovative forms of travel in tourism. This interest generates the need for active forms of leisure time, while not only physical activity is important, but also the cognitive and recreational components of travel. Under such conditions, there are dynamic changes in the way and style of recreation. New types of tourism are emerging that provide an unforgettable tourist experience and contribute to the development of tourist destinations [12]. Rural tourism is a specialized type of tourism that includes elements of organized and unorganized recreation of travelers in rural areas in order to attract them to the local nature, population lifestyle and familiarize them with local ethno-cultural complexes and their values. Under these conditions, there is a demand for new types of tourism products that have not been previously involved or have been little used in everyday life [13].

Nowadays, rural green tourism has gained significant development both globally and within Ukraine. It is a specific form of recreation that involves tourists staying in rural areas in a private farmstead with ample opportunities to use the natural, material and cultural potential of a particular region. The organizer of rural green tourism is a rural family that provides tourists or excursionists with their own accommodation and environmentally friendly food grown within the personal farming, introducing them to the peculiarities of the local lifestyle, everyday life and traditions of the region. Rural green tourism is a form of active recreation with ecologically oriented services.

In general, rural green tourism should be interpreted as an active (walks, excursions, sports games, hunting, fishing, etc.) or passive (cultural and ethnic) tourist activity that takes place and/or is organized within the rural area, associated with the accommodation of tourists in rural estates (agro-estates), familiarization with the available natural resources, customs, way of life, national cuisine, folklore, culture and unique traditions of the respective region.

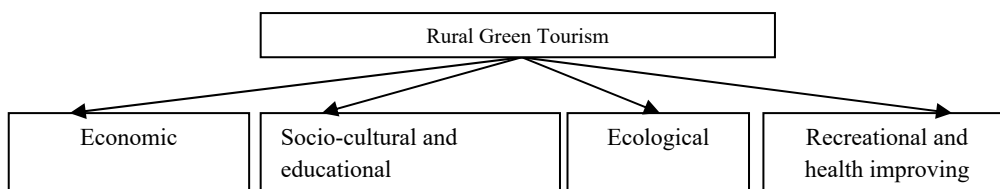
Currently, rural green tourism in its organized form is taking its first steps in Ukraine. Traditionally, it is carried out in rural areas, in particular where the most remarkable natural values are concentrated, and access to them attracts numerous tourists. In most countries of the world, rural green tourism is seen as an integral part of the comprehensive socio-economic development of rural areas. Such positions are also relevant for Ukraine, where the socio-economic problems of the countryside are clearly expressed and real changes are needed.

Rural green tourism is a specific type of tourism that organically combines certain features inherent in the essence of green, rural agro-, ecological tourism, while having its features inherent only in this type, the main of which is the personal participation of tourists in the implementation of technological processes for the production of agricultural products. This allows us to draw up a certain scheme that shows the place of rural green tourism in the system of other types of tourism (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** The place of rural green tourism in the system of related types of tourism.

The specificity of such a type of business activity in rural areas as rural green tourism is that it requires an appropriate material and technical base; its development depends to some extent on natural factors; historical and architectural factors have a significant impact; appropriate specific training of specialists plays a particularly important role in rural green tourism. It is worth noting that rural green tourism as a type of off-farm activity in rural areas is only one of many effects of this process, which reflects the degree of realization of only one of the functions of rural green tourism (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Main functions of rural green tourism.

However, at present, the development of rural green tourism is constrained both by the lack of information, organizational, financial and regulatory support that would regulate and create favorable conditions for its effective implementation within Ukraine, and by the lack of scientifically based concepts and strategies for the development of ecological tourism and programs for the greening of other types of tourism.

Today, thousands of residents of Ukrainian villages independently provide services in the field of rural green tourism, but they have not received official legalization; their status (subsidiary farming or entrepreneurship) has not yet been determined; relations with regulatory authorities are not regulated; sanitary, hygienic and environmental responsibilities for providing high-quality, environmentally friendly products and services, as well as preserving the environment, have not been defined. These and other factors significantly hinder the entry of this type of tourism into both domestic and foreign markets. In Ukraine, rural green tourism began to emerge in the late twentieth century. As opposed to traditional “beach and resort” vacations, the demand for active and educational tours has grown.

As a result of the integration of economic, environmental and social processes, rural green tourism emerged as a response to the search for a new development paradigm that defined the concept of environmentally sustainable development, which should be the basis of a survival strategy in the face of acute resource constraints. In recent years, scientists have been conducting comprehensive research on the development of rural green tourism not only within a particular territory, but also in the country as a whole. Scientists have concluded that the main part of the territory of Ukraine, in the future, aims to form a competitive brand of its own resources to attract a flow of domestic and foreign tourists and further develop regulated tourism, which is rural green tourism.

The problem of quantitative characterization of the dynamics of the development of the rural green tourism services market in Ukraine is caused by the lack of accounting of rural green tourism estates, which is a consequence of the lack of official recognition of rural green tourism as a type of tourism in the country. All official materials on rural green tourism relate not only to rural green tourism, but to tourism in general, and even then, they are very approximate. Therefore, to quantitatively characterize the dynamics of the processes of development of rural green tourism in the studied regions, the data of individual studies, personal observations of the author and their generalization were used.

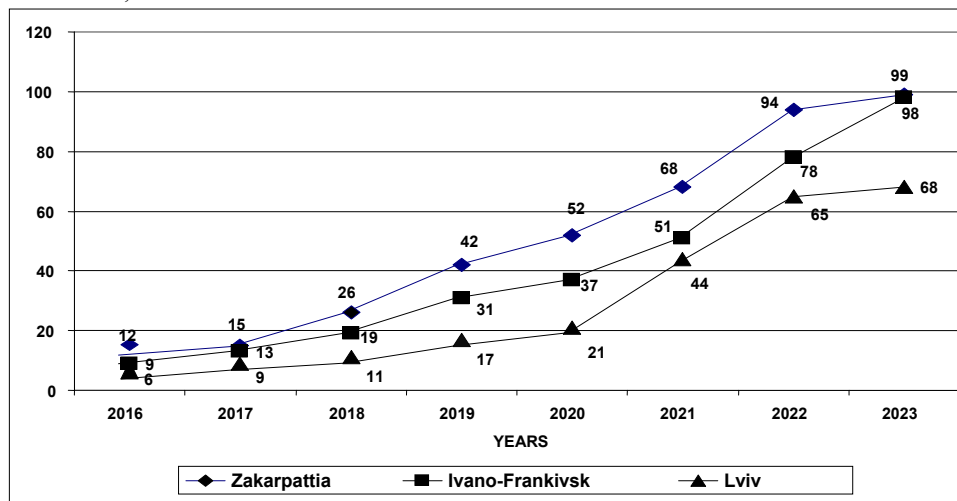
According to the analysis of tourism statistics and analytical reports [14], there are about 2000 rural homesteads in Ukraine that provide tourist services and can be classified as RGT farms. For tourists wishing a vacation in the mountain villages of the region, the Lviv Regional Union for the Promotion of Green Tourism offers about 200 agro-homesteads, the Ivano-Frankivsk offers more than 300 agro-homesteads, the Zakarpattia offers more than 360 homesteads, Chernivtsi offers about 80 agro-homesteads with meals and interesting trips. These figures change annually. However, due to the harsh taxation system, a significant number of green estate owners still provide services unofficially, avoiding licensing problems. Taking into account the results of observations in the studied regions, where the development of the RGT is at the highest level, it is possible to obtain certain data that quantitatively, to a degree close to reality, allow us to characterize the indicators of the dynamics of the RGT development (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Dynamics of the number of agritourism homesteads in the western regions of Ukraine [14].

Year	Number of rural estates providing services in the sector of:						The share of farms in the total number of rural tourism estates, %		
	rural tourism - total			rural green tourism					
	Region								
	Zakarpattia	Ivano-Frankivsk	Lviv	Zakarpattia	Ivano-Frankivsk	Lviv	Zakarpattia	Ivano-Frankivsk	Lviv
2016	70	61	39	12	9	6	17	15	15
2017	93	72	56	15	13	9	16	18	16
2018	136	111	78	26	19	11	19	17	14
2019	202	172	113	42	31	17	21	18	15
2020	227	231	148	52	37	21	23	16	14
2021	334	232	209	68	51	44	24	22	21
2022	348	312	266	94	78	65	27	25	24
2023	367	319	283	99	98	68	27	25	24
2023 up to 2016, times	5,24	5,22	7,25	8,25	10,89	11,33	+10	+10	+9

Note: in the column with the specific weight, +, - points.

As can be seen from Table 1 and Fig. 3, the dynamics of the development of RGT homesteads in the study region is quite lively, especially in Lviv region. However, if we compare the number of homesteads in the RGT sector with the total number of rural households, it is low.



**Fig. 3.** Dynamics of homesteads in the western regions of Ukraine [14].

There are also positive changes in the size of the region’s RGT homesteads, although their dynamics is not as rapid as the increase in their number (Table 2). The number of rooms provided to tourists at the same time and, accordingly, the number of beds in them were used as an indicator of the tourist enterprise’s size.

**Table 2.** Dynamics of the homesteads’ size in western regions of Ukraine [14].

Rate	Region					
	Zakarpattia		Ivano-Frankivsk		Lviv	
	2016	2023	2016	2023	2016	2023
Number of farms	12	99	9	98	6	68
Number of rooms for tourists - total	36	416	31	382	14	163
Per 1 homestead	3,1	4,2	3,4	3,9	2,3	2,4
Number of beds for tourists	72	940	50	833	30	347
Per 1 homestead	6,0	9,5	5,5	8,5	5,0	5,1

The results of the calculations in Table 2 show that the number of RGT homesteads is growing most rapidly in Lviv region among the studied oblasts, but the size of one homestead in terms of the number of rooms for simultaneous accommodation is increasing in Zakarpattia region. Similar is the ratio of trends in the number of beds for tourists - Zakarpattia region has the highest rates. The data in Table 2 also show that the study region is dominated by households with a small number of guest rooms - from 2 to 4 on average, which can accommodate 5-10 tourists at a time. The ratio between the number of beds and the number of guest rooms per household suggests that double rooms are the main accommodation type.

The owner of an agricultural estate must plan his activities in such a way that he does not operate at a loss, otherwise, his tourism business does not make economic sense. To do this, he needs to calculate the break-even point of his farm.

It is about determining the necessary number of tourists that he needs to host in order to make the investments made in the development of the RGT pay off.

It is best to perform such calculations in the coordinate system: units of production (for example, tourist days) are plotted on the X-axis, and the break-even point will occur at the amount of product required to cover investment costs, that is the number of tourist days.

For example, let's take an agro-estate whose owner has invested UAH 500 thousand in modernizing the house and adapting the existing farm to tourism activities: UAH 200 thousand was spent on the preparation of 10 double rooms with separate bathrooms, UAH 200 thousand on the reconstruction and equipment of the stables and the purchase of two horses, and UAH 100 thousand on the improvement of the recreation area and the homestead territory. Then the maximum annual number of tourist days in this farm will be  $365 \text{ days} \times 20 \text{ places} = 7300$  tourist days.

From the results of a survey of rural green tourism farm owners, we know that the actual level of capacity utilization of farmsteads does not exceed 40%. In this case, the owner of the farmstead can count on 2920 tourist days per year. At the cost of a day of rest (in the complex) of 800 UAH, the owner of the farm can apply a different strategy: high price - 1300 UAH; moderate price - 1000 UAH; low price - 850 UAH (Fig. 4).

With a high price policy (Figure 4), the homestead will reach the break-even point by using its capacity by 5%. In the case of a moderate strategy, it would be 6%, and in the case of a low price, 8%. Such low figures are explained by the fact that only the marginal costs of rural green tourism development were taken into account, but not the entire farm estate.

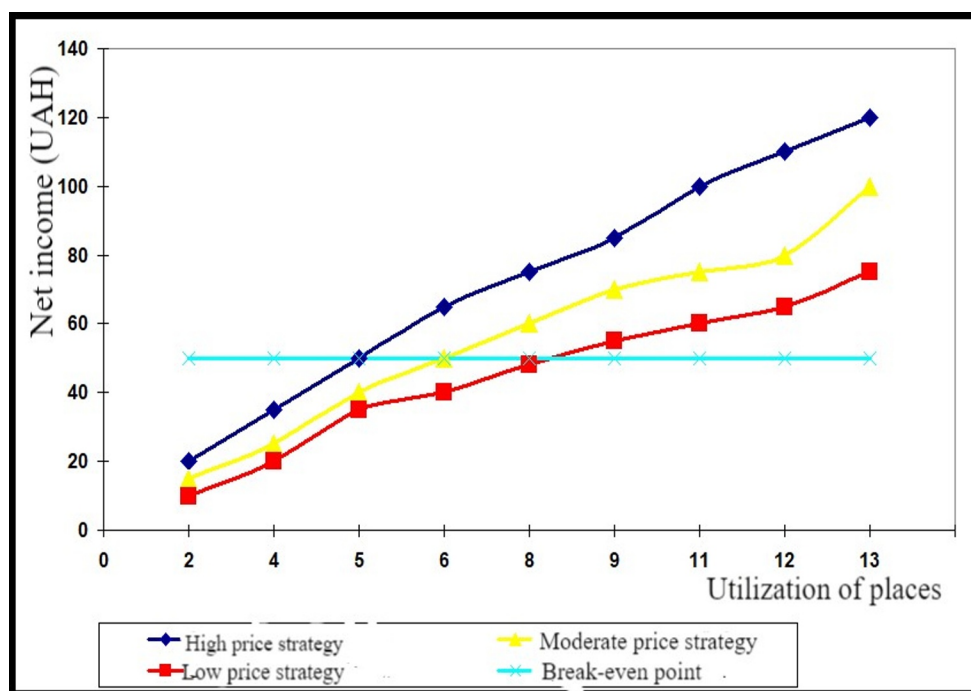


Fig. 4. Break-even points of the farmstead depending on the pricing strategy.

The owner of the farm may also be interested in the timeframe for which he can get his investment back. It is about how long it will take to reach the break-even point. There are three options for the possible workload of an agritourism homestead (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Calculation of the length of time required to reach the break-even point of an agricultural estate, depending on the pricing strategy and the level of utilization of the object, years.

Price Strategy	The time required for the return of investment according to three options of an object loading:		
	50% (optimistic version)	40% (real situation)	30% (pessimistic version)
High price	2,00	2,50	3,25
Moderate price	3,50	4,50	6,00
Low price	13,75	17,00	22,75

As can be seen from the results of the calculations presented in Table 3, investments make it impossible for the homestead owner to apply a low price strategy. It is necessary to increase the level of the facility utilization.

Reducing the unit price of a tourist product/service in order to increase the number of customers during the year is economically justified only in the case of well-established promotional activities of the homestead in the market of tourism services. The effectiveness of optimizing the pricing system will be higher in combination with effective marketing at the level of each agritourism enterprise. At the same time, it can be carried out both by the owners of the estates themselves and by firms specializing in rural (green) tourism, which are still very few in Ukraine, except for the presence of regional centers of the Union for the Promotion of Rural Green Tourism or the Union of Green Tourism in some regions.

Despite the strength of Ukraine’s tourism resource base, several problematic aspects stand in the way of rural green tourism development, including the following:

1. Disconnectedness of tourism stakeholders, lack of specialized tour operators, insufficiently developed legislative and legal framework, information deficit.

2. The habit of citizens and business leaders, as well as the authorities, to free natural resources and cheap use of them. This is one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of environmental culture and disregard for environmental law. Overcoming these problems requires time and great effort. One of the possible ways is to develop economic mechanisms that will allow to effectively evaluate the benefits of a rural green tourism product/service and increase their value.

3. Currently, there are only a small number of specialists in the field of rural green tourism who have professional experience in implementing this type of business activity. These problems are particularly acute in the western regions of Ukraine. Their overcoming is directly dependent on the development of a special ecotourism entity within which rural green tourism as a form of entrepreneurship can be realized.

Of course, these tasks should be solved by each individual region, taking into account the state and structure of tourist resources, their attractiveness and capacity, availability and capabilities of consumers, prices for the services offered, etc.

Taking into account the almost complete lack of awareness of the country’s public, representatives of leading travel agencies in Ukraine and abroad about the possibilities of rural green tourism, it should be determined that the main direction of advertising and information support for the activities of homesteads that sell rural green tourism services is the publication of thematic and comprehensive booklets and other advertising attributes, as well as wide information in the media. Undoubtedly, this will help expand demand and tourist interest. The absence or insufficient development of tourism infrastructure makes it possible to attract foreign investment for the prospective development of rural green tourism as one of the priority areas of tourism work.

It is worth noting that the development of rural green tourism to a certain extent depends not only on the initiatives of local authorities, but should also be fully supported at the state level. Domestic and foreign economic and investment programs related to the development of rural green tourism are aimed at overcoming such problems.

One of the effective ways to achieve this is through a program for the development and implementation of ecological types of tourism, which should include rural green tourism [15]. This fact is also supported by the thing that soon we should expect changes towards a long-term viable environmental strategy [16]. It recognized that the problems of environment and economic development can no longer be considered in isolation from each other.

It aims to harmonize two interdependent goals - to promote environmental improvement and to achieve high efficiency and quality of the economy for all peoples of the world.

According to [17] and the program to support small and medium-sized enterprises [18], the provision of tourism services should include environmental issues in all areas of activity - from planning and procurement of food and inventory to solving everyday practical issues. The main tasks of the program for the development of rural green tourism in Ukraine include:

- legislative formalization of activities in the field of rural green tourism;
- introduction of an economic mechanism for the provision of paid tourist services by enterprises established based on self-sufficiency, self-financing and self-supporting of recreational structural units of the National Parks of Ukraine;
- ensuring the development of recreational and tourist infrastructure following international standards;
- justification and mechanism for determining the permissible values of recreational loads on landscape complexes used for recreation, tourism and treatment;
- inventory, quantitative and qualitative assessment of recreational natural, historical and cultural resources available in protected areas;
- developing an intellectual and humanistic worldview, a patriotic attitude towards the country's natural and cultural heritage in tourists and vacationers.

An example of a program aimed at developing rural green tourism is the European Union's TACIS program "Support for Local Development and Tourism in the Carpathian Region" [19].

On December 1, 2005, the EU recognized Ukraine as a state with a stable market economy. Ukraine fulfilled all the technical requirements and officially acquired this status in early 2006. This decision reflected the significant economic and social development in Ukraine in recent years.

In general, it is worth noting that political, regulatory, social, economic, organizational, historical, cultural, and environmental factors are the main factors of rural green tourism development. However, since RGT is a rather independent type of tourism, the factors of its development are slightly different, although they largely coincide with the factors of rural tourism development [20, 21].

Thus, one of the key problems in the development of rural green tourism in Ukraine is that currently, at the legislative level, there is no understanding of the nature and importance of rural green tourism, the principles of its implementation, and its importance for territorial development and self-employment in rural areas [22-24].

## **5 Conclusions**

Rural green tourism is an effective innovative direction of tourism development in Ukraine. The manifestations of rural green tourism are becoming more distinct and obvious with the emergence of new format entrepreneurs who have realized that: on the one hand, rural green tourism has significant business opportunities, and on the other hand, it can make essential changes in the economic sphere of Ukraine by attracting foreign investment.

The system of program measures for the development of activities in the field of rural green tourism should include the following measures: development and implementation of effective measures that will promote the development of the material and technical base of rural green tourism; improvement of the personnel system; development and implementation of innovative forms of expertise and scientific research in the field of tourism, in particular rural (green) tourism; introduction of new forms of advertising and information support for the promotion of products and services in the field of rural green tourism; career guidance for the local population to engage in this type of activity; development of an effective regulatory, economic and business mechanism, the implementation of which will facilitate the development of small businesses in the field of rural green tourism.

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