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IT INDUSTRY ACHIEVEMENTS IN BELARUS

In the past several years Belarus has earned the reputation of the leading "IT country" in the Eastern European region. According to the Global Services 100 rating, the Republic of Belarus placed 13th among the 20 leading countries in the sphere of IT outsourcing and high-tech services. Moreover, three companies with Belarusian roots entered the top-100 of the largest world companies in this sphere: EPAM Systems, IBA Group and Intetics Co.

Software development has existed in the country since 1998. However, the key "starting point" from which the development of the IT sphere in Belarus began is considered to be September 2005, when by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus № 12 "On HTP", the legal basis for the successful work of the "Belarusian Silicon Valley" – the High-Tech Park – and the attraction of investments to the software development industry was laid. High-Tech Park (HTP) is a special economic zone in the Republic of Belarus, to create favorable conditions for the development of software, information and communication technologies (ICT).

According to the International Finance Corporation, by 2020 the revenue of the IT-sphere of Belarus may reach 3–4 billion US dollars. Today 49% of HTP residents are companies with Belarusian capital and 51% – with foreign capital. Experts predict an increase in the number of companies with foreign capital, as today ICT is one of the priority aspects for direct foreign investments to Belarus.

The consumers of software developed by the residents of the Hi-Tech Park are well-known global corporations: automotive corporations Peugeot (France), Mitsubishi (Japan), media holdings British Telecom (UK), T-Mobile (Germany), international news agency Reuters (UK-USA), fuel and energy concerns British Petroleum (UK), Rosenergoatom Concern, London Stock Exchange, the World Bank, Deutsche Bank, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the world-famous producers Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive (USA), Samsung (Korea).

When abroad people are asked if they have heard anything about the Belarusian IT industry. Unfortunately, very few associate Viber, Apalon, MAPS.ME, MSQRD and other well-known products with Belarus.

Let us consider what Masquerade or MAPS.ME applications are famous for. MSQRD – Live Filters & Face Swap for Video Selfies is a mobile application that allows users to change human appearance during video-chats in real time. The application is based on the 3D face tracking technology developed by its creators, and works both on IOS (Internetworking Operating System) and Android. The application was developed by Masquerade Technologies, Inc., a Belarus-based company. Original authors are Eugene Nevgen, Sergey Gonchar, Eugene Zatepyakin.

On 4 March 2016, the application appeared on Google Play and became available for Android users. February 2016, MSQRD became the 9th most popular app on the App Store. By mid-March, the number of installs exceeded 20 million. On 9 March 2016, the product was purchased by Facebook.

MAPS.ME application, formerly named MapsWithMe, is a mobile app for Android, IOS and BlackBerry that provides offline maps using Open Street Map data. The whole team has developed an application in Switzerland and Belarus. Yury Melnichek, a Belarusian programmer and entrepreneur is a co-founder of MapsWithMe. In September 2015, the app was open sourced.

Thus, the business incubator HTP is an environment where young people can meet, discuss their ideas and create new projects to become well-known all over the world like Viber, Wargaming and others. Young people will shape the future of the Belarusian IT industry. The Government will take all necessary steps to help youth initiatives grew into independent IT companies.