

Even the countries which were opponents of the idea of virtual money now decided to give it the chance for existence. There is no sense in banning them, there is a need to regulate them. The decision by the Financial Ministry highlights the idea that giving legal status to cryptocurrency will reduce the risks of fraud and prevent a prominent underground market. It will also help increase tax revenue for the government. It seems plausible, in fact, that if even a few countries introduce crypto-friendly regulations that allow businesses to do things they couldn't do at home, the world's most innovative companies would move to those countries. This could force other countries to adopt crypto-friendly regulations themselves, creating a powerful domino effect.

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STILL WATERS RUN DEEP: 6 APPS MADE BY BELARUSIANS

It may come as shock to many people, but tractors and potatoes are hardly the only things Belarus can be recognized for. We live in the 21st century that has been admitted to be the century of informational technologies, so it is inevitable that our country is also influenced by this wave. Most of us are likely to underestimate the achievements of Belarus when it comes to IT-sphere. Little do we know that venture companies all over the world are ready to finance new promising projects by Belarusians. Investors come to our country in search for talented creators with original and interesting ideas, many of which have already succeeded internationally. We all have heard a lot about unprecedented success of Viber and World of Tanks. But what else do we have to offer? There're tons of extremely successful projects created in Belarus, but most of us are unaware of them. I've decided to make a research and enlighten you about 6 apps created by Belarusians that became popular not only in the borders of our country but worldwide.

1) One of the most famous Belarusian start-up project is an offline service «MAPS.ME», which allows its users download maps on their mobile devices and use them while travelling all over the world even without Internet connection. The project was first introduced to the general public in 2010 on a “StartUp Weekend” event in Minsk. Later, in 2014, the founders managed to sell it to «Mail.ru Group» company for several tens of millions dollars. It was estimated that by the end of 2015 «MAPS.ME» had been downloaded by more than 40 million users.

2) “Apalon” products: “Apalon” company was founded in 2007 by Petr Skoromny and Matvei Timoshenko and initially specialized in developing games and web applications. After the release of iPhone and the appearance of App Store in 2008, the team focused on development of iOS applications. Launching of Google Play, Amazon Appstore and Samsung Apps opened new markets for the company, and “Apalon” has

become one of the world leaders in mobile development ever since. Dozens of apps were created for users of iOS and Android. 5 of “Apolon” creations were downloaded more than 10 million times on Google Play. In 2014 the company was bought by American investors from “Mindspark”, a startup company.

3) In 2012 Kiril Kudin took an online-course of entrepreneurship at Stanford University. The aim was to create apps that will interest potential investors. And it seems like the course had a positive effect as the app Kudin made, “WiFi Map”, is extremely popular all over the world. The app allows its users share Wi-Fi passwords to public places. Basically, the program is a huge database of Wi-Fi password which works similarly to a social network. Another advantage of the app is that it spreads across national borders and can be very useful when travelling.

4) PandaDoc is mentioned as one of the “hottest” Silicon Valley startup founded by Sergei Borisyk and Mikita Mikado. “PandaDoc” app was officially launched in July 2014. “PandaDoc” is a web-app which automizes each step of the way dealing with documents. It allows its users create a document, edit it, sent it through the line of multiple approvers in one click, get the document signed with electronic signatures and get paid immediately once the document is completed. Besides, it’s possible to know the exact time the document was opened, how much time a recipient spent on each page. The tool earned international success and became one of the first official additions to Google Docs and Google Sheets.

5) Gismart products: Gismart is engaged in creating music games for smartphones and simulators of musical instruments. Simulators include a wide range of instruments. In addition to these, in 2016 the Beat Maker Go! was launched. It allows users to create electronic music, mix various sound effects. Besides, Gismart works on «professional» apps for musicians - a guitar tuner and a metronome. The most popular simulator – Piano – was downloaded more than 50 million times. In 2017, the simulator won the American Award Appy Awards. All in all, Gismart applications were downloaded over 230 million times.

6) Steepshot is a platform that «rewards» people for sharing their lifestyle and visual experience and getting likes for their posts. But reward is very unusual – tokens. The idea of the project appeared at the end of 2016 and was inspired by the popularity of cryptocurrency. The idea belongs to a whole team of Belarusian startups under the guidance of Pavel Martynov. To receive virtual money you need to upload original photo and get the «approval» of other users. In Steepshot, a like does not have a certain value: it depends on the amount of money of other people. The more money the person who liked your picture has – the more valuable his like is. The currency can be converted into dollars within the app and then the money can be transferred to your plastic card or bank account. The app is still under development so there’re still a lot of unanswered questions about it and its future on the world market.

Conclusion: It’s not a secret that Belarusian IT-industry is mostly aimed at outsourcing. But the situation is changing and more and more creators nowadays are working on their own original content. In fact, Belarus is keeping up with advanced

countries and may compete with them in terms of IT sphere development. One more step is to be done: advertise! Mass media should pay much more attention to those who can (not only sportsmen!) also represent us on the worldwide level. The international image of Belarus depends, first of all, on us! It's up to us to advertise ourselves and prove that we're worth being noticed by investors and that we have a lot to offer to the world IT market. It seems like our country is moving in the right direction: on December 21, 2017 the President of our country signed The Decree "*On the Development of Digital Economy*", which includes measures "to liberalize conditions for conducting business in the sphere of high technologies". What's more, in 2015 High-technology Park established so-called "business-incubator" which main goal is encouraging the development of IT industry in Belarus, as well as helping gifted content makers and supporting new IT companies that can become HTP residents.

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