

Towards joint projects

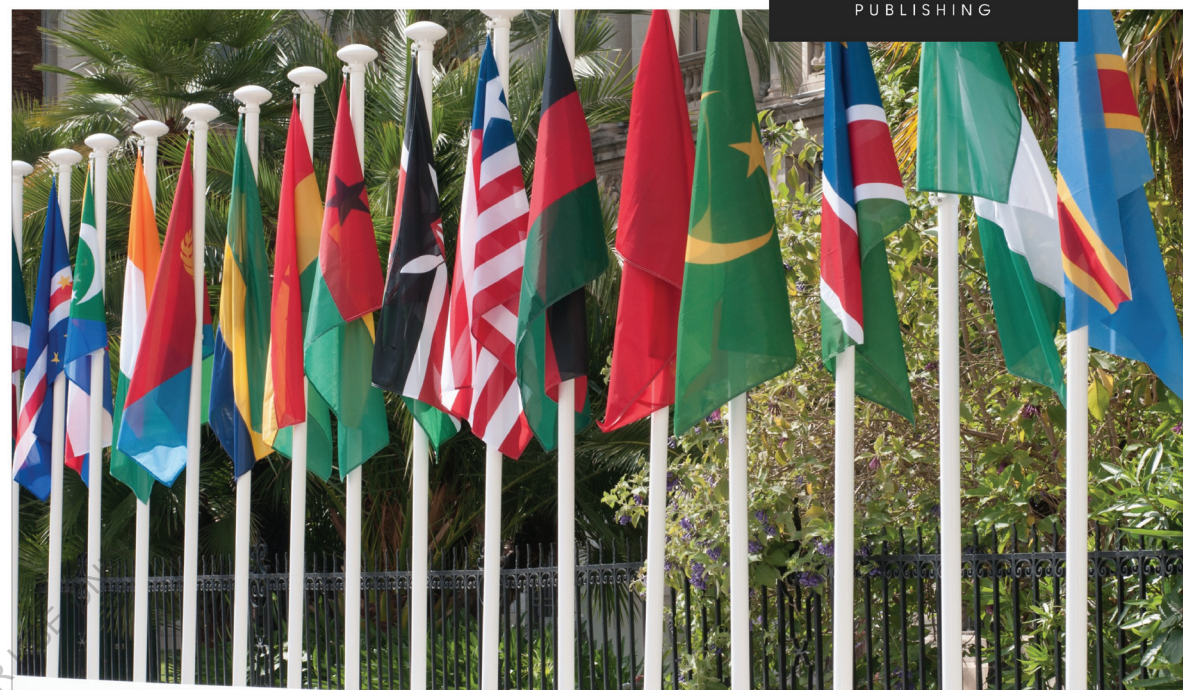
As instability, geopolitical and geo-economic rivalry, and the coronavirus pandemic continue to be the main trends in the world, the Republic of Belarus is making great efforts to promote integration processes in Eurasia, ensure multi-vector cooperation and favorable conditions for the realization of the country's foreign economic interests. In this regard, a strategic allied relationship with Russia and constructive cooperation with other countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States are being developed. The development of the strategic partnership with China is characterised by high dynamism. The development of Belarus's relations with the countries of the 'far arc of foreign policy' located in Asia, Africa and Latin America is becoming an increasingly relevant area of the Belarusian foreign policy. Economic diplomacy traditionally plays a key role in this process. How do these mechanisms of international cooperation work today in relations with different partners? This is the subject of this study.



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*International cooperation
as a mechanism to address challenges*

Boris Zalessky

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International cooperation as a mechanism for solving
problems

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Belarus: building on development new export markets

The Republic of Belarus is taking active steps to tackle one of the country's economic development priorities, stipulated in the government's 2025 activity programme - "commodity and country diversification of exports, which should secure increase of Belarus' supplies up to \$50 billion in 2025, as well as promotion of goods and services to new markets"¹. This is evidenced by the statistics for the first quarter of 2021. Particularly, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services increased by more than 17% over the period, coming close to \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million. At the same time, "exports of goods increased by 24.9% to \$8.023 billion <...>. Services exports increased by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion².

Gomel Region is among the regions that have significantly expanded the geography of supplies and increased exports since the beginning of 2021. Here, in January-February 2021 alone, they shipped \$745 million worth of products to foreign markets - \$200 million more than a year earlier. In this, "enterprises of the region exported 39% of the goods to the European Union, 33% to the EEU and 21% of all exports <...>. Exports to China in the first two months amounted to \$20 million, which is more than in the previous year³\$25 million worth of seamless pipes in the first quarter of 2021, mostly to Russia and European countries. In particular, more than \$10 million worth of pipes was supplied to the market of the European Union alone. "This is almost twice

1 Zalesky, B. With an eye to the future. Peculiarities of multi-vector partnership in modern conditions / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - -- C. 41.

2 Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 19.5 percent to \$10.3 billion in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-i-kvartale-uvelichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-195-do-103-mlrd-441081-2021/>

3 In January-February, the Gomel region shipped \$745 million worth of products for export [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-v-janvare-fevrale-otgruzila-na-eksport-produktsii-na-745-mln-439081-2021/>

as much as during the same period last year. The products were shipped to 10 countries in the European region. Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Finland showed the highest growth in consumption in the reporting period"⁴.

Another enterprise in the Gomel region, the Rogachev Dairy Factory, is expanding the geography of its supplies in 2021. In particular, the first batch of its products was shipped to Libya. "Several containers of concentrated milk were shipped at the enterprise in April⁵the company's own production in that North African country does not fully meet the needs of the domestic market. In April 2021, for the first time, Rogachev Dairy products were also shipped to Jordan, in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. It turned out that "dairy products are quite widely used in Jordanian cuisine. The country has its own production of condensed milk, but to meet the need for this product in all spheres, it is also imported from abroad"⁶. Belarusian producers have tried to take advantage of this interest.

By the way, many other Belarusian agricultural and food producers did a good job in the first quarter of 2021 in terms of expanding the geography of supplies, increasing exports by more than five percent to USD 1.5 billion. "Belarusian food products were supplied to 88 countries in January-March (83 countries in the same period in 2020) ⁷. Overall,

4 BMZ increases pipe exports by a third in January-March [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-na-tret-uvelichil-eksport-trub-v-janvare-marte-438662-2021/>

5 Rogachev ICC shipped the first batch of products to Libya [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rogachevskij-mkk-otgruzil-pervuju-partiju-produktsii-v-liviju-440966-2021/>

6 Dairy canned products from Rogachev MCC shipped to Jordan for the first time [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/molochnye-konservy-rogachevskogo-mkk-vpervye-otgruzili-v-iordaniju-441150-2021/>

7 Belarusian agricultural exports grew by 5.3% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktsii-v-i-kvartale-vyros-na-53-440045-2021/>

exports to non-CIS countries - Asia and Oceania, America and the Caribbean, Africa and China - increased by almost half.

Another interesting example in this context is the Grodno Region. The volume of deliveries of the region's enterprises to foreign markets grew by 16 percent in three months and amounted to 679 million dollars, resulting in a foreign trade surplus of more than 260 million dollars. In addition, "in the first quarter of 2021 goods from Grodno Region were exported to 84 countries worldwide. In the same period last year they were exported to 60 countries⁸. Residents of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" that exports production of the chemical, wood processing, textile, machine building and agricultural industries have made a considerable contribution to achieving such figures. In January-March this year they increased their foreign shipments by 23 percent to \$280 million on account of the increase in shipments of polycarbonate acids, fertilizers, wood boards, plywood, furniture, rapeseed oil. In the post-Soviet space, their main recipients were the Russian and Ukrainian markets, and in the European Union, not only Poland, but also Germany, France, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania and the Netherlands. As for the "far arc" countries, exports there "amounted to \$6.4 million, which is 3.8 times more than in the first quarter of 2020. Supplies of Belarusian products to Vietnam, Egypt, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and Turkey increased significantly⁹. All of these facts show that Belarusian manufacturers are laying a good foundation for the successful fulfillment of the five-year objective to develop the export

8. Grodno region has expanded its supply geography and increased exports by 16% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-rasshirila-geografiju-postavok-i-uvelichila-eksport-na-16-441068-2021>

9. Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest increased by 23% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vozros-na-23-439997-2021/>

component of the national economy, which is not easy to do in the current environment.

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Belarus: free economic zones as a tool to increase exports

Commodity and country export diversification is one of the most important objectives for the development of the Belarusian economy in the next five years - until 2025. Figures show how it is being implemented in 2021. In the first quarter of this year, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services of the Republic of Belarus "grew by more than 17 percent, approaching \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million¹⁰. The free economic zones (FEZs) operating in Belarus make a major contribution to achieving this objective.

For example, **FEZ Grodnoinvest** was able to earn a net profit exceeding one hundred million Belarusian rubles in January-March 2021 due to the increase in supplies of residents' products to foreign markets, which is the best indicator among FEZs in all six regions of Belarus. At the same time, "in the first quarter, exports increased by 23% and reached \$280 million. All in all, over 70% of the output is exported"¹¹. It should be noted that today the residents of this FEZ include 75 companies with investments from 40 countries, which are successfully implementing investment projects in wood processing and furniture production, machine engineering and metalworking, food, chemical and light industries, and agriculture.

In the first quarter of 2021 the residents of **FEZ "Vitebsk"** increased their deliveries to foreign markets by almost 30%, sending

¹⁰ \ Zalessky, B.L. With reliance on the development of new export markets / B.L. Zalessky // Materials of the XVII International scientific and practical conference "Trends of modern science - 2021", May 30 - June 7, 2021: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - - C. 17.

¹¹ Net profit of residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in the first quarter exceeded Br100 mln [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chistaja-pribyl-rezidentov-sez-gronoinvest-v-i-kvartale-prevysila-br100-mln-442835-2021>

exported goods worth almost 165 million dollars, which amounted to one third of export index of the entire Vitebsk region. The recipients of this production are business partners and consumers of the FEZ in 62 countries, including 22 countries of the European Union. For example, "sales to Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and France have doubled, while sales to another 9 EU member states have increased by 10% or more. In addition, exports by residents to some far-abroad countries, in particular to southern African states, have risen by almost 20%, to India by 5 times and to Israel by more than 6 times¹². As for promoting the products of FEZ residents to new markets, we can see countries located on different continents. In Asia it is Afghanistan, where fiber-optic cables were shipped to for the first time, and China, where fur skins were shipped to. In Europe, it was France, where Vitebsk-made electric cables were shipped. In the Americas, Mexico (fiberglass products) and Chile (linen) became the recipients of goods of BMS Vitebsk residents.

It is worth mentioning that currently 56 investment projects are being implemented in this free economic zone in 16 sectors with participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the UK, Israel, Cyprus and Spain. In the first quarter of 2021, three new residents registered here with projects to develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment, construction materials and modernization of facilities for the production of import-substituting components for agricultural machinery and cars. "The projects attracted \$12.2 million of direct foreign investment on a net basis, which amounted to more than 40% of the total

12 Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased exports by almost 30% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-narastili-eksport-pochti-na-30-za-pervyj-kvartal-442145-2021/>

investment in Vitebsk Oblast"¹³. And business plans for several more projects are under development, which are expected to be registered in the first half of 2021.

The **FEZ Gomel-Raton** is also actively developing its export component, where "the share of deliveries outside Belarus amounted to 70% of total sales revenues. <...> Goods of FEZ residents are supplied to the markets of 64 countries. Russia, Ukraine, Poland, China, Lithuania have the largest share in exports¹⁴. Today 69 residents work here, including 30 companies with foreign capital participation from 16 countries of the world. Thanks to their activities, the foreign trade turnover of the free economic zone increased by 19 percent in the first quarter of 2021, providing a positive balance for Gomel. The active attraction of investments - almost 160 million Belarusian rubles - in the implementation of projects, which is two and a half times higher than in the first quarter of 2020, played no small part in this.

By the end of this year, the FEZ expects to increase production volumes by 18.5 percent through modernization of existing facilities and registration of new residents with promising investment projects. For instance, "the Alkopak company is building a new building in which it plans to produce new medical products. "Polikap is working on a project to produce disposable tableware made of cellulose"¹⁵. Residents such as Veza-G and Multipak will also expand their production. MIRTEK-Engineering LLC, which produces energy metering devices, has already been supplying more than half of its output to foreign markets - Russia,

13 Ibid.

14 The residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton increased production of industrial products by almost a third in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-pochti-na-tret-velichili-proizvodstvo-promproduktov-v-i-kvartale-441862-2021/>

15 The residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton intend to increase output by 18.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-namereny-velichit-obem-proizvodstva-na-185-v-2021-godu-434576-2021/>

Kazakhstan, Armenia, and European countries. Recently, it has started outsourcing manufacturing of SMD and DIP components - a promising direction, which is relevant to all companies involved in the production of electronic modules and assemblies. It should be noted that "in 2020 \$230 million will be invested in FEZ Gomel-Raton" ¹⁶. FEZ plans for 2021 are no less ambitious. Their successful implementation will allow both this and other Belarusian regions to continue increasing their export component, using the FEZ as an effective tool for accelerated development of the territories.

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16 FEZs are a driver of territorial development - Asluk [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-javljautsja-drajverom-razvitija-territorij-asljuk-434551-2021/>

Belarus - Russia: Construction services export vector

Increasing exports of services is an important way of minimising the dependence of the Belarusian economy on the key factors of the foreign economic situation. In 2021, Belarus continued to increase its efforts to increase its exports. Specifically, in the first quarter, "exports of services rose by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion <...>. The surplus of the foreign trade in services amounted to \$1.041 billion (in January-March 2020, the surplus was \$1.014 billion)." ¹⁷. Exports of construction services, which exceeded half a billion dollars in 2020, are by no means the least of these figures. Today, it is one of the promising areas of development of the Belarusian construction industry, where comprehensive measures are now being taken to further increase it and expand its geography.

The Russian market offers considerable potential for Belarusian construction workers in this regard. This is largely due to the fact that "there is currently a shortage of construction labour in Russia. The issue of its involvement in the implementation of key construction projects, such as the theatrical and cultural centres in Vladivostok and Kaliningrad, the Vostochny cosmodrome, is topical¹⁸. Given the growth in construction in the neighboring country, the Belarusian side has already taken concrete steps to promote its export interests there. For instance, coordination subgroups for cooperation in construction have already been set up in seven Russian regions and "a portfolio worth over 3 billion Russian rubles has been formed in Russia in the near future. This includes schools in Kaluga, Voronezh and Leningrad Oblasts and St. Petersburg,

17. Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 19.5 percent to \$10.3 billion in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-i-kvartale-uvelichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-195-do-103-mlrd-441081-2021/>

18 Sivak: Belarus is interested in increasing exports of construction services to Russia [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sivak-belarus-zainteresovana-v-naraschivanii-eksporta-stroitelnyh-uslug-v-rossiju-442169-2021/>.

and residential buildings in Kaluga, Kursk and Kaliningrad Oblast¹⁹. All in all, Belarusian builders are planning to build more than ten social facilities in Russia by the end of 2025. In particular, Belstroycentr Holding "is now simultaneously building about five social infrastructure facilities in the Leningrad and Kaluga Regions²⁰

As for Voronezh Oblast, which is seriously interested in expanding cooperation with Belarusian partners in construction, we are talking, first of all, about implementation of a joint pilot project in the urban type settlement Strelitsa in Semiluki District to build a 520-seat school, participation of Belarusian companies BelinzhiniringstroyInvest LLC and Stroitelny Trust №12 OJSC in building pre-school and general educational institutions in Semiluki District, and also about using "Belarusian prefabricated houses in implementation of the project. The theatre and cultural centre in Vladivostok, already mentioned above, is set to become one of the largest construction projects in 2021 in cooperation between Belarus and Primorsky Krai. The centre will also house the Mariinsky Theatre's maritime stage and exhibitions of famous Russian museums. And in general, according to the governor of this Russian region, O. Kozhemyako, this centre "will become a real jewel of the entire Asia-Pacific region and can be compared, for example, to the theatre in Sydney, Australia²¹.

Another Russian region, where the possibility for participation of Belarusian builders in the construction of housing and social facilities is

19 Parkhamovich, R. The tasks set for the construction industry this year will be fulfilled / R. Parkhamovich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/postavlennye-pered-strojtirasljiu-zadachi-v-etom-godu-budut-vypolneny-7784>

20 More than 10 social facilities in Russia are to be built by the end of 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: http://mas.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/do-kontsa-2025-goda-planiruetsja-postroit-bolee-10-sotsialnyx-objektov-v-rossii-1313/

21 Belarusian specialists to build turnkey theatre building in Primorye [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/beloruskie-stroiteli-budut-stroit-pod-kljuch-zdanie-teatra-v-primorje-434288-2021/>

being carefully considered, is Novgorod Region. There are 15 organizations with Belarusian capital already registered here, but until recently, cooperation with partners from Belarus was mainly in the agro-industrial sector in the form of supplies of agricultural machinery, food products and processing. This contributed to the fact that in 2020 the trade turnover between the parties reached \$57.5 million. In this case, supplies of Belarusian goods - dairy products, eggs, plastics, sugar, timber, fertilizers, electrical machinery and equipment - increased by almost 20 percent. By all appearances, it is the construction industry that will soon be contributing to these figures. The fact is that "the region needs at least two new schools and several kindergartens. The quality of work of builders from Belarus is always quite high <...>. We have already had the experience of interaction: Belarus built the so-called medical house for us. We are interested in the construction capacity of our Belarusian colleagues"²²²³. The Bryansk and Gomel regions also have great opportunities for cooperation in the construction field. In particular, in April 2021 the sides discussed prospects of Belarusian companies' participation in the construction of the following facilities: "Construction of the Bryansk 1 - Bryansk 2 Protective Dam (1st stage), School No71 and the Wrestling Palace in the Sovetsky District of Bryansk"²⁴

As we can see, the Russian vector of Belarusian construction services exports is already quite broad and diverse. And it continues to

22 Pivovar, E. Novgorod Oblast is studying the possibility of participation of Belarusian builders in the construction of social facilities / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novgorodskaja-oblast-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-uchastija-belorusskih-stroitelej-v-vozvedenii-438576-2021/>

23 Pivovar, E. In Novgorod region they plan to restore air communication with Minsk and Gomel / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-novgorodskoj-oblasti-planirujut-vosstanovit-aviasoobschenie-s-minskom-i-gomelem-438579-2021/>

24 The Gomel and Bryansk regions will discuss the development of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-i-brjanskaja-oblasti-obsudjat-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-437066-2021/>

expand. Let us hope that this trend will only contribute to the successful implementation of the tasks set for the builders of the allied countries.

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Belarus - Tatarstan: from cooperative ties to growth in turnover

The Republic of Tatarstan is among those Russian regions which in January-February 2021 saw a significant increase of trade turnover with them - by more than 80 percent to nearly \$175 million. At the same time, Belarusian exports increased by nearly a quarter, reaching nearly \$55 million. This happened due to the growth in supplies from Belarus of tractors and tractor trucks, oil gases, ferrous metal twisted wire without electric insulation, parts and accessories for automobiles and tractors, tyres, seamless pipes, tubes and sections of ferrous metals, waste derived from the extraction of soybean oil, fresh or chilled beef, unalloyed steel wire, cheese and curd, tyre cord material, non-aqueous synthetic polymer-based paints and varnishes, furniture and parts thereof. In April 2021 the parties signed a memorandum of understanding, which "provides for further mutual interest in developing trade and economic, scientific and technical, and humanitarian cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan.²⁵In April 2021, the two countries signed a protocol of agreements that "envisages further mutual interest in the development of trade, economic, scientific and technical and humanitarian cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan.

It should be recalled that the interaction between the parties is currently developing within the framework of the intergovernmental agreement on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation of 23 June 2004, which created the prerequisites for the formation of a common scientific, technological and innovation space. Last year saw the completion of the Action Plan for 2017-2020 to implement the basic agreement. Due to the fact that Tatarstan today pays

²⁵ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Tatarstan actively develop cooperation [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9816>

special attention to the development of high-tech production and the establishment of joint ventures, in this Russian region Belarusian partners are given the opportunity to work at the "investment sites of the Republic. It is important to deepen cooperation of commodity producers, first of all, in the field of mechanical engineering and high technology"²⁶.

It should be noted that back in 2017, the two sides set a goal to restore the record level of trade turnover of two billion dollars, which was achieved in 2012. The 7th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan, held in October 2019, identified specific areas for joint work in the coming years to achieve the goal, "including supplies of passenger buses, Amkodor machinery, a wide range of agricultural equipment; implementation of joint projects in the gas vehicle sector, in particular - production of passenger vehicles, tractors, municipal and agricultural machinery, engines; expansion of the scope and range of supplies of autos". The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan as well as the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and Kazan Federal University signed cooperation agreements at the same time.

As a result of implementing the provisions of the 4-year plan, by February 2020, Tatarstan had already: two assembly factories - Belarusian tractors and Mogilevliftmash - were in operation; four companies with Belarusian capital were in operation: OOO TIC MTZ-Tatarstan, OOO Amkodor-Bel, OOO Molodechnomebel Trading House and a representative office of Pinskiy Holding dealer network of such Belarusian enterprises as Gomselmash, Minsk Tractor Works,

26 Minnikhanov, R. It is important to deepen cooperation of commodity producers, first of all, in the sphere of mechanical engineering and high technologies / R. Minnikhanov // Technologies and innovations in cooperation of the Union State regions as an impulse of Eurasian integration development: inform.-integration project / coauthors, interviewer: B. Zaleski, M. Valkovski, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2017. -- C. 30.

Mogilevliftmash, Minsk Automobile Plant, Amkodor, Borisov Plant of Tractor Electrical Equipment; TPC MTZ-Tatarstan LLC became the official distributor of MTZ OJSC in Russia, having its own production facilities, transportation and logistics division, being engaged in service maintenance. Successful development of cooperation in machine building has led to the fact that "almost 60% of Tatarstan's fleet of agricultural machinery is equipped with MTZ tractors, over 60% of forage harvesters and 40% of grain harvesters - with Gomselmash equipment". More than 50% of Kazan's fleet of passenger vehicles consists of MAZ buses and Belkommunmash trams"²⁷. And there are good prospects for cooperation in the NGV sector, where there are joint projects implemented by RariTEK together with Minsk plants - automobile, tractor and motor works.

At the 8th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation, which was held via videoconference in November 2020, the parties noted the active development of economic ties between enterprises in the engineering and petrochemical industries, as well as in agriculture, passenger transport, ecology, healthcare science, while emphasizing that "the key area remains cooperation in the petrochemical sector, which accounts for half of Belarus' trade with Tatarstan"²⁸. As a result, the Action Plan for 2021-2023 was approved, which envisages many new interesting joint projects. Already in January 2021 in Kichketan rural settlement of Agryz municipal district of Tatarstan the Belarusian UE "Polymerconstruction" "successfully implemented a pilot project in the

27_Pivovar, E. Petrochemistry, industrial cooperation, transport projects - Semashko visited Tatarstan / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/neftehimija-promkooperatsija-transportnye-proekty-semashko-posetil-tatarstan-378550-2020/>

28 Belarus and Tatarstan approve Cooperation Plan for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/53efd46968aa.html>

field of ecology on water treatment"²⁹ . And now the question of participation of this UE in the implementation of projects at other sites in Tatarstan is being solved.

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29 The Belarusian company UP "Polimerkonstruktsiya" has successfully implemented a pilot project in the field of ecology in the Republic of Tatarstan [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/29939dd56309.html>

Belarus - Sakhalin: from action plan to project implementation

In May 2021 the Republic of Belarus and Russia's Sakhalin Oblast signed an action plan for 2021-2023 to implement the agreement between their governments on trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation. This happened during the meeting of the working group on the development of bilateral cooperation which focused on the prospects of "increasing deliveries of food products, agricultural, quarry, passenger, road-building machinery, lift equipment and other products"³⁰. It should be recalled that the cooperation agreement between the parties was signed in September 2015 at the venue of the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The main objectives set out therein were to increase mutual commodity turnover, intensify business contacts, and cooperate in the social sphere - health care, education, and social protection.

Note that this Russian region is characterised by active foreign economic activity, which it conducts primarily with Asia-Pacific countries - South Korea, Japan and China. Overall, "Sakhalin Region's foreign trade turnover in 2020 was \$12.2 million. THE REGION'S FOREIGN TRADE TURNOVER IS ESTIMATED AT USD 12.2 MILLION IN 2020"³¹. Nevertheless, the Republic of Belarus has developed its niche in these international partnerships since the signing of the cooperation agreement, as evidenced by concrete facts.

Thus, in 2017, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Sakhalin amounted to almost five million dollars. The Russian consumer

30_Belarus and the Sakhalin region signed a cooperation plan for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-sahalinskaja-oblast-podpisali-plan-meroprijatij-po-sotrudnichestvu-na-2021-2023-gody-441087-2021>

31 . Sakhalin Oblast Foreign Trade Results for 2020 [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://sakhalin.gov.ru/index.php?id=152>

market saw a sharp increase in the number of Belarusian meat, sausage, dairy products, textiles and knitwear, footwear and leather haberdashery. Suffice it to say that in August 2020 in the administrative centre of the Russian region - Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk - the fourteenth (!) shop of the retail network Belorusskiy Firm was opened, where products from Belarus are represented by a wide range of sausages and meat delicacies from Brest and Grodno meat processing plants, dairy products from Minsk Dairy Plant, confectionery products from Kommunarka, Spartak, Red food producer factories, canned products from ABC Group of Companies. "In addition to the traditional assortment, Belarusian ice cream of 10-12 titles has appeared in the product line of the shop³²

Machinery of various classes from Belarus is widely used here for agriculture, housing and communal services, road construction, and forestry. "Due to the large number of Belarusian-made machines in operation in Sakhalin Oblast, the need for a unified service centre to service them was raised. Thanks to joint efforts, in April 2017, BelMashService LLC opened a service centre to service equipment manufactured in the Republic of Belarus in the regional capital³³.

Over the past five years, the partnership between the republic and the Russian region in the field of agriculture has developed strongly. Already "in 2016, the Belarusian side resumed potato cultivation on Sakhalin after a 30-year break, planting its seeds on the island on the first 40 hectares³⁴. Later, a dairy farm for one thousand head of cattle was built

32 Another "Belarusian branded" shop opened in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/khabarovsk/news/fe085b1056fe.html>

33 Belik, A. Our plans are to expand the range of cooperation / A. Belik // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of union building: inform.-integration project / compiled, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - – C. 323–324.

34 Zalessky, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. A view from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - – C. 115.

at Sovkhoz Korsakovsky JSC using Belarusian technologies. Interestingly, this construction was divided into two stages. First there were eight hay and silage trenches with a capacity of two thousand tonnes each. In the second stage buildings and constructions of the main production, biomass processing, engineering and transport infrastructure were built. Three cowsheds and three heifer houses were erected to house animals. "When the enterprise reaches its designed capacity, it will give 7 thousand tons of milk and 200 tons of meat annually to the inhabitants of the island region. <...> The agricultural project, which has been implemented in the south of Sakhalin, has been included in the sectoral state agricultural development programme. An agro-town with 50 one-storey three-bedroom houses of the Belarusian type was also built here. In February 2018, the first nine families of state farm workers received the keys to flats in the new buildings on Belorusskaya Street. "This is now the largest modern rural housing development in Sakhalin Oblast"³⁵.

As for other areas of cooperation, back in December 2017, the Belarusian side proposed to improve coal mining and transportation methods in Sakhalin, as these proposals "can significantly improve the infrastructure of the island's coal company and give a powerful boost to the development of the coal mining industry in the region as a whole. This is a whole new level of interaction between our parties."³⁶ And already in 2020 14 new Belorussian mine dump trucks with carrying capacity of 220 tonnes started working in the island's Solntsevo coal

35_Pivovar, E. An agro-town based on a Belarusian project erected on Sakhalin [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/agrogorodok-pobelorusskomu-proektu-vozveli-na-sahaline-289289-2018/>

36 Pivovar, E. Belarus will help improve methods of coal mining and transportation in Sakhalin / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-pomozhet-usovershenstvovat-metody-dobychi-i-transportirovki-uglja-na-sahaline-277311-2017/>

mine³⁷. The parties see serious potential for further development of interaction in active cooperation through the chambers of commerce and industry - in organizing online negotiations, holding joint exhibitions, seminars, as well as establishing direct links between business circles and economic entities of the republic and the region. They have an eye for results.

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37 Pivovar, E. Deliveries of Belarusian heavy trucks and cooperation in the agro-industrial complex - Semashko visited Kuzbass and Sakhalin / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavki-belorusskih-bolshegruzov-i-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-semashko-posetil-kuzbass-i-sahalin-404918-2020/>

Belarus - Vladimir region: new points of growth in cooperation identified

In May 2021, a meeting of the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Vladimir Region of Russia was held, at which the parties reviewed the entire range of trade and economic cooperation - in industry, agriculture, construction, housing and utilities services, exhibitions and fairs, as well as at the district and city levels. The tone for the discussion was set by the fact that in 2020 the trade turnover between the republic and the region "amounted to \$244 million and fell by 6.7% compared to 2019³⁸ mutual trade. To this end, new points of growth in the development of partnerships with this region of Russia were identified. These include cooperation in light industry, mechanical engineering, construction, and the agro-industrial complex.

The two countries signed an agreement on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and socio-cultural cooperation in September 2015 as part of the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, which was held in Sochi. This document contained agreements "to create the necessary organizational, financial, economic and legal conditions for the operation of joint ventures, development and implementation of joint projects and programmes of mutual interest³⁹ action plan for the implementation of this agreement for 2018-2020, which played a positive role in boosting cooperation between the parties. In particular, it was already noted at that time that "products from Belarusian companies are of great interest to the Vladimir Region. Among the imported products are binders for the production of foundry molds and cores, fiberglass and

38. Chervikov: New points of growth identified in trade with the Vladimir region of Russia [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervikov-opredeleny-novye-tochki-rosta-v-torgovle-s-vladimirskoj-oblastju-rossii-443237-2021/>.

39. Zalessky, B. Belarus-Russia: formula for integration. Chronicle of union building. / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - - C. 45.

fiberglass products, cheeses and cottage cheese, tableware and kitchenware."⁴⁰ At that time, there were already 34 companies, in which Belarusian investors fully or partially participated in the founding capital. And the search for new areas of cooperation continued all the time.

In May 2018, the Belarusian side offered its partners from the Vladimir Region to implement joint cooperation projects in mechanical engineering, energy, construction of social facilities and apartment buildings. Specifically, they talked about the possible construction of the "Belarusian Quarter" in Vladimir, as well as "the possibility and readiness of Belarusian companies to meet the region's needs for lift equipment for new buildings and housing under reconstruction, to increase supplies of construction products, materials, equipment and machinery, as well as to participate in the construction and repair of the region's highways, to organize supplies of road construction and utility equipment required for that."⁴¹ In June 2019, a Belarusian proposal was made to expand mutual trade to include industrial cooperation in food production, as well as to "supply the region with modern domestic electric vehicles"⁴² integrated development with the construction of social facilities, construction and repair of public roads, supply of necessary road construction and utility equipment.

The two sides had a thorough discussion on ways to expand cooperation in October 2020, when a representative Belarusian delegation

40 Konyshov, A. Belarusian goods are sold in a significant part of the regional trade facilities / A. Konyshov // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of the Union construction: inform-integration project / compiled, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zaleski. Gusev, B. Zaleskiy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. -- C. 118.

41 Pivovarov, E. Belarus is interested in joint projects in mechanical engineering and construction with Vladimir region / E. Pivovarov // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-sovmestnyh-s-vladimirskoj-oblastju-proektah-v-mashinostroenii-i-stroitelstve-304088-2018>

42 Valagin, A. Belarus proposed to build up the Vladimir region / A. Valagin // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://rg.ru/2019/06/06/reg-cfo/belarus-predlozhila-zastroit-vladimirskui-oblast.html>

visited Vladimir. A number of joint projects in terms of cooperation between industrial enterprises of the republic and the region were outlined then. "We are talking about Kovrov Electromechanical Plant and Minsk Engine Plant regarding the production of forklifts using the internal combustion engine that will be manufactured in Belarus. We are currently testing the samples"⁴³. In addition, other business entities from both sides suggested interesting projects. Among them are the Betal company from Vladimir, which makes water tanks, as well as Minsk Tractor Works, Mogilevliftmash, and Novy Resource from Kovrov.

In December 2020, at the Vladimirskiy Investment Congress, a new action plan was approved to implement the cooperation agreement for 2021-2023 "to expand direct links between business entities of both sides"⁴⁴ and aim to increase commodity turnover between Belarus and Vladimirskiy region. It is expected that the agreement will reflect the theme of further development and expansion of the movement of twinning between the cities and regions of the parties, which has already had its considerable history. The treaty on twinning between the cities of Vladimir and Bobruisk was signed back in 1998. For the passed time "they have developed mutually beneficial partnership relations in economy and business, science, culture, education, sports .."⁴⁵. Since 2006, Kovrov and Brest have been twinned. And in 2016 an agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural spheres was signed between the Vladimir Region Administration and the Gomel Regional Executive Committee.

43 Vladimir region / Belarus - expanding cooperation [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <http://export33.ru/news/vladimirskaya-oblast-belarus-rasshryaem-sotrudnichestvo/>

44 Belarus and the Vladimir region have approved an action plan to implement the cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vladimirskaja-oblast-utverdili-plan-meroprijatij-po-realizatsii-soglashenija-o-420545-2020>

45 Vladimir region takes part in the forum of Russian and Belarusian regions [Electronic resource]. - -- 2017. - URL: <https://www.zsvo.ru/press/view/3058/>

All these facts show that the parties have a good foundation for further movement forward in terms of implementation of the set objectives to increase mutual trade turnover.

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Gomel region: The Uzbek vector of cooperation

In May 2021, the Belarusian **Gomel Region** and the Uzbek **Navoi Region** outlined the main directions of bilateral cooperation in trade and economic and investment, education, tourism and agriculture, as well as in the operation of technology parks and the creation of favourable conditions for the development of the IT industry. These agreements were a logical continuation of the agreement on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian spheres, which the two regions signed in 2019 at the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan. Now, the Gomel and Navoi regions have expressed their intention to significantly intensify their partnership.

Gomel residents are also developing interaction with other Uzbek partners, cooperation agreements with which were signed at the First Forum of Regions of the two countries. For example, in July 2020, an online forum of representatives of business circles of the Gomel and **Fergana regions** was held, which included business entities from the Belarusian side, such as JSC Gomel Meat and Milk Holding Management Company, SE Gomeloblprom, and JSC Sozh Trading House. The participants of the forum constructively considered "the issues of bilateral cooperation in terms of trade of fruits and vegetables, textile, meat and dairy products, construction materials, agricultural machinery and equipment. The sides also discussed the possibility of opening a Ferghana Region trade house in Gomel"⁴⁶ Uz-Segang JV LLC, one of the major exporters of fruit and vegetable products in Ferghana Region, suggested cooperating with partners in Gomel Oblast by setting up a single distribution centre for Uzbek vitamin products. Gomeloblprom applied to

46_Uzbek companies are interested in cooperation with partners from the Gomel region [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/uzbekskie-kompanii-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-s-partnerami-iz-gomelskoj-oblasti-398194-2020/>

textile company A. Akbarali Ltd. Akbarali to establish supplies of cotton yarn to the Belarusian region.

Khorezm Region is Gomel Region's third Uzbek partner. The cooperation agreement signed by the parties in July 2019 named "trade and economic, scientific and cultural spheres, tourism, and healthcare" among promising areas for cooperation⁴⁷. At the same time, Gomselmash signed a cooperation agreement with Urgenchkormmash, a joint-stock company from Khorezm Region, a forage harvester plant. All in all, in preparation for the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, Gomel Oblast companies signed contracts with their Uzbek partners worth nearly 1.5 million dollars.

All of these facts suggest that the Uzbek market is very promising for enterprises in the Gomel region. In 2020, the trade turnover of the Belarusian region with this Central Asian country grew by almost 65 percent and exceeded 17 million dollars. "Polymers, dairy products, wallpaper, screws, hardware, timber are exported to Uzbekistan. Among the exporters are KolorMaster (polyvinyl chloride), Svetlogorsk Welding Electrode Plant LLC (mechanical devices, machine tools), Milkavita OJSC, Kalinkovich Dairy Plant UE (milk powder), Svetlogorsk Khimvolokno OJSC (chemical yarns)⁴⁸

Obviously, the first Belarus-Uzbekistan Regions Forum, which was held in Minsk in July 2019 and opened "new horizons of cooperation in such areas as industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, food industry, as well as in cultural, humanitarian, information and

47. Gomel region will sign three agreements with Uzbekistan at the First Forum of Regions [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-podpishet-tri-soglasheniya-s-uzbekistanom-na-i-forume-regionov-356296-2019/>

48. Gomel Region and Navoi Region of Uzbekistan intend to develop cooperation in IT-industry [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-navoijskij-region-uzbekistanana-mereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-it-otrasli-440395-2021/>

communication, and scientific spheres,"⁴⁹ contributed significantly to boosting cooperation between specific regions of the two countries. Participants on the Uzbek side alone included over two hundred representatives from Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzax, Namangan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana and Tashkent provinces. The effectiveness of the Forum is borne out by the fact that 26 direct agreements between the regions were adopted at the Forum. In addition to the three documents of Gomel Oblast, agreements on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian spheres were signed by the regions of Grodno with Samarkand and Andijan, Vitebsk with Namangan, Brest with Bukhara and Syrdarya. Similar documents have been signed between the Mogilev, Andijan, and Dzhizak regions. Minsk Oblast Executive Committee has agreed on cooperation in the social sphere with Tashkent Oblast. An action plan for 2019-2020 has been signed to implement the agreement between the Tashkent Khokimiyat and the Minsk City Executive Committee on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation⁵⁰

The growing importance of Uzbek partners for the Belarusian regions as a whole is evidenced by these figures already for 2021. According to the results of the first quarter, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Uzbekistan increased by another quarter to \$67.5 million. An important detail: "The export of Belarusian goods during this period rose by 37.4% to \$58.7 million <...>. The balance of Belarus'

49. Forum of Regions opens new horizons for Belarus and Uzbekistan in many areas - Safaev [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/forum-regionov-otkryl-novye-gorizonty-dlja-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-vo-mnogih-oblastjakh-safaev-356612-2019/>

50. A package of interregional cooperation agreements signed at the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/paket-mezhregionalnyh-soglashenij-o-sotrudnichestve-podpisan-na-i-forume-regionov-belarusi-i-356632-2019/>

foreign trade in goods was positive and totaled \$49.8 million⁵¹. This happened due to the increased supplies of chilled and frozen beef, medicines and polymers, tractors and trucks to the Uzbek market. Without the most committed involvement of Belarusian regions, it would have been extremely difficult to achieve such results.

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51_Belarus-Uzbekistan trade turnover in the first quarter increased by 25.3% to 67.5 million [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-uzbekistanom-za-i-kvartal-velichilsja-na-253-do-675-mln-440482-2021/>

Belarus - Asia: export expansion potential

In June 2021, the Belarusian-Asian Forum was held, which was attended by representatives of the embassies of those Asian states in Russia and Belarus that do not have their diplomatic missions in Minsk and where there are no Belarusian diplomatic missions abroad. Specifically, the participants included heads of diplomatic missions and other diplomats from Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Afghanistan, Laos, and the Philippines. The attention of the Belarusian side to the Asian region is quite understandable. After all, "there are no political problems on the bilateral agenda here and the approaches to major international issues are quite similar. This creates a good basis for the development of trade and economic cooperation as the main area for bilateral engagement"⁵²

Suffice it to say that in 2020, Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent totaled about two billion dollars. And this, of course, is not the limit. "It is obvious that the Asian market still remains underdeveloped by Belarusian exporters in terms of promotion of many of their products there, including those manufactured by mechanical engineering, electronic and petrochemical industries"⁵³ promote Belarusian trade and economic interests in the Asian direction. In order to use them successfully, it is necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new forms of contacts, as it is actually happening in the development of partnership ties with a number of Asian countries.

52 Cooperation with the countries of the Asian region has been and remains one of the priorities of Belarus's foreign policy - Barysievich [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sotrudnichestvo-so-stranami-aziatskogo-regiona-bylo-i-ostaetsja-odnim-iz-prioritetov-vneshnej-politiki-445159-2021/>

53 Zalesky, B. Belarus - Asia: vector of partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - – C. 5.

In particular, the Republic of Belarus has already achieved a strategic partnership with the People's Republic of China. In the language of numbers, it looks as follows. In 2020, the volume of Belarusian-Chinese trade will show a significant increase of more than 10 per cent. Even higher growth in this partnership is characteristic of the year 2021. "From January to April this year, total imports and exports of goods between the countries amounted to \$1.25 billion, an increase of 58 percent compared to the same period last year. China has become Belarus' second largest trading partner⁵⁴

A number of projects that have already been successfully implemented and are still being implemented by the Belarusian side can also be seen in some other Asian countries. For example, in early June 2021, Minsk Tractor Works and the Indian company Erisha Agritech Private Limited signed a cooperation agreement, which stipulates that "the Indian partner will purchase at least 200 BELARUS tractors by the end of 2021. Furthermore, the parties intend to organise the localisation and assembly of tractors in India under the joint brand DARSH BELARUS," and then to supply them.⁵⁵ The two sides also intend to organise the localisation and assembly of tractors under the joint brand DARSH BELARUS in India, and then to supply them to other countries of the continent - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Another interesting Asian country in this context is Mongolia. In June 2021, it became known that the Belarusian Development Bank will finance the export of Belarus tractors and agricultural machinery

54_Political interaction between Belarus and China is continuously strengthening - Xie Xiaoyun [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/politicheskoe-vzaimodoverie-belarusi-i-kitaja-nepreryvno-ukrepljaetsja-se-sjajun-446045-2021/>.

55_MTZ has signed an agreement to supply and assemble tractors in India [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-podpisal-soglashenie-o-sotrudnicestve-s-indijskoj-kompaniej-444577-2021/>

produced at the Minsk Tractor Works OJSC for four and a half million euros - to the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia. And this will be the third individual credit line under the general Belarusian-Mongolian intergovernmental export credit agreement concluded in April 2019, aimed at expanding the geography of Belarusian export supplies and strengthening foreign economic and trade relations between specific enterprises. It will be recalled that under this agreement, the Development Bank has already "financed supplies of fire-fighting vehicles manufactured by Pozhsnab to the Mongolian National Agency for Emergencies, as well as machinery manufactured by MAZ, the managing company of Belavtomaz Holding, to the Road and Transportation Development Center at the Mongolian Ministry of Roads and Transportation"⁵⁶. These facts show that Belarusian industrial enterprises see Asia as one of the key regions for increasing their exports. And they see great potential in it, "because its member countries are showing very good economic growth".⁵⁷ which makes Belarusian products in demand in that market. And such exporters as BelAZ, BMZ, MAZ, MTZ, Amkodor and Integral have good opportunities for expanding supplies here.

Today, the Asian region looks even more promising for Belarusian food exports, which have increased 13(!) times in the last five years. In 2020, it amounted to \$356 million. During the four months of 2021 Belarus exported USD 167 million worth of food to 37 Asian countries, "which is 60% more than last year. A wide range of dairy and meat

56. The Development Bank will provide an export loan to supply Belarusian agricultural machinery to Mongolia [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bank-razvitija-predostavit-eksportnyj-kredit-na-postavku-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-v-mongoliju-445880-2021/>.

57. Pivovarov, E. The Ministry of Industry of Belarus considers the Asian region as one of the key regions for product supplies / E. Pivovarov // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minprom-belarusi-rassmatrivaet-aziatskij-region-kak-odin-iz-kljuchevyh-dlja-postavok-produktsii-445212-2021/>

products, sugar, flax fiber, rapeseed oil..."⁵⁸ . It is obvious that both the geography and assortment of these supplies will only expand, as evidenced by the interest of the participants of the Belarusian-Asian Forum in the proposals of Belarusian producers voiced in their presentations at the event.

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58 Pivovar, E. Deliveries of Belarusian food products to Asian countries for 5 years increased 13 times / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavki-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-strany-azii-za-5-let-vyrosli-v-13-raz-445207-2021/>

Belarus v China: The Year of the Regions as a topical media issue

In January 2021, the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China reached an agreement at the highest level to celebrate the Year of Regions of the two countries in the next three years - from 2021 to 2023. This decision underscores the enormous role that activation of interaction at the level of autonomous regions, oblasts, provinces, and cities of the two countries plays in the development of bilateral Belarus-China relations, and the potential of which is yet to be fully realized by both countries. This is evidenced by the results of 2020, when trade turnover between Belarus and China exceeded \$4.5 billion and Belarusian export increased by almost 10%. Furthermore, "agriculture and wood processing products became the driver of Belarusian export to the PRC, with supplies doubling⁵⁹more than a hundred Belarusian agricultural producers have already been accredited in China, and the overwhelming majority of them are located in the regions of our country.

The evidence shows that the two countries are taking a variety of measures to unlock the full potential of bilateral cooperation between Belarus and China. Particular attention in this context is paid to addressing the issues related to the access of Belarusian goods to the Chinese market. In particular, at the December 2020 meeting of the Belarus-China Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee, a practical platform was created to work out all the issues of access to the Chinese market, as well as veterinary, quarantine surveillance and logistics chains, in the form of the Commission for Customs and Quarantine Cooperation. A working group comprising experts from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the Belarusian Ministry of Economy, which was formed

⁵⁹ On the outcome of bilateral trade with China in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c603710a55ba783e.html>

in late 2020, will also simplify trade procedures and create a framework for active trade. The working group is to draft an agreement on trade in services and investment, "the implementation of which will change the nature and depth of joint development and facilitate mutual investment without restrictions and exclusion lists. Facilitation of trade in services is the basis for active trade at this stage, since modern merchandise consists of services by 80%"⁶⁰. The same December (2020) meeting of the intergovernmental cooperation committee also pointed to the need to involve as soon as possible the remaining Chinese credit resources of about \$4 billion for specific projects to develop social and transport infrastructure in the Belarusian regions into economic turnover.

As we can see, the tasks set at the interstate level are ambitious and concrete. Obviously, it will hardly be possible to resolve them without committed participation of the regions. It is here that regional media should have a say in promoting the ideas of the Belarusian-Chinese comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation in the next three years. All the more so because they are now faced with no less ambitious tasks to update both their form and content.

It should be reminded that at the February 2021 board meeting of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, regional print media, which constitute a significant segment of the Belarusian media sphere and cover practically the entire territory of the country, were named among the most important issues of developing the information field of our country that need to be worked out and solved as a matter of priority. The priority of their activities should be the creation of a high-quality media product. At the same time, they "should meet the challenges of time, be able to quickly adapt to the needs of the reader".

60 Belarus and the PRC set up a platform to work out issues of access to the Chinese market [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-knr-sozdali-ploschadku-dlja-otrabotki-voprosov-dostupa-na-kitajskij-rynok-420487-2020/>.

⁶¹and contribute to the creation of a positive image of Belarus. In this respect, the most active involvement of the Belarusian regional media in covering the implementation of the "three-year plan" of the regions of Belarus and China can and should become a very important step in the formation and development of its international segment. All the more so because the thematic focus of the publications devoted to the cooperation between the regions of the two countries can and should already be very diverse.

In particular, such form of cooperation between the regions of the two countries as twinning and partnership relations should receive an especially powerful impetus for development in the next three years. Their current level is eloquently demonstrated by the following fact: every Belarusian region and Minsk have already become twinned or partnered with two or more Chinese regions, which ensures that almost all provinces in the Middle Kingdom are covered. For example, the Brest Oblast has been twinned with Hubei Province (since 1994), Qinghai Province (2015), and Qinghai Province (2015).), Qinghai (2015), Anhui (2016), Shanxi (2019); Vitebsk province: Shandong (2004), Heilongjiang (2005), Guizhou (2015), Jiangxi (2018); Gomel - Inner Mongolia (2011) and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regions (2016), Sichuan (2011) and Jiangsu (2016); and Grodno - Gansu (2007), Fujian (2018), Hainan (2019) Minsk: Chongqing (2002), Guangdong (2012) and Zhejiang (2015); Mogilev: Jiangsu (1997), Henan (2008), Hunan (2016), Shaanxi (2018), Tianjin (2019); the Belarusian capital: Changchun (1992), Beijing (1997), Shenzhen (2013), Shenyang (2016), Shanghai (2018). In addition, "more than 20 agreements on the establishment and development of city-to-city cooperation between regional centres and cities of Belarus and

61 Igor Petrishenko: Today a journalist should be a universal media worker, able to work on different platforms - in a newspaper, on a website, in social networks and messengers [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9758>

administrative centres and cities of central subordination of China have been concluded"⁶².

It is characteristic that the process of expansion and actualisation of twinning and partnership relations continues today. Thus, in the development of twinning relations between the Grodno Region and Hainan Province, "agreements between such cities as Lida and Sanya, Ostrowiec and Qionghai are already at the stage of elaboration"⁶³. In April 2021, the Gomel region and Sichuan province decided to significantly expand twinning relations in the economic, social and cultural spheres. In late March 2021, Brest Region and Hubei Province discussed the whole range of interaction. As a result, "the parties agreed to agree on a roadmap for the development of cooperation in the near future"⁶⁴.

All these facts suggest that the topic of Belarus-China inter-regional cooperation should be firmly and permanently "fixed in the Belarusian regional press and reflect the experience already gained in this regard as much as possible"⁶⁵. This will require creative strategies specific to international regional issues, which should be developed by representatives of this segment of Belarusian journalism in the near future.

62 Belarus-China interregional cooperation and twinning [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral/regional/info/>.

63 Zalesky, B.L. Grodno region: Chinese vector of interregional cooperation / B.L. Zalesky // *Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2021"*, Volume 4. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. -- C. 8.

64 China's Hubei and Brest Region intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kitajskij-hubej-i-brestskaja-oblast-aktivizirujut-sotrudnichestvo-434998-2021/>.

65 Zalesky, B.L. Information sovereignty and international journalism / B.L. Zalesky // *Rehiyanal'ny Mass Media of the Republic of Belarus in the personal era: from lokalnaya problematyki to iinfarmatsiyyy bias of the country: proceedings of the Republican Scientific Conference. Conference, Minsk, May 5, 2020 / Belarusian State University; editor: V.M. Samusevich (ed.) [and others]. - Minsk: BDU, 2020. -- C. 114.*

Mogilev region: China's engagement vector

In June 2021, the roadmap for cooperation was signed by the Belarusian Mogilev Region and China's **Henan** Province to continue cooperation in trade and increase it in the investment sphere. In addition, according to the parties, "among the important issues that need to be worked on is the improvement of transport communication and logistics between our countries"⁶⁶. Let us remind you that Mogilev region signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly relations with Henan province back in 2004. Ten years later, "in July 2014, Zhengzhou, the administrative centre of this province, became Mogilev's twin"⁶⁷. Perhaps for this reason, the development of engagement with Chinese partners for this Belarusian region has been gaining momentum since then, as evidenced by the figures. In particular, since 2015, the trade turnover between the Mogilev Region and the People's Republic of China has increased 13-fold, amounting to nearly USD 95 million in 2020.

It should be noted that the Mogilev Region, apart from Henan Province, has four other partners among Chinese regions. These are the provinces of Jiangsu, Hunan, Shaanxi and the city of Tianjin. In addition, friendly relations have been established between the partner cities: Mogilev - Nanjing, Bobruisk - Wuxi, Osipovichy - Yangzhou, Krychiv - Lianyungang. In September 2019, during the first Regional Belarusian-Chinese Cooperation Week in Mogilev, it was noted that "relations with each of these partners are developing in several areas: the parties are interested in cooperation in the medical and educational fields, industrial

66_A roadmap for cooperation development signed by the Mogilev region and the Chinese province of Henan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dorozhnyju-kartu-po-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-podpisali-mogilevskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-444325-2021/>

67 Zalessky, B. Real multi-vectorism. Belarus in the system of foreign relations / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2015. - - C. 26.

and tourism sectors, as well as in interregional exchange"⁶⁸ . With the same province of Henan, back in July 2017, opportunities for investment projects in the Mogilev Free Economic Zone (FEZ) and the southeastern region, where there are serious preferences for business, were discussed. In particular, there is vast vacant land in the south-eastern part of the Mogilev Region for "the establishment of a joint venture to produce beef, taking into account the culinary requirements and needs of the Chinese side with subsequent delivery of products to the Celestial Empire"⁶⁹.

As for **Shaanxi** province, its Department of Commerce in April 2019 signed an agreement of intent to promote economic development and friendly cooperation with the Economy Committee of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee, in which the parties agreed to "provide active support and information assistance to enterprises interested in investing and establishing import-export relations"⁷⁰ . In December 2020, the Mogilev Regional Development Agency hosted an online meeting of more than 30 representatives of the parties' enterprises, including FEZ Mogilev, Red Foodstuffs, Bobruisk Meat Processing Plant, Oasis Group, Babushkina krynka, Mogilev Ice Cream Factory, Servolux, Belarusian State Agricultural Academy (BSAA). One of the concrete results of the meeting was a partnership "between the BGSAA and the Northwest University of Agriculture and Forestry. There are already some

68_Mogilev region has increased its beef exports to the PRC by 9 times in the last year [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/za-poslednij-god-mogilevskaja-oblast-v-9-raz-uvlechila-eksport-govjadiny-v-kr-360961-2019/>

69_Kuliagin, S. Mogilev region and the Chinese province Henan intend to more actively develop investment cooperation / S. Kuliagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2017 - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-henan-namereny-aktivnee-razvivat-investsotrudnichestvo-257928-2017/>

70_Mogilev region and the Chinese province of Shaanxi intend to develop economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-shensi-namereny-razvivat-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-342757-2019/>

developments in the testing of Chinese wheat and other cereal varieties"⁷¹

A concrete result of cooperation with the city of **Tianjin** was received back in June 2017, when a social building was commissioned in the regional centre, the general contractor of which was Tianjin Electric Construction Company. "The 10-storey, 120-apartment new building is located in the under-construction Kazimirovka neighbourhood on Grunwaldska Street. This is one of the three houses, which were built in the Mogilev region, thanks to the implementation of the first phase of the project "Construction of social housing" with the technical and economic assistance of the People's Republic of China. Similar facilities have appeared in Bobruisk and Osipovichy"⁷². In May 2019, the parties signed a Memorandum on twinning. And in November 2020, investment projects of the Belarusian region in tourism, cattle breeding and housing construction were thoroughly examined by such Chinese companies as Tianjin Constant International Trade Co., Bonyum International Trading Co., Tianjin Mengdong International Trade Co., Zhonggong Huamu (Tianjin) Food Co.

China's **Jiangsu** province, which signed a twinning agreement with the Mogilev region in 2015, became the first region of China, with which in July 2020 the Mogilev residents held a contact and cooperation exchange via video conference, the participants of which from the Chinese side were more than 20 companies working in the meat and dairy

71 Emelianova, O. Issues of trade and economic cooperation and education were discussed during the online meeting between representatives of the Mogilev region and Shaanxi province / O. Emelianova [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://mogilev-region.gov.by/news/voprosy-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-i-obrazovaniya-obsudili-vo-vremya-onlayn>

72 Emelianova, O. A social house built with China's technical assistance was commissioned in Mogilev / O. Emelianova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/postroennyj-s-tehpomoschju-kitaja-sotsialnyj-dom-sdali-v-ekspluatatsiju-v-mogileve-254650-2017/>

industries, flax processing, alcoholic beverage production. Their interest in the event is understandable, since entrepreneurs of Jiangsu Province in 2020 "have additionally invested over \$2 million in the further development of their enterprises" only based on previously implemented projects. Today, Chinese investors are implementing and planning to implement projects for the cultivation and processing of flax, the production of mushrooms and various medical products⁷³

Finally, the province **of Hunan** is interesting in this context because in January 2018 it presented Mogilev with two new electric buses. And Zoomlion is implementing a project here to produce special vehicles.

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73 Business communities of the Mogilev region and the Chinese province of Jiangsu discuss prospects of cooperation at the contact and cooperation exchange [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://mogilev-region.gov.by/news/delovye-krugi-mogilevskoy-oblasti-i-kitayskoy-provincii-czyansu-obsuzhdayut-perspektivy>

Belarus - Iran: Priority - re-establishing partnerships

In April 2021, it became known that the Belarusian Homiel Region intended to resume and develop cooperation with the Iranian province of Mazandaran, the document on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation with which was signed back in 2009, but the plans therein were never implemented. Back then, when signing the memorandum on cooperation, the parties mentioned good prospects in organizing exports of agricultural products, metal and agricultural machinery from the Belarusian region. And Iranian exporters planned to establish permanent supplies of citrus and other southern fruits to the Homiel market. "In addition, there are large deposits of solid fuels in Mazandaran province, which could be exploited by economic entities of the Gomel region"⁷⁴

Among the projects that the Belarusian region and the Iranian province intend to return to now are "production of copper rod in Rechitsa district, development of a chalk deposit in Vetka district, mining of rocks in Lelchitsa district"⁷⁵. Besides, the Belarusian side made proposals to supply machine tools, timber, cardboard, cellulose, confectionary products, as well as gas-powered combine harvesters to the Iranian market. Noting the great potential in the interaction between the two regions, the Iranian side has complemented the possible areas of partnership with such areas as oil extraction, chemical industry, industry.

74. Sidorchik, V. Gomel region and Iranian Mazandaran province will sign the memorandum of cooperation / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - - 2009. - URL: <http://cenadm.gov.by/ru/region/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-podpishut-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-1957/>

75. Gomel Region and Iran's Mazandaran Province to resume trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-vozobnovjat-torgovo-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-439208-2021/>

Concrete steps to implement all these proposals will be discussed at a webinar to be held in the near future.

The mere fact that the partnership ties between the Gomel region and Mazandaran province have been updated shows that Belarus and Iran, having survived the coronavirus pandemic, are starting to return bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation to a growth trajectory after all. As a reminder, the 14th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Iranian Commission on Economic Cooperation was held in January 2018, which resulted in the signing of the Roadmap for the Development of Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Iran for 2018-2020. It spoke about the development of bilateral cooperation "in various fields of politics, investment, trade, industry, transport, agriculture, health, education, science, technology and energy".⁷⁶It also contained the intention to increase trade between Belarus and Iran to \$500 million. However, U.S. sanctions, which blocked bilateral engagement between Minsk and Tehran in a number of important areas, became a serious obstacle to the development of economic cooperation between Belarus and Iran. But "despite the restrictions, the trade turnover between Belarus and Iran amounted to \$24.7 million in 2020⁷⁷. Tyres, wood products, newsprint, and bearings made up the bulk of Belarusian export to the Iranian market.

Currently, the two sides are preparing for the 15th meeting of the joint commission, where they intend to develop a roadmap for trade and economic cooperation to give an additional impetus to the relationship. The high interest of the parties in such partnership development can be judged by the composition of the participants in the Belarusian-Iranian

⁷⁶ Belarus and Iran have developed a roadmap for cooperation for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-razrabotali-dorozhnyu-kartu-sotrudnichestva-na-2018-2020-gody-285761-2018/>

⁷⁷ Trade and Economic Relations [Electronic Resource]. - - 2021. - URL: https://iran.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/economic/

business forum that was held in Minsk in July 2019 under the auspices of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. At that time, Iranian companies interested in cooperating "in the areas of banking, medical and pharmaceutical production, gas equipment, parts and equipment for refrigerators, agricultural machinery, construction materials and construction equipment, petrochemical and oil refining industry, production and supply of food and spices, textile industry (supply of Persian carpets)"⁷⁸ took part in the talks with the Belarusian business circles .

Cooperation between the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) and the Iranian Commodity Exchange (ITB) may also become one of the promising areas for economic cooperation between the two countries. The two sides agreed to update the partnership back in October 2019, as "the use of the exchange mechanism will reduce commercial risks and simplify the search for business partners for Belarusian and Iranian business entities"⁷⁹. Moreover, Iranian businessmen are interested in using the BUTB platform to promote ferrous and non-ferrous metal products, textiles, nuts and dried fruits to Belarus. Belarusian companies are interested in the exchange platform for the export of lumber, wood slabs, and petrochemical products to Iran.

Another promising resource for expanding Belarusian-Iranian trade and economic cooperation is the Interim Agreement leading to the establishment of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Iran, which entered into force in October 2019. This document

78. Belarusian-Iranian business forum to be held in Minsk on 24 July [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusko-iranskij-biznes-forum-projdet-24-ijulja-v-minske-355013-2019/>

79. BUTB and the Iranian Commodity Exchange intend to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-iranskaja-tovarnaja-birzha-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-364553-2019/>

established a list of goods for which exporters of EAEU countries, including Belarus, were given preferential treatment in the Iranian market. It "includes meat and oil products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics"⁸⁰great opportunities for advancing their trade and economic relations. We should certainly use them.

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⁸⁰ Zalessky, B. The potential for multi-vectorism. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020. - -- C. 7.

Belarus-Pakistan: the key challenge is to implement the potential for cooperation

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of the states in South Asia, in relations with which the Republic of Belarus has created the necessary legal and infrastructure framework over the past five years to strengthen and develop bilateral interaction aimed at the full-scale implementation of the existing potential of partnership relations. It should be recalled that in 2015, the Islamabad Declaration of Belarus-Pakistan Cooperation was adopted at the highest level, "in which the parties consolidated the basic principles of the political dialogue"⁸¹. A bilateral cooperation roadmap for 2015-2020 was signed at the same time to make a gradual transition from simple trade to more advanced forms of cooperative interaction. Joint efforts to create a legal and contractual framework for Belarusian-Pakistani cooperation resulted in "77 memorandums of understanding and agreements signed by the parties by early 2021. At the moment many agreements are in the drafting stage"⁸². For example, an amended intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the field of industrial, scientific and technical cooperation.

Also in 2015, Minsk and Islamabad established the basic institutional mechanism for bilateral trade and economic relations - the joint Belarus-Pakistan commission for trade and economic cooperation, having organized five meetings to date. Within the framework of the Joint Commission, working groups in various fields, such as industry and agriculture, focus their attention on specific issues of bilateral cooperation. And in December 2020, the first meeting of the Belarusian-

81 Zalesky, B. The contours of multi-vectorism. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016. -- C. 100.

82 Sajjad, H.H. How the pandemic affected relations between Belarus and Pakistan / H.H. Sajjad // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-pandemija-povlijala-na-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistan-7589/>.

Pakistani working group for cooperation in healthcare and pharmaceuticals "identified possible areas for mutual cooperation in the export of medical and educational services"⁸³ and outlined the prospects of further cooperation.

As for partnerships between the business communities of the two countries, they are structured within the framework of the Belarusian-Pakistani Joint Business Council, whose first three meetings were held in August 2015, in March 2016 and 2017. In April 2021, the parties held the fourth meeting of this council, which was attended by representatives of over a hundred Belarusian and Pakistani companies. They discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also opportunities to step up investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, and the establishment of joint companies and productions, pointing to industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technology, and logistics as priority areas for cooperation. In addition, they reviewed "the opportunities for Pakistani enterprises to do business in the framework of the Industrial Park "Great Stone", the main directions of the new automotive development policy in Pakistan and the existing in connection with it preferences for foreign companies, the prospects for urban electric transport in Pakistan, as well as the main areas of work of Chambers of Commerce and Industry to promote business contacts"⁸⁴.

The potential for the expansion of Belarusian-Pakistani relations is evidenced by the figures. "In 2020, the trade turnover between the

83_ International cooperation. Meeting of the Joint Belarus-Pakistan Working Group on Cooperation in Healthcare and Pharmaceutics [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://belmapo.by/mezhdunarodnaya-sotrudnichestvo.-zasedanie-sovmestnoj-belorusko-pakistanskoj-rabochej-gruppyi-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-sfere-zdravooxraneniya-i-farmaczevtiki.html>

84 Online meeting of the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <http://grotpp.by/onlayn-zasedanie-belorusko-pakista-2/>.

countries amounted to \$52.2 million, which is 4% more than in 2019⁸⁵. At the same time, the surplus for the Belarusian side exceeded \$20 million. This was facilitated by deliveries from Belarus to Pakistan of such export items as "tractors and spare parts, trucks, potash fertilizers, synthetic filament harnesses and synthetic fibers, tyres, machine tools, polycarboxylic acid (phthalic anhydride), newsprint, baby food (dry blends)"⁸⁶.

In 2021, the Belarusian side plans to only increase its exports to the Pakistani market, using a variety of tools to promote products from Belarus to Pakistan. One of them is participation in international exhibitions organized in that South Asian country. Specifically, "in October [2021], Belarusian companies are expected to take part in the industrial exhibition in Karachi⁸⁷ event in the South Asian region - the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) in Lahore, Pakistan, where "such leading Belarusian companies as BelAZ, MAZ, MTZ, Mogilev Metallurgical Plant, and organizations of the Belneftekhim concern" (Belshina, Naftan, Polatsk-Steklovolokno) presented their products. Numerous visitors of this business forum were also able to get acquainted with the best Belarusian higher education institutions and advanced scientific developments of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The Belarusian State University alone demonstrated in Lahore "over 20 scientific and technological

85_Belarus is interested in developing mutually beneficial cooperation with Pakistan - Karankevich [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-razvitii-vzaimovыgodnogo-sotrudnichestva-s-pakistanom-karankevich-436781-2021/>

86 Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/

87_Ulakhovich: there are many opportunities to strengthen cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ulakhovich-dlja-ukreplenija-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-belarusju-i-pakistanom-est-mnogo-vozmozhnostej-429292-2021/>

developments in the field of instrumentation, new materials, metal optics, and tribophatics".⁸⁸ and signed a memorandum of intent to develop academic, scientific and technological cooperation with the Ali Power company from Islamabad. This was not a bad experience of participation.

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88 Results of BSU's participation in the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) (Lahore, Islamic Republic of Pakistan) [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <http://research.bsu.by/2019/10/08/bsu-results-in-the-international-exhibition-international-engineering-machinery-asia-exhibition-iema/>

Belarus vs Hungary: the partnership agenda is set by the business community

In April 2021, a Hungarian-Belarusian business forum was held online at the initiative of the Hungarian business community, attended by more than 80 companies from both countries. This took place in the context of still very active trade relations between Budapest and Minsk. Suffice it to say that "trade turnover between Belarus and Hungary during the pandemic has generally demonstrated resilience to external shocks. In 2020, it reached \$245.5 million, with Belarusian exports amounting to \$121.8 million"⁸⁹. Railroad cars, potash and mineral fertilizers, plywood, parts and accessories for cars and tractors, and furniture made up the bulk of supplies from Belarus to the Hungarian market. Furthermore, 412 Belarusian tractors worth over seven million dollars were exported to Hungary via Poland in 2020. All of these facts show that there is serious potential both to further increase the volume and expand the range of mutual trade, and to attract mutual investments.

Based on their understanding of the prospects of bilateral trade and economic cooperation, the business forum participants concluded that it is necessary to establish a joint Belarusian-Hungarian business council on the basis of the chambers of commerce of the two countries. It has been decided to formalize its structure at the next session of the intergovernmental trade and economic commission scheduled for the second half of 2021. The sides hope not only for new business contacts, revival of the export-import and investment component of the bilateral cooperation. "This platform could become a discussion platform where problematic issues are discussed and new ideas and recommendations for

⁸⁹ Belarus and Hungary will establish a joint business council [Electronic resource]. -- 2021.
- URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-sozhdadut-sovmestnyj-delovoj-sovet-439230-2021/>

the governments of the two countries on the development of bilateral trade are elaborated⁹⁰

It should be noted that trade and economic engagement is traditionally one of the main priorities for the development of the partnership between Belarus and Hungary. For example, at the tenth meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian Commission for Economic Cooperation, which was held in May 2020, discussions focused primarily on "pressing issues of trade cooperation, as well as the status of partnerships in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, energy, transport, science, education, and tourism"⁹¹, economic engagement was the focus of a visit to Belarus by Hungarian Prime Minister V. Orban. A month later, in June 2020, economic cooperation was at the center of the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Orban to Belarus, where he announced a goal for the next two to three years - to increase trade between the two countries to EUR 500 million. This can be achieved through implementation of various projects "that include both involvement and use of Belarusian technologies in Hungary in such spheres as mechanical engineering, construction and also Hungarian technologies in Belarus - agriculture and pharmaceuticals"⁹². In this regard, cooperation in the field of electric transport can be particularly effective, because "given

90 Ponomarev, A. Viktor Orban's visit - a new stage of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation / A. Ponomarev // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/vizit-viktora-orbana-novyj-etap-belorussko-vengerskogo-sotrudnichestva-7346/>

91 Zalesky, B.L. Belarus-Hungary: partnership vector - agriculture / B.L. Zalesky // Materials for XVI International Scientific Practical Conference, Innovations in European Science - 2020, 15 - 22 June 2020. Economiki. : Sofia. "Bial GRAD-BG. - - C. 37.

92 Roman Golovchenko: Belarus is ready to share experience with Hungary in developing electric transport [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9444>

Hungary's plans to switch to green technologies, cooperation in the production of buses and electric buses is particularly promising..⁹³."

Another promising area of economic partnership between the two countries, which can focus the attention of the business council to be formed, is the electricity sector. As a reminder, in June 2020, the Ministry of Energy of Belarus and the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office signed a memorandum on cooperation, which secured the mutual interest of the parties in cooperation in the nuclear power sector in order to develop contacts between business entities whose activities are related to the construction of nuclear power facilities and infrastructure. "Besides, exchange of experience in operating nuclear power plants, storage and disposal of radioactive waste is planned. The memorandum envisages various forms of cooperation, including the establishment of joint ventures to participate in investment projects in the electricity sector..⁹⁴ .

We should suppose that the future business council will also focus on intensifying interregional cooperation, the potential of which the parties have yet to really tap into. The free economic zone (FEZ) Grodnoinvest, the administration of which was among the participants of the April Hungarian-Belarusian business forum, is ready to become one of the active participants in this partnership. The interest of Grodno residents is based on the existing foundation of cooperation with partners from this European country. In particular, "the trade turnover of the residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest with Hungary in 2020 amounted to USD 2.1 million, including USD 575 million of exports. The trade turnover of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents was USD 2.1 mln, including USD 575

93. Negotiations with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://president.gov.by/ru/media/details/peregovory-s-premer-ministrom-vengrii-viktorom-orbanom-1591375023>

94. Belarus and Hungary sign a memorandum on electricity cooperation [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-v-oblasti-elektroenergetiki-393689-2020/>

thousand of exports. EXPORTS AMOUNTED TO USD 575,000. The main exports are particleboards, furniture and plastic products⁹⁵

There are reserves for stepping up cooperation in other Belarusian regions as well. As a reminder, a cooperation agreement between the two capitals - Minsk and Budapest - was signed in 2016. And in April 2018, a similar document was adopted by the Partizan district of Minsk and the Cepel district of Budapest to open "new opportunities, above all, for economic interaction. After all, both districts are industrial, so businesses in their territory will be able to cooperate mutually beneficially"⁹⁶ . Knowing this, there is every reason to believe that the future business council will provide them with the help they need to strengthen their business ties.

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95 Administration of FEZ Grodnoinvest took part in the Hungarian-Belarusian Business Forum [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/administraciya-sez-grodnoinvest-prinyala-uchastie-v-rabote-vengersko-belorusskogo-biznes-foruma/>

96 Zalesky, B.L. Belarus-Hungary: cooperation grows with investments and regions / B.L. Zalesky // Materials of the XV International scientific and practical conference "Modern scientific potential - 2019", February 28 - March 7, 2019. Economic sciences. : Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - - C. 18-19.

Belarus-Africa: the second economic forum as a platform to discuss new forms and methods of cooperation

Minsk hosted the second Belarusian-African Economic Forum in spring and summer 2021, which was attended by representatives of government agencies, business and financial circles from 14 African states - Angola, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia. More than 175 companies and industrial enterprises interested in establishing contacts with African partners and implementing joint mutually beneficial projects took part in the event on the Belarusian part. Minsk sees the forum as an important platform for dialogue aimed at further strengthening and development of bilateral and multilateral relations of Belarus with Africa, expansion of trade, economic and cooperation relations, increase of trade turnover. Suffice it to say that "in the three years following the first Belarus-Africa Forum, mutual trade between Belarus and African countries totaled more than USD 1.8 billion. Belarus and its African partners have gone from annual trade of \$158 million in the early 2000s to \$553 million in 2020⁹⁷. This dynamic largely explains why the continent is viewed as one of the important elements of Belarus's multi-vector foreign policy, where Belarus has a lot of opportunities for joint and mutually beneficial movement towards the creation of new footholds and strengthening cooperation in a wide range of areas.

It is a fact that Belarus has long exported to many African countries. Moreover, "nearly half of the countries of the southern continent know Belarusian products: from food to mechanical

97 About the Second Belarus-Africa Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html.

engineering⁹⁸. The Belarusian side has traditionally emphasized and continues focusing on the three main areas for cooperation with African partners. "First, everything related to mechanical engineering and the development of the respective infrastructure. Secondly, everything that has to do with food production, agricultural technologies, and agricultural machinery. Thirdly, everything that involves the services sector, and especially education, medicine and IT technology⁹⁹. We can say that there are quite successful examples of implemented projects for each of them. For example, there is an assembly facility for Belarusian tractors and trucks in Egypt, and similar projects are already underway in Sudan and Algeria. Potash fertilizers and tyres are exported to South Africa. "Major projects are underway and contracts are being negotiated to supply Belarusian machinery and equipment to Zimbabwe and Angola¹⁰⁰

But the very fact that the second Belarusian-African Economic Forum was held shows that the indicators of engagement with African partners achieved today can and should be much higher. The current level of cooperation is only a starting point for the introduction of new forms and methods of trade and economic cooperation and diversification of mutual trade. In fact, this is why at this economic forum Belarus suggested that African countries, as far as food security assistance is concerned, should use a comprehensive systemic approach in developing partnerships, from evaluating local farming conditions to supplying a full

98 Experts link the development of the global economy with Africa. How can Belarus take advantage of it? [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/experts-svjazyvajut-razvitie-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikoi-kak-ctim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/>.

99 Zalesky, B.L. New benchmarks for joint projects / B.L. Zalesky // Proceedings of XVI International Scientific and Practical Conference, B'deshcheto vzdavosi v naukatami - 2020, 17 - 25 December 2020. : Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - - C. 16.

100 Grishkevich, A. Belarusian dump trucks and agricultural machinery took a strong position in the markets of many African countries / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-samosvaly-i-selhoztehnika-zanjali-prochnye-pozitsii-na-rynках-mnogih-afrikanskih-stran-443820-2021/>

range of machinery and equipment. The implementation of this approach can substantially increase supplies of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components to Africa under various forms of industrial cooperation with the possible use of various instruments to finance Belarusian exports" and speed up the establishment of joint ventures in Africa. This approach could substantially increase the supply of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components to Africa in the framework of various forms of industrial cooperation, with possible use of various instruments of financing of Belarusian exports"¹⁰¹.

It should be noted that Belarusian proposals at the economic forum were met with considerable interest by the African participants. For example, the Egyptian side, which was represented by some 35 companies in Minsk and expressed its interest in industrial cooperation with partners from Belarus, suggested promoting trilateral cooperation in the framework of which Belarusian tractors assembled in Egypt could be delivered to other countries of the continent, making use of free trade zones there, which would remove a number of tariff barriers. Among other vectors of cooperation, according to Egyptian business, there are several more that look promising today. "The first one is a coronavirus vaccine produced in Belarus, and the second one is an electric bus produced in Belarus"¹⁰²

As for other African countries, for example, Uganda, which is rich in minerals and is engaged in oil and gas extraction, "intends to seriously engage in residential infrastructure and hotel construction to develop

101 On the meeting of Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej with the participants of the Second Belarus-Africa Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc66b6a8ee1bbd02.html

102 Egypt is interested in industrial cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/egipet-zainteresovan-v-promyshlennoj-kooperatsii-s-belarusju-443740-2021/>.

tourism. Belarusian partners could help the country in that¹⁰³. Other promising areas of mutual interest between Belarus and Uganda include oil refining, information and communication technologies and education. Congo would like to develop relations with Belarusian partners in order to modernize its agricultural policy. Namibia sees prospects for such cooperation in mining, energy, industry, agriculture, and even fisheries.

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103 "We can start working right now" - African countries have voiced promising areas for cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mozhem-nachinat-rabotat-prjamo-sejchas-strany-afriki-ozvuchili-perspektivnye-sfery-sotrudnichestva-s-443755-2021/>.

Belarus to the World Trade Organisation: The aim of the campaign is to inform the population and businesses

In April 2021, Belarus launched the information campaign World Trade Organization (WTO) Weeks in the Republic of Belarus, an event organized under the UNDP project "Assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus in WTO accession through capacity building in expertise and institutional framework" with the financial support of the Russian Federation. The awareness raising campaign has already helped local businesses in all the Belarusian regions to familiarize themselves with the dynamics of the accession process and the main benefits of the WTO membership. Representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs and economy, national foreign trade experts at regional roundtables focus the attention of the business community on the issues of customs and tariff protection of Belarusian producers, mechanisms of access of Belarusian goods to the markets of the third countries, opportunities to promote export of services within the accession to the WTO. The organizers of the event see the relevance of the event in "the local authorities delivering the message to business entities and maybe even to the population that the WTO is necessary for Belarus. We export over 70% of our gross domestic product, and full membership in the organization is in our interest. It is important that there is predictability in external markets and we can defend our interests when they are violated using this international platform"¹⁰⁴.

As a reminder, the Republic of Belarus has been negotiating its accession to the WTO since 1993, when the Working Party on its accession was established, in three areas - "bringing legislation into

¹⁰⁴ Belarus' WTO membership in the interest of our export-oriented economy - Gorelik [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chlenstvo-belarusi-v-vto-v-interesah-nashej-eksportno-orientirovannoj-ekonomiki-gorelik-438183-2021>

conformity with WTO rules; market access for goods and services; state support for agriculture"¹⁰⁵ . After Russia acceded to the WTO in 2012, our country has actually started to comply with most of the conditions and rules of this international organisation. The other countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) had already signed up for WTO membership earlier: Kyrgyzstan in 1998; Armenia in 2003; and Kazakhstan in 2015. This is why "completing the accession procedure of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO is a strategically important objective both for the Belarusian economy as a whole and for the development of a common trade policy within the EAEU"¹⁰⁶

Currently, the Republic of Belarus is negotiating its accession to the WTO with five international actors: the European Union as a single trade and economic bloc, as well as the United States, Ukraine, New Zealand and Canada. Accession to the WTO is one of the priority objectives of Belarus' foreign trade policy already for the reason that membership in this organization will "ensure stable and predictable terms of trade with countries of the international community, and foreign investors and producers will be provided with generally accepted rules of foreign economic activity in Belarus"¹⁰⁷ .

In this information campaign, special attention is paid to those issues around which there is a rather ambiguous attitude in Belarusian society. One of them is the extent to which state support for domestic agriculture will diminish after the country's accession to the WTO. Even at the first regional roundtable with the business community in Vitebsk

105 Belarus' accession to the WTO [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://mfa.gov.by/export/wto/accession/>

106 Negotiations on Belarus' accession to the WTO [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/peregovory-ru/>

107 World Trade Organisation Weeks campaign in Belarus starts on 21 April [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kampanija-nedeli-vsemirnoj-torgovoj-organizatsii-v-belarusi-startuet-21-aprelja-438066-2021/>

oblast the answers were clear: the amount of state support will not decrease, but the system of its provision will have to be reformatted. The point is that WTO rules allow for internal support of agricultural production, and the European Union is a leader in terms of its volume. There are three 'baskets' - red, yellow and green. "The red basket contains prohibited measures (direct subsidies for exports and import substitution, a number of other measures) and will have to be abandoned after accession to the WTO. The yellow basket contains instruments that distort competition, but their application is permissible within the framework of the WTO in agreement with the interested WTO members, primarily the countries that are major exporters of agricultural products¹⁰⁸ Kazakhstan shows that after accession to the WTO state support of agriculture there has not decreased in absolute values, but there was a reformatting of channels of its provision using tools from the green basket, including subsidies for infrastructure, scientific and educational projects. The Belarusian agricultural sector should also be prepared for such reformatting.

We should also note that the Republic of Belarus is now the largest economy among the states that are now in the advanced negotiating stage - the stage of shaping final commitments to the WTO. In November-December 2021 the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference is to take place, where, apparently, important issues for our country will be considered. But already in April this year, the Belarusian side declared its readiness to participate "as an observer in negotiations on new international rules in the field of e-commerce, simplification of investment procedures, support

108 After Belarus' accession to the WTO, the volume of state support to agriculture will not decrease - MFA [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/posle-vstuplenija-belarusi-v-vto-objem-gospodderzhki-selskogo-hozjajstva-ne-snizitsja-mid-438239-2021/>

for small and medium enterprises". As ¹⁰⁹these areas are absolutely consonant with the priorities of the Belarusian government.

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109_Geneva confirms readiness to continue providing the necessary assistance to Belarus on accession to the WTO [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-zheneve-podtverzhdena-gotovnost-i-dalee-okazyvat-neobhodimoe-sodejstvie-belarusi-po-vstupleniju-v-vto-438064-2021>

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