

## Trend towards cooperation

Import substitution is one of the main areas of work of the Belarusian economy, which is now dynamically developing both at different levels and in a full cycle. It should be recalled that in late December 2022 at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus it was noted that in 2023 import substitution will become an even more effective driver of Belarusian industrial production, where special attention will be paid to increasing localization. For reference, we note that two years ago the amount of these products in Belarus amounted to about \$27 billion, and already in 2023 the volume of import-substituting products will amount to about \$29 billion. This suggests that the import substitution program is going very well. And there are already quite a large number of enterprises in the whole country - in sectors and regions, which are involved in the implementation of import-substitution programs in all areas, from trucks and buses to TV sets, furniture and the simplest consumer goods. What steps are being taken in Belarus in this direction of development of the Belarusian economy? What is relevant in this regard? This is the subject of this proposed study.



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## Trend towards cooperation

*Dynamics of acceleration of economic development of the Republic Belarus*

**Boris Zalesskij**

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# **Trend towards cooperation**

**Dynamics of acceleration of economic development of the  
Republic Belarus**

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## **Belarus: the import substitution process is developing along a full cycle**

Import substitution is one of the main areas of work of the Belarusian economy, which is now dynamically developing both at different levels and in a full cycle. It should be reminded that at the end of December 2022 at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus it was noted that "in 2023 import substitution will become an even more effective driver of Belarusian industrial production, where special attention will be paid to increasing localization"<sup>1</sup>. For reference, we note that two years ago the amount of these products in Belarus amounted to about \$27 billion, and already "in the current [2023] year the volume of import-substituting products will amount to about \$29 billion"<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that a large number of enterprises in the whole country - in sectors and regions - are already involved in the implementation of import-substitution programs in all areas, from trucks and buses to TV sets, furniture, and the simplest consumer goods.

For example, it is already known that in 2023 the organizations of the Ministry of Industry system will produce import-substituting products worth almost six billion dollars, and in 2024 this volume should increase by another 200 million dollars. "The increase will occur in such groups as trucks, buses, vans, trailers for trucks, grain and forage harvesting equipment, diesel engines, rolled metal products, and televisions"<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the positive dynamics of import-substituting products output will be largely ensured

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<sup>1</sup> Zaleskii, B. New Realities for Partnership. Chronicle of international cooperation under conditions of economic mobilization / B. Zaleskii. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Golovchenko: we expect that this year the output of import-substituting products will amount to \$29 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-ozhidaem-cto-v-etom-godu-objem-vypuska-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-sostavit-29-mlrd-605441-2023/>

<sup>3</sup> Enterprises of the Ministry of Industry in 2024 plan to increase the output of import-substituting products [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-minprom-a-v-2024-godu-planirujut-uvelichit-objem-vypuska-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-606535-2023/>

through the development and organization of production of innovative products.

In this context, the experience of the Belarusian Automobile Plant, which at its holding site in Orsha is creating a high-tech production facility to manufacture heavy-duty dump trucks and is mastering new types of products, is interesting. "The introduced rolling technology will make it possible to produce high-quality blanks of solid rolled and profile rings from steels of various grades with an outer diameter of up to 3 m and a weight of up to 3 tons with high quality and minimal allowance for subsequent processing. They will be used to produce bearings, crown gears of planetary gears, flanges and other types of products. Currently, such blanks are not produced in Belarus"<sup>4</sup>. These high-tech products are used in machine building, aircraft and engine building, nuclear power engineering, shipbuilding. For this reason, the implementation of this investment project with high export potential will not only lead to the creation of our own high-tech production of rolling rings, but will also ensure their full import substitution both for the needs of the Belarusian Automobile Plant and other enterprises of our country.

In the energy sector, Belenergoremnaladka has accumulated extensive experience in the production of import-substituting products. This is the largest organization in Belarus specializing in repair, installation, adjustment, diagnostics and maintenance of power equipment - from small CHPPs to the Belarusian NPP, as well as production of spare parts and assemblies, including those based on unique technologies. In 2022, this enterprise produced "import-substituting products worth \$2 million, or 53% more than in 2021, in the current year - already worth \$3.5 million with the

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<sup>4</sup> Investments of BELAZ in the creation of a modern ring rolling complex will amount to almost Br200 mln [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/investitsii-belaza-v-sozdanie-sovremennogo-kompleksa-koltseraskatki-sostavjat-pochti-br200-mln-605545-2023/>



annual plan of \$2.8 million"<sup>5</sup> . In addition, Belenergoremnaladka put into operation a mobile workstation based on a high-precision 3D scanner with computer equipment and licensed software. The company's own design and engineering bureau and an accredited metal and welding control laboratory allow it to provide services for the development of a full set of design documentation to produce a product according to the sample. And in 2024 the enterprise will perform maintenance and repair of equipment of both power units, including controlled access zones, at the Belarusian NPP. In the future, a branch office will be opened here so that the work can be performed with the least involvement of third-party organizations.

Orientation to the production of import-substituting products in 2023 was one of the most important tendencies of a large number of enterprises of Belgospischeprom Concern. Suffice it to say that "in the first nine months of 2023, the concern produced an import-substituting range of products worth \$425 million. All these products are now on the shelves of Belarusian stores"<sup>6</sup> . The main part in the production of these products fell on the enterprises of confectionery and canning industry, in particular those engaged in the production of canned fruit and vegetable products, including those for infants and school meals.

As for the implementation of the import substitution program in the regions of Belarus, the systematic work in 2023 was shown by Vitebsk region, where "the volume of import substitution for the half-year period - more than \$500 million, by the end of the year it is expected to double this amount"<sup>7</sup> . The region organized the production and supply of high-pressure

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<sup>5</sup> Belenergoremnaladka OJSC produced import-substituting products for \$3.5 million [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ao-belenergoremnaladka-vypustilo-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-35-mln-606481-2023/>

<sup>6</sup> Head of Belgospischeprom: the concern has produced \$425 million worth of import-substituting products for nine months [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/glava-belgospischeproma-za-devjat-mesjatsev-kontsern-proizvel-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-425-599446-2023/>

<sup>7</sup> Subbotin: the volume of import substitution in Vitebsk region for the half-year amounted to more than \$500 million [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL:

hoses, filter hoses and wipes, fasteners to machine-building enterprises, as well as tape sealing fusion. There are also 147 production projects and 124 infrastructure projects planned in the region. The Orsha flax mill was modernizing and expanding its production. The Polotsk district mastered the technology of metal structures manufacturing with multisystem integration of processes based on the Industry 4.0 concept. In Vitebsk, a factory of truck cranes with a lifting capacity of up to 100 tons was under construction, and in Ushachsky district, a workshop for processing raw materials and producing protein and vitamin supplements was built. Construction of 6 MW wind turbines is being completed in Senno district, and a project to produce cross-laminated panels is being implemented in Tolochinsky district. Besides, the Verkhnedvinsk butter and cheese factory plans to produce mozzarella, the creation of a multi-profile fruit and vegetable processing plant is underway in Sharkovshchina, and the construction of a delayed coking unit for oil residues at Naftan OJSC has been completed. Finally, we should mention several more import-substituting projects in Vitebshchina: a vaccine plant with reconstruction of the existing production in the village of Dolzha - BelVitunipharm OJSC; a plant of innovative veterinary drugs - Belkarolin LLC; production of universal cable for laying in the ground, water and air - in Energokomplekt LLC; production of metal-cutting and auxiliary tools with the introduction of innovative technological processes - in Orsha Tool Plant OJSC. So, in 2024 Vitebsk region, apparently, should significantly update the indicators on the volume of products that will replace imported supplies.

## Minsk Free Economic Zone: a tool for attracting investment and increasing exports

Free economic zones (FEZs) in Belarus are an effective tool for increasing Belarusian exports, attracting foreign investment and increasing profits. At the same time, the successful operation of FEZs attracts not only tax preferences and benefits, but also "reduction of the time of document processing, simplification of administrative procedures for investors, simplification of the procedure for allocation of land plots within FEZs and demolition of unused buildings"<sup>8</sup>. As a result, even in 2023 the Belarusian FEZs continued to grow in foreign direct investment, production volumes, revenues, exports, and the number of residents. For example, "the list of residents of free economic zones in January-September was supplemented by 22 new enterprises with a total volume of declared investments of more than \$140 million and plans to create 1.2 thousand new jobs"<sup>9</sup>. New projects were realized in logistics, machine building, food and chemical industry, furniture and electrical equipment production, metalworking. And this had a significant impact on the socio-economic development of Belarusian regions, where FEZ residents already account for a fifth of exports, foreign direct investment on a net basis and industrial production.

One of the most powerful zones in Belarus is **FEZ "Minsk"**, whose share in industrial production of all Belarusian FEZs reaches almost 20 percent. In 2023, among the main tasks to be implemented in this zone were: "1) attraction of new investors; 2) intensification of foreign economic activity; 3) use of new innovative technologies; 4) stimulation of business activity; 5) efficient use of resources; 6) expansion of import-substituting

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<sup>8</sup> Golovchenko: for investors in FEZ creates an oasis of the most demanded business environment [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-dlja-investorov-v-sez-sozdaetsja-oazis-naibolee-vostrebovannoj-biznes-sredy-588296-2023/>

<sup>9</sup> In free economic zones of Belarus for 9 months 22 new residents were registered [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zonah-belarusi-za-9-mesjatsev-zaregistrirovano-22-novyh-rezidenta-600077-2023/>

production capacities"<sup>10</sup>. As of mid-December 2023, 105 enterprises with Belarusian and foreign investments were already operating here. For a quarter of a century residents of the zone have built "43 modern factories, 16 factories are under construction (taking into account stages and queues), 10 - at the design stage"<sup>11</sup>. In 2023, new residents with interesting investment projects in various industries came to the FEZ.

For example, in February 2023, the company Carvalio LLC was registered in FEZ "Minsk", which undertook to implement an investment project to create the production of furniture and its elements, wooden, metal building structures and joinery. "Modern furniture production will ensure the complex and rational use of wood and production of demanded products on the territory of FEZ "Minsk". The project realization provides for the construction of the facility on a land plot of 1.5 hectares in the area of Fanipol (Minsk region)"<sup>12</sup>. More than 50 jobs will be created at the new enterprise, and the share of export supplies will be at least 80 percent.

In March 2023, another - 100th resident - Modul-Online LLC, which planned to "implement an investment project for the production of furniture parts based on laminated chipboard, was registered in the FEZ. Investment costs will be spent on the purchase of new production equipment and modernization of own production facilities on the territory of the free economic zone"<sup>13</sup>. About one hundred jobs will be created at the enterprise. Apparently, the production will be a synthesis of high-tech production process, a large potential of skilled workers, technologists, designers and

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<sup>10</sup> Zalessky, B. Export growth strategy. Opportunities and challenges of open economy in modern conditions / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Enterprises of FEZ "Minsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://fezminsk.by/residenty/predpriyatiya-sez-minsk/>

<sup>12</sup> The new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will produce furniture and building structures [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-proizvodit-mebel-i-stroitelnye-konstruktsii-550914-2023>

<sup>13</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will produce furniture parts based on laminated chipboard [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-proizvodit-mebelnye-detali-na-osnove-laminirovannogo-dsp-558219-2023/>

management specialists. At the same time, more than 60 percent of production is planned to be exported to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as far abroad.

In the second half of 2023, five more new residents appeared in the FEZ in five months. In July - two companies. The first is Gualapak BiWay LLC, founded by a leading multinational group for the production of flexible packaging for food and non-food products headquartered in Italy, operating on four continents through 11 production facilities and selling its products worldwide. The implementation of the investment project of the new FEZ resident "will contribute to the achievement of the task set by the program of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus to ensure environmentally safe living conditions for the population, improve environmental protection and efficient use of natural resources"<sup>14</sup>. It is planned that at least two thirds of the production volume will be exported. The second resident is Albus Group LLC with an investment project on creation of production of chemical additives for various industries. The main idea of the project is to create a new production complex on the territory of the FEZ to produce emulsion additive and other chemical products. "The first import-substituting product, which is planned to be put into production, is AKB glue, used for the processing of paper products"<sup>15</sup>. The fact is that so far there are no producers of this glue in Belarus, for this reason the existing demand of the Belarusian market is fully covered by imported supplies. So, hopefully, the new resident will be able to significantly strengthen its position in the market, expand the assortment range, reduce the cost of production and increase sales.

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<sup>14</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will be engaged in the production of flexible packaging [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-zajmetsja-proizvodstvom-gibkoj-upakovki-577745-2023/>

<sup>15</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will create the production of chemical additives for industries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-himicheskikh-dobavok-dlja-otraslej-promyshlennosti-577985-2023/>

The next new FEZ resident - in October 2023 - is the company with Turkish capital "Diligent Company", which plans an investment project on "organization of production of ABS plastic and polypropylene products (travel suitcases). The project envisages creation of 60 new jobs"<sup>16</sup>. And in early December, the company "Holz Inc." came to the FEZ, one of the founders of which was the group of companies TMC, engaged in the construction of warehouses, hangars and production buildings, as well as the development of pre-project documentation. The new resident will implement a project for the production of furniture and blanks, "will be engaged in the construction of a production and warehouse complex of 10 thousand square meters with all necessary facilities and its equipping with technological equipment"<sup>17</sup>. This will be a high-tech and highly profitable production facility with significant export potential. Finally, in mid-December, the 105th resident of FEZ "Minsk" became the company "Manrosti" LLC, which plans to implement an investment project to organize high-tech production of coffee products with its own research base. This will provide "the needs of domestic and foreign enterprises in quality products, increase the growth of export potential, create high-tech jobs"<sup>18</sup>. An important fact: the enterprise has already allocated a third of its workplaces for workers with disabilities, who are directly involved in the production of products.

In 2024, the FEZ "Minsk" plans to involve more organizations and use all available territories. After all, this FEZ "was designed to give businesses

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<sup>16</sup> The company with Turkish capital "Diligent Company" became a new resident of FEZ "Minsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novym-rezidentom-sez-minsk-stala-kompanija-s-turetskim-kapitalom-diligent-kompani-594996-2023/>

<sup>17</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will be engaged in furniture production [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-zajmetsja-proizvodstvom-mebeli-602938-2023/>

<sup>18</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" realizes an investment project for the production of coffee products [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-realizuet-investproekt-po-proizvodstvu-kofejnyh-produktov-605440-2023/>

a boost to development in key industries"<sup>19</sup> . And a number of countries are already interested in investment cooperation with this FEZ. For example, in August 2023, the Turkish Association of Independent Industrialists and Entrepreneurs MUSIAD, which includes more than 60 thousand Turkish companies, said that it was "interested in launching production in Belarus in the chemical industry, as well as ready to consider other areas of business"<sup>20</sup> in partnership with FEZ "Minsk". In September 2023, the capital's FEZ expanded its interaction with partners from Tajikistan, when three agreements on cooperation with FEZs - Sughd, Kulyab, and Dangara - were signed at once on the margins of the Belarusian-Tajik business forum. "The documents are aimed at developing bilateral relations, as well as cooperation in the field of research and implementation of international practices of investment project realization"<sup>21</sup> . And in October 2023, during the Iran-Belarus Business Forum, FEZ Minsk signed a memorandum of cooperation with Iran's FEZ Maku, in which the parties emphasized "the expansion of bilateral trade and investment cooperation, including participation in joint projects, business events, trade and investment missions"<sup>22</sup> . Finally, in December 2023, delegations from China and India visited the capital's FEZ and considered prospects for expanding contacts and implementing investment projects. All this suggests that 2024 will be another impetus for FEZ "Minsk" to increase its investment potential and export component of residents.

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<sup>19</sup> Kartun: more organizations should be involved in FEZ "Minsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kartun-v-sez-minsk-neobhodimo-vovlekat-bolshe-organizatsij-562537-2023/>

<sup>20</sup> Turkish investors intend to launch production in the chemical industry in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turetskie-investory-namereny-zapustit-v-belarusi-proizvodstvo-v-sfere-himicheskoy-promyshlennosti-583837-2023/>

<sup>21</sup> FEZ "Minsk" will expand cooperation with Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-minsk-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-s-tadzhikistanom-590824-2023/>

<sup>22</sup> FEZ "Minsk" and Iranian FEZ "Maku" signed a memorandum of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sez-minsk-i-iranskaja-sez-maku-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-594179-2023/>

## **Belarus-China: focus on a new qualitative level of education and scientific research**

In November 2023, at the First Forum of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China in Minsk, an agreement was signed on the establishment of the Sino-Belarusian Association of Universities, which included more than 80 higher education institutions of Belarus and China. It should be reminded that today there are more than 560 direct university agreements between the two countries. And in the near future, a plan for the realization of flagship projects between the universities is being prepared for signing. In July 2023, this plan had 35 positions, and now there are more than 70. They are constantly being added and expanded. This plan will be signed at the next meeting of the intergovernmental commission on education within the framework of the intergovernmental committee, which will be held in China. This fact shows that the new association is really a new qualitative level of Belarusian-Chinese relations in education and scientific research. After all, as a result, the parties come out "to the creation of joint associations of universities with high-tech enterprises of our countries, on whose orders scientific research, experimental and design work and commercialization of our university scientists for the economy will be carried out"<sup>23</sup>.

Speaking in general about humanitarian cooperation between Belarus and China, this association could become a hallmark in such areas as inter-university cooperation, joint training of specialists, and joint scientific work. Besides, "such an association is of great importance for training even more Chinese and Belarusian scholars who know well the languages of our two countries, who understand Chinese and Belarusian culture"<sup>24</sup> and opens up

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<sup>23</sup> Belarus and China signed an agreement on the establishment of the association of universities [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-kitaj-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sozdanii-assotsiatsii-universitetov-600861-2023/>

<sup>24</sup> Xie Xiaoyun: the Chinese-Belarusian association of universities will become a hallmark of humanitarian cooperation between the two countries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL:



many opportunities for further development of cooperation between Belarus and China in the field of education. Many Belarusian universities that promote joint educational structures with Chinese partners are among the active participants of the new association. In particular, "seven joint projects are already functioning: three laboratories, two centers, and two institutes. 40 joint educational programs of the first and second levels of higher education are being implemented, 10 of which have been developed over the last two years"<sup>25</sup>. In this context, we should mention three Belarusian universities: Belarusian **State University** (BSU), **Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno** (YKSU), **Brest State Technical University** (BrSTU).

Let's start with **BSU**: to date, "more than 80 cooperation agreements have been signed with 55 Chinese educational institutions, 72% of the total number of foreign students at BSU are Chinese citizens"<sup>26</sup>. Since 2007, **Dalian Polytechnic University** (DPU) has become a strategic partner of the Belarusian university. The most significant project recently was the opening of joint institutes DPU-BSU and BSU-DPU. In June 2023, the parties considered the prospects of holding mirror summer schools on the basis of the two universities and opening a new specialty "photonics" on the basis of DPU-BPU in 2024/2025 academic year.

**Xi'an University of Foreign Languages** became BSU's new partner in China in April 2023. The Memorandum of Understanding considers cooperation "in the field of regional and country studies of the Eurasian continent, history and ethnic issues of the peoples of Central Asia, Russian-

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<https://www.belta.by/society/view/se-sjaojun-kitajsko-belorusskaja-assotsiatsija-vuzov-stanet-vizitnoj-kartochkoj-gumanitarnogo-600900-2023/>

<sup>25</sup> Zaleskii, B. Hope for the positive future. Dynamics of partnerships under conditions of economic realism / B. Zaleskii. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 103.

<sup>26</sup> "Photonics" and summer schools. BSU and Dalian Polytechnic University develop cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/fotonika-i-letnie-shkoly-bgu-i-daljanskij-politehnicheskij-universitet-razvivajut-sotrudnichestvo-571808-2023/>

Soviet oriental studies"<sup>27</sup> . The Chinese university began in 1952 as the Northwest College of Russian Language, which was one of the first to teach foreign languages. Now it consists of 23 faculties and educational institutes, where about 20 thousand undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students from 37 countries study and where 20 foreign languages, including Belarusian, are taught.

In November 2023, BSU signed two more new documents with Chinese partners. First, it is a memorandum of understanding with **Sichuan University of Foreign Languages**, which envisages prospects for cooperation in regional studies, linguistics, and Belarusian studies. After all, this Chinese university has been running the Center for the Study of Belarus since 2019. Secondly, it is an agreement on exchange of students with the **Chinese University of Political Science and Law**, which develops "the partnership within the framework of the memorandum of understanding between the universities in force since March 2023 and concerns the training in legal specialties of graduates of the Chinese university in the master's degree program of BSU, provision of grant support for the implementation of academic mobility programs"<sup>28</sup> . At the same time the issue of joining the Chinese university to the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Research Center, established by BSU together with Qingdao University, was also considered.

Interaction with China in the field of education is one of the strategic directions of international cooperation of another Belarusian university - **GrSU**, which signed its first agreement with Chinese partners back in 2001 - with the South Central University of Economics and Law. Today the

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<sup>27</sup> BSU and Xi'an University of Foreign Languages signed a memorandum of understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-sianskij-universitet-inostrannyh-jazykov-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimoponimanii-563650-2023/>

<sup>28</sup> BSU expands partnerships with China, two new agreements signed [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-rasshirjaet-partnerskie-svjazi-s-kitaem-podpisany-dva-novyh-soglashenija-598631-2023/>

Grodno university has 14 partners from different provinces of China. The cooperation is carried out in a wide range of areas: joint educational programs, academic exchanges, joint scientific projects. And in October 2023 GrSU signed an agreement on international cooperation with **Shijiazhuang Engineering Professional College**, which implies long-term cooperation in the field of introduction of scientific developments in the educational process, development of scientific potential and ensuring high quality of professional training of specialists in the field of academic mobility, development of training in the network form. It only remains to add that for five years more than 500 Chinese citizens have received bachelor's and master's degrees at GrSU, and two graduate students from China have successfully defended their PhD theses. Today there are more than 100 students from China studying at Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno"<sup>29</sup>. Also, GrSU is the first of the Belarusian regional universities, where Chinese language courses with a three-year training program began. And for five years more than 600 people have been trained.

As for **Brest State Technical University**, in November 2023, it signed a cooperation agreement with **Anhui Wenda Institute of Information Engineering**. This university, located in the Chinese city of Hefei, became the 15th Chinese educational institution to sign a document on cooperation with Brest State Technical University. The partners outlined initial priorities for beneficial interaction. In particular, graduates of the Chinese institute will be able to continue their studies at the master's program of Brest University. In addition, Belarusian and Chinese teachers will conduct joint scientific research and develop teaching materials. A more distant prospect is the creation of joint educational programs. It should be reminded that BrSTU has already concluded 170 cooperation agreements

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<sup>29</sup> SDSU and Shijiazhuang Engineering College agreed on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grgu-i-shitszjachzhuanskij-inzhenernyj-kolledzh-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-595101-2023/>

with universities of 35 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Chinese vector of cooperation is one of the priorities. For example, "for more than 15 years there is a joint training of specialists in the field of highway construction, accounting and automation with Huh-Hoto Professional Institute. Last year, a pilot program for training mechanical engineers with Xinxiang University was launched"<sup>30</sup>. And Hebei Institute of International Business and Economics plans to create a joint program with BrSTU to train students in the field of e-business. In addition, Brest University has taken up a scientific work in the field of information technologies, which is financed by the Belarusian Republican Foundation for Fundamental Research and the National Natural Science Foundation of the People's Republic of China.

All these facts show that the establishment of the Sino-Belarusian Association of Universities will be an important stage in the development of inter-university cooperation, and will also serve for the benefit of the economies of the two countries and the development of the two peoples - Belarus and China.

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<sup>30</sup> Brest Technical University will cooperate with the institute of the Chinese province of Anhui [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/amp/regions/view/brestskij-tehnicheskij-universitet-budet-sotrudnichat-s-institutom-kitajskoj-provintsii-anhoj-602188-2023>

## **Belarus-China: a tool to boost trade**

Back in early March 2023, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus adopted the Joint Statement on Further Developing the Relationship of All-Weather and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in a New Era, in which the parties agreed to promote bilateral trade and economic cooperation and steadily increase the volume of bilateral trade. One of the tools to increase and diversify the Belarusian-Chinese trade today is the application of the exchange mechanism, which has actively started to develop since 2019. "At the end of 2022, the amount of transactions made by Chinese companies at the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) trades increased by 15 percent and amounted to about \$53 million."<sup>31</sup> . At the beginning of 2023, the number of participants of BUTB trading sessions from China amounted to 113, of which two had the status of stock brokers. And as of November 27 of this year, 152 of them had already been accredited on the Belarusian exchange platform. "At the end of 10 months [2023], China became the largest export destination for Belarusian exchange traders. <...> As a result, compared to January-October last year, the volume of export transactions increased two and a half times"<sup>32</sup> and amounted to almost \$60 million.

One of the primary tasks that BUTB will address with Chinese partners in 2024 is to expand the range of goods from Belarus and China involved in mutual exchange trade. It should be noted that "Belarusian lumber, rapeseed oil, meat products, and milk powder are exported to China through the exchange. At the same time, the exchange mechanism is becoming more and more in demand among Chinese businesses, ensuring a

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<sup>31</sup> Zalessky, B. Priority - export growth. New opportunities in the conditions of multi-vector foreign economic activity of Belarus / Boris Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 41.

<sup>32</sup> 2. Osmolovsky: BUTB will provide comprehensive support to Belarusian exporters [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/osmolovskij-butb-okazhet-kompleksnuju-podderzhku-belorusskim-eksporteram-599485-2023/>

high positive dynamics in terms of the amount of transactions"<sup>33</sup>. In order to further develop these processes in Belarus and China, it is planned to focus on small and medium-sized enterprises, primarily producers of import-substituting goods. In addition, it is planned to ensure further diversification of the product mix by means of BUTB's targeted work with sectoral business associations and chambers of commerce and industry in various regions of China, which "will make it possible to establish interaction both with manufacturers of products in demand in Belarus and with potential consumers of Belarusian goods"<sup>34</sup>.

In particular, in July 2023, BUTB and the Xinjiang Asia-European International Trade Center (AEEX), the operator of the Asia Europa Exchange electronic trading platform, agreed to increase exports to China. It will focus "on the regions through which the New Silk Road passes. First of all, these are Shanghai, Taicang and Xinjiang"<sup>35</sup>, where there are AEEX offices, which are already establishing interaction with representatives of Chinese businesses interested in working through BUTB.

In August 2023, the China National Forestry Industry Corporation announced its intention to expand cooperation with BUTB. It plans not only to increase purchases of Belarusian sawn timber, but also to sell Chinese-made goods through the Belarusian import substitution platform. The two sides also reached an agreement to explore the possibility of importing Belarusian rapeseed oil and milk powder to China as the most liquid commodity items. "In this context, the issue of accreditation of the

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<sup>33</sup> BUTB and the Chinese Embassy identified priorities of cooperation in trade and economic sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-posolstvo-kitaja-opredelili-prioritety-vzaimodejstvija-v-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sfere-594539-2023/>

<sup>34</sup> Prospects for the development of exchange trade between Belarus and China discussed at the business forum in Shanghai [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/perspektivy-razvitiya-birzhevoj-torgovli-belarusi-i-kitaja-obsudili-na-biznes-forume-v-shanhae-597700-2023/>

<sup>35</sup> Xinjiang Asia-Europe Trade Center to help boost exports to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sintzjanskij-aziatisko-evropejskij-torgovij-tsentr-pomozhet-narastit-eksport-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-576501-2023/>

corporation as an exchange broker is also being considered, which will allow it to attract economic entities from other sectors of the economy to the BUTB"<sup>36</sup>.

Another fact: in September 2023, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region expressed its interest in developing cooperation with the BUTB, which "has four main features: vast territory, huge reserves of natural resources, highly developed agriculture and a powerful energy industry"<sup>37</sup>. The Chinese side is confident that exchange trading can play a key role in creating favorable conditions for companies from this region of China to do business in Belarus. In this regard, the BUTB, with its wide import and export opportunities, can facilitate the activities of companies from Inner Mongolia in the Belarusian market.

Finally, in November 2023, in the framework of the 13th China International Wood Trade Conference, which was held in Nanning, the administrative center of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, a memorandum of cooperation in the field of electronic exchange trade was signed by BUTB and the China Timber and Forest Products Trade Association (CTWPDA) to assist Chinese enterprises in entering the Belarusian market. Recall that over 467 thousand cubic meters of Belarusian lumber products were sold on the Chinese market in the first 11 months of 2023. This is almost five times more than in January-November last year. At the same time, working with domestic suppliers, Chinese importers actively use the mechanism of exchange address transactions, the volume of which has already reached 237 thousand cubic meters in just a few months"<sup>38</sup>. In

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<sup>36</sup> China Forest Industry Corporation intends to expand cooperation with BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskaja-lesopromyshlennaja-korporatsija-namerena-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-s-butb-581070-2023/>

<sup>37</sup> Belarus and China discussed the prospects of development of exchange trade [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-obsudili-perspektivy-razvitiya-birzhevoj-torgovli-590151-2023/>

<sup>38</sup> BUTB and China Forest Trade Association signed a memorandum of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-kitajskaja-assotsiatsija-torgovli-lesom-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnicestve-602012-2023/>

this regard, the establishment of partnership relations between BUTB and CTWPDA will not only help to find new buyers for sawn timber produced in Belarus, but will also provide an additional impetus to the development of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in the exchange sphere.

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## Vitebsk region: Chinese vector of partnerships

In September 2023, the third meeting of the working group on interregional trade and economic cooperation of the commission on trade and economic cooperation of the Belarus-China Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee took place in the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Veliky Kamen", where topical issues of interaction between the regions of the two countries and prospects for its development were discussed. The parties noted that certain economic indicators of cooperation between Belarus and China have reached a fairly high level. "In the first half of 2023, mutual trade turnover exceeded \$4 billion, with Belarusian exports approaching the landmark mark of \$1 billion."<sup>39</sup>.

**Vitebsk Region** is among the active participants in the Belarusian-Chinese interregional cooperation, which in 2022 exceeded the volume of supplies to China almost twofold, which amounted to more than \$55 million. And in fact, back in 2006, the basis of exports of the Belarusian region to the Celestial Empire was represented by only 12 consolidated items, of which 97 percent was a bundle of synthetic threads. "And at the end of 2021, the export basket of Vitebshchina expanded to 28 items, and its basis began to be formed by supplies of agricultural products (meat, milk and dairy products) - about 70 percent"<sup>40</sup>. Today, these supplies also include dry confectionery, rapeseed oil, polyethylene, acrylic tourniquets, glass fabrics, flax processing and woodworking products, peat, and alcoholic beverages.

But recently the interaction between Vitebsk region and China has gone beyond buying and selling, as the parties are moving "to the next level

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<sup>39</sup> Chebotar: Belarus aims to expand trade and economic cooperation with the regions of the People's Republic of China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chebotar-belarus-natselena-na-rasshirenie-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-regionami-kr-590444-2023/>

<sup>40</sup> Mishin, A. What are the prospects of cooperation between Vitebsk region and the provinces of China? / A. Mishin // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://vitbichi.by/news/ekonomika/analitik\\_obyasnit\\_kakovy\\_perspektivy\\_sotrudnichestva\\_vit\\_ebskoy\\_oblasti\\_i\\_provintsii\\_kitaya/](https://vitbichi.by/news/ekonomika/analitik_obyasnit_kakovy_perspektivy_sotrudnichestva_vit_ebskoy_oblasti_i_provintsii_kitaya/)

- exchange of technologies, assistance in their refinement, in their research, in the development of new types of products"<sup>41</sup> , to enter the plane of attracting investors, investing Vitebsk funds on the Chinese territory and mastering new technologies. Besides, the stake in the development is made on the educational, scientific and cultural segments. It should be reminded that Vitebsk region has signed eight bilateral documents - agreements, protocols, programs - on cooperation, established and maintained regular contacts at the level of executive authorities, organizations and companies with four provinces and one city of China. In addition, 19 bilateral documents on cooperation between cities and districts of Vitebsk region and Chinese partners have been concluded.

The Belarusian northern region has the most intensive interaction with **Heilongjiang** Province, which is located in the north of China, where rice is grown and agriculture is generally very developed. Over the past 18 years, the parties have created a good legal framework of mutual relations: 1) Agreement on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific-technical, humanitarian-cultural and other spheres (2005); 2) Agreement on the establishment of twinning relations (2011); 3) Cooperation Development Program for 2016-2020. "Twinning agreements with the cities of this region of the Celestial Empire were once concluded by Polotsk, Novopolotsk and Vitebsk"<sup>42</sup> . In May 2023 at the XI International Economic Forum "Innovation. Investments. Prospects" in Vitebsk, enterprises from Heilongjiang Province expressed interest in partnership with Vitebsk producers of meat products, as well as "expect to establish mutually

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<sup>41</sup> Subbotin: cooperation with China goes beyond buying and selling, into the plane of investment projects [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/subbotin-sotrudnichestvo-s-kitaem-vyhodit-za-ramki-kupli-prodazhi-v-ploskost-investproektov-598640-2023/>

<sup>42</sup> Pushnyakova, A. Food products, MDF boards: Vitebsk region will present in June in Harbin the potential of the region / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/prodovolstvennye-tovary-mdf-plity-vitebskaja-oblast-predstavit-v-ijune-v-harbine-potentsial-regiona-567209-2023/>

beneficial cooperation with Orsha and Dubrovensk flax processors in the near future, to share their experience and discuss the possibility of supplying modern equipment"<sup>43</sup> . And in June this year at the international trade and economic exhibition in Harbin - the administrative center of Heilongjiang - a memorandum of intentions to establish friendly relations between the Vitebsk concern "Meat and Dairy Products" and an enterprise from the city of Suihua from the same province was already signed. In addition, the Belarusian side is interested in cooperating in the production of electrical equipment and instrumentation, as the Chinese partners have great competence in this area. So, new promising projects in this regional interaction may appear in the near future.

Another interesting partner of Vitebsk region in China is **Jiangxi** Province, with which the Belarusian region signed an agreement on cooperation in trade, logistics, investment, economy, education, healthcare, sports and tourism in October 2022. "As another practical step, it was decided to establish direct interaction between FEZ Vitebsk and special economic zones of Jiangxi province and their residents in order to work out the creation of joint production facilities in Belarus and the use of cross-border trade mechanisms by Belarusian exporters to China"<sup>44</sup> . They also discussed the expansion of supplies of Belarusian products to China by the reverse container train Orsha-Nanchang and the exchange of practical experience in the investment sphere. After all, the city of Orsha has established cooperation with the administrative center of this province - Nanchang - in the field of innovative and traditional medicine at the level of individual medical institutions. In December 2022 the document of

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<sup>43</sup> Pushnyakova, A. Chinese industrialists intend to establish cooperation with the enterprises of Vitebsk region / A Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kitajskie-promyshlenniki-namereny-naladit-sotrudnichestvo-s-predpriyatijami-vitebskoj-oblasti-567149-2023/>

<sup>44</sup> FEZ "Vitebsk" and special economic zones of Jiangxi province will establish direct interaction [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-i-osobyie-ekonomicheskie-zony-provintsii-tszjansi-naladjat-prjamoe-vzaimodejstvie-566987-2023/>

intentions on cooperation was signed by the City Hospital No. 2 of Orsha Central Polyclinic and Hongdu Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which "provides for the exchange of practical and scientific experience, medical technologies, mutual internships and advanced training of medical workers, as well as the implementation on the basis of Orsha Central Polyclinic of projects in the field of traditional Chinese medicine, including physiotherapy, reflexology, electro-acupuncture, acupuncture, qigong"<sup>45</sup>.

As for the third Chinese partner of Vitebskchyna - **Shandong** Province, back in 2005 the parties signed a memorandum of cooperation, and in October 2019 adopted an Agreement on the establishment of relations of friendship and cooperation, in which they "identified as priorities for the development of partnership ties the development of an effective mechanism of interaction in the field of trade and investment, the development of cooperation ties..."<sup>46</sup>. In February 2023, an agreement on establishing friendly ties between Novopolotsk and the city of Liaocheng in Shandong Province was signed. The parties noted the importance of developing interregional ties as one of the key links in bilateral cooperation. They also discussed the implementation of a number of joint projects. It should be noted that in order to strengthen Belarusian-Chinese ties, Vitebsk voblast and Shandong province regularly hold joint events, as well as conclude bilateral documents. "Earlier agreements on the establishment of friendly relations at the municipal level between the cities of Vitebsk and Jinan, Novopolotsk and Weihai, Orsha and Qingdao, Polotsk and Dezhou, Glubokoe and Jining were signed"<sup>47</sup>. And in September 2023, three more

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<sup>45</sup> Orsha and Chinese Nanchang agreed on the exchange of medical experience [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/orsha-i-kitajskij-nanchan-dogovorilis-ob-obmene-meditsinskim-opytom-540364-2022/>

<sup>46</sup> Zalessky, B. From Regions to Innovations. Features of the Belarusian-Chinese strategic partnership / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Novopolotsk and Chinese Liaocheng established friendly ties [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novopolotsk-i-kitajskij-ljaochen-ustanovili-druzhestvennye-svjazi-550863-2023/>

memoranda on cooperation were signed: in innovation, education and youth policy. "Based on them and on the results of the negotiations, roadmaps for interaction on specific projects and areas of activity will be developed"<sup>48</sup>.

Finally, in November 2023, within the framework of the 6th China International Import Expo in Shanghai, where more than 10 enterprises of the Belarusian northern region took part, including - Vitebsk concern "Meat and Dairy Products", Polotsk Dairy Plant, Verkhnedvinsk Creamery, branch "Lepelsk MCC" of Vitebsk Meat Processing Plant, confectionery factory "Vityba", plant "Naftan", The Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee signed a memorandum of cooperation with the company Zonghai Business Management (Jinan) to create the China Industry Park in Vitebsk, as well as the Belarusian Industry Park in Shandong Province - on the site of Qingdao, where enterprises will be able to present their products and work out the issues of their sales in different regions of China. This will be one of the leading platforms from where Vitebsk goods will be distributed. It will be a point of growth of export of Vitebsk region, which they want to "maximally utilize, and not only for the sale of goods. <...> This is probably one of the most fresh and promising projects"<sup>49</sup>. All this in general suggests that in 2024 Vitebsk region intends to develop cooperation with Chinese regions even more actively in a wide range of areas, including economy, trade, science, engineering, technology, education, health care, and sports.

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<sup>48</sup> Kochetov, S. Vitebsk region and the Chinese province of Shandong intend to develop and expand partnership in innovation, education and youth policy / S. Kochetov // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://www.vitbichi.by/news/ekonomika/vitebskaya\\_oblast\\_i\\_kitayskaya\\_provintsiya\\_shandun\\_namereny\\_razvivat\\_i\\_rasshiryat\\_partnerstvo\\_v\\_inno/](https://www.vitbichi.by/news/ekonomika/vitebskaya_oblast_i_kitayskaya_provintsiya_shandun_namereny_razvivat_i_rasshiryat_partnerstvo_v_inno/)

<sup>49</sup> Subbotin: import exhibition in Shanghai helps enterprises to make themselves known and find partners in China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/subbotin-vystavka-importa-v-shanhae-pomogaet-predpriyatijam-zajavit-o-sebe-i-najti-partnerov-v-kitae-598641-2023/>

## **Belarus-Iran: a plan for further cooperation has been agreed upon**

In October 2023, Tehran hosted the 16th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Iranian Commission on Economic Cooperation, during which the parties discussed trade and economic, industrial, investment, banking, petrochemical cooperation, as well as healthcare and pharmaceuticals, transportation, and air services. Belarus and Iran agreed on a plan for further cooperation in promising areas of partnership ties, which "includes the implementation by the parties in the near future of activities in the areas of industrial cooperation, agriculture and veterinary medicine, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, transport and cooperation through chambers of commerce and industry"<sup>50</sup>. In addition, the Iranian capital hosted meetings of a mixed working group on oil cooperation, a joint Belarusian-Iranian committee on international automobile traffic, as well as the Iran-Belarus business forum, during which "a cooperation agreement was signed between the Minsk branch of the BelCCI and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, which will give an additional impetus to the development of Belarusian-Iranian business relations"<sup>51</sup>.

Recall that at the 15th meeting of the mixed commission in July 2022, discussing successful bilateral projects and joint promising activities, the participants expressed interest in increasing the volume of trade turnover between the two countries. After all, "in the best years, the sides reached 250-300 million dollars. Therefore <...> intend to reach a trade turnover

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<sup>50</sup> Belarus and Iran have agreed on a plan of cooperation in promising areas of interaction [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-soglasovali-plan-sotrudnichestva-po-perspektivnym-napravlenijam-vzaimodejstvija-592926-2023/>

<sup>51</sup> Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Minsk and Tehran signed an agreement on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/torgovo-promyshlennye-palaty-minska-i-tegerana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-594460-2023/>

within \$500 million in a short period of time"<sup>52</sup> . In March 2023, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Minsk and Tehran signed a roadmap for comprehensive cooperation for 2023-2026, which envisioned interaction on a wide range of issues, from politics and economy to media and tourism. This systematic document allowed the parties to work through a list of specific practical measures, many of which are already being successfully implemented. "Intensive work at various levels has led to a significant increase in trade turnover. In 2022, trade turnover tripled to the level of 2021. In the current [2023] year, it added another 25% to the same period last year."<sup>53</sup> .

Among Belarusian exporters that are successfully developing the Iranian market, the enterprises of the **Bellesbumprom Concern** stand out. In eight months of 2023, they increased their exports to Iran by more than 1.6 times. Belarus supplies "cellulose, plywood, wood boards" to this country<sup>54</sup> . At the same time, the concern plans to increase exports and expand cooperation with Iranian partners. In particular, **Svetlogorsk Pulp and Paperboard Mill** supplies bleached pulp to Iran. In October 2023, specialists of the enterprise visited the Islamic Republic in order to "reach a qualitatively new level of cooperation. We plan to increase the volume of exports, as well as to expand cooperation on the supply of chemicals from Iran necessary for the production of pulp"<sup>55</sup> .

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<sup>52</sup> Zalesky, B. The Route of Interaction - Asia. Intensification of Belarus' multifaceted ties with the main economic partners on the continent / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 65.

<sup>53</sup> Industrial cooperation and education. Roman Golovchenko outlined promising areas of cooperation with Iran [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10714>

<sup>54</sup> Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" increased exports to Iran more than 1.6 times [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-uvlichili-eksport-produktsii-v-iran-bolee-chem-v-16-raza-594471-2023/>

<sup>55</sup> "Bellesbumprom" plans to increase exports and expand cooperation with Iran [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellesbumprom-planiruet-uvlichit-objemy-eksporta-i-rasshirit-kooperatsionnye-svjazi-s-iranom-594315-2023/>

When it comes to Belarusian regions interested in actively developing trade and economic relations with Iran, **Vitebsk Region** can be mentioned. The fact is that since 2022, Vitebsk Region's trade turnover with this country has multiplied, which is due to the need to build new logistics options for export cargoes. At the same time, "among the new types of products that have not been supplied to Iran before are fiberglass fabrics, wood boards, various types of acids and reagents. Vitebsk region continues to supply lumber to Iran - 49% of the trade turnover. The region buys fresh fruits and vegetables, which account for 98% of all purchases from this country, and medical equipment"<sup>56</sup> .

In November 2023, the Belarusian region offered Iranian partners to create cooperation chains in the pharmaceutical sector. After all, a pharmaceutical cluster has already been created in Vitebsk. In addition, Vitebsk specialists are ready to offer Iran petrochemical products, which occupy almost half of the industrial output of the region, ranging from fiberglass to additives for oils. Vitebsk region can also offer food products, carpets, footwear, linen products. The Iranian side also made interesting proposals for cooperation. In particular, "there are many deposits in Iran and the mining industry is developing, so we would like to cooperate with Vitebsk region in this sphere"<sup>57</sup> . So the parties hope not only to continue old ties, but also to find new opportunities for increasing economic partnership.

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<sup>56</sup> Vitebsk region offered Iran to work in cooperation in pharmaceuticals [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskaja-oblast-predlozhila-iranu-rabotat-v-kooperatsii-v-farmatsevtike-600855-2023/>

<sup>57</sup> Machine building, petrochemistry. Ambassador of Iran on the possibilities of cooperation with Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mashinostroenie-neftehimija-posol-irana-o-vozmozhnostjakh-sotrudnichestva-s-vitebskoj-oblastju-600832-2023/>



## **Belarus-Vietnam: dynamics determines new reserves**

In December 2023, the Republic of Belarus presented its products at the largest international multi-sectoral exhibition in Southeast Asia - Vietnam Expo - in Ho Chi Minh City. Within the framework of five country expositions, which were organized at this forum together with India, China, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam, "the Belarusian collective stand brought together 36 Belarusian enterprises and organizations from the fields of mechanical engineering, petrochemicals, electrical engineering, agriculture, food and beverage production, scientific and technical research and development, as well as educational and marketing services"<sup>58</sup>. Note that this exhibition is held in Vietnam twice a year: in April in Hanoi and in December in Ho Chi Minh City. In total, more than 1,200 companies from 20 countries have registered as exhibitors in 2023. The 21st Vietnam Expo in Ho Chi Minh City showcased a wide range of products and services, making it a comprehensive and multi-faceted exhibition. The main sections of the exhibition include food processing; agriculture; machinery; electronics; metallurgy; petrochemicals; construction; science and technology; medicine and pharmaceuticals.

At the Belarusian stand, in particular, petrochemical enterprises, including JSC Belshina, demonstrated their capabilities, products and potential. The visitors and participants were presented samples of tires for cars, trucks and agricultural machinery, polyamide-6 and materials based on it, cord fabrics, acrylic fiber, high-pressure polyethylene, motor oils, nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium fertilizers. And at the stand of Beltopgaz association, with the participation of peat plants Vitebskorf of Vitebskoblgaz, Torfopredpriyatiye Glinka and Turshovka, samples of

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<sup>58</sup> Belarus presented its products at the largest exhibition in Southeast Asia [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavila-svoju-produktsiju-na-kрупnejšej-vystavke-v-jugo-vostochnoj-azii-603968-2023/>

professional peat substrates produced in Belarus were widely presented. After the negotiations, representatives of Beltopgaz signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Vietnam Coconut Association in the production of biofertilizers. The Vietnamese partner "will coordinate research on bio-organic fertilizers based on Belarusian peat for coconut palms in order to increase the yield and quality of coconuts throughout Vietnam, as well as support the development of the market for the consumption of such bio-fertilizers"<sup>59</sup>. In addition, the Vietnam Coconut Producers Association will coordinate with Beltopgaz GPO in organizing seminars on the introduction of Belarusian peat-based bio-organic fertilizers for coconuts in Vietnam to find a market of consumers. The Belarusian side will select the optimal formulation of peat substrate for coconut cultivation. The parties also reached an agreement on pilot deliveries of Belarusian peat-based substrates to Vietnam for growing 500 trees with scientific research to control the growth rate and quality of fruits, and on a counter-delivery of coconut planting material to Belarus to select the optimal substrate formulation.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus presented about 30 innovative developments at this forum, including novelties of the Belarusian National Technical University, the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and the Belarusian State University (BSU). In particular, BSU showed more than 20 exhibits in Ho Chi Minh City, for which it was awarded diplomas of the VIETNAM EXPO. Among them are food additives, pharmaceuticals, technological equipment. For example, "an innovative series of biopreparations "Tsipropig", "Biferon - MRS" and "Circol" was presented. They are intended for treatment and prevention of

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<sup>59</sup> "Beltopgaz" will cooperate with the Vietnam Coconut Association in the production of fertilizers [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beltopgaz-budet-sotrudnicchat-s-vjetnamskoj-kokosovoj-assotsiatsiej-v-proizvodstve-udobrenij-605045-2023>

diseases of farm animals"<sup>60</sup>. Also among the exhibits are heat-resistant heat-insulating composite materials based on phosphate and silicate binders, light-absorbing composite materials, technologies of applying gradient anticorrosive heat-resistant coating, metal corrosion inhibitors, food complexes for normalization of the nervous system. As a result, at the exhibition "15 documents, three framework agreements on partnership relations and 12 contracts totaling \$26 million were signed"<sup>61</sup>.

In addition to the national exposition of Belarus at the VIETNAM EXPO international exhibition in Ho Chi Minh City, the Saigon Convention and Exhibition Center hosted a Belarusian-Vietnamese business forum, which "was attended by more than 30 Belarusian enterprises and organizations, including machine-building giants of Belarus, major Belarusian educational institutions and scientific centers, as well as food and dairy producers"<sup>62</sup> and where the participants discussed the prospects of cooperation with Vietnamese partners. The fact is that today Belarus seeks to reach a new level of cooperation with Vietnam, which would be characterized by the presence of strong production and technological ties. In particular, we are talking about the establishment of "joint ventures to produce high-tech and competitive products to meet domestic demand and with subsequent access to the markets of third countries"<sup>63</sup>.

Interesting facts should be mentioned in this context. Since 2019, the production of special vehicles based on the machines of the Minsk

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<sup>60</sup> Diplomas of the International Exhibition "Vietnam Expo" are awarded to BSU and "UNITEKHPROM BSU" [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://bsu.by/news/diplomov-mezhdunarodnoy-vystavki-vietnam-expo-udostoeny-bgu-i-unitekhprom-bgu-d/>

<sup>61</sup> Anufrieva, O. Belarusian companies at the exhibition "Vietnam Expo - 2023" signed contracts for 26 million dollars / O. Anufrieva // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/beloruskie-kompanii-na-vystavke-vietnam-ekspo-2023-zaklyuchili-kontrakty-na-26-millionov-dollarov.html>

<sup>62</sup> Belarus and Vietnam at the joint business forum discussed the development of industrial ties [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vjetnam-na-sovmestnom-biznes-forume-obsudili-razvitie-proizvodstvennyh-svjazej-603969-2023/>

<sup>63</sup> Foreign Ministry: Belarus seeks to reach a new level of cooperation with Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mid-belarus-stremitsja-vyjti-na-novyj-uroven-kooperatsii-s-vjetnamom-603996-2023/>

Automobile Plant has been operating in the province of Heunggyen. "The machinery is assembled on the basis of machine kits of Belarusian production, and previously delivered vehicles are modernized. The enterprise can produce about 500 Vietnamese-made all-wheel drive vehicles per year"<sup>64</sup>. And this assembly plant "MAZ Asia" opens good prospects to work in the markets of other countries of the region - Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos. In the same Vietnamese province, a project to build a dairy products plant using Belarusian technologies and Belarusian milk powder, which will produce yogurt, ice cream, butter, and cheese, is already under consideration. In addition, the Belarusian side proposed to the Vietnamese partners to cooperate in the field of ecology, as the number of cars and motorcycles is growing rapidly in this Southeast Asian country and there is a great need to recycle used tires. In order to turn these tires into new products, it is possible to supply from Belarus high-tech and efficient complexes for the use of solid domestic waste with obtaining from them secondary resources for the production of new products. As a result, "Vietnam can make confident steps towards building a so-called circular economy based on the maximum use of all types of secondary resources"<sup>65</sup>.

All these facts show that the Belarusian-Vietnamese trade and economic cooperation today is characterized by sustainable positive trends. Suffice it to say that "at the end of last year [2022], trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$180 million. In January-September this year, it has already exceeded \$200 million, with both Belarusian and Vietnamese exports growing"<sup>66</sup>. And there is every reason to believe that this dynamics

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<sup>64</sup> Bet on the development of industrial cooperation. What Golovchenko talked about with the Prime Minister of Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stavka-na-razvitie-promkooperatsii-o-chem-golovchenko-govoril-s-premijerom-vjetnama-604054-2023/>

<sup>65</sup> Golovchenko: Belarus contributes to strengthening food security in Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-vnosit-vklad-v-ukreplenie-prodovolstvennoj-bezopasnosti-vjetnama-604073-2023/>

<sup>66</sup> MAZs, dairy products and environmental issues. What Roman Golovchenko negotiates in Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10746>

will only increase. But for this to happen, of course, in 2024 the parties will have to not only develop the existing opportunities, but also find new reserves for bilateral economic interaction.

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## **Belarus-Equatorial Guinea: the road map is comprehensive in nature**

In December 2023, the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in the capital of this African state - Malabo - signed the Roadmap for the development of cooperation for 2024-2026, which was developed taking into account the Equatorial Guinean side and is comprehensive in nature. "The document covers 15 key areas of interaction, including cooperation projects, supplies of Belarusian machinery and organization of its maintenance, agriculture, healthcare, pharmaceuticals and sales of medical equipment, forestry,"<sup>67</sup>. Over the next three years, the parties agreed to implement 74 specific promising projects, including: construction of an agro-town with the necessary infrastructure; erection of one hundred social residential houses; creation of a ceramic brick factory with a capacity of up to forty million pieces per year; supply of fire-fighting vehicles, construction and other equipment, including for the implementation of a joint project on logging and creation of new agricultural lands; electrification of remote areas. In addition to the road map, more than fifteen bilateral agreements were adopted, including: on promotion and mutual protection of investments, on avoidance of double taxation and prevention of evasion of income and property taxes, on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs affairs; on cooperation in tourism; on mutual recognition of education documents; on cooperation in science and technology. In addition, a number of documents have been concluded at the interagency level, including memoranda of cooperation and mutual understanding.

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<sup>67</sup> Presidents of Belarus and Equatorial Guinea signed a roadmap for the development of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/president/view/prezidenty-belarusi-i-ekvatorialnoj-gvinei-podpisali-dorozhnyu-kartu-po-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-604377-2023/?utm\\_source=belta&utm\\_medium=news&utm\\_campaign=accent](https://www.belta.by/president/view/prezidenty-belarusi-i-ekvatorialnoj-gvinei-podpisali-dorozhnyu-kartu-po-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-604377-2023/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent)

Recall that in October 2023, Minsk hosted the first meeting of the Joint Belarus-Ekwatoguinea Permanent Permanent Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, where the parties "agreed to ensure a steady increase in trade turnover to bring it in line with the potential of the two countries, as well as to promote specific projects in industry, technological development, agriculture, health, science, technology, education, culture, and construction"<sup>68</sup>. In addition, established bilateral sectoral working groups to achieve early results on major sectors of bilateral cooperation. "The focus is on industrial cooperation, mechanization of agriculture, Belarus' experience in ensuring food security, development of cooperation in the energy sector, health care, pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, education"<sup>69</sup>. And already in November 2023, the first meetings of these working groups discussed the prospects for the implementation of projects for the joint construction of poultry farms, energy infrastructure facilities, social housing, enterprises for the production of construction materials, the possibility of joint activities in fish processing, the creation of agrarian clusters and production and logistics hub of Belarusian products.

In particular, at the meeting of the working group in the field of industry, the Belarusian side voiced its proposals in terms of mechanization of agriculture, construction of grain storage and drying complexes, supplies of various automotive and road-building machinery, Belarusian dump trucks, diesel generator and compressor stations, and industrial diesel engines. At the same time, Belarusian manufacturers offer not only complex projects, but also "adhere to a comprehensive approach, which provides not only for the supply of machinery, but also for the provision of spare parts,

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<sup>68</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. Objective - promotion of concrete projects / B.L. Zaleskii // Materials of the XX International scientific and practical conference "Fundamental and applied science - 2023", October 30 - November 7, 2023: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 11.

<sup>69</sup> About the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus S. Aleinik to Equatorial Guinea. Aleinik's visit to Equatorial Guinea [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/ddb586f041dd247f.html](https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ddb586f041dd247f.html)

service and warranty maintenance, training for local specialists in the operation and repair of machinery, and, if necessary, sending their technicians to put machinery into operation and teach them how to use it"<sup>70</sup>. In addition, it is also about the construction of a waste processing plant, the subsequent processing of this waste into finished products and the generation of electrical energy. This contract is tentatively valued at 100 million dollars. Another thing: "Equatorial Guinea will become a kind of a hub for the supply of Belarusian machinery to neighboring African countries in the future. In the future, we can also talk about setting up production facilities here"<sup>71</sup>.

As for the working group on agriculture, at the first meeting in November, the parties agreed to supply agricultural machinery and foodstuffs, Belarusian seeds of corn, potatoes, and other crops, based on interest, as well as to implement joint projects in poultry farming and vegetable growing, and plant protection products from our country. The fact is that the Belarusian side intends to get seriously involved in the actual creation and development of a modern agrarian sector in Equatorial Guinea, which "currently imports almost the entire volume of food consumed in the country, except for literally a few items traditionally grown in the country"<sup>72</sup>. So Belarus has offered comprehensive solutions in this regard. In particular, Belarusian specialists have already started studying soils in this African country both on the islands and on the mainland. In the first half of 2024, a laboratory will be set up here, where local specialists will determine the soil

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<sup>70</sup> The Ministry of Industry of Belarus discussed the directions of bilateral cooperation with Equatorial Guinea [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minprom-belarusi-obsudil-napraavljenija-dvustoronnego-sotrudnichestva-s-ekvatorialnoj-gvineej-599714-2023/>

<sup>71</sup> Rogozhnik: Equatorial Guinea can become a hub for the supply of Belarusian equipment to neighboring countries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rogozhnik-ekvatorialnaja-gvineja-mozhet-stat-habom-dlja-postavki-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-sosednie-strany-604414-2023/>

<sup>72</sup> Belarus will help to feed people in Equatorial Guinea. Bartosh shared his ambitious plans [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-pomozhet-nakormit-ljudej-v-ekvatorialnoj-gvinee-bartosh-podelilsja-ambitsioznymi-planami-604413-2023>



composition after training. After that, the implementation of priority plans will begin. First, to clean up the area where there are suitable soils. Secondly, to teach local workers to grow crops with mineral fertilizers. Third, to help build poultry farms - for 20,000 animals and egg production. Fourth, to assist in the construction of an agro-town. Fifth, to create a center for training of Equatoguinean specialists. Sixth, "cooperation will be established in the sphere of fishery (supply from Belarus and fish processing), as well as training of specialists from Equatorial Guinea in the spheres of mechanization, processing and fishery in agrarian universities of Belarus"<sup>73</sup>. So the program of the working group on agriculture turns out to be very rich.

The working group on cooperation in the field of health and pharmaceuticals also has its own plan for building a national health system in this African State. This plan is comprehensive and covers almost all activities to quickly solve the set tasks in three to five years. But for this, first of all, it is necessary to solve the problem of medical personnel in Equatorial Guinea, because "there are a number of medical buildings that have been built and are relatively operational. But they are not functioning, <...> there are no professional staff, including specialists who can service this medical complex"<sup>74</sup>. For this reason, the Belarusian side will help organize training in medical schools and faculties in Equatorial Guinea itself, but at the first stage - in Belarus. As for the treatment process, it will be organized with the use of Belarusian medicines and medical devices. The logistics of the new projects have already been determined. For example, the Ecuatoguinean side offered the specialists from Belarus to open an oncology department at the

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<sup>73</sup> Belarus plans to supply agricultural machinery, seeds and foodstuffs to Equatorial Guinea [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-postavljat-v-ekvatorialnuju-gvineju-selhoztehniku-semena-i-prodovolstvie-599940-2023/>

<sup>74</sup> The health care system in Equatorial Guinea is offered to build on the Belarusian models [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/sistemu-zdravoohraneniya-v-ekvatorialnoj-gvinee-predlagajut-postroit-po-belorusskim-lekalam-604422-2023>

La Paz clinic in Bata. As well as to solve "the issue of the work of the logistics center for the supply of medical equipment and medicines to African countries"<sup>75</sup> .

Finally, at the first meeting of the working groups on cooperation in science and technology and education, the parties identified the most priority areas of interaction. In the first case, these are the issues of "supplies of high-tech knowledge-intensive products and cooperation between scientific organizations, the possibility of participation in scientific and technical events and holding a joint Belarusian-Equatorial Guinean competition of scientific and technical projects"<sup>76</sup> . In the second case, these are the issues of "personnel training in engineering, engineering-technical, engineering-pedagogical, technological, agricultural specialties of higher education, vocational and specialized secondary education, as well as in the sphere of teaching Russian language to Equatorial Guinean citizens"<sup>77</sup> .

All these facts show that already in 2024 Belarus and Equatorial Guinea are going to realize a very large amount of work to implement the main provisions of the Roadmap for the development of cooperation, which will have to promote partnerships on a multi-level basis as effectively as possible to make the planned bilateral agreements a reality.

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<sup>75</sup> Equatorial Guinea is interested in joint projects with Belarus in the field of health care [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekvatorialnaja-gvineja-zainteresovana-v-sovmestnyh-proektah-s-belarusju-v-sfere-zdravoohranenija-604276-2023>

<sup>76</sup> Belarus and Equatorial Guinea will develop cooperation in science and technology [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-ekvatorialnaja-gvineja-budut-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-nauchno-tehnicheskoi-sfere-599740-2023/>

<sup>77</sup> Belarus and Equatorial Guinea will establish cooperation in personnel training [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-ekvatorialnaja-gvineja-naladzat-sotrudnichestvo-v-podgotovke-kadrov-599731-2023/>

## Belarus - Cuba: Rectors' Forum is result-oriented

In September 2023, Minsk hosted the first Forum of Belarusian and Cuban Rectors of Higher Education Institutions, during which they discussed ways to deepen bilateral cooperation in education, expand partnerships between the educational community of Belarus and Cuba, inter-university contacts in the interests of training faculty, student exchanges, as well as in the implementation of specific scientific projects and joint research. "The Cuban side is particularly interested in the potential of Belarusian universities in the field of high technologies, cybersecurity and personal data protection, as well as development in the field of artificial intelligence"<sup>78</sup>. The participants of the event emphasized that today one should focus on a concrete result, which should yield economic returns. The first Forum of Belarusian and Cuban rectors resulted in the signing of bilateral cooperation agreements between the universities of the two countries.

**The Belarusian State University** (BSU) is among the active participants of this forum. It should be reminded that back in April 2023, BSU intensified cooperation with Cuban partners in the field of education, science and innovation. In particular, a cooperation program was signed with the leading and oldest higher education institution of the country - the **University of Havana**, regulating joint work "in the field of biology, geography, chemistry, mathematics, tourism, study of Spanish and Russian languages"<sup>79</sup>, as well as a memorandum on the development of a joint master's degree program. In the nearest plans - academic mobility,

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<sup>78</sup> Deputy Minister of Education of Cuba expressed interest in the realization of scientific projects with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/zamministra-obrazovanija-kuby-zajavil-o-zainteresovannosti-v-realizatsii-nauchnyh-proektov-s-belarusiju-589322-2023/>

<sup>79</sup> Mathematics, Spanish and tourism. BSU activates cooperation with universities of Cuba [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/matematika-ispanskij-jazyk-i-turizm-bgu-aktiviziruetsotrudnichestvo-s-vuzami-kuby-562131-2023/>

organization of internships, guest lectures, scientific research, as well as joint training of specialists. And with the **Pedagogical University of Enrique Jose Varona** BSU intends to develop cooperation in the field of pedagogy with the introduction of innovative methods in the educational process. In the signed agreement on cooperation the parties fixed the exchange of students, master students, invitation of teachers and researchers for joint work on research and educational projects, as well as the exchange of information, educational materials, joint scientific and educational events. In addition, "the universities plan to develop joint educational programs in the field of humanities with the issuance of two diplomas"<sup>80</sup>.

In September 2023, BSU got several more partners: the **University of Guantanamo**, the **José Antonio Echeverría Technological University of Havana**, and the **University of Camagüey**. It should be noted that "BSU, taking into account the signed agreements, is developing educational and scientific contacts with eight Cuban institutions"<sup>81</sup>, with which it is promising to cooperate in the spheres of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, to develop joint educational projects. For example, after the April negotiations BSU and the **Raúl Roa García Higher Institute of International Relations** drew up a detailed program of cooperation and have already worked out the project of the virtual platform "Russian for Cubans / Spanish for Belarusians".

The Belarusian **National Technical University (BNTU)** signed cooperation agreements with its partners from Cuba - the **University of Guantanamo** and the **Antonio Niez Jimenez Mao University** - as part of the first Forum of Belarusian and Cuban rectors of higher education

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<sup>80</sup> BSU and Pedagogical University of Cuba will develop cooperation in the field of pedagogy [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-peduniversitet-kuby-budut-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-pedagogiki-562339-2023/>

<sup>81</sup> Exchange of students and joint research. Cooperation agreements signed by BSU and universities of Cuba [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/obmen-studentami-i-sovmestnye-issledovaniya-soglasheniya-o-sotrudnichestve-podpisali-bgu-i-vuzy-kuby-589103-2023/>

institutions. These documents "provide for the exchange of experience in educational and methodical work of higher education institutions, exchange of textbooks and teaching materials (training programs, teaching aids), joint research in various areas of science and technology, as well as the exchange of scientific and technical information, experience of scientific work, search for various forms of scientific cooperation"<sup>82</sup>. It should be noted that the signing of the agreement was the result of a meeting of heads of universities, which was held in the Science and Technology Park BNTU "Polytechnik". The event was also attended by representatives of Baranovichi State University, Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University, Brest State Technical University, Belarusian State University of Food and Chemical Technologies, Belarusian-Russian University, Gomel State Technical University named after P. O. Sukhoi and Polotsk State University named after Euphrosyne Polotsky. The Cuban side expressed interest in cooperation in such areas as geology, ecology, mining and electromechanics. Colleagues from other Belarusian universities also signed a number of cooperation agreements with Cuban universities.

In September 2023, **Gomel State Medical University** (GomHMU) and the **University of Medical Sciences of Havana** signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of higher medical education and science. It should be reminded that this is not the first experience of cooperation with the Cuban side for Gomel university. After all, "as a result of Belarusian-Cuban cooperation and with the active participation of GomHMU specialists in the field of vaccinology, in 2022 the vaccine "Soberana Plus" was approved and authorized by the Ministry of Health of Belarus for booster vaccination in our country"<sup>83</sup>. Today, clinical trials of the Cuban vaccine are already

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<sup>82</sup> BNTU signed a cooperation agreement with two Cuban universities [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bntu-podpisal-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-s-dvumja-kubinskimi-universitetami-589060-2023/>

<sup>83</sup> Gomel State Medical University concluded a cooperation agreement with the University of Medical Sciences of Havana [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL:

underway on the basis of the research laboratory of the State Medical University of Belarus. So the partner universities will do a lot more on this research topic.

Speaking about the results of the first Forum of Belarusian and Cuban Rectors, we would like to emphasize that back in "November 2022, an intergovernmental agreement on mutual recognition of educational documents..."<sup>84</sup> was added to the legal framework of Belarusian-Cuban relations. Today, the participants of this forum are already starting the practical implementation of this document so that the universities of Belarus and Cuba could achieve concrete results and receive economic returns in many areas of cooperation.

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<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskij-gmu-zakljuchil-dogovor-o-sotrudnichestve-s-universitetom-meditsinskih-nauk-gavany-589137-2023/>

<sup>84</sup> Zalessky, B. With a focus on results. Perspectives of an integrated approach to new partnership opportunities / Boris Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 9.

## **Belarus-Venezuela: the goal is to return to the main highway of interaction**

In November 2023, Minsk hosted the 8th meeting of the Belarus-Venezuela Joint Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, where the parties discussed the most important aspects of the development of promising areas of cooperation, found compromise solutions to existing problematic issues and outlined concrete steps for further implementation of projects in industry, construction, agriculture, food, transport, petrochemicals, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, science and technology, education and tourism.

It should be reminded that Belarus and Venezuela established diplomatic relations back in February 1997. And which have remained strong for 26 years, "based on civilized principles of interstate interaction, characterized by mutual respect, mutual trust, sincerity, openness and peacefulness"<sup>85</sup>. In November 2017, at the 7th meeting of the joint commission, the parties adopted a roadmap for bilateral cooperation in the medium and long term, which, unfortunately, was not implemented due to global events. Nevertheless, as of mid-October 2023, 32 interstate, intergovernmental and interagency agreements had been signed between Belarus and Venezuela. And at the 8th meeting of the joint commission the parties outlined the task of the current moment "to return by joint efforts to the main highway of strategic interaction between our brotherly states, despite all the obstacles and difficulties, and to realize the huge potential that exists in the relations between the Republic of Belarus and Venezuela"<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Transcript of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus S. Aleinik following the meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (October 16, 2023, Minsk). Aleinik following the meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (October 16, 2023, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/c88fe8a4bdcdf8ac.html](https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c88fe8a4bdcdf8ac.html)

<sup>86</sup> Parkhomchik: Belarus and Venezuela are political and economic partners, as well as close friends and allies [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-belarus-i-venezuela-politicheskie-i-ekonomicheskie-partnery-a-takzhe-blizkie-druzja-i-602138-2023/>

And for this reason, 13 more documents were signed in Minsk to implement projects in various areas.

In particular, the parties adopted an important document on the creation of a high-level group for strategic planning of the joint commission to monitor the implementation of "new structural mechanisms in bilateral relations that will increase trade turnover between our countries, organize efficient logistics and production chains"<sup>87</sup>. In addition, an agreement was signed in the scientific sphere, which provides for the exchange of experience between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Venezuelan Institute of Geography in the field of geography, hermetics, geodata, as well as documents in the field of tourism and health care, and in the industrial sphere.

All these facts suggest that the 8th meeting of the joint commission may become a starting point for the preparation of a new draft roadmap for the short, medium, and long term. All the more so because the parties have already identified eight most pressing issues that should be resolved as soon as possible: 1) resumption of assembly operations of Belarusian machinery in Venezuela; 2) intensification of projects in construction; 3) discussion of options for cooperation in forestry and woodworking; 4) consideration of opportunities for joint projects in the mining industry; 5) cooperation between the parties in agriculture and food supplies; 6) cooperation between the two countries in the supply of foodstuffs; and 4) cooperation in the construction industry.

Of course, one of the most important topics on this list is the resumption of the work of tractor and truck assembly plants in Venezuela. It should be noted that over the past years, the Venezuelan side has purchased more than 1,300 machine kits from Belarus, "which were assembled in

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<sup>87</sup> Vice-President of Venezuela: our countries are bound by ties of friendship, we need to continue to stick together [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/vitse-prezident-venesuely-nashi-strany-svjazyvajut-uzy-druzhy-nam-i-dalshe-nuzhno-derzhatsja-drug-602296-2023/>



Venezuela and are used in the national economy. More than 3 thousand Belarusian tractors work in the fields of our country [in Venezuela], and trucks drive on the roads"<sup>88</sup>. The urgent task of these plants is to reach the design capacity of 10 thousand tractors and 5 thousand trucks, and to sell them in the markets of neighboring countries of Latin America. On the basis of these enterprises a multi-brand center will be created to support the equipment that will be produced there. And "specialists of MTZ and MAZ will work in this center. They will perform tasks related to education, training, support, service. On the basis of this center will also be formed warehouses of spare parts for production and repair of produced machinery"<sup>89</sup>. In addition, a very important issue is in the mining industry, as Belarus is interested in supplying quarry equipment to Venezuela, especially since this equipment has already been supplied to this country. For this reason, the parties agreed to "additionally create a narrow working group that would work out a plan of interaction in this direction"<sup>90</sup>.

As for the agro-industrial complex, the first meeting of the Belarusian-Venezuelan working group on agriculture and food was held within the framework of the joint commission in Minsk, where the prospects for cooperation in crop production, livestock breeding, veterinary medicine, and agrarian education were discussed. For reference, we note that "in the first 9 months of this year, Belarus' trade turnover with Venezuela increased by 27.9% compared to the same period last year [2022]. The main export item is dried milk whey, and the main suppliers are Slutsk Cheese Factory OJSC

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<sup>88</sup> Vice-President of Venezuela: the participation of Belarus in the life of our country is of great importance and weight [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/vitse-prezident-venesuely-uchastie-belarusi-v-zhizni-nashej-strany-imeet-bolshoe-znachenie-i-ves-602178-2023/>

<sup>89</sup> It is planned to create a multi-brand center on the basis of Belarusian-Venezuelan enterprises [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-baze-belorussko-venesuelskih-predpriyatij-planiruetsja-sozdat-multibrendovyi-tsentr-602259-2023/>

<sup>90</sup> Belarus is interested in supplying quarry equipment to Venezuela [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-karjernoj-tehniki-v-venesuelu-602262-2023/>

and Molochny Mir OJSC. The main import item is ethyl alcohol"<sup>91</sup>. As a result, the parties agreed to exchange experience in the field of agrarian education, exchange visits of technical specialists for internship, advanced training and retraining in the field of agriculture, animal husbandry and fish farming.

Speaking about the intention to expand cooperation in the field of education and science, the Venezuelan side outlined the main directions in this interaction as well. "These include artificial intelligence, bio- and information technologies, as well as the field of social sciences"<sup>92</sup>. On the Belarusian side, the Belarusian State University is already actively involved in these partnerships, having signed a cooperation agreement with the Simon Rodriguez National Experimental University back in 2007.

During the plenary session of the joint Belarus-Venezuela Commission in November 2023, the parties stressed that the organization of efficient transport communication is also of paramount importance for the two countries. In this regard, there was a proposal for "the possibility of direct air communication between our countries and joint steps to organize the transportation of goods by sea"<sup>93</sup>. In general, the two countries see great opportunities for cooperation in other areas - construction, forestry, woodworking, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, tourism. This gives Belarus and Venezuela a reason to plan cooperation not only for the next three to five years, but also for the long term.

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<sup>91</sup> Belarus is interested in supplying a wide range of food products to Venezuela [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-shirokogo-assortimenta-prodovolstvennoj-produktsii-v-venesuelu-602273-2023/>

<sup>92</sup> Belarus and Venezuela intend to expand cooperation in education and science [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-venesuela-namereny-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-obrazovaniya-i-nauki-594268-2023/>

<sup>93</sup> Belarus proposes to establish direct air communication with Venezuela [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-predlagaet-naladit-prjamoe-aviasoobschenie-s-venesueloj-602159-2023/>

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