

## The key word is partnership

In December 2021, the Republic of Belarus approved the National Green Economy Action Plan for 2021-2025, which defines the development of a smart digital economy that contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as a strategic goal. This document envisages the development of the Belarusian green economy based on such principles as: sustainable development, inclusiveness, intersectorality, innovativeness, science, efficiency and sufficiency, resource conservation, waste management as resources, increasing competitiveness and strengthening the positions held in the world markets, taking into account the global trends of greening, transparency, international cooperation and responsibility. Recall that back in the Program of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 it was stated that in the next five years the emphasis will be placed on the introduction of tools to support a "green" economy. The work on the formation of a national system of carbon regulation, attracting "green" investments, the development of eco-innovations and the creation of "green" jobs will be intensified. How are these tasks being solved today? This study is about that.



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## The key word is partnership

*Realizing the potential of cooperation in the context of turbulence*

**Boris Zalessky**

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## **Amendments to the law as an incentive for investors**

In December 2021, the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus approved amendments to the law "On Free Economic Zones" (FEZ), which provide for the transfer of powers to change the borders of these territories from the head of state to the government. "At the same time, the president of the country will still coordinate the inclusion of agricultural and forestry territories in the boundaries of free economic zones.<sup>1</sup> This innovation is expected to reduce the time from the idea to the start of new investment projects in the territories, which are considered points of growth in the regions, as it will encourage potential investors to invest resources in the FEZ. For them, "a clear rule remains unchanged: FEZ boundaries can be expanded exclusively for specific investment projects"<sup>2</sup>. It will be recalled that the law "On Free Economic Zones" itself was adopted in December 1998. One of the main goals of free economic zones is "attraction of investments into creation and development of export-oriented and import-substituting productions based on new and high technologies."<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Belarus has only six FEZs. By October 1, 2021 there were registered 429 companies with the number of employees - about 137 thousand people, where the projects attracting nearly seven billion dollars in investments from more than 30 countries are being implemented. The fact that FEZs

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1 The Council of the Republic has approved the draft Law on Free Economic Zones [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sovet-respubliki-odobril-zakonoproekt-o-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zonah-476194-2021/>.

2 Nikitina: An attractive national jurisdiction boosts investment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nikitina-privlekatelnaja-natsionalnaja-jurisdiksija-aktiviziruet-pritok-investitsij-475406-2021/>

3 Zalesky, B.L. Free economic zones and special economic zones as points of growth in the regions / B.L. Zalesky // Social and Humanitarian Studies. - 2020. - №3. - C. 64.

are the places where it is possible to build successful businesses today is also confirmed by the statistics of 2021. In three quarters, the volume of exports here increased almost one and a half times, and the inflow of foreign direct investment was one fifth of the country's total.

In particular, residents of **FEZ Grodnoinvest**, whose export volume exceeded one billion dollars in January-September, are achieving high results in 2021. The geography of these supplies is very wide: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Germany, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Lithuania, Great Britain, and Turkey. "The foreign trade surplus over 9 months amounted to \$540 million, which is the best figure among Belarusian FEZs.<sup>4</sup> As a result, residents of FEZs account for over 43% of exports and over 30% of industrial production in the entire Grodno Oblast. The machine engineering segment is developing especially fast in this FEZ. Suffice it to say that "the export of computer, electronic and optical devices has doubled in nine months of this year [2021].<sup>5</sup> In total, Grodnoinvest has so far registered nine companies in the mechanical engineering sector and another seven in metalworking.

Residents of the **Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk"** have increased export supplies by more than 60 percent in the three quarters of 2021, bringing their volume to \$623 million and interacting with partners from 73 countries. As a result of export diversification efforts, FEZ participants managed to increase shipments of their products to the far-abroad countries by almost

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4 Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in January-September exceeded \$1 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-janvare-sentjabre-prevysil-1-mlrd-472551-2021/>

5 Residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest double exports of electronic and optical equipment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-udvoili-eksport-elektronnoj-i-opticheskoy-apparatury-473562-2021/>



half, and to Great Britain, the United Arab Emirates, India, Pakistan, Israel, Brazil - by three times and more. In addition, "for the first time, fiber-optic cables were supplied to Afghanistan, gas smoke detectors were shipped to Poland, fur skins to China, linen to Chile and insulated cables to France.<sup>6</sup> The current 54 investment projects in the free economic zone are likely to be complemented very soon by a number of new ones, as foreign investors are showing interest in setting up production of composite materials, machine-tool construction, wood processing and manufacture of wood raw materials, as well as in producing micro-fertilizers. In particular, "a Swedish investor in cooperation with a partner from China is ready to invest about \$100 million in the construction of a plant for processing low-grade wood. Representatives of the Netherlands are looking for a site for furniture production with an investment volume of 100 million euro. <...> A German company is planning to set up a terrace board production facility worth about \$9 million.<sup>7</sup> Besides, Chinese businessmen have already registered a legal entity in Vitebsk to implement a wood processing project with the expected investment of about \$26 million. All in all, "about 8 more projects are being worked out, the implementation of which will make it possible to attract at least \$160 million to the economy of Vitebsk region"<sup>8</sup>.

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6 Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased exports of goods by almost 62% in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-janvare-sentjabre-uvelichili-eksport-tovarov-pochti-na-62-471298-2021/>

7 Investors from 4 countries show interest in implementing projects in FEZ Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investory-iz-4-stran-projavljajut-interes-k-realizatsii-proektov-na-ploschadkah-sez-vitebsk-472892-2021/>

8 Residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" increased production by more than 40% in 9 months [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-za-9-mesjatsev-narastili-proizvodstvo-produktsii-bolee-chem-na-40-471323-2021/>

The residents of **FEZ Gomel-Raton** also exported more than half of the goods produced in January-September 2021. More than USD 1.1 billion worth of goods were shipped to the markets of 63 countries. The top five importers here are Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and China. It is not a bad indicator if you consider that on October 1, 2021, 69 economic entities, of which 30 - the companies with foreign capital from 16 countries worked in the Free Economic Zone. In 2021 three more resident companies with about \$50 million in investments were registered here. And all in all "\$76.3 million of direct foreign investment has been attracted in FEZ Gomel-Raton for 9 months for the realization of investment projects.<sup>9</sup> This is almost half of the total volume of investments in Gomel Region.

All these facts are very eloquent evidence that this model of economic relations in the regions has already become an effective tool for the development of the national economy. And the adoption of amendments to the law "On Free Economic Zones" will certainly only contribute to maintaining the positive development dynamics, which they have already managed to achieve over the past more than 20 years since the emergence of FEZs in Belarus.

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<sup>9</sup> Residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton increased production of industrial products by more than 42% over 9 months [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-za-9-mesjatsev-uvelichili-proizvodstvo-promproduktsii-bolee-chem-na-42-471389-2021/>

## **Plan for innovative ideas relying on local reserves**

In December 2021, the Republic of Belarus approved the National Green Economy Action Plan for 2021-2025, which defines the development of a smart digital economy contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals as a strategic goal. This document envisages the development of the Belarusian green economy based on such principles as: sustainable development, inclusiveness, intersectorality, innovativeness, science, efficiency and sufficiency, resource conservation, waste management as resources, increasing competitiveness and strengthening the positions held in the global markets "taking into account global greening trends, transparency, international cooperation and responsibility"<sup>10</sup>. Let us remind you that the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025, approved in July 2021, stated that in the next five years "the emphasis will be placed on the introduction of tools to support the green economy. Work will be intensified on the formation of a national system of carbon regulation, the attraction of green investments, the development of eco-innovations and the creation of green jobs."<sup>11</sup>

Among the priority areas of green economy development in Belarus, the national plan defines such as: 1) introduction of sustainable consumption and production principles; 2) development of circular or closed cycle economy; 3) production of organic

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10 Smart cities, eco-tourism and electric transport: how the green economy will develop in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/umnye-goroda-ekoturizm-i-elektrotransport-kak-budet-razvivatsja-zelenaja-ekonomika-v-belarusi-475021-2021/>

11 Programme of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P32100292>

products; 4) ecological and agro-ecotourism; 5) formation of smart and energy efficient cities; 6) development of electric transport and its infrastructure. In other words, the plan "sets a practice-oriented trajectory, providing for the implementation of promising innovative ideas in the regions relying on local resources and creating comfortable living conditions for people."<sup>12</sup> This should undoubtedly include the development of electric transport and its infrastructure.

It should be noted that back in March 2020, Belarus issued a decree "On stimulating the use of electric cars", which contained "measures designed to stimulate demand for this environmentally friendly vehicle in the country, as well as the creation of appropriate charging and service infrastructure in the regions"<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning of 2021 there were already more than one thousand electric cars in our country and by the beginning of the second half of the year there were more than four thousand. As for the next five years, "by 2025, Belarus may approach the mark of 100 thousand of such vehicles and by 2030 about 20% of Belarusians will be equipped with electric motors."<sup>14</sup> The important tendency is that not only citizens start using electric cars in Belarus, but also industrial enterprises, which get considerable savings from their use. "This was exemplified by Gomelenergo, which was one of the first power

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12 The National Plan for a Green Economy will strengthen the environmental and innovation segments of the 2025 programme [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsplan-po-zelenoj-ekonomike-usilit-ekologicheskij-i-innovatsionnyj-segmenty-programmy-2025-475288-2021/>

13 Zalesky, B. The key to success is cooperation. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 113.

14 "Belorusneft: the largest network of fast charging stations for electric cars in the EEU has been created in the country [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusneft-v-strane-sozdana-krupnejshaja-v-eaes-set-bystryh-zarjadnyh-stantsij-dlja-elektromobilej-474986-2021/>

supply companies to implement a pilot project to upgrade its vehicle fleet with electric cars.<sup>15</sup>

The network of fast charging stations for electric vehicles is also developing rapidly in the country. Since 2018, it has increased from 14 to 486, and by the beginning of 2022, it should already include 600 such facilities, which will make it possible to operate more than 25,000 such vehicles. In a few years' time, it is expected that owners of such vehicles will spend no more time at charging stations than owners of cars with internal combustion engines at petrol stations. An important role in this regard is assigned to the Vitebsk JSC Vityaz, a diversified enterprise developing about twenty kinds of activities today. It started manufacturing electric charging stations for electric vehicles in 2017. Today, they actively cooperate with the national charging infrastructure operator RUE PA Belorusneft, to which they supply high-tech products under the Malanka brand. At the same time, the company plans to develop its own network of electric charging stations under the ISKRA brand. Here they aim to "develop the niche of the so-called slow chargers. The network facilities will be installed in residential areas, business centres and other sites where it is possible to leave a car in the car park and connect it to an electric charging station at the same time."<sup>16</sup> The first two such charging stations have already been put into test operation in Vitebsk - near the Vityaz production site. The opening of the first branded electric charging station in Minsk and several

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15 Number of electric cars in Belarus increased to 4 thousand - Karankevich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/chislo-elektromobilej-v-belarusi-uvelichilos-do-4-tys-karankevich-450761-2021/>

16 "Vityaz will develop its own network of electric charging stations under the ISKRA brand [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vitjaz-budet-razvivat-sobstvennuju-set-elektrozarjadnyh-stantsij-pod-brendom-iskra-473377-2021/>

more facilities in the residential areas of the Belarusian capital are on the way.

Domestic models of these eco-friendly vehicles should appear in Belarus in the near future. In particular, there are plans to supply Geometry C electric cars from BELJI CJSC to the market, where tests were completed in August 2021. This Belarusian-Chinese electric car "has many innovative solutions: from active safety systems to sophisticated design. <...> The range on a single charge is 550 km.<sup>17</sup> If there is a demand for these vehicles, the company will have the corresponding production capacity for new electric vehicles as early as 2022. So, this innovative vehicle has a good future in Belarus. And its development will be a significant contribution to the implementation of the National Action Plan for the development of green economy in our country until 2025.

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17 "BELJI plans to start selling a new electric car in the fourth quarter of 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/beldzhi-planiruet-nachat-prodazhi-novogo-elektromobilja-v-chetvertom-kvartale-2021-goda-454431-2021/>

## **And free trade in services, and innovation cooperation**

The presidency of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is based on the principles of continuity and aims to implement the long-term elements of the development strategy of this integration association in the post-Soviet space in various areas, will end in 2022. The measures taken in 2021 under the auspices of the Belarusian chairmanship combined with the efforts of the states at the national level have made it possible to raise the main macroeconomic indicators in the CIS in January-August. "Thus, industrial production grew by 4.3%, cargo transportation (excluding pipeline transport) by 5.2%, retail trade turnover by 8.5%.<sup>18</sup> The achievement of such positive dynamics is largely due to the current CIS free trade zone, which provides favourable conditions for the development of the economies of the CIS member states.

In 2021, thanks to Belarus' chairmanship of the CIS, active work continued with other states on a draft agreement on free trade in services, which is designed to provide additional opportunities for sustainable economic development in the post-Soviet space. An important detail here is that "work on the preparation of this agreement has been going on for nine years, since 2012.<sup>19</sup> The result of this work should be the signing of this document in May 2022. Its particular relevance lies in the fact that trade in services now

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18 Roman Golovchenko: Belarus has always advocated the development of the CIS and aims to develop regional integration [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10051>

19 Lebedev: CIS free trade in services agreement may be signed in May 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/lebedev-soglashenie-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-uslugami-v-sng-mozhet-byt-podpisano-v-mae-2022-goda-469260-2021>

accounts for about half of the CIS countries' gross product. Lifting barriers in this area will further boost economic cooperation in the post-Soviet space where integration links have been steadily restored. "Thus, in the first half of this year [2021] mutual trade has grown by nearly 27%, foreign trade turnover by more than a quarter, gross domestic product in the whole Commonwealth has increased by nearly 4.5%, cargo transportation and industrial production are on the rise".<sup>20</sup>

Another very important document developed during the presidency of Belarus in this international organization is the Complex Action Plan for 2021-2025 to implement the CIS Interstate Innovation Cooperation Program until 2030, which was approved by the CIS Council of Heads of Government in November 2021. It is appropriate to recall here that the October (2021) meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government adopted a Statement on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Commonwealth, in which, considering trade and economic cooperation as a key factor in further deepening economic integration and sustainable development of the CIS member states, the leaders of these states declared the need "to focus efforts on stable economic growth through the development of green economy, digitalization, industrial cooperation, broad application of innovation..."<sup>21</sup>.

As a reminder, the Interstate Programme for Innovative Cooperation until 2030 was signed on 6 November 2020. Its

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20 Mishustin: a free trade agreement on services will stimulate economic cooperation in the CIS [Electronic resource]. 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mishustin-soglashenie-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-uslugami-prostimuliruet-ekonomicheskoe-vzaimodejstvie-v-sng-469224-2021/>

21 CIS Heads of State adopted a Statement on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Commonwealth [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/glavy-gosudarstv-sng-prinjali-zajavlenie-v-svjazi-s-30-letiem-sodruzhestva-464684-2021/>



peculiarity is that it takes into account the requirements of modern forecasting theory, strategic planning and national programming for the development and implementation of long-term strategic decisions within the framework of interstate cooperation on the regulation and development of the market economy. Another feature of the programme is the existence of initiatives which aim to ensure the functioning of a coherent, comprehensive and transparent system of effective and coherent international innovation, S&T and industrial cooperation and to facilitate access to programme opportunities for a wide range of researchers, engineers and scientists, businesses and other stakeholders. Successful implementation of the programme "would help to achieve the anticipated effects in 14 areas including; increasing the number of breakthrough technologies, discoveries and promising developments by ensuring the promotion of research results in the market; building capacities within the CIS to increase the number of companies being global technological leaders; expanding scientific, technological and innovation cooperation as a basis for creating joint competitive products, including for third country<sup>22</sup> markets

As for the approved Comprehensive Plan of Measures for 2021-2025, which contains specific activities, initiatives and projects with responsible performers and deadlines, they are structured into five main directions concerning normative-legal, organizational, informational, financial and personnel support of the program implementation. Successful implementation of this plan is expected to strengthen the CIS position in the new architecture of the global economic system and also to create conditions for achieving such

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22 Zalessky, B.L. The key to success is innovative cooperation / B.L. Zalessky // *Materialy XVII Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Moderni vymozenosti vedy - 2021"*. Volume 3: Prague. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 11.

results as "development of interstate innovation collaboration, creation of scientific-technical and technological reserves to organize large-scale production of knowledge-intensive competitive goods and services within the common innovation space of the Commonwealth"<sup>23</sup>. Complementing these provisions, this integration association is also expected to develop a programme for the development of industrial complexes until 2025, which will be another step in the development of the CIS.

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<sup>23</sup> The CIS has approved a five-year action plan for innovative cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-utverzhdzen-plan-meroprijatij-na-pjatiletku-po-innovatsionnomu-sotrudnichestvu-469337-2021/>

## **The aim is to synergise cooperation**

One of the priority objectives of Belarus' presidency of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2021 was to achieve a synergetic effect of cooperation among the CIS member states in various areas in order to involve the widest possible range of participants in deepening integration, while respecting the principle of different-level and multi-speed integration. In the area of science and technology the goal has been set to "facilitate the creation of effective mechanisms to combine the efforts of CIS member states in science, technology and innovation, to strengthen the innovation component of economic growth through the creation of national innovation systems and the implementation of inter-state innovation projects."<sup>24</sup> One of the concrete steps in this direction was the organization of several important events aimed at strengthening ties and expanding contacts between the community of scientists and scientific organizations of the CIS countries, including the 3rd Forum of Scientists, the 9th session of the Council for Cooperation in Fundamental Science and the 29th session of the Interstate Council for Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation in Minsk in late November 2021.

**The 3rd CIS Scientists Forum** brought together over 150 participants - heads and leading scientists of academies of sciences, major scientific and research centres, educational organizations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Its main objectives were to: 1) intensify scientific and technical cooperation among

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24 Concept of the Presidency of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/19314>

Commonwealth states; 2) stimulate new collaborative research; 3) propose ways of developing innovation policy in the post-Soviet space; and 4) form an "international mobility system for scientists and young specialists in the professional community"<sup>25</sup>. At three round tables - "Status and Prospects of Basic Science", "Improvement of Scientific Cooperation in the Digital Age", "Innovative Scientific Research" - it was noted that in the context of transition to a digital model of the Commonwealth economy, the importance of science increases dramatically, where interaction is based on a strategy of mutually beneficial and equal cooperation, and where the following principles are basic 1) preservation and further development of historical and cultural ties of the peoples of the CIS countries; 2) joining efforts to implement national interests in the implementation of scientific programs and projects; 3) formation of mutually beneficial partnerships of scientific organizations of the Commonwealth countries; 4) flexibility of collective cooperation formats and decision-making mechanisms in the implementation of joint scientific research. The Declaration "Science in the Context of Global Challenges", adopted at the end of the 3rd Forum, noted that "the scientific and technical policy pursued by the Commonwealth countries is aimed at uniting the efforts of CIS scientists in the search for new forms of cooperation in scientific research to solve problems in modernizing national socio-economic systems and increasing the level of well-being and quality of life of people."<sup>26</sup>

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25 CIS scientists to adopt a declaration on cooperation in science [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/uchenye-stran-sng-primit-deklaratsiju-o-sotrudnichestve-v-nauchnoj-sfere-471428-2021/>

26 Representatives of the CIS scientific community adopted a declaration in the context of global challenges [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL:

**The 9th meeting of the CIS Council for Cooperation in Fundamental Science** noted the increasing role of fundamental science in the development of society as the basis of prosperity and well-being of future generations of our countries and proposed to develop a two-year cooperation plan in this field, which would focus on areas of particular interest to the CIS scientific community - ecology, space exploration, biotechnology, digitalization, and aimed at addressing existing problems of interaction in the scientific field. "One of them is the lack of centralized funding for scientific development."<sup>27</sup> In December 2021, a draft list of promising research projects corresponding to the priority areas of basic research of the CIS countries was finalized and sent to the Commonwealth of Independent States for completion of intra-state coordination. "Six states take part in the work on the draft list: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan."<sup>28</sup> The agreed draft includes research in such areas as physico-mathematical and chemical sciences, information and communication technologies, new substances and materials, biological, agricultural and medical sciences, biotechnology and genetic engineering, environmental management and protection, nuclear, alternative and renewable energy, engineering and instrumentation, socio-economic and humanities, space exploration.

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<https://www.belta.by/society/view/predstaviteli-nauchnogo-soobschestva-stran-sng-prinjali-deklaratsiju-v-kontekste-globalnyh-vyzovov-471791-2021/>

27 The CIS intends to develop a plan for cooperation in the basic sciences [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-namereny-razrabotat-plan-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-fundamentalnyh-nauk-471803-2021/>

28 CIS experts have finalised the list of projects in priority areas of basic research [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/eksperty-sng-dorabotali-perechen-proektov-po-prioritetnym-napramlenijam-fundamentalnyh-issledovanij-473644-2021>

At the **29th meeting of the Interstate Council for Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation** the draft concept of scientific-technical and technological cooperation of the CIS countries was announced, which provides for such tasks as "development and implementation of new breakthrough technologies in priority directions of scientific and technological activity, as well as creation of new high-tech industrial enterprises to produce knowledge-intensive and innovative products"<sup>29</sup>. The system for training highly qualified scientific and engineering personnel will also undergo significant changes in the near future.

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<sup>29</sup> The CIS has drafted a concept for scientific and technical cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-podgotovili-proekt-kontseptsii-nauchno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-471701-2021/>

## **Shared educational space: from pre-school to academic level**

One of the important objectives of Belarus' presidency of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2021 was to promote further strengthening of humanitarian ties, expansion of contacts in education and science, and formation of a "common educational space of the Commonwealth"<sup>30</sup>. Among the concrete steps taken to achieve this goal was the Sixth Congress of Teachers and Education Workers of the Commonwealth, which was held in late October 2021 in Dushanbe and brought together representatives from the education system of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and its main topic was 'The Commonwealth of Independent States Education Space - a Strategic Resource for Sustainable Development'. We should say at once that holding such an event is unique in world practice, as "in no other region of the world is there interstate cooperation in the field of education, covering the entire spectrum of educational services, from childhood to vocational guidance for young people, higher vocational education and adult education"<sup>31</sup>.

The Fifth Congress was held in Bishkek in October 2018. The three years that have passed since then have shown that the national education systems of the Commonwealth countries have been successfully developing in a number of areas: from improving management and updating the content of education, introducing innovative information technologies to forming a modern

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30 Zalesky, B.L. Towards a Common Educational Space / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVII Mezinárodní vědecko-praktická konference "Moderní výzvy vědy - 2021". Volume 3; Prague. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 21.

31 Congress of Teachers and Education Workers of the CIS Member States [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/show?id=7774>

educational environment, increasing the professional competence of teaching staff, and developing an inclusive approach in education. One of the positive trends of this period is the "activation of interaction between the CIS countries on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements on education"<sup>32</sup>. In particular, over the past period, the Belarusian education authorities have concluded 10 cooperation agreements and treaties, including an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan on cooperation in secondary vocational education.

Among other projects implemented by the Belarusian side during the period between the Congresses, we should mention a few more. In terms of the implementation of modern approaches in the field of education in Belarus, a series of manuals "Competence-based approach" for grades 1-9 in all curricula has been published. In 2019, a scientific study "Development of scientific and methodological support for the formation of supraprofessional competencies of specialists for innovative industries in the process of continuous professional education" was carried out. Speaking about formation of common approaches to assessment of results of competence-based education and development of state and independent systems of education quality assessment, it should be noted that the World Bank project "Modernization of Higher Education in the Republic of Belarus" planned to create a new national agency for education quality assurance and to join the European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies. And at the beginning of December 2021, "the government agreed on the establishment of a National Agency for Quality Assurance in

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32 The CIS countries intend to intensify cooperation in the field of education [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/strany-sng-namereny-aktivizirovat-vzaimodejstvie-v-obrazovatelnoj-sfere-467074-2021>



Education by the Ministry of Education.<sup>33</sup> Developing the digital infrastructure and technology in education management, Belarus developed a Unified Information and Educational Resource for Curriculum and Methodological Support of the Educational Process, and the resource "Profile Learning" for teaching and methodological support of learning subjects at an advanced level in grade 10 was launched on September 1, 2020. In pre-school education, tools are being developed for the evaluation of its quality in the context of the competence-based approach, as well as scientific and methodological support for the development of a national system for the evaluation of the quality of education at the pre-school, general secondary and special education levels. It is expected that on the basis of the results obtained, a national system for the evaluation of the quality of preschool education will be created in the country by 2030. In Belarus, additional education programmes for children and young people are supported in 12 areas: technical, sports and technical, tourism, local history and ecology, physical education and sports, art, socio-economic, socio-pedagogy, culture and leisure, military patriotism, natural and mathematical science and social and humanitarian sciences. A special type of educational institution, the National Children's Technology Park, is being established in the country in order to work with gifted children and young people on a systematic basis. The integration of education and science in the CIS has been actively pursued over the past three years, including through cooperation between scientific institutions and universities. For example, Belarusian participants have interacted particularly effectively and will expand these partnerships with institutions and

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33 The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education will be created in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/natsionalnoe-agentstvo-po-obespecheniju-kachestva-obrazovanija-sozdatut-v-belarusi-473393-2021>

organizations in Azerbaijan, Russia and Uzbekistan in the framework of agreements on scientific, scientific-technical and innovative cooperation.

The resolution adopted by the 6th Congress outlines a detailed programme of action for the development of the Commonwealth's common educational space, where great attention is paid to international cooperation. In particular, it provides for 'expanding the range of educational programmes, including joint programmes, to develop the import and export of educational services in the CIS Member States'<sup>34</sup>. All this will make it possible to form a common educational space here at all levels: pre-school, school, secondary and higher professional, postgraduate and academic.

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<sup>34</sup> Resolution of the VI Congress of Teachers and Education Workers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (28-29 October 2021, Dushanbe) [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3173/96167/>

## A basis for the development of mutual trade

In December 2021, the tenth meeting of the Council for Interregional and Border Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was held to discuss preparations for the first CIS Forum of Regions. Due to the unfavourable epidemiological situation, the forum will be held in 2022. The draft programme of the forum envisages four panel sessions, an exhibition of agricultural products and achievements of CIS regions. The sessions will focus on the development of regional cooperation in industry, transport and transit, agriculture and entrepreneurship. The focus of the Council on this topic is explained by the fact that "it is inter-regional cooperation which is the basis for further development of mutual trade and entails cooperation in the market of production, investment and labour resources"<sup>35</sup>. The following figures show how relevant this issue is for the Republic of Belarus. More than 800 documents on trade, economic, scientific, technological and humanitarian cooperation with partners in the CIS countries are in effect in Belarusian regions. The foreign trade turnover with these partners increased by 36 per cent in January-October 2021 and reached nearly USD 40 billion. Particularly active this interaction is now developing with the regions of Russia, Kazakhstan and also Kyrgyzstan.

In particular, **Russia accounts for** about 80 per cent of all interregional cooperation documents, and one of the most successful forms of developing these partnerships has been the holding of bilateral regional forums. The eighth forum was held in 2021, during

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35 Strahar: Interregional cooperation is the basis for the development of mutual CIS trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/strahar-mezhregionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo-javljaetsja-bazisom-dlja-razvitiya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-v-sng-474946-2021/>

which contracts in the real sector worth \$800 million were signed, facilitated by the fact that "there are about 80 regions involved in this interregional cooperation on the Russian side"<sup>36</sup>. One of the leaders on the Russian side is **Moscow**. Over ten months of 2021 the trade turnover between the Republic of Belarus and Russia increased by 27%, exceeding \$3.7 billion with a surplus of over \$1.2 billion for the Belarusian side. This was due to deliveries from Belarus of cars, footwear with natural leather uppers, non-alloy steel bars, railway and tram cars, cheese and cottage cheese, hosiery, dried, salted and smoked fish, butter, furniture and parts thereof. It is also a fact that "some 20 per cent of the Russian capital's food imports come from Belarus, especially dairy products. <...> A lot of Belarusian-made cars are used by the city's municipal agencies and services, and the population especially appreciates modern eco-friendly electric transport..."<sup>37</sup>. All these positive trends are expected to remain in place and will be continued in the new cooperation programme of the parties for 2023-2025 to be launched in 2022.

As for **Kazakhstan**, its regions interact with Belarusian partners under some 20 documents on interregional cooperation. A good example in this regard is demonstrated by the **Kostanay** and **Grodno** regions, which signed a cooperation roadmap for 2022-2023 at the end of September 2021. For the Belarusian region, this Central Asian country is generally one of the five largest foreign economic partners, with trade turnover having increased by half over

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36 Zalesky, B.L. From forum of regions - to the expansion of cooperation / B.L. Zalesky // Materials of the XVII International scientific and practical conference "Proceedings of academic science - 2021", August 30 - September 7, 2021: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 16.

37 Industry, Transport, Humanitarian Sphere: Minsk Discussed Areas of Cooperation between Belarus and Moscow [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/promyshlennost-transport-gumanitarnaja-sfera-v-minske-obsudili-napraavlennija-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-s-474907-2021/>

the last five years. At the same time, "now Grodno Region supplies its products to 13 regions of Kazakhstan. The main commodity positions include meat and dairy products, woodworking and mechanical engineering products. In the first six months of 2021, exports to Kostanay Region totaled \$3.1 million.<sup>38</sup> It is believed that the adoption of the road map, which deals with stepping up cooperation in investment and trade-economic spheres, as well as in agriculture, tourism, culture, healthcare, and education, will give a new impetus to this interaction and result in new supplies of products from Grodno Region enterprises and a possible organization of a joint assembly facility in Kostanay Region.

The capitals of **Minsk** and **Bishkek** remain the flagships in the development of cooperation between the regions of Belarus and **Kyrgyzstan**. In November 2021, the twin cities reached new practical arrangements in the implementation of the partnership. The fact is that the Kyrgyz capital needs about 1,200 units of urban public transport today. Both CNG buses and electric buses are needed. A number of Minsk enterprises have already expressed their willingness to provide necessary assistance to their partners from Bishkek. The more so because "several watering cars produced in Belarus"<sup>39</sup> have recently appeared there, which the capital residents liked. As a result, Minsk discussed not only supplies of certain vehicles from the Belarusian capital, but also establishment of joint ventures in Bishkek to service and assemble them. In this regard, we

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38 Grodno and Kostanay regions have signed a road map for cooperation development [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/dorozhnyju-kartu-po-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-podpisali-grodnenskaja-i-kostanajskaja-oblasti-462339-2021/>

39 Bishkek mayor: we are interested in buying Belarusian machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mer-bishkeka-my-zainteresovany-v-zakupke-belorusskoj-tehniki-469870-2021/>

would like to remind you that "an assembly facility for BELARUS tractors has already been set up in Bishkek. Machines for the needs of the municipal sphere can also be assembled there. The site is ready, there are qualified specialists, a service centre. We need to solve the problem of supply of spare parts in order to launch the production"<sup>40</sup>. As we can see, the ties of the CIS regions are gradually filled with concrete projects, stimulating today the integration processes in the Commonwealth.

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40 Bishkek plans to purchase machinery from MTZ for street cleaning [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bishkek-planirujut-zakupit-u-mtz-tehniku-dlja-uborki-ulits-470601-2021/>

## **Twin cities meeting as a tool for the implementation of cooperation projects**

In October 2021, the Belarusian city of Zhodino hosted the 10th meeting of the twin cities of Belarus and Russia, which was attended by representatives of 52 cities of the two countries - Moscow, Kaluga, Grozny, Novorossiysk, Zaslavl, Mogilev, Vileika, Kolomna, Smolensk and many others. It should be recalled that the previous nine meetings were held since 1998, in Gomel, Mytishchi, Vitebsk, Bryansk, Novopolotsk, Smolensk, Minsk, Podolsk and Mogilev. And virtually all of them "have become an eloquent illustration of the conclusion that the Belarusian-Russian twinning of cities creates a unique environment for productive trade and economic cooperation as well as spiritual component of the brotherhood of the two peoples and development of public diplomacy.<sup>41</sup> In particular, the 9th meeting held in March 2017 in Mogilev brought together representatives of 24 Belarusian and 35 Russian cities, including from Moscow, Vologda, Tula, Smolensk, Volgograd, Penza, Pskov and Vyazma.

The topic of the meeting in Zhodzina was "Twinning as an important potential for strengthening the Union State of Belarus and Russia and the unity of the peoples. The Belarusian public organization "Twin Cities" (BOPC) suggested such specific areas for discussion as economy and business, promotion of mutual investments, expansion of production cooperation, "interaction in the social sphere, infrastructure development, as well as cultural,

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41 Zalesky, B.L. Twin-cities of Belarus and Russia: in an atmosphere of trust - to mutually beneficial projects / B.L. Zalesky // *Materiały XII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Perspektywiczne opracowania z nauki i technikami - 2016"* Volume 3. Ekonomiczne nauki. Zarządzanie. Politologia. Historia. Filozofia : Przemysł. Nauka i studia. - C. 42.

educational cooperation and twinning as a platform to improve work with young people.<sup>42</sup> Note that by the end of 2020, the BOPAG had 36 cities that have established twinning and partnership links with more than 450 cities in 38 countries, with Russia being the clear leader.

Belarus assumes that such bilateral meetings of the twin cities are very important for the development of the twinning movement as a whole, as they represent new opportunities for expanding cooperation in the implementation of investment, trade and economic relations, cultural and educational programs. After all, "twin cities are an important and effective sector of international cooperation marked by openness, mutual trust, tolerance and kind-heartedness"<sup>43</sup>. In the Union State these relations are even more pronounced and should be used within the framework of the Union integration as an effective tool of local authorities for the development of constructive dialogue and implementation of various cooperation projects. The main goal of cooperation between the cities in this regard is "comprehensive development of the urban environment, infrastructure, social sphere, culture, education, sports, leisure and recreational opportunities in order to improve the well-being of the population, strengthen tolerance, deepen business cooperation".<sup>44</sup>

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42 Grishkevich, A. Belarus and Russia at the meeting of twin-cities in Zhodzina will discuss expansion of interaction / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-rossija-na-vstreche-gorodov-pobratimov-v-zhodino-obsudjat-rasshirenie-vzaimodejstviya-462834-2021/>

43 Batura, B. Twinning - small links of big friendship / B. Batura // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/pobratimskoe-dvizhenie-malenkie-zvenija-bolshoj-druzhby-7603/>

44 Surikov, A. City diplomacy - effective way of regional integration of not only the Union State, but also the Eurasian Economic Union / A. Surikov // Belarus-Russia: City Diplomacy: informational-interactive project / co-comp. and interviewer: B. Zaleski, M. Valkouski, A. Mostovoy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2013. - C. 4-5.



One of the concrete results of this twinning meeting in Zhodino was the signing of a cooperation agreement between the cities of Grodno and Ukhta, located in the Komi Republic. The first agreement to establish and develop trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural relations between them was adopted in September 2017 during the International Investment Forum "Grodno Region at the Crossroads of Borders". The new document primarily envisages trade and industrial cooperation. The fact is that Grodno currently has quite a few twin cities and partners in Russia. Among them are Dzerzhinsk (2005), Khimki (2005), Moscow Schukino (2005), Vologda (2007), Cheboksary (2009), the Tuapse region of the Krasnodar Krai (2012) and Tambov (2015). As we can see, few of them are located in the northern part of the neighbouring country. Thanks to the new agreement, supplies from Grodno are expected to increase, not only of meat and dairy products, but also of other products. "Among the companies whose products may soon appear in a large volume in the Russian city [Ukhta] are JSC Molochny Mir, JSC Grodno Meat Factory, JLLC Quinfood, JLLC Conte Spa<sup>45</sup>.

The intensification of partnerships between Grodno and Ukhta is an interesting form of deepening cooperation between the Grodno region and the Republic of Komi on the municipal level. The fact is that back in April 2021 the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee noted that this Russian region is interested in cooperating in wood processing and furniture production. "For this purpose, there are plans to establish ties with the business community of Grodno region. The Russian side is ready to share the Grodno experience in this field. It is also possible to set up a joint venture to produce

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45 Grodno and Russia's Ukhta signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/grodno-i-rossijskaja-ukhta-podpisali-dogovor-o-sotrudnichestve-463558-2021/>

furniture.<sup>46</sup> In September 2021, the Belarusian and Russian regions held the second meeting of the working group on cooperation to discuss specific areas of work. In agriculture, the partners from Komi are going to adopt the experience of Grodno Oblast from design and construction of agricultural facilities to implementation of technologies for processing raw materials; the partners also plan to cooperate in construction. "There is great potential in cooperation in education, culture, tourism and sports."<sup>47</sup> It goes without saying that Grodno and Ukhta are planning to make their considerable contribution to development of all these business ties between the republic and the oblast, which will fully meet the contents of the agreement signed during the 10th meeting of the twin cities in Zhodino.

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46 A meeting on cooperation between Belarus and the Komi and Tyva republics was held at the regional executive committee [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://grodno-region.by/ru/oblispolkom\\_news-ru/view/v-oblispolkome-proshlo-zasedanie-po-sotrudnichestvu-belarusi-i-respublik-komi-i-tyva-31118-2021/](https://grodno-region.by/ru/oblispolkom_news-ru/view/v-oblispolkome-proshlo-zasedanie-po-sotrudnichestvu-belarusi-i-respublik-komi-i-tyva-31118-2021/)

47 The Republic of Komi intends to adopt the Belarusian experience in the agrarian and construction spheres [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/respublika-komi-namerena-perenimat-belorusskoj-opyt-v-agrarnoj-i-stroitelnoj-sferah-267750-2017/>

## **Exchange trading as a promising integration project for regional cooperation**

The experience of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) in 2021 shows that exchange trade is gradually becoming one of the drivers of Belarusian-Russian integration and a very promising project implemented within the framework of the Union State. Suffice it to say that from January to August 2021 the exchange trade between Belarus and Russia increased by half and reached 375 million dollars. It is the highest figure among 68 countries represented on the BUTB. The fact that more than a half of all foreign clients of the exchange - over 2,600 - are Russian non-resident companies - speaks volumes. At the same time, "the largest volume of transactions is accounted for by representatives of the Leningrad, Moscow and Smolensk regions"<sup>48</sup>.

To a large extent, all these positive trends can be explained by the fact that "today there are no obstacles to use the technological and intellectual potential of commodity exchanges as a tool for the implementation of integration programmes of the Union State"<sup>49</sup>. Russian partners are also attracted by the opportunity to use the BUTB as a kind of springboard to enter third country markets. "In the first eight months of 2021, the sum of transit deals made by bidders from the Russian Federation was \$5.5 million, mostly woodworking products, petrochemicals, construction industry

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48 Zalesky, B. In search of new points of growth. The Potential of Multi-vector Foreign Trade / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 112.

49 Exchanges of Belarus and Russia discuss the creation of a unified exchange commodity market SG [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/birzhi-belarusi-i-rossii-obsudili-sozdanie-edinogo-birzhevogo-tovarnogo-rynka-sg-467052-2021/>

products, as well as equipment and machinery.<sup>50</sup> All this was successfully sold through the BUTB to Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia. In particular, about 30 companies from the Smolensk, Moscow, Leningrad and Bryansk regions have used this mechanism. And, to all appearances, in the near future these areas of Belarusian-Russian exchange cooperation will get new impulses for development in other Russian regions as well.

For example, there is great interest in cooperation with the BUTB in the **Samara region**, which is one of the leaders in terms of exports of agricultural products in the Volga Federal District. In November 2021, 30 production and trade enterprises of the region expressed their readiness to use the potential of the BUTB to expand the volume and geography of their exports, including "sales of agricultural products of the Samara region to the European Union. In particular, the BUTB has already formed a pool of regular buyers of vegetable oils from the Baltic States, Poland and Switzerland, who could purchase Samara sunflower oil as part of transit deals"<sup>51</sup>. Note that so far these countries mostly have been supplied with Belarusian oilseed products, the volume of which may exceed 70 million dollars in 2021. The Russian region can also see considerable potential in attracting metallurgical companies to the BUTB to sell ferrous and non-ferrous rolled metal products, which are used annually in considerable quantities by the Belarusian industry. So far, "as a rule, the way of Samara metal to the

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50 Russia leads in exchange trade with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rossija-lidiruet-po-objemam-birzhevogo-tovarooborota-s-belarusiju-462016-2021/>

51 BUTB and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Samara region intend to jointly develop exchange trade in agro-industrial products [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-tpp-samarskoj-oblasti-namereny-sovmestno-razvivat-birzhevuj-torgovlju-produktsiej-apk-471097-2021/>

Belarusian buyer is through intermediaries, which makes it more expensive and less competitive..."<sup>52</sup>.

The development of exchange trade with Belarus in the **Stavropol Territory** is seen as a factor contributing to the growth of mutual trade turnover and diversification of its structure. Updating contacts with the BUTB in November 2021, representatives of the regional Export Support Center expressed confidence that this exchange platform "will become "one window" for Stavropol companies, through which they will get access not only to the Belarusian market, but also be able to successfully trade with countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, where it is quite difficult to do business without their own commodity distribution network."<sup>53</sup>

As for **the Pskov Oblast**, they see the prospects for the active use of the BUTB's potential in selling the region's timber industry products. This is evidenced by the fact that 30 Pskov Oblast companies took part in the business forum held in October 2021, where it was described in detail how "the exchange mechanism will allow Pskov companies to supply their goods not only to the Belarusian market, but also to European and Asian countries, where the exchange has already formed a network of business partners who are ready to purchase timber products in almost any volume"<sup>54</sup>.

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52 The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Samara region sees significant potential for the development of exchange trade with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tpp-samarskoj-oblasti-vidit-znachitelnyj-potentsial-razvitiya-birzhevoj-torgovli-s-belarusiju-464619-2021/>.

53 The Stavropol Territory is interested in developing exchange trade in agricultural products with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stavropolskij-kraj-zajinteresovan-v-razvitiy-birzhevoj-torgovli-selhozproduksiej-s-belarusiju-467948-2021/>.

54 BUTB expects to increase sales of timber products from the Pskov region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-uvelichit-prodazhi-lesoproductsij-iz-pskovskoj-oblasti-464211-2021/>

**The Republic of Karelia** has an interesting project at the BUTB, which is primarily interested in the possibility of applying the exchange mechanism to the sale of raw milk from nearby Russian regions in the region. It seems that the initiative to sell raw milk from Vologda, Kaliningrad, Pskov and other regions of the North-Western Federal District has all the chances of success, since the BUBS considers raw milk to be a commodity with a great potential, which is yet to be discovered on the exchange trading platform. In addition, in November 2021 the Belarusian exchange confirmed its readiness "to organize separate trading sessions specifically for participants from the Republic of Karelia, which will allow <...> enterprises to get the maximum economic effect from the exchange mechanism."<sup>55</sup> So, hopefully, the results will not be long in coming.

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<sup>55</sup> Karelia is interested in selling dairy products through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/karelija-zainteresovana-v-realizatsii-molochnoj-produktsii-cherez-butb-469068-2021/>

## **From the cooperation agreement - to specific projects**

In October 2021, a meeting of the joint working group for cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (KBR) of Russia was held, where the parties signed an action plan to implement the agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, and socio-cultural spheres, adopted at the VII Forum of Belarusian and Russian Regions, which was held in September 2020. It is worth reminding that following the results of the last year the trade turnover between the parties decreased by more than a quarter and amounted to \$8.6 million. At the same time, "the balance is positive for the Republic of Belarus - plus \$3.1 million.<sup>56</sup> As a matter of fact, these trends have determined the desire of both sides to return interaction in the economic sector to the growth trajectory. The more so because "Belarus and Kabardino-Balkaria are united not only by long-standing traditions of friendship and mutual assistance, but also by multilateral economic partnership<sup>57</sup>," which the sides intend to further develop. We should note that this Russian region is part of the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD) one of the key factors of development of which is its integration into the Euro-Asian economic space. "In this case, the Republic of Belarus can be one of the effective partners of the entities of the NCFD.<sup>58</sup>

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56 Topical issues of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic discussed in remote format [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/bdc349beac26.html>

57 Belarus and Kabardino-Balkaria intensify economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kabardino-balkarija-aktivizirujut-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-466948-2021/>

58 Zalesky B.L. SKFO - Belarus: topical media topics of cooperation / B.L. Zalesky // Mediachteniya SKFU: Materials of the Third International Scientific and Practical

As far as the partnership between Belarus and the CBD is concerned, it is based on a variety of economic ties between specific enterprises on both sides. Thus, the products of the diamond tool manufacturer, Terekalmaz JSC, are well known both at Minsk plants - tractor, automobile and motor works, and at the Baranovichi Auto Aggregate Plant, Borisov Auto Aggregate Plant, as well as at the enterprises Avtogydrousilitel, Belcard, Machine-Tool Plant Krasny Borets, Belgran and Belgeo. The Belarusian market has been actively developing the presence of JSC Kavkazkabel cable plant and JSC Nalchik plant of high-voltage apparatus. Another interesting example in this regard: "Prokhladnensky plant of semiconductor devices" OJSC (manufacturing of integrated voltage regulators) has been a partner of "Integral" OJSC for more than 20 years, buying transistor and microchip crystals<sup>59</sup>. In order to actively develop partnerships in the agricultural sector, the first international "Prokhladnaya Fair" was held back in 2014, which included an exhibition of Belarusian agricultural machinery for crop production, horticulture and animal husbandry and a demonstration show of energy-saving machines from the Minsk Tractor Plant. Measures have been under way since then to plant original seeds of Belarus-breeding hybrids of various ripeness groups, which will make it possible to "supply up to 15 thousand tons of corn seeds to the Belarusian market."<sup>60</sup>

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Conference (Stavropol, 23-25 May 2019) / ed. by O.I. Lepilkina, A.M. Gorbachev, N.N. Borisenko, D.A. Shevtsova. - Stavropol: Servyshkola, 2019. - C. 174.

59 Rahaev, B. Mutual economic interests are based on historically established economic ties and are successfully developing / B. Rahaev // Interaction of Regions: Union State - the locomotive of Eurasian integration: inform.-integration project / comp. and interviewing: B. Zaleski, M. Valkovski, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2016. - C. 25.

60 Ibid. C. 27.



Among the Belarusian regions that plan to intensify their cooperation with the CBD is Brest Region, which is "working on the successful development of business initiatives, implementation of projects aimed at producing competitive products, introduction of innovations, expansion of sales markets, as well as establishment of joint ventures."<sup>61</sup> To effectively develop partnerships with this Russian region, the Brest branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a cooperation agreement with the union "Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic" in April 2018. This structure is one of the centres of business activities in the Russian region, "created to support and assist entrepreneurs, to develop business contacts both in the republic and with other regions, as well as with the CIS and foreign countries"<sup>62</sup>. We must assume that with the appearance of the action plan, the results will not be long in coming.

An important area of partnership with the Kabardino-Balkaria is the socio-cultural one. After all, it is in this Russian region that the only Belarusian centre in the North Caucasian Federal District - the Kabardino-Balkarian public movement "For Unity - Syabry" - operates, which annually holds a number of events to strengthen cultural ties between the parties. For example, in February 2021 this centre organised a meeting "Syabry Gather Friends" at the Cultural Foundation of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic with the participation of other national and cultural centres at which "young winners of the International Youth Festival-Contest of Poetry and

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61 Investment agreements worth over Br20 million signed at business contacts forum and exhibition in Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investsoglasheniya-na-summu-svyshe-br20-mln-podpisany-na-forume-vystavke-delovyh-kontaktov-v-breste-300386-2018/>.

62 Mission, Directions for Action [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://kbr.tprrf.ru/ru/mission/>

Poetic Translations "Shores of Friendship" performed, paintings and works of arts and crafts were presented, poems and songs were heard"<sup>63</sup>. Speaking of other priorities in the socio-cultural sphere, we should also recall such an interesting format as the annual international summer school at the local state university "The roots of friendship of our peoples are in our history", with the participation of students, graduate students and young scientists from Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan. In August 2019, as part of the fourth such summer school, the master class "Patriotic Education of Youth through the Prism of the Projects of the Union State of Belarus and Russia", which "was conducted by Tatiana Senkevich, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Philology at Pushkin Brest University, and Alla Senkevich, Deputy Head of the Educational Work of the Main Department for Education of Brest Regional Executive Committee, was of particular interest to the students."<sup>64</sup> All these facts show that the necessary prerequisites for successful cooperation are in place.

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63 The Foundation of Culture of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic hosted a traditional evening "Syabry gather friends" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/c0da3dd2bc7b.html>

64 Representatives of A.S. Pushkin Brest University participated in a summer school in Kabardino-Balkaria [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/652289590c9c.html>

## Focus on implementing joint projects

On the first decade of October 2021 for the first time the "Days of the Republic of Belarus in Primorsky Krai" have been held in Vladivostok. 160 representatives of different spheres of trade, economic, investment, cultural have taken part in the event. The most important events within the framework of the Days were: 1) meeting of the working group on cooperation of the Republic of Belarus with the Primorsky Territory; 2) trade fair and sale of Belarusian goods and equipment exhibition with participation of 18 largest Belarusian enterprises; 3) business forum of Belarusian and Primorsky business circles on expansion of cooperation with already existing partners and search of new ones.

A good backdrop for all these events was the fact that in 2021 Belarusian companies' exports to this Russian region increased by 43 percent to \$13 million. However, judging by how keenly and concretely the working group discussed in Vladivostok the prospects of further interaction between the parties, this value is just a starting point in terms of the implementation of new joint projects. Let us name some of them. In particular, a full-fledged exhibition and service centre is to be set up in Primorye Territory to sell and support Belarusian equipment. This will make it possible not only to sell the equipment, but also to service it and present it to a wide circle of Primorye consumers. A project to promote Mogilevliftmash products is expected to be implemented in the industrial sector. "It concerns both lifts and lift equipment, as well as rotary and carousel-type car parks, a new area mastered by the enterprise."<sup>65</sup> The

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65 Mogilev Oblast exports to Primorsky Krai increased by 84% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-mogilevskoj-oblasti-v-primorskij-kraj-uvelichilsja-na-84-463897-2021/>

promotion, testing and introduction of Belarusian potato varieties in Primorsky Krai, expert support and scientific assistance in the cultivation of orchards, as well as re-equipment of agricultural machinery on caterpillars are planned in the agricultural sector.

As for the exhibition of products of Belarusian enterprises, the main square of Vladivostok displayed municipal, agricultural and construction machinery of machine-building factories of Belarus. Another number of enterprises - Babushkina krynka Holding, Kobrin Butter and Cheese Plant, Domochay Company, Krasny Pischevik OJSC, Kommunarka OJSC, Brest, Bobruisk, Mogilev and Pinsk meat packing plants - presented Belarusian confectionery, dairy and meat products, which are well known here and are traditionally in high demand. Suffice it to say that in 2020, "\$2.1 million worth of Belarusian food was supplied to Primorye. Compared to 2019, this was an increase of 63%. This year, in the first eight months alone, supplies have increased by 34%; we have already traded for \$2 million."<sup>66</sup>

The business forum held as part of the Days of the Republic of Belarus in the Primorye Territory demonstrated high interest of the local trading networks in increasing supplies of Belarusian foodstuffs. Negotiations held by representatives of business circles to increase the range of products supplied make it possible to count on a multiple growth in their volume in the near future. The Belarusian holding AMKODOR, which incorporates 30 legal entities, including 21 factories in Belarus, Russia, Uzbekistan and Lithuania, should be mentioned among the companies that have

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<sup>66</sup> Belarus counts on a multiple increase in food supplies to Russia's Primorye Territory [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-na-kratnyj-rost-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-primorskij-kraj-rossii-463698-2021/>

worked very fruitfully in Vladivostok. In particular, "a contract has been signed to supply another 15 AMKODOR machines to one of the enterprises. In addition, one more dealer's contract was signed, the needs of Primorye Territory in special AMKODOR machines for 2022 and the scope of their delivery were specified"<sup>67</sup>. A few weeks later, at the end of October 2021, Vladivostok saw a presentation of a wide range of AMKODOR machines, which "provides comprehensive support for the forest industry, increasing productivity and efficiency of the consumer machinery at each stage of the production process."<sup>68</sup> It appears that new contracts are just around the corner.

The fact that Primorsky Krai is seriously interested in Belarusian machinery is also confirmed by the fact that Bobruiskagromash Holding Management Company OJSC signed a dealer agreement with Utyos LLC with the right to sell machines for application of pulverized chemical ameliorants in Primorsky Krai. An important detail: "For 22 years, OOO "Utes" has developed the "Gora Glubinnaya" quarry and has proved to be a reliable producer of mineral fertilizers: limestone dolomite meal, limestone grit and mineral powder for asphalt-concrete plants."<sup>69</sup> Now this Russian company is using Western European machinery, which is seven times more expensive than the Belarusian machinery, as its main

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67 "AMKODOR will deliver another shipment of machinery to Primorsky Krai [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-postavit-ocherednuju-partiju-tehniki-v-primorskij-kraj-463805-2021/>

68 Presentation of the Belarusian timber industry machinery was held in Vladivostok [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/vladivostok/news/e6bb6d0efeea1757.html>

69 Primorsky Krai is interested in Belarusian agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/primorskij-kraj-zainteresovan-v-belorusskoj-selhoztehnike-464889-2021/>

machines for applying mineral fertilizers. So, there are good prospects for Bobruiskagromash machines in the seaside market.

Recall that the VIII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia held in the summer of 2021 demonstrated "extensive potential for further development of cooperation between the specific regions of the two countries that are part of the Union State,"<sup>70</sup> which should be fully used in the near future. This is exactly the approach we see today in the cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Primorsky Krai of Russia.

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70 Zalessky, B. Time for new opportunities. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 26.

## **The priority of regional cooperation is implementation of specific projects**

Tajikistan is one of the Central Asian countries, with which the Republic of Belarus has been developing its trade and economic relations especially intensively over the past year and a half. Thus, if in 2020 the volume of mutual trade between them increased "almost three times and exceeded \$111 million<sup>71</sup>," then only in January-August 2021 trade turnover came close to the mark of \$110 million, "including Belarusian exports - \$107.5 million.<sup>72</sup> Such supplies from Belarus as tractors and tractor trucks, sugar, motor vehicles designed to carry ten or more people, oil products, insulated wires, cables, paper and cardboard stationery and tyres played a decisive role in achieving those figures. The fact that there are already "about 20 dealers of Belarusian manufacturers - in Tajikistan - speaks volumes. We are talking about assembly of tractors, Bobruiskagromash and Gomelmash machinery. Joint projects in the dairy industry are also being prepared,"<sup>73</sup> and cooperation between specific regions of the two countries should play a decisive role in each of them.

It should be reminded that the subject of activating interregional cooperation was discussed back in April 2021 at the 14th meeting of the Tajik-Belarusian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, where "topical

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71 Ambassador: Belarusian projects in Tajikistan are not justified, they have an economic impact. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-belorusskie-proekty-v-tadzhikistane-ne-prosto-obosnovany-a-dajut-ekonomicheskij-effekt-459969-2021/>

72 Trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/belarus\\_tajikistan/trade\\_economic/](https://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/belarus_tajikistan/trade_economic/)

73 Denisenko: the friendship of the leaders of Belarus and Tajikistan is a good basis for all-round cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/denisenko-druzhba-liderov-belarusi-i-tadzhikistana-horoshaja-osnova-dlja-vsestoronnego-sotrudnichestva-460655-2021/>

issues of cooperation in industry and production cooperation, agriculture and transport, health and education, investments and information technology"<sup>74</sup> were considered. An important detail: today such regions of Tajikistan and Belarus are developing trade and economic, scientific, technical and cultural ties within the framework of the signed cooperation agreements: Sughd region - with Vitebsk, Minsk and Mogilev regions, Khatlon and Gomel regions, the cities of Minsk and Dushanbe, Khujand and Mogilev, Yavan and Uzden districts.

**Minsk Region is one of** the most active participants in Belarus-Tajikistan interregional cooperation, whose foreign trade turnover with Tajikistan more than tripled and exceeded USD 22 million in the first eight months of 2021. Implementation of the cooperation agreement with **Sughd Region**, signed in 2014, played a key role in achieving such indicators. At the same time, the parties do not intend to rest on their laurels, outlining new plans for mutually beneficial partnerships. In particular, at a meeting between regional leaders A. Turchin and R. Ahmadzoda in early November 2021, they discussed a number of new promising areas of cooperation. One of the obvious priorities is the Belarusian light industry, which can use Tajik cotton as its raw material. Belarus also expressed its interest in establishing joint ventures to process cotton in Tajikistan. As for the Tajik partners of the Belarusian capital region, they are interested "in supplying vegetables and fruits to Belarus, as well as receiving high-quality Belarusian potato seeds. Within 3-4 years, the oblast plans to increase the volume of potato

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74 Zalesky, B.L. In the Course of Positive Dynamics of Cooperation / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVIII Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Efektivni nastroje modernich ved - 2021". Volume 5: Prague. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 13.



production to 1 million tonnes.<sup>75</sup> Overall, the two sides plan to seriously expand their bilateral ties in the near future. This is evidenced by the fact that, at a business meeting in November 2021, "representatives of over 30 Tajik and Belarusian companies held talks on possible cooperation in mechanical engineering, healthcare, woodworking, food processing and manufacturing.<sup>76</sup> A memorandum on cooperation between the cities of Zhodino and Gulistan, signed in November 2021, should also help expand interaction between the two regions.

**Mogilev Region** also intends to actively develop partnerships with Sughd Region. The parties signed a cooperation agreement in 2017. And in the three quarters of 2021, trade turnover between them increased by almost a third more. And in this case we are talking about an active search for new opportunities for cooperation. One of the priorities is to set up joint production facilities. Given that Mogilev is home to Mogotex, the largest Belarusian textile producer, Mogotex is seriously interested in supplying cotton from Tajikistan. And the Tajik partners, who annually increase the cultivation area of this crop, have their own interest: to set up a joint venture with the Belarusian side to process cotton. "This will make it possible to create several thousand new jobs here [in Sughd Oblast].<sup>77</sup> Mogilevliftmash is also planning to set up joint production

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75 Cotton, fruit, potato seeds: Minsk region plans to increase cooperation with Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/hlopok-frukty-semena-kartofelja-minskaja-oblast-planiruet-naraschivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-tadzhikistanom-467756-2021/>.

76 Enterprises of Minsk and Sughd oblasts are interested in cooperation in the sphere of industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-minskoj-i-sogdijskoj-oblastej-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-promyshlennosti-468050-2021/>.

77 Zayats: Mogilev Region and Sughd Region of Tajikistan are interested in close cooperation and implementation of projects [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zajats-mogilevskij-region-i-sogdijskaja-oblast-tadzhikistana-zainteresovany-v-tesnom-sotrudnichestve-i-467893-2021/>.

of lifts in the Tajik region. These are just some of the proposals that were voiced in November 2021 at a business meeting in Mogilev, during which the cooperation agreement was signed by the Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Sughd Oblast Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In addition, "to sign an agreement of intent OJSC "Mogilev plant Strommashina" and CJSC "North Asia Metal" on the implementation of the project for the manufacture and supply of technological equipment for the production of asbestos-cement sheets.<sup>78</sup> And representatives of other Mahiliou enterprises from a number of sectors have established contacts to trade in finished products and raw materials. And this is encouraging.

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78 The Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sughd Region of Tajikistan signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mogilevskoe-otdelenie-beltp-i-tpp-sogdijskoj-oblasti-tadzhikistana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-468065-2021/>

## **Cooperative projects as a tool developing partnerships**

In November 2021 the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Armenian Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation was held, where the parties considered ways to strengthen the positions of Belarusian and Armenian exporters in each other's markets, expand the commodity distribution network, and cooperate in agriculture, science and technology. A characteristic feature of the partnership between the two countries is the fact that trade turnover between them is growing annually. "So, while in 2016 it was a little over \$32 million, in 2020 it was over \$82 million. The growth in trade turnover in the first nine months of this [2021] year has exceeded \$62 million.<sup>79</sup> Belarusian exports to the Armenian market consisted mainly of dairy products, furniture, computers for automatic data processing and medications. This made it possible to reach a mutual trade surplus of more than \$32 million in 2020. Another positive trend observed today in relations between the two former Soviet republics is the increase in Armenian investment in the Belarusian economy. In the first half of 2021, they came in at over ten million dollars. All in all there are 46 companies with capital from Armenia operating in Belarus, including 11 joint ventures and 35 foreign enterprises.

When discussing prospects for the development of partnership ties at the meeting of the intergovernmental commission, the sides noted that there are significant reserves for increasing the volume of mutual trade. One of them is that "the economic way of developing

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79 Belarus and Armenia increase trade turnover by 2.5 times in 5 years [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-armenija-za-5-let-uvelichili-tovarooborot-v-25-raza-471337-2021/>

trade by increasing supplies of traditional groups of goods is outdated and it is necessary to enter into cooperation projects,"<sup>80</sup> which will ensure long-term and fruitful cooperation that is less dependent on various market fluctuations. The sides are already making certain practical steps in this direction. For instance, as part of the programme for modernising the lift sector in Yerevan, Mogilevliftmash supplied five hundred sets of lift equipment to Armenia. And the issue of creating a joint assembly production of lifts in the Armenian land is already being worked out. There are great opportunities for Belarusian companies to participate in the implementation of other Armenian government infrastructure and industrial development programmes.

The Belarusian side sees another reserve for increasing its trade with Armenian partners in the active use of the trade fairs and exhibitions that take place in that South Caucasus country. Thus, the high interest of Belarusian manufacturers in the Armenian market was eloquently demonstrated by the Made in Belarus exhibit at the 20th universal regional trade and industrial forum Armenia Expo, which was held in Yerevan in September 2021. It is enough to say that 17 enterprises of the Belgospischeprom Concern are exhibitors at one of the largest fairs in the Caucasus: "Krasny Pestrovik, Kommunarka, Krasny Mozyryanin, Spartak, KF Slodych, Malorita KOSK, Gamma Vkusa, Mashpischeprod, Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, Slutsk Sugar Refinery, Gorodeisky sugar refinery, Minsk Kristall - managing company of Minsk Kristall Group Holding, Krinita, Minsk Margarine Plant, Lidapischekontsentraty, Belkofi, Interferm. Their presence at this business forum in Yerevan can be

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80 Drozha: Belarus and Armenia have reserves for increasing mutual trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/drozhzha-u-belarusi-i-armenii-est-rezervy-dlja-naraschivaniya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-471650-2021/>

explained by the fact that "practically all the products of the Concern's organizations are supplied to Armenia. In January-July 2021, exports to this country totaled \$640,700 or 215.4% of the same period last year.<sup>81</sup>

Having demonstrated the best samples of their products at the exhibition, Belarusian exporters are planning to significantly expand their presence in the Armenian market. A good example in this regard was demonstrated by the Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant, which signed a contract for USD 55,000 to supply skimmed milk powder for ice cream production during the exhibition. "The enterprise has also reached an agreement to sign another contract for the delivery of products for the production of ice cream.<sup>82</sup> The Slutsk Cheese Factory will seriously increase the supplies to the Armenian market, demonstrating in Yerevan "Yas Belous" brand products, such as cheese, milk powder and butter, which together with cream and cottage cheese prevailed in the export of Belarusian products to Armenia in 2020. Belarusian agricultural machinery manufacturers also see good prospects here - Gomselmash, whose two Palesse-branded machines have been operating in the fields of this country since 2020, and Grodnooblselkhoztech Holding Management Company OJSC, which manufactures tillage, forage, postharvest machinery and milking machines, and Gomel Electromechanical Plant OJSC, producer of railway locomotives and rolling stock. All of them attracted much attention from visitors to the Armenia Expo

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81 "Belgospisheprom presented its products at the Armenia Expo exhibition in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospisheprom-predstavil-produktsiju-na-vystavke-armenia-expo-v-erevane-460163-2021/>

82 Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant signed a \$55,000 contract at Armenia Expo [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kalinkovskij-molochnyj-kombinat-na-armenia-expo-zakljuchil-kontrakt-na-55-tys-460231-2021/>

international exhibition. And there is every reason to believe that new contracts with Armenian partners will not be long in coming.

On the whole, as it was pointed out at the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Commission, the potential for cooperation between Belarus and Armenia is still quite extensive, i.e. joint ventures, cooperation, agriculture, humanitarian and interregional cooperation.

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## **Business Cooperation Council outlines the prospects for interaction**

In October 2021, the fifth meeting of the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council was held, which was attended by representatives of over 60 companies from Pakistan representing such economic sectors as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles, food, construction, transport, logistics and tourism. On the Belarusian side, the meeting was attended by representatives of almost a hundred enterprises and companies. Such composition of the business council participants eloquently demonstrated the fact that "the relations between Belarus and Pakistan are currently at a high level, especially in trade, investment and industry."<sup>83</sup> The very extensive contractual and legal framework, which already includes more than 80 agreements, largely contributes to this. Another "around 20 agreements/memoranda of understanding are in the final stages of negotiation"<sup>84</sup>. The established partnership implementation mechanisms in the form of commissions and working groups as well as the existing system of interregional cooperation are also active.

As for the Business Council, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry held its fourth meeting in the online format six months ago, in April 2021. There the parties "discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also possibilities to increase investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, creation of

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83 Pakistan is interested in strengthening economic cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-zainteresovan-v-ukreplenii-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusju-462939-2021/>.

84 Khan, S.H. On business plans, tractor deliveries and master class on van painting / S.H. Khan // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/posol-pakistana-o-biznes-planah-postavkah-traktorov-i-master-klasse-po-rospisi-furgonov-7887/>

joint companies and productions, mentioning industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technologies and logistics among the priority directions of cooperation.<sup>85</sup> At the fifth session of the Council the Belarusian side made the key areas of cooperation with its Pakistani partners more specific mentioning among them "increase in mutual sales of traditional products, establishment of joint productions of Belarusian equipment in Pakistan and joint productions of surgical instruments and leather goods in Belarus. The creation of joint clusters to produce medicines in demand is promising; it can take place both in Belarus and Pakistan.<sup>86</sup> In addition, topical now are issues of attracting Pakistani capital to implement projects aimed at modernizing Belarusian textile companies, developing joint ventures for the production of agricultural products, implementing joint projects in science and technology with access to the production cycle. The project to establish a university of applied technologies in Pakistan is also relevant, with the aim to reach a qualitatively new level of professional and technical training of Pakistani specialists using Belarusian educational technologies.

Speaking about such priority of cooperation as agriculture, we should note that in 2020 about three hundred units of Belarusian agricultural equipment - tractors and combines - were sold to Pakistan. In 2021, Minsk and Islamabad intend to increase this figure to three thousand units. At the same time, the idea of setting up an assembly factory of Belarusian tractors on Pakistani soil was

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85 Zalessky, B.L. Key task - realization of cooperation potential / B.L. Zalessky // Materials for XVII International Scientific and Practical Conference, Novinata za nadrednali nauk - 2021, 17 - 25 May 2021: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 19.

86 Barysievich: Belarus-Pakistan relations acquire strategic character [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/borisievich-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistana-priobretajut-strategicheskij-harakter-462932-2021/>.



discussed at the fifth meeting of the Business Council. "We are talking about assembling 10,000 tractors a year in Pakistan, this project is now in the works and preliminary documents have been signed."<sup>87</sup>

Another promising area for Belarusian-Pakistani business engagement is the development of exchange trade, which can give a new impetus to the development of bilateral trade and economic relations. In particular, the Pakistani side sees significant potential here "primarily in such areas as agriculture, woodworking, metallurgy and petrochemistry."<sup>88</sup> The fact is that, according to both sides, the Belarusian-Pakistani trade turnover is not very large yet - a little over \$50 million for 2020. A significant potential for its growth through the exchange mechanism lies in the fact that "Pakistan is one of the world's largest exporters of rice, wheat and other crops."<sup>89</sup> The textile industry is also developed there. The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) is ready to save Pakistani companies from most of the problems associated with entering the Belarusian market and to minimize their possible risks. Besides, exporters from Pakistan could use the Belarusian exchange platform to supply their goods to the European Union, where the BUCE has about four thousand accredited members. In turn, Belarusian companies could successfully export chemical and petrochemical

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87 Belarus and Pakistan are considering the possibility of setting up assembly production of Belarusian tractors [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-rassmatrivajut-vozmozhnost-sozdanija-sborocnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskih-tractorov-462934-2021/>

88 Pakistan is ready to trade with Belarus through the BUTB platform [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-gotov-torgovat-s-belarusiju-cherez-ploschadku-butb-462927-2021/>

89 BUTB opens broad prospects for the development of mutual trade between Belarus and Pakistan - Ambassador [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-otkryvaet-shirokie-perspektivy-dlja-razvitiya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-belarusi-i-pakistana-posol-453692-2021/>

products to the Pakistani market, which are traditionally in high demand there.

It should be reminded that for eight months of 2021 the trade turnover between Belarus and Pakistan has already exceeded USD 53 million. At the same time, "export of Belarusian goods amounted to USD 44.3 million..."<sup>90</sup>, and the trade surplus for the Belarusian side exceeded USD 35 million. The dynamics of these indicators attest to the fact that the growth potential is far from exhausted here. Opportunities to expand trade and economic cooperation between the two countries are quite diverse, and plans to implement them are concrete and realistic.

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90 Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade\\_and\\_economic\\_bilateral\\_relations/](https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/)

## Regions update partnerships

March 2023 will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa (RSA). In 2020, trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$25 million, with Belarusian exports accounting for \$18 million. This was due to deliveries from Belarus of quarry road machinery and spare parts, oversized tyres, potash fertilizers, linen fabric, x-ray equipment and certain food products. An important point in this case is that "the distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in South Africa includes the Belshina trade house, a dealer (certified service centre) of BelAZ".<sup>91</sup>

A characteristic feature of recent cooperation between Belarus and South Africa has been the revival of trade and economic ties. In particular, "in 2020, after a six-year break, supplies of BELAZ mining equipment to South Africa resumed."<sup>92</sup> And at the end of September 2021 the fleet of these machines in this African country had already 49 dump trucks. This fact is a clear indication that Minsk and Pretoria are now starting to gradually return to realizing the full potential inherent in the cooperation between the two countries' regions. Recall that in 2013, when celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the parties spoke about good prospects of "cooperation in the fields of industry,

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91 Cooperation of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/](https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/)

92 Turchin discusses cooperation in agriculture and machinery with the South African ambassador [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turchin-obsudil-s-poslom-juar-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-selskogo-hozjajstva-i-proizvodstva-tehniki-462069-2021/>

agriculture, interregional development..."<sup>93</sup>. And in 2021, this aspiration became particularly prominent.

For example, in late September 2021, **Minsk Region Executive Committee** met with the head of the South African diplomatic mission to Russia and Belarus, M.D. Maketuka, to discuss ways to step up cooperation with partners from **Free State**. The meeting resulted in a decision to cooperate in two areas: agriculture and machinery manufacturing. It should be noted that the two regions signed a cooperation agreement back in December 2015. In September 2016, a representative delegation from Free State visited the Belarusian metropolitan area, where it was particularly interested in the technologies and experience of Minsk Region in processing agricultural products. The reason was that agriculture is central to the province's economy. In addition, at that time the South African side expressed great interest "in Belarusian partners' assistance in personnel training, and they also intend to develop cooperation in construction and healthcare."<sup>94</sup> And in November 2020, the South African partners confirmed their readiness to cooperate in various areas, including "in the areas of milk and meat trade, exchange of students for training"<sup>95</sup>, as well as in the development of tourism. It appears that the time has come for all these plans of interaction to be realised.

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93 Zalesky, B. International relations and media. A View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 539.

94 Martynyuk, E. Free State Province of South Africa intends to adopt the Belarusian experience in processing agricultural products / E. Martynyuk // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/provintsija-fri-stejt-juar-namerenaperenjat-belorusskij-opyt-po-pererabotke-selhozproduksii-211004-2016/>

95 South Africa is interested in cooperation with the Minsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/juar-zainteresovana-v-sotrudnichestve-s-minskoj-oblastju-417308-2020/>.

Another South African province that has noticeably stepped up its interest in cooperation with Belarusian partners in 2021 is **KwaZulu-Natal**, which is the second most populous (11.5 million people) in South Africa and ranks second in the country in terms of economic indicators. Thus, in April there was a video conference "Possibilities of trade and investment cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in the sphere of textile and clothing" where "companies operating in the sphere of linen products supply, tailoring and footwear, designers were represented from the South African side"<sup>96</sup>. One can assume that such Belarusian enterprises as Orsha Flax Enterprise, Kamvol, Mogotex and Luch will soon find reliable business partners in the south of the African continent as a result of the meeting. The province of South Africa is interesting for Belarus because a project to set up an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors is slated for implementation in the special economic zone. "The parties to the project on the South African side are Nqawana Holdings and the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ) administration, and on the Belarusian side are MTZ and Round By LLC.<sup>97</sup> Technical details of this project have already been discussed here in August 2021 and concrete steps to implement the agreements reached have been outlined.

Another example of partner regions from Belarus and South Africa is the **Mogilev** Region and **Mpumalanga** Province, one of the most powerful in the country industrially, where mining,

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96 On the video conference "Opportunities for Trade and Investment Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Province of KwaZulu-Natal in the Field of Textiles and Clothing" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b561f2d89c659bd7.html>

97 On Ambassador A. Sidoruk's visit to Richards Bay [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/ad33cd30a4281477.html>

telecommunications services, and energy are well developed, and where about 40 percent of South Africa's forest land is concentrated. The parties signed a memorandum of cooperation in December 2016. In it, they expressed interest in developing partnerships in trade and industry, agriculture, education, sports, tourism and culture. The province was also interested in developing not only agricultural projects, but also in training specialists in agriculture, forestry, medicine, and information technology at Belarusian universities. In addition, they talked about opportunities for "cooperation in wood processing, creation of joint agricultural and food processing enterprises."<sup>98</sup> Let's hope that the time has come for these regions, too, to revisit the partnership plans once adopted in order to successfully implement them today.

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98 Kuliagin, S. Mogilev region and the Mpumalanga province of South Africa signed a memorandum of cooperation / S. Kuliagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-mpumalanga-juar-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-222724-2016/>

## New projects bring the future closer

In the framework of the announced course to raise the status of Belarusian-Chinese relations to the level of "iron brotherhood, exemplary all-round strategic cooperation and all-weather partnership," one of the main development objectives of the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone for the next five years is to ensure effective operation of its residents, attract new ones, actively develop innovation activities, startups, cluster cooperation, and attract Belarusian companies to participate in projects "Ve A specific goal is set: "To ensure the number of park residents is at least 170 companies by 2025..."<sup>99</sup>.

It should be noted that a number of specific measures to achieve this objective were taken at Velikiy Kamen back in 2021. In particular, during the three quarters of this year, the industrial park's residents increased their investment in fixed assets by more than a third. At the same time, "the volume of industrial production grew by more than 2.5 times to Br222.6 million. <Export of resident products and services increased by more than 16% and is carried out in 20 countries worldwide.<sup>100</sup> An important detail: if "by the end of 2020 there were 68 companies from 14 countries registered [in the park]<sup>101</sup>," by mid-November 2021 there were 81 companies from 15 countries. The work to expand Great Stone continues today.

For example, in October, the Belarusian-Latvian company SMD Bai LLC was registered here, which "plans to create high-tech

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99 Presidential Directive No 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China". - Minsk. 2021. - C. 6.

100 In Great Stone, investment in fixed assets increased by more than a third in 9 months [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-za-9-mesjatsev-bolee-chem-na-tret-uvelichilis-investitsii-v-osnovnoj-kapital-470611-2021/>

101 Zalessky, B. With a view to sustainable development. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 13.

production of electronic products (boards) of small and medium series"<sup>102</sup>, widely used in telecommunications, medicine, automotive industry, instrument making, to supply them to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. In November, the list of residents of the industrial park was supplemented by several more business entities. One of them is Rufais LLC. The new resident's investment project involves production and application of advanced polymer materials in construction. Innovative approach here is that "the composite material is the company's own development, differs from the analogs with higher operational properties. It has a wide scope of application, including for the production of roofing and other elements of buildings and constructions"<sup>103</sup>, which gives good reason to hope for the sales of this product not only in the domestic market, but also in Russia and the European Union countries.

Among the new residents is a Belarusian LLC InKata, which was previously registered in Great Stone as an investor to build facilities here to support subjects of innovation activities of the industrial park. "The project will provide design, prototyping and technical documentation services, as well as provide jobs and equipment."<sup>104</sup> Another resident of Great Stone in November is the Sino-Belarusian Center of Innovative Bioengineering Technologies LLC, which intends to cooperate closely with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. "The company will produce reagents for

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102 A new Great Stone resident will produce electronic circuit boards [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-elektronnye-platy-465743-2021/>

103 A new Great Stone resident will produce composite materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-kompozitnye-materialy-469205-2021/>

104 InKata Ltd became a resident of Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ooo-inkata-stalo-rezidentom-velikogo-kamnja-471320-2021/>



diagnosing coronavirus and some other diseases, as well as for food safety diagnostics,"<sup>105</sup> which is expected to be exported to the countries of the Eurasian Economic and European Union, as well as to China.

In the first half of December, the industrial park registered a new innovation entity - Needle Med LLC - which is going to implement a project in Velikiy Kamen to create a perfect simulator for practising practical manual skills by employees of various professions - surgeons, tattoo artists, medical students. Interestingly, this project was created in 2019 by a group of students. "Its idea is to create a simulator as close to real human tissues as possible to train professionals for practice."<sup>106</sup> Thanks to the opportunities that the industrial park offers to innovators, the young specialists' development is likely to find widespread application in real life. In the second half of December, another resident was registered at Great Stone - Tianyu Changyin UAV Science and Technology Company (MSC) LLC, whose founder is one of China's leading enterprises in the development and production of intelligent unmanned systems - Beijing Tianyu Changyin UAV Science and Technology Company. The aim of this investment project in the industrial park is "to set up high-tech production of versatile unmanned aerial vehicle logistics systems and equipment"<sup>107</sup>.

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105 A new Great Stone resident will produce reagents for diagnosing diseases [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-reagenty-dlja-dagnostiki-zabolevanij-471849-2021/>

106 Great Stone's new company will create simulators to practice manual skills in surgery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/novaya-kompaniya-velikogo-kamnja-budet-sozdavat-trenazhery-dlja-otrabotki-manualnyh-navykov-v-hirurgii-474239-2021/>

107 A new Great Stone resident will start producing unmanned aerial vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-proizvodit-bespilotnye-letatelnye-apparaty-476043-2021/>

It should be reminded that in the package of measures to develop the national innovation system in Belarus for 2021-2025, the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Great Stone" is defined "as a platform for the organization of innovative productions"<sup>108</sup>. Judging by the above facts, this site is developing quite successfully, confidently and dynamically in the current five-year period.

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<sup>108</sup> Measures for the development of the national innovation system until 2025 are defined [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/opredeleny-meroprijatija-po-razvitiju-natsionalnoj-innovatsionnoj-sistemy-do-2025-goda-475735-2021>

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