

To move forward

The Republic of Belarus is actively developing science, technology and innovation, including through the use of international best practices in science and technology. Thus, the State Program of Innovation Development till 2025 as well as new scientific and technical programs have been launched in 2021. In addition, a task has been set to implement in the Belarusian regions, taking into account their competitive advantages, innovative projects to create high-tech industries based on developments of domestic scientists, which have great potential for commercialization both within the country and abroad. The transition to digital platforms as key instruments of digital transformation of traditional industries, as well as international cooperation in the use of modern technologies, educational and production organizations, development and serial production of knowledge-intensive products contributes to the growth of innovation potential of Belarus. Cooperation with foreign partners should play a key role in this. How is this process of innovation promoting the interests of Belarus implemented in practice? This is discussed in the proposed collection of articles.



Boris Zalessky

He has almost fifty years of professional experience in journalism.

He is now an associate professor at the Department of International Journalism of the Faculty of Journalism at the Belarusian State University. Areas of research: modern international relations; international journalism, international economics.



Collection of articles

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Cover image: www.ingimage.com

This book is a translation from the original published under ISBN 978-620-4-18162-2.

Publisher:

Scienza Scripts

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Dodo Books Indian Ocean Ltd. and OmniScriptum S.R.L publishing group

120 High Road, East Finchley, London, N2 9ED, United Kingdom

Str. Armeneasca 28/1, office 1, Chisinau MD-2012, Republic of Moldova, Europe

Printed at: see last page

ISBN: 978-620-6-04415-4

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CHAPTER 1

Multi-vectorism as a basic principle of foreign policy and media

The system of state foreign policy, dubbed 'multi-vectorism', began to take shape in the post-Soviet space in the first half of the 1990s. The choice of this system for most of the former Soviet republics was dictated by the need to survive in the difficult conditions caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union .

In fact

Multidirectionality has become a tool that has corrected the natural disadvantages and exploited the strengths of the newly independent states as they embark on their own foreign policy course. The fact is that there is still no scientific description of the term "multi-vectorism", which is already widely used in the diplomatic and political science lexicon. However, there are a number of definitions that, in our view, can convey the meaning of the term in a very comprehensive way.

Firstly, "a multi-vector foreign policy is independent independent foreign policy, the distinguishing feature of which is a balanced and equal attitude simultaneously with different important centres of power and major world and regional players"¹ . Secondly, for the newly independent states of the post-Soviet space multi-vectorism meant "a certain diplomatic style, a beneficial method of conducting foreign policy, following which the national interests formulated by the ruling elite are most fully realised"² . Third, the interpretation of the principle of multi-vector foreign policy voiced by Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev draws attention: "In fact, all states can be called multi-vector. This means that under conditions of independence, self-sufficiency, each state can communicate, trade, conclude political agreements with all those with whom it is profitable to do so."³ .

¹ Delovarova, L.F. Some theoretical aspects of multi-vectorism / L.F. Delovarova // [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: <http://articlekz.com/article/7012.com/article/7012>

² Karavaev, A. "Adversarial" and "discrete" multi-vectorism of the South Caucasus states / A. Karavaev // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://iahttp://ia-centr./expertru/expert/10473/>

³ Meeting with representatives of leading domestic TV channels [Electronic resource]. -2014 .

Fourthly, even in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation multi-vectorism is one of the key characteristics, as the head of the Russian diplomatic department, Sergey Lavrov, points out: "Following this principle means only one thing: each vector is valuable to us, and any mutually exclusive or "compensatory" schemes are unacceptable"⁴. In other words, the principle of multi-vector Russian foreign policy activity is "an aspiration to develop equal mutually beneficial relations with all countries, without exception, that are ready for it"⁵.

Indeed, at the first stage of the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the need for a multi-vector foreign policy by the members of this association arose as a need to expand the circle of allies and obtain an effective mechanism for finding them. At that time, Turkmenistan almost immediately chose the path of neutrality and stated that it would not join any union or association. Uzbekistan declared that it had chosen the path of independence. Tajikistan proclaimed an 'open door' policy which sought to forge equal relations with all countries. In Kazakhstan, the focus was on developing friendly and predictable relations with all states that play a significant role in world affairs and are of practical interest.

Belarus is no exception in this regard. Declarations about the need for a multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus have been echoed in documents and speeches of Belarusian officials almost from the first months of the country's independence. In 1997, a multi-vector approach was declared as the underlying principle of Belarus' foreign policy, the implementation of which demanded "utmost precision, well-thought-out statements and actions from the Belarusian diplomacy, leaving no room for error"⁶.

URL:

http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/page_218761_vstrecha-s-predstaviteliymi-vedushchikh-otchestvennykh-telekanalov

⁴ Lavrov, S. The rise of Asia and the Eastern vector of Russia's foreign policy / S. Lavrov // [Electronic resource]. - 2006. - URL: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n6566>

⁵ Interview by Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to VGTRK in connection with E.M. Primakov's jubilee [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://phhttp://p.120-bal.ru/doc/9801/ru/doc/9801/index.html?pagepage=4>

⁶ Shadursky, V.G. The multi-vector principle in Belarus' foreign policy / V.G. Shadursky // Problems of foreign policy and security : Belarus - Poland : history and prospects of cooperation / ed. Editor-in-

The increasing globalisation processes have also provided a serious impetus to a multi-vector foreign policy of post-Soviet states. After all, "the problem of distance in the era of globalisation is becoming less and less of an obstacle to networking"⁷. Therefore, in the process of developing international cooperation between states located in different regions of the planet, an opportunity to understand the diversity of the world and the specificity of different countries and peoples has emerged. It was the globalization that provided the former Soviet Union countries with real opportunities and ability to beneficially combine different geopolitical vectors and actively use them to integrate various directions of foreign policy into one course. In fact, with the intensification of globalisation came the possibility of multilevel multivectorism, where one vector could carry qualitative assessments of the political regime, another could seriously influence and support the local elite without an ideological context and the third could be distinguished by specific pragmatic beneficial projects.

But it should not be forgotten that "for small states, with a limited number of political and economic resources, multi-vectorism carries certain dangers"⁸. It is no secret that major powers or centres of gravity constantly send signals to smaller states, making it clear that they need to decide on a major partner or vector. "In this situation, the policy of multi-vectorism risks remaining only in theory, while in practice states, guided by the interest of preserving sovereignty, will slide towards an emphasis on closer relations with one of the big partners"⁹. Negative attributes of a multi-vector foreign policy also include the masking of their real foreign policy, inconsistency in inter-state relations, momentary attempts to correct the balance in one or another favour, inconstancy and rushing

chief: A. V. Rusakovich (ed.) [etc.]. - Minsk : Theseus, 2009. - C. 43.

⁷ Shadursky, V.G. Implementation of the multi-vector principle in Belarusian foreign policy / V.G. Shadursky // Proceedings of the Faculty of International Relations 2010 : scientific collection. Vol. 1. - BSU, 2010. - C. 48.

⁸ Karavaev, A. "Adversarial" and "discrete" multi-vectorism of the South Caucasus states / A. Karavaev // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://iahttp://ia-centr./expertru/expert/10473/>

⁹ Multidirectional Foreign Policy: The Central Asian Phenomenon. - 2015. - URL: <http://politobzor.net/show-67519-mnogovektornost-vneshney-politikihttp://politobzor.net/show-67519-mnogovektornost-vneshney-politiki-fenomen-centralnoy-fenomen-centralnoy-azii.html>

between geopolitical centres, isolationism, rushing from one reference point to another, dependence on political conjuncture, "promiscuity, omnivorousness"¹⁰. Nevertheless, pursuing multi-vectorism is one effective way of redistributing foreign policy risks into different "baskets". It is important that while developing a wide range of foreign policy relations in a variety of directions, be it East, West, North or South, a state pursuing a multi-vector policy should retain the initiative to make independent decisions, rather than becoming an object of foreign games. It is clear that mutual understanding between these geopolitical phenomena should be based on a profound knowledge of the peculiarities of each of them, for it contains enormous opportunities that need to be turned for the benefit of the interacting countries and peoples. In other words, "the development of friendly relations with states correlating with such geopolitical phenomena as East, West, North and South determines the content of a multidirectional foreign policy"¹¹.

Of course, it is possible to achieve success in implementing a balanced, pragmatic foreign policy with mutual benefit and a firm assertion of national interests, with a differentiated and multilevel approach to interaction with various foreign countries and international organisations in conditions of ambiguous processes and trends in the current system of international relations, expressed in all kinds of contradictions and conflicts between their participants, only if the state will use the whole composite of the international relations of the country. Moreover, "the need to build public opinion in favour of cooperation with a given state is one of the most complex tasks of multi-vector policy"¹², which, by definition, should be addressed by the international segment of national journalism of each country

¹⁰ Some Theoretical Aspects of Multi-vectorism in the Foreign Policies of Central Asian States [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: <http://http://www.easttime.ru/reganalitic/1/206p.html.easttime.ru/reganalitic/1/206p.html>

¹¹ Medeubaeva J.M. Multi-vectorism - the conceptual foundation of the foreign policy doctrine of Kazakhstan / J.M. Medeubaeva // [Electronic resource] - 2014. - URL: <http://e-history.kz/media/upload/1466/2014/06/26/7457d86661d4c9e1cd89610d267637eb.pdf>

¹² Karavaev, A. "Adversarial" and "discrete" multi-vectorism of the South Caucasus states / A. Karavaev // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://iahttp://ia-centr./expertru/expert/10473/>

that adheres to the principle of multi-vectorism in its foreign policy. The actual practice shows that not all post-Soviet countries have solved this task by journalists - the

international actors have been successful. This is due to a number of circumstances. Let's look at some of them.

It is known that the quality of international coverage in the media of a particular state depends, first of all, on the activity of the international position of the country itself, but also on such factor as the interest of readers, viewers, listeners to international issues. The experience of the formation of international journalism in the post-Soviet space over the past two decades has demonstrated the following correlation: as the socio-economic situation in the countries sharply deteriorated, the interest of the audience towards the outside world was also seriously diminishing. This is evidenced by the fact that international political and economic issues have been replaced by purely domestic issues in the media sphere. This trend resulted in the departure of qualified international journalists and degradation of international coverage itself in the press, on radio, television and the Internet, and prompted the sad conclusion that if "society is not interested in international events, while the state's foreign policy has no global or regional interests, then one should not expect journalists <...> to be able and capable of covering these or those events in international life"¹³.

It seems that such a rigid formulation of the issue in this thematic plane is still not typical for the Republic of Belarus, which can be explained by the relevant foreign policy of the Belarusian state at all stages of its sovereign development. Thus, since the second half of the 1990s, this policy "has been actively and normally developing in two directions: eastward and southward, while on the westward and northward (the latter is adjacent to the westward) it is experiencing a serious imbalance, especially in the political sphere, being

¹³ Usabaliev, E. Foreign policy of the KR and mass media: Problems of international coverage / E.

Usabaliev // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL:

<http://www.media.kg/blogs/usubaeliev-e-vneshnyaya-politika-kyrgyzstana-i-smi-problemy-osveshheniya-mezhdunarodnoj-zhizni/>

limited mainly to the foreign economic sphere"¹⁴ . And already at the end of the 1990s, a course for a multi-vector foreign policy was proclaimed at the state level in Belarus.

At the legislative level, the major principles, goals and objectives of the Belarusian foreign policy were defined in 2005, in the Law "On Approval of the Guidelines for the Internal and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus". Among the basic principles of the Belarusian foreign policy, the document names the development of comprehensive cooperation with foreign states and international organisations, mutual consideration and observance of the interests of all members of the international community, based on the universally recognised principles and norms of international law, as the main thrust of the Belarusian foreign policy.

foreign policy is "to improve state foreign economic policy on the basis of multi-vectorism, the established international division of labour and markets for goods and services"¹⁵ .

The Republic of Belarus had to shape its international multi-vector course in a situation when the world has entered a stage of cardinal geopolitical, economic and social transformations characterized by high intensity and dynamism, when "the formation of new centres of power is accompanied by aggravation of rivalry between states and competition of models of future development"¹⁶ . The growth of international tensions in the last few years has markedly reduced the credibility of partners at the interstate level. The emergence of so-called hybrid threats and the intensification of sanctions have further complicated the international community's approach to coherent solutions to the world's

¹⁴ Snapkovsky, V.E. Foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus: conceptual foundations and priority directions / V.E. Snapkovsky // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.mirperemen.net/content/vneshnyaya-politika-respubliki-belarus-konceptualnyehhttp://www.mirperemen.net/content/vneshnyaya-politika-respubliki-belarus-konceptualnye-osnovy-i-prioritetnye-osnovy-i-prioritetnye-napravleniya>

¹⁵ On Approval of the Basic Guidelines of Internal and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. -2005 . - URL: http://www.economy.gov.by/dadvfiles/001296_334566_2.pdf

¹⁶ Foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/http://mfa.gov.by/foreign_policypolicy/.

problems. In addition, "information wars, the activation of so-called fifth columns and the shaping of negative public opinion through the media and the internet have taken on enormous significance"¹⁷.

Even more alarming in our turbulent times is the loss of mutual trust between global players, their lack of willingness to compromise, and the return to elements of bloc confrontation that are bringing the world to the brink of a new war. In these circumstances, we see a way out only in the search for optimal ways of sustainable development for the entire global community, rather than for individual countries. That is why the Belarusian side sees the new formula of universal mutually beneficial cooperation in the fact that, as it stated in the general discussion at the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations, "its main theme is the idea of integration of integrations as the most relevant trend of the modern world"¹⁸.

All the more so because today the prospects for cooperation between the European and Eurasian Economic Unions, the implementation of the large-scale Silk Road project, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Free Trade Area, and a number of other integration projects are already becoming relevant at different levels. That is why a multi-vector foreign policy in the modern context becomes the creative tool that makes it possible not only to avoid dangerous and unnecessary confrontation of integration models, but also to achieve their compatibility and mutual supportiveness.

The multi-vector foreign policy of the Belarusian state is a fundamental principle, which implies the development of balanced constructive relations with those partners in various regions of the world with whom Belarus "is guided by the principles of pragmatism and consistency, mutual respect, equality, non-

¹⁷Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electron resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusiru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-10444/.

¹⁸ Address to the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://http://president.gov.by/ru/news.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vystupleniye-obschej-diskussii-70-j-sessii-generalnoj-assamblei-on-12219/

interference in internal affairs, rejection of pressure and coercion"¹⁹ while building up a dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation. This multivector course of Belarus is conditioned by a number of circumstances, among which are both the geographical position of the country, whose territory is crossed by major transport routes from Europe and Asia, and the history of the Belarusian state, which has experienced the disastrous consequences of numerous European wars and conflicts. Today the Republic of Belarus is recognised by the entire international community as a sovereign European state, which pursues an independent, peace-loving, multi-vector foreign policy, actively developing cooperation with foreign partners in various parts of the world and making a substantial contribution to strengthening international security and stability.

The multi-vector nature of Belarus's foreign policy is also evidenced by the following figures. At the beginning of 2016, Belarus maintained diplomatic relations with 174 countries. Today, Belarusian diplomatic representations operate in 56 countries across five continents. In 2014 alone, Belarusian embassies were opened in Australia, Qatar, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Ecuador, while Italy opened a Consulate General of the Republic of Belarus in Milan. Foreign countries in Minsk are now represented by 45 embassies, 4 embassy branches, 2 trade missions, 35 consular offices, including honorary consuls. Another important fact is that 88 foreign missions have already been accredited in Belarus.

Its status as a geopolitical crossroads offers the Republic of Belarus a tempting chance to make the most of its favorable geographic location and available transit and industrial potential, but at the same time brings conflicts close to its borders, which never before in its sovereign history have flared up and developed so rapidly and unpredictably. Therefore, while maintaining uniform approaches to the development of relations with all foreign countries, Belarus still focuses its multi-vector foreign policy efforts on a number of the most

¹⁹ Principles, Goals and Objectives of the Republic of Belarus in the International arena [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/http://mfa.gov.by/foreign_./aimspolicy/aims/

important and promising areas, among which the following priorities can be highlighted.

I. The **Russian Federation**, the strategic partnership with which is conditioned by geographical, geopolitical, historical factors, mutual complementarity of the economies of the two countries, close cooperative ties between enterprises. The main foreign economic tasks in this direction:

- 1) increasing the volume of Belarusian exports;
- 2) effective use of the potential of direct links between the regions of the two countries;
- 3) deepening cooperation;
- 4) expansion of the Belarusian commodity distribution networks;
- 5) attracting investment.

The priority area of cooperation between Belarus and Russia is regional cooperation aimed at

- 1) Increasing the volume of mutual supply of goods;
- 2) expansion of the distribution network;
- 3) Strengthening of production cooperation;
- 4) the establishment of assembly plants.

The leaders in mutual trade with Belarus are the Central, Ural, Volga, Northwestern Federal Districts, and among the subjects of the Russian Federation - Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tyumen, Moscow, Smolensk, Orenburg, Bryansk, Nizhny Novgorod and Kaluga regions and the Republic of Tatarstan, which account for more than "70 per cent of Belarusian-Russian trade turnover"²⁰.

II. The countries of **the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Eurasian Economic Union**, with which the process of post-Soviet integration is taking on an increasingly concrete shape. In **THE CIS**, the potential for integration cooperation lies in trade and economic cooperation, as well as in:

²⁰ Cooperation between Belarus and Russian regions [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: [http://mfa.gov.by/bilateral/russia.gov.by/bilateral/russia regions/](http://mfa.gov.by/bilateral/russia.gov.by/bilateral/russia%20regions/).

- 1) implementation of the provisions of the Free Trade Zone Treaty;
- 2) The establishment of a free trade area for services;
- 3) further shaping the educational and investment space;
- 4) developing humanitarian, cross-border and cross-border cooperation;
- 5) strengthening environmental security.

Belarus' key trade partners in the CIS are Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, "which account for over 95 per cent of Belarus' exports to the CIS region (excluding Russia)"²¹.

THE EAEU is now creating additional conditions for the sustainable development of the Belarusian economy at the expense of

- 1) ensuring freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and labour;
- 2) implementation of coherent policies in key sectors of the economy;
- 3) The development of cooperative ties;
- 4) The implementation of joint investment and innovation projects;
- 5) compliance with uniform competition rules, standards and requirements for goods and services;
- 6) access to natural monopoly services and the public procurement market.

iii. The countries of **the European Union**, with which the intensification of relations is taking place in areas of mutual interest such as trade and investment, transport and transit, cross-border and regional cooperation, visa facilitation and environmental protection. The main trade and economic partners of Belarus among European countries are Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, the UK and Latvia, while the leading investors in the Belarusian economy include the UK, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany.

The Belarusian one is aimed at intensifying cooperation with European partners and developing concrete projects aimed at

- 1) the development of a network of energy and transport connections;

²¹ Belarus and the CIS countries and Georgia [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mf.gov.by/bilateral/cis/.gov.by/bilateral/cis/>

- 2) Strengthening regional energy security;
- 3) countering environmental threats;
- 4) improving the efficiency of border security and customs trade facilitation.

It is on the European vector that Belarus has consistently promoted the idea of integration of integrations, which "in the future may serve as a basis for harmonisation of integration processes within the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as the creation of a common economic and humanitarian space from Vladivostok to Lisbon"²².

iv. **The People's Republic of China**, with which relations have reached the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership over the last few years and are built "on the principles of mutual respect, support and multifaceted cooperation"²³, the structure of which can be divided into the following main areas:

- 1) deep and mutual integration of industries and enterprises;
- 2) information technology;
- 3) the formation of joint research and training centres;
- 4) joint development of sectoral science;
- 5) direct and systematic inter-regional cooperation.

To ensure their successful implementation, mechanisms are already being developed to encourage Chinese direct investment in the energy sector, production of construction materials, transport infrastructure, and production and processing of agricultural products. And the twin regions of the two countries have developed a roadmap for deepening trade and economic cooperation, which fixes priority joint projects, as well as promising areas for cooperation of all Belarusian regions and Minsk with the Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Gansu, Guangdong, Hubei and the capital city, Beijing.

²² European Union [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/multilateral/organization/list/c723f8823e56d467.html>

²³ State visit of President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping to Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://http://president.gov.by/ru/news.gov.by/ru/news ru/view/gosudarstvennyj-vizit-predsdatelja-knr-si-tszinpina-v-belarus-11366/>.

V. Countries of the **global South**, where in the **Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern and African regions** the Belarusian side aims to gradually diversify trade and deepen economic cooperation in order to create additional growth prerequisites for its export-oriented economy. Here the main directions for the development of relations are structured as follows:

- 1) Increased political and economic engagement with traditional partners - Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Japan, Syria, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela and Vietnam;
- 2) Establishment of dialogue and active entry into markets with significant potential for mutually beneficial cooperation - Angola, Australia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mozambique, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia. Ecuador, Ethiopia.

With **Africa**, the key area for Belarus's trade and economic cooperation is the expansion of Belarusian exports of goods and services and the development of new markets. The most promising area for Belarus's engagement with the **Middle Eastern** countries is investment cooperation, which involves joint projects in manufacturing, construction, agriculture, hotel business, and trade. **Asian** countries, which have the highest gross domestic product growth rate on the planet, are both a promising, rapidly expanding market for Belarusian goods and services and a promising investor in the Belarusian economy. **Latin American** countries are a vector of Belarus's foreign policy aimed at consolidating long-term relations, expanding the political dialogue, strengthening the legal framework and promoting the interests of Belarusian companies, including through the establishment of joint ventures, opening trading houses and representative offices.

VI. Finally, **the United States of America**, with whom the Belarusian side sees the goal of developing a constructive and equal dialogue based on mutual interests, as well as expanding full-fledged bilateral cooperation on such topical global issues as combating human trafficking, countering the spread of narcotic and psychotropic substances, cybercrime and child pornography on the Internet,

protecting nuclear facilities and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

All of these directions of Belarusian foreign policy presented above are very eloquent in emphasising the idea that in the current conditions of overcoming the global crisis it is necessary to increase international cooperation in all spheres. And this will be absolutely in line with the logic of the principle of multi-vector foreign policy. In this case, international cooperation should be based not only on knowledge, innovations and advanced technologies introduced into mass production, but also on the active formation of a common information and media space of interaction and partnership, on introducing the principles of equality and mutual respect into the mass consciousness of millions of people. After all, the media today play an extremely important role in the processes of further rapprochement of countries and peoples: "Active promotion of the idea <...> of integration presupposes an equally active creative position of the mass media, their historical responsibility to society"²⁴.

The increasing responsibility to its readers, listeners and viewers is presumably indicating to today's media not only the way to follow certain value criteria, but also the highest professional skills, based on competent knowledge

²⁴ Welcoming speech by L.S. Ananich, Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus // Interethnic harmony and tolerance - the value basis of Eurasian integration: proceedings of the international scientific-practical conference, Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 9 December 2014 / Institute of Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. - Minsk : Law and Economy, 2015. - C. 13.

Social, ethnic, linguistic, Religious,
The media are not the only way to counteract the media wars we are witnessing today - wars without rules, of which a growing number of people on our planet are becoming victims. This is the only way to counter the information wars we are witnessing in the media sphere today - wars without rules, of which more and more people on our planet are witnesses and victims.

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CHAPTER 2

Features of parliamentary diplomacy in the context of global challenges

In September 2016, the Republic of Belarus elected its sixth parliament. The time that has passed since then has shown that one of the most important areas of its activities is becoming a significant increase in the so-called "parliamentary diplomacy", which should be based on the tasks of "diversification of markets, promotion of Belarusian goods and services"²⁵. Recall that the concept of "parliamentary diplomacy" refers to the totality of active actions of the parliament, groups within it or individual parliamentarians to achieve foreign policy goals in dialogue formats, as well as various aspects of international activities of parliamentarians related both to the implementation of international obligations of the state and promotion of its various foreign policy and foreign economic initiatives.

It is believed that the dialogue formats that the people's elected representatives are called upon to build in the international arena can facilitate the search for effective strategies to resolve global and regional problems and contradictions. And if we remember that the current international environment is characterised by continued high volatility and increasing uncertainty due to ongoing global transformations and the negative impact of traditional and new challenges and threats, it is easy to understand why today "the trend towards increased multifunctional activity of parliaments in international relations is universal in nature. It extends to virtually every state in the world and the inter-parliamentary structures that they have created"²⁶.

In assessing the current state of development of parliamentary diplomacy, it should also be understood that it is now increasingly returning to the national

²⁵ MPs' international activism should contribute to the welfare of the people - Andreichenko [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: [http://www.belta.by/politics/view/mezhdunarodnaja-aktivnost-deputatov-dolzha-sposobstvovat-povysheniju-blagosostojaniija-narodaspobostvovat-povysheniju-blagosostojaniija-naroda-224872-2016/](http://www.belta.by/politics/view/mezhdunarodnaja-aktivnost-deputatov-dolzhahttp://www.belta.by/politics/view/mezhdunarodnaja-aktivnost-deputatov-dolzha-sposobstvovat-povysheniju-blagosostojaniija-narodaspobostvovat-povysheniju-blagosostojaniija-naroda-224872-2016/).

²⁶ Likhachev, V. Parliamentary diplomacy // V. Likhachev // [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: https://in.teraffairs.ru/j_author/material/122

interest and beginning to address serious foreign policy and economic issues. And this is quite understandable, as "the return to national interests and pragmatic approaches is in many ways not just a reaction to external crises, but also a logical step in rethinking the methodology of implementation <...> of goals in global politics"²⁷. In turn, the intensification of parliamentary activity in the international arena is an important growth point in the development of the institution of parliamentarism itself and the establishment of the national parliament as one of the centres of foreign policy strategy development, as "the increase in the impact of parliamentary diplomacy at the global level can be observed in the increase of powers, the geographical scope of activity and the range of issues addressed"²⁸.

In other words, parliamentary diplomacy is a tool to improve the way we discuss and create an environment conducive to international cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally. It is important that parliamentarians in the current political and economic global reality organically integrate themselves into the system of foreign policy implementation and effective decision-making, relying on a strengthened analytical component of their work, as it is precisely an in-depth analysis of the situation in foreign countries that can make their search for possible ways to influence civil society to address existing engagement issues effective.

Also relevant in this context is the topic of improving information support for the foreign policy activities of the national parliament in order to purposefully shape not only its international image, but also that of the country as a whole. All the more so since "an important problem in the field of information is the excessive closed access to information, the excessive level of secrecy, the

²⁷ Gavrilov, S. Parliamentary diplomacy returns to national interests / S. Gavrilov // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://185.37.61.231/news/ri/2016/04/26/parlamentskaya_diplomatiya_vozvravaetsya_k_nacionalnym_interesam/

²⁸ Kondrashova, E.V. The evolution of parliamentarism in the context of Russia's foreign policy / E.V. Kondrashova // [Electronic resource]. - 2008. - URL: <http://http://www.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/295367.html.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/295367.html>

materials presented to the press could have been greatly expanded by specifying the areas of activity and the list of some proposed initiatives"²⁹ .

The main forms of foreign policy activity by national parliaments today include several. First, the institutional strengthening of international
Second, to strengthen international security through parliamentarians' participation in international conferences, symposia, debates, roundtables, peacekeeping missions and election observation missions in other countries. Secondly, strengthening international security through parliamentarians' participation in international conferences, symposia, debates, roundtables, peacekeeping missions and election observation in other countries. Third, the development of inter-parliamentary co-operation through international meetings of parliamentarians and personal contacts with foreign colleagues and representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

When it comes to the Belarusian parliament, inter-parliamentary cooperation occupies a special place in its system of foreign policy activities, as 'this form contains the maximum potential for pursuing its own active international policy, as well as for assisting the official diplomacy in implementing foreign policy initiatives'³⁰ . Among the priorities of Belarusian parliamentary diplomacy are anti-crisis issues, as well as the promotion of trade, economic and production

The Belarusian parliament is a forum for cooperation and international ties of the Belarusian regions in all spheres. We will look at how this cooperation is implemented in practice, using the example of the Belarusian parliament's partnership with its colleagues in **Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Malaysia**.

In March 2017, a parliamentary delegation **from Kazakhstan, headed by** the Chairman of the Majilis of the Parliament, N. Nigmatulin, visited Belarus. The

²⁹ Kondrashova, E.V. The evolution of parliamentarism in the context of Russia's foreign policy / E.V. Kondrashova // [Electronic resource]. - 2008. - URL: <http://http://www.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/295367.html.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/295367.html>

³⁰ Gorelik, A.A. Foreign policy activity of the Belarusian parliament in modern conditions / A.A. Gorelik // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://www.pac.by/ncatfileshttp://www.pac.by/ncatfiles/000038_786310_k_Gorelik.pdf

visit signalled the mutual and most keen desire of Minsk and Astana to expand the toolbox of Belarus-Kazakhstan engagement through such an effective form of bilateral dialogue as parliamentary diplomacy. Therefore, during numerous meetings of Kazakhstani parliamentarians on the Belarusian soil they discussed not only inter-parliamentary cooperation, but also interaction in the trade and economic sphere, improvement of the legal framework and operation of joint assembly facilities in Kazakhstan.

The engagement of parliamentary diplomacy to address a number of issues in the partnership between Belarus and Kazakhstan is very timely, if only for the reason that today the parties "need to make efforts to overcome the decline in trade and economic cooperation, both at the bilateral level and within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union"³¹. Indeed, back in 2014, Belarusian-Kazakh trade turnover reached a record high of almost one billion dollars. However, in 2016, the volume of mutual trade decreased more than twice, amounting to \$419.1 million. Although the trade balance in this case was positive for Belarus due to the supplies of Belarusian tractors and tractor trucks, milk and dairy products, machines and mechanisms for harvesting and threshing crops, trucks and furniture to Kazakhstan, the priority task for parliamentarians of the two countries today is to "ensure effective legislative support for all decisions and agreements of the heads of state. <...> Another important task is to work on increasing trade turnover"³².

It should be noted that the main document on the practical development of bilateral Belarus-Kazakhstan relations today is the intergovernmental action plan for 2017-2018, which covers all areas of interaction, including trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and humanitarian, and regional issues. In accordance with this document, the parties have set a goal of restoring

³¹ Meeting with Nurlan Nigmatulin, Chairman of the Majilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://http://president.gov.by/ru/news.gov.by/ru/news/ru/view/vstrecha-s-predsedatelem-mazhilisa-parlamenta-kazaxstana-nurlanom-ni-gmatuliny-m-15817/>.

³² Andreichenko and Nigmatulin have agreed to exchange experiences in the law-making sphere more actively [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-i-nigmatulin-dogovorilis-aktivnee-obmenivatsja-opytom-v-zakonotvorcheskoj-sfere-237815-2017/>.

the level of trade turnover in 2014 and even exceeding it in the very near future. And certain steps are being taken in this direction.

Assembly of quarry and mining equipment of the Belarusian Automobile Plant, as well as Belarusian tractors, grain and forage harvesters, cargo and passenger lifts, and fire-fighting equipment has already been organized in Kazakhstan. In total, there are currently "eight joint assembling factories of Belarusian machinery and equipment in Belarus. The parties are working on launching six more assembly factories"³³. In particular, Pinsk Small Mechanization Equipment Plant and Dorelektromash are planning to take part in the production. In addition, cooperation in the industrial sector will be expanded very soon through the establishment of the Belarusian-Kazakh Industrial and Technological Park in Kokshetau. And in early 2017, the plant of Astana Motors in Almaty started producing trucks under the brand name of Minsk Automobile Plant. It is important that "the MAZ project in Kazakhstan envisages not just large-scale assembly of trucks. Already now the share of local components makes 30 per cent. By the end of this year this figure on localisation of production will increase up to 50%"³⁴.

All these facts suggest that the parties have created a certain foundation for the development and adoption of the Programme of Social and Economic Cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan until 2026, which is expected to be signed in 2017. This document, which will be facilitated by the parliamentarians of the two countries, will be able to continue and develop both the already launched projects to create an industrial and technological park of agricultural and municipal machinery, joint assembly of municipal dump trucks

³³ A parliamentary delegation from Kazakhstan arrives in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/parlamentskaija-delegatsiija-kazahstana-pribylahttp://www.belta.by/politics/view/parlamentskaija-delegatsiija-kazahstana-pribyla- v-belarusv-belarus-237708-2017/>.

³⁴ Belarusian products are in demand among consumers in Kazakhstan - Nigmatulin [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskajahttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskaja-produktsiija-produktsiija-polzuetsj a-sprosom-u-a-sprosom-u-potrebitelej -v-kazahstane--v-kazahstane-nigmatulin-237925 -237925 -20-2017/>.

based on the Minsk Automobile Plant and the Lidagroprommash harvesters, as well as those that are still being developed. In particular, this program could open up "good prospects for cooperation in drones, cooperation in the space industry"³⁵, as well as participation of the Belarusian side in the implementation of Kazakhstan's leader Nursultan Nazarbayev's large-scale initiative for the third modernization of the country. It should be reminded that at the end of January 2017, the head of Kazakhstan outlined five main priorities for reforming Kazakhstan's economy, the implementation of which will ensure its growth above the global average and sustainable advancement into the top 30 advanced countries. "The first priority is accelerated technological modernisation"³⁶, under which a programme "Digital Kazakhstan" will be created, where the developments of Belarusian specialists can be used with the widespread introduction of such elements of the fourth industrial revolution as automation, robotics, artificial intelligence.

Pakistan is among those Asian countries with which Belarus has been developing its relations especially intensively over the past few years. The two visits of the Belarusian leader to Pakistan in 2015 and 2016 and exchange visits of Prime Ministers Sharif and Kabiakoŭ in August and November 2015 showed that the time has come for fundamental changes in the bilateral relations between Belarus and Pakistan. The roadmap for short- and medium-term cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan "sets a goal to increase mutual trade to \$1 billion by 2020."³⁷

In 2017, the parties came to the understanding that "regular interaction between parliamentarians is necessary to deepen cooperation. It is parliaments that serve

³⁵ Meeting with Kazakhstan's parliamentary delegation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7109.government.by/ru/content/7109>

³⁶ Muminov, A. Nursultan Nazarbayev names five priorities for Kazakhstan's modernisation / A. Muminov // [Electronic resource].-2017 : <http://www.abctv.kz/ru/news/nursultan-nazarbaev-nazval-pyat-prioritetov-modernizacii-ka>

³⁷ Grishkevich, A. Belarus and Pakistan can increase mutual trade turnover up to \$1 billion by 2020 - Vovk / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: [http://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarusi-i-pakistanu-po-silam-narastit-vzaimnyj-tovarooborot-do-1-mlrd-k-2020-godu-vovktovarooborot-do-1-mlrd-k-2020-godu-vovk-239082-2017/](http://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarusi-i-pakistanu-po-silam-narastit-vzaimnyjhttp://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarusi-i-pakistanu-po-silam-narastit-vzaimnyj-tovarooborot-do-1-mlrd-k-2020-godu-vovktovarooborot-do-1-mlrd-k-2020-godu-vovk-239082-2017/).

as important bridges in building people-to-people contacts, deepening mutual understanding and developing mutually beneficial cooperation"³⁸ . This is why, in April 2017, the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus and the National Assembly of the Parliament of Pakistan signed a joint statement and memorandum of understanding, stating that "full-fledged interaction cannot be developed without establishing and enhancing effective inter-parliamentary dialogue"³⁹ .

It should be noted that the potential for expansion of the current Belarus-Pakistan engagement is based on the realization that the economy of this Asian country is growing and offers great investment opportunities in agriculture, agro-industry, pharmaceuticals, light industry, mechanical engineering, oil and gas industry. And in a number of these areas, concrete steps have recently been taken in terms of effective cooperation with the Belarusian side. For example, at the end of March 2017, the Pakistani side announced its intention to implement an investment project to open an assembly plant for Belarus tractors in Punjab province, which are already well known here.

It should be recalled that Minsk Tractor Works started supplying its machines to Pakistan back in 1955. Since then it has exported more than 130 thousand machines there. In 2015, the Orient Tractor plant in Pakistan opened an assembly facility for the production of Belarusian machines - about four thousand tractors annually. But "as of today, Pakistan's tractor fleet is estimated at 700,000 machines. The annual market demand is 85-90 thousand tractors"⁴⁰ . This is why there are reasons to believe that the new project of assembling

³⁸ Pakistan-Belarus relations have been developing at an unprecedented pace in recent years - Sharif [electronic resource]. - 2017 . - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/politics/view/otnosheniya-pakistan-i-belarusi-v-poslednie-gody-razvivajutsja-besprezidentnymi-tempami-sharif-242294-2017/>

³⁹ Belarus and Pakistan declare importance of cooperation in agribusiness [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-zajavili-ohhttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-zajavili-o--sotrudnichestva-v-sfere-apk-24vazhnosti-sotrudnichestva-v-sfere-apk-241978-2017/>

⁴⁰ Pakistan ready to invest in new BELARUS tractor assembly facility [Electronic resource]. - 2017 . - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-gotov-investirovat-v-sozdanie-novogo-sborchnogo-proizvodstva-tractorov-belarus-240149-2017/>

Belarusian agricultural machinery will bring real benefits to its participants. The more so because the Belarusian side has offered its Pakistani partners not only to assemble tractors but also to supply local farmers with machinery and farming technologies. And in the future the joint venture in the state of Punjab will assemble not only agricultural but also municipal machinery.

The theme of developing bilateral cooperation in the agro-industrial complex has recently received a strong impetus from the first joint Belarus-Pakistan

The Belarusian delegation, led by Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus V. Andreichenko, travelled to Pakistan in April 2017 to participate in the agricultural forum. Within the framework of this landmark event, the Belarusian side voiced the main priorities of bilateral cooperation in the agro-industrial sector, including "increasing mutual turnover, establishing joint processing facilities, sharing advanced achievements in agrarian science, and organising joint training"⁴¹.

For example, Belarusian producers such as Polotsk Dairy Factory OJSC, Vitebsk Broiler Poultry Factory OJSC, Orsha Meat Canning Factory OJSC will be able to step up their export operations in the Pakistani market, CJSC Meat and Dairy Company, Biokom LLC, OJSC Agrokombinat Dzerzhinsky, OJSC Lidselmash, OJSC Gomselmash who demonstrated their production and technological potential at the first joint agricultural forum. In terms of new joint productions we are talking about "creation of poultry meat processing enterprises, construction of greenhouses, grain drying complexes"⁴², because the parties already have good practices in designing and equipping livestock buildings, fruit and vegetable storages, and greenhouse complexes. As for the

⁴¹ Andreichenko on priorities for cooperation with Pakistan: increasing trade turnover and setting up joint ventures [Electronic resource]: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/andreichenko-o-prioritetah-sotrudnichestva-s-pakistanom-naraschivanie-tovarooborota-i-sozdanie-sp-242175-2017/>

⁴² Belarus and Pakistan intend to establish joint ventures [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-namerenyhttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-namereny-sozdavat-sovmestnye-predpriyatija-24202sozdavat-sovmestnye-predpriyatija-242021-2017/>.

exchange of advanced achievements in the field of agricultural science, the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University and the Agrarian University of Faisalabad, signed in April 2017, should provide additional opportunities.

Malaysia is a state in Southeast Asia that the Republic of Belarus views as an important and promising partner in the region, and the potential for cooperation with which has yet to be unlocked. In 2015, the country ranked 25th in terms of the value of Belarusian exports among all of Belarus's trading partners. Mutual supplies amounted to nearly \$160 million at that time, with a surplus of \$65.1 million for the Belarusian side. In 2016, the trend practically continued: Belarusian exports to Malaysia exceeded \$85 million in ten months with a surplus of forty million dollars. However, potash fertilizers accounted for the lion's share of Belarusian supplies, which is understandable, because Malaysia is one of the largest consumers of potassium chloride in Southeast Asia. In the same year 2015, 406.9 thousand tons of these fertilizers worth \$109.5 million were imported here, and in 2016 - 546.2 thousand tons worth \$104.6 million. These facts alone show that there is room for the sides to move forward in terms of trade and economic cooperation - to diversify mutual supplies. But to do this, we need to determine the most effective mechanisms of bilateral cooperation.

Minsk has its own opinion on the matter, which, however, is shared by Kuala Lumpur: "Interparliamentary cooperation should become one of the cornerstones in the foundation of Belarusian-Malaysian relations"⁴³. And, by all appearances, the parties are already making concrete steps towards the goal. Back in February 2013, a working group on cooperation with the Malaysian parliament was established in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. As a reciprocal step, in April 2014, the Malaysian-Belarusian Parliamentary Friendship Group was formed in the Parliament of Malaysia, whose

⁴³ Meeting with Pandikar Amin Mulia, Speaker of the Malaysian House of Representatives [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-so-spikerom-palaty-predstavitelej-parlamentaru/view/vstrecha-so-spiker-palaty-predstavitelej-parlamenta-malaj-zii-pandikarom-aminom-mulia-zii-pandikarom-aminom-mulia-15126/

representatives, headed by Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives R. Kiandi, arrived in Minsk in August of the same year, where they formulated one of the most important tasks of the Belarusian-Malaysian partnership with their Belarusian colleagues: "The two countries need to create and develop the legal framework for cooperation"⁴⁴.

Work immediately began on a host of draft bilateral agreements: on economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation; on promotion and mutual protection of investments; on cooperation in combating crime; on mutual abolition of visas; on cooperation in the legal sphere; on military-technical cooperation; on cooperation between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia; on cooperation between the Minsk branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the International Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia; on cooperation in the field of military-technical cooperation.

Minsk Regional Executive Committee and the Government of the State of Sabah, on cooperation between Belteleradiocompany and the State TV and Radio Company of Malaysia RTM; on cooperation in the sphere of emergency prevention and response. Finally, in 2016, the parties signed a Memorandum on inter-parliamentary cooperation, noting that "Belarus and Malaysia have the necessary basis to deepen political dialogue, develop trade and economic relations, cooperation in culture, science, education and healthcare"⁴⁵, that there is huge unrealised potential for cooperation and there are many points of contact.

The visit to Minsk in December 2016 by Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Malaysian Parliament P.A. Mulia demonstrated the

⁴⁴ Belarus and Malaysia have great opportunities for developing bilateral cooperation [Electronic resource]. -2014 .- URL : <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-malajzija-imejut-bolshie-vozmozhnosti-dlja-razvitiya-dvustoronnego-sotrudnichestva-51954-2014>

⁴⁵ Andreichenko: Belarus and Malaysia have a basis for deepening political dialogue [electronic resource]: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-u-belarusi-i-malajzii-est-osnova-dlja-uglubleniya-politicheskogo-dialoga-224305-2016/>

breadth of the thematic range that the parliamentarians of the two countries will be involved in Belarusian-Malaysian cooperation in the near future: industry, tourism, education, high-tech, military-industrial complex, establishment of joint ventures, building up interregional and scientific and technical ties. In particular, as far as scientific and technological cooperation is concerned, "projects in biotechnology, microbiology, laser optics, new materials could be implemented as start-ups"⁴⁶. Several agreements are already being worked out between the higher education institutions of the two countries on issues related to the training of specialists, both at the university level and of highly qualified scientific personnel, as "increased cooperation in training personnel would help develop political, trade and economic relations"⁴⁷.

It appears that a number of Belarusian exporters may have interesting opportunities in the Malaysian market; so far, in addition to potash fertilizers, they have supplied tyres, measuring equipment, hardware, and food products in small quantities. In 2016, trial shipments of mixed mineral fertilizers by Gomel Chemicals OJSC and malt by Belsolod OJSC were made to that country. Due to the intensive development of agriculture in Malaysia, there are prospects for the resumption of export of Belarusian agricultural machinery. It should be reminded that the first supplies of Minsk Tractor Works' machinery to Malaysia were arranged back in 1968, but then they were channeled through Singapore. Today, "the capacity of Malaysia's agricultural machinery market is estimated at \$70-80 million a year. The fleet of tractor and other agricultural machinery has about 43 thousand units. The main users of such machinery are plantation farmers"⁴⁸. So, Belarusian tractors may be in demand here in considerable quantities.

⁴⁶ Andrei Kobyakov met with the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malaysia [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL:

<http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/6900.government.by/ru/content/6900>

⁴⁷ Belarus invites Malaysia to intensify cooperation in personnel training [electronic resource]: <http://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-predlagaet-malajzii-bolee-intensivno-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-podgotovki-kadrov-224404-2016/>

⁴⁸ Malaysia considers buying MTZ machinery to work in the rice fields [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/malajzija-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-zakupki-tehniki-mtzh-dlja-raboty-na-risovyh-poljah-224664-2016/>.

The Malaysian side also expressed its interest in such Belarusian companies as the Belarusian Automobile Plant in Zhodino and the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant in Baranovichi. Belarusian dump trucks may be in demand in this Asian country for the reason that "Malaysia has large reserves of minerals. These are iron ore, coal and non-ferrous metals. The country is one of the world's largest producers of tin. <...> now we are entering the recovery phase of the sector"⁴⁹. As for the Baranovichi-based company, it has already been involved in one-off contracts with Malaysian customers. But today Malaysia is considering opportunities to expand cooperation with Belarus in the area of aviation equipment, which is why we are talking about expanding cooperation of the Belarusian side "with the Ministry of Defense of Malaysia to repair and upgrade MiG-29 type aircraft"⁵⁰. Apparently, Belarusian-Malaysian engagement in the area of military equipment can be significantly expanded in the near future. At least, in March 2017, the Belarusian side made important steps in this direction by demonstrating its latest defense technologies at the 14th international exhibition of aerospace and naval equipment LIMA 2017, which was held in Malaysia on the island of Langkawi. Note that the forum is one of the largest military equipment shows in the Asia Pacific region, which has been held biennially for the past 26 years under the patronage of the Malaysian Ministry of Defence. This time it was attended by about 350 companies from 36 countries and about 400 thousand visitors. Belarus' participation in the event is understandable, as "previous LIMA exhibitions have proven to be an excellent platform to display and promote the latest aerospace and naval equipment and technologies to the Malaysian market and the entire Asia-Pacific region"⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Ogneva, Yu. BelAZ machinery may be of interest to the private sector in Malaysia - Parkhomchik / Yu. Ogneva // [Electronic resource]. - 2016: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/tehnika-belaz-mozhet-byt-interesna-chastnomu-sektoru-malajzii-parhomchik-225091-2016/>

⁵⁰ Malaysia is interested in expanding cooperation with Belarus on military aircraft repair [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/malaizija-zainteresovana-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusju-po-remontu-voennoi-aviatehniki-224895-2016/>

⁵¹ Zhybul, A. The latest defense technologies of Belarus will be presented at the LIMA exhibition in Malaysia / A. Zhybul // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL:

That is why the joint stand of the State Committee for Defense Industry presented the latest defense technologies and capabilities of the defense sector of the Belarusian economy in the development and production of robotic equipment, aviation components, modern radiolocation equipment, radio communication suppression stations and complexes, optical and optoelectronic products, information display devices capable of operating under harsh operating conditions, and deep modernization of air defense missile systems. Aircraft Repair Plant 558 demonstrated its independent exposition at the exhibition as well. It displayed a wide range of unmanned aerial vehicles - tactical aerial UAVs Berkut-1(2), Kondor-1(2), Moskit and vertical take-off and landing quadcopters - Shershin, ARTZ Satellite and over 20 items of aviation components manufactured at the enterprise in Baranovichi.

There are certain prospects for cooperation between the regions of Belarus and Malaysia. On the Belarusian side, it concerns, first of all, Minsk Region, which is home to Belaruskali, a major exporter to Malaysia. Interestingly, "the share of Belarusian potash fertilizers among all similar products on the Malaysian market reaches 25%"⁵². But the regional authorities hope that export supplies to the Malaysian market will not be limited to potash fertilizers. Their range can be expanded to include agricultural and freight equipment, as well as food products. On the Malaysian side, the state of Sabah will be involved in this inter-regional cooperation. If the experience of cooperation with Sabah proves positive, the Minsk Oblast does not rule out the development of close ties with other Malaysian regions.

It should be noted that the stepped-up efforts to expand Belarusian-Malaysian engagement, which is based on inter-parliamentary cooperation, have been

<http://www.belta.by/society/view/novejshie-oboronnye-tehnologii-belarusi-budut-predstavlenyhttp://www.belta.by/society/view/novejshie-oboronnye-tehnologii-belarusi-budut-predstavleny- na-vystavke-lima-v-malajziina-vystavke-lima-v-malajzii-235856-2017/>.

⁵² Minsk region plans to develop cooperation with the Malaysian state of Sabah [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-planiruet-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-malajzijskim-shtatom-sabahplaniruet-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-malajzijskim-shtatom-sabah-224590-2016/>.

yielding tangible results for the past few years. Specifically, "the growth rate of Belarusian exports to Malaysia in January 2017 compared to the same period last year was 172.4% and export volume was \$13.8 million"⁵³. An important and effective instrument to expand mutually beneficial partnership, such as the intergovernmental Belarus-Malaysia Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation, is now on the agenda for the development of bilateral relations between Belarus and Malaysia. One should believe that its emergence in 2017 could become a factor for further intensification of the relations between the two countries, which turned 25 years old in March 2017. According to Minsk and Kuala Lumpur, over a quarter of a century, both sides have witnessed an increase in mutual trade turnover and the development of political and cultural ties. Further development of this constructive dialogue will only "positively influence the realization of the existing rich potential of Belarusian-Malaysian cooperation"⁵⁴.

As we can see from the cited examples of interaction between the Belarusian parliament and its Kazakh, Pakistani and Malaysian colleagues, "the parliamentary component in the international dialogue is an important element of interaction on many issues"⁵⁵. The MPs seek to use the opportunities of parliamentary diplomacy to promote trade and economic ties, industrial cooperation and the implementation of promising investment projects. Belarus sees further development of the resource of parliamentary diplomacy in its more active use in the preparation and implementation of roadmaps and policy

⁵³ Belarus's exports to Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines surged in early 2017 [electronic resource]. -2017. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-nachale-2017-goda-rezko-narastila-eksport-v-malajziju-smgapur-i-fitippiny-235803-2017/>

⁵⁴ Belarusian and Malaysian Foreign Ministry leaders note great potential for bilateral relations [Electronic resource]. -2017. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/politics/view/rukovodstvo-mid-belarusi-i-malajzii-otmechajut-bolshoj-potentsial-dvustoronnihi-otnoshenij>
<http://www.belta.by/politics/view/rukovodstvo-mid-belarusi-i-malajzii-otmechajut-bolshoj-potentsial-dvustoronnihi-otnoshenij-237705-2017/>

⁵⁵ Speech to Members of Parliament of the Republic of Sudan [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vystuplenie-pered-deputatamiru/view/vystuplenie-pered-deputatami-.respubliki-sudan-parlamenta-respubliki-sudan-15402/

documents signed with foreign countries. All the more so because "MPs, by virtue of their status, are able to raise very sensitive topics, and parliamentary contacts often prove to be an effective alternative way to "expand" the bottlenecks in interstate relations"⁵⁶.

We would remind you that the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the sixth convocation formed 70 working groups for cooperation with parliaments of foreign states, two inter-parliamentary commissions for cooperation with the National Assembly of Armenia and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, as well as 13 delegations for work with international organizations, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union, the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of CIS, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Parliamentary Assembly of Ukraine.

Furthermore, the role of the Belarusian parliament is now also greatly increasing in addressing such large-scale issues as attracting significant volumes of Western investment and technology to modernise the Belarusian economy, which cannot be done without improving the investment climate in the country and further improving legislation in this area. This is why "the inter-parliamentary exchange of experience with European colleagues on the optimization of the legal regime for the protection and promotion of investments and the protection of intellectual property becomes particularly relevant"⁵⁷. This is why parliamentary diplomacy as a whole, working to strengthen the authority and image of Belarus, to increase its investment attractiveness, not only contributes to the expansion of the entire spectrum of international cooperation,

⁵⁶ Andreichenko, V. Parliamentary diplomacy can be more actively involved in the preparation of roadmaps for cooperation / V. Andreichenko // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/opinions/view/parlamentskuju-diplomatiju-mozhno-aktivnee-zadejstvovat-pri-podgotovke-dorozhnyh-kart-sotrudnichestva-5462/>

⁵⁷ Evdochenko urged MPs to work to improve investment legislation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/evdochenko-prizval-deputatov-k-rabote-po-sovershenstvovaniyu-zakonodatelstva-v-investitsionnoj-sfere-240193-2017/>

but becomes a very important element of the entire system of implementation of Belarusian foreign policy.

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CHAPTER 3

Topical issues of export development in the context of advertising and media support

Ensuring conditions for the growth of exports of goods and services is not only one of the most important areas of foreign economic activities for the Republic of Belarus, but also the main priority for the development of the Belarusian economy, as exports account for more than half of the gross domestic product in its structure. And this fact makes it one of the key sources for ensuring sustainable economic growth in the country.

The issues of developing Belarus' export potential and balancing foreign trade have taken on special significance in the current environment, "as foreign demand for the products of domestic producers is the most important factor in loading production capacities, maintaining high levels of employment and ensuring dynamic growth of the economy. At the same time, a positive balance of foreign trade in goods and services ensures financial stability at the macro level, determining such basic parameters of the country's economic security as official foreign exchange reserves, gross and public external debt, the national currency exchange rate, and government budget revenues"⁵⁸.

The major global challenges and trends that have had a significant impact on Belarusian exports in recent years are: 1) rising global competition in the markets for goods and services, capital and technology; 2) tightening access to raw materials, energy, water, food and transport corridors; 3) the increasing role of innovative economic growth and export expansion, while traditional factors of national economic development have been gaining importance. Under these conditions, according to the Belarusian head of state, "diversification of exports and finding new markets is a matter of paramount importance, the survival of our country"⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ National Programme of Export Development of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://pravo.levonevsky.org/bazaby11/republic01/text820.htm.levonevsky.org/bazaby11/republic01/text820.htm>

⁵⁹ Meeting with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-

That is why, having completed, on the whole, the formation at the state level of a system of stimulation and support of exports based on international practice, the Republic of Belarus has set a course for the development, improvement and creation of conditions for the introduction of new effective mechanisms of this system. This is understandable: in the situation of post-crisis development of world trade, the development vector aimed at "increasing science-intensive and high-tech products in the structure of exports and diversifying supplies to new markets" is objectively relevant for countries such as Belarus.⁶⁰ .

An effective tool for achieving the outlined objectives in this area is the implementation of a multi-vector foreign economic policy, which maintains foreign trade contacts with most foreign countries and actively participates in international integration processes. The following facts are telling in this respect: "Today the Republic of Belarus has diplomatic missions in 56 countries around the world. Taking into account the concurrent accreditation of ambassadors, Belarus is represented in 112 of 174 countries with which our country

established diplomatic relations"⁶¹ . In the Republic itself, there were 46 embassies, 4 embassy branches and 2 trade missions at the beginning of 2016, 35 consular offices

of foreign states, 16 representative offices of international organisations, and 86 foreign embassies accredited in Minsk from Moscow, Vilnius, Warsaw and Kiev.

These facts show that Belarus has considerable potential, both in terms of strengthening mutually beneficial ties with its traditional economic partners and developing new markets, and in terms of diversifying its exports as one of the conditions for stable economic development and improved living standards of its citizens. It is well known that Belarusian export products number over a

delru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-.makeem-vladimirom-makeem-10420/

⁶⁰ Exports [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/export/export/>.

⁶¹ Review of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL:

<http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/ad9a745931227143.html>

thousand names, and the main products supplied to foreign markets include petroleum products, potash and nitrogen fertilizers, rolled metal products and metal cord, tautos, trucks, buses, refrigerators and freezers, chemical fibres and yarns, caprolactam, tyres, timber and wood products, furniture, clothes, footwear, dairy and meat products, sugar. This list is complemented by a wide range of sophisticated technical products with "stable demand in foreign markets: agricultural machinery, trolleybuses and trams, road-building machinery, technological and electronic equipment, gas cookers, washing machines, microelectronic products and optical instruments"⁶².

Nevertheless, the results of 2015 showed that Belarus now requires further concentration of efforts to increase exports and find new markets: "The situation confirms the need for a more dynamic shift in the centre of gravity in export policy from traditional markets to other areas of geographical and product diversification of export flows. Qualitatively new innovative goods and services are needed"⁶³. In this regard, the Belarusian government has set a goal to "make the best use of existing agreements and developments with all the countries, paying special attention to those with which a programme of joint actions has been elaborated at the highest and highest levels"⁶⁴.

Back in 2014, almost fifty countries were identified as promising new markets for Belarusian exporters: 1. Australia. 2. Algeria. 3. Angola. 4. Bahrain. 5. Bolivia. 6. Gabon. 7. Gambia. 8. Ghana. 9. Greece. 10. Zimbabwe. 11. Jordan. 12. Ireland. 13. Spain. 14. Cambodia. 15. Cameroon. 16. Colombia. 17. Côte d'Ivoire. 18. Kuwait. 19. Laos. 20. Lebanon. 21. Malaysia. 22. Mali. 23. Malta. 24. Morocco. 25. Mozambique. 26. Mongolia. 27. Myanmar. 28. Namibia. 29. Nigeria. 30. Nicaragua. 31. Oman. 32. Pakistan. 33. Peru. 34. Portugal. 35.

⁶² Export potential [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL:

<http://mfa.gov.by/export/export/potential/>

⁶³ Andrei Kobyakov held a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/5967.government.by/ru/content/5967>

⁶⁴ Andrei Kabiakoŭ met with the heads of diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/5956.government.by/ru/content/5956>

Saudi Arabia. 36. Senegal. 37. Singapore. 38. Slovenia. 39. Sudan. 40. Thailand. 41. Togo. 42. Tunisia. 43. Philippines. 44. Croatia. 45. Sri Lanka. 46. Ecuador⁶⁵. To fulfil this promising task, "our country's embassies in Australia, Ecuador, Mongolia, Pakistan, Qatar" were opened in the same year⁶⁶.

However, in 2014, Belarus faced serious external challenges related to the decline in global oil prices and exported oil products, devaluation of the Russian ruble, and escalation of the situation in Ukraine. As a result, exports of goods to Russia fell by almost USD 1.5 billion. Although partially offsetting these losses was an increase in Belarusian supplies to Europe, Asia, America and Africa by almost one billion dollars, the total volume of exports from Belarus to new promising markets was only 84% of the level of 2013.

⁶⁷This situation was the subject of serious consideration at a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers in February 2015, during which the government drew attention to the main problems in diversifying and increasing exports - the lack of an effective pricing strategy for Belarusian manufacturers and issues with quality and maintenance of machinery - and formulated specific measures to step up work in non-CIS markets using such tools as "aggressive marketing, participation in tenders, creating with

In order to take additional measures to develop new foreign markets, high-level Belarusian officials have been assigned specific countries and regions, and the coordinating body for export diversification and expansion has been designated

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has been tasked with

"directly interact with officials assigned to countries and regions"⁶⁸. The

⁶⁵ Belarus Ministry of Industry to increase exports to new markets to \$168.7 million in 2014

[Electronic resource]. -2014 . - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/minpromu-belarusi-predstoit-v-2014-godu-narastit-eksport-tovarov-na-novye-rynki-do-1687-mln-42698-2014>

⁶⁶ Review of the Foreign Policy Outcomes of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2014 [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL:

<http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/a2973e28e4b86261.html>

⁶⁷ Andrei Kobayakov held a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/5840.government.by/ru/content/5840>

⁶⁸ Grigorovich, T. Specific countries and regions were assigned to Belarusian officials to increase exports / T. Grigorovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL:

following countries have already been named as promising new markets for Belarusian exports for 2015 1. Algeria. 2. Bangladesh. 3. Bahrain. 4. Bosnia and Herzegovina. 5. Greece. 6. Denmark. 7. Zimbabwe. 8. Jordan. 9. Spain. 10. Cambodia. 11. Kenya. 12. Cyprus. 13. Kuwait. 14. Laos. 15. Macedonia. 16. Malaysia. 17. Morocco. 18. Nepal. 19. Norway. 20. Nicaragua. 21. Oman. 22. Panama. 23. Peru. 24. Portugal. 25. Saudi Arabia. 26. Senegal. 27. Singapore 26. 28. Togo. 29. Tunisia. 30. Uruguay. 31. Philippines. 32. Croatia. 33. Montenegro. 34. Chile. 35. Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, the macroeconomic situation in Belarus continued to develop in the first quarter of 2015 amid a narrowing of the main export markets. The volume of Belarusian exports in goods and services fell by almost a quarter in the first two months. "The biggest challenges and difficulties were faced by industrial enterprises, primarily in the machine-building sector"⁶⁹. Therefore, as early as April 2015, the government suggested the need for a more dynamic shift in the centre of gravity in export policy from the Russian market to other destinations. The need for accelerated geographical as well as commodity diversification of export flows was emphasised, and this was backed up by serious arguments. Specifically, despite an overall drop in export volumes in January and February 2015, Belarusian exports to Asian countries grew by \$106.7 million. In some countries, such as India, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the United States, and Bulgaria, the target was exceeded two to three times.

In order to give a strict systematic approach to the organisation of activities in this area of the state's strategic development, in January 2016 the Belarusian government and the National Bank adopted a set of measures to address the challenges of socio-economic development in 2016 and ensure macroeconomic balance, including 93 measures in the area of foreign economic, integration,

<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/dlja-naraschivanija-eksporta-za-belomsskimi-chinovnikami-zakrepili-konkretnye-strany-i-regiony-62465-2014>

⁶⁹ Matveev, V. The Government of Belarus implements a set of measures to support exports / V. Matveev // . [Electronic resource]. -2015 . - URL:

<http://www.belarus.by/ru/government/events/pravitelstvo-belarusi-realizuet-kompleks-mer-po-podderzhke-eksporta-i-0000019944.html>

investment, innovation, industrial, price, antimonopoly, social, regional and monetary policies, as well as the following

The first item in the document is "approval of the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020."⁷⁰ . Further, it says it is necessary to develop a support plan for Belarusian exporters and implement the decisions of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council on the joint development of exports of goods and services to third countries. At the same time, "special attention will be paid to export diversification"⁷¹ in the following ratio: Eurasian Economic Union market - 37.3 percent; European Union market - 35.2 percent; other countries' markets - 27.5 percent.

In the longer term - by 2020, as follows from Directive No. 3 "On Priority Areas for Strengthening the Economic Security of the State", updated in late January 2016, it is envisaged to ensure a systematic diversification of Belarusian exports to achieve an equal distribution of supplies from Belarus between the markets already mentioned above in the ratio: one-third to one-third. "This will make it possible to balance Belarus' foreign trade, develop new markets and gain a foothold in them, and reduce the risk of Belarus' economic growth depending on the growth of individual trading partner countries"⁷² . In this context, the objective is to find and implement new forms and methods to promote Belarusian goods, works and services in traditional and new markets, and to expand international cooperation by creating long-term alliances of various types - joint ventures outside Belarus, franchise, license and leasing agreements - to develop advanced technologies, manufacture new products and accompany

⁷⁰ Complex of Measures to Address the Tasks of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus in 2016 and to Ensure Macroeconomic Balance [Electronic resource] URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file579cc4076ac5948a.PDF>

⁷¹ A set of measures to meet the challenges of Belarus' socio-economic development in 2016 has been approved [Electronic resource]: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6206>

⁷² Belarus plans to significantly reduce its dependence on traditional markets by 2020 [e-resource]: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-k-2020-godu-planiruet-znachitelno-snizit-zavisimost-ot-traditsionnyh-rynkov-sbyta-179235-2016/>

their sale with related services. One of the priorities for Belarus is to establish cooperation between leading Belarusian manufacturers and multinational corporations in order to attract foreign direct investment , which would make it feasible to

The use of modern technology, equipment, patents for the production of the latest products, and access to the distribution network of multinational corporations.

The emergence of these policy documents at the beginning of 2016 was largely dictated by the fact that in 2015, the overall foreign trade turnover of Belarusian goods dropped by almost a quarter to nearly \$57 billion. Belarusian exports dropped by an even bigger amount - 26 percent - to \$26.7 billion. At that, with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States "exports fell by 33.3% to \$14.1 billion"⁷³ , with non-CIS countries - by 15.8% - to \$12.6 billion, including those of the European Union - 19.4% - to almost \$8.6 billion.

Belarus sees the way out of this situation in the implementation of an effective investment and innovation policy based on the implementation of a number of landmark concrete projects. First, it is the implementation of joint investment projects within the framework of interregional Sino-Belarusian cooperation, where the flagship project is the development of the Sino-Belarusian Industrial Park Great Stone. Second, the implementation of investment projects under the 2016 State Investment Program, where special attention will be paid to the construction of engineering infrastructure facilities at the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Third, improving the efficiency of economic development of Belarusian regions by deepening their specialization and developing industries that use local raw materials and resources, organizing industrial sites equipped with engineering and transport infrastructure to implement industrial projects with the establishment of new enterprises. Fourth, attraction of foreign

⁷³ Belarus reduced imports of goods by 25.2% in 2015 [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2015-godu-umenshila-importhttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2015-godu-umenshila-import-.natovar-na-252-179684-2016/>

investments for the implementation of projects within the framework of cross-border and interregional cooperation, joint creation of regional infrastructure facilities, development of cross-border trade and tourism.

As we can see, the role of regions in the implementation of an effective export policy is noticeably increasing in modern conditions. This can be explained by the serious problems they have faced recently. For example, in January-November 2015, the Vitebsk Region managed to export only 54.6 percent of its goods compared to 2014. The region sees the solution to the problem in expanding the geography of export supplies. And certain steps in this direction have already been taken. In particular, in the first 11 months of 2015, Vitebsk Region's products were shipped to the markets of eight countries - India, Cameroon, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Montenegro. In another eight countries - Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Poland, the United Arab Emirates, and Mongolia - Vitebsk exports recovered their positions last year in the form of new supplies of milk powder, whey, lubricating oil additives, door sheets, and veterinary drugs. In addition, "interregional contacts with the Pskov, Chelyabinsk, Rostov, Sverdlovsk, Kaluga, Lipetsk, Smolensk and Moscow regions of Russia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Latvia were significantly "intensified"⁷⁴. In total, the geography of the region's exports has already expanded to 77 countries.

As for the Grodno Region, it still remains extremely dependent on the Russian market. In particular, the region supplied nearly 97 percent of its meat and dairy products to Russia in 2015. But the contours of geographical and commodity diversification of exports are already outlined here: "In 2015, the first shipments from the Grodno Region were made to Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Croatia. Exports to far-abroad countries almost doubled, and to the US by

⁷⁴ Tikhonova, A. Vitebsk region has expanded the geography of exports to 77 countries / A. Tikhonova // [Electronic resource].-2016 : <http://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskaja-oblast-rasshirila-geografiju-eksporta-do-77-stran-178915-2016/>.

10%."⁷⁵ .

In the first ten months of 2015, the export supplies of the Brest Region's economic entities dropped by almost 29 percent. The region plans to drastically change this negative trend "through geographic and commodity diversification of exports, by increasing the export of knowledge-intensive and innovative goods, deepening interregional cooperation, and improving the export infrastructure"⁷⁶ . In particular, work with the People's Republic of China, where the region's enterprises have already significantly increased their export volumes in 2015, by 1.7 times, will be significantly strengthened. At the same time, "the city of Xiaogan can become a springboard on which the Chinese market as a whole can be developed"⁷⁷ .

The Minsk Region planned to increase exports of goods by more than five percent in 2016 "through the implementation of investment projects for the technical upgrading and reconstruction of production facilities in order to improve the quality and competitiveness of products and enhance marketing activities"⁷⁸ . In particular, the increase in exports was to be ensured by: Gromin LLC, completing construction of a plastic packaging plant; Onega Plus LLC, completing construction of a raw crisps plant; Evipack Industries LLC, commissioning a new technological line for production of packaging equipment;

⁷⁵ Stasiukevich, E. Grodno Region will increase exports to new countries while preserving premium markets / E. Stasiukevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-budet-naraschivat-eksport-v-novye-strany-pri-sohranenii-premialnyh-rynkov-179447-2016/>

⁷⁶ Vechorko, S. Export expansion identified as the main growth factor of the Brest Oblast economy in 2016 / S. Vechorko // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/regions/view/rasshirenie-eksporta-opredeleno-glavnym-faktorom-rosta>
<http://www.belta.by/regions/view/rasshirenie-eksporta-opredeleno-glavnym-faktorom-rosta-ekonomiki-ekonomiki-brestskoj-oblasti--oblasti-v-2016-godu-godu-175763-2015/>

⁷⁷ Chernovolova, A. Chinese companies are interested in cooperation with Brest's processing enterprises / A. Chernovolova // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL:

<http://www.belta.by/regions/view/kitajskie-kompanii-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-s-pererabatyvajuschimi-predpriatijami-bresta-167088-2015/>

⁷⁸ Minsk region plans to increase exports of goods by 5.2% in 2016 [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblasthttp://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-planiruet-v-2016-godu-uvelichit-eksport-tovarov-na-52-176378-2016planiruet-v-2016-godu-uvelichit-eksport-tovarov-na-52-176378-2016/>

and Adani Technologies CJSC, planning to commission a plant for production of high-tech and radiographic equipment for industrial and special applications. OJSC Dzerzhinsky Agrocomplex plans to develop new markets in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine by expanding the range of products supplied. Increased export of services in the form of increased transportation between the countries of the European Union, Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Mongolia is included in specific plans of such transportation enterprises of the Minsk region as Big-Trade LLC, Belspetsagrotrans LLC, Proliv JLLC and Intertransavto LLC.

The task to find and implement new forms and methods of promoting Belarusian goods, works and services in traditional and new markets for Belarusian industries of the real sector, where the demand for innovation and an effective innovation policy aimed at creating an innovation-oriented economy, is no less urgent. And in a number of sectors, this objective is already being realistically achieved. In particular, the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Belarus, which includes several hundred enterprises, including 135 - mechanical engineering and metalworking, more than 60 - radio engineering, 16 - electrical engineering, 10 - optomechanical, 8 - metallurgical, 5 - instrumentmaking, 4 - electronic industry.

It is clear that in a highly competitive marketplace where there is intense competition for markets and consumers on virtually every continent, building a strategy for winning new markets is both difficult and time-consuming. It is clear that before entering a particular market, it should be thoroughly researched and all options for action should be considered. It is clear that it is important to link the marketing departments of companies with potential markets and consumers, understanding the decisive role of marketers in the formation of orders to engineering departments, which, in turn, based on consumer demands and analysis of the competitive environment, must create new engineering products.

The Belarusian Ministry of Industry considers several priority export

diversification areas: "The main direction is the countries of South-East Asia, India, Pakistan and China. <...> The second priority direction is Latin American countries. And the third direction is Africa."⁷⁹ . What is being done concretely to address these challenges is evidenced by the facts. In particular, in the first 10 months of 2015, the products of the enterprises of the Ministry of Industry appeared in the markets of 12 countries where they had not been exported before: Ireland, Montenegro, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, Colombia, Chile, New Zealand. A further 27 countries experienced an increase in exports compared with 2014. These include Armenia, Belgium, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, the UK, Vietnam, Thailand, Israel, China, Tunisia, Canada, Cuba and Australia. In total, "enterprises of the Ministry of Industry exported their products to 102 countries in 2015"⁸⁰ .

It goes without saying that each company chooses its own strategy to diversify its export supplies. For example, in 2015, the geography of foreign trade partners of Belarusian Automobile Plant included 42 countries, and the top ten included: Russia, the United Kingdom, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Vietnam, Iran, Italy, and Kazakhstan. In addition, "in 2015, the number of new consumer countries of BELAZ products on the African continent also expanded. A large batch of equipment was put into operation in Zimbabwe <...>, wheeled bulldozers BELAZ-78231 are now operating in Morocco"⁸¹ . And Minsk Automobile Plant came out on top in terms of sales of new trucks over 3.5 tonnes GVW in Ukraine in 2015. The statistics here are as follows. A total of over 900 new trucks were registered in Ukraine, including 294 of the MAZ

⁷⁹ Vovk, V. Export diversification - one of the priority tasks in 2015 / V. Vovk // [Electronic resource]. -2015 .- URL: <http://www.belta.by/comments/view/diversifikatsiia-eksporta-odna-iz-pervoocherednyh-zadach- v-2015-godu-3697/>

⁸⁰ Enterprises of the Ministry of Industry in January-October 2015 started supplying machinery to 12 new countries [Electronic resource]. -2015 .- URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-minprom-a-v-janvare-oktjabre-2015-goda- nachali-postavki-tehniki-v-12-novyh-stran-176237-2016/>

⁸¹ Geography of BELAZ's foreign trade partnership in 2015 [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?News_IDID=1858

brand, up 43.4 per cent on 2014 sales. As for the competitors, the "number two brand in Ukraine is Scania: last year the Swedes managed to sell 137 trucks. In third place is MAN with 85 vehicles"⁸².

Gomselmash has its own geography of export diversification, with Russia's regions playing a significant role. In particular, in 2015, for the first time, farmers of the Samara and Tula regions, as well as the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions, were able to get acquainted with the advantages of the KZS-1624.1 grain harvesters. The first ten units of "Palesse" machinery were sent to the Leningrad region. The first KZS-1218-29 combine harvester was sold to Kaliningrad Oblast. With the help of Gomselmash representative office in the Czech Republic, the first samples of machinery were sent to Spain, Hungary and Turkey. Palesse machines have appeared in Pakistan and Thailand. In 2016, "the presence of Gomselmash machines is expected in Egypt, Azerbaijan, the Republic of South Africa, Tajikistan, Georgia, Serbia and Germany."⁸³

The cooperation between the Belarusian holding Amkodor and the China International Investment Property Management Corporation CITIC Construction CO. LTD on the production of export-oriented products may turn out to be effective. In January 2016, the parties signed a memorandum "on the construction of a plant to produce special machines Amkodor Mash in the village of Kolodishchi, Minsk District"⁸⁴.

The Belarusian Production and Trade Concern of Forestry, Woodworking, Pulp and Paper Industry, which unites 46 large enterprises of various forms of ownership, should also ensure the growth of export potential. Today, the concern's enterprises export their products to 52 countries, and the share of export in the total volume of their production is already 56,4%. Nevertheless,

⁸² MAZ is the number one brand on the new truck market in Ukraine [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?News_IDID=1863

⁸³ Konovalov, E. "Gomselmash" with the word "for the first time" / E. Konovalov // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL:

http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?News_IDID=1857

⁸⁴ "AMKODOR has signed a memorandum of cooperation with a major Chinese investment corporation [Electronic resource]. -2016 . - URL: http://www.minprom.gov.by/novost?News_ID=1859

together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the Concern has already developed and started implementing an action plan to develop foreign trade, foreign economic and investment cooperation for 2016, the main objective of which is to increase the export volume of the Concern's enterprises. The task of increasing exports "will be solved through the search and development of new foreign markets, including through the development of product distribution networks, commodity and geographic diversification of export structure, reaching a strategic level of relations with dynamically developing countries"⁸⁵.

The diversification of exports will be aimed at a flexible combination of several main vectors: first, the development of cooperation and specialisation in the Eurasian Economic Union based on deepening economic relations, primarily with Russia; second, ensuring partner relations with European Union countries in view of Belarus' possible accession to the World Trade Organization, primarily with Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary; third, expanding the presence of the Concern's products in non-traditional markets. <...> The priority markets for the expansion of the Concern's exports in 2016 are Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Spain, Italy, France, China, and Egypt.⁸⁶

All these plans can only become a reality if the enterprises of the Concern develop the production capacities of already implemented investment projects of export-oriented productions and expand the range of their products, as well as create new export-oriented economic entities. The Belarusian wallpaper holding, which is part of the Bellesbumprom Concern, is already demonstrating interesting experience in this regard.

The holding company incorporates four enterprises: UP Gomeloboy, UP Minsk Wallpaper Factory, Dobrush Paper Factory Hero of Labor, and Belkarton

⁸⁵ Kasko, M. Bellesbumprom has defined the reference points of export growth for 2015 / M. Kasko // [Electronic resource]. -2015 .- URL: <http://www.belta.by/comments/view/bellesbumprom-opredelil-opomye-tochki-rosta-eksporta-na-2015-god-3699/>

⁸⁶ Attention to exports [e-resource]. -2016. - URL: <http://bellesbumprom.by/ru/press-tsentr/novost/924-vnimanie-eksportu>

branch. In 2015, these enterprises increased exports of cardboard and paper products by 44 percent, exceeding the figure of six million dollars. Export of paper and cardboard increased even more - by 80 percent - to 8.6 thousand tons. It is noteworthy that in 2015, the main recipients of cardboard and paper products of Belarusian Wallpapers were consumers in Russia and Poland - five and a half million dollars, as well as Lithuania, Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Latvia.

The secret of the export success of the holding's enterprises lies in the timely development of export-oriented productions. In particular, the largest volume of export deliveries in 2015 came from the branch of Belarusian Wallpapers - Dobrush Paper Factory "Hero of Labor", where "in 2014, the paper-making machine was modernized. This allowed us to significantly expand the range of products and increase production volumes by half."⁸⁷. Now another investment project is being implemented at this factory - the construction of a plant to produce coated and uncoated cardboard with a capacity of 200 thousand tonnes per year. The project is scheduled for completion in 2017. Having mastered the production of coated and uncoated cardboard, Belarusian producers will not only reduce imports of the product from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the European Union, but also ensure the growth in exports.

As we can see, Bellesbumprom has experience in the development of export-oriented enterprises. And it is ready to share it with other participants of this segment of the Belarusian economy. This is evidenced, in particular, by the fact that in January 2016, at the initiative of the Concern, the Association of Furniture and Wood Processing Industry was established in the Republic of Belarus, one of the main objectives of which will be to "promote the formation of export-oriented, high-tech, resource-efficient timber processing ,

⁸⁷ Belarusian Wallpaper Holding increased its paper and cardboard exports by 1.8 times to 8.6 thousand tonnes in 2015 [Electronic resource].-2016 :

<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/holding-belorusskie-oboiv-2015-godu-uvlechil-eksport-bumagi-i-kartona-v-18-raza-do-8-6-mln-t-178139-2016/>

woodworking and furniture industries"⁸⁸ .

The Belarusian construction sector is among those segments of the national economy that have a particularly high export potential. Thus, in 2014, "export of goods by organisations of the Ministry of Construction and Architecture increased by 3.7% <...>, export of services - by 46%"⁸⁹. And in 2015 the export targets for construction, engineering and architectural services were met to the tune of one billion dollars. Nevertheless, in 2016, the builders of Belarus have been tasked to further increase the export of goods and services by focusing on the quality of work and deadlines in line with contractual obligations, as well as to "coordinate the cost optimization of enterprises, reduce production costs and introduce new technologies. Enterprises need to ensure the application of best international practices in construction"^{89 90} .

The development strategy of the Belarusian construction industry envisages several ways to meet this challenge. Firstly, through new technologies. An example: the Gomelglass enterprise, where modernisation in terms of industrial glass processing is nearing completion. We are to complete commissioning of an energy-efficient glass production line by the end of the six months. The line is expected to produce about 4 million square meters of energy-efficient glass at the first stage with the possibility of increasing its amount to 8 million square meters. And we already have preliminary contracts to supply this glass for export. Besides, the high export potential of the Belarusian glass is proved by facts like these. We have already signed contracts to export 8.5 million square meters to Germany and Poland, and 13 million square meters to Ukraine, as well as small amounts to Turkey and Italy.

⁸⁸ Furniture and woodworkers united in an association [Electronic resource]. -2016 . - URL: <http://bellesbumprom.by/ru/press-tsentr/novost/936-mebelshchiki-i-by/ru/press-tsentr/novost/936-mebelshchiki-i-derevoobrabotchiki-ob-edinilis-v-assotsiatsiyu>

⁸⁹ Dylenok, Y. In Belarus, the share of construction in the GDP structure has exceeded 10% / Y. Dylenok // [Electronic resource].-2014: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-belarusi-udelnyj-ves-stroitelstva-v-strukture-vvp- prevysil-10-59965-2014>

⁹⁰ Anatoly Kalinin took part in a meeting of the board of the Ministry of Construction and Architecture [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/6246.government.by/ru/content/6246>

The next export item for Belarusian builders is cement. It is known that its domestic consumption is not more than four million tons a year, while production only by dry method is 6.6 million tons. In 2016, supplies of Belarusian cement to Europe will increase by 500 thousand tons, while exports to Russia will reach 1.2 million tons. It is also encouraging to see the export potential of Belarusian crushed stone, which is already being worked on with Poland and Lithuania. Specifically, "in January 2016 alone, crushed stone was loaded as much as during the entire first quarter of last year"⁹¹.

The second direction is the diversification of foreign markets, where it is primarily a question of expanding the Russian regional markets. A good example is the Kaluga region, where the Belarusian company MAPID is building the Malinovka residential complex on the north-eastern outskirts of Kaluga. It consists of five apartment buildings with landscaped and landscaped areas, roads, car parks, sets of small architectural forms, a beautiful park with a pond, walking paths and pavilions. A 9-storey 3-sectional house with 188 flats and a 19-storey 1-sectional house with 126 flats have already been built in the neighbourhood. Two 19-storey 1-section buildings with 126 flats and one 19-storey building with 106 flats are nearing completion. The cooperation will continue with the construction of another residential complex on a nearby site, Malinovka 2, comprising five buildings with 698 flats. A Belarusian developer, Vesta LLC, was granted permission to build the Vesnushki housing estate in the Pravoberezhnye district of Kaluga. In August 2015, we laid the first stone in the foundation of the first house. There will be seven in total, the total area of flats will be 42968 square metres, and the number of flats will be 920. VESTA has also launched another project - the Annenki residential complex"⁹². There is

⁹¹ Mihovich, S. Belarus plans to increase cement supplies to Europe by 500 thousand tonnes in 2016 / S. Mihovich // [Electronic resource].-2016: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-v-2016-godu-uvelichit-na-500-tys-t-postavki-tsementa-v-evropu-180248-2016/>

⁹² Artamonov, A. Life shows our full mutual understanding and readiness to support each other / A. Artamonov // Interaction of Regions: Union State - an engine of Eurasian integration : informational-integration project / coauthors, interviewing : B. Zalessky, M. Valkovsky, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk : Biznesofset, 2016. - C. 159.

also an interesting experience of cooperation in the construction sector between builders of Belarus and Moscow. Back in 2014, the Russians ensured the creation of the Moscow Yard improvement project on Independence Avenue in the Belarusian capital. "In 2015, the Minchans completed a reciprocal project: the "Minsk Yard" improvement facility in the Southern Administrative District of Moscow on Borisovskiye Prudy Street"⁹³. It is quite possible that Belarusian builders will appear in other Russian regions in 2016. For example, opportunities for the participation of Belarusian construction organizations "in the complex programme to develop the transport system of the Chechen Republic have already been discussed. In particular, there has been talk about the reconstruction and construction of transport infrastructure facilities: airports, railway stations, logistics centres"⁹⁴.

At the beginning of 2016, Belarus established the construction holding Belstroycentre, which "included 18 of our enterprises with a total workforce of about 35,000 people"⁹⁵, which indicates a major boost in the industry's efforts to enter new markets.

Against the backdrop of Belarus's strong export diversification campaign, it is important that the demands to take additional measures to promote and advertise Belarusian products at the April 2015 meeting of the Belarusian Council of Ministers are not overshadowed. In particular, it was suggested at that time that expert groups of representatives of exporting organizations should be formed to study visits to countries whose markets are promising for exports, and additional measures should be taken to intensify work in the sphere of foreign economic activities of bilateral organizations.

⁹³ Cheremin, S. Belarusian products are in deserved demand among Muscovites / S. Cheremin // Interaction of Regions: Union State - locomotive of Eurasian integration : inform.-integration project / coauthors, interviewing: B. Zalesky, M. Valkovsky, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk : Biznesofset, 2016. - C. 192.

⁹⁴ The Construction Complex of Belarus and the Chechen Republic: Prospects for Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.mas.by/ru/http://www.mas.by/ru/news/ru/view/strojkompleksru/view/strojkompleks-belarusi-i-chechenskaja-respublika-perspektivy-sotrudnichestvabelarusi-i-chechenskaja-respublika-perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-634/>.

⁹⁵ Mihovich, S. A construction holding is registered in Belarus / S. Mihovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-belarusihttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-belarusi-zaregistririvan-zaregistririvan-stroitelnyj--holding--holding-180247-2016/>.

intergovernmental commissions, committees, councils, as well as to consider the need to "encourage the use of active marketing techniques and the publication of relevant material in print specialist publications, export opportunities on Internet resources and social media"⁹⁶.

This task was very timely, as it is a fact that in 2015 the presence of Belarusian content in the global information space increased noticeably. This is evidenced, in particular, by the activity of the Belarusian diplomatic corps in the foreign media. **January:** interview by S. Sukhorenko, head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission to Armenia, to the Armenian News agency. **February:** a press conference by Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Makei on the results of his visit to Syria, an interview by Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakov to the South Korean newspaper Zhongan Ilbo, an article by the Belarusian ambassador to Finland A. Ostrovsky in Ostrovski - in Baltic Rim Economies, and an interview of the head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission to Kazakhstan A. Nichkasov - in the magazine Mangi El. **March** - interview of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Guryanov to the Lithuanian newspaper Verslo Zinios, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Poland A. Averyanov to the magazine Baltic Rim Economies. In Ukraine, V. Velichko - to the information agency Svyat elit, in Mongolia - to the newspapers Soembo and Zuuny Mede, in Ukraine - to the newspaper Verslo Zinios. In Mongolia, he was represented by S. Chepurny in Mongolia for the newspaper Soobo, Zuun Madā, and in Ukraine for the news agency Ukrainshsk Novyny; in Russia, Igor Petrishenko for the newspaper Soyuz. Belarus - Russia", in Egypt and Algeria (concurrently) - S. Rachkova to the Algerian newspaper "Al-Shaab". **April** - interviews of First Deputy Foreign Minister A. Mikhnevich to the Lithuanian newspaper Lietuvos Žines, Deputy Foreign Minister E. Kupčina to the Hungarian newspaper Magyar Hirlap, A. The first deputy minister of foreign affairs E. Kupčynaū - to the Hungarian newspaper Magyar Hirlap, A. Guryanov - to the Estonian newspaper

⁹⁶ Andrei Kobayakov held a meeting of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://www.government.by/ru/content/5_897

Delovye Vedomosti, I. Petrishenka - to the program "From First Person" of the Russian Public Television and the newspaper Soiuznoe Veche, A. Nichkasov - to the news agency Kazinform, the head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission in the Czech Republic V. Markovich - to the periodical Parvizi Rossii. Markovich, head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission to the Czech Republic, to the periodical Parlamentni Listy. **May** - article by V. Makei in the British magazine Forced Migration Rewiew; interview by V. Makei to the American newspaper The Washington Post. E. Mayakay - to the American newspaper The Washington Post; E. Kupčina - to the Slovenian newspaper The Slovenia Times; A. Korol, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Lithuania - to the Lithuanian edition Express-week; in Israel - to V. Skvortsov - to the portal Israel in Persons. **July** - interviews with V. Makei to Russia-24 TV channel, V. Rybakov to Russian news agency TASS and Russian service of UN Radio, I. Petrishenko to Rossiyskaya Gazeta; joint article by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Austria V. Voronetsky and the Ambassadors of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia in Austria - in Die Presse. **August:** interview of V. Skvortsov to the portal Israel in Persons **September:** interview of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Latvia M. Dolgoplova to the Latvian newspaper Business Vesti. September, interviews with M. Dolgoplova, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Latvia, to the Latvian newspaper Biznesa Vesti. **October** - interviews: V. Makei to the newspaper Kommersant, A. Mikhnevich to the information and analytical portal of the Union State, S. Rachkov to the Middle East News Agency. **December** - interview with I. Nazaruk, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Armenia, to the news agency ArmInfo; S. Rachkov to the Egyptian magazine Diplomacy⁹⁷.

It is thought that this most interesting media experience of the Belarusian

⁹⁷ Interviews and publications
<http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/1>

[Electronic resource

].-2016:

diplomats should be reflected and further developed in publications of representatives of Belarusian regional as well as sectoral structures with the most active participation and support of representatives of the international segment of the Belarusian national journalism.

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CHAPTER 4

Prospects for cross-border cooperation between regions and media

In the Republic of Belarus, regional media have traditionally had a powerful impact on their audiences. According to First Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus P. Legky, "in terms of their influence on the public consciousness and their audience reach they are not inferior to the republican ones"⁹⁸. This largely explains the large-scale tasks that the Belarusian regional press is facing today in terms of reflecting the specifics of implementation of the state policy of development of the Belarusian regions, one of the most important components of which is deepening of **cross-border cooperation** with foreign partners, which implies adequate development of the international segment of the Belarusian regional journalism as well. In doing so, representatives of the media sphere need to proceed from a number of basic provisions outlined in the policy documents.

⁹⁹ As a reminder, at the legislative level in the Republic of Belarus, **cross-border cooperation** is understood to mean: first, interaction with foreign countries at regional and local levels in order to promptly solve border problems, attract foreign investments to improve border and transport infrastructure, establish commercial organisations with foreign investments; second, development and implementation of regional technical assistance projects financed by international organisations and programmes

The National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030, which defines the goals, stages and directions of the transition of the Belarusian state to a post-industrial society

⁹⁸ Legky, P. Regional media should not be inferior to republican ones / P. Legky // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: [http://www.belta.by/opinions/view/regionalnye-smi-
ne-dolzheny-ustupat-respublikanskimne-dolzheny-ustupat-respublikanskim-6366/](http://www.belta.by/opinions/view/regionalnye-smihttp://www.belta.by/opinions/view/regionalnye-smi-ne-dolzheny-ustupat-respublikanskimne-dolzheny-ustupat-respublikanskim-6366/).

⁹⁹ Law of the Republic of Belarus "Main Directions of Internal and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus" [Electronic resource]:
<http://laws.newsby.org/documents/laws/law0361.htm>

and innovative economic development, identifies the regions of the country as the place where a solid foundation for further sustainable development based on modernization of the system of economic relations and effective governance is still to be built, in order to ensure a balance between their social, economic and environmentally safe development. The strategic objective of Belarusian regional policy is the comprehensive development of each region and the reduction of the existing regional disparities, taking into account the effective use of its resource potential and competitive advantages in order to ensure high living standards, nature conservation and the positive contribution of the regions to national competitiveness and security.

It is assumed that until 2030 the policy of regional development in the Republic of Belarus will be implemented in two stages. Within the framework of the first one - until 2020 - it is planned to form and support regional development centres, reduce interregional differentiation in living standards, structural reorganization of the regional economy, create favourable conditions for the development of entrepreneurial activity, strengthen the resource base of local budgets, solve the problems of areas lagging behind the average national level, overcome infrastructure and institutional barriers to socio-economic development of regions, increase efficiency

In the second stage - until 2030 - the development policy of Belarus' regions will be oriented towards "the expansion of local self-government in addressing socio-economic issues ,

environmental and ecological problems, reduce subsidization of areas and ensure a high standard of living in all regions"¹⁰⁰ . The main objectives for

The long-term vision is to : improve

administrative-territorial division ; deepening

Specialization of the economies of the districts, revealing their potential opportunities and competitive advantages in the domestic and **foreign** markets

¹⁰⁰¹⁰⁰ National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2030. - Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus. - Minsk, 2015. - C. 115.

for goods and services; advanced development of cities and districts, acting as centres of territorial clusters; increasing social standards of living in the process of economic growth, their differentiation taking into account the specifics of population settlement, especially for rural areas; promotion of territorial mobility of labour resources; **deepening of transboundary cooperation**. As for the latter, it will have to take place through: first, the formation of cooperative technological chains with industries in the Eurasian Economic Union in the form of holding structures and cross-border clusters in border areas and the creation of joint marketing alliances with them in third country markets; second, the development of import substitution industries aimed at the Eurasian Economic Union market, including by establishing branches and assembly facilities of transnational corporations in those

The Main Provisions of the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 set the task - "by concentrating resources in key areas that can ensure the maximum development of territories, effective use of local resource potential and competitive advantages"¹⁰¹ to create economic growth centres in Belarusian regions, where modern production structures, engineering and social infrastructure facilities will be concentrated. At the same time, the development of the main networks and objects of energy, transport, telecommunication and other infrastructure would be in line with the development strategy of a given region. This is explained by the fact that the development of infrastructure in conjunction with the location of production will ensure the development of territories with a difficult economic situation and reduce the gap in the level and quality of life in cities of different categories and in rural areas. And the support of the most lagging regions will be expressed in the placement there of new organizations, branches and workshops of existing industries related to the service of agriculture and forestry, processing of their products, production of goods from local raw materials, development of the

¹⁰¹ Main Provisions OF the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 [Electronic resource]. -2016:
<http://shod.belta.by/programma/>

sphere of services for the population and tourism. It is also important that key projects involving foreign investment and involvement of inefficiently used and idle production facilities in the investment process are envisaged to implement the strategic directions of regional development. In particular, "foreign investors will be involved, including through active interregional Sino-Belarusian contacts, in order to implement projects of regional development significance and create tourism and social infrastructure facilities. China's loans will be an additional source of financing for such projects"¹⁰².

In total, more than 60 economic growth centres are expected to be established in the regions of Belarus, covering two thirds of the country's territory. Their formation will take into account three complementary vectors: first, creating these centres in those districts and cities that have the potential to do so; second, creating jobs outside the economic growth centres within an hour's reach; and third, creating comfortable conditions throughout the country that will require a developed modern infrastructure. In this regard, investment activities would need to coordinate three policies: science and technology, industry and regional policies. The first would identify priority economic activities

technological niches and corresponding specific projects to be proposed to businesses for implementation. The second is the location of the selected projects based on the specialisation of the districts and taking into account their human, production and raw material potential. At the same time, a balanced development of the regions should be one of the main conditions. The third is the formation of a package of stimulating measures of the national and regional level for the implementation of projects"¹⁰³. If we talk more specifically about the prospects of development of the Belarusian regions, the picture is as follows.

¹⁰² Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 // Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://www.government.by/upload/docs/http://www.government.by/upload/docs/program_ek2016-2020.pdf

¹⁰³ More than 60 regional economic growth centres may be created in Belarus - Zinovskiy [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/vhttp://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-belarusi-mozhet-byt-sozdano-bolee-60-tsentrov-ekonomicheskogo-rosta-v-regionah-zinovskijbelarusi-mozhet-byt-sozdano-bolee-60-tsentrov-ekonomicheskogo-rosta-v-regionah-zinovskij-272081-2017/>.

In Brest Oblast, the mining industry, agro-industrial complex, mechanical engineering, woodworking and furniture production, transport and logistics, and tourism should receive priority development. The cities of Brest, Baranovichi, Pinsk and the adjacent districts, as well as Berezovsky, Pruzhansky, Ivatsevichy, Kobrininsky and Luninets districts will become centres of economic growth. Among the major investment projects are the following: modernisation of CJSC Pinskdiv Holding Company, aimed at increasing the output of plywood and bent plywood parts up to one hundred thousand cubic metres per year; continuation of the construction of a mining and processing plant on the basis of the Sitnitskoye deposit; establishment of Beldan, IOOO - an agro-industrial organisation for slaughtering and processing of bacon pork with a capacity of 80 heads per hour; ensuring a full cycle of production of lead batteries at Exide Technologies, IOOO; reconstruction of the Soveiki palace and park ensemble by LadaGarant, ZAO.

In Vitebsk Region, economic growth will be ensured primarily in oil refining and petrochemicals, energy, footwear production, agro-industrial complex, metallurgy, machine building and tourism. Vitebsk and Novopolotsk, as well as Vitebsk, Orsha, Braslav, Verkhnedvinsk, Glubokoe, Miorki, Lepel, Polotsk, Pastavy and Chashniki Districts should become investment attraction centres. As for major investment projects, they are, first of all, completion of reconstruction of the vacuum block of the distillation unit AVT-2 to process residual fuel oil and construction of a delayed coking unit at Naftan, modernization of the Orsha flax mill, as well as construction of factories to produce: sheet metal and tin plate - MMPZ-Group in Miory District, metal structures - in Polotsk District, commercial equipment - in Modern-Expo LLC.

Oil refining and oil extraction, mining and chemical industries, metallurgy and machine building, pulp and paper industry, woodworking and alternative energy should become the key development areas **of Gomel Oblast**. Gomel and the districts of Gomel, Mozyr, Rechytsia, Rogachev, Zhlobin and Svetlogorsk have been identified as centres of economic growth,

Kalinkovich, Dobrush and Zhitkovichi. And among the major investment projects are: reconstruction of the main technological units of arc-furnace shops¹ 1 and¹ 2 and the construction of a special steel complex in JSC "Belarusian Steel Works" - the managing company of the holding "Belarusian Metallurgical Company", the establishment of two crushed stone plants in Lelchitsy district; plant for the production of sulfate bleached pulp on the basis of JSC "Svetlogorsk Pulp and Paper Mill" capacity of 400 thousand tons per year; complex hydrocracking of heavy oil residues in the Republic of Belarus.

As for **Grodno Oblast**, a fundamentally new industry for Belarus, nuclear power engineering, as well as chemical production, agro-industrial agro-complex, woodworking, and tourism will emerge here. Not only Grodno, but also Grodno, Lidsky, Ostrovetsky, Mostovsky, Smorgonsky, Volkovysky and Slonimsky districts will become centres of economic growth. If we talk about major investment projects, we should mention completion of technical re-equipment of the phthalic anhydride production line at JSC "Lakokraska" with the capacity increase up to 48 thousand tons a year, construction of the nitric acid production line at JSC "GrodnoAzot", implementation of the project at JSC "Novalok" in Skidel to produce pharmaceutical forms - tablets and capsules, reconstruction of the hotel and restaurant complex "Grodno".

Chemical production, pharmaceuticals and fine chemistry, automotive and agro-industrial complex, transport and logistics, and tourism should receive priority development in **Minsk Region**. Economic growth centres will be formed in Zhodino, Borisov, Minsk, Smolevichi, Soligorsk, Dzerzhinsk, Molodechno, Slutsk,

Pukhovichi, Logoisk, Nesvizh, Myadel and Volozhin districts. Key investment projects in Minsk Oblast will include the construction of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Velikiy Kamen, the mining and processing plant Slavkaliy FLLC in Luban District, the car manufacturing plant of Belji CJSC, the milk processing plant of Nesvizh Baby Food Factory LLC, the transport and logistics complex in the Minsk Free Economic Zone, as well as the reconstruction of the

ampoule plant of Borisov Medical Preparations OJSC.

Mogilev region will develop through chemical production, production of rubber and plastic products, construction materials, food products, woodworking with centres of economic growth in Mogilev, Bobruisk, as well as in the districts - Mogilev, Bobruisk, Osipovichi, Shklov, Bykhov, Gorki. In the region it is expected: to reconstruct the production capacities of rubber products in Krichev with an increase in production of model shoes from polyvinylchloride to 250 thousand pairs per year; to build a polyester production complex at OJSC "Mogilevkhimvolokno"; to expand production of chicken broiler meat at the branch "Servolux Agro" of CJSC "Servolux"; to upgrade the casting and machining equipment of OJSC "Bobruisk machine building plant"; to continue implementing the Program of socio-economic development of south

Finally, machine building and science-intensive industries such as microelectronics, instrument engineering, computing and telecommunication equipment, pharmaceuticals, as well as medicine and services will be developed as priorities in **Minsk**. The largest

A project implemented with foreign capital in the Belarusian capital would be the construction of

an experimental multifunctional complex "Minsk World", which "envisages the construction of over 2 million square metres of housing, 600 thousand square metres of administrative and public and business premises, including an international financial centre"¹⁰⁴. This will make it possible to create a strategic area for doing business in the Republic of Belarus and contribute to the development of the domestic financial market and related services - tourism, banking, insurance, outsourcing - which will become an additional incentive for attracting foreign investors. "The project investments will amount to about USD 3.5 billion."¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴ Programme of socio-economic development of the city of Minsk for 2016-2020 [Electronic resource] . URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=D917o0083491&p1=1&p5=0>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

In mechanical engineering, a number of the capital's companies will be taken to the next level through a comprehensive modernisation programme. These include: OJSC Minsk Engine Plant holding management company - through mastering of the production of high-precision, high-strength cast iron and development of small diesel engines with up to 75 horsepower; OJSC Minsk Automobile Plant - Belavtomaz holding management company - through the reconstruction of the production of cabin frames for MAZ family vehicles; MAZ-Kupava Car Trailer and Body Plant LLC - through the introduction of the hydrocarbon foaming technology in the production of isothermal panels of the transaxle.

In the microelectronics and instrument-making industry, it is planned to implement projects to develop a branch of the Scientific and Technical Centre "Belmicrosystems" of OJSC "Integral" - the managing company of the "Integral" holding company; to create promising technology for packaging integrated circuits and integration in manufacturing products for industrial, special and dual use; to develop production of epitaxial structures and bipolar technology on plates with a diameter of 150 millimetres. A pilot project is planned to be implemented by 2020 to create in the Belarusian capital an innovation-industrial cluster of high technologies in the field of complex medical equipment, security systems, non-destructive testing equipment and analytical instrument-making , which will unite

high-tech instrument-making organisations in Minsk, as well as scientific organisations and educational institutions with a strong research base and significant human resource potential. The implementation of this pilot project by 2020 should "provide revenues from sales of goods (works and services) in the amount of US\$ 450 million, create 1000 new jobs, increase the share of shipped innovative products in the total volume of shipped products to 90 per cent"¹⁰⁶ . In general, the economy of the Belarusian capital during the five years until

¹⁰⁶ Programme of socio-economic development of the city of Minsk for 2016-2020 [Electronic resource] . URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=D917o0083491&p1=1&p5=0>

2020 "will attract at least \$38.1 billion in foreign investment, including over \$4.8 billion of direct foreign investment (FDI) on a net basis"¹⁰⁷ .

The deepening of cross-border cooperation between Belarusian regions should be organically integrated into the development of international cooperation and external economic relations of the Republic of Belarus as a whole, the most important criteria of which are sustainable growth rates of exports of goods and services and the achievement of a positive balance of foreign trade in goods and services. In this respect, until 2020 the attention of Belarusian regions will be focused on: expansion and diversification of trade and economic relations with different countries, regional unions and international economic organisations; development of economic integration within the Eurasian Economic Union; maintenance of good neighbourly relations and close cooperation with the Russian Federation; expansion of comprehensive cooperation with the European Union countries, including the Eastern Partnership initiative; further intensification of trade in goods and services with other countries. The second phase, until 2030, will focus on deepening cross-border cooperation in all areas of trade, economics , science and technology, and trade facilitation.

The development of environmental protection activities should be an essential factor for sustainable development. This will facilitate the creation of flexible commercial structures, attracting external investments for infrastructure improvements; the improvement of cross-border trade, tourism; effective cooperation in the cultural, social and environmental spheres; the formation of a common socio-cultural space ; the development of joint of cross-border regional politics. In these conditions, it is the regional media that should become the most important part of mass communication in order to play

¹⁰⁷ Minsk plans to attract at least \$38 billion in foreign investment in 2016-2020 [Electronic resource4resource].-2017: https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-planiruet-privlech-v-2016-2020-godah-ne-menee-38-mlrd-inostrannyh-mvestitsij_-25_2054-2017/

its socio-political role of consolidating society in terms of solving large-scale development tasks of the Belarusian regions in the next 12-15 years.

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CHAPTER 5

From a strategy to attract foreign investment to international cooperation

Back in 2018, the Republic of Belarus together with international experts, government authorities, scientific and business communities started working on the draft Foreign Direct Investment Strategy until 2035. At the preliminary stage of preparation of the document, an analysis of the national legislation, law enforcement practice, institutional factors, and experience of foreign countries in the field of investment was carried out. According to the intention of the developers, the strategy should define long-term goals, objectives, principles, directions and expected results of foreign investment attraction with due regard to the priorities of socio-economic development of Belarus. For example, the long-term goals of the strategy are to improve the investment climate, increase the inflow of foreign direct investment into the economy, develop infrastructure, including through public-private partnerships, and increase the efficiency of investment activities. The strategy is to be implemented in four stages: 1) 2019-2020; 2) 2021-2025; 3) 2025-2030; 4) 2031-2035. At the same time, "a roadmap of measures will be developed for each stage, which will define the responsible state bodies, the timeframe for the implementation of measures and their results"¹⁰⁸.

The implementation of this strategy should result in Belarus becoming one of the first thirty countries with the best business climate in the World Bank's Doing Business ranking, as well as in being among the top thirty countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Index:

- 1) World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index;
- 2) international institute for management development's global competitiveness ranking;
- 3) Ernst & Young's International Country Attractiveness Index for venture

¹⁰⁸ NAIP invites to discuss the draft strategy for attracting foreign direct investments in Belarus [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/naip-predlagaet-obsudit-proekt-strategii-privlechenija-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-belarus-337734-2019/>

capital and private equity funds.

Such areas as high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries, logistics, transport and digital infrastructure, the financial sector, the social sector - through public-private partnership projects, and the tourism industry are considered as promising for attracting foreign direct investment into the Belarusian economy. In addition, it is planned "to form a package of additional preferences for the establishment of industrial micro, small and medium enterprises by domestic businesses and foreign investors in areas with a difficult economic situation"¹⁰⁹. The first "swallow" in this regard can be considered the appearance in Belarus of the presidential decree "On the development of Orsha District of Vitebsk Region", which seriously spurred investors' interest in the region. In particular, after the decree was issued, "four investors at once applied to the district executive committee with offers to implement various projects at the production site of the former plant of reinforced concrete products. <...> Work is underway to set up production of non-woven materials, a pellet factory and a furniture factory. Orsha Forestry is implementing a plan to set up a new production facility with advanced wood processing, including the construction of a pellet plant"¹¹⁰. In addition, negotiations have already been held with representatives of a Chinese logistics company to establish a joint venture in the area.

Using the planned tools to implement the strategy, which include work to improve investment legislation, simplification of administrative procedures for business, further digitalisation of all processes to eliminate as much as possible the subjective approach to solving tasks in the future, Belarus intends to double the amount of foreign direct investment attraction on a net basis by 2025. "Active work is also planned to attract foreign investments and promote the

¹⁰⁹ Belarus intends to double foreign direct investment by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-namerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-pri-amyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/>.

¹¹⁰ Bogacheva, O. Decree on development of Orsha district has increased investors' interest in the region - Isachenko / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/ukaz-o-razvitii-orshanskogo-rajona-povysil-intereshttps://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/ukaz-o-razvitii-orshanskogo-rajona-povysil-interes-investorov-k-regionu-isachenko-investorov-k-regionu-isachenko-336516-2019/>.

investment potential of Belarus abroad, including through such events as Belarusian Economy Days, investment forums, conferences, meetings with business"¹¹¹ , as well as expanding cooperation with leading international financial institutions.

In the language of numbers, this means that in the first stage of the strategy's implementation, in 2019-2020, the amount of foreign direct investment should be at least \$1.5 billion annually, and in the second stage - by 2025 - three billion dollars. It should be recalled that in 2018, in addition to banks, foreign investors invested \$10.8 billion in the real sector of the Belarusian economy, the main share of which came from business entities in Russia, the UK and Cyprus. At the same time, "the inflow of foreign direct investment amounted to \$8.5 billion, or 78.7% of all incoming foreign investments"¹¹² . And there was outstripping growth in spending on machinery and equipment, including such major investment projects as the modernization of oil refineries, construction of a nuclear power plant, and the Belaruskali and Slavkali projects.

During a hearing in the Belarusian parliament on the legal and practical aspects of improving the investment climate in Belarus in November 2018, it was noted that so far the structure of foreign direct investment demonstrates the desire of foreign capital to continue to "prevail in sectors of the economy that pay off quickly. First and foremost, these are trade and services. Our task is to gradually reorient it towards the industrial sector as well"¹¹³ . To this end, it is planned to reformat the work of the National Agency of Investment and Privatisation to make it a full-fledged "one stop shop" for investors, and to pay much more

¹¹¹ Belarus plans to attract at least \$1.6 billion in FDI on a net basis in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarushttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-v-2019-godu-privlech-ne-menee-16-mlrd-pii-na-planiruet-v-2019-godu-privlech-nee-menee-16-mlrd-pii-na-chistoj-osnove-350482-201-osnove-350482-2019/>

¹¹² Foreign investors invested \$10.8bn in Belarus' economy in 2018 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyehhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannye-investory-v-2018-godu-vlozhili-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-108-mlrdinvestory-v-2018-godu-vlozhili-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-108-mlrd-336490-2019/>

¹¹³ Belarus expects to double investment by 2025 [Electronic resource].

- 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-udvoit-obiem-investitsij-k-2025-godu-325426-2018/>

attention to investment policy at the regional level, where investment sites with ready-made transport and engineering infrastructure need to be prepared. As for expanding cooperation with leading international financial institutions, there are interesting prospects, in particular in cooperation with their representatives, such as **the Eurasian Development Bank** and **the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**.

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) is an international financial institution, established by Russia and Kazakhstan in January 2006 to facilitate the development of market economies in its member states, their sustainable economic growth and the expansion of mutual trade and economic ties. Along with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, the Republic of Belarus is also a member of the bank. It should be noted that in recent years, the bank has been developing very successfully, as evidenced by the following figures: "By the end of 2018, the volume of investments increased by 2.5 times compared to 2017 and reached \$1.6 billion. This indicator reached the maximum in the history of the bank <...>. The loan portfolio grew by 48% to \$3.6bn and reached its highest value in five years."¹¹⁴ . Interestingly, the bank itself considers 2018 a successful year for the reason that "provisions on loans to Alutech Group in Belarus were restored. As a result, the bank received \$10 million in additional income."¹¹⁵ . And in 2019, the EDB planned to increase its loan portfolio to \$2.9 billion. "As of July 1 [2019], the current investment portfolio stood at \$3.7 billion <...>. As of June 30, 2019, the EDB's assets grew by \$458 million, or 12.3%, to \$4.2 billion."¹¹⁶ .

¹¹⁴ Belyaninov: It is crucial for the EDB to finance projects using the national currencies of EAEU countries [Electronic resource]. URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belijaninov-cabr-krajne-vazhno-finansirovat-proekty-s-ispolzovaniem-natsvaljut-stran-caes-345396-2019/>

¹¹⁵ The EDB plans to grow its loan portfolio to \$2.9 billion in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cabr-planiruet-rost-kreditnogo- portfelj a-va-v-2019-godu-godu-do-29-29 -mlrd-345-mlrd-345498-2019/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cabr-planiruet-rost-kreditnogohttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/cabr-planiruet-rost-kreditnogo- portfelj a-va-v-2019-godu-godu-do-29-29 -mlrd-345-mlrd-345498-2019/).

¹¹⁶ EDB's investment portfolio exceeded \$8 billion as of 1 July [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/obiem-investitsionnogo- portfelj a-cabr-a-cabr-na- - 1-1-ij ulja-ulja-prevysil-8 -8 -mlrd-mlrd-354493-2019](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/obiem-investitsionnogohttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/obiem-investitsionnogo- portfelj a-cabr-a-cabr-na- - 1-1-ij ulja-ulja-prevysil-8 -8 -mlrd-mlrd-354493-2019)

As for the Republic of Belarus, during its cooperation with the Eurasian Development Bank it has already implemented 30 projects worth around one billion dollars. If

As for today, "the Bank is currently considering investment projects of Belarusian industrial enterprises aimed at modernising existing production facilities and creating new ones, including with the use of technologies of technological modes V and VI"¹¹⁷. This area of Eurasian Development Bank's activities is confirmed by the loan agreement signed in May 2019 to provide Belarus with USD 100 million to finance the working capital and investment program of Belaruskali for

on mutually beneficial terms. In all, "more than six projects of various amounts in different sectors are in the works today in cooperation between the EDB and the Republic of Belarus"¹¹⁸. Syndicated lending agreements have been signed with Belarusian banks, such as Belgazprombank and Belarusbank, and credit lines have been opened for trade finance and SME support.

And the EDB's participation in Belinvestbank's equity capital is being actively negotiated. In this regard, it should be recalled that in October 2018, Belinvestbank, with the assistance of the EDB, attracted a one-year USD 20 million syndicated loan, the proceeds of which are "provided to finance trade contracts of Belinvestbank's clients related to supplies of goods, equipment and services from the Russian Federation to the Republic of Belarus"¹¹⁹, which contributes to the development of small and medium businesses in our country - a segment that is expected to become one of the drivers of economic growth in the foreseeable future.

¹¹⁷ Meeting with EDB Board Chairman Andrei Belyaninov [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://government.by/ru/content/8785.by/ru/content/8785>

¹¹⁸ The EDB will allocate \$100 million to finance Belaruskali's working capital and investment programme [Electronic resource]. -2019 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cabr-vydelit-100-mln-na-finansirovanie-oborotnogo-kapitala-i-investprogrammy-belaruskalija-347439-2019/>

¹¹⁹ Belinvestbank attracted a syndicated loan from the Eurasian Development Bank [Electronic resource] : <https://www.belinvestbank.by/about-bank/article/n-Belinvestbank-privlek-sindiczirovannyj-kredit-ot-Evrazijskogo-bank-razvitiya>

In general, the EDB considers several projects in connection with Belarus - in the road sector, housing and utilities, as well as in the energy sector. Thus, the bank is interested in the upcoming road reconstruction in Belarus: border with Russia - Gomel - Kobrin; Minsk - Vitebsk. "The cost of the issue of road reconstruction may range from €150 to €450 million.¹²⁰ . The EDB may also participate in the contract for the purchase by Belarusian Railways of ten five-car Stadler electric trains for international business-class lines. Delivery of the first electric train is scheduled for the end of 2020. And as the parties were planning to raise credit resources from leading foreign banks for this case, the Eurasian Development Bank said back in February 2019 that it was highly prepared to participate in this investment project. In the energy sector, it is about the construction of gas turbine generators in Belarus for the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Furthermore, the EDB is interested in cooperating with the Belarusian High Tech Park in order to be present with its partners. In particular, "we are talking about a Russian company that may become a HTP resident"¹²¹ . Returning to the loan agreement on Belaruskali, it will undoubtedly help the Belarusian company to implement a large-scale project for the construction of the Petrikov mining and processing plant, which will increase its capacity to produce potash fertilisers in Belarus. Another interesting aspect of the EDB's operations in Belarus concerns the bank's engagement with the China-Belarus Industrial Park Velikiy Kamen. In February 2019, the parties signed a memorandum of cooperation that opens up broad prospects for cooperation and provides for a close partnership in attracting strategic investors to the park, as well as financing individual projects. In particular, the "bank

¹²⁰ The EDB considers participation in financing the reconstruction of the M10 and M3 roads in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-rassmatrivaet-uchastie-v-finansirovani-rekonstruktsii-dorog-m10-i-m3-v-belarusi-335452-2019/>.

¹²¹ The EDB is interested in a presence in the Belarusian HTP [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-rassmatrivaet-uchastie-v-finansirovaniihttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-rassmatrivaet-uchastie-v-finansirovanii-rekonstruktsii-dorog-m10-i-m3-v-belarusirekonstruktsii-dorog-m10-i-m3-v-belarusi-335452-2019/>

interested in investing in the construction of the park's infrastructure"¹²² .

As for the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** (AIIB), the Republic of Belarus became its member in January 2019 and is the first state in the European region with which this financial institution has started cooperating on infrastructure financing. It should be recalled that the AIIB was established at the initiative of the People's Republic of China with registered capital of \$100 billion in October 2014 to overcome infrastructure constraints to economic development not only in Asia, but also beyond, to strengthen and complement financing of international development institutions such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, and the Eurasian Development Bank. The bank's largest shareholders today are China, India and Russia. And in just a few years, "the AIIB's membership has expanded from 57 to 93 countries"¹²³ . In particular, six new sovereign members have recently been admitted: Serbia, Libya, Algeria, Ghana, Morocco and Togo.

Because such "regional financial arrangements shape the new global financial architecture and contribute to global financial stability by acting as a lending mechanism for states participating in these financial arrangements when they need assistance"¹²⁴ , the very emergence of this Western-independent multilateral regional bank has attracted strong support from an overwhelming number of Asian countries. Moreover, the creation of the new bank "marked a major change in the current structure of multilateral development institutions in the Asia-Pacific region"¹²⁵ . The fact is that one of the most important tasks of

¹²² "Great Stone and the EDB will work together to attract investors to the park [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-i-kamen-i-eabr-budut-eabr-budut-vzaimodejstvovat-v-privlechenii-v-park-stvovat-v-privlechenii-v-park-investorsov-335625-335625-201-2019/>

¹²³ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank adds 6 new members [Electronic resource]. -2018 . - URL: <https://ekd.me/2018/12/aziatskij-bank-ekd.me/2018/12/aziatskij-bank-infrastrukturnyx-investicij-popolnilsya-6-novymi-chlenami/>

¹²⁴ Valkova, A.V. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: new financial initiatives in APR / A.V. Valkova // International Finance. Banking System. - 2016. - №1. - C. 27.

¹²⁵ Klishin, V.V. Creation of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a tool to improve investment strategy of developing countries of Asia-Pacific Region / V.V. Klishin. Klishin // Business in Law.

the AIIB is to build a new 'Silk Road' within the transport corridor of Western China - Central Asia - Europe. This means that in order to achieve its stated objectives of developing integration and infrastructure that meets the requirements of the Asian region, this bank needs to rapidly expand the areas and scale of its operations.

In other words, the AIIB should be the instrument to bring the process of regional economic integration in Asia to the multilateral level and further beyond the region, in order to enhance the coherence of trade, economic and financial relations there and deepen cooperation with the partners involved in the New Silk Road project. And the first steps in this direction have already been taken by the new bank.

In just a few years of its existence, the AIIB has managed to finance 24 projects worth four and a half billion dollars. And "the bank plans to increase the average annual volume of lending to \$4-6 billion in the next few years, and to \$10-15 billion thereafter"¹²⁶. Notably, in February 2019, the head of the AIIB, D. Likun stated that "the bank plans to increase project financing from \$3.3bn in 2018 to \$4bn in 2019"¹²⁷. At the same time, the main criterion for the allocation of funds remains the quality of projects. And while the bank intends to focus on financing projects in Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan, its next steps will be aimed at other countries of the world as well.

That is why Minsk believes that Belarus's accession to the AIIB opens up new opportunities for the country, because the bank's resources can be used for the development of the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road," which our country is also a member of. And the resources can be used "to create and upgrade the existing transport corridors, energy and urban infrastructure, industrial and

Economic and Legal Journal. - 2015. - №1. - C. 215.

¹²⁶ Belarus expects to attract the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to co-finance projects [Electronic resource] URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-privlech-aziatskij-bank- infstrukturnyh-investitsij-k-sofinansirovaniju-proektov-322842-2018/>

¹²⁷ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will increase project lending by 20% in 2019 [Electronic resource]. -2019 URL:

<https://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/114547>

logistics areas"¹²⁸ , including in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone", as well as for co-financing of projects with other international financial institutions. In addition, interaction with the AIIB may become another important step for the Republic of Belarus in terms of strengthening the relations of trust-based comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation with the People's Republic of China.

The fact that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is ready to start programming investment projects for Belarus, given its mandate to finance infrastructure development in transport, energy, utilities and urbanization was announced in May 2019 during the first official visit of the AIIB delegation to our country. The Belarusian side suggested that the bank should focus on projects in the transport sector as a funding priority in the short term because "transport projects increase connectivity between different regions of Belarus, provide a land bridge between the West and the East, which is fully in line with one of the bank's key principles for developing and supporting ties with the Asian region."¹²⁹ . In particular, it is about financing the construction and reconstruction of the M3 (Minsk-Vitebsk), M1 (Brest-Minsk-Russian border) highways, where today "the highest priority is given to road infrastructure investment. The AIIB is also considering joining the public-private partnership project for the reconstruction of the M10 [Gomel-Kobrin], which is currently being actively pursued by the Ministry of Transport and Communications"¹³⁰ . The amount of financing by the bank will be determined by the cost of the

¹²⁸ Belarus has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/special/economics/view/belarus-vstupila-v-aziatskijhttps://belta.by/special/economics/view/belarus-vstupila-v-aziatskij- bank-infrastrukturnyh-bank-infrastrukturnyh-investitsij -333276-2019/>.

¹²⁹ Belarus invited the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to consider projects in the transport sector [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlozhila-aziatskomu-banku-infrastrukturnyhhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlozhila-aziatskomu-banku-infrastrukturnyh- investitsij -rassmotret-proekty-v-transportnom-347465-20-rassmotret-proekty-v-transportnom-347465-2019>

¹³⁰ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank may start financing projects in Belarus before the end of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/https://www.belta.by/economics/view/aziatskij -bank-infrastrukturnyh-bank-infrastrukturnyh-investitsii -mozhet-mozhet- nachat-finansirovanie-proektov-v-belarusi-do-kontsanachat-finansirovanie-proektov-v-belarusi-do-kontsa-350838-2019/>

project and the capacity of the Belarusian side to absorb these resources. But it is already clear that we are talking about significant amounts of financing.

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Attracting foreign investment as a topical media issue

The intensification of foreign investment has been a priority for the Belarusian economy for a number of years, due to the limited other sources of economic growth, which is why this issue has been given special attention in Belarus today. The August 2020 State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly noted that "investment is the most powerful and secure source of economic growth"¹³¹. This is why the challenges of integrating the Belarusian economy into the system of modern global economic relations and effectively using the available domestic scientific and technological potential urgently require renewal of the main production assets and implementation of the latest foreign technologies. Among the existing mechanisms of state influence on investment activity, "along with tax incentives, preferential loans, and co-financing,

The information support for investment activities should also be mentioned, including administration, creation of special investment councils, regional development organisations and investment funds"¹³². The following are considered to be promising areas for attracting FDI into the Belarusian economy high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries, logistics, transport and digital infrastructure, the financial sector, the social sphere - through public-private partnership projects, as well as the tourism industry. In addition, it is planned "to form a package of additional preferences for the creation of industrial micro-, small and medium enterprises by domestic businesses and foreign investors in areas with a difficult economic situation"¹³³.

¹³¹ Message to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly [Electronic resource]. - 2020. -

URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-belorusskomu-narodu-i-gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-belorusskomu-narodu-i-](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-belorusskomu-narodu-i-gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-belorusskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-24168/)

[natsionalnomu-sobraniju-24168/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-belorusskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-24168/)

¹³² Zaleskii, B.L. Belarusian international journalism: peculiarities, trends, perspectives : textbook / B.L. Zaleskii. - Minsk: BSU, 2014. - C. 344.

¹³³ Belarus intends to double foreign direct investment by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarushttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-k-2025->

As is known, Belarus has already worked out a draft strategy to attract foreign direct investment until 2035, which envisages a doubling of their volume on a net basis up to three billion dollars by 2025. This will not only involve improving the investment legislation, simplifying administrative procedures for business, but will also involve stepping up efforts to attract foreign investment and promote the Belarusian investment potential abroad through various tools, including economic days. Domestic mass media, representatives of the international segment of national journalism, should also find their niche in this context.

As a reminder, foreign investors invested \$10 billion in the real sector of the Belarusian economy in 2019. At the same time, "the inflow of foreign direct investment amounted to \$7.2 billion, or 72.3% of all incoming foreign investments"¹³⁴. The leading investors were Russian business entities, which accounted for slightly less than half of all incoming investments, as well as companies of Great Britain and Cyprus. In the first half of 2020, the same figure amounted to \$4.5 billion, and the share of foreign direct investment in this volume exceeded 70 per cent. "The main investors of organisations in the republic were entities from the Russian Federation (42.8 per cent of all incoming investments), Cyprus (10.9 per cent) and Austria (7.9 per cent)"¹³⁵.

The peculiarity of the current state of the Belarusian economy lies in the fact that today it is necessary to significantly increase the inflow of foreign investments into the regions of Belarus, where they "should contribute to a sustainable, high quality,

[godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsijnamerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyehinvestitsijnamerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/)

¹³⁴ Foreign investors invest \$10 billion in Belarus' economy in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyehinvestitsijnamerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/>

¹³⁵ Foreign investors invested \$4.5 billion in the Belarusian economy in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyehinvestitsijnamerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/>

to the balanced development of the country's small towns and to the organisation of production there of products attractive to the international market"¹³⁶ . The regional media can and should contribute to the solution of this problem by revealing, summarising and disseminating in their publications for further use already existing positive experience based on concrete examples, of which there are quite a few in our country. In particular, this includes the activities of the free economic zones (FEZs) in Belarus.

For example, only FEZ "Minsk", which has registered about 120 residents, received more than \$ 118 million from abroad in the first six months of this year, 85 percent of which were foreign direct investments, which is 76 percent higher than last year. "Key investors were Switzerland, Cyprus and China"¹³⁷ . An active policy of attracting foreign investment has enabled a significant - almost one-third - increase in exports by FEZ residents to the "far arc" countries, achieving a foreign trade surplus of nearly \$85 million. In addition, 482 people were employed in the new jobs.

Another example. In the first half of 2020, the Gomel-Raton FEZ attracted over USD 55 million in foreign direct investment. The active policy pursued by FEZ residents, even in the current difficult epidemiological conditions, has enabled not only a 2.6 percent increase in industrial output in the first six months of this year, but also a 4 percent increase in the revenue growth rate for goods and services, creation of 232 new jobs in this period, and a foreign trade surplus of almost USD 300 million. The secret of success is also the fact that "residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton sell most of their products outside Belarus"¹³⁸ . This is

¹³⁶ Zalessky, B.L. Brest Region: Aiming to attract foreign investments / B.L. Zalessky // Materials for XV international scientific practical conference, Present Investigations and Development - 2019, 15-22 January 2019: Sofia: Byal GRAD-BG. - C. 28.

¹³⁷ More than \$118 million of foreign investments arrived in FEZ Minsk in January-June [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-118-mlnhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-118-mln-.investitsij-postupilo-v-sez-minsk-v-janvare-ijunezarubezhnyh-investitsij-postupilo-v-sez-minsk-v-janvare-ijune-403464-2020/>

¹³⁸ More than \$55 million of foreign investment came to FEZ Gomel-Raton in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/boleehttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-mln-inostrannyh-investitsij-postupilo-v-sez-gomel-raton-za-polugodie55-mln-inostrannyh-investitsij-postupilo-v-sez-gomel-raton-za-polugodie-404136-2020>

despite the fact that as of 1 August 2020 there were only 69 business entities with investments from 16 countries registered here. Note that this trend is also characteristic of the Gomel region as a whole. Suffice it to say that Gomel showed a significant increase in foreign investment attraction in 2019 - one and a half times at once. The largest investments were then made in the modernisation of production facilities and construction of infrastructure. They were, in particular, technical modernization of the mineral fertilizer shop of the Gomel Chemical Plant, organization of production of innovative medical products at Medplast, production of furniture, mattresses and components at Delcom40, and reconstruction of sections of Gomelenergo's heating networks. As a result, "more than 3,200 new jobs have been created in Gomel through new enterprises and production facilities"¹³⁹.

Investment cooperation with foreign partners is developing in a peculiar way in Vitebsk Region, where more than half of the foreign direct investments attracted in the first six months of 2020 were made by FEZ Vitebsk residents. And this is despite the fact that "the share of employees of FEZ enterprises in the number of those employed in the region's economy does not exceed 3.5%"¹⁴⁰. Let us remind you that 53 investment projects are currently being implemented on FEZ territory, 26 of which involve capital from 15 countries. And here, in the first half of 2020, almost \$22 million of foreign direct investment was attracted on a net basis - almost a third more than in 2019. As a result, such investments have ensured that the share of exports by FEZ residents in the total volume of products sold is 70 per cent, and the geography of supplies has included 63 countries, of which 23 are European Union states.

All these facts, which could go on and on, once again show that the topic of

¹³⁹ Gomel exceeded the target for attracting foreign investment by 1.5 times in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-vhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-v-godu-perevypolnil-zadanie-po-privlecheniju-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-15-raza2019-godu-perevypolnil-zadanie-po-privlecheniju-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-15-raza-379723-2020/>

¹⁴⁰ Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased the volume of foreign direct investments by almost a third in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-za-i-polugodie-narastili-objem-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-pochti-na-tret-401152-2020/>

attracting foreign investment in the Belarusian economy today is developing dynamically and is becoming increasingly relevant, especially for the country's regions. It is obvious that in this regard it should find its rightful place and be firmly fixed on the pages of the Belarusian regional press, which, according to our observations, is not yet happening there, unfortunately.

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CHAPTER 7

The Sustainable Development Goals and the media

In August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus established a working group to promote the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Belarus, consisting of the agency's media specialists and representatives of TV and print media. The aim of the group is to raise awareness of the Belarusian society on the implementation of the SDGs in our country.

It should be recalled that in September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it fixed 17 Sustainable Development Goals aimed, inter alia, at eradicating poverty and hunger, combating inequality and injustice, and addressing the problems associated with climate change. This event demanded that all states of the planet, including the Republic of Belarus, undertake to create mechanisms to achieve the SDGs.

A year and a half later, in May 2017, the institutional foundations for managing the implementation of the plans were already in place: first, the post of National Coordinator for the Sustainable Development Goals was established; second, a national architecture was built

The SDG implementation management system, which includes the
Sustainable Development Council
, parliamentary, regional and partnership
sustainable development groups that ensure effective
interaction of the public sector with civil society
organisations, academia, the business community and foreign
partners. Upon commencement of its work, the Council for Sustainable
Development
assigned each of the 17 SDGs to public authorities in Belarus,

The governmental bodies involved are all part of four sectoral blocks: economy, environment, social sphere, and monitoring. As a result, "all government agencies involved fall into four sectoral blocks: economy, ecology, social sphere, monitoring"¹⁴¹.

Following the recommendation of the United Nations to conduct a three-tiered - global, regional, national - analysis of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Belarus already presented its voluntary report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the international level in 2017, then participated in the presentation of the Eurasian Economic Union report on sustainable development at the UN Headquarters, and in 2018 itself organized the regional forum of national coordinators dedicated to building a partnership of countries and organizations, in which Belarus was ranked 23rd. As a result, the 2018 Global Sustainable Development Goals Index, which was calculated for 156 countries based on one hundred SDG-related indicators, ranked Belarus 23rd, with a "score above the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region"¹⁴².

One of the conditions for successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus is national legislation. In 2018, the Belarusian parliament adopted a number of laws aimed at achieving the SDGs. These include laws on specially protected natural territories and on the production and circulation of organic products. In 2019, draft laws related to health care and the rights of persons with disabilities were considered. The Sustainable Development Goals are also expected to become an organic part of the country's socio-economic development in order to reach a gross domestic product of one hundred billion dollars by 2025 and "join the group of countries with an average

¹⁴¹ Shchetkina, M. Sustainable development depends on each of us / M. Shchetkina // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/interview/view/ustojchivoehhttps://www.belta.by/interview/view/ustojchivoeh-razvitiye-zavisit-ot-kazhdogo-iz-nasrazvitiye-zavisit-ot-kazhdogo-iz-nas-6646/>

¹⁴² Belarus ranked 23rd among 156 countries in achieving the SDGs in 2018 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/belarushttps://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/belarus-zanjala-23-e-mesto-sredi-156-stran-v-dostizhenii-tsur-za-2018-god-333890-201zanjala-23-e-mesto-sredi-156-stran-v-dostizhenii-tsur-za-2018-god-333890-2019/>

per capita income at purchasing power parity above the world average"¹⁴³ .

Another important condition for the successful achievement of the SDGs is the synchronisation of the work of regional groups, since 'the sustainable development of a country as a whole is only possible if the development of all its regions is sustainable'¹⁴⁴ . This is why territorial development plans should be proposed not only by national governments, but also, and above all, by representatives of local governments, taking into account the needs and interests of citizens. That is why the comprehensive development plan developed in August 2019 by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus together with the regional executive committees for more than 30 Belarusian regions lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development seems extremely important in this context, the implementation of which would allow to bring these territories up to the average republican level. Suffice it to say, "A package of 280 projects has been put together so far. Some 54 projects will be started from scratch, 80 will be investments in existing production facilities, and 140 projects are infrastructure-related (with industrial infrastructure accounting for 30% and social facilities for the rest)"¹⁴⁵ . In addition to these 280 projects, there are another 224 investment proposals. Also important is the fact that some of the projects in this comprehensive plan will be financed by "foreign investors as well as international financial institutions that channel funds primarily to infrastructure development, such as the construction of water de-ironing plants or the conversion of boiler houses into local fuels and the development of alternative forms of energy. World Bank funds will be used to renovate schools

¹⁴³ Belarus sees Agenda 2030 as basis for new global policy - Myasnikovich [electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-povestku-2030-kak-osnovu-dlja-novoj-globalnoj-politiki-mj-asnikovich-333892-2019/>

¹⁴⁴ Meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/8943.government.by/ru/content/8943>

¹⁴⁵ 280 projects are proposed for inclusion in the development plan for Belarus's lagging regions [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-plan-razvitiyahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-plan-razvitiya- otstajuschih-regionov-belarusi-predlagaetsja-vkljuchit-280-proektovotstajuschih-regionov-belarusi-predlagaetsja-vkljuchit-280-proektov-359816-2019/>

and hospitals"¹⁴⁶.

In January 2019, the first National Forum on Sustainable Development was held in Minsk, where more than four hundred participants considered the national experience of Belarus in achieving the SDGs, the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the country until 2030, as well as the features of the preparation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period until 2035. The positive experience of the Brest and Mogilev Regions in this regard was highlighted. And today it is a question of overcoming the varied movement to organise this work in other Belarusian regions.

At the first National Forum on Sustainable Development it was also noted that the country's media should play an important role in implementing the key provisions of the 2030 Agenda into national strategic documents, sectoral and regional programmes, which "still have a lot to do to ensure a broad public understanding of the SDGs and the role of each individual in their achievement"¹⁴⁷. This is why, in August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus set up a working group made up of journalists who are deeply immersed in the topic, in the national SDG management architecture, to inform on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. But it is already clear that the efforts of one working group in implementing such an ambitious media project will not be enough.¹⁴⁸ That is why, in August 2019, the Ministry of Information, with the support of the National Project Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) "Supporting the

¹⁴⁶ Shchetkina: the work of regional SDG groups in Belarus needs to be synchronised [Electronic resource]. -2019. - URL : <https://www.belta.by/society/view/schetkina-rabotu-regionalnyh-grupp-po-dostizheniju-tsur-v-belarusi-nuzhno-sinhronizirovat-333887-2019/>

¹⁴⁷ The media will form a separate group in the work to achieve the SDGs in Belarus - Shchetkina [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-sostavjat-otdelnuju-gruppu-v-rabote-nad-dostizheniem-tsur-v-belarusi-schetkina-333874-2019/>.

¹⁴⁸ A national media competition "From Global Goals to Local Actions" has been announced . URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/objavlen-respublikanskij-konkurs-dlja-smi-ot-globalnyh-tselej-k-lokalnym-dej-stvijam-359398-2019/>

Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Management Architecture", announced a national competition "From Global Goals to Local Actions" to involve Belarusian society in the process of achieving the SDGs and enhance the work of journalists.

Until 1 December 2019, essays, interviews, articles, television and radio programmes, publication cycles and broadcasts were accepted for this competition in seven categories including: 1) environmental; 2) social topics, including gender equality and youth issues; 3) economic; 4) topics related to vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, and implementation of the No One Left Behind principle; 5) inter-agency collaboration on the SDGs; 6) SDG-focused projects implemented by businesses, including impact investment projects; 7) community initiatives aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The results of the competition showed that it was a good test of the level of competence, first of all, of Belarusian journalists and another opportunity for them to unleash their creative potential. Thanks to this format of creative competition, the Belarusian press had a very diverse discussion of the main areas and objectives of sustainable development, and possibilities for their implementation and realization. It was not only leading journalists who took part. The competition also interested a wide audience of readers, TV and radio listeners, once again confirming the conclusion that "mass media is not just one of the main channels in informing the population about the SDGs. In this context, they play a crucial role - educating citizens about the opportunities to make informed and responsible decisions about themselves, their families, and to influence the decision of the authorities to implement the SDGs"¹⁴⁹.

An important detail: in 2020, the Republic of Belarus should significantly strengthen the work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, primarily at

¹⁴⁹ The editorial teams of 7 Days and Belaruskaya Dumk G won the competition for coverage of the SDGs [Electronic resource resource] . URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/kollektivny-redaktsii-7-dnej-i-belaruskaj-dumki-pobedili-v-konkurse-po-osvescheniiu-tsur-373180-2019/>

the regional level. At the same time, regional mass media should have a say in this matter, because, according to M. Shchetkina, the national coordinator for the achievement of the SDGs, "without informing the population, without involving it in the work on the achievement of the SDGs, almost nothing can be done"¹⁵⁰. This means that the range of publications on this topic in the regional media should be very broad, concerning practically all

17 of the Sustainable Development Goals and takes into account the country's socio-economic development priorities until 2030. It is worth recalling here that the work of the media is very closely aligned with Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful, inclusive societies and partnerships.

As for the other SDGs, Goal 5: 'Decent Work and Economic Growth', which targets the development of the Belarusian regions' economies at an accelerated pace, is of particular relevance to Belarus in the current environment. A characteristic detail in this regard is that "the traditional economy has practically exhausted its growth reserves, and further development is only possible with the creation of new industries, including those involving foreign investors"¹⁵¹. In other words, as First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus D. Krutoy said, "one of the most important tasks will be to attract investment, improve relevant legislation and revise the entire investment agenda"¹⁵². At the same time, the focus will be on regional policy. In particular, the Belarusian government is already actively working on three large pilot projects: Orsha District of Vitebsk Region, working with areas lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development, and 11 major cities.

In addition, the year 2019 saw the implementation of critical investment projects in areas such as the automotive industry, metallurgy and construction, pulp and

¹⁵⁰ Belarus will strengthen work on the SDGs at the regional level in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belarusi-vhttps://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-godu-usilj-at-rabotu-po-at-rabotu-po-dostizhenij.-tsur-na-regionalnom-urovne-373u-tsur-na-regionalnom-urovne-373167-2019/>

¹⁵¹ Sergei Rumas: Belarus is drawing up an action plan to create conditions for economic development [Electronic resource]: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9175>

¹⁵² Sergei Rumas introduced the First Deputy Prime Minister to the team [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/9155.government.by/ru/content/9155>

paper, wood processing and light industry, and the oil refining, petrochemical and energy sectors. In total, as of mid-December 2019, "out of 34 high-profile investment projects, 22 have already been commissioned"¹⁵³, 12 of which have reached design capacity. But it is not only these major projects that should be in the spotlight of the regional media.

At the regional level, the Vitebsk Region is showing a positive trend in attracting foreign investment, particularly from Latvia. In three quarters of 2019, the volume of foreign investments from Latvian investors increased by three and a half times, exceeding two million dollars. There are already 90 companies registered in Vitebsk Oblast in trade, woodworking, motor transport services, tailoring services, and plastic products manufacturing. The fact that "33 cooperation agreements have been concluded between the districts and cities of the Vitebsk region and Latvian municipalities" undoubtedly plays no small role in strengthening these positive tendencies¹⁵⁴.

The Brest Oblast, which plans to attract at least \$90 million in net foreign direct investment into its economy in 2020, has an even stronger performance in this context. Half of it is expected to go to the Brest Free Economic Zone. As for specific cities in the region, "the target for Brest is about \$15 million of direct foreign investment, and for Baranovichi and Pinsk over \$6 million"¹⁵⁵. A little less than half of these funds will be used to purchase machinery, equipment, vehicles in order to open about six and a half thousand new jobs through modernisation and technical upgrading of the existing enterprises and creation of new production facilities.

At the level of specific business entities, an interesting experience of working

¹⁵³ Sergei Rumas: 22 out of 34 high-profile investment projects have been commissioned . URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9174>

¹⁵⁴ Shcherbitsky, A. The volume of Latvian investments in Vitebsk region for 9 months increased by 3.5 times / A. Shcherbitsky // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/objem-latviiskih-investitsii-v-vitebskuju-oblast-za-9-mesjatsev-vyros-v-35-raza-371103-2019/>

¹⁵⁵ Foreign direct investments in Brest Oblast economy in 2020 will amount to at least \$90 million [- Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/prjamye-inostrannye-investitsii-v-ekonomiku-brestskoj-oblasti-v-2020-godu-sostavjat-nee-menee-90-mln-374236-2019/>

with foreign investments is demonstrated by the company with an almost 60-year history - Goryn Agricultural Combine OJSC, located in the worker's settlement of Rechitsa, Stolin District, Brest Region, which only in August 2019 got out of the reorganization procedure by signing a settlement agreement with creditors. Having actively worked with foreign investors, the staff of the joint-stock company received about 800 thousand dollars from the Polish partner to complete the production of green peas. The modernization of the existing production facilities allowed the company to expand the range of products. In particular, the company "launched the production of a new type of product - boiled sterilized vegetables in vacuum packaging. It is a completely natural product without the addition of preservatives, even such innocuous ones as sugar and salt. The shelf life of such ready-to-eat vegetables is half a year, and the colour, quality and taste of the product are preserved"¹⁵⁶. If we take into account that the work on the introduction of new technology in production at the agrocombinat is almost complete and has even made it possible to sign a contract with a Russian company to supply a new line of products to the retail network, this experience of attracting foreign investment can be considered doubly successful. And it can be the subject of a detailed study not only in the Brest regional press, but also in the media of other Belarusian regions.

All of the above facts eloquently illustrate the conclusion that the implementation of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG #5 related to the topic of attracting foreign investment and its effective use in Belarusian regions, should be firmly fixed on the front pages of regional, district and city newspapers and reflect the experience of specific economic entities already accumulated in this regard as fully as possible. It is also important to promote the work of the media in this direction because "the media not only fix our perception of reality, but they actually model reality itself, the

¹⁵⁶ . A Polish investor has invested Br1.6 million in the production of the Goryn agro-industrial complex [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/polskij-investor-vlozhil-v-provodstvo-gorynskogo-agrokombinata-br16-mln-373083-2019/>.

scenario and dynamics of events..."¹⁵⁷ . At the same time, the task of the media is to reflect reality with all its problems, complexities and contradictions, "in the future to influence the change of the situation for the better"¹⁵⁸ .

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¹⁵⁷ Kuntsevich, A. Responsibility to society distinguishes a journalist from other subjects of information creation / A. Kuntsevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/opinions/view/otvetstvennost-pered-obschestvom-otlichaet-zhurnalista-ot-dругih-subjektov-sozdaniya-informatsii-7drugih-subjektov-sozdaniya-informatsii-71110/>.

¹⁵⁸ Karliukevich, A. The main task of mass media is to reflect reality with all its problems and difficulties / A. Karliukevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/12/11/1940593.html>.

Global information security and the regional press

Global digitalisation, which we are all witnessing today, is rapidly changing the world around us, including in the sphere of information and media. At the same time, the new technologies affect not only the nature of the creative work of today's journalists, but also bring to the fore a number of challenges and threats to which the journalistic community must respond. At the international scientific and practical conference "Security and Sustainable Development: Theory and Practice in the Context of Digital Transformation" held in Minsk in December 2019, it was noted that "the leading players in the information field are now hastily building defence lines. Whereas a few years ago the information domain was dominated by the themes of free trade and human rights, the issue of security is now the dominant one"¹⁵⁹. The apparent militarisation of the information space in a number of countries, which has a destructive impact on other actors in the media and information sphere, is also worrying.

Considering all these challenges and threats, the Republic of Belarus launched a number of initiatives in 2019 to address global information security issues. In particular, in March, the country's Information Security Concept was approved, which refers to information sovereignty as a new approach to ensuring information security, and to information neutrality as a form of state-responsible behaviour and self-restraint on the use of disruptive technologies to the detriment of other states. More specifically, information sovereignty in Belarus will be achieved through the formation of a system of legal regulation of relations in the information sphere that ensures safe sustainable development, social justice and harmony. As part of this approach, the development of national mass media and telecommunications should be ensured, educating and stimulating in society "a critical attitude to manifestations of disrespect for

¹⁵⁹ Information offensive capabilities are already in place in some states - Makarov [Electronic resource]. - 2019 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nastupatelnyj-potentsial-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-uzhe-sformirovan-v-nekotoryh-gosudarstvah-makarov-371838-2019/>

national foundations, traditions and violations of norms of morality and law in the information sphere, intolerance to disinformation, information manipulation and other implicit information-psychological influences"¹⁶⁰ .

In international relations, the information sovereignty of the Belarusian state should be ensured based on the principle of information neutrality.¹⁶¹ Its essence is that, defending its own national interests in the sphere of information using all available forces and means, the Belarusian side aims to pursue a peaceful foreign information policy, to respect the generally recognized and generally accepted rights of any state in this sphere, to exclude initiatives of "interference in the information sphere of other countries aimed at discrediting or disputing their political, economic, social and spiritual standards and priorities, and also to cause harm to the information society. Important for representatives of the journalistic community in this context is the statement contained in

The concept of information security of the Republic of Belarus states that in order to ensure the policy of information neutrality it is necessary to increase the presence of Belarus in the global information space and expand international information exchange.

In other words, existing security threats point to the need to expand interstate cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere. Based on the urgency of this problem, in September 2019, at the high-level international conference in Minsk "Countering Terrorism through Innovative Approaches and the Use of New Emerging Technologies," the Belarusian side proposed to form a "digital good-neighbourhood belt" aimed at defusing tensions in the information sphere. According to President of Belarus A. Lukashenka, "the key elements of such agreements could be the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, which would first of all guarantee non-interference of countries in

¹⁶⁰ The Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<http://http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf>

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

each other's information resources"¹⁶². The Belarusian side sees the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements to ensure information security as a mechanism to implement this initiative.

Speaking from the high rostrum of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019 about the need to expand interstate digital cooperation and enhance mutual trust in the information sphere, the Belarusian side once again drew the attention of the entire global community to the need to implement the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, as well as non-interference of countries in each other's information resources. Digital sovereignty should guarantee the ability of the state to control its information space, prevent and block cyberattacks, and ensure reliable protection of critical infrastructure. Digital neutrality implies that countries will not undertake actions in cyberspace that damage the security of other states. Ultimately, such agreements could lay the groundwork for international rules of responsible behaviour in virtual space."¹⁶³

The launch of such a "wave of digital security" could undoubtedly increase the effectiveness of joint efforts to counter terrorist threats in the virtual space. In this context, Belarus is ready to cooperate and strengthen ties with all countries of the world and, especially, with its neighbours, including in the Commonwealth of Independent States, where there is an active search for a unifying agenda, new ideas shared by a wide range of states and organizations, and where, first of all, "we should agree that we in the media should at least not pounce on each other and not conduct this information war against each

¹⁶² Participation in an international conference on counter-terrorism [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnojru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnoj-konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terrorizmom-21konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terrorizmom-21910/

¹⁶³ Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei in the General Debate at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly (26 September 2019, New York) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b698116bea64mfa/b698116bea64ee66.html

other"¹⁶⁴. It should be noted that the Belarusian initiative to create a "digital good-neighbourhood belt" in the post-Soviet space was supported, first of all, by Russia, which was announced by the head of the foreign ministry of that country, Sergey Lavrov, in November 2019. According to him, the initiative "fully corresponds to Russia's aim to form as many digital good-neighbours as possible"¹⁶⁵. The Belarusian side also spoke about the need to expand international cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere at the summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in November 2019 in Bishkek, emphasizing that "information security should be firmly established among the CSTO's priority activities"¹⁶⁶. Furthermore, in December 2019, at the 26th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the participating states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, official Minsk drew the attention of the members of this international structure to the need to conclude international agreements in the field of cybersecurity, "similar to the agreements on additional confidence and security building measures in the politico-military sphere"¹⁶⁷, to better adapt to the changing security environment and thus enhance joint actions on. An important aspect of the implementation of this initiative is also the consistent development of partnerships of the Republic of Belarus and within the framework of bilateral relations, both at the level of individual states and their regions.

At the same time, "one of the security reserves that has not yet been fully

¹⁶⁴ Participation in the meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistanru/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistan-22184/

¹⁶⁵ Lavrov: Moscow welcomes Minsk's digital security proposal [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/7145127tass.ru/politika/7145127>

¹⁶⁶ Collective Security Treaty Organisation Summit [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-oru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-okollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-22481/

¹⁶⁷ Speech by Belarusian Foreign Minister V. Makei at the 26th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council (Bratislava, 5 December 2019) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/statements/c8f7cc1b86026dad.html/.gov.by/press/statements/c8f7cc1b86026dad.html/>

exploited is the resource of analytical and expert communities, which have a unique research potential"¹⁶⁸. One should believe that representatives of the international segment of the Belarusian journalism could contribute to the development of certain areas of analysis of security reserves in the information sphere. Especially as regards combating fake information, methodology of responsible behaviour in the information and media sphere, ways to verify information on the Internet.

It should be reminded that in the above-mentioned Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus, "manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, erosion of national sovereignty, instability of the information infrastructure" is mentioned among the modern challenges and threats emerging in the information sphere and posing danger to the constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state.¹⁶⁹ Proceeding from the fact that the information sphere has now become of key importance for any state and any individual, Belarus has set the task to expand the sphere of influence of domestic mass media and to take "measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting and the population's trust in the official mass media"¹⁷⁰.

The fact is that during the "Big Conversation with the President" in early March 2019, the Belarusian head of state drew attention to the fact that "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a lack of content that would be absolutely trusted by the audience, One of the reasons is the so-called fake

¹⁶⁸ Building a reliable security system by the state alone is impossible - Vakulchik [Electronic resource]. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/society/view/postroenie-nadezhnoj-sistemy-bezopasnosti-tolko-silami-gosudarstva-nevozmozhno-vakulchik-371768-2019/>

¹⁶⁹ Matveev, V. The concept of information security of Belarus is to be approved in the near future / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://belta.by/society/view/kontseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belarusi-planiruetsjahttps://belta.by/society/view/kontseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belarusi-planiruetsja-utverdit-v-utverdit-v-blizhaj_shee-vremja-339646-2019shhee-vremja-339646-2019/.

¹⁷⁰ Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusiru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/.

news. They spread instantly, capturing the audience, stirring their thoughts"¹⁷¹ . In this regard, the role of a deterrent in the fight against fake news should be taken up today:

- 1) authoritative **media**;
- 2) Professional **journalists who** steadfastly observe the ethical and moral laws of the media space and strive for maximum accuracy and objectivity in their work;
- 3) **representatives of the expert community**, who by virtue of their competence have yet to take a special place in the work of the media.

The fact that traditional media should become a powerful uniting factor in the fight against fake information and unprofessional approaches to the coverage of current foreign and domestic issues was mentioned in the resolution of the XIII Belarusian International Media Forum "Partnership for the Future: Digital Agenda for Media Space", which took place in Minsk in September 2018. The resolution of the forum stressed that it is extremely important to preserve the authority and position of traditional media - print and electronic - since it is these subjects of the information field that can fully "bear responsibility to the society for the quality, completeness and reliability of the information presented, have the capacity to ensure a professional approach to the creation and distribution of information products"¹⁷² .

Real practice shows that the credibility of the media with a wide audience arises when the media competently analyses the events taking place in society and promptly provides comprehensive answers to urgent questions arising from readers, viewers and listeners. In other words, it is possible and necessary to minimize the threats of negative information influence in the form of fake news

¹⁷¹ Meeting with representatives of the public and expert community, Belarusian and foreign media "Big Talk with the President". [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-.-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smiru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/

¹⁷² Media need to unite against fake information and unprofessionalism - Media Forum resolution [Electronic resource]. -2018 .- URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-nuzhno-objedinitjsja-v-borbe-s-fejkovoj-informatsiej-i-neprofessionalizmom-rezoljutsija-mediaforuma-317622-2018/>

by creating one's own interesting, relevant and truthful content, so that "any fake news can be confidently answered and destroyed at the root"¹⁷³. It is clear that without close and constant interaction with representatives of the expert community, media outlets are unlikely to be able to fully achieve such a large-scale task.

In order to strengthen coordination between the media and expert communities in this area, it appears to be time to start forming professional **media and expert** pools in the most important areas of Belarusian foreign and domestic policy. Professionalism in the information sphere in this case should be understood as high-quality and interesting presentation of materials, skilful technical organization of the creative process, availability of expert opinions and analytics based on reliable data. We can see something similar, for example, already during the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus, where among partner groups, as proposed by the Ministry of Information

In Belarus, the national SDG management architecture has established a media expert group to conduct media outreach on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Another interesting example in this direction is the 2019 Joint Action Plan for Media Coverage of Belarus' Export Potential, signed in March this year by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote "the dissemination of objective information about the development of national exports, strengthening of international contacts of Belarusian enterprises, and the entry of their products into new markets"¹⁷⁴. The basic component of this media-expert interaction

¹⁷³ Pavel Legky: the main tool in the fight against inaccurate information on the Internet is people's trust [Electronic resource]. -2018. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/society/view/pavel-legkij-glavnyj-instrument-v-borbe-s-nedostovemoj-informatsiej-v-internet-doverie-ljudej-317648-2018/>

¹⁷⁴ Mininform and BelCCI sign joint action plan on media coverage of Belarusian exports [electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/mininform-i-beltp-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-posvescheniju-v-smi-belorusskogo-eksporta-339703-2019/>

should be a series of seminars for journalists working on foreign trade topics, which would not only highlight key problems of Belarusian exports, but also contribute to increasing the presence of relevant economic topics in the Belarusian media at all levels - from the central to regional ones. It should be reminded that the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 contains among its eight main tasks the requirement **to promote export culture** in the form of fixing in the mass consciousness the importance of exports for the development of the country and society and raising its priority. In this context, the adoption by the Ministry of Information and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of a joint action plan to highlight export potential

Belarus in the media sphere seems to be an extremely important and necessary step.

In this context, the interaction between the media and expert communities at the regional level, including the implementation of the policy of international cooperation of the Belarusian regions, deserves a separate discussion. The fact is that "regional media occupy a unique niche in which neither national, nor international media can compete"¹⁷⁵. But at the same time, "despite the powerful development of media space, there is still a lack of content which would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience"¹⁷⁶. This is under the circumstances when the thematic spectrum into which the Belarusian regional press is to be embedded has been expanding at an exceptional rate in recent years. These are just the areas highlighting the geography of international cooperation of Belarus' regions that have emerged in recent years and that need to be adequately reflected in the regional media in order to contribute to the effective resolution of problems arising here:

¹⁷⁵ Digitalisation boosts regional media - Lung [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsilrovizatsija-sposobstvuet-povysheniju-urovny-a-regionalnyh-smi-legkij-317725-2018/>.

¹⁷⁶ District publications can maintain audience trust with exceptional truthfulness - Melnikova [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/doverie-auditorii-rajonnye-izdaniya-mogut-podderzhivat-iskljuchitelnoj-pravdivostju-melnikova-338797-2019/>.

- 1) developing large-scale economic integration with the regions of the Eurasian Economic Union and especially with the Russian entities of the federation within the Union State, as well as with the regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States;
- 2) Increasing comprehensive cooperation with the regions of the European Union and especially within the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative, as well as with the regions of the "good neighbourhood belt" countries Poland, Lithuania and Latvia;
- 3) deepening interaction with the regions of the countries participating in the One Belt, One Road mega-project and especially with the provinces, autonomous regions and cities of the People's Republic of China;
- 4) Further intensification of trade and economic relations with the regions of the "far arc" countries - South-East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America - and especially with those where there is considerable potential for mutually beneficial inter-regional cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus assumes that the role of traditional regional media will become increasingly important, as "the successful development of any region depends in general on the information space, on the ability to quickly adapt to the conditions of the rapidly growing market of communication technologies"¹⁷⁷. This is why there is already a need for internationally and regionally specific information strategies, which are able to significantly extend the sphere of influence of a particular media outlet due to the high quality of the media product it generates.

¹⁷⁷ The role of local media in the socio-economic development of regions will be discussed at a national meeting [Electronic resource] . -URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/rol-mestnyh-smi-v-sotsialno-ekonomicheskom-razviti- regions- obsudjat-na-respublikanskom-soveschani-337842-2019/>

CHAPTER 9

Exports as a response to challenges

Sustained economic growth at an annual rate of three to four per cent is the specific objective set today in the Republic of Belarus to ensure stable socio-economic development of the country in the medium term. For its successful accomplishment, it is necessary to "ensure the efficient operation of each enterprise and the equitable and sustainable development of the country's regions; create conditions for attracting foreign and domestic investment; and increase exports, including to new markets"¹⁷⁸. The presence of the export theme in this list of the most important conditions is explained by the fact that 'export is the basis of the open Belarusian economy, as it ensures the inflow of currency into the country, profits to enterprises and taxes to the budget of the Republic of Belarus'¹⁷⁹. Among the Belarusian companies that are active in the current challenging conditions in foreign markets, we should mention, first of all, the largest global manufacturer of dump trucks and transportation equipment for the mining and construction industries, which occupies about a third of the global market for heavy-duty dump trucks - the **Belarusian Automobile Plant**, whose export in 2020 is developing along several major vectors at once.

The first vector is **Russia's regions**. For example, in April 2020, another batch of 180-tonne BELAZ-75180 dump trucks was shipped to the Kirov branch of Apatit JSC in the **Murmansk region under** an agreement signed in September 2019. Three 130-tonne vehicles have already arrived in this Russian region in February 2020. In total, at least 50 dump trucks will go there in the next three years, which will be used to develop the apatite-nepheline deposits in the Khibiny. It is expected that the 180-tonne dump trucks "will be subsequently

¹⁷⁸ Kochanova's speech at the opening of the second session of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus of the seventh convocation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/vystuplenie-kochanovoj-na-otkrytii-vtoroj-sessii-soveta-respubliki-natsionalnogo-sobranija-belarusi-385692-2020/>

¹⁷⁹ Zalesskii, B.L. Export Culture and Mass Consciousness / B.L. Zalesskii // Journalshytko-2016: Status, Problems and Prospects: Mataryyaly 18-th International Scientific and Practical Conference marking the 95th anniversary of Belarusian Diplomatic Academy, 10-11 Ist. 2016, Mshsk / edited by: S.V. Dubovsh (editor-in-chief) [i sh.] - Vyp. 18. - Mshsk : AAT "Palshrafkambshat i imya Ya. Kolas", 2016. - C. 234.

modified into smart dump trucks and will acquire new technical characteristics. The additionally installed equipment will make it possible to control them over long distances. A pilot site for unmanned operation of quarry machinery is planned to be set up in the Nyorpakha open pit of the Vostochny mine"¹⁸⁰.

Also in April 2020, another six dump trucks from the Belarusian manufacturer started operating in the **Krasnoyarsk Territory** at the Achinsk Alumina Refinery, part of JSC Rusal Achinsk. The upgrading of the mining fleet at the Mazulsky mine will make it possible to increase productivity and cut costs in the technological process of raw material extraction. A typical detail: in 2020 Russian Aluminum, one of the world's largest aluminium producers, plans to buy several dozens of Belarusian machines, as "these machines have high operating characteristics, they are more economical in fuel and lubricant consumption. The driver's cabs have improved visibility and control systems, and are equipped with comfortable seats and climate control systems."¹⁸¹.

Another Russian region, where the second 130-ton dump truck BELAZ-75131 was delivered in early 2020, is **Sverdlovsk region**, where the mining and processing enterprise JSC Uralasbest is already operating eleven 130-ton trucks, each of which transports up to fifteen hundred tons of mined rock per shift. How important it is for the Russian side, say these figures. BELAZ trucks work "on the base of Bazhenovka deposit, explored reserves of which are enough for more than 150 years. The field is developed by the open-pit method. The quarry is 8 km long, 2.5 km wide and 350 m deep"¹⁸².

The second vector is the countries **of the Eurasian Economic Union**. In particular, **Armenia**, where three 90-tonne BELAZ-75585 dump trucks were

¹⁸⁰ BELAZ has delivered another batch of dump trucks to Russia's Apatit [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavilhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavil-ocherednuy-u-u-partij-u-samosvalov-u-samosvalov-rossij-skomu-apatituskomu-apatitu-3-86828-2020/>

¹⁸¹ Nemankova, Y. BELAZ quarry dump trucks have started work in Krasnoyarsk Krai / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/karjemye-samosvaly-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-krasnojarskom-krae-386202-2020/>

¹⁸² Nemankova, Y. Another 130-ton dump truck BELAZ will start work at Russian "Uralasbest" / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ocherednoj-130-tonnyj-samosval-belaz-nachnet-rabotu-na-rossijskom-uralasbeste-385689-2020/>

sent in the spring of 2020. They joined the fleet of equipment of Sotk gold mine, the largest gold mine in Armenia by production of pure gold, reserves of which are estimated at more than 120 tonnes. It should be noted that the 130-ton Belarusian machines are already working here with high efficiency. The new dump trucks are equipped with diesel engines capable of producing up to 1,200 horsepower. "New high-strength steels have been used to improve the reliability of the main load-bearing elements of the dump truck, and castings have been used in the most stressed areas"¹⁸³.

Vector three is **far-abroad** countries, whose share in the exports of the Belarusian Automobile Plant has almost doubled by half since the beginning of 2020 and reached 40 percent. In April, eight 130-tonne dump trucks BELAZ-75131 started working at a coal mine on the island of Kalimantan in **Indonesia**. Their configuration takes into account all the wishes of the Indonesian partners and climatic conditions. These include tropical options such as "appropriate rubber, air conditioning and a special cooling system"¹⁸⁴. The Belarus Automobile Plant is actively expanding its presence on the African continent in **Algeria**, where in the spring of 2020 another batch of five BELAZ-78221 front loaders was shipped. And the company plans to "participate in specialized exhibitions and conduct direct negotiations with interested consumers of quarry machinery in the region"¹⁸⁵.

Belarusian companies that are active in foreign markets, even in such difficult conditions as we see today, include **the Gomselmash holding**, a manufacturer of grain and forage harvesters, corn and potato harvesters, mowers and

¹⁸³ Nemankova, Y. BELAZ sent dump trucks to Armenia / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-otpravilhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-otpravil-v-armeniiu-kariemye-samosvalyv-armeniiu-kariemye-samosvaly-385547-2020/>.

¹⁸⁴ Eight BELAZ dump trucks have started work in Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vosemhhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/vosem-kariemyh-samosvalov-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-mdoneziikariemyh-samosvalov-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-mdonezii-387074-2020/>.

¹⁸⁵ Nemankova, Y. A batch of BELAZ loaders shipped to Algeria / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/partiiahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/partiia-pogruzchikov-belaz-otgruzhena-v-alzhirpogruzchikov-belaz-otgruzhena-v-alzhir-385911-2020/>.

other

agricultural equipment that is already operating on the fields of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Chile, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Argentina, China, South Korea, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In the first quarter of 2020, the holding's enterprises shipped more than 400 machines to its customers. "At the same time 278 self-propelled combine harvesters and machine sets have been exported outside Belarus. The list of countries to which the vehicles have been shipped includes Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Moldova. <...> In total, shipments to the same period in 2019 increased by 373%."¹⁸⁶

Another enterprise that is actively promoting its products in foreign markets is the **Minsk Tractor Works**. More than 250 tractors have been shipped to Pakistan alone since the beginning of 2020. This is an eloquent testimony to the fact that "even despite the crisis in many Asian countries and the restrictive measures introduced due to the difficult epidemiological situation, deliveries remain at the planned level"¹⁸⁷. In total, since 1955, Minsk tractor builders have shipped more than 120 thousand of their vehicles to this country in Southern Asia. The company does not forget about other export directions. In particular, in the first quarter of the current year, about five hundred units of machinery and tractor kits have been exported to European countries. The following fact speaks for itself: "Export of MTZ's products to African countries in the first quarter of 2020 has increased by 70%"¹⁸⁸. In April this year for one of the countries of this continent - Sudan - the next "shipment of more than 100 tractors <...> was

¹⁸⁶ "Gomselmash supplied over 270 harvesters and machine sets to foreign markets in the first quarter [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-v-i-kvartale-postavil-na-vneshnie-rynki- bolee-270-kombaj nov-i-mashinokomplektov-3 88443 -2020>

¹⁸⁷ MTZ has delivered more than 250 tractors to Pakistan since the beginning of the year [Electronic resource]. -

2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-s-nachala-goda-postavil-v-pakistan- bolee-250-traktorov-388294-2020/>.

¹⁸⁸ Nemankova, Y. Exports of MTZ products to African countries increased by 70% / Y.

Nemankova // . [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-produktsii-mtz-v-strany-afriki-vyros-na-70- 386540-2020/>

formed. This is the second shipment in 2020"¹⁸⁹. The following figures complete the picture very convincingly. "Since the beginning of the year the company has increased deliveries to Russian regions by 20%. Export of Belarusian agricultural equipment to Uzbekistan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia has also increased"¹⁹⁰. Deliveries to Tajikistan have doubled, with more than a hundred tractors and tractor kits shipped there in the first three months of the year. Much of this growth can be explained by the fact that "since January 2020, spare parts and components imported into the territory of Tajikistan for the further assembly of agricultural machinery are not subject to VAT and customs duties"¹⁹¹. In the first quarter of this year, Minsk Tractor Works products were shipped to more than thirty countries, including 22 non-CIS countries.

In the first quarter of 2020, the **Minsk Automobile Plant** increased its supplies of equipment to non-CIS countries by almost two and a half times. An important component in achieving this figure was the fact that at the beginning of this year, the enterprise, together with Borisov Pozhsnab LLC, signed a contract to supply 73 units of fire fighting and rescue vehicles to the Mongolian Emergency Situations Agency. And MAZ has already "started fulfilling the contract to supply chassis and assemble passenger vehicles for export to Mongolia. The joint project will be implemented during this year"¹⁹².

In the spring of 2020, **Amkodor-DOMZ**, a unitary enterprise based in

¹⁸⁹ Nemankova, Y. MTZ will supply the second batch of machinery to Sudan / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-postavit-vtoruj-u-u-partij-u-tehniki-v-sudanu-tehniki-v-sudan-3-86164-2020/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-postavithttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-postavit-vtoruj-u-u-partij-u-tehniki-v-sudanu-tehniki-v-sudan-3-86164-2020/).

¹⁹⁰ MTZ has a good export performance: deliveries to Russia are up 20%, deliveries to Russia are up 70%

- to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://ont.by/news/u-mtz-horoshiehttps://ont.by/news/u-mtz-horoshie-pokazateli-po-eksportu-na-20-vyrosli-postavki-v-rossiyu-na-70-v-pokazateli-po-eksportu-na-20-vyrosli-postavki-v-rossiyu-na-70-v-afriku>

¹⁹¹ MTZ has doubled its exports to Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-uvelichil-eksport-produktsii-v-tadzhikistan-v-2-raza-387386-2020/>

¹⁹² Nemankova, Y. MAZ in Q1 increased exports to far abroad almost 2.4 times / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-v-i-kvartale-uvelichil-eksport-v-dalnee-zarubezhje-pochti-v-24-raza-387079-2020/>

Dzerzhinsk, Minsk Region, seriously updated its export plans by shipping its first batch of products to the Russian region, the Republic of Karelia, in April. There, the seven gantry cranes with the lifting capacity from 3.2 to 16 tons will be used to implement an investment project, which the Government of Karelia attaches great importance to - "to create on the premises of the former Onega tractor plant high-tech import-substituting full cycle production of harvesting equipment: harvesters and forwarders of medium and heavy class"¹⁹³. A typical detail: the overhead travelling cranes sent to Karelia are next-generation equipment, which is controlled from the floor by means of a radio signal, ensuring high safety standards for the personnel. It is also important that a second batch of equipment from Dzerzhinsk in Belarus is due to be sent to Karelia this spring.

Another Belarusian company that has significantly strengthened its position in the Russian market in the first quarter of 2020 is **THE COMPANY BELJI**. In the first three months of this year, the company assembled 5,059 vehicles and sold a total of 5,230. At the same time, "deliveries to the Russian market increased 2.5 times, with 2,705 vehicles exported there in the first quarter"¹⁹⁴. The company plans to sell a total of 28,000 vehicles in 2020, of which 18,000 will be shipped to Russia.

Belarusian agricultural and food producers also continue to increase their deliveries abroad. In the first quarter of 2020, their exports to 83 countries grew by another almost 10 percent, amounting to almost a billion and a half dollars. An important detail: the increase in supplies was observed in almost all directions. Specifically, "exports to Russia increased by 4.4 percent, to CIS countries excluding Russia by 24.7 percent, to Asia and Oceania by 2.2 times, to

¹⁹³ "Amkodor-Onego in Karelia has received the first batch of overhead cranes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-onego-v-karelii-poluchil-pervuju-partiju-mostovykh-kranovpoluchil-pervuju-partiju-mostovykh-kranov-388008-2020/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-onego-v-kareliihttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-onego-v-karelii-poluchil-pervuju-partiju-mostovykh-kranovpoluchil-pervuju-partiju-mostovykh-kranov-388008-2020/).

¹⁹⁴ "BELJI has increased exports to Russia by 2.5 times in Q1 / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-v-i-kvartale-uvlichil-eksport-v-rossiju-v-25-razakvartale-uvlichil-eksport-v-rossiju-v-25-raza-386430-2020/>.

the Americas and the Caribbean by 52.4 percent and to the EU by 54.3 percent. China's direction showed a 2.4-fold increase"¹⁹⁵ . The supplies of Belarusian meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, and potatoes to the foreign markets increased especially intensively during the first three months of 2020. These positive trends were largely a continuation of the strong export performance that the Belarusian agro-industrial complex demonstrated in 2019. As a reminder, supplies of agricultural products and foodstuffs to 104 countries exceeded five and a half billion dollars in monetary terms then, accounting for virtually one sixth of the Republic of Belarus' merchandise exports in 2019. A number of positive trends contributed to the achievement of this level. First, "shipments of milk and dairy products, rapeseed oil, prepared or canned fish, canned fruits and vegetables, soybean oil, poultry meat, eggs, chocolate and other finished products containing cocoa, and potatoes have increased"¹⁹⁶ . Secondly, the geographical diversification of Belarusian exports increased. The new markets include countries on almost all continents: in Asia - Afghanistan; in Africa - Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Sudan, Uganda; in the Americas and the Caribbean - Belize, Cuba, Uruguay; in Europe - Luxembourg, Finland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The diversity of supplies from Belarus to these new countries was illustrated by the following examples. Thus, supplies of whey and skim milk powder were launched to Afghanistan, malt to Angola and Burkina Faso, skim milk powder to Benin, Mozambique and Niger, canned milk and milk powder to Cuba, alcoholic beverages to Uruguay, fur and fur raw materials to Finland, sugar and potatoes to Albania, and potatoes to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thirdly, Belarusian exports of agricultural products and food to Belarus' strategic partners - Russia and China - increased in 2019. Specifically, to Russia,

¹⁹⁵ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products grew by 9.8% in the first quarter [Electronic resource] : <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-beloruskoj--selhozproduktcii-v-i-kvartale-vyros-na-98-389760-2020/>

¹⁹⁶ Belarusian agricultural exports exceed \$5.5 billion in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-beloruskoj-selhozproduktcii-v-2019-godu-prevysil-55-mlrd-378531-2020>

its volume increased by three percent and amounted to \$4.3 billion. It should be noted that "the main driver of growth in supplies to Russia was dairy products. Its export revenues increased by 23%. Supplies of eggs, flax fiber, gelatin, seeds and rapeseed oil have also increased"¹⁹⁷.

As for China, deliveries from Belarus increased by almost 60 percent and amounted to \$131.5 million. This brought the share of Belarusian exports to the Chinese market in the structure of total exports to the countries of Asia and Oceania to 68 percent. At the same time, "the volume of deliveries of high value-added processed meat products (beef and poultry) increased by \$53.3 million to 44.1 percent of the total structure of Belarus' food exports to China."¹⁹⁸ . This is in addition to the fact that supplies of rapeseed oil, flax fiber, chocolate, alcoholic beverages, mineral water, skimmed milk powder and whey powder to the Celestial Empire have increased.

Even more aggressive plans for the development of agricultural and food exports were adopted in Belarus for 2020 - "to increase supplies by 4.2% compared to 2019 and reach an amount exceeding \$5.7 billion"¹⁹⁹. At the same time, hopes were pinned not only on dairy products, but also on crop and meat products. Specifically, 3.6 million tons of dairy products and 316 thousand tons of meat products will be shipped to Russia alone. There are also interesting prospects for China, where another 14 new producers of meat products from Belarus were accredited in January 2020. These include 11 new beef producers - Pinsk, Brest, Zhlobin, Gomel, Grodno, Vitebsk, Slonim, Volkovysk meat packing plants, Brest Traditions, Vakhavyak Plus, Miron, as well as three

¹⁹⁷ Nemankova, Yu. Belarus plans to supply more than 3 million tons of dairy and 316 thousand tons of meat to Russia in 2020 / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-postavit-bolee-3-mln-t-molochki-https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-postavit-bolee-3-mln-t-molochki-i-316-tys-t-t-mj-asa-v-rossiju-vasa-v-rossiju-v-2020-godu-378543-2020>

¹⁹⁸ The first container train carrying meat products is scheduled to depart for China this year: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervyj-kontejnernyj-poezd-s-mjasnoj-produktsiej-planiruj-ut-otpravat-v-kitaj-v-etom-godu-378553-2020>

¹⁹⁹ Belarus plans to increase food exports by 4.2% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarushttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-uvelichit-eksport-prodovolstvija-na-42-v-2020-goduplaniruet-uvelichit-eksport-prodovolstvija-na-42-v-2020-godu-378535-2020>

chicken meat producers - Belorusneft-Osobino and two sites of Rassvet poultry farm. Five more companies have expanded the range of products that can be exported to

the Chinese market for products "including chicken feet, wing tips and offal"²⁰⁰ . All these facts demonstrate that whoever does not give up in the most difficult circumstances wins in the end, contributing to overcoming the consequences of the adverse epidemiological situation in the world.

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²⁰⁰ Another 14 producers have been accredited to supply Belarusian meat products to China [Electronic resource]:
<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/dlja-postavok-belorusskoj -mj asnoj -produksii-v-kitaj-akkreditovany-esche- 14-proizvoditelej -375197-2020/>

CHAPTER 10

Towards export diversification

One of the priority objectives for the development of the Belarusian economy, as set out in the Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, is the commodity and country diversification of exports, which should ensure growth of Belarusian supplies in 2025 up to \$50 billion, as well as "promotion of goods and services to new markets"²⁰¹. It is clear that the enterprises that have already created a certain foundation for the development of foreign sales markets can contribute to solving this task. These, of course, include, first of all, the flagships of the Belarusian industry.

For example, despite the coronavirus pandemic, Minsk Tractor Plant shipped \$530 million worth of products for export in 2020. At the same time, it increased deliveries to non-CIS countries by 18.5 percent. Although Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine remained the main importers of its machinery, "a total of 45 countries were supplied with products, including nine countries that were not sold in 2019 (Burundi, Great Britain, Haiti, Guatemala, Guinea, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Spain)"²⁰².

Two million tonnes of steel products were shipped to 52 countries in 2020 by the Belarusian Steel Works. At the same time, the share of European Union countries in total exports exceeded 45 percent. The fact that "shipments to Spain, Slovenia and France increased twofold or more. Shipments to Austria, Finland, Ireland, Romania and Poland increased by more than 30 per cent"²⁰³. Rolled wire rod, flatbed bronze and steel wire, as well as structural steel for the automotive industry, were in the highest demand in these markets.

The Minsk Motor Plant (MMZ), on the other hand, increased its supplies to

²⁰¹ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the Period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 46.

²⁰² MTZ increased exports to non-CIS countries by 18.5% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-vhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-v-2020-godu-uvlechil-eksport-produktsii-v-dalnee-zarubezhje-nagodu-uvlechil-eksport-produktsii-v-dalnee-zarubezhje-na-185-427593-2021/>

²⁰³ BMZ has increased exports of steel products to 13 EU countries [Electronic resource] : <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bmz-narastil-eksport-www.belta.by/regions/view/bmz-narastil-eksport-metalloproduktsii-v-13-stran-evrosoj-uza-426139-2021/>

Russia by more than 12 percent in 2020, exceeding \$40 million. This is largely due to the fact that in the neighboring country MMZ "cooperates with 59 Russian industrial assembly companies and is also working on establishing partnerships with ten more"²⁰⁴.

Enterprises of the Belarusian light industry concern Bellegprom, which last year sent about 60 percent of its total output to 52 countries, are getting off to a fairly high start in the new five-year period, having also achieved a foreign trade surplus of over \$170 million. At the same time, "exports to Lithuania (128.7%), Germany (104.6%), Estonia (115.3%), Japan (296.2%), Uzbekistan (107.3%), Sweden (102.8%), Bulgaria (158.2%), Slovakia (176.2%), the Czech Republic (115.8%), Israel (129.4%), Denmark (360.3%), Australia (361.2%), Austria (261.4%) increased"²⁰⁵.

The Bellesbumprom Concern's enterprises also increased their exports by five percent in 2020, with exports to 70 countries reaching almost 610 million dollars, accounting for a record three quarters of the Concern's total output. It was possible to do it, to a great extent, owing to the growth in the volume of exports to non-CIS countries. In particular, shipments to Albania, Ireland, Iceland, Cyprus, Mexico were resumed, but the highest growth rate was recorded in the USA, Canada, Austria, Great Britain, Switzerland, Finland, Turkey, India, Indonesia. In addition, "exports to China grew by almost 1.3 times over the year. Export to Russia grew by 5.2% and to Ukraine by 7%"²⁰⁶.

It is to be supposed that in 2021, these and other Belarusian companies will try not to slow down their current pace. At least, the results of January this year

²⁰⁴ MMZ grew its shipments to Russia by more than 12% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mmz-v-2020-godu-narastilhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/mmz-v-2020-godu-narastil- objemy-postavok-v-rossiju-bolee-chem-naobjemy-postavok-v-rossiju-bolee-chem-na-12-425977-2021/>

²⁰⁵ "Bellegprom supplied products to 52 countries in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belleprom-v-2020-goduhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belleprom-v-2020-godu- postavil-produktsiiu-v-52-strany-mirapostavil-produktsiiu-v-52-strany-mira-427383-2021/>

²⁰⁶ Enterprises of Bellesbumprom increased exports by 5% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriiatiahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriiatia-bellesbumproma-vbellesbumproma-v-2020- godu-uvelichili-eksport-produktsii-nagodu-uvelichili-eksport-produktsii-na-5-427809-2021/>

show that economic entities in our country have taken the task of exporting their goods and services abroad very seriously, increasing the supplies of goods and services to foreign countries by 13.5% - to over USD 3 billion. At the same time, "exports of goods increased by 19.4% to \$2.36 billion <...>. The balance was positive at \$100.2 million (in January 2020, it was negative at \$61.2 million"²⁰⁷.

The companies of the Bellesbumprom Concern, which managed to increase the export supplies by 18 per cent up to USD 55.5 million in January, are among those who have made a significant contribution to achieving this index. It happened due to an increase in exports of wood slabs, furniture, wood pulp, plywood, paper and cardboard. In total, almost 50 commodity positions were exported to markets of 48 countries. An important detail: more than half of the exports - almost 30 million dollars - went to non-CIS countries. Moreover, "shipments to the European Union countries increased by 15.5% and to China by 35.9%. Shipments to CIS markets grew by 10.6%"²⁰⁸. Among the countries, Russia, Poland and China were the leaders in this list. As a whole in 2021 the enterprises of the concern Bellesbumprom plan to "continue increasing the export of goods by at least 6.5% compared to the level of 2020"²⁰⁹. In particular, in this regard, this year it is planned to put into operation a plant for the production of laminated cardboard on the basis of the Dobrush Paper Factory "Hero of Labor" and a new production facility for the production of wood fuel - pellets - in Vitebsk.

Domestic high-tech products can and should contribute to the achievement of

²⁰⁷ Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 13.3 percent to \$3.057 billion in January [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-yhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-ianvare-uvulichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-135-do-3057-mlrd-ianvare-uvulichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-135-do-3057-mlrd-432023-2021/>.

²⁰⁸ Bellesbumprom's enterprises increased exports by 18% in January [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatijahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-bellesbumproma-v-j-ianvare-uvulichili-eksport-produktsii-na-ianvare-uvulichili-eksport-produktsii-na-18-432143-2021/>.

²⁰⁹ Enterprises of Bellesbumprom plan to increase exports by at least 6.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-2021-godu-planirujut-uvulichit-eksport-ne-menee-chem-na-65-429310-2021/>.

high export diversification targets. In 2020, the Republic of Belarus has set a target to maintain the volume of its export at the level of USD 15 billion, both through supplies of already existing items and the emergence of new priorities. Last year supplies of such products abroad were carried out in such areas as radioelectronics, instrument-making, machine-building and pharmaceuticals. "The ICT sector makes a significant contribution to exports. There is also a growing demand for Belarusian intellectual property"²¹⁰. The participation of domestic developers in international exhibitions held in the autumn of 2020 has been a very effective tool to promote Belarusian high-tech products in foreign markets.

Thus, in November, the exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus was presented at the international exhibition and forum of telecommunication and information technologies Cairo ICT in the capital of Egypt, which was attended by more than 400 companies from such countries as Russia, China, USA, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia. The distinguishing feature of the Belarusian exposition was the latest developments of the research organisations of the National Academy of Sciences and higher education institutions of the Ministry of Education, which have high export potential. In particular, the Belarusian State University has demonstrated in Cairo a number of medical developments: a set of medical programmes in cardiology, mathematical models for surgical practice, computer modelling for creation of drugs against coronavirus SARS-CoV. Developments in the field of information protection for enterprises of the banking and customs spheres were presented by the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics. The Belarusian-Russian University attracted the attention of the exhibition visitors and forum participants with its information and advertising system "Electronic Guide" designed for public transport. As for the United Institute of Informatics Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, it "demonstrated an intelligent micro-module for onboard recognition of surface and object images, as well as a cluster personal supercomputer UIIP-OFFICE designed for complex scientific calculations, modeling, solution of engineering tasks and teaching parallel programming technologies to universities"²¹¹.

²¹⁰ Belarus expects to keep high-tech exports at \$15 billion this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-etom-godu-sohranit-objemhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-etom-godu-sohranit-objem-eksporta-eksporta-vysokotekhnologichnoj-produksii-na-urovne-15-421-produktsii-na-urovne-15-421250-2020/>.

²¹¹ Exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus presented at the international exhibition in Cairo [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih->

Belarus's national exposition at the third China International Import Fair in the online format was also a good help in promoting Belarusian high-tech exports. Suffice it to say that the Belarusian side exhibited over one hundred scientific, technological and innovative developments in the field of information and communication technologies, healthcare, biotechnologies, new materials, and agriculture. Among them, one should mention more than actual development of the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Transfusiology and Medical Biotechnologies - "anticovid immunoglobulin for treatment of patients with severe form of COVID-19 infection, as well as patients with viral encephalitis and meningoencephalitis"²¹². The Belarusian National Technical University showed here a unique acoustic system for the treatment of skin oncological diseases, which has a higher efficiency compared to traditional methods and at the same time allows a quarter reduction of the patient's radiation dose. The National Academy of Sciences demonstrated at the Imports exhibition an office supercomputer, which has small dimensions and at the same time provides complex scientific calculations and processing of large amounts of data, and the Belarusian State University demonstrated plant protection preparations based on natural components, which can be used in organic farming. Among the innovative developments of Belarusian State Technological University at the China International Import Expo in Shanghai were "the technology of nickel-diamond coating, self-cleaning antibacterial composite coatings, radioactive glass, sheet glass of thin denomination and flexible glass films for solar batteries"²¹³, as well as the technology of forming imitation decorative coatings

[proizvoditelej-made-in-belarus](https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-made-in-belarus-predstavlena-na-predstavlena-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-kaire-417549-2020/)<https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-made-in-belarus-predstavlena-na-predstavlena-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-kaire-417549-2020/>

²¹² More than 100 scientific and technical developments will be presented by Belarus at the China Import Fair [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-100-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavit-belarus-na-kitaj-100-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavit-belarus-na-kitajskoj-vystavke-importa-vystavke-importa-414174-2020/>.

²¹³ BSTU innovations to be presented at the exhibition of goods and services in Shanghai [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/innovatsionnye>

on wood, board, facing and composite materials and dental cements and mater

Finally, a wide range of Belarusian high-tech scientific and technical developments was presented at the TeMEx international online industrial exhibition, which took place under the auspices of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for three months starting from mid-October 2020 and was attended by over 70 companies from eight countries. An absolute novelty, an electric bus, was demonstrated there by the Minsk Automobile Plant. The project "Intelligent Quarry" was demonstrated by the Belarusian Automobile Plant. All these and a number of other facts support the conclusion that "the main pivotal factor in the development of the Belarusian industrial complex is the growth of the innovative component of the manufactured products"²¹⁴, which, in turn, will inevitably contribute to the growth of Belarusian high-tech exports in the near future.

Another priority area for the development of Belarusian exports is agricultural products and foodstuffs. The aforementioned Programme of Action of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, under the heading "Efficient and ecologically safe agriculture", sets out the tasks of improving the competitiveness of agricultural production and increasing export potential, in order to eventually reach "export of food products and of agricultural raw materials in 2025 - USD 7 billion"²¹⁵. In doing so, the government plans to focus on "all segments: both crop and livestock production"²¹⁶, as well as diversification of export supplies.

In addition, the Republic of Belarus has approved the state programme

razrabotki-razrabotki-b-gtu-gtu-predstavj-at-na-vystavke-tovarov-i-uslug-v-shanhae-414078at-na-vystavke-tovarov-i-uslug-v-shanhae-414078-2020/

²¹⁴ Kharitonchik: the main factor of Belarus' industrial complex development is the growth of innovative products [Electronic resource]. 2020. - URL:

https://www.belta.by/economics/view/haritonchik-glavnym-faktorom-razvitiya-promkompleksa-belarusi-j-avlj-aetsj-a-rost-innovatsionnoj-410940-2020/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent

²¹⁵ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the Period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 35.

²¹⁶ Production growth and export diversification - Alexander Subbotin outlines objectives for the meat industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

<http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/9783.government.by/ru/content/9783>

"Agrarian Business" for 2021-2025. It envisages achieving goals such as increasing the competitiveness of agricultural products and foodstuffs, developing ecologically safe agriculture, providing nutritious food and a healthy lifestyle to the population, and "increasing the export potential"²¹⁷. The programme contains nine subprogrammes dealing with such areas as: 1) crop production; 2) seed production; 3) livestock production; 4) breeding; 5) fisheries; 6) land reclamation; 7) engineering flood control measures to protect agricultural land; 8) ensuring general conditions for the functioning of the agro-industrial complex; and 9) support for small-scale farming. Subject to their successful implementation, "exports of food products and agricultural raw materials are projected to increase by 21.3 per cent by 2020 (up to US\$7 billion) in 2025"²¹⁸. This is feasible to achieve, provided that the raw material base of agro-industrial production is strengthened, existing competitive industries are modernized and new competitive industries are developed, the digitalization of industries and sub-sectors of the agro-industrial complex is increased, and breeding and genetics for the needs of sustainable agriculture are developed. And the immediate task for the year 2021 is "to increase exports of agricultural products by 4.3 per cent against the level of 2020. This will amount to just over \$6 billion."²¹⁹.

Belarusian exporters intend to move forward in this direction based on several basic priorities. First, it is important to maintain the gains achieved in traditional markets, which include Russia, as well as Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. Suffice it to say that the Russian market share in Belarusian exports of agricultural products in 2020 was nearly three quarters of the total, or \$4.3 billion. And it is not only meat and dairy products, but also high-tech products. "These are seeds

²¹⁷ Food security and export promotion - identified areas of agricultural business development [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prodbezopasnost-i-naraschivanie-eksporta-opredeleny-napravleniya-razvitiya-agrarnogo-biznesa-427294-2021/>

²¹⁸ State Programme "Agrarian Business" for 2021-2025 [Electronic resource] . URL: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22100059&p1=1&p5=0>

²¹⁹ Belarus expects to increase agricultural exports to \$7 billion in 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-2025-godu-narastit-eksport-selhozproduktov-do-7-mlrd-427628-2021/>.

and planting material, breeding stock, plant protection products, veterinary medicines, fodder additives, modern agricultural equipment"²²⁰ . At a joint session of the board of agrarian agencies of the two countries held in March 2021, the parties outlined further necessary measures to step up mutual trade and the main areas of integration of Belarusian and Russian agricultural complexes in the Union State, which gives good reason to believe: cooperation in agriculture between Belarus and Russia will only grow.

As for Uzbekistan, in 2020, trade in agricultural products and foodstuffs with that country in Central Asia exceeded \$87 million, increasing by 76 percent at once. An important detail is that "exports of Belarusian food products in 2020 more than doubled to \$73 million. Supplies of Belarusian beef to Uzbekistan more than doubled, sugar - 3.5 times, dried milk - 2 times, fish and fish products - 1.5 times"²²¹ . The sides also actively cooperated in other areas of the industry. As far as animal husbandry is concerned, Belarus is to supply about 400 cattle to Uzbekistan in 2020. In order to enhance this cooperation, a joint selection and genetic centre has been established between the Belarusian Belplemzhivodobniya and Uzbek VostokMedGeruda to purchase and supply Belarusian pedigree cattle to Uzbekistan, as well as provide scientific and technological support. In the field of veterinary medicine, the Belarusian BelVitunifarm, together with the Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine and the Research Institute of Veterinary Medicine have decided to establish a joint venture to produce veterinary drugs and vaccines on Uzbek territory. In the area of breeding, 45 varieties of vegetables and 6 varieties of melons selected in Belarus have been produced in collaboration with the Research Institute of Vegetables, Melons and Potatoes in Uzbekistan. There are also results in seed

²²⁰ More than 70% of Belarus' food exports in 2020 went to Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/boleehhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/boleeh-70-belorusskogo-eksporta-prodovolstvija-v-2020-godu-prihodilos-na-rossijubelorusskogo-eksporta-prodovolstvija-v-2020-godu-prihodilos-na-rossiju-432008-2021/>.

²²¹ Belarusian food exports to Uzbekistan more than doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksporthttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-uzbekistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-dva-razabelorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-uzbekistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-431838-2021/>.

breeding, where the partnership is actively developed by Belsemena and the Centre of Seed Breeding of Uzbekistan. In 2020, samples of pea, bean, carrot, onion and tomato seeds of Uzbek selection were sent to Belarus for testing, while seeds of tomato, onion, beet, radish, carrot and bean varieties of Belarusian selection were successfully grown in Uzbekistan. Finally, in the field of education, Tashkent State Agrarian University and Grodno State Agrarian University have established joint faculties in Tashkent and Andijan and have begun to admit students for bachelor's degrees in plant protection and quarantine and in the technology of animal raw material storage and processing.

Exports of Belarusian agricultural products to Azerbaijan grew by more than 10 percent last year as well. More precisely, "in 2020, the turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs reached \$35 million and increased by 5.3 percent compared to 2019. Exports of goods were \$30.4 million (or 110.7%) and imports \$4.6 million"²²². This was due to deliveries of a wide range of dairy and meat products from Belarus by Belarusian exporting companies such as Belovezhskie Cheese, Luninets Dairy Plant, Dairy World, Rogachev Dairy and Canning Plant, Kalinkovich Dairy Plant, Lidsky Dairy and Canning Plant, and Minsk Dairy Plant No. 1. Enterprises of Belarus will take part in the InterFood Azerbaijan international food industry exhibition in June 2021 to open up new opportunities for entering the consumer market of this South Caucasus country. So there are good prospects for increasing exports.

Secondly, special attention will be paid to diversifying markets and developing exports to other countries around the world as well. In particular, it is planned to actively develop food supplies to the Chinese market, which in 2020 alone have almost doubled due to exports of beef, poultry meat, milk powder, milk whey powder, ice cream, cheese, butter, as well as sugar, starch, crisps and fish products. And this is far from the limit. It should be noted that in 2020

²²² Belarusian exports to Azerbaijan increased by 10.7% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksporthttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktii-v--selhozprodukti-v-azerbaj-dzhan-v-2020-godu-vyros-nadzhan-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-107-433105-2021/>.

Belarusian agricultural products and food were supplied to 116 countries of the world. At the same time, 20 new markets were opened. "Among them are Kuwait (started to supply flour confectionery and sweets), Nepal (protein substrates), Algeria and Madagascar (flour), Congo (corn seeds), Mali (corn grits), Morocco (beet pulp), Namibia (milk powder), Somalia (sugar), Sierra Leone (egg processing products), Equatorial Guinea (poultry), South Sudan (whole milk powder). Also on the list are Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Djibouti, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal Croatia"²²³. Overall, the share of far-abroad countries in total Belarusian agricultural exports in 2020 rose to \$796 million and is now almost 14 percent.

All in all, food exports from Belarus increased by 4.3 percent in 2020 and exceeded \$5.8 billion. This allowed our country, for example, to gain a foothold in the top five global exporters of a number of dairy products - butter, cheese, powdered milk and whey. At the same time, the Belarusian side seeks "not to export raw materials, but to process grain, milk and meat in the country and supply high value added products abroad, so that these products get to the shop shelves and buyers form a stable loyal opinion about Belarusian goods"²²⁴.

A good example of this approach to developing and securing a foothold on foreign markets is demonstrated, in particular by Rogachev MCC.

The enterprise's foreign economic development in 2020 was to increase supplies to the existing markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Israel and the USA, as well as to enter new markets - the UAE, Singapore, South Korea and Afghanistan. This was also due to the fact that in 2020 "the range of products supplied to non-CIS markets was expanded, where consumers

²²³ Belarus starts supplying agricultural products to 20 new markets in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2020-.nachala-postavki-selhozproduksii-na-20-novyh-rynkovgodu-nachala-postavki-selhozproduksii-na-20-novyh-rynkov-427631-2021/>

²²⁴ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products grew by 4.3% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. -

2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-.selhozproduksii-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-43-427620-2021>

appreciated condensed milk with the addition of cocoa, coffee and chicory²²⁵, opting for safe and natural products.

Another interesting example in this context is the Turovsky Dairy Plant, which "now accounts for 80% of its production for foreign consumers. Deliveries to other countries brought the company almost \$87 million - 20% more than in 2019"²²⁶. In total, dairy products from Turow were supplied to 16 countries in 2020. Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Iraq have become new markets. The mill plans to increase export volumes by more than a quarter in 2021. These plans are based on an active re-equipment of the enterprise. In 2020, it increased the capacity of cream cheese production, installed whey processing and thickening lines. In 2021, the cheese drawing line is to be modernised.

All these examples show that the potential and opportunities for successful implementation of the tasks set for the new five-year period to diversify exports from the Republic of Belarus are quite real and attainable with the active work of Belarusian economic entities both in industry, in the production of high-tech products, and in the agro-industrial complex.

²²⁵ Rogachev ICC expanded exports in 2020 by supplying new markets in four countries [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rogachevskij-mkk-v-2020-godu-rasshiril-eksport-za-schet-postavok-na-novye-rynki-chetyreh-stran-427607-2021>

²²⁶ Turovsky Dairy Plant in 2020 produced a third more cheese and generated \$110 million in revenues [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turovskij-molochnyj-kombinat-v-2020-godu-proizvel-na-tret-bolshe-syrov-i-vyruchil-110-mln-tret-bolshe-syrov-i-vyruchil-110-mln-427862-2021/>

Building on the development of new export markets

The Republic of Belarus is taking active steps to address one of the country's economic development priorities, outlined in the Belarusian government's 2025 activity programme - "commodity and country export diversification, which should ensure growth in Belarusian supplies in 2025 to \$50 billion, as well as the promotion of goods and services in new markets"²²⁷. This is evidenced by the statistics for the first quarter of 2021. Specifically, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services increased by more than 17% over the period, coming close to \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million. At the same time, "exports of goods increased by 24.9% to \$8.023 billion <...>. Services exports increased by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion"²²⁸.

Gomel Region is among the regions that have significantly expanded the geography of supplies and increased exports since the beginning of 2021. Here, in January-February 2021 alone, they shipped \$745 million worth of products to foreign markets - \$200 million more than a year earlier. In this, "to the European Union, the region's enterprises exported 39% of the goods, the EEU - 33%, the Far East - 21% of all exports <...>. Exports to China in the first two months amounted to \$20 million, which is more than in the previous year."²²⁹. Among the companies in the region there is the Belarusian Steel Works that exported more than \$25 million worth of seamless pipes in the first quarter of 2021 - mostly to Russia and European countries. In particular, more than \$10 million worth of pipes was supplied to the market of the European Union alone. "This is almost twice as much as in the same period last year. The products were shipped to 10 countries in the European region. Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and

²²⁷ Zalesky, B. The key to success is cooperation. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 65.

²²⁸ Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 19.5 percent to \$10.3 billion in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-i-kvartale-uvlechila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-195-do-103-mlrd-441081-2021/>.

²²⁹ In January-February, the Gomel region shipped \$745 million worth of products for export [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-v-janvare-fevrale-otgruzila-na-eksport-produktsii-na-745-mln-439081-2021/>.

Finland showed the highest growth in consumption during the reporting period"²³⁰ .

Another enterprise in the Gomel region, the Rogachev Dairy Factory, is expanding the geography of its supplies in 2021. In particular, the first batch of its products was shipped to Libya. "Several containers of concentrated milk were shipped at the enterprise in April"²³¹ . And now the issue of further deliveries to this market is being addressed, as the company's own production in this North African country does not fully meet the needs of the domestic market. In April 2021, for the first time, Rogachev Dairy products were also shipped to Jordan, in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. It turned out that "dairy products are quite widely used in Jordanian cuisine. The country has its own production of condensed milk, but to meet the need for this product in all spheres it is also imported from abroad"²³² . Belarusian producers have tried to take advantage of this interest.

By the way, many other Belarusian agricultural and food producers did a good job in the first quarter of 2021 in terms of expanding the geography of supplies, increasing exports by more than five percent to USD 1.5 billion. "Belarusian food products were supplied to 88 countries in January-March (83 countries in the same period in 2020)"²³³ . Overall, exports to non-CIS countries - Asia and Oceania, America and the Caribbean, Africa and China - increased by almost half.

²³⁰ BMZ increases pipe exports by a third in January-March [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-na-tret-uvelichil-eksport-trub-v-janvare-marte-438662-2021/>.

²³¹ Rogachev ICC shipped the first batch of products to Libya [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rogachevskij-mkk-otgruzilhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/rogachevskij-mkk-otgruzil- pervuj u-u-partij u-produktsii-v-livij u-440966-2021u-440966-2021/>.

²³² Dairy canned products from Rogachev ICC were shipped to Jordan for the first time [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/molochnye-konservy-www.belta.by/regions/view/molochnye-konservy-rogachevskogo-mkk-vpervye-otgruzili-v-iordanij u-441150-2021/>.

²³³ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products grew by 5.3% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-beloruskoj-selhozproduktsii-v-i-kvartale-vyros-na-53-440045-2021/>.

Another interesting example in this context is the Grodno Region. The volume of deliveries of the region's enterprises to foreign markets grew by 16 percent in three months and amounted to 679 million dollars, resulting in a foreign trade surplus of more than 260 million dollars. In addition, "in the first quarter of 2021 goods from Grodno Region were exported to 84 countries worldwide. At the same time, in the same period last year goods were exported to 60 countries"²³⁴. Residents of the free economic zone (FEZ) Grodnoinvest, which exports chemical, woodworking and textile products, made a significant contribution to the region's performance,

The engineering and agricultural industries. In January-March this year, they increased their overseas shipments by 23 percent, to 280 million dollars, due to increased shipments of polycarboxylic acids, fertilizers, wood boards, plywood, furniture, and rapeseed oil. In the post-Soviet space, their main recipients were the Russian and Ukrainian markets, and in the European Union, not only Poland, but also Germany, France, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania and the Netherlands. As for the "far arc" countries, exports there "amounted to \$6.4 million, which is 3.8 times more than in the first quarter of 2020. Supplies of Belarusian products to Vietnam, Egypt, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and Turkey increased significantly"²³⁵. All of these facts show that Belarusian manufacturers are laying a good foundation for the successful fulfillment of the five-year objective to develop the export component of the national economy, which in the current environment is not very easy to do.

²³⁴ Grodno region has expanded its supply geography and increased exports by 16% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-rasshirila-geografiju-postavok-i-uvelichila-eksport-na-16-441068-2021>

²³⁵ Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest increased by 23% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vozros-na-23-439997-2021/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vozros-nahttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vozros-na-23-439997-2021/)

CHAPTER 12

Free zones and special economic zones as growth points in the regions

The Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Free Economic Zones", adopted on December 7, 1998, defines as one of the main objectives of establishing FEZs the attraction of "investments in the creation and development of export-oriented and import-substituting productions based on new and high technologies"²³⁶. More than 20 years of experience in the activity of FEZs established in the territory of the country show that during this period this model of economic relations in the regions has demonstrated many positive trends, and in the future it may turn into an even more effective instrument of socio-economic development of the Belarusian state.

The Minsk SEZ, established in Belarus in 1998, is making good progress towards this goal. At the beginning of February 2020, it had already incorporated 116 resident enterprises, 57 of which with foreign investments. The Minsk Free Economic Zone has more than 20 years of history and has attracted more than \$2 billion worth of investments, including from investors from over 20 countries. Occupying an area of about three thousand hectares, it now comprises 23 sites in Minsk and the capital region, including in such towns as Molodechno, Zhodino, Fanipol, Borisov, where mechanical engineering and metalworking, chemical and petrochemical, timber and construction industries are successfully operating. Such well-known manufacturers, not only in Belarus, but also abroad, as "Stadler-Minsk" are the peculiar business card of FEZ "Minsk": "Stadler-Minsk" - electric trains and trams; group of companies "Alutech" - components for security shutters, gate systems; "Adani" - X-ray equipment; "BELJI" - cars and light trucks; "SN Europe Industries Bisov" - bimetal band and end saws.

The fact that this industrial centre on the business map of Belarus continues to develop very actively is evidenced by the facts. Suffice it to say that in 2019, the

²³⁶ Law of the Republic of Belarus On Free Economic Zones [Electronic resource]. - 1998. - URL: http://pravo.by/document/?guid=387guid=3871&p0=&p0=H_19800213

administration of FEZ Minsk registered another 17 new resident companies. One of them in December 2019 was Belagromash OJSC, which intends to set up production of specialised steel railway containers at the Molodechno Metal Works, whose innovative properties will increase the speed of loading and unloading of goods due to the fact that new containers can be lifted from one mode of transport to another - from a railway platform to a road platform and vice versa. The project is also attractive due to the fact that "the main customer for the containers is a foreign company, so the new production facility will be as export-oriented as possible. At least 130 jobs will be created"²³⁷.

On the eve of 2020, BelMetr Limited Liability Company became a FEZ resident and plans to implement an investment project in Zhodino for the production of anti-vandal water meters with improved characteristics. These include: anti-magnetic protection; anti-fraud device against external influences on the lid; high sensitivity of the meter; elimination of fogging of the upper part of the body. And let "production will initially be carried out on rented premises, a new production building is planned for the future"²³⁸.

The ranks of Minsk FEZ residents began to expand quite intensively in 2020. In mid-January, Techno-Express JLLC, one of the leading Belarusian manufacturers of passenger car life support systems, was registered here. The company plans to carry out an investment project in the FEZ to produce electrical equipment for passenger cars of locomotive traction. In particular, we are talking about the production of air conditioner converters - "devices designed to power asynchronous motors of air conditioning unit on railway passenger cars as part of electric equipment and life support complexes"²³⁹.

²³⁷ Production of freight containers will be set up in Molodechno [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-gruzovyh-kontejnerovhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-gruzovyh-kontejnerov-naladj-at-v-molodechno-37267at-v-molodechno-372673-2019/>.

²³⁸ An investment project for the production of water meters will be implemented in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/investitsionnyi-proekt-po-proizvodstvu-schetchikov-vody-budet-realizovan-v-zhodino-3745-81-2019/>

²³⁹ The first resident in 2020 is registered in FEZ Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyi-v-2020-godu-rezident->

This project has both import-substituting and export-oriented potential, because the main consumer of these products will be not only the Belarusian Railways, but also interested companies in the CIS countries.

A week later, a second resident, BEL-DOZER LLC, appeared in the FEZ in 2020. It plans to build a plant in Fanipole to produce a wide range of specialised machinery designed for earthmoving, construction and transportation work. The plant is to "turn out backhoe-loaders, multipurpose machines for construction and renovation work, as well as graders, efficient special machines used for the construction and maintenance of roads and airfields. <...> The investment in the project will amount to more than EUR 1 million"²⁴⁰.

Another new resident of the Minsk FEZ, Emfil Ail LLC, registered here in early February 2020, will also be located there, in Fanipole. A distinctive feature of its investment project will be a pronounced export orientation of products. The fact is that "the company plans to establish production of dedusting as well as chemically active filtering elements for air purification, on the basis of which the production of innovative high-tech equipment will be organized"²⁴¹, which will be designed, developed and manufactured exclusively to order.

Finally, a very recent example. In May, the seventh resident of the Minsk FEZ, Zaslavskie Kraski LLC, registered in May, which intends to set up production of special paintwork materials for road markings in Zhodino. "The cost of the investment project is estimated at \$10 million"²⁴². As we can see, with 2020 coming, the Minsk FEZ is not reducing its growth rate, contributing to the socio-

[zaregistrovanhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyi-v-2020-godu-rezident-zaregistrovan-v-sez-minsk-sez-minsk-376013-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyi-v-2020-godu-rezident-zaregistrovan-v-sez-minsk-sez-minsk-376013-2020/).

²⁴⁰ A new resident of FEZ Minsk will build a plant to produce special machinery in Fanipole [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-v-fanipole-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetstehnik-376899-2020/>

²⁴¹ A new resident of FEZ Minsk will produce non-standard equipment for air purification [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-vypuskat-nestandardnoe-oborudovanie-dlja-ochistki-vozduha-378734-2020>

²⁴² A plant to produce paint materials will be built on the territory of FEZ Minsk in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. -2020:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-lakokrasochnyh-materialov-postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsk-v-zhodino-390518-2020>

economic development not only of the capital region, but also of the country as a whole.

The Free Economic Zone "Brest" was the first to be established in the Republic of Belarus. It happened in 1996. And today

It is a multidisciplinary economic territory, where manufacturing , technology and other economic activities can be developed, logistics activities. In addition, part of it is adjacent to the road and rail border crossing points and can be used as a logistics component. Since the creation of the FEZ, total investment here has exceeded one and a half billion dollars. This investment is certainly paying off. In three quarters of 2019, residents of Brest FEZ have almost doubled their payments to the budget - from 20.9 million Belarusian rubles in 2018 to 41 million now. Today, there are already 73 companies from 20 countries operating on its territory. Remarkably, in 2018 they "exported \$700 million worth of goods, the geography of exports includes 70 countries of the world"²⁴³ . One year later - at the beginning of 2020 - "FEZ entities have exported \$718 million worth of goods, and the geography of exports includes 75 countries worldwide"²⁴⁴ .

Among foreign countries, Germany leads in terms of investment in FEZs. German investors account for a third of total foreign investment here. And companies with German capital show high economic efficiency. Among them are Santa Bremor, Discom, and Salamander Window and Door Systems, whose products are well known both in Belarus and abroad. In particular, in April 2019, a new paint and varnish production facility, Discom, opened in the FEZ, with about two million euros invested in its construction. This company is part of the German concern DAW SE, founded in Germany back in 1895. "Today Discom employs more than 250 specialists. The opening of the new plant has

²⁴³ Brest FEZ residents double their payments to the budget [Electronic resource].

- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-brest-vdvoe-uvelichili-otchislenij-a-v-bj-udzheta-367876-2019/3>

²⁴⁴ History [Electronic resource]. -2020. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/historyfezbrest.com/history>

created about 20 additional jobs for the people of Brest."²⁴⁵ .

Italian entrepreneurs are very active in the Brest FEZ, who "have already invested EUR 3 million in new projects and created 150 jobs. In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian company Frieza Industry was opened at the Aeroport site. It manufactures energy-saving devices for refrigeration equipment"²⁴⁶ and is showing one of the highest export growth rates among FEZ enterprises. We would like to remind you that back in 2010 the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Brest Regional Executive Committee signed a declaration on the creation of an Italian industrial region in the FEZ with the area of 26 hectares. A year later, a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of this industrial area was adopted in Trieste, which envisaged the creation of maximum favorable conditions to attract Italian investors and outlined "the development of the Italian industrial zone in Brest as a transport and logistics centre, ensuring transshipment and transit between the European Union, the Customs Union, and, in the future, China"²⁴⁷ . So the prospects for Italian business in the Brest FEZ are enormous.

Polish businessmen are also showing great interest in the FEZ. Today there are 11 companies with Polish capital operating here, including Stomil Sanok BR. Investors from this European country "rank third after Germany and Russia. Polish investments account for 17 per cent of the total"²⁴⁸ . In particular, in March 2019, English Windows Ltd. with Polish investments was registered here. "There are plans to create at least 20 jobs at the new company"²⁴⁹ . It is

²⁴⁵ The opening of the new Discom production facility [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

<https://fezbrest.com/otkryitie-novogo-proizvodstva-%C2%ABdiskom%C2%BBfezbrest.com/otkryitie-novogo-proizvodstva-%C2%ABdiskom%C2%BB>

²⁴⁶ Discussion of the Belarusian-Italian Business Forum continued in Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/obsuzhdenie-voprosovhttps://fezbrest.com/obsuzhdenie-voprosov-belorussko-italyanskogo-biznes-foruma-prodolzhilos-v-belorussko-italyanskogo-biznes-foruma-prodolzhilos-v-brest>

²⁴⁷ Zalesky, B. International relations and media. A View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 147.

²⁴⁸ Strengthening Partnerships [Electronic Resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/2-ukreplyaya-partnerskie-svyazi>

²⁴⁹ New Brest FEZ resident registered [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

possible that in 2020, the cooperation agreement signed in April 2017 between the Brest FEZ administration and the Lower Silesian Economic Development Agency will get its further development in the form of specific projects.

The interest in cooperation with Brest FEZ is also shown by Israeli entrepreneurs, who have a good example to follow: the current resident of the free economic zone is "a company with Israeli capital Fa-UH, which has established in the FEZ the production of feed additives for agricultural production"²⁵⁰. In September 2019, a delegation from the Israeli city of Ashdod, whose port is the largest in Israel and through which 60% of all cargo imported into the Middle Eastern country passes, including that of FEZ resident Santa Bremor. It is expected that the dialogue between Brest and Ashdod companies, which has started between the two sides, will develop in the near future.

Swiss entrepreneurs have their own interest in the FEZ. They are attracted, first of all, by the advantageous location of Brest airport, which allows it to be used for private aviation flights. The next step would be to locate here

"production facilities of companies with Swiss capital related to mechanical engineering and food production"²⁵¹.

The volume of exports by enterprises-residents of the **Grodnoinvest Free Economic Zone** in 2019 came close to one billion dollars, increasing by almost 10 percent compared to 2018. This brought the FEZ's share in total exports of industrial goods in the Grodno Region to 42 percent. Overall, the trade turnover of FEZ residents exceeded one and a half billion dollars with a surplus of more than 380 million dollars. There are two main vectors in the geography of these

[https://fezbrest.com/zaregistrirovan-novyy-rezident-sez-](https://fezbrest.com/zaregistrirovan-novyy-rezident-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BBfezbrest.com/zaregistrirovan-novyy-rezident-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB)

<https://fezbrest.com/zaregistrirovan-novyy-rezident-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB>
²⁵⁰ The Brest FEZ administration hosted a meeting with a delegation from Israel [Electronic resource].

- 2019. - URL: [https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-](https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BBhttps://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegacziej-iz-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegacziej-iz-izrailya)

<https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BBhttps://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegacziej-iz-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegacziej-iz-izrailya>

²⁵¹ The Brest FEZ administration discussed proposals from the Swiss business community [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: [https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sezhttps://fezbrest.com/v-](https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sezhttps://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-shvejczarii)

[administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-](https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-shvejczarii)
[https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sezhttps://fezbrest.com/v-](https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sezhttps://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-shvejczarii)
[administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-shvejczarii](https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sezhttps://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyyx-krugov-shvejczarii)

export supplies: post-Soviet - Russia and Ukraine; and European - Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and Latvia. The basis of Belarusian exports "was formed by companies from the wood and furniture industry (30% of total exports), food processing (27%), machine building and metal processing sectors"²⁵² . Companies in the chemical and textile industries as well as in the manufacture of vehicles and equipment, rubber and plastic products should also be mentioned. The FEZ sees the prospects for development in attracting new residents who could contribute to further increase in exports of goods and services through their activities.

It should be reminded that Grodnoinvest FEZ, established in 2002, now has 12 territories not only in Grodno but also in such cities of Grodno region as Mosty, Novogrudok, Slonim, Shchuchin, Smorgon and Svisloch. As of mid-January 2020, 75 companies with capital from 41 countries were operating in the FEZ. In 2019, four companies from Belarus, Austria and Poland engaged in wood processing and non-metallic mineral products production, with a total declared investment of over 190 million dollars, including fixed assets, became residents of the FEZ, where potential investors are offered land plots and production areas with engineering and transport infrastructure, tax, customs and other preferences that allow to significantly reduce project costs and increase the competitiveness of manufactured products. They intend to build highly efficient factories in Grodno and Svisloch, creating over 560 new jobs. At the same time, "most of the products will be supplied to the European Union countries"²⁵³ .

The year 2020 has also got off to a very productive start for the FEZ. In particular, in February, the EUECOPAK company was registered here as a

²⁵² Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in 2019 approached \$1 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksporthttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-priblizilsja-k-1mlrdrezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-priblizilsja-k-1mlrd-379958-2020>

²⁵³ Four companies with investment projects worth \$190 million became residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in 2019 [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidentami-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-stali-4-kompanii-s-investproektami-na-190-mln-375887-2020/>

resident, which intends to invest more than one million dollars in the creation of production facilities for the production of disposable paper packaging and tableware. The topic is undoubtedly of current interest in Belarus, where measures are being taken at the legislative level to encourage businesses to switch to environmentally friendly packaging, including paper. The new FEZ resident is expected to produce paper Kraft bags with and without handles, Lunchbox-type cardboard packaging, paper cocktail sticks and cups for cold and hot drinks. These products "are expected to be sold predominantly on foreign markets. The share of export sales will exceed 85%. The main markets will be in the European Union"²⁵⁴. In addition, 25 new jobs will be created.

In February 2020, ZOV-MARKET became a FEZ resident and will establish a modern enterprise for the production of dry edged boards, beams and furniture blanks on the basis of a construction-in-progress facility in Grodno. Characteristically, "70% of production will be exported to the European Union"²⁵⁵. One of the new residents of FEZ may become a logistics company Berango from France, which is interested in implementing on the territory of FEZ Grodnoinvest an investment project "to create a multimodal logistics terminal for handling and cleaning of containers and tanks"²⁵⁶. Negotiations on this particular project were held with the FEZ administration in Grodno in February 2020.

The existing BMS residents are also actively expanding the production of export-oriented products. For example, in February 2020, Terrazit Plus LLC demonstrated a new innovative VPC ALPHA Grip of the Constellation series as

²⁵⁴ A new resident of FEZ Grodnoinvest will produce paper packaging. [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvodstvo- bumazhnoj-upkaki-sozdast-novyj-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-379035-2020/>.

²⁵⁵ ZOV-MARKET LLC is registered as a resident of FEZ Grodnoinvest. [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/ooo-zov-market- zaregistrovano-v-kachestve-rezidenta-sez-grodnoinvest/>

²⁵⁶ A company from France considers establishing a terminal in FEZ Grodnoinvest [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kompanija-iz-frantsii-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-sozdanija-terminala-v-sez-grodnoinvest-379266-2020/>

part of Virpil Controls' innovative project to create devices for virtual control of aircraft, helicopters and space ship prototypes. Importantly, this "product is in demand in the Western European market, almost all production is for export"²⁵⁷, and the project involves pilots, designers, constructors and software developers. In 2019, Belabedding FLLC, which has been a FEZ resident since 2006, started producing new products - Boxspringbett continental beds. And now "more than 80% of the company's products are exported to Western European countries"²⁵⁸. It is to be assumed that the measures taken in the FEZ will bring even stronger results in terms of increasing exports of products of the residents of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" in 2020.

In June 2019, a **special economic zone** (SEZ) regime came into effect in the Republic of Belarus for **THE Bremino-Orsha** multimodal logistics complex located in the village of Bolbasovo, Orsha District, Vitebsk Region. This means that Belarus has a second economic complex operating in a similar regime. The Sino-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen was the first in the list of SEZs back in 2015. It should be noted that the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) strictly restricts the possibility of establishing such territorial entities in the member states of the integration association. In particular, only "three such zones may be established in Russia, two in Belarus and one each in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan."²⁵⁹. As a reminder, the term 'special economic zone' is used to describe a territory that has 'a special legal status in relation to the rest of the country and preferential economic conditions for entrepreneurs'²⁶⁰. SEZs are created to attract foreign direct

²⁵⁷ FEZ "Grodnoinvest" resident Terrazit Plus Ltd. presented new innovative products [Electronic resource]. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-ooo-terrazit-plyus-predstavil-novuyu-innovacionnuyu-produkciyu/>

²⁵⁸ FEZ Grodnoinvest resident Belabedding FLLC launched production of new products [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-iooo-belabedding-zapustila-vypusk-novoj-produkcii/>

²⁵⁹ The Bremino-Orsha Special Economic Zone started operating in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/otherhttps://news.21.by/other-news/20news/2019/06/27/1827049.html>

²⁶⁰ Special Economic Zone (SEZ) [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.audit->

investment, create new jobs for highly qualified personnel, develop the export base, minimize costs due to the absence of export and import duties, bring production closer to the consumer, use cheaper labour force, and develop territories.

The Bremino-Orsha SEZ intends to attract investors to it with a number of benefits and tax advantages. In particular, zero tax rates for profits (for 9 years), real estate (for 20 years), and dividends (until 1 January 2033), and zero rates of offshore duty, export value added tax (VAT) when exporting manufactured goods outside the EEU, and VAT when selling, renting or leasing real estate by residents (until 1 January 2033), finally, a special 50-year legal regime for industrial processing, wholesale trade, e-commerce, logistics, warehousing, postal services, information and administrative services, research and experimental activities

design work. To this end, two sectors are being created in the SEZ - an industrial sector and a logistics sector. The first one will house the production of household appliances and electronics, pharmaceutical products and preparations, food products - coffee, tea, rice, as well as

The centre will have shops for car spare parts, perfumes and cosmetics, household chemicals and jewellery. There will also be ready-made shops, showrooms, warehouses, a business centre and a car park.

As for the logistics sector, it "will include road, rail and air terminals. There will be a 24-hour customs clearance office, phytosanitary and veterinary services, a bank branch, an insurance agent and a customs broker's office within the special economic zone"²⁶¹. By December 2023, the completion date of the project, investments in this multimodal industrial-logistics complex will total \$200 million. A total of 17 thousand square metres of office space, 190 thousand square metres of warehouse space and 280 thousand square metres of production

[it.ru/terms/taxation/https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya_ekonomicheskaya_zona.html](https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya_ekonomicheskaya_zona.html)

²⁶¹ The Bremino-Orsha Special Economic Zone has been launched in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/osobajahttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/osobaja-ekonomicheskaja-zona-bremino-orsha-nachala-rabotat-v-bolbasovoeekonomicheskaja-zona-bremino-orsha-nachala-rabotat-v-bolbasovo-352502-2019/>

space are expected to be built there. Plus 1.7 thousand parking spaces for trucks. The railway terminal will handle cargo flows between Europe and Asia, which already now allows us to predict that "between 2018-2022 the total transit flow through Bremino-Orsha will be 10 million tonnes, reaching its full capacity of 12 million tonnes of cargo per year is planned for 2026"²⁶².

It is important to note that the first steps in the implementation of this project have already been made. Back in February 2019, the first export train with more than forty containers of Belarusian goods departed from here for the Chinese city of Nanchang. Its travel time is ten days. "Transportation by sea would take 40 days. The train will run once a month."²⁶³. Also in February 2019, the Bremino Group Ltd. opened the first phase of the Bremino-Orsha complex in Bolbasovo, in which about 20 million dollars have been invested. A road logistics terminal with a car park for 212 trucks is now operational and has already transshipped almost two million tonnes of cargo per year. The administrative and amenity building houses the customs, veterinary and phytosanitary inspection services, which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The infrastructure already in place allows for the picking and handling of cargo and the receipt of the necessary services to support the logistics process.

In early December 2019, Bremino Group signed an agreement with Chinese partner Shaanxi Zhongqiao Silk Road Technology Development Co. Ltd, to establish an international Silk Road Trade City in the SEZ, which, spread over 62 hectares, will be a large-scale trade and exhibition complex, expected to "carry out wholesale and small-scale wholesale of consumer goods, delivery and warehousing, e-commerce operations, and exhibitions of products from various Asian countries"²⁶⁴. Investments in this project, which is being implemented as

²⁶² Belarus launches second special economic zone with preferential tax regime [Electronic resource]. - 2019 . - URL:

<https://interfax.by/news/biznes/novosti kompaniy/1260614/>

²⁶³ Zakrzewski, G. Bremino-Orsha: at the crossroads / G. Zakrzewski // Transport Newsletter. - 2019. - 14 Feb. - C. 9.

²⁶⁴ An international trade town will appear in the Bremino Special Economic Zone

part of China's Belt and Road initiative, will exceed 128 million Belarusian rubles.

All of these examples illustrate very eloquently one simple truth: despite the difficult situation in the global economy due to the coronavirus pandemic, one must never stop looking for new ways forward. All the more so because the contours of tomorrow are already beginning to emerge today in many ways. The functioning of free economic zones and special economic zones, whose influence on the economic life of the country is becoming more and more prominent, can reasonably be counted among such in Belarus.

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Prospects for growth - in the free economic zone

Vitebsk Region is among those regions of Belarus where, according to the Belarusian head of state, "it is necessary to take technological and organizational measures to cope with the problems that exist there"²⁶⁵ and to direct the development of the region in an innovative direction. One of the real tools used in the region to address the task is the free economic zone (FEZ) Vitebsk, established twenty years ago - in 1999. Until August 2018, it consisted of 13 sectors, including seven in Vitebsk, four in Orsha, and one each in Vitebsk and Postavy districts.

In August 2018, in order to further develop free economic zones and intensify the attraction of national and foreign investments, the Republic of Belarus adopted Decree No. 346, which spoke of the need to expand the territory and optimise the country's existing free economic zones - Minsk, Vitebsk, Grodnoinvest, Mogilev, Gomel-Raton. It was assumed that the measures adopted in the decree "will allow to accommodate residents with a view to their further growth prospects, organize jobs, optimally use free land plots with available engineering and transport infrastructure, and will also contribute to attracting investment in the creation of export-oriented and import-substituting industries"²⁶⁶.

It should be noted that this decree identified 16 sectors in the FEZ Vitebsk alone, located not only around Vitebsk, but also in other cities and towns of the region - Postavy, Orsha, Barany, Bolbasovo, Novopolotsk, Polotsk district, as well as around the villages of Kosachi and Kopti in Vitebsk district, each of

²⁶⁵ Meeting on the development of the agro-industrial complex of the Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://http://president.gov.by/ru/news.gov.by/ru/news ru/view/soveschanie-po-voprosam-razvitiya-agropromyshlennogo-kompleksa-vitebskoj-oblasti-22434/>.

²⁶⁶ Belarus will consider raising a loan to build energy infrastructure in FEZs [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-privlechenija-zajmahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-privlechenija-zajma-dlja-stroitelstva-energeticheskoy-infrastrukturydlja-stroitelstva-energeticheskoy-infrastruktury-330424-2018/>.

which can and should get powerful impulses for development. And these plans have already begun to be implemented in practice. Forty-eight enterprises with the participation of investors from 14 countries, including Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, UK, USA, Israel, Cyprus, Estonia, including the German Vitella, Polish Dekora East, UK LINPAK Packing East, have started operating in their territory, Estonia's "Soyuz-Kabel", USA's "CESS-Bel" and a number of others, which operate in 25 production directions, including mechanical engineering, electronics, veterinary medicine, chemical, fuel, food and light industries. And the total number of employees in the resident companies was about 11 thousand people.

In December 2018, the first resident with Lithuanian capital appeared in FEZ Vitebsk - VMG WoodArt LLC, whose production site is located in the first sector of the FEZ on the territory of the former military airfield on the outskirts of Vitebsk, which is called Zhurzhevo. The new resident is part of one of the largest furniture and chipboard manufacturers and exporters in the Baltics - the international holding "VMG", which is headquartered in Klaipeda and brings together a number of companies in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus. The project proposed for the Vitebsk free economic zone involves the construction of a sawmill and factories producing chipboard and furniture. It will be implemented in two stages. "Initially, by 2023 over €50 million will be invested in the development of the production activity and about 200 working places will be created. The total volume of timber processing at the enterprises of the holding will be about 700,000 cubic metres per year. In total, at least 500 jobs will be created"²⁶⁷.

Among the states with which the residents of the Vitebsk FEZ are successfully developing cooperation is Latvia. In three quarters of 2018, their trade turnover with Latvian economic entities approached close to 25 million dollars, which

²⁶⁷ A resident with Lithuanian capital registered in FEZ Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-s-litovskim-kapitalomhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-s-litovskim-kapitalom- zaregistrirovan-v-sez-vitebskzaregistrirovan-v-sez-vitebsk-330553-2018/>.

amounted to more than a third of the volume of mutual trade of the entire Vitebsk region with this Baltic country. "The following companies are involved in export-import transactions with Latvia: BelGigaSint LLC, PO Energokomplekt LLC, Vityaz OJSC, Modern-Expo LLC, Allianzplast LLC, Orsha Flax Mill RUPTP"²⁶⁸.

Even more significant results are characteristic of the interaction of FEZ Vitebsk residents with Russian partners, especially from Moscow and the Moscow Region. For example, in the first half of 2018 alone, the trade turnover with them exceeded 60 million dollars, and the leaders of business cooperation with Muscovites include not only JSC Vitebsk Carpets, but also "foreign enterprise VIC Animal Health," IPO Prodexim, SOOO TransExpedition, CJSC Pozhtechnika"²⁶⁹ and a number of others.

Other specific plans of the FEZ Vitebsk to expand the geography of international cooperation are also of interest. For example, the Chinese company Blue Lotus was planning to launch a project here in 2019 with an investment of at least USD 300 million. The Chinese investor is planning to set up "up to ten manufacturing enterprises on the territory of the FEZ".

production of wood products - from fuel biomaterials to furniture"²⁷⁰. The United Arab Emirates-based AL Maya Group, whose representatives visited Vitebsk in July 2018, saw pharmaceuticals as one of the promising areas for investment cooperation, "as the

Middle Eastern partners have extensive experience in this area"²⁷¹. Finally, in September 2018, the administration of FEZ Vitebsk signed a cooperation agreement with the Indian company India Advisory, which, according to the

²⁶⁸ Participation of FEZ Vitebsk administration in the Belarusian-Latvian Business Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

²⁶⁹ Participation of FEZ Vitebsk administration in a comprehensive presentation of the Vitebsk region in Moscow [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fezhttp://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/com/ru/news>

²⁷⁰ An agreement of intent is signed between the administration of FEZ Vitebsk and a Chinese company [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fezhttp://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/com/ru/news>

²⁷¹ The administration of FEZ Vitebsk was visited by businessmen from the UAE [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

parties, "will serve as an impetus for further fruitful cooperation and attraction of Indian investments in the Vitebsk region"²⁷² .

The residents of FEZ Vitebsk demonstrated a high growth rate in attracting foreign direct investment in 2019 - three and a half times as much, reaching \$16.5 million. As a result, "the share of FEZ "Vitebsk" in the investment portfolio of Vitebsk region for 2019 was almost 39% and increased by 10 percentage points compared to 2018"²⁷³ . Among the FEZ residents who have shown the greatest investment activity are JLLC Natrix, LLC Chess-Bell, LLC Akitama, FEZ VIK-Zdorovye Zdorovye Zdorovye Zdorovye Zdorovye. A total of 50 residents have started implementing their projects in the FEZ, almost half of them with foreign capital. It should be noted that in 2019, eight organizations established with the participation of investors from Lithuania, Sweden, and Spain received "resident status in FEZ Vitebsk, Russia and Belarus. Total investments in the new projects exceed \$52 million, and at least 270 jobs are expected to be created"²⁷⁴ . Apparently, these figures will only grow in the near future.

In November 2019, a new resident was added - LLC Rubovsky Dolomite Quarry, involving an investor from Lithuania and a project for the production of construction materials based on dolomite. This is a project to produce Lego bricks and other decorative building materials made of environmentally friendly raw materials. The production facility will be located on the territory of the former airfield on the outskirts of Vitebsk. Apparently, the project has a long-term perspective, as the total reserves of dolomite in Vitebsk region "are estimated at more than 5 billion tonnes at a depth of 2.5 to 38 meters, of which

²⁷² Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in the Belarusian-Indian business forum [Electronic resource]. - URL: <http://http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

²⁷³ Residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" increased the volume of direct foreign investments 3.5 times [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-uvlichili-obiem-priamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-35-raza-379775-2020/>

²⁷⁴ Investors from four countries plan to launch projects in FEZ Vitebsk this year [Electronic resource

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<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investory-iz-4-stran-planirujut-v-etom-godu-nachat-realizatsiju-proektov-v-sez-vitebsk-379788-2020/>

878 million tonnes are proven reserves. The Ruba dolomite deposit is one of the largest among the explored ones in Belarus²⁷⁵. In fact, for this reason, the production of construction materials based on natural raw materials is one of the priority areas of economic development of the Vitebsk region.

Another very promising area for the development of the FEZ "Vitebsk" is woodworking production. There are already five resident companies that specialise in this sector. In particular, VMG WoodArt Ltd

is an integrated wood processing complex. Another OOO Akitama is building a plant for processing low-grade timber and producing wood-fuel pellets. And Karelia Venirs is organizing veneer production. In addition, two more projects were under registration in the FEZ, including one to set up production of machinery and equipment for the woodworking industry.

Given the obvious growing interest of investors in wood processing projects, the FEZ "Vitebsk" has taken the initiative to create a wood processing cluster in the region, involving the association of producers, research centres and educational institutions, which is expected to provide favourable conditions for the implementation of innovations. After all, "this form of cooperation will stimulate scientific developments and their practical application. As a result, it will increase the depth of processing of wood raw materials and create products with higher added value"²⁷⁶. Enterprises, institutions of additional education, educational institutions that train specialists for this industry, including the Vitebsk State Technical College, can become participants of this cluster. An agreement on the creation of the woodworking cluster is planned to be signed in spring 2020 in the framework of the International Economic Forum in Vitebsk. It should be assumed that such form of coordination, which implies a synergetic

²⁷⁵ A new resident of FEZ Vitebsk will create production of construction materials from dolomite [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-iz-dolomita-371163-2019/>.

²⁷⁶ FEZ Vitebsk proposes to create a woodworking cluster [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-predlagaet-sozdat-klaster-37-klaster-371147-2019/>.

effect at the output, will really help to introduce innovations not only in the free economic zone, but also outside it.

It should be noted that the emergence of this cluster in the Vitebsk region can continue and complement the innovative direction of development of the northern Belarusian region. It should be reminded that in October 2017, the Novopolotsk innovation and industrial petrochemical cluster was already established here, which includes Novopolotsk City Executive Committee, Polotsk State University, JSC Naftan, JSC Stroitelno-Montazhny Centre No. 16, Novopolotsk, LLC Interservice and Novopolotsk Center of Entrepreneurship and Real Estate. The number of participants is expected to almost double as early as 2020, including foreign participants. In particular, it could be Chinese partners from Weihai in Shandong Province, the twin city of Novopolotsk, which are interested in the innovative developments of Polotsk scientists in creating new types of petrochemical products and improving the characteristics of the fuel produced. A company from the Czech Republic, which is interested in entering the Belarusian market, appears to be among the cluster's potential partners.

The growing interest of foreign partners in the petrochemical cluster pushes its organizers to optimize the mechanisms of interaction between its participants. For this reason, there are plans to establish an association here in 2020, which will act as a coordinating centre and will form proposals to improve the regulatory requirements governing the activities of the subjects of this innovative infrastructure. In addition, "the association will also take on the organization of events to develop effective interaction of the participants, build a portfolio of joint orders, promote the image of the cluster and improve the staffing of its activities"²⁷⁷. There is every reason to believe that this format of cooperation can also have the most beneficial effect on the innovative

²⁷⁷ The number of participants in the Novopolotsk petrochemical cluster is to be almost doubled [Electronic resource]:
<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chislo-uchastnikov-novopolotskogo-neftehimicheskogo-klastera-planiruetsja-uvelichit-pochti-v-dva-raz-371161-2019/>

development of the economy of the Vitebsk region.

The first resident registered in the FEZ in 2020 was BelBanka LLC, established with the participation of an investor from Russia. This company's investment project involves the reconstruction and modernization of production facilities on the outskirts of Vitebsk and at the site of Vityaz, as well as the installation of two lines for the production of tin cans for industrial canning of food products. Production will start in 2021. The raw material, tinplate, will be supplied by the Miorsky metal-rolling plant located in Vitebsk Oblast and will be commissioned in the second quarter of 2021. As a result, BelBanka LLC "will be engaged in the production of one-piece cans, where the bottom and the side surface are one piece, only the lid is rolled. In the second stage, the company will produce prefabricated products consisting of three parts (bottom, body and lid).²⁷⁸ . An important detail: when the new factory reaches its full capacity, the volume of production will double. And all of it will be shipped to foreign markets.

The investment picture for 2020 in the FEZ Vitebsk is very much complemented by the fact that there are already plans to register as residents at least six enterprises set up with investors from Canada, China, Azerbaijan, and Russia. The total investments in these projects will exceed \$100 million, and the number of jobs created will be at least 300. In particular, in Polotsk the FEZ resident is Belsun International High Technology Corporation Ltd will set up high-tech production

low-tonnage chemical products that have no analogues in the former Soviet Union. The Azerbaijani investor will produce innovative products designed "to service various types of machinery, including in harsh operating conditions. Production is expected to start by the end of 2020, and the products will be fully shipped to foreign markets.²⁷⁹ .

²⁷⁸ A Russian investor will create a production of tin cans in the FEZ Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-sez- vitebsk-s-uch-astiem-rossijskogo-investora-sozhdadut-proizvodstvo-zhestjanyh-banok-377712- 2020/>.

²⁷⁹ An investor from Azerbaijan will create a high-tech production of low-tonnage chemistry in FEZ Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/investor-iz-azerbajdzhana-sozdast-www.belta.by/economics/view/investor-iz-azerbajdzhana-sozdast->

In Polotsk, a Belarusian investor intends to set up production of stainless steel containers and create about 20 jobs. The Belarusian-Russian JV Novopolotsk Plant of Technological Metal Structures is considering a project with about USD 10 million in investments in hot-dip galvanizing in the village of Farinovo, Polotsk District. About \$28 million will be invested by a Chinese company in a wood processing complex on the outskirts of Vitebsk. Belmatch Ltd. in Postavy will specialize in match straw production. In Orša, a Belarusian company will try to set up production of fuel pellets, and Zavod PAK JSC will initiate a project to set up production of components for dump trucks.

Another significant investment development will take place in FEZ Vitebsk in 2020, as the Lithuanian holding VMG Group has decided to expand the financing of an investment project already underway in the FEZ from 100 to 200 million euros. For this purpose, the investor is ready to organize additional production of solid wood furniture in addition to the vertically integrated wood processing complex that is being created. This will increase the number of jobs created by the holding company's projects to 1,000²⁸⁰. This is being done in order to start in 2021 in the new furniture production plant the production of new products - tables and chairs, the main buyer of which will be IKEA, which is now helping to finance this project.

It should be noted that the economy of the Vitebsk Region attracted over one billion dollars in investments in 2019. Thanks to an active investment policy, the first plant for the production of steel seamless cylinders in Belarus was put into operation here. New enterprises and wood processing plants were opened in Rossony, Sharkovshchino, Beshenkovichi, Gorodok, Polotsk districts. "A grain drying complex of the Vitebsk broiler poultry farm in the urban settlement of Surazh, a soybean processing shop of the Ekomol-Agro enterprise have been

[vysokotekhnologichnoe-proizvodstvo-malotonnazhnoj-himii-v-sez-vitebsk-381432-2020](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/litovskij-holding-vmg-grupp-uvelichit-objem-investitsij-po-proektam-v-sez-vitebsk-do-200-mln-evro-379950-2020/)

²⁸⁰ Lithuanian holding VMG Group will increase investments in projects in FEZ Vitebsk to EUR 200 million [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/litovskij-holding-vmg-grupp-uvelichit-objem-investitsij-po-proektam-v-sez-vitebsk-do-200-mln-evro-379950-2020/>

commissioned"²⁸¹ . In addition, the Yubileiny Agricultural Complex is completing the construction of the largest dairy complex in Belarus, Kupalinka, for more than two thousand cows. In the first half of 2020 another two innovative objects of the agricultural enterprise Ustye, a 10 thousand ton grain drying complex for the preparation of agricultural crops and a dairy complex with a robotic milking system, will be put into operation. It is not a complete list. This is the pace set by the investments attracted today to develop just one of the Belarusian regions, encouraging the creation of new points of growth in its territory.

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²⁸¹ Bogacheva, O. More than \$1 billion investments attracted in the economy of Vitebsk region in 2019 / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bole-1 -mlrd-investitsij -privlecheno-v-ekonomiku-vitebskoj -oblasti-za-2019-god-378810-2020/>

Investment and export drivers for regional development

The five-year development programme and the target forecast for the next three years currently being drafted in the Republic of Belarus include free economic zones (FEZ) among the most important segments that should receive new impulses for development in the medium term, with more than 450 economic entities resident in FEZs as of early autumn 2020. The high potential of free economic zones is also demonstrated by the fact that "today free economic zones account for almost 17% of the volume of industrial production, 20% of direct foreign investments and almost 20% of the country's exports"²⁸². And there is every reason to believe that under the current difficult conditions of the development of the Belarusian economy, it is FEZs that can and should become the main investment engine, on the basis of which the innovative, industrial and export potential of the territories in which they are located could develop. The more so because "our neighbours are forming zones with absolutely different conditions of incentives, functions"²⁸³. Today, it is necessary to continue the active development of FEZs in Belarus, not only in terms of improving legislation, land relations and infrastructure development, but also in terms of ways to increase the inflow of investments and improve economic efficiency. All the more so because Belarusian FEZs have already gained some experience in dealing with these issues. Suffice it to say that in the first half of 2020 alone, the number of residents in Belarus' free economic zones increased by more than 60 economic entities. And in the first quarter of the same year foreign investors invested nearly three billion dollars in the real economy of the country. "The main investors in Belarus were entities from Russia (35.7% of all incoming

²⁸² More than 60 residents registered in the FEZ of Belarus in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-60-rezidentovhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-60-rezidentov- zaregistrirvano-v-sez-belarusi-v-i-polugodii zaregistrirvano-v-sez-belarusi-v-i-polugodii-405375-2020/>.

²⁸³ FEZs should become the main investment engine - Nikitina // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sez-dolznyhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/sez-dolzny- stat-osnovnym-investitsionnym-lokomotivom-nikitinastat-osnovnym-investitsionnym-lokomotiv-nikitina-405379-2020/>.

investments), Cyprus (15%) and Austria (8.4%). The inflow of foreign direct investment amounted to \$2.1bn, or 75.1% of all incoming foreign investment"²⁸⁴. These facts clearly show that Belarus has many examples of successful investment solutions that contribute to the socio-economic development of the country as a whole.

In particular, high rates of development in 2020 was demonstrated by the **SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE Minsk**, which by the beginning of September had 118 resident companies, 69 of which - with foreign investment, and which in the first half of the year received more than \$ 118 million from abroad. At the same time, "foreign direct investment on a net basis in January-June amounted to nearly \$70 million, an increase of 76% over the same period last year. The key investors were the Swiss Confederation, the Republic of Cyprus and the People's Republic of China"²⁸⁵.

This influx of investment has had a very positive effect on the exports of FEZ residents, which in the first half of 2020 came close to \$560 million. The bulk of it was made up of electronic products and components, medical equipment, cable products, metal structures, auto and electric vehicles, railway and tram cars, parts and equipment for cars, and electrical equipment for passenger cars. We can assume that the assortment of export items in the metropolitan free economic zone will only expand in the near future, as a number of significant investment projects are currently underway here. These include the production of control valves for the petrochemical industry, innovative high-tech equipment and air filtration systems, special paints for road marking, electrical equipment for locomotive traction passenger cars, paper packaging, and the assembly of structures and products made of ferrous and nonferrous metals. Each of these

²⁸⁴ Foreign investors invested \$2.8 billion in the Belarusian economy in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyehhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannyeh-vlozhili-v-i-kvartale-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-28-mlrdinvestor-vlozhili-v-i-kvartale-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-28-mlrd-390601-2020/>

²⁸⁵ More than \$118 million of investments were received from abroad in FEZ Minsk in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/svyshe-118-mlnhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/svyshe-118-mln-investitsij-postupilo-v-i-polugodii-v-sez-minsk-iz-za-rubezha-40601-postupilo-v-i-polugodi-v-sez-minsk-iz-za-rubezha-406018-2020/>

projects is already creating new jobs in the FEZ. Suffice it to say that in the first six months of 2020, 482 people were hired here.

The facts show that FEZ Minsk was not going to slow down in the second half of 2020 either. Thus, in October, it registered the 14th resident in 2020. (There were 17 in the whole of 2019!). This is the company BASISPRO GROUP, which intends to implement an investment project "for the production of an aluminum frame for translucent enclosing structures"²⁸⁶, whose consumers will be not only Belarusian construction companies, but also from neighboring countries. After all, fences made using an aluminum frame are now widely used in the construction of modern buildings. November 2020 saw the 15th resident of the Free Economic Zone, MKtrade, which specializes in the manufacture of galvanized steel products with various types of polymer coating. Its arrival here is due to the fact that it plans to open a new production facility for the production of fences and roofing elements for cottage-type buildings, for which purpose it "intends to expand its own facilities and set up a new workshop at the production site in Fanipole"²⁸⁷.

InCata's investment project to create a science and technology park in the capital's FEZ to provide services to technology start-ups also looks very promising. For its successful implementation, fast-mounted airframe buildings will be built near the village of Privolny, Minsk region, which "will house a design bureau, a research engineering (R&D) centre and a prototyping centre. Offices for production consultants, investors and business mentors will be allocated"²⁸⁸. This will actualize the development of innovative

²⁸⁶ A new FEZ Minsk resident will build a plant to produce aluminium products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sezhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-minsk-postroit-zavod-po-provodstvu-izdelij-iz-aljuminija-4-iz-aljuminija-411877-2020/>

²⁸⁷ A new resident of FEZ Minsk will produce roofing and facade materials [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezidenthttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-proizvodit-krovelnye-i-fasadnye-materialysez-minsk-budet-proizvodit-krovelnye-i-fasadnye-materialy-415998-2020/>

²⁸⁸ A science and technology park to help start-ups will be built on the territory of FEZ Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/nauchnohttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/nauchno-park-v-pomosch-startapam-postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsktehnologicheskij-park-v-pomosch-startapam->

entrepreneurship in such fields of science and technology as nanotechnology, microelectronics, aerospace technology, power electronics, robotics in FEZ "Minsk", to help the residents of this science and technology park to eventually successfully enter the international market due to additional competitive advantages.

In terms of investment cooperation, the capital's FEZ may cooperate with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in an interesting way. In June 2020, it became known that this international financial institution intends to allocate a loan of almost EUR 15 million "for the construction of the Cherkasy substation to supply electricity to the Minsk Free Economic Zone"²⁸⁹. This loan is expected to be drawn down in 2020-2022 for a period of 15 years.

As for **THE Brest SES**, it will be 25 years old in 2021. Today it is located on more than ten thousand hectares. Its borders include land plots located not only in Brest and Brest rayon, but also in such cities as Baranovichi, Pinsk, Kobrin, Gantsevichi. As of mid-February 2020, over 70 residents from two dozen countries were registered here, including 47 with foreign capital, where more than 21,000 people are already employed. In 2019, the FEZ attracted \$107 million in investments, while the exports of its residents to 75 countries reached almost \$730 million. These positive trends continued in 2020, in the first quarter of which the FEZ attracted foreign direct investment on a net basis of almost 50 million dollars, four times the target. The dynamics of FEZ development today are such that all performance indicators for 2019 could be exceeded in 2020. The prerequisites for this have been serious. For example, while in 2018 721 jobs were created in the FEZ by opening new production facilities by residents, and 890 jobs in 2019, it was planned to open at least one thousand jobs in 2020. With such development potential, five new residents with Polish and German capital are coming here, whose activities are focused on light industry,

postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsk-411305-2020/

²⁸⁹ Belarus wants to raise €14.11 million from the EBRD to build a substation for FEZ "Minsk" [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-hochet-privlech-ot-ebrr-1411-mln-evro-na-stroitelstvo-podstantsii-dlja-sez-minsk-394602-2020/>

woodworking, cosmetics, and the production of metal products and units and components for the automotive industry.

It should be noted that at the end of April 2020, two more land plots with a total area of over a hundred hectares, located in Ivatsevichi and Ivatsevichi District, were added to FEZ Brest for the implementation of investment projects involving foreign capital. Already in June 2020 a new FEZ resident was registered here - Polipol Mebel Bel Ltd., which is part of Polipol Produktions Verwalfund GmbH, a well-known holding in the European market, which has been producing upholstered furniture for 30 years. It employs over seven thousand people in ten factories not only in Germany but also in other European countries. The new resident plans to build a furniture plant and several other related facilities on the Ivatsevichi industrial site. "The project will be implemented over six years. The company expects to invest over €25 million in the furniture production during this period and create over 1,000 jobs. At the same time, 90% of the production will be exported"²⁹⁰. An important detail: OOO "Polish Mebel Bel" has become the seventh company in the FEZ with German capital. And overall, German entrepreneurs rank first here in terms of investment, as they account for more than a third of the FEZ's total investment portfolio.

Other new residents are also coming here with interesting projects. For example, Savantdrev LLC, a company with Belarusian capital, registered as a FEZ resident in May 2020, plans to invest half a million euro in the production of lumber - boards, timber, and various building structures. The production site near Krasnogvardeyskaya Street in Brest is expected to produce fuel pellets or pellets from wood waste, which are very popular in the European Union countries. This is why "Savantdrev expects to supply up to 85% of its

²⁹⁰ New Brest FEZ resident intends to invest over EUR 25 million in furniture production [Electronic resource]:
<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-na-meren-investirovat-v-proizvodstvo-mebeli-bolee-25-mln-evro-394124-2020/>

production to foreign markets"²⁹¹ . A full production cycle will start here in 2021. At least 15 jobs will be created at the new factory.

Also in May 2020, the FEZ registered Lady- X LLC, which plans to locate its production facilities at the unused premises of the Baranovichi Automated Line Plant. The Belarusian company plans to "invest about 2 million euros in the project for the production of collectible clothes. <...> When it reaches full capacity in 2024, the company will employ 260 people"²⁹² . On top of that, the previously registered residents are expected to start operations in the FEZ. In particular, "BTV-Agro LLC has built the first complex for growing mushrooms for Bonche LLP, which is engaged in the production of mushrooms. Jobs will also be created there. The issue of organising production of car harnesses and campers on the territory of the FEZ is being considered"²⁹³ .

The Italian Industrial District, whose infrastructure is due to be completed shortly, is also set to contribute to the BMS objectives. A 5 MW transformer substation and a sewage pumping station have already been built there, in the Aeroport industrial estate. In addition, a street and road network, a water supply system and a storm drainage system are being laid. The facility should be commissioned in 2021. Since much of the area has already been provided with the necessary engineering infrastructure, including power, gas and water supply, sewerage and telephony, "this has enabled the business entities of the FEZ to

²⁹¹ A new resident of Brest FEZ will engage in woodworking [Electronic resource]. - 2020. -

URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-
www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-
derevoobrabotkoj-392514-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-derevoobrabotkoj-392514-2020/)

²⁹² . A new FEZ Brest resident will produce collectible clothes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-
budethttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-budet- vypuskat-kollektsionnuju-
odezhduvypuskat-kollektsionnuju-odezhdu-392737-2020/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-budethttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-budet-vypuskat-kollektsionnuju-odezhduvypuskat-kollektsionnuju-odezhdu-392737-2020/)

²⁹³ Brest FEZ plans to create 1,000 jobs [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-
www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-
380116-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-380116-2020/)

locate 10 companies here. Two more are under construction"²⁹⁴ .

It should be reminded that the idea of creating such a district in the Aeroport industrial zone was voiced about ten years ago, when a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of an industrial district in the Brest region was adopted in Trieste in June 2011, which provided for "creating the most favorable conditions to attract Italian investors and implement their projects in Belarus"²⁹⁵ . Today not only Italians, but also any investor willing to set up and develop his business here can come to the territory of the district, using the advantages of the free economic zone. That is why two companies with investments from Germany are already operating here, as well as companies with Israeli, British, Polish and Russian capital. "In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian company Frieza Industry, which produces energy-saving elements for commercial refrigeration equipment, was launched at the Aeroport site. Today, the joint venture has one of the highest export growth rates among FEZ enterprises"²⁹⁶ .

All these examples are certainly encouraging when assessing the prospects for the development of the Brest FEZ.

The Grodnoinvest SEZ, whose residents attracted a record amount of foreign direct investment on a net basis in the first three months of 2020 - \$59.8 million - out of a total of \$157 million in foreign capital inflows, shows an interesting example of development. "The main investor countries were Russia (over \$45 million), Austria (\$39 million) and the Netherlands (\$34 million). Investments came from 15 countries, including the UAE, Germany, the US and the UK"²⁹⁷ .

²⁹⁴ FEZ Brest completes development of Italian industrial district [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-bresthttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-brest- zavershaet-obustroystvo-italjjanskogo-promyshlennogo-okrugazavershaet-obustroystvo-italjjanskogo-promyshlennogo-okruga-418092-2020/>.

²⁹⁵ Zalessky, B. Belarus - Europe: potential for partnership. Multi-vector policy in the context of global challenges / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 43.

²⁹⁶ FEZ Brest completes infrastructure development in the Italian industrial district this year [electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/sez-brest-zavershaet-v-etom-godu-sozdanie- infrastruktury-v-italjjanskoy-promyshlennom-okrug-380751-2020/>

²⁹⁷ The residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest attracted a record volume of FDI on a net basis in the first quarter [Electronic resource]:

In total, during 18 years of its existence FEZ "Grodnoinvest" has attracted over USD 900 mln of foreign investments from 40 countries including Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, Canada and Poland into the economy of Grodno region.

The growing investment appeal of this production site certainly could not have come out of thin air. It is largely due to the FEZ administration's attention to developing the free economic zone's infrastructure. The following statistics are quite telling: since 2015, about nine million Belarusian rubles have been invested in the infrastructure of industrial sites in Grodno and the Grodno Region, Lida and Smorgon to improve the investment attractiveness of the sites from the FEZ Development Fund. For example, a transformer substation was built at the FEZ site near Grodno in the Novaya Gozha area, which provided electricity for new resident industries and created the necessary reserve for potential investors. In Lida, an industrial site in the area

"The city's water, sewerage, communications and electricity networks have been laid.

In Smorgon, a large-scale project to reconstruct Industrialny Avenue, which connects the city with the industrial site of the FEZ, where such residents as Kronospan Group, Smorgon Aggregate Plant, Europlastic Invest and Shinaka Mebel Bel are located, was launched in 2019 with funding from the FEZ Development Fund. The project is to result in a four-lane motor road with stop pavilions and small architectural forms, external lighting, power and water supply, rain sewerage and external communication systems. All this is being done with a single goal in mind: "The new infrastructure will make the site more attractive for potential investors and participants of the Furniture Cluster in the FEZ Grodnoinvest"²⁹⁸.

Here it is necessary to clarify that today "an efficient furniture cluster has been formed in Grodno region, which includes more than 20 enterprises producing

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodmomvest-v-i-kvartale-privlekli-rekordnyj-objem-pii-na-chistoj-osnove-389251-2020/>

²⁹⁸ FEZ Grodnoinvest has invested about Br9 million in infrastructure development over five years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-grodnoinvest-za-pj-atlet-investirovala-v-razvitie-infrastruktury-okolo-br9-mln-387801-2020/>.

wood products packaging, wood boards, furniture and much more"²⁹⁹. It should be noted that the timber processing industry accounts for about half of all investments in the FEZ. So it should come as no surprise that in 2019, too, residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest attracted \$436 million in investments, a fourth of the figure for all FEZs in Belarus. And as a result, this one of the youngest Belarusian FEZs has become the leader in terms of attracted investments from foreign investors.

In November 2020, 75 companies with capital from 40 countries were already operating here. However, a number of new residents of the FEZ appeared in 2020. They include the Irish company Skywatt with a project to build a photovoltaic power plant, the Belarusian company ZOV-MARKET with a project to set up a wood processing plant, and the Belarusian-Russian company EUEcoPack with a topical project to set up a paper packaging plant. One more company, IBA Investment is implementing a project as a resident of the special tourist and recreational park "Avgustovsky kanal"³⁰⁰. Particularly interesting in this series is a project by the Irish investor Skywatt, with an investment volume of over five million euros, to set up a network of photovoltaic stations to provide green energy to FEZ residents. Its implementation will, among other things, make it possible to "establish cooperative links with international concerns that have requirements for the use of energy from renewable sources"³⁰¹.

In mid-December 2020, the first stone was laid by HSBelakon LLC, a subsidiary of Austria's HS Timber Group, one of Europe's leading woodworking companies, on site No. 12 of Grodnoinvest FEZ in the Svisloch District. The construction is planned to be completed in 2022. "Investments will amount to

²⁹⁹ Residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest attracted \$436 million in investments in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-privlekli-436-mln-investitsij-385388-2020/>.

³⁰⁰ Since the beginning of the year, residents of SMEZ "Grodnoinvest" have paid over Br157 million in taxes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/s-nachala-goda-rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-uplatili-br157-mln-nalogov-415012-2020/>.

³⁰¹ FEZ resident Grodnoinvest will create a network of photovoltaic stations [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-set-fotoelektricheskikh-set-fotoelektricheskikh-stantsij-410108-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdasthttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-set-fotoelektricheskikh-set-fotoelektricheskikh-stantsij-410108-2020/).

about \$84 million and there are plans to process up to 500,000 cubic metres of conifers per year. The main focus will be on recycling and creating pellets"³⁰² . Plus it will provide jobs for some 230 people, which is not unimportant for an area like Svisloch.

The emergence of new residents in the FEZ Grodnoinvest is largely dictated by the obvious advantages of this Belarusian region, among which stands out "the availability of both wide and narrow gauge railways. This allows logistics companies to deliver goods from Asia to Europe and back quickly and efficiently"³⁰³ . This is why in summer 2020 the FEZ administration offered potential investors to participate in the creation of a multimodal logistics centre at the Belarusian-Polish border, where ten pairs of trains per day could be handled. We are talking about implementation of infrastructure subprojects here - construction of a motor road, access and exhibition railway tracks, engineering networks. Let's hope that this proposal will resonate with interested business people. Especially since "since 2018, five companies with investments from Belarus, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, and China have become residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in the logistics sector"³⁰⁴ .

In 2020, the activities of FEZ residents continued to be characterized by their active investment policy. During the first 10 months of this year, they invested almost a hundred and fifty million Belarusian rubles in fixed assets, the bulk of which - more than 60 percent - was spent on the purchase of technological machinery and equipment. The trend is especially noticeable at the facilities of the Smorgon-based industrial zone, where more than 90 million Belarusian

³⁰² An Austrian investor will build a woodworking plant in the Svisloch region [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/avstrij-skij-investor-postroit-derevoobrabatyvaj-uschee-predpriyatie-v-svislochskom-rajone-420771-2020/>

³⁰³ An investor from Germany considers building a container terminal near Grodno [Electronic resource]. -2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investor-iz-germanii-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-stroitelstva-pod-grodno-kontejner'nogo-termmala-417507-2020/>

³⁰⁴ Investors are offered a multimodal logistics centre project on the Belarusian-Polish border [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investoram-predlagajut-proekt-multimodal'nogo-tsentra-logistiki-na-belorussko-polskoj-granitse-396558-2020/>

rubles have been invested and where companies with foreign capital, such as Kronospan, Szynaka, and Sodrugestvo, are successfully operating. As a reminder, the Grodnoinvest FEZ industrial zone in Smorgon district was established in 2015. It now consists of three sectors. "In just a few years, eight new residents with investments from the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and Cyprus have appeared here. <...> The FEZ residents have invested \$425 million in the creation of joint production facilities"³⁰⁵. As a result today FEZ residents form over 90% of industry in the Smorgon region, where more than two thousand people are employed and the export volume is almost \$500 million. As for the FEZ residents in Grodno and Grodno District, they have invested Br30 million in fixed assets from January to November 2020. At the same time, "the companies Bigan, ZOV, Makey, Gronitex, Belagrofert are actively modernizing and expanding their production facilities"³⁰⁶.

The active investment policy of the residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest allows them to successfully address the export of their products as a result. In the first 10 months of 2020, they shipped almost \$778 million worth of goods to 55 countries. Moreover, exports to the U.S. alone increased threefold. In addition, "shipments of FEZ residents' products to Canada (4.7 times), the Netherlands (2.4 times), the United Arab Emirates (2.3 times), Estonia (1.9 times), Turkey (1.5 times) as well as Switzerland and Afghanistan have multiplied"³⁰⁷. But Russia, Poland and Ukraine remain the main export destinations. Two-thirds of all shipments to other countries from the FEZ are food and agricultural products, furniture and wood processing products.

All these facts once again confirm the idea that free economic zones in the Republic of Belarus are becoming an instrument of economic development, the

³⁰⁵ In Smorgon, the reconstruction of the main part of Industrial Avenue has been completed [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-smorgoni-zavershili-rekonstruktsij-u-osnovnoj-chasti-industrialnogo-prospekta-405149-2020/>

³⁰⁶ Residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest invested Br144 million in fixed capital [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-vlozhili-br-144-mln-investitsij-v-osnovnoj-kapital-417225-2020/>.

³⁰⁷ Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest to the USA tripled in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnomvest-v-ssha-za-janvar-sentjabr-vozros-v-tri-raza-416050-2020/>.

potential of which is only beginning to be truly realised and can bring even greater results for the benefit of the country as a whole.

A focus on innovation

To create new points of economic growth in the Belarusian regions, including for the implementation of complex "projects of the future" in order to reach the level of innovative development of the leading countries in the Eastern Europe region - Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary - by 2025 is the task set out in the Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025. In this connection in Vitebsk region for the coming five years five branches in which hi-tech enterprises will be created to produce goods of world standards: 1) electric transport; 2) bioindustry; 3) pharmaceuticals; 4) robotics; 5) production of composite materials. And not just identified, but "there are already first steps in the implementation of these areas, and in 2021-2025 innovative and investment projects in these areas will be actively implemented"³⁰⁸.

As far as **electric vehicles and the electric industry are concerned**, great hopes are pinned on Vityaz. The company is the first Belarusian manufacturer of infrastructure for electric vehicles to create high-power models of charging devices. We are talking about a prototype of an ultra-fast 200kW electric charging station. "The time to fully charge the battery of an electric vehicle capable of realising the potential of such stations will be around 10 minutes."³⁰⁹.

These ultra-fast charging stations are scheduled for delivery in 2021

to the state operator for the pilot scheme

operation. It should be recalled that in 2020, Vityaz certified the design and production system of electric charging stations for compliance with the

³⁰⁸ Pushnyakova, A. Matskevich on Vitebsk Oblast industry: emphasis on development of 5 high-tech industries / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/matskevich-o-promyshlennosti-vitebskoj-oblasti-aktsent-sdelana-razvitiu-5-vysokotekhnologichnyh-431976-2021/>.

³⁰⁹ "Vityaz will build a prototype of an ultra-fast electric charging station for electric cars by the end of the year [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/vityaz-do-kontsa-goda-sozdast-opytnyj-obrazets-sverhbystroj-elektrozarj-adnoj-stantsii-dlja-413363-2020/>

requirements of the international standard STB ISO 9001:2015. And the first model of such a station was installed in the car park near the company back in 2017.

In terms of **bioindustry** development, we are talking about "projects of the future" such as the construction of a digitised plant for the production of innovative veterinary drugs of the "green line" series. This project is being implemented in the free economic zone "Vitebsk". Along with the traditional veterinary drugs the enterprise will expand the production of original drugs for the treatment of animals developed jointly with scientists of the Vitebsk State Academy of Veterinary Medicine. The plant is being erected in three stages. Production of non-sterile drugs is expected to be moved to the new site this year. "The third stage implies the organization of sterile production. This is the most expensive part of the project, which is planned to be completed by 2025. The enterprise will create at least 80 jobs"³¹⁰. At the same time, the implementation of the project will enable the Vitebsk company, established back in 1995, to significantly expand its export potential.

In **the pharmaceutical industry**, the five-year innovation plans are related to the work of the specialized cluster, which was established in Vitebsk in August 2015. To be absolutely precise, the medical-pharmaceutical cluster "Union of Medical, Pharmaceutical and Scientific and Educational Organizations "Medicine and Pharmaceuticals - Innovative Projects" today includes Vitebsk State Medical University, SOOO Nativita, BelVitunifarm OJSC, VitVar LLC, AconitPharma JLLC, Medelcombel JLLC, PharmedMarketing Group LLC, Vitebsk Regional Marketing Centre CCUE, NP Union of Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Clusters (Russia), Akadempharm RUE, SiVital LLC, P. Masharov Vitebsk State University. Masharov. Since 2018, expert councils involving leading scientists, representatives of research centres and pharmaceutical

³¹⁰ Belcarolin will launch pharma production according to GMP standards by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kompanija-belkarolin-k-2025-godu-zapustit-farmproizvodstvo-po-standartam-gmp-383600-2020/>

industry enterprises began to be formed here to improve the interaction between science and practice. "This form of communication allows the participants of the pharmaceutical cluster to use the scientific potential not only of the Vitebsk region, but also of the country as a whole, and makes it possible to reduce the time distance between the creation of a medicinal product and its introduction into production"³¹¹.

The robotics area in the Vitebsk region is being developed, first of all, by Belwest LLC, where robotic software and hardware complexes developed in the company's own scientific laboratory are gradually being introduced. The fact is that the share of manual labour in the footwear industry is very high. "For some types of footwear the total number of operations is close to 250, of which only two are automated. Each product can go through up to 185 pairs of work hands"³¹². That is why the company is aiming for full or partial automation of many of these processes. And they have already created innovative machines that are unparalleled in the world.

As for **the production of composite materials**, specific steps in this direction were taken in the Vitebsk region back in 2018. In particular, Polotsk composite cluster was created, which already includes 11 enterprises. Today they not only produce composite materials, but also conduct scientific research on the development of high-tech composite production. "Among the cluster projects are such as "Composite reinforcement", "Basalt-plastic and fiberglass macro-fiber for concrete", "Human capital"³¹³.

Projects of the future are being laid today

The Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for

³¹¹ Vitebsk State University joined the medical-pharmaceutical cluster [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskij-gosuniversitet-voshel-v-sostav-mediko-farmatsevticheskogo-klastera-303786-2018/>.

³¹² Sumaneyev Y., Director of Belwest about competition, robots in light industry and bonuses for non-smokers / Y. Sumaneyev //. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/direktor-belvesta-o-konkurentsii-robotah-v-legpromie-i-bonusah-dlja-nekurjaschih-6889/>.

³¹³ Polotsk Innovative-Industrial Composite Cluster [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://clusterland.by/2019/11/16/innovaczionno-https://clusterland.by/2019/11/16/innovaczionno-promyshlenny-j-kompozitnyj-klasterv-g-poloczkklasterv-g-poloczkl/>.

the period until 2025 sets the objective to reach in five years the level of innovative development of the leading countries in the Eastern European region. To this end, it is planned to create new points of growth of the Belarusian economy, including through the implementation of complex "projects of the future" - "new innovative projects in the following areas: electrical industry, electric transport, bioindustry, pharmaceuticals, robotics, instrumentation, production of composite materials"³¹⁴, as well as the development of a range of prototypes of fundamentally new for Belarus technology and the organization on their basis of serial production.

The solution to this problem should and will be based on some experience from previous years. All the more so because there is a lot to build upon. Suffice it to say that over the last five years Belarus has increased production of innovative products by one and a half times, up to almost seven and a half billion dollars. Moreover, "the share of exports of science-intensive and hightech products has increased from 30% in 2015 to 38% in 2020, the share of innovation-active organisations increased from 19.6% to 26%"³¹⁵. In addition, the country has already created a network of 17 technoparks, which cover all Belarusian regions and are becoming centres of attraction for innovative production and development.

The residents of the Sino-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park, where 68 companies from 14 countries were registered as of the end of 2020, hold great hopes in this regard today. An important detail: 12 residents already belong specifically to the field of science, innovation, new, absolutely unique developments. One such business entity is the innovative Sino-Belarusian enterprise Aviation Technologies and Complexes, whose products were presented at the Great Stone in December 2020 - multirotor and aircraft-type

³¹⁴ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the Period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 25.

³¹⁵ Belarus has increased production of innovative products by 1.5 times in five years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-za-https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-za-pj-atat-let-uvulichila-proizvodstvo-innovatsionnoj-produktsii-let-uvulichila-provodstvo-innovatsionnoj-produktsii-v-15-15-raza-415-raza-415135-2020/>.

drones, as well as multipurpose unmanned aerial complexes of hybrid type. It is no secret that there is currently a very high demand for such technology in the world. This is why the manufacturing company has already reached an agreement with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry "to facilitate the active promotion of Belarusian machines and technologies in the field of remote control in foreign markets"³¹⁶. Such innovative products, we can be sure, will have no delays in sales in the near and far abroad. Another promising resident appeared here in December 2020 - Solidpipe System, which will implement a project in the field of new materials related to the production and application of an innovative protective coating on components for equipment used in the mining industry. The point is that "this technology is unique for Belarus and the countries of the Eurasian region. Production is scheduled to start in 2021"³¹⁷.

The Sino-Belarusian Center for Cooperation in Science and Technology, which will open here in December 2020, is intended to facilitate the development of innovative industries in the Great Stone Industrial Park, and will house research laboratories, incubation and acceleration zones for startups, a testing and small-scale production centre, and a hall for demonstrating scientific and technological achievements. It is noteworthy that "among those who will work in the newly opened centre is the China-Belarus Innovation Centre of Industrial Technologies, established by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of Guangdong province (People's Republic of China). The Spark program will be launched here in the first quarter of 2021 to help develop R&D projects of the two countries."³¹⁸. In addition, construction of an

³¹⁶ Aviation Technologies and Complexes was presented at the Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikomhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-prezentovali-kompaniju-aviatsionnye-tehnologii-i-kompleksy-kamne-prezentovali-kompaniju-aviatsionnye-tehnologii-i-i-kompleksy-421952-2020/>.

³¹⁷ Great Stone resident implements new materials project [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezident-velikogo-kamniahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezident-velikogo-kamnia-realizuet-proekt-v-sfere-novyh-materialovrealizuet-proekt-v-sfere-novyh-materialov-420268-2020/>.

³¹⁸ The Sino-Belarusian centre for cooperation in science and technology is opened in Velikiy Kamen

international exhibition centre started here in December 2020, which "will be one of the important links in the business infrastructure of the industrial park along with the trade and logistics park, commercial and trade and exhibition centres"³¹⁹.

Overall, Great Stone's priorities for 2021 include supporting the implementation of resident investment projects, as well as developing a high-quality development programme for the industrial park and a feasibility study for its second phase facilities, which envisages "further expansion of the production sectors to attract investment, active promotion of the regional research and development platform

cooperation"³²⁰. More specifically, during the implementation of the second stage of the Great Stone development and development of the area of almost one thousand hectares, it is "planned to create a smart city - eco-friendly, with non-standard solutions, introduction of advanced innovations in telecommunications, information, mobile, driverless technologies, artificial intelligence, quantum computing"³²¹. All these facts prove that the plans associated with the Great Stone Industrial Park, as an innovative "project of the future", are quite realistic, concrete and feasible, which is especially important in the current difficult conditions for the development of the Belarusian economy.

Strong regions, defined as "comfortable and safe living and working conditions,

[Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

https://www.belta.by/economics/view/https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitaj_sko-sko-belorusskij-tsentr-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-tsentr-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-dostizhenij-otkryt-v-otkryt-v-421475-2020/

³¹⁹ Construction of an international exhibition centre has begun in Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stroitelstvohttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/stroitelstvo-mezhdunarodnogo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-nachalos-v-velikom-kamnemezhdunarodnogo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-nachalos-v-velikom-kamne-421518-2020/>

³²⁰ Yan, G. Will Chinese business continue investing in Belarus / G. Yan // [Electronic resource]. -

2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/prodolzhit-li-kitajskij-biznes-investirovat-v-belarus-jan-gan-o-novyh-tsentrakh-prijazhenijakitajskij-biznes-investirovat-v-belarus-jan-gan-o-novyh-tsentrakh-prijazhenija-7602/>

³²¹ Declared investment by Great Stone residents is estimated at more than \$1.2 billion [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zajavlennye-investitsii-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-otsenivajutsja-v-bolee-chem-12-mlrd-421491-2020/>

high quality and accessible social infrastructure, high mobility, investments in new production and productive employment" are also among the main priorities of the socio-economic development programme of the Republic of Belarus until 2025³²². At the same time, the regional development strategy implies the implementation of investment projects in lagging regions - to use local resources and create new production facilities, and in territories with preferential treatment - to create high-tech export-oriented production facilities. It is clear that the more efficient the jobs in the regions, the higher the productivity there, the more attractive life will become outside the capital. In this regard, "the first task is to create conditions for the emergence in the regions of enterprises with highly productive jobs, with a certain level of wages"³²³. The Belarusian free economic zones (FEZs), which "are becoming a tool for the development of the economy, the potential of which is only beginning to be truly realized and can bring even better results for the benefit of the entire country"³²⁴, have already laid a good foundation for a successful solution of this problem in the new five-year period. This is evidenced by concrete facts.

Suffice it to say that as of 1 January 2021, 440 business entities were registered as residents in the FEZ. And now projects worth about seven billion dollars worth of investments from more than 30 countries are being implemented there. In 2020 alone, 43 new residents were brought into the FEZ in Belarus, about half of them with foreign capital, with total declared investments of about two hundred million dollars. And by other indicators, the dynamics of these territorial complexes are nothing short of encouraging. "Compared to 2019, there has been a 1.5-fold increase in foreign direct investment on a net basis (up

³²² Main Provisions of the Draft Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/osnovnye-polozheniya-proekta-programmy-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-respubliki-belarus-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-programmy-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-respubliki-belarus-na-202.html>

³²³ GDP growth and regional development - Minister of Economy on five-year plans [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rost-vvp-i-razvitiye-regionov-ministr-ekonomiki-o-planah-na-pjatiletkurazvitiye-regionov-ministr-ekonomiki-o-planah-na-pjatiletku-428671-2021/>

³²⁴ Zalesky, B. With an emphasis on cooperation. Chronicle of international interaction in the post-Soviet space / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 104.

to \$307 million), a 10% increase in industrial production and sales revenues <...> and a 2.2% increase in exports of goods (up to \$5.9 billion). Depending on FEZs, residents generated up to 85% of investments, up to half of goods exports and a third of regional industrial production"³²⁵.

For instance, in the FEZ Gomel-Raton alone, which by early 2021 had 70 economic entities, including 32 companies with foreign capital from 16 countries, attracted nearly \$110 million in foreign direct investment to implement investment projects in 2020, almost half the total investment volume in the region. And it has produced a corresponding result. FEZ residents have sold most of their products outside Belarus. The volume of these supplies exceeded one billion dollars. All in all the goods were supplied to the markets of 63 countries. "The largest share in the exports is taken by Russia (48.1%), Ukraine (18.6%), Poland (7.8%), China (6.1%), Lithuania (6.6%) <...>. The foreign trade turnover of goods in 2020 was \$1.7 billion"³²⁶ with a surplus of more than \$600 million. At the same time, more than 700 new jobs were opened in the FEZ in 2020, and the total number of people employed here today is almost thirty thousand.

Residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest, which accounts for about 40 percent of total exports of Grodno Region, have also achieved a trade surplus of \$438 million in 2020. It is made up of wood and paper products, furniture, foodstuffs, as well as machinery and equipment, computer, electronic and optical devices, electrical equipment, vehicles, ready-made metal and textile products, chemical products and fertilizers. In total, the products of FEZ residents were exported to 65 countries in 2020. Even quite exotic ones, such as Zimbabwe, Peru and Somalia.

³²⁵ Residents of free economic zones formed almost 5% of Belarus' GDP in 2020 [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-v-2020-goduhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-v-2020-godu-sformirovali-sformirovali-pochti-5-5-vvp-belarusi-428975-202-vvp-belarusi-428975-2021>

³²⁶ Residents of the FEZ Gomel-Raton increased output by 13.1% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-uvlechili-obiiem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-131-V-2020-godu-429328-2021/>

Russia, Poland and Ukraine remained the main markets. Nevertheless, "in 2020, there was a significant increase in supplies of Belarusian products to the United States (a growth rate of 337%), the United Arab Emirates (229%), Estonia (210%), Egypt (209%), Canada (194%), and the Netherlands (185%)"³²⁷. It is also characteristic that supplies to the European Union increased to almost \$200 million, accounting for one fifth of all exports of FEZ Grodnoinvest residents.

In the FEZ "Minsk" residents' exports in 2020 increased by 11 percent and amounted to nearly 1.5 billion dollars, and the inflow of foreign direct investment on a net basis increased by 3.7 times - up to 68 million dollars. In addition, in 2020, "just over 1 thousand people were employed here"³²⁸, and projects in mechanical engineering, instrumentation and green technology are planned for implementation, so that by 2025 about four thousand more high-performance jobs will be created in the FEZ.

FEZ "Vitebsk" is also one of the real tools to develop the economy of the Vitebsk region in an innovative way. Today 56 investment projects are being implemented here in 16 sectors with the participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Israel, Cyprus and Estonia. In 2020 they exported over \$550 million worth of products, which was nearly one third of the total supplies to foreign markets of the entire Vitebsk Oblast. This made it possible to obtain a foreign trade surplus: over \$177 million in goods and over \$13 million in services. "At the same time FEZ "Vitebsk" is the only free economic zone in the region that provided services exceeding exports over imports. A total of \$24.4 million worth of services was provided to foreign

³²⁷ Residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest exported products to 65 countries in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez- grodnomvest-v-2020-godu-eksportirovali-produktsiju-v-65-stran-429156-2021>

³²⁸ Minsk FEZ residents' exports in 2020 amounted to almost \$1.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-minsk-v-2020-godu-sostavil-pochti-godu-sostavil-pochti-15-mlrd-429-mlrd-429290-2021/>

partners"³²⁹ .

This strong performance would not have been possible without the reliance on an active investment policy, which is characteristic of this FEZ. Suffice it to say that in 2020 the inflow of foreign direct investment here increased by another 16 percent and exceeded 30 million dollars. It has managed to create 235 new jobs, more than 1.5 times the number of those announced in the business plans. An important detail: In 2020 there are six new companies registered as residents in the Free Economic Zone, with a total announced investment of over 35 million dollars, which will allow to create here at least another hundred jobs. Five of them are companies with foreign capital. "Businessmen from Russia, Canada, Ireland and Azerbaijan intend to implement projects on organization of production of food cans, protection means and special purpose products, match straws, build photovoltaic stations for energy supply of residents' activity as well as to establish production of plastic lubricants of wide operation temperature range"³³⁰ .

Three more companies have received FEZ resident status in the first two months of 2021. The first of them was OOO STS-Beton at the beginning of January with an investment project to develop the production of building materials. The new resident, specialising in the production of cement and concrete, plans to expand the nomenclature and master the production of new products for the construction industry after purchasing new equipment. "This will allow for an increase in volume figures, as well as entering new markets, including exporting

³²⁹ Residents of FEZ Vitebsk increased production by 17% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sezhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-2020-godu-uvelichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-navitebsk-v-2020-godu-uvelichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-17-429730-2021>

³³⁰ Vityaz JSC is recognised as the best resident of FEZ Vitebsk in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/oaohhttps://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/oaovitjaz-priznano-luchshim-rezidentom-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2020-godavitjaz-priznano-luchshim-rezidentom-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2020-goda-429541-2021/>.

products."³³¹ .

In mid-January, Hydropress LLC was registered with the FEZ with a project to develop the production of special hydraulic presses. The company, operating in Polotsk and specialising in the development and production of special hydraulic presses for the general engineering industry, railways and the military-industrial complex, plans to upgrade its machine park, add new machines, which will enable it to master the production of new types of products of its own design. "Among the new products will be equipment for the production of pipeline fittings for the oil and gas industry, as well as a large hydroforming press which is in demand for the production of shells for the rocket and space industry. Besides, production of equipment for utilization of 200-liter barrels of fuel and lubricants in field conditions will be additionally developed"³³² . It is well known that the environmental problem associated with 200-litre barrels is characteristic of the Arctic zone. That is why its solution will allow the new FEZ resident to export its products almost entirely.

In mid-February, a private enterprise, New Century Spring, appeared in the FEZ with a project to modernise import-substituting production of components for agricultural machinery. The new resident is an associate member of the Russian association Rosspetsmash, which unites manufacturers of agricultural, construction and road machinery, trailers and semi-trailers. The investment project to be implemented in the free economic zone will make it possible to increase the total output one and a half times, expand the range of spring teeth, tensile and compression springs for machine-building enterprises, and create additional opportunities for diversifying exports and increasing supplies to foreign markets. And this despite the fact that today this company already

³³¹ A new resident of FEZ Vitebsk will develop the production of construction materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyihttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-.sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-stoitelnyh-materialovrezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-provodstvo-stoitelnyh-materialov-422919-2021/>

³³² A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-spetsialnogo-gidropressovogo-oborudovaniia-424231-2021/>

exports more than half of its production to partners in Russia.

In addition, "two more investment projects are considered promising for registration in the FEZ "Vitebsk" - creation of a wood processing park and organization of an enterprise for the production of bio-coal, which investors from China and Sweden are interested in implementing"³³³ .³³⁴ In order to make these and other promising projects a success, the FEZ is now actively developing additional energy, water supply and railway access roads on the territory of the Zhurzhevo sector on the outskirts of Vitebsk, where "engineering and transport infrastructure development of the site will allow to attract at least \$165 million in foreign investment and create around 1,000 jobs for the projects that are already in progress or are being prepared for registration this year [2021]" xml-ph-0000@deepl.inte It should be assumed that the implementation of all these plans will mean that FEZ Vitebsk will reach a qualitatively new level of innovative development.

Another important mechanism for the implementation of the innovation development strategy in Belarus should be the implementation of investment projects to create 13 clusters and technoparks on the unused and inefficiently used production facilities of state enterprises. As a reminder, a technopark is understood today as a form of territorial integration of science, education and production in the form of an association of scientific organizations, design and engineering offices, educational institutions, production enterprises or their subdivisions. In other words, "the purpose of creating a technopark is to concentrate specialists of common activity profile in one territory. Researchers can conduct research there, teach in educational institutions and participate in

³³³ New resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop production of components for agricultural machinery
[Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-komplektujuschih-dlja-selhozmashin-429288-2021/>

³³⁴ Some Br40 million will be invested in the construction of infrastructure facilities of the FEZ
"Vitebsk" [Electronic resource].-2021:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-br40-mln-planiruetsja-investirovat-v-stroitelstvo-objektov-infrastruktury-sez-vitebsk-429858-2021>

the process of implementing the results of their research"³³⁵. Organisations acquiring technopark resident status receive additional development opportunities in the form of tax and rent relief, the use of special technopark equipment and production facilities, and legal and business advisory services.

In Belarus, the first project "to create a science and technology park has been implemented in Mogilev. The founders of CJSC Technology Park of Mogilev were the city and regional executive committees, as well as universities of the city"³³⁶. Its registration took place in March 2011. Today the innovation infrastructure network of our country already covers all regional centres, as well as Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Gorki, Borisov and Lyakhovichi districts, and includes 17 technoparks, 7 technology transfer centres and the Belarusian Innovation Fund. An important detail: residents of Belarusian technoparks for the past five years has increased production six-fold, up to nearly 200 million Belarusian rubles in 2020. At the same time, "the number of technopark residents has increased 2.2 times over this period, and the total number of their employees has increased 2.7 times. In 20162020, 2566 jobs were created in the technoparks, compared to the plan of 1536"³³⁷. The main areas of activity of Belarusian technopark residents today are instrumentation and machine building, electronics, information technology and software development, medicine, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment manufacturing, as well as "optics, laser technology, energy, energy saving, bio- and nanotechnology"³³⁸. And good results have already been achieved in a number of these areas.

For example, there were 61 residents registered in Belarusian university technoparks at the beginning of 2021. The volume of products manufactured in

³³⁵ Xiaojuan, L. Shaping the Belarusian Model of Technopark Development / L. Xiaojuan // Economics and Banking. - 2018. - №2. - C. 54.

³³⁶ Pinyagin, Y. Technoparks as an Element of National Innovation Infrastructure / Y. Pinyagin, L. Xiaojuan // Banking Bulletin. - 2016. - №12. - C. 52.

³³⁷ Residents of Belarusian technoparks have increased output 6 times in 5 years [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidentyhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-belorusskih-tehnoparkov-za-5-let-uvelichili-vypusk-produktsii-v-6-raz-belorusskih-tehnoparkov-za-5-let-uvelichili-vypusk-produktsii-v-6-raz-428037-2021/>.

³³⁸ Subjects of innovation infrastructure of the Republic of Belarus / ed. by A.G. Shumilin. - Minsk: GU BelISA, 2018. - C. 3.

them in 2020 exceeded 17 million Belarusian roubles, including innovative products worth more than 10 million roubles. A special feature of these technoparks is that each of them is included in the educational process and each has its own specialisation, depending on the region of location and scientific focus.

"In particular, the technopark "Unitehprom BSU" specializes in the production of veterinary drugs and pharmaceuticals, the scientific and technical park BNTU "Polytechnik" in the creation and production of medical equipment"³³⁹. The activity of the technopark of the Vitebsk State Technological University is aimed at creating innovative production in the light industry. In addition, in the Vitebsk region "a medical-pharmaceutical cluster has been formed on the basis of 10 organizations, including two universities and a technopark. The core of the cluster is the Vitebsk Medical University which trains personnel for pharmacy. And this is a model for the future"³⁴⁰.

Another interesting example is the science and technology park of the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, the total profit of its residents "in 2020 has increased by 2.5 times, to more than Br 800 thousand"³⁴¹. And just in 2018, an unused building of one of Grodno's enterprises on Gospodarča Street was reconstructed for this technopark. Fourteen companies soon became residents, half of them founded by university students and professors. The construction of the second stage of the technopark is nearing completion. To this end, the former industrial enterprise workshop building of over six thousand square meters has been rearranged, which will house offices and production facilities with all the infrastructure necessary for the operation of an innovative

³³⁹ Technoparks of Belarusian universities produced Br17 million worth of products in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tehnoparki-vuzovhttps://www.belta.by/society/view/tehnoparki-vuzov- belarusi-zabelarusi-za-2020- god-proizveli-produktsii-na-god-proizveli-produktsii-na-br 17-mln-425-mln-425772-2021/>.

³⁴⁰ Report of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus Roman Golovchenko at VI The All-Belarusian People's Assembly "On the policy of economic growth". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/9740.government.by/ru/content/9740>

³⁴¹ Opinion: creation of technoparks on unused spaces - an example of advanced development of regions [Electronic resource]. -2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mnenie-sozdanie-tehnoparkov-na-neispolzuemyh- ploschadjah-primer-operezhajushchego-razvitiya-regionov-428389-2021>

enterprise. It is noteworthy that some of this space has already been reserved by companies working in the fields of electric transport, bioengineering, and energy efficiency. And this shows good prospects for development, not only for the technopark itself, but also for the region where it is located.

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Free economic zones as a tool to increase exports

Commodity and country export diversification is one of the most important objectives for the development of the Belarusian economy in the next five years - until 2025. Figures show how it is being implemented in 2021. In the first quarter of this year, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services of the Republic of Belarus "grew by more than 17 percent, approaching nearly USD 20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million."³⁴² . The free economic zones (FEZs) operating in Belarus make a significant contribution to the solution of this problem.

For example, **Grodnoinvest FEZ** was able to earn a net profit of more than one hundred million Belarusian rubles in January-March 2021 by increasing the supply of residents' products to foreign markets, which is the best indicator among FEZs in all six Belarusian regions. At the same time, "in the first quarter, exports increased by 23% and reached \$280 million. In total, more than 70% of the output is exported"³⁴³ . It should be noted that today the residents of this FEZ include 75 companies with investments from 40 countries, which successfully implement investment projects in wood processing and furniture production, machine building and metalworking, food, chemical and light industries, and agriculture.

In the first quarter of 2021 the residents of **FEZ "Vitebsk"** increased export deliveries to foreign markets by almost 30%, sending exported goods worth almost 165 million dollars, which amounted to one third of the export indicator of the entire Vitebsk region. The recipients of this production are business partners and consumers of the FEZ in 62 countries, including 22 countries of the European Union. For example, "sales to Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Slovakia,

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

³⁴³ Net profit of residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in the first quarter exceeded Br100 mln [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chistaja-pribyl- rezidentov-sez-gronoinvest-v-i-kvartale-prevysila-br 100-mln-442835-2021>

Slovenia, and France have doubled, while sales to another 9 EU member states have increased by 10% or more. In addition, exports by residents to some far-abroad countries, in particular to Southern African states, have risen by almost 20%, to India by 5 times, and to Israel by more than 6 times."³⁴⁴ . As for promoting the products of FEZ residents to new markets, we can see countries located on different continents. In Asia it is Afghanistan, where fiber-optic cables were shipped to for the first time, and China - supplies of fur skins. In Europe, it was France, where Vitebsk-made electric cables were shipped. In the Americas, Mexico (fiberglass products) and Chile (linen) became the recipients of goods of BMS Vitebsk residents.

It is worth mentioning that currently 56 investment projects are being implemented in this FEZ in 16 sectors with participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the UK, Israel, Cyprus and Spain. In the first quarter of 2021, three new residents registered here with projects to develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment, construction materials and modernization of facilities for the production of import-substituting components for agricultural machinery and cars. "The projects attracted \$12.2 million of direct foreign investment on a net basis, which is more than 40% of the total investment in Vitebsk Oblast"³⁴⁵ . And business plans for several more projects are under development, which are expected to be registered in the first half of 2021.

The export component is being actively developed in **THE FEZ Gomel-Raton**, where "the share of deliveries outside Belarus amounted to 70% of the total sales revenues. <...> Goods of FEZ residents are supplied to the markets of 64 countries of the world. Russia, Ukraine, Poland, China and Lithuania have the

³⁴⁴ Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased exports by almost 30% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-narastili-eksport-pochti-na-30-za-pervyj-kvartal-442145-2021/>.

³⁴⁵ Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased exports by almost 30% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-narastili-eksport-pochti-na-30-za-pervyj-kvartal-442145-2021/>.

largest share in exports.³⁴⁶ . Currently there are 69 residents in the SEZ, including 30 companies with foreign capital participation from 16 countries. Due to their activities, the foreign trade turnover of the free economic zone increased by 19 percent in the first quarter of 2021, ensuring a positive balance for Gomel. The active attraction of investments - almost 160 million Belarusian rubles - in the implementation of projects, which is two and a half times higher than in the first quarter of 2020, played no small part in this.

By the end of this year, the FEZ expects to increase production volumes by 18.5 percent through modernisation of existing facilities and registration of new residents with promising investment projects. For instance, "the Alkopak company is building a new building in which it plans to produce new medical products. "Polikap is working on a project to produce disposable tableware made of cellulose"³⁴⁷ . Residents such as Veza-G and Multipak will also expand their production. MIRTEK-Engineering LLC, which produces energy metering devices, has already been supplying more than half of its output to foreign markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and European countries. Recently, it has started outsourcing manufacturing of SMD and DIP components - a promising direction, which is relevant to all companies involved in the production of electronic modules and assemblies. Note that "in 2020 \$230 million investments will be invested in FEZ Gomel-Raton"³⁴⁸ . FEZ plans for 2021 are no less ambitious. Their successful implementation will enable this and other Belarusian regions to continue increasing their export component, using the FEZ as an effective tool for accelerated development of the territories.

³⁴⁶ The residents of the Gomel-Raton FEZ increased production of industrial products by almost a third in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-pochti-na-tret-uvlechili-proizvodstvo-promproduktov-v-i-kvartale-441862-2021/>

³⁴⁷ Gomel-Raton FEZ residents intend to increase output by 18.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-namereny-uvlechit-objem-proizvodstva-na-185-v-2021-godu-434576-2021/>

³⁴⁸ FEZs are a driver of territorial development - Asluk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-javlajutsja-drajverom-razvitiya-territorij-asluk-434551-2021/>

CHAPTER 16

New residents, new projects

One of the obvious trends of the first quarter of 2021 was the active entry of new residents to Belarusian special economic zones and free economic zones with their export-oriented innovation and investment projects. For instance, 65 companies with "medicine, fintech, e-commerce, game industry, transport, industry and agriculture" as their areas of activity³⁴⁹, were registered as residents of the Special Economic Zone - High Tech Park (HTP) in March 2021. As a result, at the beginning of March, HTP already had 1,021 companies, showing enviable growth rates of production (+43%), exports (+25%) and foreign direct investment (+26%). At the same time, "the main consumers of IT products and services of HTP residents are the USA and EU countries - they account for about 90% of all exports"³⁵⁰.

Among the new HTP residents is Integration Distribution Projects, which intends to develop software and equipment for fare payment through biometric terminals in the Minsk metro, as well as create a border guard workstation with a facial recognition system for border crossing. Another HTP resident, Badrobot, will develop a software and hardware complex consisting of a self-designed smart construction printer, embedded software and a CAD/CAM application to control the construction printer. AMIS-ITI plans to develop custom software for the areas of

industrial safety, renewable energy, medicine, electricity, transport, oil and gas

The product line will be represented by its own mobile application of medical profile for doctors and nursing staff. RINGL Software Development plans to create a universal platform for comfortable everyday communication and

³⁴⁹ The number of HTP residents exceeds 1,000. [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-rezidentov-pvt-prevysilo-1-tys-431144-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-rezidentov-pvt-prevysilo-1-tys-431144-2021/>

³⁵⁰ Absolute all-time record - HTP exports to exceed \$2.7 billion in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/absoliutnyi-rekord-za-vsju-za-vsju-istoriju-eksport-pvt-vu-eksport-pvt-v-2020-godu-prevysil-27-mlrd-43godu-prevysil-27-mlrd-432318-2021/>

business communications with advanced security, social interaction and e-commerce capabilities.

In addition, residents with foreign capital have also joined HTP, including two development centres of foreign corporations. In particular, Altoros Bel as a development centre of the US corporation Altoros plans to develop and support software in the areas of decentralised finance and COVID-19 restriction, while Deriv BAY represents the multinational Deriv group of companies and will work on various online trading platforms.

If we talk about the special economic zone (SEZ) - the Sino-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen, where 68 business entities are currently operating, there are plans to attract about 17 new residents in 2021, work with them on their registration is already underway. As a rule, these "projects are very good, some are really <...> systemic"³⁵¹. For example, the project to create a multimodal railway terminal involving Germany, China, Belarus and Switzerland, the construction of which will start this year.

The Belarusian free economic zones (FEZs) are also adding new entrants, "the number of residents in which as of early autumn 2020 exceeded 450 economic entities"³⁵². Here are just a few examples. Already in January 2021, Empire Green LLC, a producer of premium pellets and industrial pellets, which are sold not only in the domestic market, but also in foreign countries, became a resident of the Mogilev FEZ. Entering the FEZ will allow the company to increase production of the sought-after product, which is "considered one of the most efficient areas of small wood waste and bark recycling due to the use of almost 100% input raw materials"³⁵³.

And in March 2021, SodaStream LLC came to FEZ Mogilev with an investment

³⁵¹ The Great Stone Industrial Park expects to attract around 17 residents in 2021 [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-rasschityvaet-v-2021-godu-privlech-okolo-17-rezidentov-423412-2021/>

³⁵² Zaleski, B. In Focus - Partnership. International engagement under uncertainty and volatility / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 23.

³⁵³ New resident registered in FEZ Mogilev [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-zaregistrirovan-v-sez-mogilev-rezident-zaregistrirovan-v-sez-mogilev-423476-2021/>

project in the production of plastic products for packaging of goods, producing special lids-siphons that can be used for all carbonated and low-alcohol beverages, as well as carbonated mineral and drinking water. The new resident is already supplying its products to Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Moldova and Romania. The implementation of this project in the FEZ "will increase regional exports and also contribute to job creation for residents of Mogilev and the Mogilev region"³⁵⁴.

At the end of February 2021, a new resident was also registered in the Minsk SEZ - the company Altovatt, which will implement an investment project to build and maintain a power plant for the needs of other residents of the SEZ. The erection of this plant will enable them to reduce the cost of their products by optimizing the cost of electricity in the daytime. Interestingly, "the project will be managed at the design and construction stage by Pew Energy, which oversees the projects of Irish investors in the Republic of Belarus. In other words, there will be Irish investment of about EUR 4.5 million."³⁵⁵.

³⁵⁴ A new resident of FEZ Mogilev will produce plastic products for packaging goods [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyjhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-mogilev-budet-proizvodit-plastikovye-izdelija-dliia-upakovki-tovarovrezident-sez-mogilev-budet-proizvodit-plastikovye-izdelija-dliia-upakovki-tovarov-432388-2021/>.

³⁵⁵ A new resident of FEZ Minsk will build a plant to save energy by other residents [Electronic resource]. -2021 .- URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-ustanovku-dlj-a-ekonomii-elektroenergii-drugimi-rezidentami-430335-2021/>

CHAPTER 17

The aim is integrated regional development

In the Action Programme of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, it is planned to pay great attention to the implementation of the regional development strategy in order to reduce the number of underdeveloped areas in the country by 18 by the end of the new five-year plan. For this purpose it is planned to implement investment projects in towns and districts with the population of 80,000 or more to prepare industrial sites and create infrastructure for the organization of two or three new enterprises, which have no analogues in the country, as well as to "create in each district 1-2 medium-sized industrial enterprises"³⁵⁶. The regions lagging behind will receive a certain set of benefits for the creation of new breakthrough production facilities, and efficiency will be put at the heart of the new investment cycle. In other words, "at least one new efficient company should appear in each such region"³⁵⁷. And it must be said that concrete steps are already being taken in the Belarusian regions to successfully implement the plans.

For example, in the first half of 2021, the investment project for the production of special electronics for large-size machinery in the Braslav District of the Vitebsk Region is expected to be completed. The project is being implemented by the Russian capital-owned unitary enterprise Zavod Zaryad, a developer and manufacturer of electronic and electromechanical products, including electronic, switching units, key switches and automotive lighting equipment for heavy-duty operation, which already has one production. Characteristically, the products of the new "company will be predominantly export-oriented and import-substituting. The main focus is on Russia. More than Br503 thousand has been

³⁵⁶ Programme of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025

[Electronic resource]

URL:

<http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file2635c85fcdcb1ca5.PDF>

³⁵⁷ Support for lagging regions will be based on their potential - Chebotar [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/podderzhka-otstajuschih-regionov-budet-bazirovatsja-na-ih-potentsiale-chebotarotstajuschih-regionov-budet-bazirovatsja-na-ih-potentsiale-chebotar-421034-2020/>

invested in this project"³⁵⁸ . An important detail: this investment project with foreign capital is not the only one for Braslav District. In 2020 a new enterprise for the production of prefabricated metal structures appeared here, in which an investor from Latvia invested more than 370 thousand dollars, and its products are already sold not only in the Belarusian market, but also in the neighboring countries.

Another new production facility with an investment of about two million Belarusian rubles in the same Vitebsk Region opened at the end of 2020 in the township of Begoml, Dokshitsky District. This Vetraz plant, a subsidiary of Mogilevliftmash, has set up here an electrical assembly shop which already employs over 80 people and which "will make it possible, together with the Italian firm, to create new types of products and increase production by 150% in 2021. It will also contribute to the opening of new production facilities."³⁵⁹ . In particular, there will soon be a plastic injection moulding facility, for which two machines have already been purchased.

In the Minsk Region, a new production facility was opened in the town of Zhodino on the eve of 2021. The Minsk Automobile Plant set up the assembly of electric vehicles - trolleybuses of various modifications and the latest electric buses - and intends to assemble at least three hundred vehicles annually, which will be supplied both to Belarusian cities and to the countries of the near and far abroad. The project is a result of the state-private partnership between the Minsk Automobile Plant and ETON LLC and has already created over 130 jobs. It is also important that the full cycle of assembly lines has been created in Zhodino, including welding, adjustment and painting works, adjustment of control systems, diagnostics of electronic systems, control and acceptance of products -

³⁵⁸ Pushnyakova, A. Plant for production of special electronics in Braslav will start working in 2021 / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetsialnoj-elektroniki-v-braslavehttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetsialnoj-elektroniki-v-braslave-nachnet-rabotu-v-202nachnet-rabotu-v-2021-godu-godu-422488-2020>

³⁵⁹ A new workshop at the Vetraz plant in Begoml will boost production [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-by/regions/view/novyj-tseh-zavoda-vetraz-v-begomle-pozvolit-narastit-objem-proizvodstva-422131-2020/>

all this took only half a year. At the same time, the ambitious prospects of this project are evident, as "the development of competences in the field of electric transport construction will make it possible to create a full line of passenger transport and allow a presence in all market segments"³⁶⁰.

On the eve of 2021, Grodno Region registered the State Experimental Forestry Institution "Smorgon Experimental Forestry" as a resident of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" with an investment project to establish wood fuel production - pellets. The idea of the project is to organize pellet production in Smorgon and involve low-quality wood and timber sawing waste into the economic turnover. The entire volume of the product produced here is expected to be exported. The investment in the new plant will exceed EUR 2,5 million, and production is planned to start in the second half of 2021. Bottom line "implementation of the project will expand the range of products, increase the scale of production and exports, improve the profitability and efficiency of production, create additional jobs and increase contributions to the budget"³⁶¹.

It is easy to see that all these examples show that the Belarusian regions intend to successfully meet the challenges of socio-economic development in the new five-year period, relying on the existing experience of investment activities, including in cooperation with foreign partners. The formats of international cooperation at the regional level, which exist in our country and are still in operation, should also facilitate this.

Thus, with the arrival of 2021, the implementation period of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 ended, which is an important tool for developing cooperation between the European Union and partner states in Eastern Europe in order to ensure integrated and sustainable

³⁶⁰ MAZ opens assembly production of electric vehicles in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/maz-otkryl-sborochnoehttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/maz-otkryl-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-elektrotransporta-v-zhodmo-422proizvodstvo-elektrotransporta-v-zhodmo-422142-2020/>.

³⁶¹ Smorgon Experimental Forestry became a new resident of FEZ Grodnoinvest [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/smorgonskijhttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/smorgonskij-opytnej-leshoz-stal-novym-rezidentom-sez-grodnoinvestopytnyj-leshoz-stal-novym-rezidentom-sez-grodnoinvest-422374-2020/>.

regional ties. It should be reminded that this programme, and the first programme period was implemented back in 2004-2006, "has for 17 years supported development processes in the border areas of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine by co-financing a variety of projects"³⁶². All projects are non-commercial and contribute to improving the quality of life of inhabitants of the eastern voivodships in Poland as well as some western regions of Belarus and Ukraine. More specifically, the programme covers the following areas in three countries: Poland -

Krosno, Przemysl, Rzeszow, Tarnobrzec, Chełm-Zamojski, Pulawskie, Lubelskie, Bialystok and Suwałki counties; Belarus - Grodno, Brest, Minsk, Gomel regions and the city of Minsk; Ukraine - Lviv, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Rivne, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk regions. Under the four thematic objectives of this programme - Heritage, Accessibility, Security and Borders - three types of projects were implemented between 2014 and 2020: large infrastructure, regular and microprojects. In 2020 alone, 139 projects were under implementation at once, of which 12 were completed.

In particular, 85 kilometres of local roads connecting towns and villages were built or reconstructed under the thematic objective "Accessibility", and repairs were carried out in the Grodno and Brest regions, Lublin, Mazowieckie and Podkarpackie voivodeships, and in the Lviv and Volyn regions. Just in January 2021, two new roundabouts were opened in the Polish city of Biała Podlaska, built as part of the project "Improvement of transport accessibility in Brest and Biała Podlaska". And the Brest Road Maintenance Company under the same project "reconstructed seven intersections in Brest by equipping them with an adaptive traffic control system. Subsequently, an Intelligent Transport System (ITS) was developed, which reduces travel time by regulating the mode of traffic"³⁶³. To be absolutely precise, it is the installation of 'smart traffic lights'

³⁶² Programme [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/pages/135www.pbu2020.eu/by/pages/135>

³⁶³ New roundabouts in Biała Podlaska [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1961www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1961>

and the embedding of sensors in the roadway, which transmit information to special controllers, at the intersections in Brest of Moskovskaya Street with Partizansky and Respublika Avenues, Gavrilova and Pionerskaya Streets, and Warsaw Highway with October Revolution, Krasnoznamenskaya and Makhnovicha Streets.

With regard to the thematic objective of Borders, the main result of the joint work was two additional

The new customs and control lanes and the new pavilions
Passport control at the Forge border crossing
Bialystok-Bruzgi." These events were among other

parallel tasks increasing the efficiency of the border. As a result of the completion of these two projects, throughput has increased by almost 76%, significantly speeding up border controls."³⁶⁴ . In addition, a number of other projects were implemented by the customs authorities of the participating countries. First, a major infrastructure project, "Construction of an X-ray scanning vehicle control system at the road border crossing in Berestovitsa", involving the construction of an inspection and scanning complex, "including an X-ray scanning system, a protective building for it and a building for staff, engineering systems, training of experts to operate, organization of rapid vehicle inspections, exchange of experience in using scanners with Polish partners"³⁶⁵ . And several regular projects, including "Improving Customs Control at the Domachevo Road BCP" and "Strengthening the Capacity of the Canine Service of the Customs Offices of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Poland". The first of these, designed to enhance the security of the Belarusian-Polish border and to improve the quality of customs control operations, involved the installation of weighing equipment, which resulted in reduced time spent on such operations and accelerated cross-border traffic. The second project, aimed

³⁶⁴ Results for 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. -
URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1952>

³⁶⁵ Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://www.customs.gov.by/ruhttps://www.customs.gov.by/ru/2014-2020-nuru/>.

at preventing the illegal movement of illegal drugs, psychotropic substances and tobacco products and at preventing illegal migration, involved the procurement of six vehicles equipped with cages for the transport of working dogs for the Grodno and Brest Customs, as well as for the Minsk-2 Customs.

All these facts show that the completed Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 has helped its participants to address many specific issues of cross-border cooperation. Apparently, the same pragmatic approach will be incorporated into the new cross-border programme for 2021-2027, which is already being actively discussed by the stakeholders. In particular, Brest in Belarus and Biała Podlaska in Poland are working on the possibility of implementing joint projects in three areas at once: possibilities of converting public transport to electric transport, projects on energy saving, energy and thermal rehabilitation of social facilities, as well as "treatment and further use of rainwater"³⁶⁶.

Another important aspect of the topic under consideration is that the Republic of Belarus is now witnessing a significant increase in work at the local level on sustainable energy development and climate change adaptation.

Suffice it to say that already 53 Belarusian cities have declared their readiness to join the Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy, a major European initiative for cooperation in the climate field, which appeared in 2008 and "as of 2020, more than 10,000 cities and communities with about 320 million inhabitants have joined it"³⁶⁷. Recall that by signing this agreement, "local governments make a voluntary commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30% by 2030"³⁶⁸. It is clear that each city is approaching the target in

³⁶⁶ Brest and Biala Podlaska work on joint projects in green economy [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brest-i-bjalahttps://www.belta.by/regions/view/brest-i-bjala-podljaska-prorabatyvajut-sovmestnye-proekty-v-zelenoj-ekonomikepodljaska-prorabatyvajut-sovmestnye-proekty-v-zelenoj-ekonomike-424871-2021>

³⁶⁷ Arikas, D. European Cities Energy and Climate Initiatives / D. Arikas, M. Gratz, E. Ferrer, A. Chumakova, N. Andreenko. - Baltic Environmental Forum Germany, 2019. - C. 4.

³⁶⁸ More than 50 Belarusian cities are ready to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions [Electronic resource]. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolse-50-belorusskih-gorodov-gotovy-vzjat-na-sebja-obiazatelstva-po-snizheniju-vybrossov-pamikovyh-424013-2021/>

its own way.

For example, in the Belarusian town of Kostyukovichy in the Mogilev region in August 2020, the project "Construction of a photovoltaic system. Decentralised energy supply of the gymnasium from the environmental point of view". It was initiated and financed by partners from the German twin city Ditzgenbach, with which Kostyukovichy cooperate in various fields: education, health care, sports, culture, tourism and ecology. As part of the already mentioned project, "135 photovoltaic panels with a total capacity of 35.8 kW have been installed on the roof of the gymnasium. There is also a monitoring system to track electricity generation, collecting and storing data on the operation of the plant for at least a year for each day, month"³⁶⁹. There is also a new solar power plant (SPP) located in the Mogilev region, which started operating in 2020 near the village of Asmolovichy, Mstislav District. Here, on an area of about four hectares 4752 solar panels were installed. "Each of the panels has a nominal capacity of 335 watts. As a result, the cumulative installed capacity of the new solar power plant was 1.6 MW."³⁷⁰. In addition, the tallest wind power plant in Belarus with a height of 142 metres has also been erected near Asmolovichy in 2020.

Note that the presence of these environmentally-oriented facilities in the Mstislav region is not a coincidence. The town of Mstislav itself signed the Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy in 2017. Since then, a wide variety of events have been held here to promote a culture of energy conservation and environmental responsibility among the younger generation. In particular, in the summer of 2020, as part of the organised Energy Days, everyone could take part in the internet marathon of the Sustainable Development Goals "EcoMy Mstislav". Its participants posted their materials related to energy saving, ecology, and sustainable development of the region on the global network. In pre-schools and health camps of the district, interactive classes "How to Live

³⁶⁹ A photovoltaic power station will be built on the roof of a grammar school in Kostyukovichy [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

³⁷⁰ A new solar power plant has started operation in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

Environmentally on Earth" were held, the competition "Share with Us" was held, and film screenings of "Energy Saving Schools" were organised - about modern ways and methods of saving and conserving energy at home, at school and at work. Ecological campaigns "We cleaned up here! How about you?". And near the gymnasium in Mstislavlje they planted the Alley "Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow" out of young thuas, next to which plates with information about each of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were installed. The Energy Days ended with the Mstislavskoe Ring bicycle race, which took place for the third time and gathered about a hundred participants of different ages from all over the district. These facts show that by participating in all these events, the inhabitants of the Mstislavlau district could see first-hand that the main objective of the Covenant of Mayors Climate and Energy Initiative is sustainable energy development at local level and taking concrete measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and that "an important role in the greenhouse gas emissions reduction work of the district is played by the residents who can make a valuable contribution by their personal behaviour to the common cause"³⁷¹

Another effective tool that is also actively used in Covenant of Mayors cities is the European Mobility Week, an international campaign aimed at greening urban transport systems, changing transport behaviour and making smarter use of public spaces, which traditionally takes place annually from 16 to 22 September, culminating in Car Free Day. This week's events typically involve more than 50 countries around the world. The 2020 theme, 'Emission-Free Movement for All', focused on "reducing greenhouse gas emissions and making emission-free infrastructure and transport accessible to all categories of citizens"³⁷². The popularity of this theme in our country is illustrated by the fact that a record number of cities in Belarus - over 80 - joined this campaign in

³⁷¹ Mstislavl for eco-friendly living! And the Energy Days prove it [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/616.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/616>

³⁷² European Mobility Week [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://rosavtotransport.ru/ru/activities/european-mobility-week/>

2020. For example, within this week only Minsk organized a cycling race, offered free public transport for motorists and opened the first eco-route for cyclists in Belarus, which connected three environmental trails of the Belarusian capital - "City of Birds", "Silver Log" and "Chizhovka". Its special feature was "the possibility of cycling and birdwatching"³⁷³, as well as information boards about local birds along the route.

Summing up these considerations, it should be noted that "the strategic goal of the Belarusian regional policy is the integrated development of each region and the reduction of existing regional disparities, taking into account the effective use of its resource potential and competitive advantages in order to ensure high standards of living for the population, the conservation of nature and the positive contribution of regions to national competitiveness and security"³⁷⁴. As we can see, within the framework of the second phase of the National Strategy of Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030, the Belarusian regions are already taking many concrete steps aimed at expanding local self-government in addressing socio-economic, environmental and ecological problems, reducing subsidies and ensuring high living standards of the population.

³⁷³ A new eco-route, bike ride and free fare - what the European Mobility Week will be like in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-ekomarshrut-robeg-i-besplatnyj-proezd-kakoj-budet-evropejskaja-nedelja-mobilnosti-v-minske-406811-2020/>

³⁷⁴ Zalessky, B. The starting point is multi-vectorism. Part I / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 24-25.

CHAPTER 18

To create innovative cities

In March 2021, the forum of the International Telecommunication Union "Smart Sustainable Cities: Organisational and Technical Aspects of Development" took place in the Belarusian capital, where about 200 people took part and the representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, experts from Green Cities Projects, the United Nations Development Programme, and specialists from the leading Belarusian companies shared their practical experience of building a smart sustainable city. Let us note, that the concept of a smart sustainable city today is defined as " an innovative city using information and communication technologies

communication technologies and other means to enhance urban livelihoods, efficiency and competitiveness, while meeting the needs of present and future generations economically, socially, environmentally and culturally"³⁷⁵ . Particularly relevant at this stage in terms of implementing this theme are the identification of integrated approaches to building such cities, the development of conceptual documents and how to measure the effectiveness of development. In this regard, the choice of the venue for this forum by the International Telecommunication Union is far from accidental, as Belarus has a rather high level of infrastructure development. In particular, "fibre optic cables reach practically every multi-storey building here. There is a good level of 4G coverage. Therefore, it provides an excellent technical base for layering all kinds of electronic platforms and digital services on top of the existing infrastructure. The only thing left to do here is to implement these digital services and teach all citizens how to use them"³⁷⁶ .

Indeed, back in 2019, Belarus developed a model concept for the development of smart cities and adapted it for Orsha and Orsha district, with a refined

³⁷⁵ Belarus is gradually moving towards practical implementation of the smart city concept - Shulgan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v- belarusi-poeta.pno-perchodjat-k-prakticheskoij-realizatsii-kontseptsii-umnogo-goroda-shulgan- 432843-2021/>.

³⁷⁶ The digital society must be built with people with physical disabilities in mind - ITU [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsifrovoe- obschestvo-dolzno-stroitsja-s-uchetom-liudei-s-fizicheskimi-ogranicheniiami-mse-432906- 2021/>

roadmap for its implementation. In 2020, the adaptation of the model concept was continued in such Belarusian potential centres of economic growth as Minsk, Baranovichi, Pinsk, Novopolotsk, Bobruisk and a number of other cities. For instance, "Polotsk has implemented the My City project, where a mobile application offered a single window for customer interaction with all organisations and infrastructure in the region"³⁷⁷.

By completing the laying of fibre-optic communication lines to all settlements with more than 100 households and providing them to more than half of the households with at least 50 yard households in 2020, Belarus has already started implementing individual fragments of the smart sustainable city concept, advancing in three main directions. Firstly, the subscriber base of the "smart house" project is already about 60 thousand. Secondly, the total number of installed video cameras is about 35 thousand and the total number of consumers - individuals and legal entities - has approached 65 thousand. Thirdly, the mobility of communication between enterprises, infrastructure of any district and the population has been ensured.

In February 2021, our country adopted the State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025, which consists of six subprogrammes: 1) "Information and analytical and organizational and technical support for digital development"; 2) "Infrastructure for digital development"; 3) "Digital development of public administration"; 4) "Digital development of economic sectors"; 5) "Regional digital development"; 6) "Information security and digital trust". At the same time, the subprogram "Regional Digital Development" provides for "the implementation of measures, the results of which will have a systemic nature for the development of "smart city" technologies in all regions of the country"³⁷⁸.

In particular, we are talking in this case about the creation of a regional state

³⁷⁷ Karaim: Developing the methodology and structure of a smart city is important today [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/karaim-na-segodnia-vazhna-razrabotka-metodologii-i-struktury-umnogo-goroda-432929-2021/>

³⁷⁸ State Programme "Digital Development of Belarus" for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 19.

model digital platform "Smart City (Region)", designed for the digital transformation of regional governance processes, solving socio-economic and community development tasks, organizing information interaction, including the development of feedback from citizens. The implementation of this digital platform is planned primarily in regional centres and cities with a population of over 80,000 people. It is also planned to transfer to practice the technologies of information modeling of urban planning units and urban spaces or the creation of "digital twins" of cities, which will allow effective modeling of urban development and management of various spheres of city life. Besides, on the basis of the Smart City (Region) digital platform the typical services will be created, including housing and communal services, accounting and property management, construction and spatial planning, management of urban and transport infrastructure facilities, healthcare, education, ensuring public safety, environmental monitoring, organization of citizen participation in city management, development of culture, tourism and in general the service sector. It should be assumed that the Minsk International Forum "Smart Sustainable Cities: Organisational and Technical Aspects of Development" has become another important step towards solving the urgent issues of innovative development of the Belarusian cities and regions, enriching them with efficient international experience.

A

comprehensive programme paves the way for the future

Belarus has prepared a draft State Programme of Innovative Development for 2021-2025 that envisages the implementation of some 80 innovation projects to create high-tech industries. Among the priorities should be the development of six "projects of the future", which focus on new production, technology and products that are in line with global trends and take into account the development of markets. One of the most prominent of these is national electric transport. The implementation of the prepared comprehensive programme for the development of this sector in 2021-2025 will not only create a new machine-building sector in Belarus - electric vehicles - but will also have a large-scale multiplier effect on the innovative development of other sectors, such as metallurgy, electrical engineering, robotics and information technology. In addition, "the development of samples of new equipment, the creation of 14 production facilities for freight, passenger and special electric vehicles, including the assembly facility for electric cars at BELJI CJSC, as well as basic components for it are envisaged"³⁷⁹.

It should be recalled that back in March 2020, the Republic of Belarus adopted a decree "On Encouraging the Use of Electric Vehicles", which envisaged measures to stimulate demand for these environmentally friendly vehicles in the country, as well as the creation of the relevant charging and service infrastructure in the regions. The emergence of this document was prompted by a number of circumstances. First, let us recall that "at the 24th United Nations World Conference on Climate Change, held in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, the Belarusian side stated that it considers the green economy and low-carbon sustainable development as a strategic vector"³⁸⁰.

³⁷⁹ Shumilin, A. How Belarus plans to develop high-tech sector / A. Shumilin // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kakhttps://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-belarus-planiruet-razvivat-vysokotehnologichnyj-sektor-77belarus-planiruet-razvivat-vysokotehnologichnyj-sektor-7711/>.

³⁸⁰ Zalesky, B. Points of growth. Peculiarities of sustainable development in the context of global challenges / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 57.

Secondly, existing expert forecasts show that "by 2030, one in five cars in the world will be electric. This process is being spurred on by government policies in a number of countries, where restrictions are about to be imposed on cars with internal combustion engines"³⁸¹. Thirdly, the growing number of electric cars will help to reduce air pollution in Belarus. Fourthly, "the use of electric vehicles is one of the ways to intelligently increase electricity consumption"³⁸², which becomes especially relevant in connection with the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Fifthly, the transition to electric vehicles is a turn to new technologies in line with global best practices, so that by 2025 about 40 per cent of existing cars with internal combustion engines in Belarus could be replaced by electric vehicles.

Turning to the decree, we note some of the measures it contained. For instance, this document exempted owners of electric cars from paying a fee for a permit to participate in road traffic. Individuals will not have to pay value-added tax when bringing electric cars into our country for personal use. In addition, "owners of electric vehicles will be exempt from paying parking fees in designated spaces in communal car parks until 1 April 2026"³⁸³.

The decree also contained measures for producers of electric cars and electric charging stations, as well as for organizations operating them. In particular, the charging stations were exempted from value added tax when used in Belarus. And land plots for construction and maintenance of electric charging stations have been leased to Production Association Belorusneft without an auction. This may be the reason why PA Belorusneft was planning to open 180 quick-

³⁸¹ Measures to be taken will contribute to the creation of electric car production in Belarus - Ministry of Economy [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prinimaemye-mery-budut-sposobstvovat-sozdaniju-v-belarusi-proizvodstva-belarusi-provodstva-elektromobilej-minekonomiki-minekonomiki-3-83056-2020/>.

³⁸² Ecology and smart electricity consumption - what benefits the growth of electric cars in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekologija-i-gramotnoe-potreblenie-elektoenergii-chem-vygoden-rost-chisla-elektromobilej-v-belarusi-383046-2020>

³⁸³ Lukashenka signed a decree on incentives for purchases of electric cars [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-podpisal-ukaz-o-stimulirovanii-zakupok-stimulirovanii-zakupok-elektromobilej-383041-2020>

charging stations at once in 2020.

At that time, the situation of electric charging stations (EPS) in Belarus was as follows. Since early 2020, "the EPS network has expanded to 251 such stations (plus 13 facilities)"³⁸⁴. And it could already serve up to nine thousand electric vehicles. The EFS network on the Belarusian territory includes two types of stations: firstly, Mode 3, where an electric vehicle needs six to eight hours to charge; secondly, Mode 4, where the battery can be recharged in less than an hour. An important detail: at the beginning of 2020, Belorusneft's network of charging stations got a new brand, Malanka, which should be operating 639 charging stations by 2022. And by 2030, there should be enough of them to serve up to 300,000 electric vehicles.

Speaking about the production of our country's own electric cars, it should be recalled that the first Belarusian sample of such vehicles based on Geely was unveiled back in August 2017. At that time, it was said that "after testing the first electric car, scientists will start developing an improved prototype. It could be ready as early as next year [2018]"³⁸⁵. Nevertheless, as noted already at the March 2020 meeting of the President of Belarus with the leadership of the Council of Ministers, so far the topic of producing one's own electric car has not received the proper impetus, although electric transport has enormous potential. "It is an urgent need already today. <...> Many states are already developing this promising direction. Countries like us, which are export-oriented and don't have huge reserves underground, have long focused on electric transport"³⁸⁶.

When the decree "On promotion of electric cars" appeared, it became clear that

³⁸⁴ "Belorusneft plans to open 180 electric charging stations this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusnefthttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusneft-planiruet-otkryt-180-planiruet-otkryt-180-elektrozarj-adnyh-adnyh-stantsij-v-etom-godu-v-etom-godu-383042-2020>

³⁸⁵ Gavrilova, V. Ecological, modern and maneuverable: scientists presented the first Belarusian electric car / V. Gavrilova // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/reportazh-ekologichnyj-sovremennyy-i-manevrennyj-uchenye-prezentovali-pervyj-belorusskij-elektromobil-262688-2017>

³⁸⁶ Meeting with the leadership of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://president.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/soveshanie-s-rukovodstvom-soveta-ministrov-23197/>

BELJI CJSC was going to take up the cause and was "ready to consider production of electric cars in Belarus subject to sales of 5-10 thousand cars per year"³⁸⁷. At the same time the company received four Chinese electric Geely Geometry A models, which were to be tested: one at the plant and three in dealerships. This version of the electric car attracted because it had a range of 500 kilometres, adaptive cruise control and pedestrian and cyclist response systems, as well as an intelligent automatic parking system. At the same time, there were hopes that with the adoption of the presidential decree, production of the Geely Geometry A model at BELJI SAO would go much faster.

In January 2021, the draft Comprehensive electric transport development programme for 2021-2025, developed by the National Academy of Sciences together with other stakeholders and envisaging increasing the share of public electric transport in Belarus up to 30 per cent by 2025, was considered at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, which voiced the main requirements of the government for the content of the document: "The programme should be really comprehensive - from research and development to stimulating In other words, it should be "cross-cutting" and touch upon virtually all spheres related to electric transport in one way or another"³⁸⁸. This may be the reason why other topical high-level documents also talk about the development of electric transport in Belarus. In particular, the State Programme "Energy Saving" for 2021-2025 envisages the development of production of electric vehicles, components and charging infrastructure for them in the industrial sector, while in the transport sector it envisages "the development of electric cars, hybrid cars and charging network, electrification of urban passenger transport to replace the use of hydrocarbon fuel"³⁸⁹.

³⁸⁷ "BELJI is ready to consider production of electric cars with sales of 5-10 thousand cars per year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi_gotov-rassmatrivat-vypusk-elektromobilej-pri-prodazhe-5-10-tys-avto-v-god-382660-2020/

³⁸⁸ The share of public electric transport in Belarus wants to increase to 30% by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/9713.government.by/ru/content/9713>

³⁸⁹ State Programme "Engergo-Saving" for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 15.

As far as the research component of this topic is concerned, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus outlined its plans to create an experimental production of Belarusian electric cars as early as January 2021. The fact is that domestic scientists are working on middle class models designed for a wide range of consumers. We are talking about production of several models at once: cargo, passenger car, minivan, even a sports car. Characteristically, "it is not Geely, it is a fundamentally different electric car with all-Belarusian stuffing. <...> Several battery models - lithium-ion, graphene and graphene-lead - are being developed for the Belarusian electric car"³⁹⁰ with a range of 500 kilometres.

In this regard, it should be noted that at the exhibition of achievements and the most significant results of scientific, technical and innovation activities "Days of Belarusian Science - 2021" held in Minsk in January 2021, it was already possible to see a mock sample of an electric car Academic Electro of the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering, designed for transportation in closed areas, that is, without going on public roads, and designed for two passengers on the open area. "The maximum speed of the electric car is 50 km/h. The frame-and-panel type of the body enables production in small batches according to customer requirements."³⁹¹. Another peculiarity of this novelty is that the power part of its cabin contains no metal elements: it is made of fiberglass plastic. In addition, the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences is already implementing a number of joint projects with several Belarusian enterprises. Thus, "an electric truck is being developed together with MAZ, which will be equipped with an electric propulsion system

³⁹⁰ The National Academy of Sciences expects to set up experimental production of Belarusian electric cars [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nan-rasschityvaet-sozdat-eksperimentalnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-elektromobilej-425463-2021/>

³⁹¹ New drone and electric car - National Academy of Sciences to present about 200 developments at Science Day exhibition [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/novyj-bespilotnik-i-elektromobil-nan-predstavit-okolo-200-razrabotok-na-vystavke-ko-dnj-u-nauki-425-608-2021/>

developed at the institute"³⁹². And the result of the work with Minsk Tractor Plant will be an electric ice-pouring machine, the first production run of which is scheduled for 2021. As for the production of electric cars based on BELJI, in 2021 five hundred to one thousand electric cars were planned to be delivered to Belarus "to study the demand, understand the possibilities and then make all the necessary preparations for the production. We should expect the electric cars closer to the second half of the year."³⁹³. In short, the measures being taken in Belarus to create its own electric cars promised to yield results as soon as possible.

Finally, in April 2021, the Republic of Belarus already finally approved the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport for 2021-2025, which aims to achieve key objectives such as

- 1) the creation of a new branch of engineering - the production of electric vehicles;
- 2) Ensure conditions for increasing the number of electric vehicles in use;
- 3) expansion of electric transport infrastructure ; 4) minimising negative impacts on the environment.

To this end, the integrated programme has seven objectives:

- 1) creation of a system of scientific support, including that which ensures the scientific and technological security of the country in the field of mechanical engineering;
- 2) organising the production of electric vehicles, their basic components and infrastructure elements and their maximum localisation;
- 3) the formation of a set of institutional conditions for the development of electric transport based on the systematic provision of its standardisation,

³⁹² Electric Trucks, Electric Combines and Electric Passenger Cars - What Belarusian Scientists are Working on [Electronic Resource]:
<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/elektrogruzoviki-elektrokombajny-i-legkovye-elektromobili-nad-chem-rabotajut-belorussian-uchenye-426333-2021/>

³⁹³ "BELJI will study the demand for electric cars and prepare for production - Parhomchik [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL:
<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-izuchit-spros-na-elektromobili-i-budet-gotovitsja-k-proizvodstvu-parhomchik-423890-2021/>

conformity assessment and regulatory support;

4) Creation of electric transport infrastructure, including EPS, with its optimal spatial layout and taking into account the specificity of consumers (public passenger and freight transport, personal electric transport);

5) coordinating government action for the development of electric transport and its infrastructure on a national and regional scale; optimising investment in the creation and acquisition of electric vehicles;

6) developing and implementing measures to stimulate the development of electric transport, from research, acquisition and operation to recycling and reuse, including attracting investment to accelerate the development of electric transport;

7) minimising economic, environmental, social and other risks.

Two subprogrammes - "Production and technological base for electric vehicles" and "Creation of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles" - provide for the creation of scientific groundwork and a production base to increase the number of electric-powered vehicles in use, as well as a developed network of electric filling stations that will ensure the smooth movement of electric vehicles throughout Belarus. And among the activities planned by the integrated programme, we would like to mention the creation of a pilot experimental production of electric vehicles and "the exemption of road users of electric cars from payment for the use of car parks, which are in public ownership"³⁹⁴. In addition, this type of transport is exempt from transport tax in the Republic of Belarus. More precisely, "owners of vehicles of category M1, M1G (electric cars and all-terrain electric cars) driven solely by an electric motor will not have to pay transport tax. This exemption is granted until 31 December 2025"³⁹⁵.

Of course, all these measures create good conditions for the growth in the

³⁹⁴ On the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport up to 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://http://government.by/ru/content/9804.by/ru/content/9804>

³⁹⁵ Tax Ministry: electric cars exempt from transport tax until the end of 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mns-elektromobilihttps://www.belta.by/society/view/mns-elektromobili-osvobozhdeny-ot-transportnogo-naloga-do-kontsa-2025-godaosvobozhdeny-ot-transportnogo-naloga-do-kontsa-2025-goda-434965-2021/>

number of electric cars, of which there were already more than two and a half thousand in our country as of mid-March 2021. At the same time, "the volume of electricity consumption by charging stations for electric vehicles in Belarus almost doubled in 2020 compared to 2019, to 7.7 million kWh."³⁹⁶ . Up to two hundred new users are now registered on the EHS network every month. And "there are an average of 250 charging sessions every day at the stations, and in the last two months [January and February] the total number has exceeded 15,000"³⁹⁷ . The Comprehensive Programme contains serious measures for the development of the EPS network. If now the network consists of 288 EZSs, by the end of 2021 there will have to be 471. In the second phase (2022-2025), 466 will be added, and in the third phase (2026-2030) another 407.

Another important issue on this topic is that low-cost Chinese electric cars continue to be particularly popular with Belarusian consumers today, due to the fact that domestic models simply do not exist yet. The comprehensive programme to this end states that "it is planned to develop serial production of electric cars at BELJI and produce 1,000 electric cars based on the "Geometry C" model in 2021"³⁹⁸ , and to establish experimental assembly production of single models and small batches of electric cars of various modifications at the "United Institute of Machine Building of the NAS of Belarus", using components and units of Belarusian production as much as possible.

As for other types of electrically-powered transport vehicles, a very extensive development programme has been outlined. In particular, by the end of 2023, production of electric buses for passenger transportation at airports with

³⁹⁶ Electricity consumption by electric vehicle charging stations in Belarus almost doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://atom.belta.by/ru/https://atom.belta.by/ru/news/ru/view/elektropotreblenie-zarjadnvmi-stantsiiami-dliaru/view/elektropotreblenie-zarjadnvmi-stantsiiami-dlia-elektrotransporta-v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-vyroslo-pochti-vdvoe-elektrotransporta-v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-vyroslo-pochti-vdvoe-11190/>

³⁹⁷ The number of electric cars in Belarus has exceeded 2.5 thousand. [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-elektromobilei-v-belarusi-prevysilo-25-tyshttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-elektromobilei-v-belarusi-prevysilo-25-tys-431822-2021/>

³⁹⁸ Comprehensive programme of electric transport development for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 20.

Belarusian-made power plant components is to be mastered.

The Unified Institute of Mechanical Engineering together with the Minsk Automobile Plant will create a sample electric truck with a payload capacity of about four and a half tonnes, and with Belkommunmash - up to ten tonnes. The fleet of the Belarusian electric transport is also expected to include a domestic electric rubbish truck. Finally, the Belarusian Automobile Plant "within the frames of the program intends to create a sample of battery-operated dump truck. The gross weight of such a vehicle will be 176 tonnes and its payload will be 90 tonnes"³⁹⁹.

As we can see, the increased use of electric vehicles in Belarus should become one of the most promising development areas already in the coming years, which will not only help to reduce the use of imported energy, but will also improve the environmental situation and ensure the use of the capacity of the Belarusian energy system.

³⁹⁹ Electric dump truck, electric garbage truck and electric vehicle of Belarusian production are planned to be created by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://doingbusiness.by/elektrosamosval-elektromusorovoz-i-elektromobil-belorusskogo><http://doingbusiness.by/elektrosamosval-elektromusorovoz-i-elektromobil-belorusskogo-proizvodstva-planiruetsya-sozdat-do-2025-proizvodstva-planiruetsya-sozdat-do-2025-goda>

CHAPTER 20

In order to maximise the potential

The year 2020 marks the 15th anniversary of the first trading on the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE), when Belarusian Unitary Enterprise Bellesexport and Polish company International Paper Kwidzyn S.A. made their first on-exchange sale of balance wood worth \$189,000. All in all, over the past decade and a half, "3.2 million transactions amounting to \$21 billion were made here, and the export volume amounted to \$5.8 billion"⁴⁰⁰. These figures show that the BUTB has already turned into one of the largest commodity exchanges in Eastern Europe, whose main function is to assist Belarusian companies in exporting products and help foreign companies to enter the Belarusian market.

This fact also speaks volumes. The market-based pricing mechanism and high concentration of supply and demand on this exchange platform allowed Belarusian bidders, starting from 2005, to gain additional revenue and save as much as one and a half billion dollars. It should be reminded that companies accredited on BUOTB take part in electronic trading on five commodity positions: 1) metal products; 2) timber products; 3) agricultural products; 4) industrial and consumer goods; 5) prospective exchange goods. In the domestic market, roundwood, ferrous metal products and oilseed meal are in particular demand, while in foreign trade their participants give preference to lumber and dairy products. These trends are characteristic of the development of the BUTB in 2020 as well.

At the beginning of December 2020, 24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 companies from 63 countries. Between January and November, trade turnover grew by 12 percent to almost five billion Belarusian rubles. It is estimated that between 1,500 and 3,000 transactions are concluded there every day. In addition, the export of goods through the exchange demonstrates a positive dynamic. "With the total amount of export transactions at Br1 billion,

⁴⁰⁰ Deals worth \$21bn concluded at the BOOTB over 15 years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sdelki-na-2https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sdelki-na-21-milrd--mlrd-zaklj-ucheny-na-butb-za-ucheny-na-butb-za-15--let-393174-2020>

last year's result was exceeded by 5%. Lumber, wood chips, and agricultural products were the leaders in sales on the foreign market"⁴⁰¹. Interestingly, in October 2020, the BUTB recorded a record \$46.5 million worth of export transactions this year, more than half of which came from wood products - sawn lumber and wood chips. Companies from Germany, Latvia and Lithuania were the biggest buyers of sawn wood, while companies from Lithuania, Poland and Estonia were the biggest buyers of wood chips. Another characteristic detail is that "in October there was also a noticeable increase of foreign buyers of cement. The amount of transactions with this commodity increased 4.3 times, up to \$2.6 mln. The main market for this commodity was Russia"⁴⁰².

It should be noted that cement is not the only item that attracts Russian business people to the BUTB. In particular, they are interested in Belarusian dairy products, which were exported through the exchange for the first ten months of 2020 for a total of about thirty million dollars. At the same time, "about 80% of this amount was accounted for by transactions made with companies from Russia.

Milk powder, butter and whey powder were the main products purchased. Butter dominated the sales structure, with sales of \$14.9 million"⁴⁰³.

These facts are quite eloquent indications of the potential of the Russian vector in the activities of the BUTB, where 2,482 Russian residents were accredited as of 1 December 2020. And this figure does not appear to be conclusive, as BUTB has taken energetic steps in 2020 to develop new business contacts in the eastern direction of interaction, which are yielding results. Suffice it to say that since the

⁴⁰¹ The BUTB trade turnover in January-November increased by 12% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-butb-v-janvare-nojabre-vyros-nahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-butb-v-janvare-nojabre-vyros-na-12-420279-2020/>.

⁴⁰² Exports of goods through the TSB increased by 22% in October [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tovarov-cherez-butb-v-oktjabre-vyros-nahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tovarov-cherez-butb-v-oktjabre-vyros-na-22-415863-2020/>.

⁴⁰³ Russia accounts for around 80% of dairy exports through the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolohttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-80-eksporta-eksporta-molochnoj-produktsii-cherez--produktsii-cherez-butb-prihoditsja-na-prihoditsja-na-rossij-u-41u-414442-2020/>.

beginning of 2020, 183 new Russian companies have been accredited to the exchange, most of which are active bidders, which of course has a positive impact on the dynamics of exchange turnover. In particular, "black metal supplies

The growth in exports of rolled metal products for Belarusian industrial enterprises in the first 11 months was 68%, and exports of milk powder to Russia increased by 53% <...>. Rapeseed oil, flour and construction materials also showed a positive trend"⁴⁰⁴.

The Russian vector is characterised by the following detail: the interest in the BUTB is growing especially fast among business circles of those Russian regions which border with Belarus. Smolensk region is an example. Today about four hundred Smolensk companies are accredited to the exchange, more than from any Russian region. Many of them regularly participate in the bidding for both import and export. But, as it turned out during a pilot webinar held in December 2020 by the BUTB together with the Smolensk Region Export Support Centre, even enterprises in this Russian region are not yet fully realising the potential of the exchange mechanism. And "among the promising areas are sales of Russian wood raw materials, grain crops, feed additives, ferrous rolled metal products, as well as the purchase of Belarusian meat and dairy products and construction materials. These commodity items can form the basis for long-term mutually beneficial cooperation"⁴⁰⁵. The "Digital Contact Exchange", also held in December 2020 in the form of an online conference, showed that the BUTB can develop cooperation with more remote regions of Russia in the same mutually beneficial way. In particular, with enterprises in the Omsk region, for which the exchange can become an effective tool for sales and procurement of

⁴⁰⁴ BUTB looks forward to expanding cooperation with the Omsk region of Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butbhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-omskoj-oblastju-rossiirasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-omskoj-oblastju-rossii-420606-2020/>

⁴⁰⁵ BUTB looks forward to developing cooperation with the Smolensk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butbhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-so-rasschityvaet-na-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-so-smolenskoj-oblastju-42-oblastju-421404-2020>

materials in the short term.

The fact that in the case of BUTB the distance between seller and buyer no longer plays a decisive role is shown by the exchange's experience in developing contacts with Egypt. Also in December 2020, BUTB reached an agreement with the Egyptian company Sama Al Jazeera for Import and Export to organise lumber exports to that North African country via the exchange. The intrigue here is that so far "almost all imports of lumber to Egypt are organised through intermediaries, and prices are sometimes very high"⁴⁰⁶. But a trading floor will allow Egyptian companies to buy wood products in almost unlimited quantities, without any middlemen, directly from manufacturers in Belarus, and Belarusian exporters will be able to enter a very lucrative market in Egypt, where the annual consumption of lumber is about five million cubic meters. The Egyptian side sees this as an optimal solution, because by taking part in the bidding, it gets access to a large number of specialized companies that are ready to supply the goods it needs on acceptable terms. The benefits for the Belarusian side are no less obvious. So the geography of mutually beneficial contacts is developing rather diverse and effective. And this in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, which has not best affected the economies of most countries in the world and which requires all market players to find new ways of working with business partners in order to ultimately succeed.

The BUTB is no exception in this respect. Back in May 2020, it hosted the first Belarusian-Canadian-British webinar or online seminar Timber: Doing Business in Belarus, which was attended by over forty representatives of the Canadian and British business communities. It should be noted, that 63 companies from the UK and 6 from Canada have already been accredited to the BUTB. The discussion in the format of a videoconference on the specifics of exchange trade in timber products and the key advantages of the Belarusian exchange platform,

⁴⁰⁶ Through the BUTB it is planned to organise the supply of lumber to Egypt [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherez-butbhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherez-butb-planiruetsja-organizovat-postavki-pilomaterialov-v-egipetplaniruetsja-organizovat-postavki-pilomaterialov-v-egipet-419296-2020/>

including control of execution of deals, transparent pricing, absence of intermediaries, the possibility of using trade finance instruments, resulted in the fact that "a number of British and Canadian companies expressed their interest in being accredited to participate in exchange trade in lumber and wood chips on the BUOTB.⁴⁰⁷".

It should be noted that BUTB also uses the online seminar format to train its prospective business partners. To this end, in May 2020 they held the first training webinar for specialists from the Uzbek Republican Commodity Exchange, with which BUTB signed a strategic co-operation agreement back in September 2018. Thanks to this modern format of cooperation, the Uzbek partners were able to become better acquainted not only with the structure and specific features of the Belarusian public procurement system, but also with the opportunities for foreign suppliers of goods, works and services to participate in procurement procedures. It is believed that the information received by the Uzbek side will not only contribute to enhancing cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan in e-procurement, but will also "serve as a guide to action for Uzbek companies planning to operate in the Belarusian market"⁴⁰⁸.

The development of cooperation between the Belarusian-Turkish Trade Bank and Chinese partners deserves a separate discussion in this context. The fact is that in December 2020, a meeting of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation was held, which noted positive changes in the trade engagement between the two countries, associated with changes in the structure of Belarusian exports. First, the nomenclature of commodity supplies from Belarus to China is expanding. Second, the dependence of the bilateral trade turnover on the export of Belarusian potash fertilizers to Chinese consumers is

⁴⁰⁷ British and Canadian businesses are interested in buying Belarusian lumber on stock exchanges [Electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskij-i-kanadskij-biznes-zainteresovan-v-zakupke-belorusskih-pilomaterialov-na-birzhevyh-torgah-391809-2020>

⁴⁰⁸ Belarus and Uzbekistan develop cooperation in e-procurement [Electronic resource]. - 2020. -

URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-razvivajut-vzaimodejstvie-v-oblasti-elektronnyh-zakupok-390898-2020/>.

diminishing. And the main priorities that are planned to boost joint actions to expand cooperation are "the inclusion of Belarusian products in the state reserves of the People's Republic of China, and the establishment of China's joint production facilities for processing Belarusian raw materials, simplification of trade procedures and elimination of trade barriers, optimization of financial settlements"⁴⁰⁹, as well as the use of electronic trading platforms as a promising mechanism for bilateral trade, where the key role will apparently be assigned to the BUTB, where 28 Chinese companies were already accredited as of early December 2020, 13 of which came here this year.

Suffice it to say that in the three quarters of 2020, the amount of buying transactions made by companies from China on the exchange rose more than tenfold(!) to two million dollars. Wood billets and edged lumber dominated the commodity mix. It should be noted that, until recently, the majority of Belarusian lumber products used to go to the Celestial Empire mainly via the Baltic States, which contributed to its appreciation for the end consumer and reduced the foreign exchange earnings of Belarusian exporters. "Thanks to the joint project with Bellesexport and Beltamozhservice, dozens of Belarusian forest enterprises were able to sell their products to the high-margin Chinese market without intermediaries."⁴¹⁰

The BUTB believes that this sharp increase in interest in exchange trading on the part of Chinese businesses is due not only to the favorable price environment, but also "convenient logistics that Belarusian exporters were able to offer. In particular, starting from this year [2020], it became possible to buy lumber products on different delivery bases (multi-base lots), which allowed Chinese companies to choose the pickup point that suits them best. In addition,

⁴⁰⁹ Nikolay Snopkov: Belarus sees agricultural products as a new export driver to China [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<http://http://www.government.by/ru/content/9682.government.by/ru/content/9682>

⁴¹⁰ Belarusian lumber worth \$5.1 million has been sold to China through the BUTB since the beginning of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-na-5pilomaterialy-na-51--mln-prodali-v--mln-prodali-v-kitaj--cherez--cherez-butb--s--nachala-nachala--godagoda-400531-2020/>

delivery times have been significantly reduced through the use of rail transport as part of the Chinese government's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative."⁴¹¹ .

After receiving these statistics, BUTB began to consider the possibility of introducing a separate trading session for timber products on the Chinese market, in which all lots put up for auction would be adapted to Chinese consumers as much as possible, and the necessary level of competition would be ensured by a dense concentration of buyers. All the more so because the increased activity of companies from China has been particularly visible since October 2020, when they bought more than one million dollars worth of lumber through the exchange. This is also due to the BUTB's simplified accreditation procedure, which now takes no more than three days to complete all documents. And "in January-November the timber products to the total sum of more than \$9 million were sold through the exchange site in the Chinese direction"⁴¹² . A year earlier this figure was only about two hundred thousand dollars. Building on this successful experience, BUTB held its first specialised trading session on sales of lumber to China in mid-December 2020. Let's hope that this new form of work will also open up new horizons for cooperation with Chinese partners, because there is every reason to believe that in the near future the export nomenclature here will noticeably expand, especially at the expense of products of the agro-industrial complex. After all, "in addition to products of the timber industry, rapeseed oil, beet pulp, meat, sugar and dairy products are among the promising exchange goods demanded in the Chinese market. The number of enquiries from Chinese companies interested in buying these products has increased markedly recently"⁴¹³ .

⁴¹¹ More than 10 times the amount of transactions by companies from China on the TSB in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/boleehhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/boleeh-chem-v-10-raz-vyrosla-summa-sdelok-kompanijami-iz-chem-v-10-raz-vyrosla-summa-sdelok-kompanijami-iz-kita-ja-na-butb-v-ijanvare-sentjabre-413129-2020/>.

⁴¹² BUTB to hold first specialised export bidding for Chinese market on 15 December [Electronic resource]. -2020 . - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-provedet-pervye-spetsializirovannye-eksportnye-torgi-dlja-kitaj-skogo-rynka-15-dekabrya-420090-2020>

⁴¹³ Chinese companies bought more than \$1 million worth of lumber at BUTB in October [Electronic

In particular, rapeseed oil offers interesting prospects in this "Chinese" context, with exports via BUTB increasing threefold in value terms in the first eight months of 2020 as a whole. This is because rapeseed products are widely used both in the food industry and for the production of biodiesel. Perhaps for this reason, too, Switzerland is the largest buyer of these products at BUTB, with transactions from January to August 2020 amounting to almost six million dollars. "The top three key markets for Belarusian rapeseed oil are also Lithuania with \$3.5 million in deals and Estonia with \$3.3 million"⁴¹⁴.

As for China, where rapeseed oil is also in high demand, its traditional partner for this import position has been Canada. "However, due to the protracted trade conflict, the supply of this product has fallen noticeably. The resulting shortage has caused a record price increase. So now China is actively looking for alternative procurement channels and Belarus may become one of them"⁴¹⁵. Back in September 2020, the Chinese trading company Shandong Liuqing decided to take advantage of the situation by announcing its intention to undergo the accreditation procedure and start operations at the BUTB. At the same time, the company expressed its readiness to invest in the Belarusian timber industry. It is also interested in the development of the Belarusian transport and logistics infrastructure. This is the multi-purpose approach that has been initiated by the cooperation with the BUTB.

Another important trend in the development of the BUTB in 2020 is an increase in exports of metal products by one-third at once - up to Br27 million, where the bulk of transactions came from ferrous and non-ferrous metals, as well as their scrap and waste. Suffice it to say that "companies from Germany, Canada,

resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskie-kompanii-v-oktjabre-zakupili-pilomaterialy-cherez-butb-na-summu-bolee-1-mln-417473-2020/>

⁴¹⁴ Rapeseed oil exports through BUTB have increased threefold, with the largest buyer Switzerland [electronic resource]. -2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-vyros-v-3-raza-krupnej-shij-pokupatel-shvejtsarija-406915-2020/>

⁴¹⁵. Belarusian pallet board and rapeseed oil to be exported to China via BUTB [electronic resource]:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorussskuii-palletnuii-dosku-i-rapsovoe-maslo-budut-eksportirovat-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-408061-2020/>

Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine purchased these products for Br24 million in the first half of the year, exceeding the 2019 figure by 20%"⁴¹⁶ . During the same period, a joint project with the Belarusian Steel Works has been actively developed at BUTB, thanks to which three million Belarusian rubles worth of rebar has been sold to the Polish market. In the future, the exchange plans to expand the commodity nomenclature of metal products exports through the development of new promising markets in order to increase the share of this section in export transactions from five to twenty percent in the next five years.

Of great interest in this regard are the BUTB's plans to bring other Belarusian companies to foreign markets as well. In particular, there are plans to combine the exchange's efforts to achieve this objective with

The Mior metal-rolling plant is an innovative industrial enterprise in the Vitebsk region with significant foreign investments, which will be able to produce about 240 thousand tons of white tin plate per year after reaching its designed capacity. It should be noted that only Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works in Russia and ArcelorMittal Temirtau Joint Stock Company in Kazakhstan produce similar products in the former Soviet Union. For the Belarusian export-oriented company, "as

Scandinavia is the most interesting market <...>. This is primarily due to the favourable pricing situation and the consistently high demand for tinplate"⁴¹⁷ . White tinplate is widely used in the manufacture of food and chemical containers. Moreover, the company plans to produce ultra-thin tinplate starting from 0.1 mm in thickness. With the help of the BUTB, the company hopes not only to find new buyers and eventually establish regular supplies of tinplate to

⁴¹⁶ Exports of steel products through BUTB grew by 33% in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-metalloproduktssiihttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-metalloproduktssii- cherez-butb-v-i-polugodii-vyros-nacherez-butb-v-i-polugodi-vyros-na-33-399873-2020/>.

⁴¹⁷ The BUTB and the Miorsky metal-rolling plant plan to jointly develop exports of tinplate [Electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-miorskij-metalloprokatnyj-zavod-planirujut-sovmestno-razvivat-eksport-beloj-zhesti-400676-2020/>

Europe, but also to find partners for raw materials, since the exchange trading mechanism is effective in both directions - when exporting finished products and when purchasing raw materials.

All these facts indicate that the pace of the BUTB's development today is such that it can and should become the driver of e-commerce in the Republic of Belarus in the near future, where they believe that to ensure sustainable development and competitiveness of the Belarusian state in the global arena, "it is necessary to create our own digital platforms in key sectors of economy so that foreign businesses coming to the Belarusian market would not impose their technological solutions, but integrate into the digital infrastructure of the country"⁴¹⁸. In this regard, it is safe to say that the first fifteen years of operation of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange are evidence that the foundation for solving the set tasks has been laid here in a solid manner.

⁴¹⁸ BUTB should become a driver of e-commerce in the country - Koltović [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-dolzha-stat-draj-verom-elektronnoj-torgovli-v-strane-koltovich-401009-2020>

Features of a multi-directional exchange partnership

Deeper integration with the Russian Federation over the next five years will remain the most important objective of the Belarusian government in terms of the development of foreign economic activities and international cooperation. To this end, it is envisaged to implement plans of joint activities by sectors of the economy, as well as "on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and socio-cultural cooperation with the regions of the Russian Federation"⁴¹⁹. And today many market players in our country are taking active steps to mainstream activities in this direction. Among them is the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE), for which the Russian vector of interaction has a serious potential.

Recall that as of December 1, 2020, there were 2,482 Russian residents using the services of the BUTB. And this despite the fact that at the same time "24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 companies from 63 countries"⁴²⁰. But the experience of interaction with Russian partners in 2020 showed that even in the regions bordering Belarus - Smolensk, Bryansk and Pskov regions - the opportunities offered by this e-commerce mechanism are not yet fully understood. When this perception changes for the better, the result is not long in coming. A good example in this context is the record export sales in January 2021 at BUTB Cement, which increased tenfold at once, to \$5.3 million. This increase was "due to the increased attention to the exchange by Russian trading and construction companies <...>. After Ukraine introduced an anti-dumping duty and effectively closed its market to Belarusian cement, Russia became the priority destination"⁴²¹. And now at least eight Russian

⁴¹⁹ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the Period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 44.

⁴²⁰ Zalessky, B.L. Prospective e-commerce mechanism on the way to maximum potential realization / B.L. Zalessky // Social and Humanitarian Studies. - 2020. - №5. - C. 20.

⁴²¹ Cement exports through BUTB increased 10-fold in January [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tsementa-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-v-10-raz-428027-2021/>

companies regularly participate in these cement export auctions on the BUTB. Perhaps for this reason, too, with the advent of 2021, the BUTB has seriously stepped up its activities in the Russian direction. For example, in February an agreement was reached with the Trade Representation of the Russian Federation in Belarus on joint actions to increase trade turnover between Belarusian and Russian regions. The trade mission will make full use of the trade mission's business contacts in order to inform Russian business about the opportunities offered by the Belarus-Belarus Trade Mission as an effective platform for trade and procurement activities. Besides, the parties will combine their efforts in organizing and holding events aimed at stepping up cooperation between Belarusian and Russian business entities to make the BUOTB a primary point of entry into the Belarusian market for all Russian businessmen. After all, registration on this trading floor "automatically opens access to 25 thousand companies from 64 countries, which, by the way, is actively used by foreign participants. A recent example is a company from the Kaliningrad Region, which sold rapeseed oil worth over €1 million through our trading platform. The buyer was a Lithuanian company"⁴²². Indeed, this effort to expand business contacts with Russian regions is starting to pay off. In one week alone in February 2021 eight companies from Russia were accredited at the BUTB. This shows that strengthening of cooperation with Russian regions has really become one of the priorities of this year's BUTB, and a variety of collaboration tools are being used to achieve this goal.

Thus, in the first decade of February 2021, the possibilities to increase mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia were discussed at an online conference with representatives of the government of that Russian region. It should be noted that in 2020, "the trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia

⁴²² The BUTB and the Russian Trade Representation intend to help increase trade turnover [Electronic resource]. -2021 . - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-torgovoe-predstavitelstvo-rf-namerenyhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-torgovoe-predstavitelstvo-rf-namereny-sodejstvovat-uvlicheniju-tovarooborotasodejstvovat-uvlicheniju-tovarooborota-428409-2021/>

amounted to \$184.5 million, or 112.5% of the 2019 level"⁴²³ . During the discussion, the parties agreed that even these relatively good indicators can be significantly improved by the implementation of the exchange trade, which can become an effective tool to increase the volume and expand the range of goods that are in demand in the Belarusian and Udmurt markets. If we take the part that in the last few years Udmurtia has become one of the most export-oriented regions of Russia and today ranks first in the neighboring country for the growth rate of non-energy export, we can be sure that in the near future representatives of the Udmurt business will become regular participants of trading on the BUTB.

In the second decade of February 2021, an online conference was held to discuss the expansion of cooperation between the BUTB and the Volgograd Region business community. The participants in this discussion noted the steady trend observed since late 2020 to increase the number of exchange-traded residents from Russia. And it is not only export of Belarusian goods to the Russian market and purchase of Russian products by Belarusian companies, but also more frequent "transit transactions between companies from Russia and third countries. In other words, the exchange is used as a tool to insure foreign trade risks"⁴²⁴ . And this, of course, expands its opportunities in terms of attracting business partners, among which, we believe, many more representatives of Volgograd Region's business will soon appear.

While developing partnerships with the regions of the Russian Federation, BUTB simultaneously plans to seriously expand cooperation with the European business community in 2021 due to the enormous and as yet unrealized potential of this partnership vector. This can be seen on the basis of trading in January

⁴²³ Belarus and Udmurtia intend to increase trade turnover through more active use of exchange trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-udmurtija-namereny-uvelichit-tovarooborot-zahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-udmurtija-namereny-uvelichit-tovarooborot-za-schet-bolee-aktivnogo-ispolzovanija-birzhevojschet-bolee-aktivnogo-ispolzovanija-birzhevoj-427781-2021/>.

⁴²⁴ BUTB looks forward to expanding cooperation with the Volgograd Oblast business community [Electronic resource] : <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-delovymi-krugami-volgogradskoj-oblasti-429055-2021/>

2021, which resulted in an immediate 27 per cent increase in timber exports through the BUTB, exceeding \$30 million. At the same time, "the main markets were Germany, Latvia and Lithuania. Companies from these countries purchased Belarusian lumber products for a total of \$24.4 million"⁴²⁵. Representatives of such European countries as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Estonia were also among the largest buyers of this type of products, with which wooden billets for export were in the highest demand. Suffice it to say that during the first export trade on the BUTB in 2021, over one and a half million wooden stakes worth over one million euros were sold to the United Kingdom alone, which was immediately above the level of exports to this country in 2020. An important detail: in the past, these products had been supplied to the British market in much smaller quantities and mostly through intermediaries in the Baltic States. The results of this trade session in January, however, clearly confirmed the high export potential of our country's timber products, as well as the trend observed last year, when "the amount of export transactions for cylinder and debarked wood products in 2020 was 4.2 million euros. The main markets were Germany, Latvia Lithuania and Poland"⁴²⁶.

Planning to expand the geography of sales of the same wood products on the European vector in 2021, the BUTB is already working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian lumber, for example, to France. Thus, in February 2021, the company outlined the prospects of using the exchange trade mechanism with the French timber importer Bois Import SA. The fact is that this company has been buying lumber, including Belarusian lumber, from the Baltic states for a long time. However, the coronavirus pandemic has made some changes in this situation, forcing to look for alternative markets. So Belarus has come to the

⁴²⁵ In January, lumber exports through BUTB increased by 27% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-ianvare-eksport-pilomaterialov-cherez-butb-vyros-na-27-429846-2021/>.

⁴²⁶ A British company has bought more than €1 million worth of wood products through BUTB [electronic resource]: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskaja-kompanija-kupila-cherez-butb-produktsiju-derevoobrabotki-bolee-chem-na-1-mln-evro-424714-2021/>

attention of French buyers, where about half of all manufactured lumber - about two million cubic meters - is sold for export through the exchange trading mechanism. It is clear that this opens up great opportunities for French importers. Especially since the French company was also invited "not to limit itself to lumber, but to consider buying other wood processing products, including wood pellets. Six new pellet plants were built and commissioned in Belarus in 2020. Six more are planned for construction this year [2021]"⁴²⁷. As a result, the annual export volume from Belarus may amount to about 250 thousand tons of pellets.

The possibility of sales of Belarusian fuel pellets or pellets through BUTB to European countries in 2021 can also be seen from the interest of European businessmen in the online Nordic Pellets Conference 2021, organised by the Swedish bioenergy association Svebio in late January 2021. The event brought together leading bioenergy experts and biofuel producers from Denmark, France, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and the UK. The fact that the demand for pellets in the European Union is increasing steadily today is what brought them to the conference. This, in turn, contributes not only to the increase of European producers' own production capacity, but also to the import of such products from other countries, including Belarus. At the same time, BUTB is confident that "given the low capacity of the domestic market, practically the entire volume of pellets produced in Belarus can be supplied abroad, which will make our country one of the largest exporters in the region"⁴²⁸. After all, European companies will be able to buy any required volume of pellets directly from Belarusian manufacturers on one-off as well as annual contracts. The demand for this type of e-commerce is evidenced by the

⁴²⁷ BUTB is working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian lumber to France [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butbhttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-eksporta-belorusskih-pilomateriatov-vo-frantsiju-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-eksporta-belorusskih-pilomateriatov-vo-frantsiju-430040-2021>

⁴²⁸ BUTB is ready to promote exports of fuel pellets to Northern Europe [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotovahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotova-sodejstvovat-eksportu-toplivnyh-granuLv-sevemuju-evropusodejstvovat-eksportu-toplivnyh-granuLv-sevemuju-evropu-426052-2021/>

statistics of 2020, when only lumber was sold for 260 million dollars, and the buyers were companies from 30 countries.

Another product in demand in European countries is vegetable oils and feed additives, the export of which increased 2.3-fold and reached \$26 million in the first 10 months of 2020, accounting for more than 40 percent of agricultural exports through the BUTB. "Increased demand for Belarusian vegetable oils in the Baltic States contributed to the growth in exports: oilseeds products worth \$14.7 million were sold there, with Lithuania leading in purchases with \$6.2 million of transactions."⁴²⁹ . At the same time, beet pulp and molasses were sold for almost two million dollars in just a month and a half through the BUTB, the main buyers of which were again the European Union countries. Lastly, in January 2021, rapeseed oil exports through the BUOTB rose almost tenfold, "reaching \$8.4 million"⁴³⁰ . Here too, Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland are among the leaders in terms of the amount of transactions. And the very dynamics of growth in sales in the European direction suggests that the opportunities to expand Belarusian exports in this foreign track are far from exhausted.

Finally, another priority for the development of the BUTB in 2021 is to increase the share of companies from the "far arc" countries - Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America - in the exchange turnover. This can be explained by the significant potential that exists in the interaction with these partners, and the successful implementation of which promises significant benefits to both Belarusian exporters and foreign importers. Among the countries of the "far arc", the development of business contacts with representatives of which is particularly intense at the BUTB today, one should mention, first of all, the People's Republic of China. Suffice it to say that "in terms of the growth rate of

⁴²⁹ Vegetable oils and feed additives accounted for more than 40% of agricultural exports through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rastitelnye-masla-i-kormovye-dobavki-obespechili-bolee-40-eksporta-selhozproduktov-cherez-butb-415013-2020/>

⁴³⁰ Rapeseed oil exports through BUTB increased almost 10-fold in January [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovoogo-masla-cherez-butb-v-2021-426697-2021/>

the volume of exchange transactions, China outperformed almost all of the major markets with which Belarus currently trades on the exchange in the first two months [of 2021].⁴³¹

In this context, it is very significant that the 5,000th foreign company to be accredited for trading on the BUTB was the Chinese manufacturing company Wenzhou Ruijun Steel Co. at the beginning of March 2021. Ltd. is now also the 36th company from China to be listed on the exchange. The company intends to use the exchange platform to supply Belarus with rolled steel and other ferrous metal products. At the initial stage, it will be selling pipe products on the exchange, and then, depending on the sales dynamics and market conditions, the product range will be gradually expanded. Probably roughly the way it is happening at the BUTB with woodworking products.

As a reminder, special trading sessions for export sales of lumber with delivery in containers to the destination in the Chinese market have been held at BUTB since December 2020. "As a result, shipments of domestic lumber products to China have increased significantly and amounted to nearly \$5 million in monetary terms in January-February"⁴³². The fact that almost every month two or three new Chinese companies are added to the bidding process for timber products on the BUTB contributes greatly to this. This has a positive effect on the formation of a highly competitive environment here and allows timber producers from Belarus to sell sawn timber on more favourable terms. In particular, more than 11 thousand cubic meters of sawn timber worth USD 2.5 million were sold at the first exchange trade of timber products for the Chinese market in January 2021. Due to the price increase during the trading session, the exporters from Belarus received additional proceeds exceeding \$90 thousand.

⁴³¹ The 5,000th non-resident company accredited on the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovalas-5-tysjachnajahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovalas-5-tysjachnaja- kompanij a-nerezident-43a-nerezident-431246-2021/>

⁴³² Belarusian lumber worth \$2.6 million sold to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-nahttps://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-na- mln-prodany-v-kitaj-cherez-butb26-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-431434-2021/>

And "the entire volume of the lumber for sale was purchased with delivery to Qingdao - the largest seaport in Shandong province. This increases the attractiveness of Belarusian goods for Chinese buyers, and enables domestic exporters to expand their sales geography and increase revenues."⁴³³

It is also important for the development of the Chinese vector at BUTB that in 2021 it launched export deals on such promising items for Chinese buyers as rapeseed oil, milk powder and sugar. As far as rapeseed oil is concerned, immediately after the start of its delivery to the Chinese market through the exchange, the first two trading sessions resulted in deals worth about one and a half million dollars. This put China in second place in terms of the amount of transactions with these products, displacing Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland, the leaders of the entire year. At the same time, the preconditions for a further substantial increase in other export figures have also emerged. "First and foremost is the growth in the number of accredited companies from China on the exchange"⁴³⁴, which contributes to an increased level of competition in the bidding process.

In January 2021, the first batch of milk powder was also sold to the Chinese market through BUTB. "Two lots of 300 and 100 tonnes were put up for trading. The total amount of transactions made at the end of the trading session was \$940,000"⁴³⁵. This happened after global food prices started rising in the second half of 2020, which greatly increased the attractiveness of Belarusian dairy products not only in China, but also in other countries of the "far arc. This is evidenced, in particular, by the return of one of the world's largest agro-traders,

⁴³³ Belarusian lumber worth \$2.4 million sold to China in exchange auctions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-na-24-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-na-birzhevyh-torgahpilomaterialy-na-24-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-na-birzhevyh-torgah-425850-2021/>.

⁴³⁴ Rapeseed oil exports through BUTB increased almost 10-fold in January [Electronic resource]. -

2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-через-butb-v-через-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-razanvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherез-butb-v-через-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-razanvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/)

⁴³⁵ A shipment of milk powder sold to China through an exchange for the first time [Electronic resource]. -

2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/partiiu-suhogo-moloka-vperve-prodali-v-kitaj-через-birzhu-424904-2021/>.

Singapore-based Olam International, to the BUTB at the end of 2020. And it shows that the prospects for the export of dairy products from Belarus to the Asian continent through the exchange trading mechanism are quite significant today.

Egypt is another "far-abroad" country whose representatives are starting to work actively on the TSB. In early March 2021, Egyptian company Sama Al Jazeera for Import and Export made its first deal to export Belarusian products to that North African country by purchasing a trial batch of Belarusian lumber. The company's strategic goal is "to become the largest importer of Belarusian timber products to Egypt and other North African countries in the future. The first step in this direction has already been taken"⁴³⁶. Its next step in cooperation with BUTB may become the role of a stockbroker on this electronic trading platform. In this case the market of almost the entire African continent will give a new impetus to Belarusian producers-exporters. With the help of such an export mechanism as the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange.

⁴³⁶ The first deal with an Egyptian company was done at BUTB [electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervuiu-sdelku-s-kompaniej-iz-egipta-sovershili-na-butb-431073-2021>

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