

Frontiers of multidirectionality

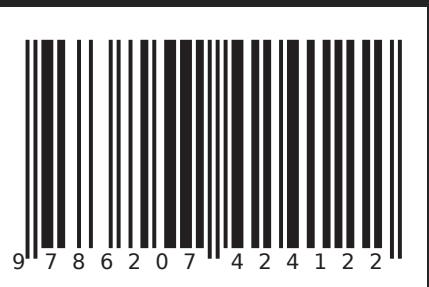
The Republic of Belarus traditionally adheres to unified approaches to the development of relations with all foreign partners, while concentrating its foreign policy efforts on the most important and promising vectors, which include the countries of the so-called far arc, including those in the African and African regions, with many of which the Belarusian side seeks to expand and strengthen cooperation. The Belarusian foreign policy is aimed at developing relations with the countries of the far arc in two main directions: first, intensifying political and economic interaction with traditional partners; second, establishing a dialogue, actively entering and establishing a foothold in the markets of the states that have a significant potential for mutually beneficial cooperation. This focus is explained by the fact that diversification of trade and deepening of economic cooperation with the countries of the above regions of the planet is an important prerequisite for growth of the export-oriented Belarusian economy. Over the past few years, the Republic of Belarus has done a lot in this respect. This study describes how this mutually beneficial cooperation is developing.



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Collection of articles

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Boris Zalesky

Frontiers of multi-vectorism

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Commonwealth of Independent States: from interfacing integration processes to co-operation between regions

In December 2020, the CIS Council of Heads of State approved a new version of the Concept for the Further Development of the Commonwealth and a plan of main measures for its implementation. The new edition fixes the main task of the CIS - "to increase the efficiency of its activities, including by ensuring the fulfilment by the states of their commitments and monitoring their implementation. The document defines economic co-operation as a key priority"¹. For the Belarusian side, the subject of the Commonwealth of Independent States development is especially relevant today, since the Republic of Belarus became the chair of this international organisation on 1 January 2021. And now, to a large extent, its approach to strengthening integration mechanisms in the post-Soviet space will determine to what extent the CIS will be able to cope with the urgent problems caused by globalisation and new challenges of modernity.

At the December 2020 meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Belarus identified among the main priorities of its chairmanship in the CIS such as liberalising trade, reducing restrictions and exemptions to a minimum, eliminating technical barriers, unifying rules and procedures for public procurement, establishing common markets for goods and services, as well as boosting investment activity, expanding industrial cooperation, and searching for common points of economic growth. The same line includes strengthening humanitarian ties, expanding contacts in scientific fields, education, health care, culture, sports and tourism, youth work, as well as enhancing the image of the Commonwealth in the international arena with a focus on strengthening cooperation between CIS member states in the field of information.

The attention to the intensification of information co-operation in this context is explained by the concerns voiced at the CIS Council of Heads of State about the state of affairs in this area. The participants in the summit recognised "the lack of awareness among the people of our countries, the level of their awareness of what the Commonwealth does and its importance. It is necessary to make more active use of modern information and communication

¹ Meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-glav-gosudarstv-sng-25085/

technologies, which are especially demanded by the younger generation. It is expedient to create discussion platforms more actively, to involve the export community and the journalistic corps. It is necessary to think through and adopt a plan for the information promotion of the CIS². We should assume that this proposal will be taken into account in the Concept of the Belarusian Chairmanship and the Action Plan for its implementation. This proposal sets serious tasks for the information sphere of all the CIS countries to ensure adequate media articulation of the integration processes that will take place in the CIS during the presidency of the Republic of Belarus. Of course, a special role in solving this creative task should be played by representatives of the international segment of the national journalism of the chairing country, who should set the tone in the media sphere by addressing the most topical issues of integration building in the post-Soviet space. In doing so, they should take into account a number of important points.

Even before the beginning of its presidency, the Belarusian side announced at the highest level that in 2021 it intends to focus on the development of the common economic space of the Commonwealth, with "special emphasis planned to be placed on the conjugation of integration processes in the CIS and the EAEU"³, in order to create within the Commonwealth the same level of co-operation as in the Eurasian Economic Union. This intention actualises for media representatives the study of the existing experience of integration construction in the EAEU, which could be successfully used in the CIS. Especially since the economic union of Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia has such experience.

It should be recalled that in November 2020, a meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government was held in the format of a videoconference, at which its participants approved the action plan for the implementation of the first stage of the CIS economic development strategy for the period until 2030. This document "covers the period from 2021 to 2025 and contains 29 sections, including trade and economic cooperation, industry, fuel and energy complex, transport, communications and informatization, agro-industrial complex,

² Moldova proposes to think over a plan of information promotion of the CIS [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/moldova-predlagae-t-produmat-plan-informatsionnogo-prodvizhenija-sng-420785-2020>

³ On the meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Makei with the Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee - Executive Secretary [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b824e89c5996ccf3.html

monetary and financial policy, labour market"⁴ . The measures contained in the adopted plan and aimed at strengthening and improving the competitiveness of the CIS economies, developing new cooperation and infrastructure projects, developing the digitalisation of the economy, implementing scientific, technical and educational potential should help to effectively use the integration mechanisms of this international organisation to restore the positive dynamics of the scale of cooperation. After all, for seven months of 2020, the value of foreign trade turnover of goods between the CIS countries decreased by almost 17 per cent. In addition, "in January-August, the volume of industrial production of the Commonwealth countries decreased by 4 per cent compared to the same period last year. Cargo transport decreased by 4.8 per cent and passenger transport by more than a quarter, by 28 per cent"⁵ .

Of course, these indicators do not look very convincing against the background of the results of the Eurasian Economic Union, where there are a number of positive trends in economic activity. Thus, "over the past 5 years, the volume of mutual trade of the Union's countries has grown by 35% to \$62bn (in 2015 it was \$46bn). Total GDP increased by 21% and reached \$2 trillion"⁶ . And if we take even the year 2020, which is not the most favourable for epidemiological reasons, agricultural production grew by another two and a half times and there was no decline in industrial production in the manufacturing sectors. But the EAEU is well aware that the union should only accelerate the pace of integration of the industrial potentials of the member states. For this reason, just a week before the meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State, the EAEU approved the strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration, which envisage a faster pace of this international organisation moving forward. "It is necessary to grow by 4.5 per cent of GDP every year to reach the indicators laid down in the strategy for the development of integration until 2025"⁷ . The adopted strategy, which includes eleven directions and 332 implementation mechanisms, provides for

⁴ The next meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government will be held in Minsk on 28 May 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sledujuschee-zasedanie-soveta-glav-pravitelstv-sng-projdet-v-minske-28-maja-2021-goda-414460-2020/>

⁵ Roman Golovchenko took part in the meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://government.by/ru/content/9638>

⁶ Nazarbayev: it is necessary to increase the volume and sustainability of trade flows inside and outside the EAEU [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nazarbaev-neobhodimo-naraschivat-objemy-i-ustojchivost-torgovyyh-potokov-vnutri-i-za-predelami-eaes-419719-2020/>

⁷ The strategy of development of Eurasian integration will allow solving many issues in a new way - Myasnikovich [Electronic resource]. 2020. URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/strategija-razvitiija-evrazijskoj-integratsii-pozvolit-po-novomu-reshat-mnogie-voprosy-mjasnikovich-419794-2020/>

a fuller utilisation of the EAEU's industrial potential and its logistical capabilities in order to fully ensure the complementarity of the economies. Particular attention will be paid to education, health care, and the movement of citizens. In order to implement this peculiar roadmap for the development of integration, "it will be necessary to conclude 13 international treaties, more than 60 normative legal acts, as well as to introduce about 25 amendments and additions to the EAEU Treaty and national legislation"⁸. As we can see, there is a lot of work to be done. An important detail: the strategy for the development of Eurasian integration until 2025 was adopted when the Republic of Belarus was chairing the EAEU, which allows us to hope for an effective chairmanship of the Belarusian side in the CIS in 2021.

Another interesting experience for the CIS in terms of interfacing integration processes with the EAEU could be the transition from the formation stage to the stage of project integration in this economic union, where the emphasis is placed on investment cooperation and complementary specialisation in the real sector of the economy. The essence of this transition is contained in the industrialisation and agro-industry maps currently being formed in the EAEU. The former is designed to identify import-dependent technological areas and import-substituting potential of producers, as well as areas for possible industrial cooperation and specific implemented and planned major industrial projects in the EAEU. "The current version of the draft map includes 177 large investment and significant projects for relevant industries worth \$194.5bn in 21 sectors"⁹. As for the agro-industry development map, it will also include areas where projects that involve the formation of co-operation chains for the development of import-substituting industries are to be implemented. The experience of implementing these components of project integration in the post-Soviet space should, of course, be in the focus of attention of both the Belarusian media and all the countries of the Commonwealth.

The experience of the EAEU in expanding scientific-technical and innovation cooperation, including through the formation of Eurasian technological platforms, the main task of which is to "ensure systematic work

⁸ The EAEU Strategy until 2025 contains 330 measures and mechanisms for the development of integration - Malkina [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/strategija-eaes-do-2025-goda-soderzhit-330-mer-i-mehanizmov-po-ravvitiju-integratsii-malkina-419802-2020/>

⁹ Pivovar, E. Maps of industrialisation and agroindustry will contribute to import substitution in the EAEU - Malkina / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/karty-industrializatsii-i-agroindustrii-budut-sposobstvovat-importozamescheniju-v-eaes-malkina-419027-2020/>

to accumulate advanced national and global achievements of scientific and technological development, mobilise the scientific potential of member states to solve applied problems in the development of innovative products and technologies, as well as their introduction into industrial production"¹⁰. The fact is that "the Treaty on the EAEU lacks basic provisions on scientific and technical co-operation, which would allow regulating innovative interaction between the countries of the Union"¹¹. For this reason, the Republic of Belarus initiates the inclusion of a separate article in the Treaty on the EAEU, which would define the areas of co-operation between the member states of the Union in the scientific, technical and innovation spheres.

Recall that back in April 2016, by decision of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, a list of Eurasian technology platforms was formed, which included 14 areas: 1. Medical and medical biotechnologies, pharmacy. 2. Information and communication technologies. 3. Photonics. 4. Aerospace technologies. 5. Nuclear and radiation technologies. 6. Energy. 7. Transport technologies. 8. Metallurgy technologies and new materials. 9. Extraction of natural resources and oil and gas processing. 10. Chemistry and petrochemistry. 11. Electronics and engineering technologies. 12. Environmental development. 13. Industrial technologies. 14. Agriculture, food industry, biotechnology.

In January 2019, the EAEU formed the 15th Eurasian platform - "Energy and Electrification", the founders of which were nine enterprises and scientific institutes of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, which outlined such main areas of activity as "energy engineering, electrification, as well as the creation and distribution of smart grids - electrical installations that ensure parallel operation of different energy sources in the network. In addition, it is planned to develop and utilise renewable sources for energy saving of remote consumers"¹². In August 2019, the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved the 16th Eurasian technology platform - "Technologies for maintenance and repair of industrial equipment", which is designed to address such tasks as "development of industrial partnership and import

¹⁰ Eurasian technological platforms [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vystupaet-za-rasshirenie-nauchno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-v-eaes-shumilin-397579-2020/>

¹¹ Belarus is in favour of expanding scientific and technical cooperation in the EAEU - Shumilin [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vystupaet-za-rasshirenie-nauchno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-v-eaes-shumilin-397579-2020/>

¹² Pivovar, E. Technological platform in the energy sector is created in the EAEU / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/tehnologicheskaja-platforma-v-sfere-energetiki-sozdana-v-eaes-333240-2019/>

substitution, re-engineering of obsolete units and assemblies on the basis of technical re-equipment and modernisation of production facilities, introduction of breakthrough technologies"¹³. At the same time, the Eurasian Centre for Machine Tool Construction was established to maintain a unified register of machine tool equipment produced in the EAEU countries, which will help determine what competencies and production capacities they possess.

For the Republic of Belarus, participation in these Eurasian technology platforms is important because the focus here is on the implementation of highly innovative projects that have not only economic, but also political and social significance. In particular, this is characteristic of the Belarusian side's participation in the implementation of the technology platform related to space and geoinformation technologies. "Work in this direction has made it possible to create our own satellite, as well as a whole sector of the economy that deals with the sphere of space, and to declare ourselves on the international arena as a space power"¹⁴. An important addition: in April 2020, the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved a global co-operation project in the field of space and geoinformation services based on Earth remote sensing data, which is scheduled to be implemented in 2021-2025. "At the first stage, the current and prospective satellite constellations of the EAEU countries are to be united. The second stage is to create a unified information portal"¹⁵.

Other interesting areas of Belarus' participation in the Eurasian technology platforms include the EurasiaBio technology platform, which involves the development of joint projects in the field of biotechnology for effective use in the interests of science, education, economic sectors, social sphere and state needs, as well as the project "Organisation of LED lighting equipment production", whose participants include Belarusian, Russian, Armenian, Kazakh and Kyrgyz organisations.

Another important area, which, to all appearances, will be updated by the Belarusian side in the CIS in 2021 and on which representatives of the media sphere should focus, is related to the topic of interaction between the

¹³ The EAEU formed a new Eurasian technological platform on technologies of maintenance and repair of industrial equipment [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/13-08-2019-1.aspx>

¹⁴ Nikitina, Yu.F. Perspectives of technological platforms: Synergetic effects / Yu.F. Nikitina// Designing the Future. Problems of digital reality: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference (7-8 February 2019, Moscow). - Moscow: Keldysh IPM, 2019. - C. 88-89.

¹⁵ EAEU countries intend to create a Eurasian space constellation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: https://www.tvr.by/news/obshchestvo/strany_eaes_namereny_sozdat_evraziyskuyu_kosmicheskuyu_gruppirovku/

regions of the Commonwealth countries, as Minsk expects "a noticeable effect from the implementation of the Interstate Programme of Innovative Cooperation, the Concept of Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation and the Priority Areas of Cooperation in the Field of Transport"¹⁶. It should be noted that over the years of the Commonwealth's existence, the regions have become an effective instrument of interstate dialogue and an integral part of economic interaction. The Concept of Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation approved at the November (2020) meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government should introduce new effective elements into this priority of development of this integration structure. It should be recalled that this area of interaction between the Commonwealth countries includes "a set of legislative, administrative and economic measures that promote the most rational allocation of productive forces and equalisation of the living standards of the population, covering all the most important branches of material production, health protection, ensuring law and order and security, employment of the population, placement of the service sector, promotion of tourism"¹⁷.

Speaking about interregional cooperation, in developing this area of cooperation, back in April 2020 the Commonwealth countries adopted the Convention on Interregional Cooperation of the CIS Member States, which clarified the term "interregional cooperation", which now means concerted actions of the parties "aimed at strengthening and developing friendly relations, trade and economic, social, cultural, legal and humanitarian cooperation between the regions of the Parties"¹⁸. More than twenty areas have been identified among the priorities of activity that contribute to the achievement of the set goals, including the creation of free economic zones in the regions, the implementation of investment projects, trade and fair activities.

With regard to cross-border co-operation, the relevant convention of the CIS member states was adopted back in October 2008. This document defines "cross-border cooperation" as "concerted actions aimed at strengthening and promoting good-neighbourly relations between border territories, conclusion, in accordance with the legislation of the Parties, of agreements necessary to

¹⁶ Exit from economic recession, increase of mutual and foreign trade - Igor Petrishenko named the most important tasks facing the CIS at the current stage [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9678>

¹⁷ The state of interregional and cross-border cooperation in the CIS member states (information and analytical report). - M.: CIS, 2017. - C. 4.

¹⁸ Convention on Interregional Co-operation of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/N01600091_1585774800.pdf

achieve these goals"¹⁹ . Among the more than twenty areas of activity mentioned here that contribute to the development of cross-border co-operation, we should mention the creation of special or special economic zones in the border areas, cross-border trade, industrial and technical co-operation.

The Republic of Belarus is one of those CIS countries where special attention is paid to regional co-operation. Thus, at the IX meeting of the Council for Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation of the CIS Member States, held in the format of a videoconference in September 2020, it was noted that the Belarusian regions "continue to have more than 600 documents on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian spheres with the regions of the CIS Member States"²⁰ . And although over 430 agreements out of them fall on the regions of Russia, recently active actions have been taken to expand partnership relations of the regions with other countries as well. Thus, 26 such documents were signed only during the preparation and holding of the first Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan in July 2019. Almost 15 agreements have been concluded with the regions of Armenia. And a draft of such a document between Minsk and Yerevan is ready to be signed. There are 23 co-operation agreements with the regions of Kazakhstan, Moldova - 18, Kyrgyzstan - 5. As for Azerbaijan, partnership relations have been established between Minsk and Baku, Mogilev and Sumgait. Belarusian-Turkmen interregional co-operation is based on the existing agreements between Minsk and Ashgabat, Mogilev region and Mary province. Vitebsk, Gomel, Minsk, Mogilev voblasts and Minsk actively co-operate with the regions of Tajikistan.

As we can see, the potential for partnership is considerable. How it is reflected in the national media today is not an easy question. But in any case, this diversity of regional ties will have to be fully disclosed in 2021, first of all, by the Belarusian regional mass media, based on the provisions of the CIS Information Promotion Plan, which was discussed at the December 2020 meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth, in order to reflect this direction of integration in the post-Soviet space as adequately as possible in their publications, programmes and broadcasts, thus contributing to

¹⁹ Convention on Cross-Border Co-operation of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States [Electronic resource]. - 2008. - URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902196976>

²⁰ Speeches of the participants of the IX meeting of the Council on Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation of the CIS Member States on the state of interregional and cross-border cooperation in the CIS Member States [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3763/89102/>

the successful chairmanship of the Republic of Belarus in this international body

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Commonwealth of Independent States: free trade in services, innovation, science, education

The year 2022 will mark the end of the chairmanship of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is based on the principles of continuity and is aimed at implementing long-term elements of the development strategy of this integration association in the post-Soviet space in various areas. The measures taken in 2021 under the auspices of the Belarusian presidency in conjunction with the efforts of the states at the national level allowed to ensure the growth of the most important macroeconomic indicators in the CIS in January-August. "Thus, the growth of industrial output was 4.3%, cargo transportation (without pipeline transport) - 5.2%, retail trade turnover - 8.5%"²¹. Achievement of such positive dynamics was largely facilitated by the CIS free trade zone for goods, which provides favourable conditions for the development of the economies of the CIS member states.

In 2021, thanks to Belarus' chairmanship in the CIS, active work continued together with other states on the draft **agreement on free trade in services**, which is designed to provide additional opportunities for sustainable economic development in the post-Soviet space. An important detail here is that "the work on the preparation of this agreement has been going on for 9 years, since 2012"²². The result of this work should be the signing of this document in May 2022. Its particular relevance lies in the fact that trade in services today accounts for about half of the gross product of the CIS countries. The removal of barriers in this matter will allow to further increase economic interaction in the post-Soviet space, where stable processes of restoration of integration ties are already observed. "Thus, in the first half of this [2021] year, mutual trade increased by almost 27 per cent, foreign trade turnover - by more than a quarter, the volume of gross domestic product in the Commonwealth as a whole increased by almost 4.5 per cent, freight transport and industrial production are growing"²³.

²¹ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus has always been in favour of the CIS development and is aimed at the development of regional integration [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10051>

²² Lebedev: agreement on free trade in services in the CIS may be signed in May 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/lebedev-soglashenie-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-uslugami-v-sng-mozhet-byt-podpisano-v-mae-2022-goda-469260-2021>

²³ Mishustin: agreement on free trade in services will stimulate economic interaction in the CIS [Electronic resource]. 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mishustin-soglashenie->

Another very important document that was worked on during the year of Belarus' presidency in this international organisation is the **Comprehensive Action Plan for 2021-2025** for the implementation of the Interstate Programme of Innovation Cooperation of the CIS countries for the period until 2030, which was approved by the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth in November 2021. It is relevant to recall here that at the October (2021) meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State a statement was adopted on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Commonwealth, in which, considering trade and economic interaction as a key factor in further deepening economic integration and sustainable development of the CIS member states, the leaders of these states stated the need to "direct efforts towards stable economic growth through the development of a green economy, digitalisation, industrial cooperation, and the widespread use of innovations..."²⁴

²⁴

It should be recalled that in 2020 the implementation of the **Interstate Programme of Innovation Cooperation of the CIS countries**, which was approved in October 2011 and in which the main objective was formulated - "the creation of an interstate space, uniting the capabilities of national innovation systems, giving a sustainable systemic character to innovation development, promoting the effective use of scientific and technological developments and inventions"²⁵. During its implementation, certain results have been achieved. These include the formulation of a functioning mechanism for the implementation of interstate projects, the creation of a legal framework for the successful interaction of participants, and the formation of an innovation infrastructure.

With regard to the participation of the Republic of Belarus in the implementation of the provisions of the completed programme, Belarusian organizations have become executors in nine inter-State projects out of ten. Among the most significant of them is the development and implementation of a comprehensive information system for aerospace forecast monitoring of natural emergencies, which makes it possible to reduce the damage caused by such situations and the costs of eliminating their consequences by up to 20 per cent through timely measures. Another interesting example in this context is

[o-svobodnoj-torgovle-uslugami-prostimuliruet-ekonomicheskoe-vzaimodejstvie-v-sng-469224-2021/](#)

²⁴ CIS Heads of State adopted a Statement in connection with the 30th anniversary of the Commonwealth [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/glavy-gosudarstv-sng-prinjali-zajavlenie-v-svjazi-s-30-letiem-sodruzhestva-464684-2021/>

²⁵ Interstate programme of innovation cooperation of the CIS member states for the period up to 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/19142>

the development of a highly sensitive test system for detecting hepatitis E in humans, wild and domestic pigs, rabbits and reindeer, on the basis of which Belarus has developed a system of anti-epidemic measures among the population.

Continuation of systematic work in this direction was the adoption in November 2020 at the meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the CIS countries of the decision on the **Interstate Programme of Innovation Cooperation of the Commonwealth member states for the period up to 2030**. This document is "a system of mutually linked activities in terms of objectives, resources and timeframes, which takes into account the accumulated experience. In particular, much attention is paid to attracting extrabudgetary sources of financing for inter-State innovation projects"²⁶. The main task of the new programme is to organise large-scale production of knowledge-intensive competitive goods and promising developments in the common innovative Eurasian space. One of the innovations that distinguishes the new document from the previous one is that the new programme has become more flexible in its implementation. Whereas previously there was a strict condition for the participation of representatives of at least three Commonwealth countries in an innovation project, now "it is envisaged that projects may be launched with the participation of two CIS member states, and other interested countries may join in the future"²⁷. The focus on measures to increase the efficiency of innovation activities is dictated by the fact that in the period up to 2030, global economic processes will be characterised by increased uncertainty and volatility, even possible radical changes under the influence of geopolitical factors. But the most important trends, which in the next decade can really affect the development of world processes, will remain new technologies, innovative solutions in the economy, creation of a large number of own high-tech industries.²⁸ In this respect, the Commonwealth has a lot to do to get rid of those obstacles in the innovation sphere, which CIS member states continue to face today, where there is still "a certain inertia, little consideration of the time factor, the level of strategic planning in the spheres of innovative development and international scientific and technical

²⁶ On the results of the meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://e-cis.info/page/3758/89205/>

²⁷ The programme of innovation cooperation of CIS countries has become more flexible and adaptive - Shumilin [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/programma-innovatsionnogo-sotrudnichestva-stran-sng-stala-bolee-gibkoj-i-adaptivnoj-shumilin-421456-2020/>

²⁸ Interstate Programme of Innovation Cooperation of the CIS Member States for the period up to 2030. - M., 2020. - C.8.

cooperation remains low, and measures to support small and medium-sized, including youth, scientific and technical and innovative entrepreneurship are not effective enough". Successful implementation of the new programme would make it possible to achieve the expected effect in 14 areas at once, including: increasing the number of breakthrough technologies, discoveries and promising developments by ensuring the promotion of research results on the market; creating the potential for increasing the number of companies - world technology leaders in the CIS; expanding scientific, technical and innovation cooperation as a basis for the creation of joint competitive products, including those for the markets of third countries.

As for the approved Comprehensive Action Plan for 2021-2025, which contains specific activities, initiatives and projects with the indication of responsible executors and deadlines, they are structured in five main areas relating to regulatory, legal, organizational, informational, financial and personnel support for the implementation of the programme. It is expected that the successful implementation of this plan will strengthen the CIS position in the new architecture of the world economic system and create conditions for achieving such results as "the development of inter-State innovation cooperation, the creation of scientific, technical and technological reserves for the organisation of large-scale production of knowledge-intensive competitive goods and services within the common innovation space of the Commonwealth"²⁹. In addition to these provisions, this integration association is also expected to develop a programme for the development of industrial complexes until 2025, which will be another step in the development of the CIS.

Another priority goal of the presidency of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2021 was to achieve a synergetic effect from the cooperation of the member states of this association in the post-Soviet space in various areas in order to attract the widest possible range of participants in addressing the issues of its deepening, observing the principle of multilevel and multirate integration. At the same time, in the **field of science and technology**, the task was set to "promote the creation of effective mechanisms to combine the efforts of the CIS member states in the scientific, technical and innovation spheres, to strengthen the innovation component of economic growth through the formation of national innovation

²⁹ The CIS approved the action plan for five years on innovative co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-utverzhdjen-plan-meroprijatij-na-pjatiletku-po-innovatsionnomu-sotrudnichestvu-469337-2021/>

systems and the implementation of inter-State innovation projects"³⁰. One of the concrete steps towards its solution was the holding of several important events in Minsk in the last decade of November 2021, aimed at strengthening ties and expanding contacts between the community of scientists and scientific organisations of the CIS countries, including the 3rd Forum of Scientists, the 9th meeting of the Council for Cooperation in Basic Science, and the 29th meeting of the Interstate Council for Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation.

The 3rd Forum of CIS scientists gathered more than 150 participants - heads and leading scientists of academies of sciences, major scientific and research centres, educational organisations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Its main objectives were to: 1) to intensify scientific and technical cooperation of the Commonwealth states; 2) to stimulate new joint research; 3) to propose ways to develop innovation policy in the post-Soviet space; 4) to form "a system of international mobility of scientists and young specialists in the professional community"³¹. Within the framework of three round tables - "The State and Prospects of Basic Science Development", "Improving Scientific Cooperation in the Digital Era", "Innovative Scientific Research" - it was noted that in the context of the transition to the digital model of the Commonwealth economy, the importance of science is sharply increasing, where interaction is based on the strategy of mutually beneficial and equal co-operation and where such principles as: 1) preservation and further development of historical and cultural ties of the peoples of the CIS countries; 2) joining efforts for the implementation of national interests in the implementation of scientific programmes and projects; 3) formation of mutually beneficial partnerships of scientific organisations of the Commonwealth countries; 4) flexibility of collective cooperation formats and decision-making mechanisms in the implementation of joint scientific research. The declaration "Science in the context of global challenges" adopted at the end of the 3rd Forum notes that "the scientific and technical policy pursued by the Commonwealth states is aimed at uniting the efforts of scientists of the CIS countries in the search for new forms of cooperation in

³⁰ The Concept of the Chairmanship of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/19314>

³¹ Scientists of the CIS countries will adopt a declaration on co-operation in the scientific sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/uchenye-stran-sng-primut-deklaratsiju-o-sotrudnichestve-v-nauchnoj-sfere-471428-2021/>

the field of scientific research to solve problems in modernising national socio-economic systems and improving the welfare and quality of life of people"³² .

At the **9th meeting of the Council for Cooperation in Basic Science of the CIS countries**, the increasing role of basic science in the development of society as a basis for prosperity and well-being of future generations of our countries was noted, and a proposal was made to develop a plan of cooperation in this area, designed for a two-year period and dealing with areas of particular interest to the scientific community of the CIS - ecology, space exploration, biotechnology, digitalisation, and aimed at solving existing problems of cooperation in the scientific sphere on "One of them is the lack of centralised funding for scientific developments"³³ . In December 2021, the draft list of promising scientific projects corresponding to the priority areas of fundamental research of the CIS countries was finalised and sent to the Commonwealth states to finalise internal coordination. "Six states are involved in the work on the draft list: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan"³⁴ . The agreed draft includes scientific developments in such areas as physical, mathematical and chemical sciences, information and communication technologies, new substances and materials, biological, agrarian and medical sciences, biotechnology and genetic engineering, rational nature management and environmental protection, nuclear, alternative and renewable energy, mechanical engineering and instrumentation, socio-economic and humanities, space exploration.

At the **29th meeting of the Interstate Council for Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation** a draft concept of scientific, technical and technological cooperation of the CIS countries was announced, which envisages the solution of such tasks as "development and introduction of new breakthrough technologies in priority areas of scientific and technical activity, as well as the creation of new high-tech industrial enterprises for the production of knowledge-intensive and innovative products"³⁵ . The system of

³² Representatives of the scientific community of the CIS countries adopted a declaration in the context of global challenges [Electronic resource]. - 20231. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/predstaviti-nauchnogo-soobschestva-stran-sng-prinjali-deklaratsiju-v-kontekste-globalnyh-vyzovov-471791-2021/>

³³ The CIS intends to develop a plan of co-operation in the field of basic sciences [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-namereny-razrabotat-plan-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-fundamentalnyh-nauk-471803-2021/>

³⁴ CIS experts finalised the list of projects in priority areas of fundamental research [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/eksperty-sng-dorabotali-perechen-proektov-po-prioritetnym-napravlenijam-fundamentalnyh-issledovanij-473644-2021>

³⁵ The CIS has prepared a draft concept of scientific and technical co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-sng-podgotovili-proekt-konseptsii-nauchno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-471701-2021/>

training of highly qualified scientific and engineering personnel will also undergo significant changes in the near future.

The concept of Belarus' presidency in the CIS in 2021 also implied that one of the priorities of the country's chairmanship in this international organisation would be to further strengthen humanitarian ties and expand contacts in the field of education and science. In this case, it is about continuing work on the development of the regulatory and legal framework aimed at creating a **common educational space of the Commonwealth**, promoting "the development of partnership ties between educational organizations of the CIS member states, implementation of joint educational projects and programmes"³⁶.

It should be recalled that the **Agreement on co-operation in the field of education by the member states of the Commonwealth** was signed in May 1992 in Tashkent. In this document, the parties agreed to support joint scientific research, "to fully promote the maintenance and development of direct partnership ties in the field of education between the territories and educational institutions of the member states"³⁷. Five years later, in January 1997, the normative-legal base of interaction in this sphere was supplemented by the **Agreement on Cooperation for the Formation of a Common (Common) Educational Space of the CIS**, in which the parties, solving the task set by this document, declared their intention to create "a mechanism for coordination of integration processes in the field of education, training and certification of scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel"³⁸ and created the **Council for Cooperation in the Field of Education of the Commonwealth Member States**. Since then, about forty documents have been adopted in the CIS on the initiative of this coordinating body. These include: decisions on the concepts of adult education development (2006) and distance learning (2007); agreements on coordination of work in the field of informatisation of educational systems (2007), on professional development of pedagogical staff of educational organisations (2007), on mutual recognition of documents on higher/higher professional education (2013); Regulations on the Congress of Teachers and Education Workers (2018). Кпоме тогу, в

³⁶ Chairmanship of the Republic of Belarus in the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.by/mulateral/belaruscischairmanship2021/>

³⁷ Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Education [Electronic resource]. - 1992. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/7570>

³⁸ Agreement on Co-operation for the Formation of a Common (Common) Educational Space of the Commonwealth of Independent States [Electronic resource]. - 1997. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/7552>

рамках Содружества 17-ти высшим учебным заведениям придан статус базовых организаций по различным направлениям образовательной деятельности, в числе которых есть и белорусские вузы: Международный государственный экологический институт имени А.Д. Сахарова Белорусского государственного университета – базовый в СНГ по экологическому образованию; Республиканский институт профессионального образования – базовый по профессиональной подготовке, переподготовке и повышению квалификации кадров в системе профессионально-технического и сп

Another interesting project in the educational sphere of the Commonwealth is the **CIS Network University**, which was established in 2009 by a consortium agreement signed by the rectors of 11 leading universities of the Commonwealth with the aim of training highly qualified personnel and developing a common educational space of the CIS. Initially it was planned to train personnel in humanities and social disciplines. But since 2010, the technical vector has been developing, and such areas as oil and gas business and construction have appeared. The essence of training specialists here comes down to the fact that "by studying at a network university, students of the Commonwealth countries have the opportunity to receive a document on education of two countries, and by this they automatically increase their competitiveness in the labour market"³⁹. It should be noted that from 2010 to 2019, 1,100 undergraduates were trained here. And today 38 universities from 9 CIS member states "participate in this project"⁴⁰, including two domestic universities - Belarusian State University and Belarusian National Technical University. In particular, master's students of the Belarusian State University are trained in international law in the fields of "Management", "Economics", "Philology", "International Relations". And "upon successful passing of the state examination and defence of the master's thesis, the graduate receives two diplomas: Russian and Belarusian"⁴¹.

In May 2020, during a meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government, an Agreement on the Establishment and Functioning of the CIS

³⁹. More than 800 people were trained at the CIS Network University [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolee-800-chelovek-proshli-obuchenie-v-setevom-universitete-sng-337497-2019/>

⁴⁰ Information on the activities of the Council for Co-operation in the Field of Education of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the formation of a common educational space of the CIS [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3063/79383/>

⁴¹ CIS Network University [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://ums.bsu.by/ru/am/cis-net-university>

Network University was signed, which actually legalised at the governmental level the inter-university project that had existed for more than ten years. In December 2020, the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus ratified this document, which should give a new impetus to the development of educational interaction in the Commonwealth. The entry into force of this agreement, signed in order to improve the quality of staff training in higher education institutions, to implement joint scientific and scientific-technical projects prioritised by the participating countries, to support the study of languages, culture and traditions of the peoples of the Commonwealth member states, "will create the necessary conditions for the expansion and deepening of contacts between the countries in the humanitarian and educational sphere"⁴², will strengthen cooperation and inter-university ties in the field of higher education in Eurasia. As a result, it will contribute to the realisation of the task of creating a common educational space of the CIS.

Among the concrete steps that were taken in 2021 to promote the formation of a common educational space of the Commonwealth, we should also mention the **6th Congress of teachers and education workers of the CIS countries**, which was held in late October in Dushanbe, brought together representatives of the education system from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and its main theme was "The educational space of the Commonwealth of Independent States - a strategic resource for sustainable development". Let us say at once that holding such an event is a unique phenomenon in the world practice, as "in no other region of the world there is interstate cooperation in the field of education, covering the whole range of educational services, from childhood to professional orientation of youth, higher vocational education and adult education"⁴³.

We recall that the fifth Congress was held in October 2018 in Bishkek. The past three years have shown that the national education systems of the Commonwealth countries have been successfully developing in a number of areas: from improving management and updating the content of education, introducing innovative information technologies to the formation of a modern educational environment, improving the professional competence of teaching staff, and developing an inclusive approach in education. Among the positive

⁴² Deputies ratified the agreement on the establishment and functioning of the CIS Network University [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/deputaty-ratifikatsirovali-soglashenie-ob-uchrezhdenii-i-funktzionirovani-setevogo-universiteta-sng-420406-2020/>

⁴³ Congress of Teachers and Education Workers of the CIS Member States [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/page/show?id=7774>

trends of this period is the "intensification of interaction between CIS countries on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements on education"⁴⁴ . In particular, over the past period, Belarusian state bodies in the field of education concluded 10 agreements and treaties on cooperation, including an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan on cooperation in the field of secondary vocational education.

Among other projects implemented by the Belarusian side in the period between the congresses, we should mention a few more. In terms of the implementation of modern approaches in education, Belarus published a series of manuals "Competency Approach" for grades 1-9 for all curricula. In 2019, the scientific research "Development of scientific and methodological support for the formation of supaprofessional competences of specialists for innovative industries in the process of continuous vocational education" was carried out. Speaking about the formation of common approaches to assessing the results of competence-based education and the development of state and independent systems of education quality assessment, we note that the World Bank project "Modernisation of Higher Education in the Republic of Belarus" planned to create a new national agency for quality assurance of education and join the European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies. And at the beginning of December 2021, "the Government agreed the establishment of the National Agency for Quality Assurance of Education by the Ministry of Education"⁴⁵ .

In order to develop digital infrastructure and technologies in the field of education management, Belarus has been developing a unified information and educational resource for software and methodological support of the educational process, and on 1 September 2020 the resource "Profile Education" for educational and methodological support for the study of academic disciplines at an advanced level in the 10th grade began to function. With regard to preschool education, Belarus is developing tools for assessing its quality in the context of the competency-based approach, as well as scientific and methodological support for the development of a national system for assessing the quality of education at the preschool, general secondary and special education levels. It is envisaged that, taking into account the results

⁴⁴ CIS countries intend to intensify co-operation in the educational sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/strany-sng-namereny-aktivizirovat-vzaimodejstvie-v-obrazovatelnoj-sfere-467074-2021>

⁴⁵ The National Agency for Quality Assurance of Education will be created in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/natsionalnoe-agentstvo-po-obespecheniju-kachestva-obrazovaniya-sozdadut-v-belarusi-473393-2021>

obtained, a national system for assessing the quality of preschool education will be established in the country by 2030.

With regard to support for programmes for the additional education of children and young people, in Belarus they are implemented in the following profiles: technical, sports and technical, tourism and regional studies, ecological and biological, physical culture and sports, artistic, socio-economic, social and pedagogical, cultural and leisure, military and patriotic, natural and mathematical, and social and humanitarian. A special type of educational institution, the National Children's Technopark, is being set up to work with gifted children and young people on a systematic basis. The integration of education and science in the CIS has been actively pursued over the past three years, including through co-operation between scientific institutions and universities. For example, Belarusian participants have been particularly effective in interacting and will continue to expand these partnerships with institutions and organisations in Azerbaijan, Russia and Uzbekistan within the framework of agreements on scientific, scientific-technical and innovation cooperation.

The resolution adopted by the 6th Congress outlines a detailed programme of actions to develop the common educational space of the Commonwealth, where much attention is paid to the issues of international cooperation. In particular, it provides for "expanding the range of educational, including joint, programmes for the development of import and export of educational services in the CIS member states"⁴⁶. All this will make it possible to form a common educational space here at all levels: preschool, school, secondary and higher professional, postgraduate and academic.

⁴⁶ Resolution of the VI Congress of Teachers and Education Workers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (28-29 October 2021, Dushanbe) [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3173/96167/>

Commonwealth of Independent States: Towards the First Forum of Regions

In December 2021, the 10th meeting of the Council for Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was held to discuss preparations for the first CIS Regions Forum. Due to the current unfavourable epidemiological situation, it was decided to hold it in 2022. The draft programme of the forum envisages four panel sessions, an exhibition of agricultural products and achievements of the CIS regions. The sessions are planned to consider the development of co-operation ties between the regions in industry, transport and transit, agriculture and entrepreneurship. The focus of attention of the Council participants on this topic is explained by the fact that "it is interregional cooperation that is the basis for further development of mutual trade, entails cooperation in the market of production, investment and labour resources"⁴⁷. Such figures show how relevant this issue is for the Republic of Belarus. Belarusian regions today have more than 800 documents on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian spheres with partners in the CIS countries, the foreign trade turnover with which in January-October 2021 increased by another 36 per cent and came close to forty billion dollars. This co-operation is now developing particularly actively with the regions of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In particular, **Russia** accounts for about 80 per cent of all interregional cooperation documents, and one of the most successful forms of developing these partnerships has been the holding of bilateral regional forums. In 2021, the eighth such forum was held, during which \$800 million worth of real sector contracts were signed, facilitated by the fact that "about 80 regions are involved in this interregional cooperation on the Russian side"⁴⁸. One of the leaders in this regard on the Russian side is **Moscow**. In the first ten months of 2021, the trade turnover of the Republic of Belarus with it grew by 27 per cent and exceeded \$3.7 billion with a positive balance of more than \$1.2 billion for the Belarusian side. This was due to supplies of cars, leather shoes, non-alloyed

⁴⁷ Strahar: interregional co-operation is the basis for the development of mutual trade in the CIS [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/strahar-mezhregionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo-javljaetsja-bazismom-dlja-razvitiya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-v-sng-474946-2021/>

⁴⁸ Zaleskii, B.L. From the forum of regions - to the expansion of cooperation / B.L. Zaleskii // Materials of the XVII International scientific and practical conference "Proceedings of academic science - 2021", August 30 - September 7, 2021: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 16.

steel bars, railway and tramway freight cars, cheese and cottage cheese, hosiery, dried, salted and smoked fish, butter, furniture and its parts. It is also a fact that "about 20 per cent of the Russian capital's food imports come from Belarus, especially dairy products. <...> A lot of Belarusian-made motor vehicles are used by the city municipal structures and services, the population especially appreciates modern environmentally friendly electric transport..."⁴⁹. It should be assumed that all these positive trends will be maintained and continued in the new programme of cooperation between the parties for 2023-2025, which will be developed in 2022.

As for **Kazakhstan**, the regions of this country interact with Belarusian partners within the framework of about 20 documents on interregional cooperation. A good example in this regard is demonstrated by the **Kostanai** and **Grodno** regions, which signed a roadmap of cooperation for 2022-2023 at the end of September 2021. For the Belarusian region, this Central Asian country is one of the five largest foreign economic partners, with trade turnover with it having increased one and a half times over the past five years. At the same time, "now Grodno Region supplies its products to 13 regions of Kazakhstan. Among the main commodity items are meat and dairy products, woodworking and machine-building products. In the first six months of 2021 the export of goods to Kostanay region totalled \$3.1 million"⁵⁰. It should be assumed that the adoption of the road map, which deals with intensification of cooperation in investment and trade and economic spheres, as well as in agriculture, tourism, culture, health care, education, will give new impulses to this interaction and will lead to new deliveries of products of Grodno enterprises and possible organisation of joint assembly production in Kostanai region.

The capital cities of **Minsk** and **Bishkek** continue to be the flagships in the development of co-operation between the regions of Belarus and **Kyrgyzstan**. In November 2021, the twin cities reached new practical arrangements in the implementation of partnership ties. The fact is that today the Kyrgyz capital needs about 1,200 units of urban public transport. Both gas-fuelled buses and electric buses. And a number of Minsk enterprises have already expressed their readiness to provide the necessary assistance to their

⁴⁹ Industry, transport, humanitarian sphere: the directions of cooperation between Belarus and Moscow were discussed in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/promyshlennost-transport-gumanitarnaja-sfera-v-minske-obsudili-napravlenija-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-s-474907-2021/>

⁵⁰ Grodno and Kostanay regions signed a roadmap for the development of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/dorozhnuju-kartu-po-razvitiu-sotrudnichestva-podpisali-grodnenskaja-i-kostanajskaja-oblasti-462339-2021/>

partners from Bishkek. Especially since there "recently appeared a few watering cars produced in Belarus"⁵¹ , which were liked by the capital's residents. As a result, Minsk discussed not only the supply of certain types of equipment from the Belarusian capital, but also the creation of joint ventures in Bishkek to service and equip them. In this regard, we would like to remind that "an assembly plant for BELARUS tractors has already been set up in Bishkek. Machines for the needs of the municipal sector can be assembled there as well. The site is ready, there are qualified specialists and a service centre. In order to launch production, it is necessary to resolve issues related to the supply of components"⁵² .

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

Gomel residents are also developing co-operation with other Uzbek partners, cooperation agreements with whom were signed at the First Forum of Regions of the two countries. Thus, in July 2020, an online forum of representatives of business circles of Gomel and **Fergana** regions was held. Among the participants from the Belarusian side were such business entities as OJSC "Managing Company of Gomel Meat and Dairy Company Holding", GU "Gomeloblprom", OJSC "Trading House "Sozh". The participants of the online forum constructively considered "issues of bilateral cooperation in terms of trade in fruit and vegetables, textile, meat and dairy products, construction materials, agricultural machinery and equipment. The parties also discussed the possibility of opening a trading house of the Fergana region in

⁵¹ Mayor of Bishkek: we are interested in the purchase of Belarusian equipment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mer-bishkeka-my-zainteresovany-y-zakupke-belorusskoj-tehniki-469870-2021/>

⁵² Bishkek plans to purchase from MTZ machinery for street cleaning [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bishkek-planirujut-zakupit-u-mtz-tehniku-dlya-uborki-ulits-470601-2021/>

Gomel"⁵³ . In particular, one of the major exporters of fruit and vegetable products in Fergana region - Uz-Segang JV LLC - proposed cooperation with partners in Gomel region in the form of creating a single distribution centre for Uzbek vitamin products. The Gomeloblprom State Institution made an offer to the textile enterprise A. Akbarali Ltd. to establish supplies of Uzbek vitamin products to Belarus. Akbarali to supply cotton yarn to the Belarusian region.

The third Uzbek partner of Homiel Region is **Khorezm** Region. The cooperation agreement signed by the parties in July 2019 named "trade and economic, scientific and cultural spheres, tourism, healthcare" among the promising areas of interaction⁵⁴ . At the same time, the enterprise "Gomselmarsh" concluded a co-operation agreement with the joint-stock company "Urgenchkormmash" from the Khorezm region - a plant of forage harvesters. All in all, in preparation for the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, the companies of Gomel region signed contracts with Uzbek partners totalling almost \$1.5 million.

All these facts show that the Uzbek market is very promising for the enterprises of Gomel region. In 2020, the trade turnover of the Belarusian region with this Central Asian country increased by almost 65 per cent and exceeded \$17 million. "Polymers, dairy products, wallpaper, screws, hardware, timber are exported to Uzbekistan. Among the exporters are KolorMaster JLLC (polyvinyl chloride), Svetlogorsk Welding Electrode Plant LLC (mechanical devices, machine tools), Milkavita OJSC, Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant UE (milk powder), SvetlogorskKhimvolokno OJSC (chemical threads)"⁵⁵ .

Obviously, the already mentioned above First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, which took place in Minsk in July 2019 and opened "new horizons of cooperation in such areas as industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, food industry, as well as in cultural, humanitarian, information and communication and scientific spheres"⁵⁶ . More than 200

⁵³ Uzbek companies are interested in co-operation with partners from Gomel region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/uzbekskie-kompanii-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-s-partnerami-iz-gomelskoj-oblasti-398194-2020/>

⁵⁴ Gomel region will sign three agreements with Uzbekistan at the I Forum of Regions [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-podpishet-tri-soglashenija-s-uzbekistanom-na-i-forume-regionov-356296-2019/>

⁵⁵ Gomel region and Navoi region of Uzbekistan intend to develop co-operation in IT-industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-navojskij-region-uzbekistana-namereny Razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-it-otrasli-440395-2021/>

⁵⁶ The Forum of Regions opened new horizons for Belarus and Uzbekistan in many areas - Safaev [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/forum-regionov-otkryl-novye-gorizonty-dlya-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-vo-mnogih-oblastjah-safaev-356612-2019/>

representatives of such regions as Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzak, Namangan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana and Tashkent provinces took part in the forum from the Uzbek side alone. The fact that 26 direct agreements between the regions were adopted at this forum speaks for its effectiveness. In addition to three documents of Gomel region, agreements on cooperation in trade-economic, scientific-technical and humanitarian spheres were signed by then regions: Grodno region - with Samarkand and Andijan regions, Vitebsk region - with Namangan region, Brest region - with Bukhara and Syrdarya regions. Similar documents were signed between Mahiliou and Andijan and Dzhizak voblasts. Minsk Regional Executive Committee agreed on co-operation in the social sphere with Tashkent region. An action plan for 2019-2020 to implement the agreement between the Tashkent khokimiyat and the Minsk City Executive Committee on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation was signed⁵⁷.

The growing importance of Uzbek partners for the Belarusian regions as a whole is evidenced by such figures already in 2021. At the end of the first quarter, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Uzbekistan increased by another quarter and totalled \$67.5 million. An important detail: "Exports of Belarusian goods during this period increased by 37.4% and totalled \$58.7 million <...>. The balance of foreign trade in goods was positive for Belarus and totalled \$49.8 million"⁵⁸. This was due to an increase in supplies of chilled and frozen beef, medicines and polymers, tractors and lorries to the Uzbek market. It would have been extremely difficult to achieve such results without the keen involvement of the Belarusian regions.

Tajikistan is also one of those countries in Central Asia whose trade and economic relations with the regions of which the Republic of Belarus has been developing particularly intensively over the last year and a half. Thus, if in 2020 the volume of mutual trade between them increased "almost threefold and exceeded \$111 million"⁵⁹, then only in January-August 2021 trade turnover came close to the mark of \$110 million, "including Belarusian exports

⁵⁷ Package of interregional agreements on co-operation signed at the I Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/paket-mezhregionalnyh-soglashenij-o-sotrudnichestve-podpisan-na-i-forume-regionov-belarusi-i-356632-2019/>

⁵⁸ Trade turnover between Belarus and Uzbekistan increased by 25.3% to 67.5 million in the I quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovaroorot-mezhdu-belarusijju-i-uzbekistanom-za-i-kvartal-velichilsja-na-253-do-675-mln-440482-2021/>

⁵⁹ Ambassador: Belarusian projects in Tajikistan are not just justified, but have an economic effect [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-belorusskie-proekty-y-tadzhikistane-ne-prosto-obosnovany-a-dajut-ekonomicheskij-effekt-459969-2021/>

- \$107.5 million"⁶⁰. Such supplies from Belarus as tractors and tractor-trailers, sugar, cars designed to transport ten or more people, petroleum products, insulated wires, cables, stationery made of paper and cardboard, tyres played their determining role in achieving these figures. The fact that there are already "about 20 dealers of Belarusian manufacturers" in Tajikistan speaks volumes. We are talking about the assembly of tractors, machinery of Bobruiskagromash and Gomselmash. Joint projects in the dairy industry are also being prepared⁶¹, in each of which the interaction of specific regions of the two countries should play a decisive role.

It should be recalled that the topic of intensifying interregional cooperation was discussed back in April 2021 at the 14th meeting of the intergovernmental Tajik-Belarusian commission on trade and economic cooperation, where "topical issues of interaction in industry and production cooperation, agriculture and transport, health care and education, investment and information technology" were considered⁶². An important detail: today such regions of Tajikistan and Belarus are developing trade-economic, scientific-technical and cultural ties within the framework of signed co-operation agreements as: Sughd region - with Vitebsk, Minsk and Mogilev regions, Khatlon and Gomel regions, the cities of Minsk and Dushanbe, Khujand and Mogilev, Yavan and Uzden districts.

One of the most active participants in Belarusian-Tajik interregional cooperation is **Minsk Region**, whose foreign trade turnover with Tajikistan more than tripled to over USD 22 million in the first eight months of 2021. The key role in achieving such indicators was played, among other things, by the implementation of the cooperation agreement with **Sughd Region**, signed in 2014. At the same time, the parties are not going to stop at what has been achieved, outlining new plans for mutually beneficial partnerships. In particular, at the meeting of the heads of the regions A. Turchin and R. Ahmadzoda in early November 2021, they discussed a number of new promising areas of cooperation. One of the obvious priorities is the Belarusian light industry, for which Tajik cotton can become a raw material. In this regard,

⁶⁰ Trade and economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/belarus_tajikistan/trade_economic/

⁶¹ Denisenko: friendship of the leaders of Belarus and Tajikistan is a good basis for comprehensive cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/denisenko-druzhba-liderov-belorussi-i-tadzhikistana-horoshaja-osnova-dlya-vsestoronnego-sotrudnichestva-460655-2021/>

⁶² Zaleski, B.L. In the line of positive dynamics of co-operation / B.L. Zaleski // Materialy XVIII Mezinarnodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Efektivni nastroje modernich ved - 2021". Volume 5: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 13.

Belarus was also interested in establishing joint ventures for cotton processing in Tajikistan. As for the Tajik partners of the Belarusian capital region, they are interested "in supplying vegetables and fruits to Belarus, as well as receiving quality Belarusian potato seeds. Within 3-4 years the region plans to increase the volume of potato production up to 1 million tonnes"⁶³. In general, the parties expect to expand bilateral ties very seriously in the near future. This is evidenced by the fact that at a business meeting held in November 2021, "representatives of more than 30 Tajik and Belarusian enterprises held talks on possible co-operation in machine building, healthcare, woodworking, food and processing industries"⁶⁴. The memorandum of co-operation between the cities of Zhodino and Gulistan, signed in November 2021, should also contribute to the expansion of co-operation between the two regions.

Mogilev region intends to actively develop partnership relations with Sughd region. The parties signed a co-operation agreement in 2017. And in the three quarters of 2021, the trade turnover between them increased by almost a third. And in this case we are talking about an active search for new opportunities for co-operation. One of the priorities is the creation of joint productions. Given the fact that Mogilev is home to the largest Belarusian textile producer, OJSC Mogotex, there is a serious interest in cotton supplies from Tajikistan. And the Tajik partners, who annually increase the area of cultivation of this crop, also have their own interest: to organise a joint venture with the Belarusian side to process cotton. "This will make it possible to create several thousand new jobs here [in Sughd Oblast]"⁶⁵. OJSC "Mogilevliftmash" is also planning to set up joint production of lifts in the Tajik region. And this is only a part of the proposals voiced in November 2021 at the business meeting of the parties in Mogilev, within the framework of which a cooperation agreement was signed by the Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Sughd region. Besides, "OJSC "Mogilev plant "Strommashina" and CJSC "Nord Asia Metal" agreed to sign an agreement of intentions on the implementation of the project on manufacturing and supply of technological

⁶³ Cotton, fruit, potato seeds: Minsk region plans to increase co-operation with Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/hlopok-frukty-semena-kartofelja-minskaja-oblstan-planiruet-naraschivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-tadzhikistanom-467756-2021/>

⁶⁴ Enterprises of Minsk and Sughd regions are interested in co-operation in industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predprijatija-minskoj-i-sogdijskoj-oblajt-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-promyshlennosti-468050-2021/>

⁶⁵ Zayats: Mogilev region and Sughd region of Tajikistan are interested in close co-operation and implementation of projects [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zajats-mogilevskij-region-i-sogdijskaja-oblstan-tadzhikistana-zainteresovany-v-tesnom-sotrudnichestve-i-467893-2021/>

equipment for the production of asbestos-cement sheets"⁶⁶ . And representatives of other Mogilev enterprises from a number of industries have established contacts for trade in finished products and raw materials. And this is encouraging.

As we can see, the ties between the regions of the post-Soviet countries are gradually being filled with concrete projects, stimulating today the integration processes in the Commonwealth and demonstrating the relevance of holding the First Forum of Regions of the CIS countries in 2022.

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⁶⁶ Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sughd region of Tajikistan signed a co-operation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mogilevskoe-otdelenie-belpp-i-tpp-sogdijskoj-oblasti-tadzhikistana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-468065-2021/>

Eurasian Economic Union: focus on international cooperation

In early October 2019, a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council was held in Yerevan, where the leaders of the five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) discussed the issues of economic interaction, financial policy, energy, as well as the main areas of international activities and development of cooperation with third countries. Noting the serious intensification of interaction between this integration association and such international formats as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, President Lukashenka drew attention to the fact that "in order to expand the international agenda of the Eurasian Economic Union, it is necessary to pay special attention to the countries of the 'far arc', where our goods and services are still little recognised"⁶⁷.

It should be recalled that by the time of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Yerevan, the EAEU already had a free trade zone with **Vietnam**. The agreement on its creation was signed by the parties back in May 2015, and the document came into force in October 2016. In order to adapt the national economies of the EAEU countries to the free trade regime with Vietnam, transitional periods of five to ten years were established for certain goods, during which there would be a gradual reduction in the rates of import customs duties. And as of 2017 alone, the Eurasian Economic Union has "zeroed import duty rates for Vietnam with respect to 43% of the total number of tariff lines of the Single Customs Tariff (SCT of the EAEU). Within 10 years, duty-free import of goods into the common union market for Vietnamese exporters will expand to cover 90 per cent of the positions of the EAEU CCT"⁶⁸.

And in June 2019, the parties have already started discussing opportunities to expand trade and economic co-operation, as the free trade zone agreement quickly proved its effectiveness. "Already in the first full year of the agreement - 2017 - the increase in trade turnover was 36 per cent (\$5.6 billion). At the same time, Union exports to Vietnam increased by 40 per cent

⁶⁷ Participation in the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-zasedanii-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-22132/

⁶⁸ EAEU free trade zone Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/zst-vietnam-ru/>

(from US\$1.6 billion to US\$2.3 billion) and imports of goods from Vietnam by 35 per cent (from US\$2.7 billion to US\$3.7 billion).⁶⁹ . In 2018, the existing trend continued. Perhaps also for this reason, the Vietnamese economy grew by more than seven per cent in 2018, a record high since 2008, with a trade surplus of more than seven billion dollars and foreign investment attracted of 19 billion dollars. At the same time, as Vietnamese researchers note, "it is not only Russia that benefits from the agreement: Belarus is also launching more and more joint ventures in Vietnam"⁷⁰ . In particular, a project for the production of trucks of Minsk Automobile Plant is being implemented in Hung Yen province within the framework of the joint venture MAZ Asia. And in the same province, work is underway to set up a joint venture to produce dairy products from Belarusian raw materials. That is why, at the June (2019) talks with the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Vietnamese side said it would like to maximise relations with the EAEU and consider all opportunities to boost cooperation, including in the areas of financial and tourism services.

Apparently, the positive example of developing relations between the EAEU and Vietnam played no small part in the fact that on 1 October 2019, an agreement on the establishment of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union and **Singapore** was signed in Yerevan within the framework of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. This document provides for Singapore to grant duty-free access for all goods from the EAEU countries - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. Similar commitments - on duty-free access for Singaporean goods - have been assumed by this integration association. In addition, the signed agreement fixed the obligations of the parties to comply with: international standards in licensing procedures; prohibitions and quantitative restrictions; technical regulation of sanitary and phytosanitary norms; transfers and payments for the supply of products; fees associated with the passage of procedures at the border; application of anti-dumping, countervailing and special protective measures. It also formulates "significant groundwork for improving the quality and development of co-operation in such areas as e-commerce, ecology, countering anti-competitive practices, transparency in public procurement, protection of intellectual property rights, which is especially relevant when discussing issues of

⁶⁹ EAEU and Vietnam discussed opportunities to expand trade and economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/13-06-2019-4.aspx>

⁷⁰ Nguyen, C.T. Benefits of the free trade zone of Vietnam and the EAEU / C.T. Nguyen // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://eurasian-studies.org/archives/11237>

technology transfer"⁷¹. Interestingly, work on the agreement lasted more than two years. In signing it, the Singaporean side emphasised the prospects of the Eurasian market - "it is a large market at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It has a huge potential for economic growth, especially in the areas of logistics and digital. All these are areas of interest for Singapore"⁷², so the creation of a free trade zone "will contribute to the development of industry in the EAEU member states, investment, establishing contacts between people, business representatives"⁷³.

In the second half of October 2019, Moscow hosted a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, during which the heads of government of all five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) focused their attention on the development of sectoral areas of cooperation, as well as on strengthening the organisation's position in the international arena, stressing that "international cooperation holds a special place in the development of Eurasian integration"⁷⁴. And, indeed, in October 2019 alone, this Eurasian integration structure made a number of concrete steps to develop interaction with states located both in Europe and Asia.

In particular, the same meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council saw the signing of the Agreement on Free Trade Zone between the EAEU and **Serbia**, which, according to the parties, should give new impetus to the expansion of trade and economic cooperation between its participants. It should be recalled that Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan already had bilateral free trade agreements with Serbia before this document. Nevertheless, the new agreements with the Serbian side, firstly, "open a fundamentally new market for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan - with immediate duty-free access to the vast majority of export goods, and, secondly, create new export opportunities for producers of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia"⁷⁵. At the same time, the parties

⁷¹ Pivovar, E. The EEC told the details of the agreement on free trade zone with Singapore / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-eeek-rasskazali-podrobnosti-soglashenija-o-zone-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-singapurom-364247-2019/>

⁷² Prime Minister of Singapore notes great growth potential in the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/premjer-ministr-singapura-otmechaet-bolshoj-potentsial-rosta-v-evrazijskom-ekonomicheskem-sojuze-364128-2019/>

⁷³ EAEU and Singapore signed an agreement on the creation of a free trade zone [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/eaes-i-singapur-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sozdaniii-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-364131-2019/>

⁷⁴ Meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9076>

⁷⁵ EAEU and Serbia signed a free trade agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaes-i-serbija-podpisali-soglashenie-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-367118-2019/>

to the agreement receive economic benefits not only in the short term in the form of immediate savings in customs duties on existing exports, but also in the medium term in terms of realising export opportunities while expanding the free trade regime. In addition, the document guarantees stability, predictability and transparency of trade relations, as well as the fulfilment of obligations to comply with international standards in terms of licensing procedures, prohibitions and quantitative restrictions, technical regulation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, application of anti-dumping, countervailing and special protective measures, and protection of intellectual property rights.

Another example of the EAEU's expanding international cooperation concerns **Iran**, whose interim agreement leading to the creation of a free trade zone was signed back on 17 May 2018 and entered into force on 27 October 2019. This document "provides for limited commodity coverage, but includes virtually all major products, which account for 55 per cent of the EAEU's total exports - agricultural and industrial groups of goods. <...> Preferential import coverage accounts for 49 per cent of Iran's total supplies to the EAEU"⁷⁶. More specifically, the list of goods for which exporters of the EAEU countries, including Belarus, received preferences includes meat and oil and fat products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics. It is also important that the parties will now have to ensure most-favoured-nation treatment for all goods traded between the EAEU and Iran. And all fees related to the import of goods should no longer exceed the cost of services rendered for customs clearance. And unreasonable tariffs, which restrict trade, should no longer be applied to goods that are listed in the agreement. In addition, welcoming any co-operation with the EAEU in the banking, financial and investment spheres, the Iranian side proposed to create a working group for the development of joint economic projects, the potential of which could be very extensive. For example, "Iranian ports in the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, railways and roads on the territory of the country and a secure environment make it possible for neighbouring countries to transit goods through Iran"⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Pivovar, E. Temporary agreement on free trade zone between the EAEU and Iran entered into force / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vremennoe-soglashenie-o-zone-svobodnoj-torgovli-mezhdu-eaes-i-iranom-vstupilo-v-silu-367284-2019/>

⁷⁷ Tehran proposes to establish a working group on economic projects between Iran and the EAEU [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/tegeran-predlagayet-sozdat-rabochuju-gruppu-po-ekonomicheskim-proektam-irana-i-eaes-364137-2019/>

Finally, on the day of the meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council - 25 October 2019 - the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and **China**, signed on 17 May 2018, entered into force. Let us immediately stipulate that this document is not a free trade agreement, as its provisions do not provide for the reduction or elimination of import customs duties. The purpose of the agreement is different: "to increase the transparency of regulatory systems, simplify trade procedures, and develop co-operative ties"⁷⁸. In particular, the document establishes a much higher level of transparency of the parties' systems of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical regulation. In the area of customs procedures, the agreement contains an agreement on the release of goods without unreasonable delays, with the designation of accelerated customs clearance of perishable goods. It also provides substantial guarantees for Belarusian, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Armenian exporters with regard to the protection and defence of intellectual property rights. For Belarus, which is currently in the process of accession to the World Trade Organisation, this document is also important because it establishes in its relations with China "legal guarantees for the implementation of key WTO principles"⁷⁹.

In accordance with the development strategies of the EAEU member states, the priorities of co-operation with China are industry and agro-industrial complex. With this in mind, the parties have identified three most important areas of co-operation: 1) creation of a common digital space; 2) localisation of technologies; 3) effective cooperation in the scientific, technical and innovation spheres. In order for all these areas to be successfully implemented, the EAEU is now creating an industrialisation map, which will "identify those areas where attracting foreign investment and technology will be most appropriate"⁸⁰. At the same time, the creation of common digital platforms and solutions will eliminate barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital and data. The key competences on the basis of which this industry of the future

⁷⁸ The heads of government of the EAEU countries adopted a joint statement with China on the occasion of the entry into force of the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and the PRC [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9074>

⁷⁹ Agreement on trade and economic co-operation between the EAEU and China entered into force [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/soglashenie-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sotrudnichestve-eaes-i-kitaja-vstupilo-v-silu-367082-2019/>

⁸⁰ Pivovar, E. The EEC has identified three main areas of industrial cooperation between the EAEU and China / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekk-opredelila-tri-osnovnyh-napravlenija-promyshlennogo-sotrudnichestva-eaes-s-kitaem-365900-2019/>

will be formed include electric transport, additive manufacturing, and unmanned technologies.

As for the second area of cooperation between the EAEU and China, an important strategic task is to ensure the transition from localisation of production to localisation of competencies, where the starting point should be the forecasting of the EAEU's unique competitive advantages in the global arena, which can be realised through the creation of technology parks, clusters and technology platforms. It should be noted that the first steps in this direction have already been taken. For example, Belarus, together with China, has already implemented a project to create the Great Stone industrial park, which in 2019 received the status of a territorial special economic zone, which gave the residents of the industrial park the maximum possible customs advantages in this integration association in the post-Soviet space, and where the volume of investment in projects is already more than one billion dollars.

In Russia, the Haier industrial park opened in Naberezhnye Chelny in August 2019 at the Chinese side's encouragement, as well as a smart factory for the production of washing machines, which will also produce refrigeration, freezing and kitchen equipment, and TV sets using smart technologies. In Kazakhstan, under a contract with China National Chemical Engineering Company, an integrated gas-chemical complex, Kazakhstan Petrochemical Industries, is being built to produce half a million tonnes of polypropylene a year, and production of polyamide materials from grain using Chinese technology will also be established. Speaking about strengthening scientific and technical cooperation, it is worth emphasising the EAEU's interest in cooperation with China in the agricultural sector, in the introduction of advanced agricultural technologies and innovations, as well as in terms of energy efficiency and productivity of processing industries.

Another important aspect of the topic under consideration is that from 1 January 2020 the Republic of Belarus will become the chair of the Eurasian Economic Union, and from 1 February of the same year the Belarusian representative will head the Eurasian Economic Commission. The Belarusian side intends to use these formats of activity "to give a new impetus to integration processes and to form common policies by the member countries"⁸¹. In particular, to ensure that producers from the EAEU member countries

⁸¹ Grishkevich, A. Belarus as the chairman of the EAEU will seek to create a full-fledged economic union - Ministry of Foreign Affairs / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-kak-predsedatel-v-eaes-budet-dobivatsja-sozdanija-polnoformatnogo-ekonomicheskogo-sojuza-mid-366038-2019/>

receive the most favourable conditions when exporting their products to foreign markets, and consumers - safe, high-quality and inexpensive goods, the Union plans to "accelerate the signing of an agreement on the procedure and conditions for the elimination of technical barriers to mutual trade with third countries, which will establish an effective mechanism to ensure barrier-free movement of goods in the EAEU and third countries"⁸² . In fact, as early as autumn 2019, the EAEU has already started a new cycle of forming a list of priority countries with which this integration association will conclude free trade area agreements. In particular, procedures to this effect with Israel are being finalised, "at the beginning of the next [2020] negotiations with India. There is another list of 12 states with which we would like to work in approximately 2-3 years. This list can be supplemented by other countries"⁸³ .

Indonesia, one of the key economies in the Asia-Pacific region, is among the states with which the EAEU is going to conclude a free trade agreement in the future. In October 2019, the Eurasian Economic Commission signed a memorandum of co-operation with the government of this country. This document is expected to help build an effective infrastructure for the development of trade and economic co-operation. On its basis, the parties have already established a working group, the first meeting of which will be held in the first quarter of 2020 in Moscow and which will focus on "issues of supranational competence of the EEC, such as trade facilitation, customs and technical regulation, development of financial markets"⁸⁴ . It should also be noted that the Eurasian Economic Commission already interacts with the governments of such countries as Peru, Mongolia, Cambodia, Morocco, Jordan, Faroe Islands, Cuba Thailand, Bangladesh, Moldova in the form of memoranda, and with the government of Greece in the format of a declaration.

This list also includes such a South American country as **Chile**, with which the Eurasian Five have significantly expanded their co-operation in recent years. In particular, in 2018, trade turnover between the parties grew by almost a third to \$1.2 billion. "At the same time, exports of EEAS countries to

⁸² Pivovar, E. EEC proposes to accelerate the signing of an agreement on the procedure for removing technical barriers with third countries / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekk-predlagaet-uskorit-podpisanie-soglashenija-o-porjadke-ustranenija-tehbarjerov-s-tretjimi-stranami-364105-2019/>

⁸³ Belarus expects export growth due to the EAEU agreements and FTA with third countries [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-na-rost-eksporta-blagodarja-soglashenijam-eeas-o-zst-s-tretjimi-stranami-365828-2019/>

⁸⁴ Pivovar, E. EEC and Indonesia signed a memorandum of co-operation / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/ekk-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-366253-2019/>

Chile increased by 54.8 per cent, imports - by 28.7 per cent⁸⁵ . A free trade agreement between the EAEU and Chile could open up a lot of opportunities for Belarus, as currently the Belarusian-Chilean trade turnover is only about ten million dollars, of which 90 per cent is the supply of goods from this South American country. The reason for this phenomenon lies in "the presence of some problems with duties, which are still significantly higher for Belarusian goods than for other foreign products entering Chile"⁸⁶ .

Another country with which negotiations on the creation of a free trade zone have already entered an active phase is **Egypt**. This African state will be the first to have a joint industrial infrastructure with the EAEU, the creation of which will "become a window for the countries of the integration association to promote our industrial products in Africa and the Middle East"⁸⁷ . Apparently, the memorandum of understanding signed on 24 October 2019 between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union Commission, according to which "the parties intend to cooperate in infrastructure and agriculture, trade, investment and business development, regional economic integration and other areas of mutual interest"⁸⁸ . In accordance with this document, a co-operation plan will be developed with a focus on activities for the business communities of the parties. In the language of numbers, the prospects for this co-operation look very impressive. After all, the African Union is an international intergovernmental organisation uniting 55 states of the "black" continent with a population of about one billion people. The EAEU's trade turnover with them has grown almost 2.7 times since 2010, reaching \$21.7 billion at the end of 2018. At the same time, more than 80 per cent of the Eurasian Five's exports go to just five African countries - Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia. So the reserves for the development of partnership ties here are truly considerable.

⁸⁵ Pivovar, E. Chile shows interest in creating a free trade zone with the EAEU / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chili-projavljaet-interes-k-sozdaniju-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-eaes-365298-2019/>

⁸⁶ Grishkevich, A. Chile is interested in long-term co-operation with Belarus - Benitez / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/chili-zainteresovana-v-dolgosrochnom-sotrudnichestvem-s-belarusju-benites-365275-2019/>

⁸⁷ Pivovar, E. EAEU countries intend to create a joint industrial infrastructure in Egypt / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/strany-eaes-namereny-sozdat-sovmestnuju-promyshlennuju-infrastrukturu-v-egipte-364924-2019/>

⁸⁸ ECE and African Union Commission sign Memorandum of Understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/24-10-2019-5.aspx>

Eurasian Economic Union: focus on long-term priorities

The Republic of Kazakhstan, which holds the presidency of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2021, guided by the long-term development priorities of this international organisation, has outlined five main areas of its activities in the year of its presidency:

- 1) give a new impetus to industrial co-operation in the form of joint ventures in industry, agro-industry and services;
- 2) eliminate remaining barriers to mutual trade between the member countries of this integration formation at the central, regional and municipal levels;
- 3) harness the potential of cross-border transport arteries and logistics hubs to build trust across the Eurasian continent;
- 4) to make comprehensive digitalisation a driving force for the development of the economies of the member states of the Union, giving qualitative acceleration to the introduction of digital technologies in industry, agriculture, transport;
- 5) expand access to foreign markets, "more actively develop trade and economic relations with third countries and integration associations"⁸⁹ .

The effective and full implementation of the Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, adopted by the heads of the EAEU member states at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in December 2020 and published in January 2021, will contribute to the fulfilment of these tasks. This document contains 330 measures and mechanisms to develop cooperation, grouped into 11 system blocks, the implementation of which by 2025 should lead to the achievement of such results as:

- 1) completion of the formation of a common market for goods, services, capital and labour;
- 2) increasing the efficiency of regulation of the common market of the EAEU;

⁸⁹ Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev to the Heads of the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/18-01-2021-1.aspx>

- 3) transfer to a qualitatively higher level of customs regulation and administration;
- 4) ensuring guarantees of quality and safety of goods;
- 5) formation of the EAEU digital space;
- 6) Establishment of mechanisms for targeted economic development assistance;
- 7) building a management system for joint co-operation projects, development of high-performance sectors;
- 8) stimulation of scientific and technological progress;
- 9) increasing the efficiency of the EAEU institutions;
- (10) Launching co-operation mechanisms in the fields of education, health, tourism and sports;
- 11) establishment of the EAEU as one of the most significant development centres of the modern world.

In order to realise these strategic directions, "it will be necessary to conclude 13 international treaties, adopt more than 60 regulatory legal acts, and introduce about 25 amendments and additions to the Treaty on the EAEU and national legislation"⁹⁰. It is assumed that all these measures will help to increase by 2025 only non-resource exports to third countries from the EAEU states by a quarter. This can be achieved if we follow the path of creating joint Eurasian companies to mutually complement each other and produce competitive products. So far, "there are 17.5 thousand joint ventures in the EAEU, including 2.4 thousand in Belarus. The EAEU is interested in implementing investment projects with a total estimated cost of about \$200 billion"⁹¹.

Another important segment of Eurasian integration is the implementation of digital projects, as the process of integrating digital technologies into all aspects of activity is now a key condition for progress. The Republic of Belarus is going to play not the least role in this in the EAEU,

⁹⁰ Pivovar, E. The strategy for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025 has been published / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/opublikovana-strategija-razvitija-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoy-integratsii-do-2025-goda-423997-2021/>

⁹¹ Pivovar, E. Myasnikovich considers it necessary to develop industrial co-operation in high-tech industries in the EAEU / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mjasnikovich-schitaet-neobhodimym-razvivat-v-eaes-promkooperatsiju-v-vysokotekhnologichnyh-otrasljah-427278-2021>

where sufficient infrastructural groundwork for digital transformation has already been created, where the largest IT cluster in Eastern Europe - the High Technology Park - has been functioning for quite some time. "In 2020, its exports exceeded \$2.5bn - that's more than 20% of Belarus' total exports of services"⁹².

At the Digital Almaty Forum 2021 international forum held in February 2021, the Belarusian side named the Eurasian Development Bank's project "Travelling without COVID" as one of the joint digital projects in the EAEU that were actually implemented in the interests of the population. At the same time, the attention of the forum participants was drawn to the fact that other projects on the EAEU digital agenda are stalled. Few tangible results, including economic ones, have been achieved in three years. This is why the implementation of the digital agenda in the Union has not yet led to the development of national segments. In this regard, it is now very important to set specific tasks, identify the executors, develop clear rules for the information architecture, and synchronise the pace of work both in the EAEU member states themselves and at the integration level, so that, as a result, digitalisation will bring the real sector of the economy to a new level in the first place. In fact, Kazakhstan, which will chair the EAEU in 2021, is demonstrating just such an approach in this matter. Suffice it to say that the project initiated by Kazakhstan to create wholesale and distribution centres, as well as the full-fledged launch of the ecosystem of digital transport corridors, proposed by Belarus together with its partners in the union, are now among the priorities in the union. In addition, one of the joint projects could be a "smart city", as all major cities in the EAEU have the same tasks of managing lighting, traffic flows, electricity, water and heat supply. According to the Belarusian side, "all these tasks can be solved with the help of multifunctional digital platforms"⁹³, but this will require a lot of concerted work to produce a powerful synergistic effect.

Another of the most important areas of development of the Eurasian Economic Union for the next five years should be the intensification of economic cooperation with foreign countries and international organisations, which will allow for coordinated work on the conjugation of integration

⁹² HTP exports in 2020 exceeded \$2.5bn - Golovchenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-pvt-v-2020-godu-prevyshil-25-mlrd-golovchenko-427222-2021/>

⁹³ Belarus is in favour of accelerating the implementation of digital projects in the EAEU - Golovchenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vystupaet-za-uskorenie-realizatsii-tsifrovyh-proektov-v-eaes-golovchenko>

processes in the Eurasian space, including economic interaction "within the framework of the idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership"⁹⁴. Recall that the idea of forming a Greater Eurasian Partnership, proposed in 2015 by the Russian side, is a network of dialogues between key players in Eurasia, not only among the largest national economies, but also regional economic associations linked by a flexible system of international legal norms, transport and logistics, energy, telecommunications and financial infrastructures, joint projects and institutions. This large-scale concept, which has already been called the most ambitious integration project of the current century, implies the implementation of a number of basic principles that distinguish it from other Eurasian unification plans.

First of all, it does not pretend to compete with other regional integration structures, but only develops them for the future unified Eurasian economic mechanism. The Greater Eurasian Partnership "does not act as a unification of the Eurasian East against the European West"⁹⁵. It is assumed that the implementation of this project, whose participants are already characterised by differences in models of social, political and economic development, will not impose a single set of values on anyone, but will only create the most comfortable conditions for all participants, not dividing them into leaders and outsiders, but providing for a variety of flexible forms of involvement of individual countries in the partnership. It is expected that the Greater Eurasian Partnership will affect not only the economy, but also other spheres of interaction - science, education, culture, humanitarian sphere, as well as in parallel will contribute to strengthening food, energy and continental security, addressing such global problems as climate change, combating pandemics, migration. Another distinctive feature of this project should be the very principle of implementation - "bottom-up", in which the foundation of the project will be formed by specific agreements between regional integration associations and individual countries. In particular, the planned pairing of the Eurasian Economic Union with China's One Belt, One Road initiative fits very harmoniously into this scheme. And not only that.

Thus, as early as the East Asia Summit held in November 2020, it was stated that the further development of various integration projects in the Asia-Pacific region will only contribute to the strengthening of economic

⁹⁴ Strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025. - M., 2020. - C. 9.

⁹⁵ Kortunov, A. Eight principles of the Greater Eurasian Partnership / A. Kortunov // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/vosem-printipov-bolshogo-evraziyskogo-partnerstva/>

cooperation. In this regard, such "regional and subregional associations as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can interact in the interests of the entire region, harmoniously and effectively complement each other"⁹⁶.

⁹⁷In turn, Kazakhstan, which will chair the EAEU in 2021, declaring its approach to the consistent expansion of access to foreign markets, active development of trade and economic relations with third countries and integration associations, focused its attention not only on systematic work to establish an equitable, mutually beneficial and pragmatic dialogue between the EAEU and the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also on the fact that "an effective strategy of interaction with the new EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will have to be developed.

Indeed, in mid-November 2020, an agreement was signed at the ASEAN summit to form potentially the world's largest free trade bloc between the ten countries of this association (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the five leading economies of the Asian region - Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam. This agreement "brought together countries with a combined gross product approaching \$26 trillion (one-third of global GDP) <...> and a population exceeding 2.2 billion"⁹⁸. It is clear that the development of mutually beneficial interaction with such a major partner in the global arena can become a powerful impetus for the EAEU to become one of the most significant development centres of the modern world.

The Central American Economic Integration Subsystem, which was formed in October 1993, could also soon become a promising partner of the Union. Its members are such countries of the region as Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador and Guatemala. In February 2021, the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Secretariat for Economic Integration in Central America (SIECA), which is the technical and administrative body of the Subsystem, signed a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations aimed at intensifying trade and economic

⁹⁶ The world's largest free trade zone is created in Asia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/28129>

⁹⁷ Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev to the Heads of the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/18-01-2021-1.aspx>

⁹⁸ Erokhin, V.L. Comprehensive regional economic partnership: a review of the main indicators of the trade alliance / V.L. Erokhin // Marketing and Logistics. - 2020. - №6. - C. 25.

cooperation between the parties in such areas of interaction as mutual trade, technical regulation and standardisation, industry and agro-industry, macroeconomics, to share experience, develop recommendations, and promote cooperation between the two countries. The EAEU believes that "Central American countries have great potential for increasing co-operation. The signing of the memorandum is the first step to intensify trade and investment co-operation and, in the long term, to integrate into global value chains <...>. Since 2015, mutual trade turnover has increased by 22.6 per cent"⁹⁹. In order to practically implement the provisions of the memorandum, the parties will soon form a joint working group.

Another country of the American continent with which the EAEU's interaction will be significantly intensified in 2021 is Cuba, with which a memorandum of understanding was concluded back in 2018 and which was granted the status of an observer state to the EAEU at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in December 2020. Many facts show that the level of development of trade and economic co-operation between the parties to the memorandum has serious potential for growth. In particular, "at the end of 2019, the EAEU's trade turnover with Cuba totalled \$214.7 million, including exports - \$197.1 million and imports - \$17.6 million. In 2018, a record level of trade turnover between the EAEU and Cuba was recorded since 2010 - \$417.5 million"¹⁰⁰.

Continuing the topic of the EAEU's bilateral format of international cooperation, we note that in fulfilment of the tasks set out in the Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, the Eurasian Economic Commission is now doing the necessary work to conclude agreements on the creation of free trade zones with a number of other countries. In Asia, among the states interested in developing full-scale co-operation with the EAEU is Iran, with which an interim agreement leading to the formation of a free trade zone was signed in May 2018 and entered into force in October 2019. In December 2020, the heads of the EAEU member states decided to start negotiations on an agreement to establish a free trade area with Iran by October 2022. Already in February 2021, the participants in these negotiations focused their attention on transport and logistics projects

⁹⁹ Pivovar, E. EEC and the Secretariat for Economic Integration in Central America signed a memorandum / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eeek-i-sekretariat-po-ekonomicheskoy-integratsii-v-tsentralnoj-amerike-podpisali-memorandum-430366-2021>

¹⁰⁰ Pivovar, E. Cuba has appointed a representative in the Eurasian Economic Commission / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kuba-naznachila-predstaviteľa-v-evrazijskoj-ekonomiceskoy-komissii-427078-2021/>

that could "have a positive impact both on the growth of trade turnover between the EAEU countries and Iran and on increasing the level of transport connectivity of the entire large Eurasian region"¹⁰¹.

In 2021, the EAEU intends to establish interaction between business circles and significantly strengthen trade and economic ties with such a South Asian country as Bangladesh. A memorandum of co-operation with Bangladesh was signed in 2019. The fact that the Bangladeshi economy "has demonstrated significant growth over the past ten years, with GDP increasing by 8% per year on average and even during the pandemic the growth rate was 5.6%"¹⁰² speaks of a rather high potential for the development of partnership ties. And it is now important to identify where the two sides have mutual interest and where trade diversification can be achieved. In addition, studies on the prospects of forming free trade zones with Indonesia and Mongolia have already begun. And in the first half of 2021, the negotiation process will resume "with the largest economy in Africa - Egypt, as well as with India"¹⁰³.

The EAEU is also expected to intensify its actions across the entire post-Soviet space, as evidenced by the signing in February 2021 of the Action Plan for 2021-2022 for the implementation of the memorandum on deepening cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which envisages the implementation of joint projects and the holding of joint events, including with the participation of business communities. Recall that the memorandum signed in 2018 provides for cooperation between the EAEU and the CIS "in the areas of customs regulation, traceability and labelling of goods with means of identification, public procurement, consumer protection, digital economy, tax policy and administration, foreign trade, competition policy and antimonopoly regulation, as well as sanitary, veterinary-sanitary and quarantine phytosanitary measures"¹⁰⁴. And in bilateral terms, the EAEU is very interested in Uzbekistan's proposal to jointly build the Trans-Afghan railway.

¹⁰¹ Chairman of the EEC Collegium Mikhail Myasnikovich met with Chairman of the Majlis of the Islamic Council of Iran Mohammad Beger Ghalifab [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/09-02-2021-01.aspx>

¹⁰² Possibilities of intensification of trade and economic cooperation between Bangladesh and EAEU discussed in the EEC [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/29-01-2021-3.aspx>

¹⁰³ Pivovar, E. EAEU intends to create free trade zones with Egypt, India, Indonesia and Mongolia / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaes-nameren-sozdat-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-egiptom-indiej-indonezijej-i-mongoliej-426578-2021/>

¹⁰⁴ EEC and CIS Executive Committee signed a plan of co-operation for 2021-2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/05-02-2021-07.aspx>

This is explained by the fact that "in 2020, the volume of railway transit through the states of the Union in the direction from Asia to Europe and back increased by more than 60%, and the efficiency of transport has significantly increased. This shows the prospects of this direction and the need for concerted efforts"¹⁰⁵. In other words, by contributing to the concept of transport connectivity in Greater Eurasia, the implementation of this project will allow both the EAEU member states and Uzbekistan to improve the competitiveness of their enterprises and the efficiency of trade, as well as to create new jobs. This is the orientation towards long-term priorities in the Eurasian Economic Union.

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¹⁰⁵ Pivovar, E. EAEU will consider Uzbekistan's initiative on the construction of the Trans-Afghan railway / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaes-rassmotrit-initiativu-uzbekistana-o-stroitelstve-transafganskoy-zheleznoy-dorogi-431104-2021/>

Eurasian Economic Union: To build on already established co-operation mechanisms

The Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, approved in December 2020, include among the main tasks the further development of the contractual and legal framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with third countries and their integration associations on the creation of preferential trade regimes for the development and comprehensive deepening of trade and economic cooperation. In fact, the intensification of economic cooperation with foreign countries and international organisations over the next five years should become one of the most important areas of the EAEU, which "will make it possible to carry out coordinated work on the issues of interfacing integration processes in the Eurasian space"¹⁰⁶.

In December 2021, the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council approved the main directions of the EAEU's international activities for 2022, which include the development of already established mechanisms of cooperation with third countries, regional integration associations and international organisations, as well as identifying potentially promising partners. In particular, "the priority for the EAEU in 2022 will be cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union (EU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum..."¹⁰⁷. At the same time, the international activities of this association will be focused on solving such urgent tasks of Eurasian economic integration as the development of exports, transport and energy infrastructure, industrial cooperation, introduction of new technologies, as well as creating conditions for joint entry of member states' enterprises into the markets of third countries, including the states of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific region, North Africa, and Latin America.

¹⁰⁶ Zalesky, B.L. Eurasian integration in the context of a large partnership on the continent / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Naukowa myśl informacyjnej powieki - 2021", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C.24.

¹⁰⁷ The EAEU approved the main directions of international activities for 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/v-ees-utverdili-osnovnye-napravleniya-mezhdunarodnoj-deyatelnosti-na-2022-god/>

In 2022, the presidency of the EAEU passed to Kyrgyzstan, which intends to focus primarily on achieving the goals laid down in the strategic directions of Eurasian economic integration until 2025.¹⁰⁸ An undoubted priority in this regard is international cooperation, which "it is important to develop both the dialogue format of cooperation and trade and economic relations with third countries by signing trade agreements in order to enter new promising markets..."¹⁰⁹, so that producers from the countries of this integration entity, including Belarus, "receive the most favourable conditions when exporting their products to foreign markets, and consumers receive safe, high-quality and inexpensive goods" xml-p

It should be recalled that by the beginning of 2022, the EAEU had already concluded preferential agreements on the creation of free trade zones (FTZs) with Vietnam, Serbia, Singapore, and a temporary agreement with Iran. An agreement on trade and economic co-operation with the People's Republic of China has also entered into force. As for the search for potential partners, "negotiations on the establishment of FTAs with Egypt and Israel are at an active stage, work is underway to prepare the first round of negotiations with India, and negotiations have begun to prepare for a full-scale free trade agreement with Mongolia and Indonesia"¹¹⁰. And intensive work continues on identifying new partners and negotiating appropriate agreements with them.

Thus, in December 2021, following the second forum "Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)-Latin America and the Caribbean (LACB): Removing Barriers and Building Bridges for Business Cooperation", the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) signed a joint statement with the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System, in which the parties reaffirmed their commitment to developing and strengthening comprehensive cooperation, noting the strategic importance of relations between the two regions. It should be noted that for the EAEU, the Latin American and Caribbean region is strategically important. This is evidenced by the fact that the dynamics of trade between the parties "reached its

¹⁰⁸ Zalesky, B.L. Vectors of Eurasian integration - Indonesia, Chile, Egypt / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XV Mezinárodní vedecko-praktická konference "Vedecký prumysl evropského kontinentu - 2019". Volume 6: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Address by President Sadyr Zhaparov to the Heads of the EAEU Member States on the occasion of Kyrgyzstan's chairmanship in the bodies of the Union in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/obrashhenie-prezidenta-sadyra-zhaparova-k-glavam-gosudarstv-%E2%80%93-chlenov-kaesa-po-sluchayu-predsedatelstvovaniya-kyrgyzstana-v-organakh-soyuza-v-2022-godu/>

¹¹⁰ Gorelik, Y. Without industrial lockdowns and reduction of export activity / Y. Gorelik // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bez-promyshlennyh-lokdaunov-i-snizhenija-eksportnoj-aktivnosti-predstavitel-mid-o-vneshnetorgvoj-477276-2021/>

maximum value in 2018 - \$17.6 billion". US DOLLARS. The main article of imports remains agricultural goods, fruits and nuts, oil seeds and fruits, meat and fish. EAEU countries in turn export fertilisers, ferrous metals, mineral fuels, cereals and other goods to the LACB"¹¹¹. Recently, co-operation in such spheres as pharmaceuticals, machine building, information and communication services has been growing. Bioengineering, green technologies, services, including tourism and education, could become new areas of co-operation. Among the main reasons for the still insufficient level of trade and economic co-operation, the joint statement pointed out "the low level of awareness of the subjects of economic relations about the needs and opportunities of business in the EAEU and LACB countries, <...> the lack of modern trade and economic agreements between the countries and integration associations of the EAEU and LACB"¹¹². As a result, an agreement was reached to move from agreeing on general areas of co-operation to substantive negotiations with the involvement of interested business representatives. Among the possible areas of co-operation were the post-wild and green economies, economic methods of combating climate change, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth, and expanding the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in foreign trade.

A kind of complement to the development of relations with the LACB will apparently be the plan of joint actions until 2025 with Cuba, signed by the EAEU in December 2021, which covers 34 areas of co-operation. For Cuba, this document is important in the context of the implementation of the country's National Plan for Economic and Social Development until 2030 and the Economic and Social Strategy to stimulate the economy and overcome the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, "the Cuban side showed particular interest in strengthening sectoral dialogue, in particular, in the areas of technical regulation and regulation of the circulation of medicines in the EAEU"¹¹³.

Other international organisations with which the EAEU plans to intensify mutually beneficial cooperation in the near future include the

¹¹¹ EAEU and Latin American countries intend to reach pre-crisis trade indicators by the end of 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/eaes-i-strany-latinskoj-ameriki-namereny-vyjiti-na-dokrizisnye-pokazateli-torgovli-po-itogam-2021-goda/>

¹¹² ECE and the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System announced the transition to substantive negotiations on trade and economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/EEK-i-postoyannyyj-sekretariat-latinoamerikanskoy-ekonomicheskoy-sistemy-zayavili-o-perehode-k-predmetnym-peregovoram-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sotrudnichestve/>

¹¹³ EAEU and Cuba signed a plan of joint actions until 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/eaes-i-kuba-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-do-2025-goda/>

International Sugar Organisation (ISO), which currently unites 87 countries and promotes international cooperation in sugar production, consumption and circulation. In December 2021, the ECE and ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which defines the main areas and activities of cooperation to bring the two organisations to "the horizon of practical interaction <...> to develop effective measures for the development of a common market for sugar and sugar-containing products"¹¹⁴.

If we talk about the development of EAEU co-operation with partners on different continents, at the end of 2021, its structures were particularly active in co-operation with such Asian countries as China, Iran, Mongolia and Bangladesh. Thus, in December 2021, at the 2nd meeting of the Joint Commission on the implementation of the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and the PRC, it was noted that the volume of mutual trade in 2021 will exceed the pre-pandemic level and reach a record \$165 billion, demonstrating the high intensity and mutual complementarity of trade ties. Discussing the progress in preparing a roadmap for the implementation of the agreement between the EAEU and the PRC, which came into force in 2019, the parties highlighted the development of digital transport corridors as the main section of this document, as "the digitalisation of rail transport can have a cumulative effect"¹¹⁵. The issues of green trade and green investment were not left aside, where the Chinese side proposed to strengthen interaction between the PRC and the EAEU on the global climate agenda, as well as the prospects for cooperation in three areas that "relate to the issues of smart customs, smart customs borders and smart interconnectivity"¹¹⁶. At the same time, the Chinese side expressed its willingness to share its experience in implementing the concept of "three intelligent spheres", which is based on the modern technological mode with the use of new methods, systems and equipment, with the aim of intelligent customs control and management.

As for Iran, the temporary free trade agreement with Iran entered into force in October 2019. Thanks to this document, "the list of goods for which

¹¹⁴ ECE and the International Sugar Organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/EEK-i-mezhdunarodnaya-organizatsiya-po-saharu-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimoponimaniu/>

¹¹⁵ Andrey Slepnev: "EAEU-PRC co-operation is gaining momentum, it organically complements the bilateral relations of our states" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/andrey-slepnev-sotrudnichestvo-eaes-knr-nabiraet-oboroty-ono-organichno-dopolnyaet-dvustoronne-otnosheniya-nashih-gosudarstv/>

¹¹⁶ Formation of "single window" and intelligent customs discussed by representatives of the EEC and China [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/formirovaniye-%C2%A Bedinogo-okna%C2%BB-i-intellektualnyu-tamozhnyu-obsudili-predstaviteli-eek-i-kitaya/>

exporters of EAEU countries, including Belarus, received preferences includes meat and oil and fat products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics"¹¹⁷. In December 2021, this interim agreement was extended until 2025. The past two years have shown that the interaction between the parties is developing exclusively on an upward trajectory. Thus, in the first half of 2021, "exports of the Union's member states increased by almost 47% to \$1.35 billion, while imports increased by 34% to \$825 million"¹¹⁸, which indicates great prospects for this co-operation.

Another promising EAEU partner in Asia is Mongolia, a memorandum of co-operation with which was signed back in 2015. In December 2021, the 4th meeting of the joint working group on interaction between the EEC and the Mongolian government was held, at which it was noted that in 2020 the volume of mutual trade between the parties totalled \$1.5 billion. And "in the first nine months of the current [2021] year, trade turnover between the EAEU countries and Mongolia increased by 23 per cent, while the potential of mutual trade is clearly not fully utilised"¹¹⁹. In order to maintain this positive dynamics, it was decided to update the plan of joint measures for the implementation of the above-mentioned memorandum until 2025. As a key reserve for the development of trade and economic ties, the parties identified the activation of contacts between business circles and business associations. And for this purpose, a business forum will be held in Ulaanbaatar in 2022 at the suggestion of the Mongolian side.

Also in December 2021, the 1st meeting of the Joint Working Group on ECE engagement with the Government of Bangladesh on the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed in May 2019 was held. It noted that trade volume between the two sides has grown six times in the last ten years. In 2020, its growth continued by another 11 per cent to more than two and a half billion dollars. And "in January-September of this [2021] year, the EAEU's trade turnover with Bangladesh increased one and a half times - to

¹¹⁷ Zalesky, B.L. Vectors of Eurasian integration - Serbia, Iran, China / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XV Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Perspektywiczne opracowania sa nauka i technikami - 2019", Volume 6. Przemysl: Nauka i studia. - C. 20.

¹¹⁸ Pivovar, E. The validity of the temporary agreement on free trade between the EAEU and Iran is extended until 2025 / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/dejstvie-vremennogo-soglashenija-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-mezhdu-eaes-i-iranom-prodeleno-do-2025-goda-474217-2021>

¹¹⁹ EEC and the Government of Mongolia discuss plans of interaction until 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/eeek-i-pravitelstvo-mongolii-obsuzhdayut-plany-vzaimodejstviya-do-2025-goda/>

\$2.2 billion. USD¹²⁰ . As a real task, the parties are now considering increasing this indicator to three billion dollars. There are reserves for this: agricultural products, machinery, equipment, vehicles, pharmaceuticals, as well as other types of products with a relatively high share of added value.

Among the international organisations with which the EAEU plans to actively develop cooperation in 2022 is the European Union (EU). In particular, it is a question of developing a dialogue between the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and the European Commission (EC), including interaction with specialised EU bodies, "in the areas of technical regulation, application of sanitary and veterinary measures, circulation of medicines and medical devices, competition, certain aspects of trade policy, as well as in other areas of the Union's activities"¹²¹.

The relevance of the EAEU's European vector of international cooperation is already explained by the fact that "the European Union continues to be the key trade and economic partner of the Eurasian Economic Union, occupying 35.5% of EAEU imports"¹²² . EU member states are the main buyers of goods exported from Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. In 2021, trade turnover between them grew by another 40 per cent or so and is "expected to reach about \$330 billion. U.S."¹²³ . And this is far from the limit if a number of pressing problems in trade between the parties are resolved. Many of these were discussed in December 2021 during the 8th round of the EEC and EC technical dialogue, in which the parties addressed the difficulties faced by business. In particular, the conversation was about the registration of medicines and medical devices in the EAEU countries, as well as the validity of the technical regulation "On the safety of alcoholic beverages". The topics of technical regulation in the field of railway transport in the EU countries, e-commerce, development of the "single window" mechanism as a tool to simplify trade procedures were discussed. An important detail: convinced of the usefulness of the technical dialogue "both parties plan

¹²⁰ EAEU countries and Bangladesh have the potential to increase trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/strany-eaes-i-bangladesh-imeyut-potentsial-dlya-dostizheniya-tovarooborota-v-3-mlrd-dollarov-ssha/>

¹²¹ Strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025. - M., 2020. - C. 53-54.

¹²² Sergey Glaziev: "Strategy-2025 meets the interests of both Eurasian and European business" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/sergej-glazev-%C2%ABstrategiya-2025-otvechaet-interesam-kak-evrazijskogo-tak-i-europejskogo-biznesa%C2%BB/>

¹²³ The meeting of the management of the trade block of the Eurasian Economic Commission with the Association of European Business was held [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/sostoyalas-vstrecha-rukovodstva-torgovogo-bloka-evrazijskoy-ekonomiceskoy-komissii-s-associaciyevropejskogo-biznesa/>

<...> to continue interaction in this format in 2022, as well as to consider the possibility of holding specialized webinars on topical issues"¹²⁴.

In the same December 2021 meeting with the Association of European Businesses, issues related to free trade agreements, response to climate change, labelling, e-commerce, rules for importing certain types of goods, and determination of customs value were discussed in practical terms.¹²⁵ At the same time, a meeting was held in the EEC with the heads and representatives of the Russian-German Foreign Trade Chamber, the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Italian Industrialists in Russia, the Working Group for the elaboration of the initiative to create a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok, where a wide range of issues of relevance to European business communities were discussed, including "in the areas of intellectual property, taxation, labour migration, regulation of the circulation of medicines and pharmaceuticals".

Among the individual EU member states with which the EAEU intends to seriously intensify co-operation in the near future is Portugal. In November 2021, the 4th Russian-Portuguese Innovation Forum "New Opportunities and Challenges in Innovation" addressed the issues of promoting high-tech products and facilitating the diversification of trade and economic ties between the EAEU and Portuguese-speaking countries. It was emphasised that "business circles in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries are building their commercial strategies taking into account the factor of Eurasian economic integration and the opportunities associated with it"¹²⁶. As a result, the forum participants were able to consider promising cooperation projects in such areas as information and communication technologies, bioenergy, agriculture, healthcare, transport infrastructure, and interregional cooperation. German business, whose representatives attended a seminar held by the EEC in September 2021, can be named among the promising EAEU partners in the European direction. The exchange of views focused on such areas of

¹²⁴ EEC and the European Commission held consultations on topical issues of business work [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/EEK-i-evrokomissiya-proveli-konsultacii-po-aktualnym-voprosam-raboty-biznesa/>

¹²⁵ Ruslan Beketayev: "Direct dialogue is an effective tool of interaction between the EEC and European entrepreneurs and investors" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/ruslan-beketaev-%C2%ABpryamoj-dialog-%E2%80%93-effektivnyj-instrument-%20zaimodejstviya-EEK-s-europejskimi-predprinimateleyami-i-investorami%C2%BB/>

¹²⁶ Gohar Barseghyan: "Portuguese business captures new opportunities in the EAEU market" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/goar-barsegyan-%C2%ABportugalskij-biznes-fiksiruet-novye-vozmozhnosti-na-rynke-eaes%C2%BB/>

interaction as "digital agenda, green economy, customs co-operation"¹²⁷. One of the outcomes of this event was the consolidated opinion of its participants on the importance of continuing the dialogue between the EAEU and German business in various formats to promote mutual trade and facilitate foreign economic activity of economic entities, as well as the creation of a dialogue mechanism to resolve disputes.

It is clear that all these measures aimed at expanding foreign markets and diversifying the exports of the EAEU member countries are extremely important for Belarus, which is very actively involved in all the systematic work on the creation of free trade zones with third countries and interaction with international organisations.

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¹²⁷ The EEC held a seminar for German business on the regulation of foreign economic activity in the EAEU [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/ekk-provela-seminar-dlya-germanskogo-biznesa-po-voprosam-regulirovaniya-vneshneekonomiceskoy-deyatelnosti-v-caes-/>

Belarus - Russia: Regions expand partnership ties

The VII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, held in September 2020, set the task to intensify joint activities of the parties in a whole range of areas in politics, economy, social sphere, education, culture, and also actualised "improvement of work in the media space and strengthening of economic cooperation on an equal basis"¹²⁸.

The Pskov Region, located in the North-Western Federal District of the Russian Federation, is among the **Russian** regions where specific measures are being taken today to achieve this goal in co-operation with Belarusian partners. This is evidenced by the action plan for 2021-2023 signed in early December 2020 by the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the administration of the Pskov region to implement the existing agreement between the parties on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. The adopted joint document aims to return the partnership ties of the Belarusian regions with Pskov Oblast to the trajectory of sustainable growth. After all, so far "trade turnover between Belarus and Pskov region in January-September 2020 amounted to \$77 million and decreased by 17.3% compared to the same period last year. The balance for Belarus is positive - \$16.6 million"¹²⁹.

It should be reminded that the basic agreement between the parties was signed back in October 2000. It was later reinforced by more than 20 more agreements between the municipalities of the Pskov Oblast and Belarusian districts. This contributed to the fact that in 2017 the trade turnover between the parties totalled almost \$200 million, and "more than 100 enterprises with Belarusian capital are registered on the territory of the region"¹³⁰. True, already "in 2019 the trade turnover between Belarus and the Pskov region totalled \$121 million and increased by 12% compared to 2018"¹³¹. Nevertheless, all these facts allow the leadership of the Russian region to assert with good reason that

¹²⁸ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Russia need to intensify cooperation in politics and economy [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9593>

¹²⁹ Belarus is ready to participate more actively in agricultural development programmes in the Pskov Oblast [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-aktivnee-uchastvovat-v-programmakh-razvitiya-selskogo-hozjajstva-v-pskovskoj-oblasti-418071-2020>

¹³⁰ Priority directions of regional co-operation development as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled by, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 287.

¹³¹ Roman Golovchenko proposed to the Governor of the Pskov region to intensify co-operation in various sectors [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9588>

"Belarus is our key foreign economic, foreign trade partner. This partnership accounts for 35% of trade turnover"¹³² .

The 3-year action plan for cooperation adopted in early December 2020 envisages the realisation of a large potential for cooperation in a wide range of areas. In particular, this document "includes measures for the participation of Belarusian enterprises in the construction of social facilities and housing construction"¹³³ . Here we are talking about the construction of housing estates, as well as schools, kindergartens, hospitals with the help of credit resources of the Development Bank of Belarus. The fact is that the parties already have a good experience of cooperation in this area, as "the largest school in Pskov was built by Belarusian construction organisations. And we are satisfied with this experience, because the quality is very high"¹³⁴ .

Another promising area of co-operation is providing this Russian region with Belarusian passenger, cargo, road-building and municipal equipment. In this respect, the Belarusian side proceeds from the understanding that "the Pskov region is facing the issue of cardinal renewal of the fleet of city buses, first of all in the capital of the region"¹³⁵ . And already in September 2020 the dealer of Minsk Automobile Plant won the tender for the supply of 11 buses of extra-large and 6 - large capacity to Pskov. A pilot operation of a Belarusian bus powered by gas motor fuel was successfully conducted there.

Investment co-operation between the parties should also receive additional impulses for development in the next three years. This will be facilitated by the cooperation agreement signed in September 2020 between the Belarusian National Agency for Investment and Privatisation and the Investment Development Agency of the Pskov Region. In this document, the parties agreed, in particular, to "create favourable conditions for mutual attraction of investments, development and implementation of joint projects, exchange information on business conditions, investment opportunities and

¹³² Meeting with the Governor of the Pskov Region of Russia Mikhail Vedernikov [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-gubernatorom-pskovskoj-oblasti-rossii-mixailom-vedernikovym-24596/

¹³³ In the Pskov region they plan to build social objects with the participation of Belarusian companies [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-pskovskoj-oblasti-planirujut-stroit-sotsobjekty-s-uchastiem-belorusskikh-kompanij-418082-2020>

¹³⁴ Pskov region is interested in Belarusian agro-towns, machinery and construction services [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/pskovskaja-oblazt-zainteresovalas-belorusskimi-agrogorodkami-tehnikoj-i-stroitelnymi-uslugami-408508-2020/>

¹³⁵ Igor Petrishenko: Belarus is ready to participate more actively in agricultural development programmes in the Pskov Oblast [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9668>

proposed projects, as well as take joint participation in thematic seminars, conferences, forums and other investment-oriented events"¹³⁶ .

Finally, another new vector of co-operation, which will be developed in the near future, is in the field of education. We are talking about the fact that Belarus is starting to train medical personnel for the Pskov Oblast. In this regard, "an agreement on co-operation and strategic partnership has been signed between Pskov State University and three higher education institutions of Belarus"¹³⁷ . The relevance of this topic for the Russian region can be expressed by one figure: the deficit of medical personnel in the Pskov region today is almost 50 per cent. So the assistance of Belarusian partners is more than necessary here and now.

Another interesting example of developing ties with Belarusian partners in the same Northwestern Federal District is shown by the **Leningrad Region**. In March 2021, the ninth meeting of the joint commission for the development of cooperation between the Leningrad Region and the Republic of Belarus took place, at which the parties signed a new Agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, and socio-cultural spheres. Recall that the interaction of this Russian region with the Belarusian side began in 1997, when framework co-operation agreements were signed with four regions in Belarus - Minsk, Gomel, Vitebsk and Mogilev. "A year later, the agreements were already signed by the governments of the Leningrad Region and the Republic of Belarus. These documents became the basis for the establishment and development of mutually beneficial ties in the following years"¹³⁸ .

For a long time, the key area of cooperation between the region and the republic in terms of the intensity of interaction has remained the sphere of agro-industrial complex, where agro-enterprises traditionally maintain close ties and co-operation with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus has been established. An interesting fact: "About 20 per cent of spring grain crop seeds in the Leningrad Region are sown with varieties developed by Belarusian breeders <...> At the same time, the cultivated varieties from year to year show high performance in all parameters, proving the high level of breeding

¹³⁶ Investment Agencies of Belarus and the Pskov Oblast signed an agreement on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/agentstva-po-investitsijam-belarusi-i-pskovskoj-oblasti-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-408584-2020/>

¹³⁷ Belarus will train medical personnel for the Pskov region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-budet-gotovit-meditsinskie-kadry-dlya-pskovskoj-oblasti-408501-2020/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent

¹³⁸ Regions of Russia - in the Republic of Belarus: Information and Integration Project / compiled by B. Zaleskii, A. Kiselev, E. Korovkin. B. Zalessky, A. Kiselev, E. Korovkin. - Minsk: Theseus, 2009. - C. 65.

development in Belarus"¹³⁹ . In this regard, the demand for Belarusian seed from the agrarians of the Russian region continues to grow.

According to the results of 2019, the Leningrad Region became 11th among Russian regions in terms of trade turnover with Belarus, which then amounted to about \$600 million. True, in 2020, for known reasons of epidemiological nature, it has slightly decreased: in the first half of the year - about 280 million dollars. That is why in September 2020, at a high level, the parties decided to "update the programme of cooperation between Belarus and the Leningrad Region and set clear and specific objectives"¹⁴⁰ . And in 2020, the Russian side increased purchases of Belarusian forestry equipment and started buying heavy road machinery. Moreover, for 2021 in the budget of the region is planned to buy more than a hundred units of such equipment. "Urban transport is also of interest to the Leningrad region. The company "Piteravto" plans to make a large purchase - up to 1.5 thousand combined buses. The first hundred buses will be purchased already in the first quarter of 2021"¹⁴¹ .

As for the new cooperation agreement signed in March 2021, it focuses the parties' attention on such an important area as ecology, including Belarusian technologies and equipment for water treatment, as well as waste recycling. The fact is that the Russian region is considering the possibilities of partnership with the Belarusian side in terms of the choice of technologies for the construction of enterprises for the recycling of household waste, relying on the experience of the Brest region. Suffice it to say that "within the framework of the federal project "Clean Water" 13 water treatment plants of Belarusian production have already been installed in the Leningrad region, and now 9 more water treatment plants and 4 modular treatment facilities (sewage treatment plants) are being installed. In the period of 2021-2022 it is planned to purchase 108 water treatment plants and 31 wastewater treatment plants of Belarusian production for the amount of 1.65 and 2.40 billion Russian rubles respectively"¹⁴² . In addition, the Action Plan for cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural areas for 2021-2023, signed at the ninth meeting of the joint commission, provides for "increasing supplies of

¹³⁹ Priority directions of regional co-operation development as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled by, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 204.

¹⁴⁰ Roman Golovchenko: Leningrad Oblast can enter the top 5 trade partners of Belarus among Russian regions [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9586>

¹⁴¹ Meeting with the Governor of the Leningrad Region of Russia Alexander Drozdenko [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/vstrecha-s-gubernatorom-leningradskoy-oblasti-rossii-aleksandrom-drozdenko>

¹⁴² Ecology - in the focus of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9787>

public transport using various types of fuel, road-building, municipal and agricultural machinery to the Leningrad Region from Belarus, as well as supplies of breeding stock, fertilisers, machine-building and woodworking products to Belarus"¹⁴³.

The planned expansion of co-operation between the region and the republic over the next three years may also be augmented by the intensification of co-operation between the parties at the municipal level. According to the Committee for External Relations of the Leningrad Region, partnership or twinning relations have already been established between such districts as: 1. Volosovsky and Logoisky (2010); 2. Volkovskiy and Mozyrsky (2006); 3. Vyborgsky and Rechitsa (2011); 4. Gatchinsky and Nesvizhsky (2010); 5. Kingiseppsky and Svetlogorsky (2010); 6. Kirovsky and Myadelsky (2013); 7. Lomonosovsky and Baranovichi (2008); 8. Luzhsky and the city of Bobruisk (2017); 9. Luzhsky and Gorodoksky (2014); 10. Podporozhsky and Miorsky (2017); 11. Priozersky and Mogilevsky (2006); 12. Slantsevsky and Shklovsky (2018); 13. Tikhvinsky and Dzerzhinsky (2009); 14. Tosnensky and Rogachevsky (2010); 15. Tosnensky and Polotskiy (2010); 16. Shcheglovskoye Rural Settlement and Vileysky District (2012); 17. The towns of Kommunar and Svetlogorsk (2007); 18. Sošnovoborsk Urban District and Ostrovets District (2012, 2016).

As we can see, the potential for co-operation between the Leningrad Region and the Republic of Belarus is already considerable. It only needs to be updated to the maximum extent possible in all areas of mutual interest in accordance with the plans adopted by the joint commission. And then the results that the parties are counting on will not be long in coming.

In the Siberian Federal District, **Tomsk Region has** seriously intensified its interaction with Belarusian partners. In December 2020, the first meeting of the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and this Russian region was held, at which the parties agreed to focus on expanding trade turnover, to consider opportunities for the production of new products, including innovative products, as well as the opening of joint ventures of different forms of ownership. Especially since "there are a large number of growth points for the development of co-operation in terms of meeting the needs for raw materials, components, finished goods, and natural resources"¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Belarus and the Leningrad region signed an agreement on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-leningradskaja-oblstan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-434519-2021/>

¹⁴⁴ Belarus is ready to co-operate with Tomsk Oblast in economic, humanitarian and scientific spheres - Khudyk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

. In addition, it is planned to strengthen contacts and expand co-operation in the field of science, education and culture. This is discussed in the updated plan of joint activities for 2021-2023, which the Tomsk side submitted to the Belarusian partners for approval.

It should be reminded that the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Tomsk Oblast was signed in 2016 at the plenary session of the Third Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. In this document, which gave new impetus to the bilateral interaction between the republic and the region, the parties identified the main priorities of joint work in a very wide range of areas, relying on the existing experience of interaction. And very soon the concrete results of the implementation of this agreement appeared.

Thus, "the Agrarian Centre of Tomsk region signed a number of cooperation agreements with the Scientific and Practical Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on Agricultural Mechanisation, Grodno State Agrarian University and Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University"¹⁴⁵. The National Research Tomsk State University, National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics, Tomsk Scientific Centre of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences became participants of joint projects with Belarusian partners related to fundamental and applied research, as well as the development of academic mobility among undergraduates and teaching staff.

In particular, within the framework of the Union State's Pramen programme, scientists from the Tomsk Institute of Atmospheric Optics of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and specialists from the Institute of Physics of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences jointly developed special complexes for monitoring the state of the atmosphere, which allow not only to determine the distance to any object, but also to scan the composition of the atmosphere along the way. Thus, there is no need for sampling and analyses, as the data immediately appear on the operator's monitor. Another interesting project is the joint work of scientists from the National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University and the Belarusian State University "on the development of nanocomposite coatings resistant to radiation effects, which are intended for use in nuclear reactors. The results of the research may be in

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-k-sotrudnichestvu-s-tomskoj-oblajstju-v-ekonomicheskoy-i-gumanitarnoj-i-nauchnoj-sferah-421752-2020/>

¹⁴⁵ Tomsk region has good opportunities for expanding economic ties with the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://tomsk.er.ru/activity/news/u-tomskoj-oblasti-est-horoshie-vozmozhnosti-dlya-rasshireniya-ekonomicheskikh-svyazej-s-respublikoj-belarus>

demand in other areas where operation in extreme situations is expected: for example, in space, in steam turbines of thermal power plants"¹⁴⁶.

The partnership relations between this Russian region and the Belarusian manufacturer Amkodor are developing very effectively in line with the signed agreement. In June 2016, the Tomsk region approved a medium-term cooperation plan to expand the supply of its machinery. And today, this equipment is used in this Russian region in municipal services and forestry. In particular, in December 2017, Verkhneketsky leskhоз purchased a logging complex, which began to be used in selective and clear sanitary felling as part of the execution of state assignments. "This is the third logging complex that Amkodor has supplied to the forestry enterprises of the region. By the way, it will now be easier to service this equipment, as the company opened its own branded service centre in the region in the summer of 2017"¹⁴⁷.

All these facts show that the basis for cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Tomsk region is not bad, but it needs to be developed, since so far mutual trade accounts for an insignificant share in the total volume of their foreign economic activity - just over \$10 million for 10 months of 2020. The Tomsk side expects to emphasise the development of partnership ties in such areas as "crop and livestock farming, hunting and fishing, industry and consumer market, ecological and rural tourism, additional professional education and advanced training, use of IT systems for state and municipal needs, support for innovative entrepreneurship"¹⁴⁸. The Belarusian side sees prospects in supplying a wide range of export goods - buses, trucks, municipal, road-building, logging, agricultural machinery, food, light industry and agro-industrial complex products. In short, the potential for partnership between the parties is very solid. And this inspires optimism that the plans adopted at the first meeting of the working commission to expand cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Tomsk Oblast will be successfully implemented.

Speaking about Belarusian partners in the Siberian Federal District, we should recall **Irkutsk Region**, where the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, Cultural, and Humanitarian Cooperation was signed in

¹⁴⁶ Technologies and innovations in the cooperation of the regions of the Union State as an impetus for the development of Eurasian integration: information-integration project / co-authored, interviewed : B. Zaleskii, M. Valkovski, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2017. - C. 202.

¹⁴⁷ Priority directions of regional co-operation development as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled by, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 345.

¹⁴⁸ Tomsk region and Belarus agreed to expand cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://tomsk.sm.news/tomskaya-obl-i-belarus-dogovorilis-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-42561-u3t5/>

December 2016. At the same time, the first meeting of the working group formed from representatives of the parties was held to prepare a roadmap - the Action Plan for 2017-2019 - for the implementation of the signed agreement in order to rapidly increase trade and economic cooperation. The fact is that 2016 highlighted a serious problem in the development of partnership ties between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region - the trade turnover between the parties has almost halved. And this is despite the fact that in 2015 the mutual trade indicator was the highest for five years - \$115 million. This gave the parties a reason to outline the main task for the near future in a very simple way: "Belarus and the Irkutsk Region of Russia should find reserves to increase mutual trade"¹⁴⁹.

¹⁵⁰It is worth recalling that in the pre-crisis period, the trade and economic interaction between the parties was carried out in a fairly wide range of areas, including the creation of a system of business cooperation using modern information technologies and electronic systems, expansion of the product range of mutual supplies, the establishment of service and repair centres for Belarusian-made machinery in the Irkutsk region, the organisation and holding of joint trade fairs and exhibitions, as well as the establishment of a joint trade fair and exhibition events.

In their search for new reserves of trade and economic cooperation, the parties decided to rely on the existing achievements. Firstly, the Belarusian side proposed to make more active use of its export potential in Priangarie, where there are still significant prospects for supplying quarry, truck and other specialised equipment, as well as loaders for coal and other mineral deposits in the Russian region. After all, Belarus is well aware that the Irkutsk region is one of the leaders in Russia in terms of mining, so the quarry equipment of the Belarusian Automobile Plant for the mining enterprises of the region would be very useful. Besides, the Minsk Automobile Plant was already "ready to meet the needs of the region in passenger vehicles using gas motor fuel"¹⁵¹. At the same time, the Belarusian side offered such attractive financing schemes for its export supplies as leasing, budget subsidies, and preferential lending, which may also apply to the latest Belarusian novelties in the form of innovative

¹⁴⁹ Negotiations with the Governor of the Irkutsk Region Sergey Levchenko [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/peregovory-s-gubernatorom-irkutskoj-oblasti-sergeem-levchenko-15007/

¹⁵⁰ Common Economic Space: integration of regions: inform.-integ. project / compiled by, interviewed by: B. Zalessky, M. Valkovsky, A. Mostovoy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2013. - C. 118.

¹⁵¹ Andrei Kobyakov met with the Governor of the Irkutsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6866>

urban electric transport - electric buses and trolleybuses with autonomous running.

Second, an important section of the roadmap for cooperation between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region was to be production cooperation not only with defence industry companies. In this respect, the attention of Belarusian manufacturers was attracted to the territory of advanced socio-economic development "Usolye-Sibirskoye" created in the Russian region, which has a special tax regime and where assembly production of Belarusian tractors could well appear. All the more so because "large areas of unused arable land in the Irkutsk Oblast are planned to be put into agricultural turnover. For this project, the Russian region is resuming programmes on leasing and investment projects. This should contribute to the growth of sales of tractor equipment"¹⁵² . The parties also mentioned agriculture, construction, logging, and water resources as other areas for intensifying co-operation. In total, this list includes more than a dozen promising areas of joint activity, which, to all appearances, will be supplemented. In particular, we are also talking about co-operation between scientific institutions, primarily those related to agriculture, as well as in the tourism sector. All these facts spoke about the seriousness of the parties' intentions to bring partnership ties to a qualitatively new level. And, it must be said, today these plans are gradually taking real shape.

In March 2021, the Irkutsk Region and Minsk Tractor Plant agreed to supply more than 160 Belarusian tractors to this Russian region. They are expected to significantly replenish the fleet of BELARUS-branded machinery, which is already close to ten thousand machines in demand in the Priangarie region in the agricultural and municipal sectors. As part of further expansion of this cooperation, the Belarusian side also announced the possibility of "transfer of forest and special machines for experimental operation in the organisations of the region. This type of machinery has not been supplied to the region before. The possibility of purchasing equipment for volunteers involved in extinguishing forest fires is under consideration"¹⁵³ . In addition, the leaders of the Russian region and the Belarusian company have already discussed the issue of establishing a specialised service and technical centre in

¹⁵² Assembly production of BELARUS tractors may appear in the Irkutsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-traktorov-beloruss-mozhet-pojavitsja-v-irkutskoj-oblasti-222392-2016/>

¹⁵³ Irkutsk region will purchase more than 160 BELARUS tractors [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/irkutskaja-oblast-priobretet-bolee-160-traktorov-beloruss-433486-2021/>

the region, which would allow for prompt and cheap repairs of tractor equipment from Belarus.

Recall that the Irkutsk Region and Minsk Tractor Plant signed a cooperation agreement in September 2020. At that time, the Russian region made a proposal "to set up several maintenance stations in the Irkutsk region so that it would be possible to repair Belarusian machinery, including major repairs"¹⁵⁴. Especially since the region, as noted above, has territories of advanced socio-economic development with benefits, as well as a surplus of labour force. In March 2021, representatives of MTZ have already visited the site proposed by the Irkutsk side for the organisation of overhaul and repair of BELARUS machinery in order to make a concrete decision on all components of the implementation of this joint mutually beneficial project.

Note that back in November 2018, the parties agreed to establish and develop joint ventures in different areas. "Especially in those areas that the region is rich in. This is the timber processing complex, machine building, aircraft construction"¹⁵⁵. In September 2020, the Belarusian side also announced its readiness to participate on an equal footing with other manufacturers in tenders for the supply of cargo, forestry, passenger, municipal, road-building equipment for the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects in the Irkutsk region. And among the promising areas of cooperation she noted "co-operation in the forestry sector, in the field of environmental protection and natural resources, in processing municipal waste and providing clean drinking water to the population"¹⁵⁶.

The intensification of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Irkutsk Region five years ago had a positive impact on bilateral trade. Suffice it to say that in 2016-2019, the volume of trade turnover between the parties increased more than fourfold and showed a record level of \$284 million at the end of 2019. The basis of Belarusian exports to Priangarie then was made up of supplies of wires, fluorides, trucks, tyres, parts for cars, rolling stock, paints, varnishes, lifts, milk, cream. For the first time in 2019, special purpose vehicles and X-ray equipment were sent to the Irkutsk region from Belarus.

¹⁵⁴ MTZ and Irkutsk region concluded a co-operation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-i-irkutskaja-oblazt-zakljuchili-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-408690-2020/>

¹⁵⁵ Matveev, V. Belarus and the Irkutsk Oblast have agreed on the creation and development of JVs in different areas / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-irkutskaja-oblazt-dogovorilis-o-sozdanii-i-razvitiu-sp-v-raznyh-sferah-325641-2018/>

¹⁵⁶ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus is ready to participate in tenders for the supply of equipment to the Irkutsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9587>

And in 2020, two new shops of Belarusian products - "Traditions and Tastes" - were also opened there. This is largely due to the fact that a variety of Belarusian goods and products have been presented in the retail market of the region in recent years. Among them are "heavy-duty automobile, passenger, trailer and truck crane equipment and spare parts of Belarusian manufacturers MAZ and MTZ, women's clothing - Belarusian knitwear, cosmetics, food products - cheese, dairy, meat, fruit and vegetable products"¹⁵⁷.

But the decline in economic activity caused by the epidemic of coronavirus infection led to the fact that in 2020 "based on the results of January-October, trade turnover decreased 2.1 times"¹⁵⁸. That is why in December 2020, at the meeting of the working group on cooperation between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region, the parties decided to focus their efforts on restoring the volume of mutual trade in 2021. The development of co-operation in the industrial sector and the forestry industry, as well as agriculture and agro-industrial complex were named as the most promising areas. In addition, "Belarusian mining equipment, <...> quarry equipment, public transport, electric vehicles, and various types of transport on gas motor fuel" may be of interest in this Russian region¹⁵⁹. As we can see, the parties have opportunities for successful solution of the task. Let us hope that they will be fully utilised in the near future.

¹⁵⁷ Priority directions of regional co-operation development as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled by, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 168.

¹⁵⁸ The volume of trade turnover between Belarus and the Irkutsk Oblast has doubled in five years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/objem-tovaroorobota-mezhdu-belarusju-i-irkutskoj-oblajtju-za-pjat-let-udvoilsja-420587-2020/>

¹⁵⁹ Meeting with Igor Kobzev, Governor of the Irkutsk Region of Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://president.gov.ru/events/vstrecha-s-gubernatorom-irkutskoy-oblasti-rossii-igorem-kobzevym>

Belarus - Russia: Orientation towards mutually beneficial co-operation

The results of the first two months of 2021 show that trade and economic ties between Belarus and Russia continue to develop along a steady growth trajectory. Thus, "the turnover of Belarusian-Russian foreign trade in goods and services totalled \$5.3 billion in January–February 2021, having increased by 11.9% compared to the same period of 2020. Exports of goods and services to Russia totalled \$2.3 billion (up 2%)"¹⁶⁰.

Among Belarusian companies that feel confident on the Russian market is Minsk Motor Plant (MMZ), which doubled its exports to Russia in the first quarter of 2021. The main consumers of its products in the neighbouring country are enterprises in Kursk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Yaroslavl regions, the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Republic of Mordovia. In order not to lose the momentum in exports, "during 2021, Minsk Motor Works will continue to develop its distribution network in Russia in two areas: engines and spare parts for them, as well as special equipment. Exports of products are planned to increase by 11%"¹⁶¹. The plant sees another reserve for increasing supplies to the Russian market in 2021 in the organisation of a permanent exhibition of an expanded range of engines and special equipment at the trade and exhibition sites of LLC "Trade House "Minsk Engine Plant" in Noginsk and its partners in each federal district of Russia. Cooperating today with 59 Russian enterprises, Minsk engine builders are now working on establishing co-operation ties with ten more partners.

Belarus-based Gomselmash, which has a distribution network of 60 entities in this country, including 34 dealerships, two joint production facilities and a trading house in Siberia, has also announced large-scale plans to increase the supply of its machinery to Russia in 2021. Over the 13 years of its existence, the company has sold more than 3,200 units of self-propelled grain and forage harvesting machinery on the Russian market. In 2020, sales of Gomselmash machinery to Russia increased by 163 per cent. Only together with "Bryanskselmash" more than one thousand combines were sold to Russian regions. In addition, "in 2020 the company expanded the boundaries

¹⁶⁰ Roman Golovchenko: Package of proposals on deepening the integration of Belarus and Russia in high readiness [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9807>

¹⁶¹ Minsk Motor Plant in the I quarter doubled its supplies to Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-motornyj-zavod-v-i-kvartale-v-dva-raza-uvelichil-postavki-v-rossiju-437469-2021/>

of deliveries and opened a new dealership in the Primorsky Krai - LLC "AgroSupport"¹⁶². All these facts give the Belarusian company a good reason to set itself a truly ambitious task in 2021 - to triple the volume of its deliveries to Russia.

The Belarusian Steel Works (BSW) is also actively cooperating with Russian companies, for which its partners in Russia are both suppliers of key raw materials and major consumers of steel products. Suffice it to say that "in January-February 2021, exports of BMZ to Russia exceeded 58 thousand tonnes, which is 8% more than in the same period of 2020. In monetary terms, exports to the Russian Federation exceeded \$43 million, which is a third more than in the same period last year"¹⁶³. This was due to growth in sales of rebar, structural steel, steel wire and metal cord.

Another clear example of such a plan is the Belarusian Automobile Plant (BELAZ). In March 2021 alone, it shipped more than 93% of the total volume of manufactured machinery and spare parts to foreign markets, with an export growth rate of 142%. An important detail: "At the same time, the share of the most capacious of the company's traditional markets - Russia - in the total March shipment was 89.1% (growth rate - 308.1%)"¹⁶⁴. In particular, only under the long-term agreement on strategic partnership with the mining company Kuzbassrazrezugol Coal Company JSC, BELAZ is to supply 29 dump trucks by the end of April 2021. Three of them, with a payload capacity of 220 tonnes, were shipped to one of Kuzbassrazrezugol's production branches - the Kedrovsky coal mine - back in late January this year. It should be noted that the arrival of the rest of the machines will seriously replenish the existing here more than half a thousand technological park, which is dominated by Belarusian machinery at the mining mines. "Also at the enterprises of the flagship coal mining company of the Kemerovo region BELAZ brand machines serve mining and transport operations, special equipment of the Belarusian manufacturer is used (irrigation irrigation machines, towing tractors, loaders, bulldozers)"¹⁶⁵. BELAZ's presence on the Russian market is

¹⁶² "Gomselmash" plans to triple the supply of machinery to Russian regions in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-planiruet-utroit-postavki-tehniki-v-rossijskie-regiony-v-2021-godu-436585-2021/>

¹⁶³ BMZ increases export supplies [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-uvelichivaet-eksportnye-postavki-433237-2021/>

¹⁶⁴ BELAZ increased production, sales and export volumes in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-v-i-kvartale-uvelichil-objemy-proizvodstva-realizatsii-i-eksporta-produktsii-437188-2021/>

¹⁶⁵ BELAZ will supply 29 dump trucks for one of the largest coal mining companies in Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavit-29-karjernyh-samosvalov-dlya-odnoj-iz-krupnejshih-ugolnyh-kompanij-rossii-427978-2021/>

also strengthened by the cooperation agreement signed in April 2021 with the St. Petersburg Mining University, the implementation of which should contribute to the fact that "as early as September [2021], modern specialised classrooms equipped with exclusive equipment will start working in one of the largest Russian universities of mining engineering"¹⁶⁶. In this case we are talking about the opening of an innovative BELAZ Competence Centre at this university, which will be created on the model of the best technological solutions in mechanical engineering, digital and information technologies in the mining industry. Its main feature will be the use of virtual reality technologies, which will raise to a new level not only the training of university students, but also the professional development of specialists and managers of enterprises that operate the Belarusian manufacturer's machinery.

The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) is also actively building up ties with partners in Russia. The dynamics of growing interest on the part of Russian business in its electronic trading indicates that in 2021 Russia may become the leader on the BUTB not only in terms of the number of accredited companies, but also in terms of exchange turnover. Recall that "as of 1 December 2020, 2,482 residents from Russia used the services of BUTB"¹⁶⁷. And the amount of exchange transactions made by them in January and February 2021 "almost 3 times exceeded the figure for the same period in 2020 and totalled \$12 million"¹⁶⁸. This allowed Russia to move to the third place in the list of the largest export markets of BUTB. The first two places in this ranking were retained by Lithuania (\$32 million) and Latvia (\$18 million). And at the end of the first quarter of 2021, the sum of all transactions carried out by Russian participants in exchange trading came close to \$38 million. This growth in exports of Belarusian goods to the Russian market was the result of comprehensive measures taken by the BUTB to attract business entities from Russia to the exchange platform in Belarus. Among the main ones are: 1) simplification of the accreditation procedure at BUTB; 2) regular webinars and online presentations for representatives of the Russian business community; 3) spot visits to leading industrial, woodworking and agrarian enterprises in various regions of Russia. As a result, in the first two months of

¹⁶⁶ BELAZ will open a Competence Centre at the St. Petersburg Mining University [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-otkroet-tsentr-kompetentsij-v-sankt-peterburgskom-gornom-universitete-437447-2021/>

¹⁶⁷ Zalessky, B. Looking ahead. Features of multi-vector partnership in modern conditions / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 97.

¹⁶⁸ Russia has entered the top three largest export markets for H&S [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rossija-voshla-v-trojku-krupnejshih-eksportnyh-rynkov-butb-432830-2021/>

2021, 30 new Russian companies interested in purchasing Belarusian meat and dairy products, rapeseed oil and construction materials, as well as in making transit deals to sell their own goods to third countries, were accredited at BUTB. It should be noted that close cooperation between BUTB and the Russian border regions of Smolensk, Bryansk, and Pskov has so far played a decisive role in increasing the exchange turnover figures.

In particular, the mentioning of the Bryansk Region in this list is explained by the fact that Belarus currently accounts for about half of the foreign trade turnover of this Russian region, which in itself indicates a sufficiently high level of trade and economic co-operation. Nevertheless, at a working meeting at the BUTB with representatives of the Bryansk Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry in March 2021, the parties stated that there is a significant potential for further expansion of cooperation in the sphere of exchange trade. In this regard, it is planned to "focus this year on the agricultural sector and the sale of industrial goods as the most promising areas for the development of cooperation"¹⁶⁹. For this purpose, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Bryansk Region will use its entire network of business contacts to inform business representatives of the Bryansk region about the advantages of the BUTB electronic trading mechanism.

BUTB's planned co-operation with the Chelyabinsk Region looks very promising. At a webinar on exchange trading with Belarus held in mid-March 2021, several major producers and sellers from this Russian region announced their plans to increase sales of steel products at BUTB. "In particular, representatives of PJSC Chelyabinsk Forge and Press Plant, LLC Foundry Plant and LLC Trade House MKK expressed their interest in more active application of the exchange mechanism. First of all, we are talking about increasing supplies of ferrous rolled metal products, which are in consistently high demand among Belarusian industrial enterprises"¹⁷⁰. It should be noted that almost every day about 800 companies participate in the trading of ferrous metals and ferrous metal products at the BUTB, and the amount of transactions at one trading session can reach up to two million euros. It is clear that the arrival here of the largest Russian metal producers from the Chelyabinsk Region - the undisputed leader in ferrous metallurgy among other Russian

¹⁶⁹ BUTB and CCI of Bryansk region agreed on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-tpp-brjanskoy-oblasti-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-431815-2021/>

¹⁷⁰ The enterprises of the Chelyabinsk region are interested in the realisation of metal products on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-cheljabinskoy-oblasti-zainteresovany-v-realizatsii-metalloproductsii-na-butb-433059-2021/>

regions - will only open up new opportunities and prospects for all participants in these trading sessions.

At the end of March 2021, with the assistance of the Volgograd Region Export Support Centre, BUTB hosted a meeting with business representatives from this Russian region. As a result, several companies from the Volgograd Region "expressed interest in selling their products in the industrial and consumer goods section of BUTB. In particular, it is planned to work out the issue of auctioning products for the construction industry, packaging materials and foodstuffs"¹⁷¹. And already at the beginning of April 2021, the prospects of increasing exchange trade in Belarus were considered with representatives of business circles of **Kursk** region within the framework of an online conference. Following the results of the discussion, a number of enterprises of the Russian region expressed their readiness to exhibit their products on the platform of industrial and consumer goods BUTB. Thus, "the issue of selling equipment for the food industry, high-tech rubber products, packaging materials made of paper and corrugated cardboard is being worked out"¹⁷². BUTB also expects real results from the agreement reached in March 2021 to intensify co-operation with the St. Petersburg International Commodity Exchange. Established in 2008, it is now the largest commodity exchange in Russia and "specialises in trading oil, oil products, gas, timber and mineral fertilisers"¹⁷³. It should be assumed that the actualisation of cooperation with such a serious partner may yield no less serious results.

Apparently, Russia's role in 2021 will also increase noticeably for Belarusian exports of construction services. But first, we note that the growth of exports of services in general is an important area of minimising the dependence of the Belarusian economy on the influence of key factors of the foreign economic environment. In 2021, the Republic of Belarus continued to step up efforts to increase its volumes. In particular, in the first quarter "exports of services increased by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion <...>. The balance of foreign trade in services was positive in the amount of \$1.041 billion (in January-

¹⁷¹ BUTB plans to establish closer co-operation with the Volgograd region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-naladit-bolee-tesnoe-sotrudnichestvo-s-volgogradskoj-oblajtju-434981-2021/>

¹⁷² Enterprises of Kursk region plan to work in the Belarusian market through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-kurskoj-oblasti-planirujut-rabotat-na-belorusskikh-rynkakh-435331-2021/>

¹⁷³ BUTB and St. Petersburg Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange agreed to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-sankt-peterburgskaja-tovarno-syrevaja-birzha-dogovorilis-aktivizirovat-vzaimodejstvie-434334-2021/>

March 2020 the surplus was \$1.014 billion)¹⁷⁴ . Export of construction services, which in 2020 exceeded the volume of half a billion dollars, is not the last place in achieving such indicators. Today, it is one of the promising areas of development of the Belarusian construction industry, where comprehensive measures are being taken to further increase and expand its geography and where the Russian market, which has significant potential, is beginning to play an increasingly important role. This is largely due to the fact that "today in Russia there is a shortage of labour force in the construction sector. It is urgent to attract them to key construction projects such as, for example, the theatre and cultural centres in Vladivostok and Kaliningrad and the Vostochny Cosmodrome" .¹⁷⁵

Given the growth in construction in the neighbouring country, the Belarusian side is already taking concrete steps to promote its export interests there. For example, coordination subgroups for cooperation in construction have already been set up in seven constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and "a portfolio in Russia totalling over 3 billion Russian rubles has been formed for the near future. These are schools in Kaluga, Voronezh, Leningrad regions and St. Petersburg, residential buildings in Kaluga, Kursk and Kaliningrad region"¹⁷⁶ . In total, Belarusian builders plan to build more than ten social facilities in Russia by the end of 2025. In particular, the holding Belstroitsentr "is now simultaneously building about five social infrastructure facilities in Leningrad and Kaluga regions"¹⁷⁷ .

¹⁷⁸ As for the Voronezh Region, which is seriously interested in expanding cooperation with Belarusian partners in the construction sector, we are talking, first of all, about the implementation of a joint pilot project in the urban-type settlement of Strelitsa, Semiluksky District, to build a school for 520 children, participation of Belarusian companies BelengineeringstroyInvest

¹⁷⁴ Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 19.5% to \$10.3 billion in Q1 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-i-kvartale-uvelichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-195-do-103-mld-441081-2021/>

¹⁷⁵ Sivak: Belarus is interested in increasing exports of construction services to Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sivak-beloruss-zainteresovana-v-naraschivaniyu-eksporta-stroitelnyh-uslug-v-rossii-442169-2021/>

¹⁷⁶ Parkhamovich, R. The tasks set for the construction industry this year will be fulfilled / R. Parkhamovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/postavlennye-pered-strojotrasliju-zadachi-v-etom-godu-budut-vypolnены-7784>

¹⁷⁷ By the end of 2025 it is planned to build more than 10 social facilities in Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: http://mas.gov.ru/news_ru/view/do-kontsa-2025-goda-planiruet-sjapostroit-bolee-10-sotsialnyx-objektov-v-rossii-1313/

¹⁷⁸ Voronezh region is interested in expanding co-operation with Belarus in construction [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/voronezhskaja-oblazt-zainteresovana-v-rasshireniu-sotrudnichestva-s-belorussiju-v-stroitelstve-429176-2021/>

LLC and Stroitelny Trust No. 12 OJSC in the construction of pre-school and secondary schools in Semiluksky District, as well as the use of "Belarusian house kits" in the implementation of the project. The above-mentioned theatre and cultural centre in Vladivostok is to become one of the most large-scale construction projects in 2021 in cooperation between Belarus and Primorsky Krai. This centre will house the Mariinsky Theatre's Primorsky stage, as well as exhibitions of famous Russian museums. And in general, according to the governor of this Russian region, O. Kozhemyako, this centre "will become a real ornament of the entire Asia-Pacific region and can be compared, for example, with the theatre in Sydney, Australia"¹⁷⁹ .

Another Russian region where the possibility of Belarusian builders' participation in the construction of housing and social facilities is being carefully considered is Novgorod Oblast. There are already 15 organisations with Belarusian capital registered here, but until recently, the interaction with partners from Belarus was mainly in the agro-industrial sector in the form of supplies of agricultural machinery, food products, and processing. This contributed to the fact that the trade turnover between the parties totalled \$57.5 million in 2020. At the same time, supplies of Belarusian goods - dairy products, eggs, plastics, sugar, wood, fertilisers, electrical machinery and equipment - increased by almost 20 per cent. Apparently, the builders will contribute to these figures in the near future. The fact is that "the region currently needs at least two new schools and several kindergartens. The quality of work of builders from Belarus is always quite high <...>. We have already had an experience of co-operation: Belarus built a so-called medical centre for us. We are interested in the construction capacities of our colleagues from Belarus"¹⁸⁰ . The parties are also discussing the idea of building a new runway by Belarusian specialists "not far from Veliky Novgorod, in the place where the Krechevitsy military airfield used to be"¹⁸¹ . The Bryansk and Gomel regions also have a wide range of opportunities for co-operation in the construction sector. In particular, in April 2021, the parties have already discussed the prospects of participation of Belarusian companies in the

¹⁷⁹ Belarusian specialists will build a turnkey theatre building in Primorye [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belorusskie-stroiteli-budut-stroit-pod-kluch-zdanie-teatra-v-primorje-434288-2021/>

¹⁸⁰ Pivovar, E. Novgorod region is considering the possibility of participation of Belarusian builders in the construction of social facilities / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novgorodskaja-oblast-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-uchastija-belorusskih-stroitelej-v-vozvedenii-438576-2021/>

¹⁸¹ Pivovar, E. The Novgorod region plans to restore air communication with Minsk and Gomel / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-novgorodskoj-oblasti-planirujut-vosstanovit-aviaisosbschemie-s-minskom-i-gomelem-438579-2021/>

implementation of such projects as "Construction of the motor road - protective dam Bryansk 1 - Bryansk 2 (1st stage)", MBOU "School No. 71", Palace of Martial Arts in the Sovetsky district of Bryansk"¹⁸². As we can see, the Russian vector of Belarusian exports of construction services is already very wide and diverse. And it continues to expand. Let us hope that this trend will only contribute to the successful fulfilment of the tasks set for the builders of the allied countries.

Many Russian regions are also actively developing their ties with Belarusian partners in 2021. Among them is the Republic of Tatarstan, which is among those whose trade turnover with Belarus grew significantly in January-February 2021 - by more than 80 per cent to almost \$175 million. At the same time, Belarusian exports increased by almost a quarter, coming close to \$55 million. This was due to the growth of supplies from Belarus of tractors and tractors, oil gases, twisted wire of ferrous metals without electrical insulation, parts and accessories for cars and tractors, tyres, seamless pipes, tubes and profiles of ferrous metals, soybean oil extraction waste, fresh or chilled beef, unalloyed steel wire, cheese and cottage cheese, tyre cord materials, synthetic polymer paints and varnishes in non-aqueous media, furniture and parts thereof. In April 2021, the parties signed a protocol of agreements which "envisages further mutual interest in the development of trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan"¹⁸³, where priority will be given to the development of co-operative cooperation in the production and scientific and technological spheres.

It should be reminded that the interaction between the parties is developing today within the framework of the intergovernmental Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation of 23 June 2004, which created prerequisites for the formation of a common scientific, technical and innovation space. Last year, the implementation of the Action Plan for 2017-2020 to fulfil the basic agreement was completed. Due to the fact that Tatarstan today pays special attention to the development of high-tech production and the creation of joint ventures, Belarusian partners in this Russian region are given the opportunity to work at "investment sites of the

¹⁸² Gomel and Bryansk regions will discuss the development of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-i-brjanskaja-oblasti-obsudjat-razvitiye-sotrudnichestva-437066-2021/>

¹⁸³ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Tatarstan are actively developing co-operative cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9816>

republic. It is important to deepen co-operation between commodity producers, first of all, in the sphere of machine building and high technologies"¹⁸⁴ .

It should be noted that back in 2017, the parties set a goal to restore the record level of trade turnover of two billion dollars, which was reached in 2012.¹⁸⁵ The 7th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan, held in October 2019, identified specific areas of joint work in the coming years to achieve the goal, "including in terms of: supplies of passenger buses, Amkodor machinery, a wide range of agricultural machinery; implementation of joint projects in the NGV sector, in particular - the production of passenger vehicles, tractors, municipal and agricultural machinery, engines; expansion of the volume and range of supplies of motor vehicles, as well as in the production of motor vehicles, tractors, municipal and agricultural machinery, and engines. At the same time, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, as well as the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and the Kazan Federal University signed co-operation agreements.

As a result of the implementation of the provisions of the 4-year plan, by February 2020, Tatarstan had already: two assembly plants - of Belarusian tractors and lifts of Mogilevliftmash - were in operation; four enterprises with Belarusian capital were operating - TPC MTZ-Tatarstan' LLC, Amkodor-Bel' LLC, Trade House Molodechnomebel' LLC, and a representative office of Pinskdriv Holding; dealer network of such Belarusian enterprises as "Gomselmarsh", Minsk Tractor Plant, "Mogilevliftmash", Minsk Automobile Plant, "Amkodor", Borisov Automobile and Tractor Electrical Equipment Plant; LLC "TPC MTZ-Tatarstan" became the official distributor of OJSC "MTZ" in Russia, having its own production base, transport and logistic division, engaged in service maintenance. Successful development of co-operation in the field of machine building has led to the fact that "the agricultural machinery fleet of Tatarstan is almost 60% equipped with MTZ tractors, more than 60% of forage harvesters and 40% of grain harvesters are Gomselmarsh machines". Kazan's fleet of passenger vehicles consists of more

¹⁸⁴ Minnikhanov, R. It is important to deepen the cooperation of commodity producers, primarily in the sphere of mechanical engineering and high technologies / R. Minnikhanov // Technologies and innovations in cooperation between the regions of the Union State as an impetus for the development of Eurasian integration: information-integration project / co-authored, interviewed : B. Zalessky, M. Valkovsky, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2017. - C. 30.

¹⁸⁵ The Concern hosted the 7th meeting of the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation [Electronic resource], - 2019. - URL: <http://www.belneftekhim.by/press/news/eafc42c9330d3164.html>

than 50% MAZ buses and Belkommunmash trams"¹⁸⁶. And there are good prospects for cooperation in the gas-motor sphere, where there are joint projects implemented by RariTEK together with Minsk plants - automobile, tractor and motor.

At the 8th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation, held in the format of a video conference in November 2020, the parties noted the active development of economic ties between enterprises in the machine-building and petrochemical industries, as well as in agriculture, passenger transport, ecology, and health science, stressing that "cooperation in the petrochemical sector, which accounts for half of Belarus's trade turnover with Tatarstan, remains a key area"¹⁸⁷. As a result, the Action Plan for 2021-2023 was approved, which envisages many new interesting joint projects. Already in January 2021 in Kichketan rural settlement of Agryz municipal district of Tatarstan the Belarusian UE "Polimerkonstruktsiya" "successfully implemented a pilot project in the sphere of ecology on water treatment"¹⁸⁸. And now the issue of participation of this UE in the implementation of projects at other sites in Tatarstan is being resolved.

Another Russian region that I would like to name in this context is the Sakhalin Oblast, which in May 2021 signed with the Republic of Belarus a plan of measures for 2021-2023 to implement the agreement between the governments on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation. It took place within the framework of a meeting of the working group on the development of bilateral cooperation, which focused on the prospects of "increasing the supply of food products, agricultural, quarry, passenger, road-building machinery, lift equipment and other types of products"¹⁸⁹. It should be recalled that the cooperation agreement between the parties was signed in September 2015 at the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The main objectives outlined in the agreement were to

¹⁸⁶ Pivovar, E. Petrochemistry, industrial cooperation, transport projects - Semashko visited Tatarstan / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/neftehimija-promkooperatsija-transportnye-proekty-semashko-posetil-tatarstan-378550-2020/>

¹⁸⁷ Belarus and Tatarstan approved the Plan of cooperation for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/53efd46968aa.html>

¹⁸⁸ The Belarusian company UP "Polimerkonstruktsiya" has successfully implemented a pilot project in the field of ecology in the Republic of Tatarstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/29393dd56309.html>

¹⁸⁹ Belarus and Sakhalin Oblast signed the action plan for cooperation for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-sahalinskaja-oblasc-podpisali-plan-meroprijatij-po-sotrudnichestvu-na-2021-2023-gody-441087-2021>

increase mutual trade turnover, intensify business contacts, and cooperate in the social sphere - healthcare, education, and social protection.

It should be noted that this Russian region is characterised by active foreign economic activity, which it conducts primarily with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region - South Korea, Japan, and China. In general, "the foreign trade turnover of the Sakhalin Oblast in 2020 totalled \$12.2 million. USD"¹⁹⁰. Nevertheless, the Republic of Belarus also began to develop its niche in these international partnerships after the signing of the co-operation agreement, as evidenced by specific facts.

Thus, already at the end of 2017, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Sakhalin totalled almost five million dollars. The consumer market of the Russian region has seen a sharp increase in the number of Belarusian meat, sausage, and dairy products, textiles and knitwear, footwear, and leather haberdashery. Suffice it to say that in August 2020 in the administrative centre of the Russian region - Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk - the fourteenth(!) shop of the retail chain "Belarusian Firm" was opened, where products from Belarus are represented by a wide range of sausages and meat delicacies from Brest and Grodno meat processing plants, dairy products from Minsk Dairy Plant, confectionery products from factories "Kommunarka", "Spartak", "Krasny Izhevsk", canned food from the group of companies "ABC". "In addition to the traditional assortment, Belarusian ice cream of 10-12 names appeared in the product line of the shop"¹⁹¹.

Machines of various classes from Belarus for agro-industrial, housing, road construction and forestry sectors are widely used here. "Due to the large number of Belarusian-made machinery operated in the Sakhalin Oblast, the question of the need to create a single service centre for its maintenance arose. Thanks to joint efforts, in April 2017, a service centre of BelMashService LLC was opened in the regional capital to service machinery manufactured in the Republic of Belarus"¹⁹².

Over the past five years, the partnership between the republic and the Russian region in the field of agriculture has developed strongly. Already "in 2016, after a 30-year break, the Belarusian side resumed potato cultivation on

¹⁹⁰ Results of foreign trade of the Sakhalin Oblast for 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://sakhalin.gov.ru/index.php?id=152>

¹⁹¹ Another "Belarusian branded" shop opened in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/khabarovsk/news/fe085b1056fe.html>

¹⁹² Belik, A. In our plans - to expand the range of cooperation / A. Belik // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled, interviewed: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 323-324.

Sakhalin, planting its seeds on the first 40 hectares on the island"¹⁹³ . Later, a dairy farm for one thousand cattle was built using Belarusian technologies at the Korsakovskiy State Farm. Interestingly, this construction was divided into two stages. First, there were eight hay and silage trenches with a capacity of two thousand tonnes each. At the second stage, buildings and structures of the main production, biomass processing, engineering and transport infrastructure were constructed. Three cowsheds and three calf houses were erected to accommodate animals. "When the enterprise reaches its design capacity, it will provide the inhabitants of the island region with 7 thousand tonnes of milk and 200 tonnes of meat annually. <...> The agrarian project implemented in the south of Sakhalin is included in the sectoral state programme for the development of agriculture"¹⁹⁴ . Here they also built an agro-town with 50 one-storey three-room houses of the Belarusian type. In February 2018, the first nine families of state farm workers received the keys to flats in new buildings on Belorusskaya Street. "Now this is the largest modern rural housing construction project in the Sakhalin Oblast"¹⁹⁵ .

As for other areas of interaction, back in December 2017, the Belarusian side proposed to improve coal mining and transportation methods in Sakhalin, as these proposals "can significantly improve the infrastructure of the island coal company and give a powerful boost to the development of the coal mining industry in the region as a whole. This is a completely new level of co-operation between our parties"¹⁹⁶ . And already in 2020 at the Solntsevskiy coal mine on the island "14 new Belarusian dump trucks with a lifting capacity of 220 tonnes"¹⁹⁷ . The parties see a serious potential for further development of interaction in active cooperation through chambers of commerce and industry - in the organisation of online negotiations, joint exhibitions, seminars, as well

¹⁹³ Zaleskii, B. Formula of multi-vectoriality. Opportunities for international cooperation in the context of globalisation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2017. - C. 60.

¹⁹⁴ In the south of Sakhalin opened a dairy farm for 1 thousand heads [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: [https://sakhalin.gov.ru/index.php?id=105&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=12461](https://sakhalin.gov.ru/index.php?id=105&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=12461)

¹⁹⁵ Pivovar, E. Agrorogorodok by the Belarusian project erected on Sakhalin [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/agrorogorodok-po-belorusskomu-proektu-vozvelena-sahaline-289289-2018/>

¹⁹⁶ Pivovar, E. Belarus will help to improve the methods of coal mining and transportation on Sakhalin / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-pomozhet-usovershenstvovat-metody-dobychi-i-transportirovki-uglia-na-sahaline-277311-2017/>

¹⁹⁷ Pivovar, E. Deliveries of Belarusian heavy trucks and cooperation in the agro-industrial complex - Semashko visited Kuzbass and Sakhalin / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavki-belorusskih-bolshegruzov-i-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-semashko-posetil-kuzbass-i-sahalin-404918-2020/>

as in the establishment of direct links between the business community and economic entities of the republic and the region. They are focused on results.

At the April 2021 meeting of the heads of government of Belarus and Russia, it was noted that "the topic of integration in the economic sphere is a priority issue on the bilateral agenda"¹⁹⁸. The trend of recovery of the bilateral Belarusian-Russian trade turnover, which has been observed since the beginning of 2021, shows that the parties have been quite successful in developing integration cooperation in many areas, despite the known objective difficulties. And this provides new positive impulses for a fuller realisation of the potential of union building.

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¹⁹⁸ Roman Golovchenko: Package of proposals on deepening the integration of Belarus and Russia in high readiness [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9807>

Belarus - Russia: Forum of Regions as a Generator of New Ideas

The Eighth Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, held in late June - early July 2021, focused on such topical issues of the Union State development within five thematic sections as: 1) Russian-Belarusian cooperation in science and education in the era of "big challenges" and digital technologies; 2) the role of digitalisation in the formation of a common scientific and technological space of the Union State; 3) cooperation between Belarus and Russia on the implementation of Union programmes and scientific and technical projects under international treaties; 4) law and digitalisation in the Union State: prospects and directions; 5) young people online: digital environment of the future. The attention of the Forum participants to the topic of interaction between the parties in the scientific, technical and innovation spheres is explained by the fact that large-scale cooperation in these areas is implemented through the Union State programmes, the use of which "allows to increase the level of integration of our economies, to develop cooperation between enterprises, to increase the competitiveness of jointly produced products"¹⁹⁹ and which today should be aimed not so much at supporting individual enterprises and industries, but rather at the creation and development of new technologies. Among them at the VIII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia the following were mentioned: 1) intellectual systems of information analysis; 2) supercomputers, neural networks, artificial intelligence; 3) space instrumentation and technologies; 4) new laser materials; 5) microelectronics; 6) electric transport; 7) multifunctional unmanned complexes; 8) nuclear energy; 9) information security.

²⁰⁰The formation of a common scientific and technological space between Belarus and Russia, within the framework of which the harmonisation of national legislation in the scientific and technological sphere is ensured, is necessary to create equal opportunities for Belarusian and Russian scientists to work in the territory of the Union State and to carry out joint research and development in the areas of priority for the two countries, among which the

¹⁹⁹ Igor Petrishenko: Interaction between Belarus and Russia in science, technology and innovation is aimed at the formation of a full-fledged unified scientific and technological space [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9897>

²⁰⁰ Belarus and Russia have managed to achieve a lot in science and technology - Karasin [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarusi-i-rossii-udalos-mnogogo-dobitsja-v-nauchno-tehnicheskoy-sfere-karasin-448170-2021/>

forum also mentioned "new materials and chemical procedures, ecology and environmental management, technologies of living organisms".

It should be recalled that during the existence of the Union State, "more than 60 Union programmes have already been implemented in the spheres of economy, space, security and agriculture, and 41 billion Russian roubles have been spent for these purposes"²⁰¹. In particular, scientific and technical programmes concerning developments for remote sensing of the Earth, feed production and genetic research have been carried out. In 2020, such a landmark scientific and technical programme of the Union State as "Autoelectronics" was completed, which envisaged "the development of a new generation of electronic components for control and safety systems for special and dual-purpose vehicles. The results of the programme were used in the development of robotised unmanned BELAZ mining dump trucks, which are already operating at the open pits of the Siberian Coal Energy Company"²⁰².

But today the task is set to involve even more actively in the preparation of proposals for new programmes not only federal and republican executive authorities, but also representatives of the regions of the two countries. Note that "eight scientific and technical programmes are currently being implemented in the Union State, and three more are being prepared"²⁰³. Another six new draft programme concepts are in a high degree of readiness:

- 1) "Overcoming" - development of modern technologies to detect and overcome resistance of microorganisms to drugs;
- 2) Soyuzbiomembranes - novel medical cell products;
- 3) "Additivity" - creating 3D printing technologies, materials and equipment;
- 4) "Accelerator-SPR" - development of a complex based on superconducting resonators;

²⁰¹ Mezentsev at the Forum of Regions called for more active involvement in the preparation of proposals for Union programmes [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mezentsev-na-forume-regionov-prizval-aktivnee-vkljuchitsja-v-podgotovku-predlozhenij-dlya-sojuznyh-448530-2021/>

²⁰² Belarus and Russia plan to create a single register of technoparks of the Union State [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-rossija-planirujut-sozdat-edinyj-reestr-tehnoparkov-sojuznogo-gosudarstva-448127-2021/>

²⁰³ Pivovar, E. 8 scientific and technical programmes are being implemented in the Union State, three more are being prepared - Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-sojuznom-gosudarstve-realizujutsja-8-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-programm-gotovjatsja-esche-3-vitse-premier-448523-2021/>

5) "Component F" - creation of innovative technologies for development of photon component base of the Union State; 6) "Complex-SG" - a new programme in the field of space.

In addition, a project is being prepared for implementation to expand the research computer network to connect leading centres and universities not only in Belarus and Russia, but also in the entire Eurasian Economic Union, which will enable scientific and educational organisations of the member states to interact effectively, including through remote access to research infrastructure. And the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus, the Association of Clusters and Technoparks of Russia and the Standing Committee of the Union State are creating an IT platform for a unified register of technoparks of the two countries with the subsequent development of a system of data storage, systematisation, analysis and graphical visualisation. The Union State has also recently started preparing a common programme of fundamental research and a roadmap for cooperation, which defines such goals and priorities as "capacity building in space research, expansion of nuclear research, informatics and robotics, development of quantum research, and research into the creation of the latest nanomaterials"²⁰⁴. All this, of course, will still yield its results.

The Eighth Forum also demonstrated a very extensive potential for further development of co-operation between specific regions of the two countries that are part of the Union State. Speaking about the contracts signed during this forum, "in the real sector of the economy - this is about \$800 million"²⁰⁵. Undoubtedly, such a high performance of Belarusian-Russian partnership ties is facilitated by the fact that about 80 regions on the Russian side participate in this interregional interaction. "The Republic of Bashkortostan, the Samara Region, the Stavropol Territory, the Kursk Region, the Komi Republic, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, the Nenets Autonomous District"²⁰⁶. In the same row we can also name the Moscow region, among the foreign trade partners of which Belarus ranks second, second only to China. 120 Belarusian companies are already "successfully

²⁰⁴ Gusakov proposed to accelerate the creation of a unified scientific and technological space SG [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/gusakov-predlozhil-uskorit-sozdanie-edinogo-nauchno-tehnologicheskogo-prostranstva-sg-448546-2021/>

²⁰⁵ Kochanova: the Forum of Regions has a solid baggage of signed agreements and contracts [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/kochanova-u-forumov-regionov-solidnyj-bagazh-iz-podpisannyh-soglashenij-i-kontraktov-448569-2021/>

²⁰⁶ About 80 Russian regions participate in interregional cooperation with Belarus - Vorobiov [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-80-rossijskih-regionov-uchastvujut-v-mezhregionalnom-sotrudnistve-s-belarusju-vorobjev-448283-2021/>

operating in this Russian region, representative offices of Belarusian companies that supply foodstuffs and machine-building products have been opened"²⁰⁷. If 23 companies from the Moscow region signed export contracts with Belarusian partners for the whole year 2020, then for the first half of 2021 - already 28.

The role of Russian partners is also high for the Belarusian capital region. Firstly, in the first five months of 2021, the trade turnover of Minsk Region's enterprises with Russia increased by 30 per cent at once, amounting to more than \$2.2 billion. Exports from the Belarusian capital region increased by more than a third, while "the balance of foreign trade in goods was positive in the amount of \$624.3 million"²⁰⁸. Secondly, the volume of foreign direct investment from Russia in 2021 has also increased. In the first quarter alone, their volume totalled almost \$95 million. And, judging by the available investment plans for co-operation, this value is far from the limit.

Speaking about Brest region in this context, we should note that it "has concluded and is implementing 26 cooperation agreements with Russian regions, including Penza, Astrakhan, Belgorod, Bryansk, Irkutsk, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kostroma, Lipetsk, Novosibirsk, Pskov, Saratov, Smolensk, Tyumen, Stavropol and Stavropol regions, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kostroma, Lipetsk, Novosibirsk, Pskov, Saratov, Smolensk, Tyumen regions, Stavropol Krai, Karachay-Cherkessia, Buryatia, Udmurtia, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug"²⁰⁹. Besides, there are more than 40 agreements on co-operation of Brest region towns and districts with Russian municipalities. Probably, this is the reason why the region's enterprises signed commercial contracts worth over \$120 million with Russian partners in the course of preparation for the VIII Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Russia. It should be noted that the share of the Russian market in the total volume of supplies from the Belarusian region exceeds 60 per cent. The main export commodity items include meat and dairy products, cattle meat, cooked and tinned fish, gas cookers, children's toys. More than 330 enterprises with Russian capital are registered in Brest region. The most famous of them are JV "Brestgazoapparat" OJSC, JV

²⁰⁷ Pivovar, E. Belarus is second only to China in the volume of trade with the Moscow region - Governor / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-po-objemu-torgovli-s-podmoskovjem-ustupaet-tolko-kitaju-gubernator-448521-2021/>

²⁰⁸ Minsk region and Russia plan to implement a unique business project in the sphere of agriculture [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskaja-oblstat-i-rossija-planirujut-realizovat-unikalnyj-biznes-proekt-v-sfere-selskogo-hozjajstva-451727-2021/>

²⁰⁹ Brest region enterprises signed contracts for \$120 million for the Forum of Regions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-brestskoj-oblasti-podpisali-k-forumu-regionov-kontrakty-na-120-mln-447664-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-brestskoj-oblasti-podpisali-k-forumu-regionov-kontrakty-na-120-mln-447664-2021/)

"Vastega" LLC, JV "ANREKS" LLC, "Belineko" LLC, JV "STiM" LLC, JV "RusBelGaz" LLC, JV "Frost and Co" LLC.

The Russian vector of interaction remains the key foreign trade direction for Grodno Region as well, as it accounts for more than half of foreign supplies from here. Grodno Region works with 74 Russian regions, and has signed agreements on trade and economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation with 27 of them. The Republic of Bashkortostan and Tomsk Oblast joined this list of partners at the 8th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The intensification of interregional ties in the Russian direction allows the enterprises of Grodno region to increase the assortment and expand the geography of supplies, which was largely facilitated by the forum. "The total amount of contracts of the region's producers, primarily of the meat and dairy industries, as well as industrial enterprises, with Russian counterparties is 12 billion Russian roubles"²¹⁰.

Gomel region is also successfully developing the Russian direction of foreign economic relations. Its trade turnover with Russia increased by almost 20 per cent over the first five months of 2021 and amounted to almost \$2.5 billion. The top five recipients of goods from the enterprises of Gomel region include Moscow region, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Bryansk and Smolensk regions. The most popular among them are bars and wires made in the Belarusian region from iron or non-alloy steel, dairy products, agricultural machinery and spare parts, synthetic fibres, non-woven materials, and hardware. An equally important area of co-operation is investment. "In January-March 2021, the volume of foreign investments received from the Russian Federation totalled \$154.3 million"²¹¹. This is largely due to the fact that 361 enterprises with Russian capital are already operating in Gomel region, of which 12 are residents of the free zone "Gomel-Raton". Besides, the Gomel Regional Executive Committee has concluded 22 bilateral co-operation agreements with Russian regions. Another 78 similar documents were signed at the level of cities and districts of Gomel region and their partners in the neighbouring country.

Among the Russian regions actively developing interaction with Belarusian partners in 2021 is Vladimir Region. In May this year, a meeting of

²¹⁰ Grodno region signs agreements with the Republic of Bashkortostan and Tomsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-podpisyvaet-soglashenija-s-respublikoj-bashkortostan-i-tomskoj-oblastiju-448192-2021/>

²¹¹ Belarus and Russia need to develop co-operation in IT - Lukyanov [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarusi-i-rossii-neobhodimo-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-it-lukjanov-452331-2021/>

the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and this Russian region was held, at which the parties considered the entire range of trade and economic interaction - in industry, agro-industry, construction, housing and utilities, exhibition and fair activities, as well as at the level of districts and cities. The tone of the discussion was set by the fact that in 2020 the volume of trade turnover of the republic and the region "totalled \$244 million and decreased by 6.7% compared to 2019"²¹². In this regard, the working group outlined ways to correct the situation in mutual trade. For this purpose, new points of growth in the development of partnership ties with this region of Russia were identified. These are co-operation in light industry, machine building, construction, agro-industrial complex.

It should be recalled that the parties signed the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, Scientific and Socio-Cultural Cooperation in September 2015 during the second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, held in Sochi. This document contained agreements to "create the necessary organisational, financial, economic and legal conditions for the functioning of joint ventures, development and implementation of joint projects and programmes of mutual interest"²¹³. In December 2017, in addition to it, an action plan for the implementation of this agreement for 2018-2020 was adopted, which played its positive role in intensifying the interaction between the parties. In particular, it was noted at that time that "products of Belarusian enterprises are of great interest to the Vladimir region. Among the imported products are binders for the production of foundry moulds and rods, glass fibre and glass fibre products, cheese and cottage cheese, tableware and kitchen utensils"²¹⁴. Already then, 34 enterprises were operating in this Russian region, the founding capitals of which were fully or partially owned by Belarusian investors. And the search for new areas of co-operation continued constantly.

In May 2018, the Belarusian side offered its partners from Vladimir Region the implementation of joint cooperation projects in engineering, energy, construction of social facilities and apartment buildings. In particular, they talked about the possible construction of the "Belarusian Quarter" in

²¹² Cherviakov: new points of growth in trade with the Vladimir region of Russia have been identified [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherviakov-opredeleny-novye-tochki-rosta-v-torgovle-s-vladimirskoj-oblastju-rossii-443237-2021/>

²¹³ Zalessky, B. Belarus - Russia: the formula of integration. Chronicle of Union Building. / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 45.

²¹⁴ Konyshov, A. Belarusian goods are sold in a significant part of trade facilities of the region / A. Konyshov // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled, interviewing: K. Gusev, B. Zalesskiy. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 118.

Vladimir, as well as "the possibility and readiness of Belarusian enterprises to meet the region's needs in lift equipment for new buildings and reconstructed housing, to increase the supply of construction products, materials, equipment and machinery, as well as to participate in the construction and repair of roads in the region, to organise the supply of road-building and municipal equipment necessary for this purpose"²¹⁵. In June 2019, there was a Belarusian proposal to expand the volume of mutual trade to include industrial cooperation in food production, as well as "to supply the region with modern domestic electric transport"²¹⁶. In the construction sector, Belarusian design and production companies could participate in housing construction programmes implemented in the region based on the principle of integrated development with the construction of social facilities, construction and repair of public roads, and supply of necessary road-building and municipal equipment.

The parties had a thorough discussion on ways to expand cooperation in October 2020, when a representative Belarusian delegation visited Vladimir. At that time, a number of joint projects were outlined in terms of co-operation between industrial enterprises of the republic and the region. "These are the Kovrov Electromechanical Plant and Minsk Motor Plant in terms of manufacturing forklifts using an internal combustion engine, which will be produced in Belarus. Now the samples are being tested"²¹⁷. In addition, other economic entities from both sides offered interesting projects. Among them are the Vladimir-based company Betal, which produces water tanks, as well as the Minsk Tractor Plant, OJSC Mogilevliftmash, and Novy Resource LLC from Kovrov.

In December 2020 in the framework of the Vladimir Investment Congress a new action plan - for 2021-2023 - for the implementation of the cooperation agreement was approved. The plan is aimed at "expanding direct ties between economic entities of both sides"²¹⁸ and is aimed at increasing trade turnover between Belarus and the Vladimir region. It should be assumed that

²¹⁵ Pivovar, E. Belarus is interested in joint projects in mechanical engineering and construction with the Vladimir region / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-sovmestnyh-s-vladimirskoj-oblajtiju-proektah-v-mashinostroenii-i-stroitelstve-304088-2018>

²¹⁶ Valagin, A. Belarus offered to build up Vladimir region / A. Valagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://rg.ru/2019/06/06/reg-cfo/belarus-predlozhila-zastroit-vladimirskuiu-oblajt.html>

²¹⁷ Vladimir region / Belarus - expanding cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://export33.ru/news/vladimirskaya-oblajt-belarus-rashshirjaem-sotrudnichestvo/>

²¹⁸ Belarus and Vladimir region approved the action plan for the implementation of the agreement on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vladimirskaja-oblajt-utverdili-plan-meroprijatij-po-realizatsii-soglashenija-o-420545-2020>

it will reflect the theme of further development and expansion of the twinning of cities and districts of the parties, which already has its own considerable history. Back in 1998 the Agreement on twinning of the cities of Vladimir and Bobruisk was adopted. Since then "they have developed mutually beneficial partnerships in economy and business, science, culture, education, sports ..." ²¹⁹. Since 2006, Kovrov and Brest have been twinned. And in 2016 an Agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural spheres was signed between the Administration of the Vladimir region and the Gomel Regional Executive Committee. All these facts show that the parties have a good foundation for further progress in terms of realising the set tasks to increase mutual trade turnover.

Another Russian region that should be focused on in this context is the Novosibirsk Region. In June 2021, the fifth meeting of the Business Cooperation Council of the Republic of Belarus and the Novosibirsk Region was held to review the results of the Programme of Measures for the Development of Cooperation between the parties for 2019-2021. Recall that the agreement on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation was signed by the government of the Republic and the administration of the region back in 1998. In 2020, the trade turnover between the parties exceeded \$150 million. This allowed the Novosibirsk Region to become the third in terms of bilateral trade with Belarus among the subjects of the Siberian Federal District after the Krasnoyarsk and Altai Territories. The wide range of trade and economic interaction between the parties is evidenced by Belarusian supplies to this Russian region, which are based on tractors and tractors, trucks, spare parts for cars and tractors, trailers and semi-trailers, ferrous metal structures, aluminium bars and profiles, furniture, TV sets, monitors and projectors, meat, cheese and cottage cheese, sugar, fresh and tinned fruit and vegetables, hosiery, footwear. It is also important that more than 40 enterprises with the participation of Belarusian legal entities and individuals are registered in the Novosibirsk Region. In general, the region co-operates with Belarus not only within the framework of the above-mentioned agreement of 1998, but also with the Mogilev, Grodno and Brest Regions, which gives concrete results in industry, agriculture and transport. In particular, co-operation between the parties in the transport sector has recently intensified. Thus, in 2020, Novosibirsk purchased "15 large-class gas-powered buses from Belarusian partners, and plans for this year [2021] include the purchase of another 50 city-

²¹⁹ Vladimir region takes part in the forum of regions of Russia and Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.zsvo.ru/press/view/3058/>

type buses, 20 trolleybuses with large autonomous travel and 10 low-floor trams. A decision in principle has also been made to purchase a large batch of 150 buses under leasing programmes"²²⁰.

But perhaps even more promising is the intention of the parties to develop co-operation in science, technology, innovation, and education. An interesting fact: over the more than 20-year period of the cooperation agreement between Belarusian and Novosibirsk universities, 28 direct agreements on the development of partnership relations have been signed, within the framework of which scientific projects are implemented, experience is exchanged, and joint events are held. Another 11 contracts and agreements were signed during the fifth meeting of the Business Co-operation Council. For example, "the development of a joint programme between the Faculty of Digital Economy of the Belarusian State Economic University and the Faculty of Information Technologies of the Novosibirsk State University looks promising. The Scientific and Technological Park of BNTU "Polytechnik" is also ready for further co-operation with Novosibirsk colleagues on the implementation of the Belarusian-Russian project for the production of medical devices for cardiac surgery"²²¹. The Belarusian side also proposed to continue the practice of exchanging students, undergraduates, postgraduates and to intensify the invitation of leading scientists within the framework of the "Visiting Professor" programme. A number of Belarusian universities are included in the implementation of the project "University 3.0" - a trinity of science, education and technological innovations, the platform for the implementation of which are technology parks, interdisciplinary laboratories and technology transfer centres.

Among the active participants of Belarusian-Russian cooperation in the field of education is the Novosibirsk State Technical University (NSTU), which develops partnerships with Belarusian universities on the basis of the Agreement on Cooperation in Science, Technology, Culture, Sports, Student and Academic Mobility of NSTU for 2016-2021, which was signed with the Belarusian State University, for 2017-2022 - with the Belarusian-Russian University, cooperation agreements for 2018-2023 - with the Brest State University, and with the Belarusian-Russian University. Another promising

²²⁰ Novosibirsk region and the Republic of Belarus are increasing the pace and volume of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.nso.ru/news/47415>

²²¹ Belarus and Russia are interested in strengthening direct contacts between educational institutions - Karpenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-rossija-zainteresovany-ukrepljat-prjamye-kontakty-mezhdu-uchrezhdenijami-obrazovanija-446424-2021/>

project in this regard is the International Russian-Belarusian Centre for Interregional Cooperation in Education, Science, and Culture, founded by Novosibirsk State Technical University, Belarusian-Russian University, Novosibirsk Centre of Belarusian Culture, and the social and cultural public association "Heritage". "Among the main tasks of the centre are to establish and develop effective mutually beneficial partnership ties between scientific, educational, social, cultural, youth and sports organisations of the Mogilev and Novosibirsk regions, to organise participation in international scientific, educational, sports, cultural and mass events held on the basis of the founders of the centre, to acquaint citizens of Belarus and Russia with the history, culture, traditions of the peoples, their achievements in the field of economy, science, culture and sports"²²². In 2020, it helped to organise an interethnic cultural online dialogue "Russia and Belarus - 2020", which has become an important educational and cultural platform aimed at supporting and strengthening the Union State. The Business Cooperation Council meeting set the task to intensify the centre's work to promote the ideas of the Union State, patriotic education, and to involve young people in the development of civic initiatives aimed at supporting and strengthening statehood.

All these facts show that the reserves of co-operation between the regions of the two countries are truly enormous. And there are good reasons to believe that they will definitely be utilised in the very near future.

²²² Belarus and the Novosibirsk region are interested in developing co-operation in education [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-novosibirskaja-oblazt-zainteresovany-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-obrazovanija-446260-2021/>

Belarus - Russia: direct partnership relations between the regions as a tool to strengthen economic co-operation

In September 2021, the Council of Ministers of the Union State of Belarus and Russia approved the Main Guidelines for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Treaty on the Establishment of the Union State for 2021-2023 and 28 Union Programmes aimed at implementing large-scale tasks to strengthen Belarusian-Russian integration. At the same time, the parties emphasised that "direct partnership ties between the regions are becoming an increasingly important factor in strengthening mutual trust and economic cooperation"²²³ . This is confirmed by the concrete practice of Belarusian-Russian interregional cooperation in 2021, which is being implemented in a variety of formats. Let us consider some of them.

One of the important trade and economic partners of the Republic of Belarus in the Central Federal District of the Russian Federation is the **Voronezh Region**. The parties signed an agreement on trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural cooperation as part of the Fifth Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia held in October 2018. The trade turnover between them in the first half of 2021 increased by almost 15 per cent and amounted to almost \$160 million with the share of supplies from Belarus in the amount of almost \$102 million. "Belarusian exports were based on ferrous metal structures and other metal products; parts and accessories for cars and tractors; cheese and cottage cheese; frozen beef; soya oil products; butter"²²⁴ .

In addition, apart from trade in goods, other areas of co-operation, in particular construction services, are also actively developing here. The fact is that the Voronezh Region, along with the Kaluga, Pskov and Leningrad Regions, is among those Russian regions where "a scheme for the construction of social facilities that is acceptable to both Belarusian builders and customers

²²³ Joint statement of Roman Golovchenko and Mikhail Mishustin on the current development and further steps to deepen integration processes within the Union State [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9960>

²²⁴ Pivovar, E. The Belarusian delegation headed by Semashko will visit Voronezh / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belorusskaja-delegatsija-vo-glave-s-semashko-posetit-voronezh-457530-2021/>

has already been worked out"²²⁵. ²²⁶ Back in February 2021, a delegation from the Belarusian Ministry of Architecture and Construction visited the region and discussed with Voronezh partners the possibilities of "implementing a joint pilot project in the urban-type settlement of Strelitsa, Semiluksky District, to build a school for 520 children, participation of the Belarusian companies BelengineeringstroyInvest LLC and Construction Trust No. 12 OJSC in the construction of pre-school and secondary schools in Semiluksky District, as well as the prospects of using Belarusian house kits in the implementation of the project". On the eve of the new school year - at the end of August 2021 - a general education school was opened in Strelitsa. The school became a pilot project for the development of cooperation in the construction sector between Belarus and Voronezh region on the investment and construction principle, with the involvement of an export credit from the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus, as well as such Belarusian manufacturers of construction materials and equipment as Mogilevliftmash, Gomelstroymaterialy, Keramin. Mogilev Construction Trust No. 12, which has already earned a good image outside Belarus, became the general contractor for the construction of the school in a rather short period of time - less than a year. In the same Voronezh region "even at the construction stage the customers are more than satisfied with the quality and progress of works and invite Mogilev to participate in the tender for the construction of several more objects"²²⁷.

The experience gained in Strelitsa with the use of the investment and construction principle has shown that it is favourable for all project participants. The Russian side received stable financing and a two-year deferral of payments, as well as high quality work at an acceptable cost. The Belarusian side sees its benefit in the fact that the loan it issues is linked to a number of conditions - from the mandatory participation of Belarusian companies, which receive their profits, in the construction, to the supply of construction materials and equipment from Belarus. An important detail: a similar scheme will now be applied to the construction of other social facilities with Belarusian participation in Voronezh Oblast.

²²⁵ Export of construction goods and services of Belarus in January-June totalled \$637 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-stroitelnyh-tovarov-i-uslug-belarusi-v-janvare-i-june-sostavil-637-mln-452543-2021/>

²²⁶ Zaleskii, B.L. Russian vector of export of construction services / B.L. Zaleskii // Materiały XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Aktualne problemy nowoczesnych nauk - 2021", Volume 3. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 7.

²²⁷ Rusyi: sustainable work of labour collectives in the basis of economic well-being of the country [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rusyi-ustojchivaja-rabota-trudovyh-kollektivov-v-osnove-ekonomicheskogo-blagopoluchija-strany-450830-2021/>

One of these new facilities will be a mega-school in Voronezh for 2,560 students. In August 2021, LLC Stroyengineering, established with the participation of the Belarusian side, received the right to build it. The facility, a building with a variable storeyage of two to four floors, the construction of which is estimated at three and a half billion Russian rubles, will be one of the largest educational institutions in Russia. "The mega-school will have 110 classes studying in one shift, 220 teachers will teach the children. <...> The project envisages separate educational blocks, creation of a barrier-free environment, conditions for the development of children's creative potential and sports"²²⁸. In addition, Belarusian specialists are expected to reconstruct the main sports ground of the region. At the same time, "the estimate for the reconstruction of the football stadium "Fakel" will amount to 812 million Russian rubles"²²⁹. Another school and a kindergarten are planned to be built with Belarusian participation in the village of Semiluki.

It should be noted that Belarus and Voronezh Region have a number of other areas for cooperation: supplies of machinery, food, waste processing, industrial cooperation. In particular, the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange "plans to provide a single channel of sales and purchases for agricultural producers, since it is the products of the agro-industrial complex that have every chance to become the driver of exchange trade with this Russian region"²³⁰. This is explained by the fact that the Belarusian market is traditionally in demand for oilseed meal, feed additives, cereals and grains, and the Voronezh Region is known to be one of the leaders in this segment. In 2022 the Republic of Belarus and the Voronezh Region "plan to increase the volume of trade turnover by 7-9% by the level of 2021 on the basis of bilateral projects"²³¹. These concrete plans show that the parties have everything they need to fulfil this task.

In the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD) of the Russian Federation, the interaction between the Republic of Belarus and the Kabardino-

²²⁸ Pivovar, E. Belarusian specialists will build one of the largest schools in Russia / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belorusskie-spetsialisty-postrojat-odnu-iz-krupnejshih-shkol-v-rossii-456043-2021/>

²²⁹ Pivovar, E. Belarus will reconstruct a stadium and build educational institutions in Voronezh region / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-rekonstruiuet-v-voronezhskoj-oblasti-stadion-i-postroit-obrazovatelnye-uchrezhdenija-457654-2021/>

²³⁰ Zaleskii, B.L. Orientation to regions as a condition for successful partnership / B.L. Zaleskii // Materials of the XVII International scientific and practical conference "Prospects of world science - 2021", July 30 - August 7, 2021: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 3.

²³¹ Belarus and Voronezh region signed an agreement to increase trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/12260267>

Balkar **Republic** (KBR) is developing in an interesting way. In October 2021, a meeting of the joint working group on interaction between the parties was held, at which an action plan was signed to implement the Agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, and socio-cultural spheres, adopted at the VII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, held in September 2020. Recall that in 2020, trade turnover between the parties decreased by more than a quarter to \$8.6 million. At the same time, "the balance is positive for the Republic of Belarus - "plus" \$3.1 million"²³². Actually, these trends have determined the desire of both sides to return the interaction in the economic field to the growth trajectory. All the more so because "Belarus and Kabardino-Balkaria are united not only by long-standing traditions of friendship and mutual assistance, but also by multilateral economic partnership"²³³, which the parties intend to develop even more actively. This trend is characteristic of the entire North Caucasian Federal District, one of the key factors in the development of which is its integration into the Euro-Asian economic space. "In this case, the Republic of Belarus can be one of the effective partners of the subjects of the North Caucasian Federal District"²³⁴.

As for the partnership between Belarus and Kabardino-Balkaria, it is based on various economic ties between specific enterprises on both sides. For example, the products of the diamond tool manufacturer Terekalmaz JSC are well known both at Minsk plants - tractor, automobile and motor, and at the Baranovichi Autoaggregate Plant, Borisov Autoaggregate Plant, as well as at the enterprises Avtogradrousilitel, Belkard, Machine-Tool Plant Krasny Borets, Belgran, Belgeo. JSC Cable Plant Kavkazkabel and JSC Nalchik Plant of High Voltage Equipment actively developed their presence in the Belarusian market. Another interesting example in this regard: "JSC "Prokhladnensky Plant of Semiconductor Devices" (production of integrated voltage regulators) has been a partner of JSC "Integral" for more than 20 years, purchasing transistor crystals and microcircuits"²³⁵. To actively develop partnerships in the

²³² Actual issues of co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and the Kabardino-Balkar Republic discussed in the remote format [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/bdc349beac26.html>

²³³ Belarus and Kabardino-Balkaria intensify economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kabardino-balkarija-aktivizirujut-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnistvo-466948-2021/>

²³⁴ Zalessky B.L. SCFU - Belarus: topical media topics of cooperation / B.L. Zalessky // Media Readings of SCFU: Proceedings of the Third International Scientific and Practical Conference (Stavropol, 23-25 May 2019) / ed. by O.I. Lepilkina, A.M. Gorbachev, N.N. Borisenko, D.A. Shevtsova. - Stavropol: Servisskola, 2019. - C. 174.

²³⁵ Rakhayev, B. Mutual economic interests are based on historically established economic ties and are successfully developing / B. Rakhayev // Interaction of Regions: the Union State - the locomotive

agricultural sector, back in 2014, the first international "Prokhladnenskaya Fair" was held in the territory of Prokhladny urban district, within the framework of which an exhibition of Belarusian agricultural machinery for crop production, horticulture and livestock farming was held and a demonstration of energy-rich machines of Minsk Tractor Plant was organised. Since that time, the company has also been implementing measures to grow original seeds of hybrids of various maturity groups zoned in Belarus, which will make it possible to "supply the Belarusian market with up to 15 thousand tonnes of maize seeds"²³⁶.

Among the Belarusian regions that plan to intensify their co-operation with Kabardino-Balkaria is the Brest region, which "works on the successful development of business initiatives, implementation of projects aimed at the production of competitive products, introduction of innovations, expansion of sales markets, as well as the creation of joint ventures"²³⁷. To effectively develop partnership relations with this Russian region, in April 2018, the Brest branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a cooperation agreement with the union "Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic". This structure is one of the centres of business activity in the Russian region, "created to support and help entrepreneurs, to develop business contacts both in the republic and with other regions, as well as with CIS and non-CIS countries"²³⁸. We must assume that with the emergence of the action plan, their results will not be long in coming.

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

of Eurasian integration: information-integration project / compiled by, interviewed by: B. Zalessky, M. Valkovsky, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2016. - C. 25.

²³⁶ Ibid. C. 27.

²³⁷ Investment agreements worth over Br20 million signed at the forum-exhibition of business contacts in Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investsoglashenija-na-summu-svyshe-br20-mln-podpisany-na-forume-vystavke-delovyh-kontaktov-v-breste-300386-2018/>

²³⁸ Mission, directions of activity [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://kbr.tpprf.ru/ru/mission/>

performed, paintings and works of arts and crafts were presented, and poems and songs were sung"²³⁹.

Speaking about other priorities in the socio-cultural sphere, we should also recall such an interesting format as the annual international summer school held in the CBD on the basis of the local state university "The Roots of Friendship of Our Peoples - in Our History" with the participation of students, postgraduates and young scientists from Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan. In August 2019, within the framework of the fourth such summer school, the master class "Patriotic education of youth through the prism of the projects of the Union State of Belarus and Russia", which "was conducted by Tatyana Senkevich, PhD in Philology, Dean of the Philological Faculty of the Brest Pushkin University, and Alla Senkevich, Deputy Head of Educational Work of the Main Department of Education of the Brest Regional Executive Committee", aroused special interest among the students²⁴⁰. All these facts show that the parties have the necessary prerequisites for successful co-operation.

Various opportunities for co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and the regions of the Far Eastern Federal District are also opening up. This is evidenced by the fact that in the first decade of October 2021, Vladivostok hosted the Days of the Republic of Belarus in **Primorsky Krai** for the first time. 160 representatives of various spheres of activity - trade and economic, investment, and cultural - took part in the Days from the Belarusian side. The most important events within the framework of these days were: 1) a meeting of the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Primorsky Krai; 2) a fair and sale of Belarusian goods and an exhibition of machinery with the participation of 18 major Belarusian enterprises; 3) a business forum of Belarusian and Primorsky Krai business circles to expand cooperation with existing partners and search for new ones.

A good backdrop for all these events was the fact that in 2021, exports of Belarusian companies to this Russian region had already grown by 43 per cent to \$13 million. However, judging by how interestedly and specifically the working group discussed in Vladivostok the prospects for further interaction between the parties, this value is just a starting point in terms of implementing

²³⁹ The traditional evening "Syabry gather friends" took place in the Culture Foundation of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/c0da3dd2bc7b.html>

²⁴⁰ Representatives of A.S. Pushkin Brest University participated in the summer school in Kabardino-Balkaria [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/rostov/news/652289590c9c.html>

new joint projects. Let us name some of them. In particular, it is planned to create a full-fledged exhibition and service centre for the sale and support of Belarusian machinery in Primorsky Krai, which will make it possible not only to sell machinery, but also to service it and present it to a wide range of consumers in Primorye on the spot. In the industrial sector, a project to promote the products of Mogilevliftmash OJSC is expected to be implemented. "This concerns both lifts and lift equipment, as well as rotary and carousel-type car parks - a new direction mastered by the enterprise"²⁴¹. In the field of agriculture, there are plans to promote, approbation and introduction of Belarusian potato varieties in Primorsky Krai, expert support and scientific support in orchard cultivation, as well as conversion of agricultural machinery to caterpillar running.

As for the exhibition of Belarusian enterprises' products, the main square of Vladivostok displayed municipal, agricultural and construction machinery of machine-building plants of Belarus. A number of other enterprises - Babushkina Krynska Holding, Kobrin Butter and Cheese Factory, Domochai Company, Krasny Pischevik OJSC, Kommunarka OJSC, Brest, Bobruisk, Mogilev and Pinsk meat processing plants - presented Belarusian confectionery, dairy and meat products, which are well known here and traditionally enjoy high demand. Suffice it to say that in 2020, "\$2.1 million worth of Belarusian food was supplied to Primorye. Compared to 2019, it was a 63% increase. This year, only at the end of 8 months, deliveries have increased by 34%, and \$2 million has already been traded"²⁴².

The business forum held as part of the Days of the Republic of Belarus in Primorsky Krai demonstrated the high interest of local retail chains in increasing the volume of supplies of Belarusian food products. And the negotiations held by the representatives of business circles to increase the assortment of supplied products make it possible to really expect a multiple increase in their volume in the near future. Among the enterprises that worked very efficiently in Vladivostok is the Belarusian holding AMKODOR, which unites 30 legal entities, including 21 factories in Belarus, Russia, Uzbekistan and Lithuania. In particular, "a contract was concluded for the delivery of another 15 units of the holding's machines to one of the economic

²⁴¹ Export of Mogilev region to Primorsky Krai increased by 84% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-mogilevskoj-oblasti-v-primorskij-kraj-uvyelichilsja-na-84-463897-2021/>

²⁴² Belarus counts on the multiple growth of food supplies to Primorsky Krai of Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-na-kratnyj-rost-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-primorskij-kraj-rossii-463698-2021/>

organisations. In addition, another dealership contract was signed, the needs of Primorye region in special machines "AMKODOR" for 2022 and the volume of their supply were specified"²⁴³. Interestingly, a few weeks later - at the end of October 2021 - Vladivostok also hosted a presentation of a wide range of AMKODOR machinery, which allows "to implement a comprehensive support of the forestry sector, which in turn increases productivity and efficiency of the equipment purchased by the customer at each stage of the production process"²⁴⁴. Apparently, new contracts are not far off.

The fact that Primorsky Krai is seriously interested in Belarusian machinery is also evidenced by the fact that JSC "Managing Company of Bobruiskagromash Holding" signed a dealer agreement with Utyos LLC with the right to sell machines for the application of pulverised chemical ameliorants in Primorsky Krai. An important detail: "Utyos LLC has been the developer of the Gora Glubinnaya quarry for 22 years and has established itself as a reliable producer of mineral fertilisers: limestone dolomite flour, limestone coarse meal and mineral powder for asphalt and concrete plants"²⁴⁵. Now this Russian company uses Western European machinery, which is seven times more expensive than the Belarusian one, as the main machines for mineral fertiliser application. So the prospects for the machines of Bobruiskagromash on the Primorsky market are not bad. It should be reminded that the VIII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, which took place in the summer of 2021, demonstrated "a vast potential in terms of further development of interaction between specific regions of the two countries that are members of the Union State"²⁴⁶, which should be fully utilised in the near future. This is exactly the approach we are seeing today in the example of co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and Primorsky Krai.

The twin-cities movement is also a very effective tool for the development of Belarusian-Russian interregional ties. In October 2021, the Belarusian city of Zhodino hosted the 10th meeting of twin-cities, which was attended by representatives of 52 cities of the two countries - Moscow, Kaluga, Grozny, Novorossiysk, Zaslavl, Mogilev, Vileika, Kolomna, Smolensk and

²⁴³ "AMKODOR" will deliver the next batch of equipment to Primorsky Krai [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-postavit-ocherednuju-partiju-tehniki-v-primorskij-kraj-463805-2021/>

²⁴⁴ Presentation of the Belarusian forestry machinery was held in Vladivostok [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/vladivostok/news/e6bb6d0efea1757.html>

²⁴⁵ Primorsky Krai is interested in Belarusian agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/primorskij-kraj-zainteresovan-v-belorusskoj-selhoztehnike-464889-2021/>

²⁴⁶ Zaleskii, B. Time of new opportunities. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 26.

many others. Let's remind that the previous nine meetings were held since 1998 in Gomel, Mytishchi, Vitebsk, Bryansk, Novopolotsk, Smolensk, Minsk, Podolsk, Mogilev. And almost all of them "became an eloquent illustration of the conclusion that the Belarusian-Russian twinning of cities creates a unique environment for productive trade and economic interaction, as well as for the spiritual component of the brotherhood of the two peoples and the development of people's diplomacy"²⁴⁷. In particular, the 9th meeting, held in March 2017 in Mogilev, brought together representatives of 24 Belarusian and 35 Russian cities, including from Moscow, Vologda, Tula, Smolensk, Volgograd, Penza, Pskov, and Vyazma.

The theme of the meeting in Zhodzina was "Twinning as an important potential for strengthening the Union State of Belarus and Russia and the unity of the peoples". The Belarusian Public Organisation "Twinned Cities" (BPOPG) proposed such specific areas of discussion as economics and business, promotion of mutual investments, expansion of industrial cooperation, "cooperation in the social sphere, infrastructure development, as well as cultural, educational cooperation and twinning as a platform for improving work with young people"²⁴⁸. It should be noted that at the end of 2020, 36 cities were members of the BOPG, which has established twinning and partnership ties with more than 450 cities in 38 countries, with Russia being the clear leader.

Belarus assumes that such bilateral meetings of sister cities are of great importance for the development of the twinning movement as a whole, as they present new opportunities for expanding cooperation in the implementation of investment, trade and economic ties, cultural and educational programmes. After all, "twin cities are an important and effective sector of international cooperation, a feature of which is openness, mutual trust, tolerance and good-heartedness"²⁴⁹. In the Union State, these relations are even more pronounced and should be used within the framework of Union integration as an effective tool of local authorities to develop constructive dialogue and implement a

²⁴⁷ Zalesky, B.L. Sister Cities of Belarus and Russia: in the atmosphere of trust - to mutually beneficial projects / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Perspektywiczne opracowania sa nauka i technikami - 2016" Volume 3. Ekonomiczne nauki. Zarządzanie. Politologia. Historia. Filozofia: Przemysł. Nauka i studia. - C. 42.

²⁴⁸ Grishkevich, A. Belarus and Russia at the meeting of twin cities in Zhodino will discuss the expansion of cooperation / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-rossija-na-vstreche-gorodov-pobratimov-v-zhodino-obsudjat-rasshirenie-vzaimodejstvija-462834-2021/>

²⁴⁹ Batura, B. Twinning - small links of a great friendship / B. Batura // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/pobratimskoe-dvizhenie-malenkie-zvenja-bolshoj-druzhby-7603/>

variety of cooperation projects. The main goal of cooperation between cities in this regard is "comprehensive development of urban living environment, infrastructure, social sphere, culture, education, sports, leisure and recreation opportunities in the interests of improving the welfare of the population, strengthening tolerance, deepening business interaction"²⁵⁰.

One of the concrete results of this twinning meeting in Zhodzina was the signing of a cooperation agreement between the cities of Grodno and Ukhta from the **Komi Republic**. The first agreement on the establishment and development of trade and economic, scientific, technical and cultural ties between them was adopted in September 2017 during the International Investment Forum "Grodno Region at the Crossroads of Borders". The new document envisages, first of all, trade and industrial interaction. The fact is that Grodno in Russia today has quite a few twin cities and partners. Among them are Dzerzhinsk (2005), Khimki (2005), the Shchukino administration of Moscow (2005), Vologda (2007), Cheboksary (2009), the Tuapse district of the Krasnodar region (2012), Tambov (2015). As we can see, few of them are located in the northern part of the neighbouring country. Thanks to the new agreement, it is expected to intensify supplies from Grodno not only of meat and dairy products, but also other products. "Among the companies whose products may soon appear in large volume in the Russian city [Ukhta] are JSC Molochny Mir, JSC Grodno Meat Processing Plant, SOOO Kvinfud, SOOO Conte Spa"²⁵¹.

The activation of partnership ties between Grodno and Ukhta is an interesting form of deepening the interaction between Grodno Region and the Komi Republic at the municipal level. The fact is that back in April 2021, the Grodno Regional Executive Committee noted that this Russian region is interested in cooperating in wood processing and furniture production. "For this purpose, it is planned to establish ties with the business circles of Grodno region. The Russian side is ready to adopt the experience of Grodno residents in this field. It is also possible to create a joint venture for furniture production"²⁵². In September 2021, the Belarusian and Russian regions held

²⁵⁰ Surikov, A. Urban diplomacy is an effective way of regional integration not only of the Union State, but also of the Eurasian Economic Union / A. Surikov // Belarus - Russia: urban diplomacy: information and information project / compiled by, interviewed by: B. Zalessky, M. Valkovsky, A. Mostovoy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2013. - C. 4-5.

²⁵¹ Hrodna and Russian Ukhta signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/grodno-i-rossijskaja-ukhta-podpisali-dogovor-o-sotrudnichestve-463558-2021/>

²⁵² The meeting on cooperation between Belarus and the Republics of Komi and Tyva was held in the Regional Executive Committee [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://grodno-2021.grodno-region.by/>

the second meeting of the working group on cooperation, where they discussed specific areas of work. In agrarian business, the partners from Komi are going to adopt the experience of Grodno region from the design and construction of agricultural facilities to the introduction of raw material processing technologies, and they also envisage co-operation in the construction field. "Great potential lies in co-operation in education, culture, tourism and sports"²⁵³. Of course, Grodno and Ukhta are planning to make their considerable contribution to the development of all these business ties of the republic and the region, which will fully meet the content of the agreement signed within the framework of the 10th meeting of the twin cities in Zhodino.

Another driver of interaction with Russian regions in 2021 is the activity of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB). Suffice it to say that from January to August 2021, the exchange trade turnover between Belarus and Russia increased one and a half times and reached \$375 million. This is the highest figure among the 68 countries represented on the BUTB. The fact that more than half of all foreign clients of the exchange - more than 2,600 - are non-resident Russian companies speaks volumes. At the same time, "the largest volume of transactions falls on representatives of the Leningrad, Moscow and Smolensk regions"²⁵⁴.

In many respects, all these positive trends are explained by the fact that "today there are no obstacles to using the technological and intellectual potential of commodity exchanges as a tool for implementing integration programmes of the Union State"²⁵⁵. Partners from Russia are also attracted by the opportunity provided by the BUTB to use it as a kind of springboard to enter the markets of third countries. "In the first eight months of 2021, the amount of transit transactions made by bidders from the Russian Federation totalled \$5.5 million. These were mainly supplies of woodworking products, petrochemicals, construction products, as well as equipment and machinery"²⁵⁶. All of this was successfully sold through BUTB to Latvia, Lithuania, Poland

region.by/ru/oblispolkom_news-ru/view/v-oblispolkome-proshlo-zasedanie-po-sotrudnichestvu-belorussi-i-respublik-komi-i-tyva-31118-2021/

²⁵³ The Komi Republic intends to adopt the Belarusian experience in agrarian and construction spheres [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/respublika-komi-namerena-perenimat-belorusskoj-opyt-v-agrarnoj-i-stroitelnoj-sferah-267750-2017/>

²⁵⁴ Zalessky, B. In search of new points of growth. The potential of multi-vector foreign trade / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 112.

²⁵⁵ Exchanges of Belarus and Russia discussed the creation of a single exchange commodity market SG [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/birzhi-belorussi-i-rossii-obsudili-sozdanie-edinogo-birzhevogo-tovarnogo-rynska-sg-467052-2021/>

²⁵⁶ Russia is the leader in the volume of exchange trade turnover with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rossija-lidiruet-po-objemam-birzhevogo-tovaroorbora-s-belorussiju-462016-2021/>

and Estonia. In particular, about 30 companies from the Smolensk, Moscow, Leningrad and Bryansk regions used this mechanism. And, to all appearances, in the near future, these areas of Belarusian-Russian exchange co-operation will get new impulses for development in other regions of Russia as well.

For example, the **Samara region**, which is one of the leaders in agricultural exports in the Volga Federal District, is very interested in co-operation with BUTB. In November 2021, 30 production and trading companies in the region expressed their willingness to use the potential of BUTB to expand the volume and geography of their exports, including "for the sale of agricultural products from the Samara region to the European Union countries. In particular, BUTB has already formed a pool of regular buyers of vegetable oils from the Baltic States, Poland and Switzerland, who could purchase Samara sunflower oil within the framework of transit deals"²⁵⁷ . It should be noted that so far these countries are mainly supplied with Belarusian oilseed processing products, the volume of which may exceed \$70 million in 2021. This Russian region also sees significant potential in attracting metallurgical companies to BUTB to sell ferrous and non-ferrous rolled metal products, which are annually used in considerable quantities in the Belarusian industry. For the time being, "as a rule, the way of Samara metal to the Belarusian buyer is through intermediaries, which makes it more expensive and less competitive..." .²⁵⁸

The development of exchange trade with Belarus in the **Stavropol Territory** is assessed as a factor contributing to the growth of mutual trade turnover and diversification of its structure. Updating contacts with BUTB in November 2021, representatives of the Export Support Centre of the region expressed confidence that this exchange platform "will become a "single window" for Stavropol companies, through which they will have access not only to the Belarusian market, but will also be able to successfully trade with the countries of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, where it is quite difficult to do business without having their own distribution network"²⁵⁹ .

²⁵⁷ . BUTB and CCI of Samara region intend to jointly develop exchange trade in agricultural products [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-tpp-samarskoj-oblasti-namereny-sovmestno-razvivat-birzhevuju-torgovlyu-produktsiej-apk-471097-2021/>

²⁵⁸ CCI of Samara region sees a significant potential for the development of exchange trade with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tpp-samarskoj-oblasti-vidit-znachitelnyj-potentsial-razvitiya-birzhevoy-torgovli-s-belarusju-464619-2021/>

²⁵⁹ Stavropol Krai is interested in the development of exchange trade in agricultural products with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stavropolskij-kraj-zainteresovan-v-razvitiu-birzhevoy-torgovli-selzhozproduktsiej-s-belarusju-467948-2021/>

As for the **Pskov region**, they see the prospects for active use of the BUTB potential in the sale of products of the region's timber industry enterprises. This is evidenced by the fact of participation of 30 companies of the Pskov region in the business forum held in October 2021, where it was detailed how "the exchange mechanism will allow Pskov companies to supply their goods not only to the Belarusian market, but also to the countries of Europe and Asia, where the exchange has already formed a network of business partners ready to purchase timber products in almost any volume"²⁶⁰

The Republic of Karelia is also coming to the BUTB with an interesting project, and is primarily interested in the possibility of using the exchange mechanism for the sale of raw milk from neighbouring Russian regions in the region. This initiative to sell raw milk from the Vologda, Kaliningrad, Pskov and other regions of the North-West Federal District has every chance of success, as BUTB considers raw milk to be a commodity position with great potential, which is yet to be revealed at exchange trading. Moreover, in November 2021, the Belarusian exchange platform confirmed its readiness to "organise separate trading sessions specifically for participants from the Republic of Karelia, which will allow <...> enterprises to get the maximum economic effect from the use of the exchange mechanism"²⁶¹. So here, too, hopefully, the results will not be long in coming.

²⁶⁰ BUTB expects to increase sales of timber products from the Pskov region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-uvolichit-prodazhi-lesoproduktsov-iz-pskovskoj-oblasti-464211-2021/>

²⁶¹ Karelia is interested in the realisation of dairy products through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/karelija-zainteresovana-v-realizatsii-molochnoj-produktsov-cherez-butb-469068-2021/>

Belarus - Russia: A factor of trust and co-operation

Direct partnership ties between the regions of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation in the September (2021) joint statement of the Prime Ministers of the two countries called an increasingly important factor of mutual trust and economic cooperation within the Union State. The following fact speaks volumes in this regard: "About 80 regions participate in this interregional co-operation on the part of Russia"²⁶² .

One of its active participants is **Astrakhan Oblast**, which signed the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation with the Republic of Belarus back in May 1999, and in December 2021 adopted a new 3-year plan of joint actions with the Belarusian side for its implementation for 2022-2024. It should be noted that the adoption of the new 3-year plan of joint actions took place at a time of very positive development of bilateral relations between the Republic and the region. After all, "the trade turnover between Belarus and Astrakhan Oblast in January-September of this [2021] year totalled \$23.1 million, which is almost 29% more than in the same period of 2020"²⁶³ . The bulk of Belarusian exports to the Russian region were chipboard, household appliances, machinery and devices for lifting, moving, loading and unloading, wool, and plastic construction parts. For example, only "shipments of uncoated paper and paperboard in the first nine months of this [2021] year increased 11.7 times over the same period last year."²⁶⁴ . The dealer network of Belarusian enterprises, including Minsk automobile and tractor plants, Gomselmash, Bobruiskagromash, AMKODOR, and "work is underway to create a MTZ trade and service centre, which is planned to be put into operation in 2022"²⁶⁵ . In addition, a chain of Belarusian footwear shops "Belvest", a salon of Belarusian furniture "Megapolis", five specialised shops "Belarusian Products" are successfully operating in Astrakhan. Another "about

²⁶² Zalessky, B. The Partnership Orientation - Success. Chronicle of multi-vector interaction / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 15.

²⁶³ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus intends to strengthen trade and economic ties with Russian regions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10081>

²⁶⁴ . Governor: Astrakhan Oblast and Belarus are linked by long-standing partnership relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gubernator-astrahanskogo-oblasti-s-belarusju-svjazyvajut-mnogoletnie-partnerskie-otnoshenija-472693-2021/>

²⁶⁵ Governor of the Astrakhan region: we attribute successes in agriculture to the use of Belarusian machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/gubernator-astrahanskogo-oblasti-uspehi-v-selskom-hozajstve-my-svjazyvaem-s-ispolzovaniem-belorusskogo-472691-2021/>

3500 trade enterprises sell Belarusian-made goods in the region - linen, cosmetics, clothes, bedding, household chemicals".²⁶⁶

The new 3-year joint action plan signed in December 2021, according to the parties, should give a new impetus to bilateral co-operation and will identify steps to further deepen co-operation in the most significant and strategic areas. In particular, the document contains specific measures "to increase trade turnover, joint activities in the agro-industrial complex and the use of innovative technologies"²⁶⁷. Thus, one of the clauses deals with the use of Belarusian experience in the organisation of urban public transport, road traffic and passenger transportation, automation of transport management and cashless fare payment, which is very relevant for the Russian region today. The experience of Belarus in the use of modern technologies of production and laying of asphalt-concrete mixtures, as well as in the restoration of operational characteristics of the rain drainage system will also be introduced in the Astrakhan region. Agricultural machinery and lift equipment are also promising areas of cooperation.

In addition, at the December (2021) meeting of the working group on cooperation between the republic and the region, the Astrakhan side made a proposal to Belarusian partners to "take advantage of the opportunities of the international transport corridor North-South. A new container terminal in the sea port of Olya will become a part of it"²⁶⁸. The fact is that the North-South International Transport Corridor links the Scandinavian countries and the north-western part of the Eurasian Economic Union with the states of Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It includes railway, road and inland waterway transport infrastructure, seaports on the Caspian Sea, including Astrakhan, Persian Gulf ports, road and railway checkpoints, and international airports. The main advantage of the North-South ITC compared to other routes, including through the Suez Canal, is a significant reduction in the time it takes to transport goods - from 30 to 45 days. At the same time, the port of Olya, located at the mouth of the Volga River, is one of the most promising Caspian ports. It already operates on Turkmen and Iranian routes.

²⁶⁶ Zhilkin, A. Realisation of joint projects requires thorough elaboration / A. Zhilkin // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of union building: information-integration project / compiled, interviewing: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 81.

²⁶⁷ Belarus and Astrakhan Oblast signed a plan of joint actions for 2022-2024 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-astrahanskaja-oblaster-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-na-2022-2024-gody-472832-2021/>

²⁶⁸ Astrakhan region offered Belarus to use the port of Olya for exports to South-East Asia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/astrahanskaja-oblaster-predlozhila-belarusi-ispolzovat-port-olja-dlja-eksporta-v-jugo-vostochnuju-aziju-472703-2021/>

"In the future, ferry communication with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan will be developed"²⁶⁹. That is why now new cargo flows are being actively attracted here, new technological complexes are being created here to process cargoes that are still going by other routes. The successful implementation of this port on the Caspian Sea is also facilitated by the fact that it is located on the territory of the special economic zone "Lotos", which provides favourable conditions for the implementation of investment projects in a wide range of areas in the field of industrial production and transport support. Thus, the offer from the interregional co-operation partners from Astrakhan Oblast looks very promising and promising for Belarusian business entities.

The Republic of Bashkortostan is another Russian region whose plans include intensifying interaction with Belarus in the near future. In December 2021, a meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between the parties was held, at which its participants discussed possible interaction in the main areas of trade and economic cooperation - agriculture, machine building, machine tools, and construction. It should be reminded that Belarus and Bashkortostan signed the Agreement on trade-economic, scientific-technical and cultural co-operation back in June 1999. Since then, "Bashkortostan sees the potential for co-operation with Belarus in those activities where it is possible to get the maximum practical effect from the union integration. This concerns, first of all, the petrochemical, machine-building and agro-industrial complexes, robotics and electronics"²⁷⁰. And it should be recognised that for more than twenty years of partnership ties Belarus and Bashkortostan have made significant progress in many areas. In particular, assembly plants of MTZ tractors, Gomselmash and Lidselmash combine harvesters, Bobruiskagromash machinery, trolleybuses made of MAZ machine kits, and 14 enterprises established with the participation of Belarusian capital are currently operating in this Russian region.

As for mutual trade, we note that although "Belarus ranks third in terms of trade turnover with Bashkortostan, second only to China and Kazakhstan, the opportunities for intensifying mutual trade are far from being exhausted"²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Vinokurov, E. International transport corridor "North-South": creation of the transport framework of Eurasia. Report 21/5. / E. Vinokurov, A. Akhunbaev, M. Shashkenov, A. Zaboev. - Almaty, Moscow: Eurasian Development Bank, 2021. - C. 28-29.

²⁷⁰ Zalessky, B. International relations and media. Features of multi-vector international co-operation in the period of global challenges / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 90-91.

²⁷¹ Development of exchange trade between Belarus and Bashkortostan will contribute to the growth of mutual trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/razvitiye-birzhevoy-torgovli-mezhdu-belarusju-i-bashkortostanom-posposobstvuet-rostu-vzaimnogo-473580-2021/>

. Indeed, the best indicators of trade turnover were achieved by the parties in 2018 - almost 750 million dollars. In 2020, this figure was expressed by the value of almost 427 million dollars, and for the three quarters of 2021 - just over 280 million dollars. At the same time, "for 10 months. 2021 exports of Belarusian products to the Republic of Bashkortostan amounted to \$122.4 million or 107 per cent of the same period last year"²⁷² . The main supplies from Belarus were refrigerators, freezers and refrigeration equipment, cookers, sheets and films of plastics, cheese and cottage cheese. In addition, in January - September 2021, "the supplies of wood-fibreboard (almost 14 times compared to the same period last year), consoles, tables and panels for electrical equipment (10 times) increased significantly"²⁷³ . In general, the enterprises of the concern "Bellesbumprom" increased their exports to this region of Russia by more than a quarter - almost to two million dollars. "Among the new types of products that began to be supplied to Bashkortostan in the current [2021] year is wallpaper. The Belarusian Wallpaper Holding has signed a long-term contract with a company from Ufa for the supply of wallpaper products of various assortment"²⁷⁴ .

Given the existing dynamics of cooperation, the parties agreed in December 2021 to intensify work in a number of areas in order to restore the pre-crisis trade turnover as soon as possible, and in the long term to increase it to one billion dollars, relying on several priorities. "The first is the expansion of co-operative cooperation of industrial enterprises in the field of supplies of specialised and truck equipment. The second direction is interaction in the sphere of agro-industrial complex and participation in the technical modernisation of Bashkortostan's agro-industrial complex"²⁷⁵ . In the same line is the expansion of co-operation in petrochemicals and construction, including road construction. And the prospects here, it must be said, are considerable. In particular, the Russian region, where the area of arable land is seven million hectares and where only Belarusian wheeled tractors are assembled at the Bashselkhoztekhnika enterprise, is in urgent need of caterpillar-based

²⁷² The head of Bashkortostan with a large delegation visited Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/ufa/news/f288069d32f80b7a.html>

²⁷³ "Neither kovid nor sanctions scare us". Bashkortostan intends to deepen cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nas-ne-pugajut-ni-kovid-ni-sanktsii-bashkortostan-nameren-uglubljat-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusju-473499-2021/>

²⁷⁴ Export of the enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" to Bashkortostan in January-October increased by 27% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekspорт-predpriyatiy-bellesbumproma-v-bashkortostan-v-janvare-oktjabre-vyros-na-27-473805-2021/>

²⁷⁵ Equipment supplies, agro-industrial complex and petrochemistry: Roman Golovchenko outlined the priorities in cooperation with Bashkortostan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10091>

machinery - "we need caterpillar tractors - not dozens, but hundreds"²⁷⁶. As a result, the issue of possible assembly of Belarusian caterpillar tractors on Bashkir territory has already been put into practice.

Another promising topic concerns motorways, the total length of which in this Russian region exceeds 50 thousand kilometres, and Bashkortostan ranks second in Russia in terms of the extensive network of local roads. All major federal highways pass through here. It is planned to start reconstruction of a section of the Kazan - Yekaterinburg motorway running through the Bashkir land. And in this regard, they are interested in the Belarusian experience of using cement concrete pavements, which was launched in our country in 2014. At that time, the first object was the second ring road around Minsk, and then two more artificial runways - at the National Airport and Orsha. Bashkortostan firmly intends to develop cement-concrete road construction and is ready to intensify co-operation in this direction with partners from Belarus. Besides, taking into account the fact that the inter-repair periods of cement-concrete roads are much longer than those of asphalt-concrete roads, the Bashkir side expressed its interest in co-operation with Belarusian specialists "not only in the construction of federal roads of the highest class, but also in the restoration of regional roads with gravel and crushed stone pavement, which require improvement of their operational characteristics"²⁷⁷. And, to all appearances, the Belarusian holding Belavtodor is already ready to share the experience of its organisations with its Bashkir partners in these matters. Note that all these facts are only part of the agreements that were reached in December 2021 within the framework of more than 200 meetings of business people in Minsk to develop co-operation between Belarus and Bashkortostan.

In January 2022, the **Republic of Tyva**, a Russian region located in the south of Eastern Siberia and home to 330,000 people, also made a significant bid to significantly intensify interaction with Belarus. It is clear that geographical remoteness brings its own adjustments to the implementation of joint projects of the parties. This is evidenced by the volume of trade and economic co-operation between Belarus and Tyva, which amounted to about \$275 thousand in 2020, and even less in the first 11 months of 2021 - only

²⁷⁶ Bashkortostan wants to expand the assembly of Belarusian tractors and is interested in drones [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bashkortostan-hochet-rasshirit-sborku-beloruskih-traktorov-i-zainteresovalsja-bespilotnikami-473514-2021/>

²⁷⁷ Bashkortostan is interested in studying the Belarusian experience of road maintenance [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bashkortostan-zainteresovan-v-izuchenii-belorskogo-opyta-dorozhnogo-hozjajstva-473566-2021/>

\$47.5 thousand. "The basis of supplies from our republic [Belarus] was the supply of machines and devices for lifting, moving, loading or unloading, metal structures made of ferrous metals, corsetry products and women's knitwear"²⁷⁸.

The issue of the need to intensify cooperation between the parties was raised three years ago - in December 2018 - at a meeting of the Tyva administration with representatives of the Belarusian distribution network in the region, where it was noted that "there are 70 BELAZ dump trucks in operation at the enterprises of the Republic of Tyva, moreover, the region has a serious potential for further expansion of the fleet of this equipment"²⁷⁹. And in January 2022, during the first visit of the head of the Russian region V. Khovalyg to Belarus, these intentions began to take quite concrete shape.

Minsk sees the prospects for the development of these partnerships in the near future as a serious increase in trade turnover with the Republic of Tyva. Especially since there is a lot of potential in this respect: from supplies of modern Belarusian road, municipal, construction, logging, and passenger equipment to the Russian region to the implementation of joint projects "in the agro-industrial sphere, in the field of water supply and drainage, design of housing and social facilities"²⁸⁰. In particular, one of the concrete results of the visit of the representative delegation of Tyva to Belarus was the agreement that with the help of the Belarusian side a dairy farm will be built in the region, which will be "equipped with Belarusian-made equipment and Belarusian cattle. It is planned to implement the project within a year, and then this experience can be replicated"²⁸¹, in order to fully meet the region's demand for milk and dairy products by creating its own base. The Belarusian side has already expressed its readiness to transfer the project documentation for the construction of small dairy farms - approximately for 200 heads - with subsequent completion of these facilities with Belarusian milking and refrigeration equipment. It should be noted in this connection that Belarus

²⁷⁸ Agriculture, industry, tourism: Grodno region and the Republic of Tyva signed a protocol on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/selskoe-hozjajstvo-industrija-turizm-grodnenskaja-oblast-i-respublika-tyva-podpisali-protokol-o-480420-2022/>

²⁷⁹ The Republic of Belarus and the Tyva Republic of the Russian Federation plan to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://russia.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/regions/krasnoyarsk/news/98cd50c57373.html>

²⁸⁰ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus intends to increase trade turnover with the Republic of Tyva [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10135>

²⁸¹ Belarus will help Tyva in the construction of a dairy farm [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-pomozhet-tyve-v-stroitelstve-molochno-tovarnoj-fermy-480369-2022/>

already has a good experience of co-operation with Siberian regions in the agricultural sector. Suffice it to say that "in the Siberian Federal District, of which Tyva is a part, Belarus [in 2021] supplied more than \$100 million worth of agricultural products"²⁸² .

Another promising area is the IT sphere. The fact is that the partners from Tyva were very interested in the Belarusian experience related to the system of training IT-specialists, where IT-education programmes are implemented at all levels - from universities to kindergartens. As a result, following the meeting at the High Technology Park in Minsk, "points of interaction between the two sides were found, which is especially important for the Russian delegation in the run-up to the opening of its own IT park, scheduled for the next [2023] year"²⁸³ .

Among Belarusian regions, Grodno Region has a great interest in co-operation with the Republic of Tyva. In January 2022, the parties discussed possible joint projects in agriculture, "as the Tyva administration plans to triple its share in the gross regional product. In addition, it is possible that Belarusian specialists will participate in the development of infrastructure of the Ak-Sug mining and processing plant under construction"²⁸⁴ . Apparently, the dialogue between the parties will be continued in late June 2022 at the 9th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, which will be held in Hrodna, where all the agreements reached in January can be formalized in the form of a corresponding agreement.

In January 2022, the Gomel Region signed a protocol on cooperation intentions with the Republic of Tyva to actively develop mutually beneficial ties in various spheres. The immediate plans here include providing the Russian region with Gomselmarsh machinery, as well as the development of high technologies, including in livestock breeding. The fact is that in Gomel region there is an enterprise "Agrokomplekt", which designs dairy equipment, dairy farms "with different volumes of milk production and different capacities - from 200 to 1200 heads with different milking rates"²⁸⁵ . It is quite possible

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ The Republic of Tyva is interested in the Belarusian experience of training IT-specialists [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/respublika-tyva-zainteresovana-v-belorusskom-opyte-podgotovki-it-spetsialistov-481053-2022/>

²⁸⁴ Karanik on co-operation with the Republic of Tyva: it is necessary to turn the potential into concrete projects [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/karanik-o-sotrudnichestve-s- respublikoj-tyva-nado-prevratit-potentsial-v-konkretnye-proekty-480387-2022/>

²⁸⁵ Economy, technology, agro-industrial complex: Gomel region and the Republic of Tyva intend to develop co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL:

that it will become an active participant in this interregional cooperation to support the implementation of projects in Tyva from the moment of design to the launch of the farm.

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Belarus - Kazakhstan: plans for the future - in the roadmap

In May 2021, the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus-Kazakhstan Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held, following which the parties adopted a roadmap or programme of activities for 2021-2022. The results of the interaction between the two countries in the first quarter of 2021 became a kind of tuning for this meeting. "Trade turnover totalled \$215 million and increased by 12% compared to the corresponding period of 2020"²⁸⁶. At the same time, the positive balance for the Belarusian side amounted to \$133.5 million. Among the main activities of the adopted roadmap is the development of Belarusian-Kazakh cooperation in industrial cooperation and machinery supplies, agriculture and construction, as well as in the interaction between the regions of the two countries.

Another important event in the Belarus-Kazakhstan interaction took place at the end of June 2021, when a Belarusian government delegation headed by Prime Minister R. Golovchenko visited Kazakhstan, during which the parties made serious progress in terms of developing bilateral **trade and economic relations**. This visit took place against the backdrop of very positive dynamics in mutual trade between the two countries. Suffice it to say that "in 2020, Belarusian-Kazakh trade turnover totalled \$847.9 million. The main items of Belarusian exports were tractors, combines, beef, milk, cream, sugar, cheese, cottage cheese, furniture and medicines"²⁸⁷. Such figures testify to a lot. There are 54 companies with Kazakh capital operating in Belarus, including 13 joint ventures and 36 foreign ones. There are 366 companies with Belarusian participation in Kazakhstan. Besides, there are enterprises with Belarusian technologies operating at ten production sites in different regions of this country. And now the parties are focusing on increasing the localisation of machinery produced there - the same tractors and cars - in order to "reach

²⁸⁶ Promcooperation and Days of Culture - Belarus and Kazakhstan held a meeting of the intergovernmental commission [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/promkooperatsija-i-dni-kultury-belarus-i-kazakhstan-proveli-zasedanie-mezhpravkomissii-443204-2021/>

²⁸⁷ Ruslan Golovchenko visited large enterprises of Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/roman-golovchenko-posetil-krupnye-predpriyatiya-kazahstana-447818-2021/>

new indicators in mutual trade in 2021 - more than \$1 billion a year in goods and services"²⁸⁸.

The contracts signed at the end of June 2021 between the economic entities of the two countries should contribute to the achievement of this goal. In particular, Minsk Tractor Plant will supply 590 units of machinery to Kazakhstan for ten million dollars. "Another contract was signed between MAZ OJSC and Hyundai Trans Auto LLP for the supply of MAZ trailer kits worth \$1.3 million. Also, BELAZ OJSC and ASTANABELAZSERVICE LLP signed a contract for the supply of BELAZ machinery worth \$1.2 million"²⁸⁹. The same list of Belarusian exporters includes the company Bobruiskagromash, which has been working closely on the Kazakh market for the past five years, where it has an assembly plant for trailers, balers and mowers. In 2020, it increased its exports of agricultural machinery to that country by one and a half times. In 2021, the results promise to be no worse. At least, the signed contract for the supply of products in the amount of one million dollars with the entities of the commodity distribution network of "Bobruiskagromash" in Kazakhstan is aimed at this. Gomselmash OJSC and AgromashHolding KZ JSC - the only industrial enterprise in this country that produces combine harvesters, tractors and additional products in a wide range and is the exclusive distributor of Gomel's products in Kazakhstan - also signed an agreement on the development of cooperation for 2021-2022.

But, perhaps, Minsk Tractor Plant stands out more than others in terms of the development of **industrial cooperation** with Kazakh partners. Minsk Tractor Plant already has three assembly plants here, has its own trading house and plans to develop another assembly plant in this Central Asian country - with investments of \$50 million - on the basis of the enterprise "Composite Group Kazakhstan" in Kostanai. Now the assembly line here is designed to produce 1200 Belarus tractors. But plans have already been formed to develop the site, create new jobs, increase the number of technological operations, aimed at increasing the localisation of production. In particular, "at the first stage, together with Kazakh partners, a workshop for the production of cabins will be built. The next stage is the construction of another building with an area of 25 thousand square metres for the assembly of engines and radiators of all

²⁸⁸ Belarus has agreed with Kazakhstan on oil supplies [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-dogovorilas-s-kazahstanom-o-postavkah-nefti-447959-2021/>

²⁸⁹ Belarus is increasing supplies of machinery to Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-naraschivaet-postavki-tehniki-v-kazahstan-447970-2021/>

types. It is also planned to produce a new type of products - diesel pumps"²⁹⁰. It is quite possible that this enterprise will become an important element of the Belarusian industrial centre being created in the industrial zone of Kostanay. "It will be a multi-profile structure, which will combine not only production facilities, but also scientific and technical activities and training of specialists"²⁹¹. And there is every reason to believe that such a centre could become the core of innovative development.

Agriculture is one of the other areas of Belarus-Kazakhstan cooperation that should receive accelerated development in the near future. The market of this Central Asian country is important for Belarusian agrarians because it ranks second after Russia in terms of food supplies from Belarus. By the end of 2021, the Belarusian side plans to "reach 120% of exports of our products to Kazakhstan to the level of last year: in 2020 it was over \$300 million"²⁹².

In this regard, it is important to recall the results of 2020, which showed that even in the context of restrictions related to the spread of coronavirus infection, the agro-industrial complex of both countries maintained growth trends in 2020. In particular, data from the Eurasian Economic Commission shows that "agricultural production in the territory of the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU) in 2020 increased by 2.3 per cent to 114.3 billion US dollars. The highest production growth among the EEAU countries was recorded in Kazakhstan (by 5.6%) and Belarus (by 4.9%)"²⁹³.

Positive trends in the growth of cooperation between the two countries in the agro-industrial sector were also recorded at the second meeting of the joint Belarusian-Kazakh working group on developing promising areas of bilateral cooperation in agriculture, which took place in Minsk in February 2021. At the meeting, the parties focused on food trade, crop and livestock farming, veterinary medicine, breeding and selection, taking into account that "in 2020, trade turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs between

²⁹⁰ Industrial enterprises of Belarus and Kazakhstan intend to sign large contracts [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prompredpriatija-belorussi-i-kazahstana-namereny-podpisat-krupnye-kontrakty-447828-2021/>

²⁹¹ Golovchenko: the foundation of Belarusian-Kazakh cooperation is trade and economic relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-fundament-belorussko-kazahstanskogo-sotrudnichestva-torgovo-ekonomicheskie-otnoshenija-447956-2021/>

²⁹² Brylo: Belarusian food exports to Kazakhstan are increasing every year [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brylo-eksport-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-kazahstan-kazhdij-god-uvelichivaetsja-447921-2021/>

²⁹³ About the meeting of the Ambassador of Belarus with the Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://kazakhstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c66dcb28873a0b75.html>

Belarus and Kazakhstan increased by 1.2 times by 2019 and reached \$307.2 million. Exports totalled \$289.9 million (an increase of more than 20%)²⁹⁴. At the same time, the parties noted the existing serious potential for further stable growth of trade turnover and consolidation of positive trends in mutual trade.

On the Belarusian side, these prospects are seen in the supply of equipment for the construction of dairy farms, the introduction of new technologies, the expansion of agricultural machinery purchases, and the retraining of personnel for the agro-industrial complex. Kazakhstan is particularly interested in the Belarusian experience in the development of the dairy and sugar industries, as well as in other areas of agricultural production. The nature of this interest lies in the fact that "the coronavirus has shown how much all agricultural products are in demand now. New niches are opening up"²⁹⁵.

In particular, in 2021, the parties have high hopes for continued cooperation between Belarus's Gomselmash OJSC and Kazakhstan's largest agricultural machinery company AgromashHolding KZ, which increased its production volumes by 1.7 times in 2020. Joint assembly of grain harvesters by these enterprises on Kazakh soil began back in 2007. "In 2019, the organisation produced 429 combines and tractors, and in 2020 - 730 units of machinery"²⁹⁶. Including the first combine harvester ESSIL KZS-790, which has already been tested in the Karaganda region and showed good results. The new machine has increased engine power and grain cleaning area, and threshing is done in a combined way: by drum and rotor. In 2021 the serial production of this model is planned. In addition, the production of self-propelled mowers will also increase, which is explained by the growing demand for them among Kazakhstani farmers. Recall also that back in the summer of 2020, more than 70 machine sets of the KZS-10 MAX model were sent to Kazakhstan from Gomel. "The innovations introduced on this model of combine harvester, mainly concerning more comfortable work of mechanisers, were liked by the agrarians of Kazakhstan. This prompted them to order 30

²⁹⁴ Export of Belarusian agricultural products to Kazakhstan in 2020 increased by more than 20% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-beloruskoj-selhozproduktsii-v-kazakhstan-v-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-na-20-430100-2021>

²⁹⁵ Kazakhstan is interested in the Belarusian experience in the development of dairy and sugar industries [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kazahstan-zainteresovan-v-beloruskom-opyte-razvitiya-molochnoj-i-saharnoj-otraslej-430102-2021>

²⁹⁶ "Gomselmash" and "AgromashHolding KZ" will expand the line of agricultural machinery in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-i-agromashholding-kz-rasshirjat-linejku-agrotehniki-v-2021-godu-424825-2021/>

more of these combines²⁹⁷. And in the second half of December 2020, this additional batch of 30 machine sets was shipped to Kazakh partners.

Among the events that should have a positive impact on the development of cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan in agriculture in 2021, we would like to mention a few more. First, the idea discussed at the meeting of the Belarus-Kazakhstan Business Council in November 2020, which was attended by representatives of more than 160 enterprises of the two countries, may yield interesting results. Given the fact that one of the most important issues in the development of relations between the two former Soviet republics is the holding of exhibitions, "Belarus and Kazakhstan are considering the possibility of holding an offsite agricultural exhibition Belagro in Kazakhstan"²⁹⁸. This could be another concrete step towards intensifying bilateral cooperation and increasing mutual trade turnover. Secondly, back in November 2020, the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) offered Kazakh companies to buy Belarusian meat and dairy products and sugar at exchange trading. At the same time, BUTB could assist companies from Kazakhstan in selling their products on the Belarusian market. As a follow-up to this proposal, in January 2021, BUTB agreed to intensify cooperation in the field of electronic trade with the Astana Universal Commodity Exchange, which "will make it possible to form a single database with commercial offers of Belarusian and Kazakh companies and will contribute to the growth of mutual trade volumes"²⁹⁹.

Another of the most important areas of co-operation between Belarus and Kazakhstan, which should receive intensive development in the very near future, is the **construction sector**, as the parties are seriously interested in this interaction. This is explained by the fact that "today, Belarus and Kazakhstan have multifunctional construction complexes, which continuously carry out their activities, increasing their pace every year"³⁰⁰. Among the priorities of interaction in this area, the parties see such areas of cooperation as the

²⁹⁷ "Gomselmash" additionally shipped to Kazakhstan 30 machine kits KZS-10 MAX [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-dopolnitelno-otgruzil-v-kazakhstan-30-mashinokomplektov-kzs-10-max-421382-2020/>

²⁹⁸ Utyupin: the possibility of holding the exhibition "Belagro" in Kazakhstan is considered [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/utjupin-rassmatrivaetsja-vozmozhnost-provedenija-vystavki-belagro-v-kazahstane-417045-2020/>

²⁹⁹ BUTB and Kazakhstan exchange "Astana" intend to develop cooperation in the sphere of electronic trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-kazahstanskaja-birzha-astana-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnistvo-v-sfere-elektronnoj-torgovli-425206-2021>

³⁰⁰ Belarus and Kazakhstan are interested in expanding co-operation in the construction sector [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-kazakhstan-zainteresovany-v-rashireniu-sotrudnistva-v-stroitelnoj-sfere-452678-2021/>

construction of industrial enterprises, housing and dairy complexes, production and supply of construction materials, as well as the establishment of a trading house of Belarusian construction materials in Kazakhstan and the expansion of supplies of sanitary faience, thermal insulation and roofing materials, and floor coverings to this Central Asian country.

If we talk about industrial construction, it was noted at the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission that "an important step in co-operation cooperation will be the construction by MTZ OJSC in Kazakhstan of a plant for the production of cabins for tractors and front axles"³⁰¹. Let's add that the works on the mentioned production facilities in the Kazakh city of Kostanai have already started. "About 7 million dollars of investments will be directed on realisation of the project. And it is planned to invest about 50 million dollars in the development of production facilities"³⁰².

In addition, today the parties are working on the establishment and construction of a joint venture for the production of ceramic tiles on Kazakh soil. This project will be realised in reality if there will be enough raw materials in the subsoil of this country to produce these products. That is why "now the geological, environmental protection services of Kazakhstan are studying the volume of available resources"³⁰³.

Another interesting construction project, which is being worked out by the parties, concerns the construction of a "Belarusian neighbourhood" in Nur-Sultan. By its example, the Belarusian side could demonstrate its capabilities in designing and building residential complexes. The peculiarity of this project is that it does not exclude "the possibility of equipping the built housing with Belarusian furniture and household appliances, because in Kazakhstan some construction companies have such a practice of selling completely finished housing"³⁰⁴.

The next project discussed by the parties to open a trading house in Kazakhstan, which would include such Belarusian construction industry

³⁰¹ On holding the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus-Kazakhstan Commission [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://kazakhstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/dda48a09c28d30da.html>

³⁰² Multimillion contracts and agreements on oil supplies: summarising the three-day visit of the Prime Minister to Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9894>

³⁰³ Joint plant of ceramic tiles and "Belarusian Quarter" may appear in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sovremennyj-zavod-keramicheskikh-plitki-i-belorusskij-kvartal-mogut-pojavitsja-v-kazahstane-452553-2021/>

³⁰⁴ Belarus is interested in the construction of the "Belarusian Quarter" in Kazakhstan - Utյupin [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-y-stroitelstve-belorusskogo-kvartala-v-kazahstane-utjupin-451644-2021/>

enterprises as Keramin, Berezastroymaterialy, and Belarusian Glass Company, looks logical in this regard. It is possible that later, according to the Belarusian Ministry of Architecture and Construction, the concern Bellesbumprom will join their ranks. The fact is that only in the first four months of 2021, its enterprises increased exports of its products to the Kazakh market by almost 30 per cent - to more than seven million dollars. "This is primarily furniture: it was supplied for more than \$2 million. Belarusian upholstered furniture and cabinet furniture made of solid wood are particularly popular in Kazakhstan. The country also exports chipboard and fibreboard, plywood, wooden windows and doors, wallpaper, paper, cardboard, sawn timber..."³⁰⁵. There is every reason to believe that sales of Belarusian woodworking products in the Kazakhstan market will continue to grow systematically. The use of the potential of a specialised trading house can only open up new additional opportunities for its sales.

Finally, with regard to the construction of agricultural facilities, the Kazakh side is particularly interested in this issue. At the end of June 2021, an agreement was even reached to meet with partners from Kazakhstan in Belarus, where "we will demonstrate to them our capabilities to build fairly large farms for 2,400 heads"³⁰⁶. If this Belarusian experience finds a favourable response from the Kazakh side, then in the future we can talk about the implementation of a similar turnkey project of a Belarusian farm in Kazakhstan with its further expansion throughout the country. In this case, the concept of "turnkey" includes design, construction by Belarusian companies, supply of equipment and breeding stock.

Interregional co-operation also plays an important role in the development of Belarusian-Kazakh partnership ties. Suffice it to say that there are about 30 co-operation agreements between the regions of Belarus and Kazakhstan. In particular, the relevant documents were signed by the executive committees of Minsk, Brest, Gomel, Vitebsk, and Mogilev regions and the akimat of Karaganda region. Gomel and Vitebsk voblasts have a co-operation agreement with North Kazakhstan voblast, Brest voblast - with East Kazakhstan voblast. Grodno region co-operates with Aktobe, Kostanay and Mangistau regions, Gomel region - with Almaty and Atyrau regions. These

³⁰⁵ Enterprises "Bellesbumprom" in January-April increased exports to Kazakhstan by 28.7% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-bellesbumproma-v-janvare-aprele-narastili-eksport-v-kazahstan-na-287-448021-2021/>

³⁰⁶ Belarus plans to double the export of construction materials to Kazakhstan - Parkhamovich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-udvoit-eksport-strojmaterialov-v-kazahstan-parhamovich-447920-2021/>

partnerships of the regions of the two countries are complemented by documents on co-operation of such cities as Minsk and Nur-Sultan, Brest and Semey, Bobruisk and Ust-Kamenogorsk, Mogilev and Shymkent. But due to the fact that "in 2020 the development of regional cooperation was to some extent hampered due to the introduction of quarantine restrictions related to the spread of coronavirus infection COVID-19"³⁰⁷, in 2021 the task is set not only to intensify existing partnerships, but also to work on establishing new ones.

In particular, serious intentions in this regard are demonstrated today by Gomel region, which offers Kazakh partners to expand cooperation, including through joint ventures, small business, transport infrastructure, tourism. In 2020, the volume of foreign trade of the region with Kazakhstan exceeded 115 million dollars. "The growth rate of trade turnover in January-April [2021] reached 161% compared to last year's four months"³⁰⁸, and among the main suppliers should be noted "Gomselmash" and a meat and dairy company. The same "Gomselmash" in June 2021 signed an agreement on the development of co-operation for 2021-2022 with the Kazakh JSC "Agromashholding". The crux of the matter is that "the Kazakh side requested 570 units [of combines] for this year - for \$60 million. In the next three years, the goal is to produce up to 1,000 units of combines per year"³⁰⁹. The parties are also discussing other areas of co-operation. In particular, there are prospects for mutually beneficial partnership in the chemical and glass spheres. The proposal of the head of the Kazakh diplomatic mission in Belarus A. Beisenbayev, who expressed his views on this issue, is also noteworthy. Beisenbayev, head of Kazakhstan's diplomatic mission in Belarus, suggested in Gomel that a forum of regions of the two countries should be held.

Brest region is also going to actively develop cooperation with the Kazakh side, the volume of foreign trade turnover with Kazakhstan in 2020 exceeded 130 million dollars. Now nine enterprises with Kazakh capital are registered in Brest region. But there are certainly reserves and potential for continued cooperation. And today we are talking about "supplies of products

³⁰⁷ About interregional co-operation of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://kazakhstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/region/

³⁰⁸ JV, small business, tourism - Gomel region intends to expand cooperation with Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sp-malyi-biznes-turizm-gomelskaja-oblstan-naamerena-rasshirjat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kazahstanom-446559-2021/>

³⁰⁹ Multimillion contracts and agreements on oil supplies: summarising the three-day visit of the Prime Minister to Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.govt.gov.by/ru/content/9894>

with added value, first of all, in such industries as woodworking, food processing"³¹⁰.

A real breakthrough in the development of cooperation between the regions of the two countries could be the emergence of the Belarusian Industrial Centre in the Kostanai region, which the parties agreed on in June 2021. "This will be a multi-profile structure that will combine not only production facilities, but also scientific and technical activities and training of specialists"³¹¹. This centre will be located in the industrial zone "Kostanai", which was opened in 2017 and is an industrial site of 400 hectares, provided with communications, which already houses enterprises of mechanical engineering, food and light industry, production of building materials and structures, agricultural equipment. Interestingly, the first "swallow" of this zone was the "factory for the production of tractors of the brand "Belarus" of the holding company "Composite Group Kazakhstan". It was opened in 2018, and now it is successfully developing"³¹². So the foundation for the appearance of the Belarusian Industrial Centre is already here.

As we can see, Belarus and Kazakhstan have great prospects for co-operation in various areas and have already created a good foundation for long-term co-operation between industrial, agro-industrial and construction complexes, as well as at the level of the regions of the two countries. Let's hope that all these plans discussed above will be successfully realised.

³¹⁰ Belarusian-Kazakh intergovernmental commission plans to meet in Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/belorussko-kazahstanskaja-mezhpravkomissija-planiruet-sobratisja-v-breste-434510-2021/>

³¹¹ Belarusian industrial centre will appear in the industrial zone of Kostanay [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/belorusskiy-industrialnyy-tsentr-poyavitsya-v-industrialnoy-zone-kostonaya.html>

³¹² Goray, O. Industrial zone "Kostanai" is gradually filled with new production / O. Goray // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://top-news.kz/industrialnaja-zona-kostanaj-postepенно-zapolniaetsja-novymi-proizvodstvami/>

Belarus - Uzbekistan: Commission outlines priorities for co-operation

The eighth meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission on bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan was held in early March 2021 in Tashkent. It discussed issues related to the development of trade and economic, investment and cooperation ties, strengthening relations in the scientific-educational and socio-humanitarian spheres, interregional cooperation, information technologies, and tourism.

Diplomatic relations between the two former Soviet republics were established in January 1993. In 2020, the Belarusian-Uzbek trade turnover grew by another 17 per cent and exceeded \$280 million with the share of supplies from Belarus - more than \$237 million. "The main items of Belarusian exports last [2020] year were trucks, tractors and tractor-trailers, meat and meat products, sugar and dairy products, medicines, vaccines, and blood serums"³¹³ . Noting these positive trends, the parties at the meeting of the intergovernmental commission nevertheless focused their attention on those issues, the solution of which would help to bring bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level. One of such urgent priorities was the expansion of the legal framework of Belarusian-Uzbek cooperation, which had more than 70 agreements until March 2021. The eighth meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission contributed to its further expansion.

In particular, the National Metrology Institutes of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed in Tashkent an agreement on co-operation, which defines the main areas of interaction for the next five years. The document refers to the close partnership of the parties in the development and implementation of programmes to create national and working measurement standards. "Another direction is participation in the development of interstate documents on the issues of ensuring the uniformity of measurements to solve the problems of harmonisation of national legislations and development of common principles of activity in this field"³¹⁴ . In addition, the programme of cooperation for 2021-2023 was adopted by the State Committee for Standardisation of Belarus and the agency "Uzstandart", which outlined comparisons of state

³¹³ Belarus aims at further development of bilateral relations with Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9736>

³¹⁴ Institutes of Metrology of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/instituty-metrologii-belorussi-i-uzbekistana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-431178-2021/>

measurement standards, calibration of measurement standards and working measuring instruments, as well as participation of laboratories in proficiency testing programmes. All this, together with the planned establishment of a permanent group, should help to resolve issues related to technical barriers to trade between the two countries. Another important aspect of cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan in this area is that the Eurasian Economic Union currently has a draft agreement on the procedure and conditions for the elimination of technical barriers to trade with third countries in high readiness. In this regard, the Belarusian Gosstandart is "working on the possibility and making a proactive proposal that the first pilot project under this agreement after its entry into force be implemented with Uzbekistan"³¹⁵.

Ten more cooperation documents were signed in early March 2021 by higher education institutions of the two countries. They supplemented the already very extensive legal framework of interaction between educational institutions and scientific organisations, which already included about two hundred direct agreements. Thanks to them, joint faculties are now successfully functioning, Belarusian-Uzbek educational programmes are being implemented, including dual-diploma programmes. A joint Belarusian-Uzbek Interindustry Institute of Applied Technical Qualifications was opened in Tashkent. The establishment of the Uzbek-Belarusian University of Materials Science is under consideration. The following figures are quite eloquent: "In the 2020-2021 academic year, Belarusian educational institutions will host about 2,000 Uzbek students. Exports of educational services to Uzbekistan last year [2020] totalled \$1.7 million, having increased by almost 14% compared to the previous year"³¹⁶. It should be assumed that the appearance of ten more documents on co-operation between the universities of the two countries will only contribute to the further expansion of Belarusian-Uzbek interaction in the educational sphere.

It should be noted that a number of domestic universities are showing considerable interest in developing co-operation with Uzbek partners. Among them are the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, the Belarusian National Technical University, the Belarusian State Technological University, the Masherov State University of Vitebsk, the

³¹⁵ Gosstandart of Belarus and the agency "Uzstandart" signed a programme of cooperation for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gosstandart-belarusi-i-agentstvo-uzstandart-podpisali-programmu-sotrudnichestva-na-2021-2023-gody-431298-2021/>

³¹⁶ Universities of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed 10 documents on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/vuzy-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-podpisali-10-dokumentov-o-sotrudnichestve-431140-2021>

Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, and the Francysk Skorina State University of Gomel. The Belarusian State University (BSU) is also busy implementing big plans to expand its presence in the Uzbek educational market and plans to seriously expand the range of joint educational programmes here.

In particular, the agreement signed in April 2021 on cultural and scientific co-operation between BSU and Mirzo Ulugbek National University of Uzbekistan, the first and leading higher education institution in Central Asia, offers great opportunities in this regard. Established in 1918, today it unites 12 faculties: Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Social Sciences, History, Geology and Geoinformation Systems, Geography and Natural Resources, Foreign Philology, Journalism and Taekwondo and Sports. Until recently, the interaction between the two universities consisted in joint training of Uzbek students in "medical and biological science" and "medical ecology" on the basis of the International State Ecological Institute named after A.D. Sakharov BSU.³¹⁷ The document signed in April concerns not only cooperation on student and faculty exchange, preparation of theses, dissertations and publications, joint scientific research and events, exchange of literature and periodicals, but also expands the subject area of inter-university relations in new directions, among which "the parties have indicated an increase in joint educational programmes in the humanities and natural sciences, the organisation of mutual summer schools, interaction between the Uzbek and Uzbek sides. In addition, the Uzbek side was interested in the BSU's experience in organising a system of continuing education for lawyers, which is implemented through a law college and faculty, as well as the Institute for retraining and advanced training of judges, prosecutors, courts and justice institutions. It is also quite possible that Belarusian scientists with relevant experience will participate in the development of a satellite for the Uzbek university.

The topic of expanding the range of educational programmes is also relevant in the BSU's interaction with the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, where Uzbek students have been jointly studying Oriental (Chinese) philology since 2019. Among the new areas under discussion is the use of BSU's experience in training specialists for the IT industry, as well as the development of interdisciplinary specialities. In particular, in April 2021, "the

³¹⁷ BSU and the National University of Uzbekistan reach a new level of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-natsionalnyj-universitet-uzbekistana-vygodat-na-novyj-uroven-sotrudnichestva-436206-2021/>

initiative of joint training of students in the field of computer linguistics³¹⁸, as well as the implementation of youth startup projects was supported.

A concrete result of the implementation of the roadmap signed in April 2021 between BSU and Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi will be the opening in December 2021 in Minsk of a cabinet of Uzbek language and literature, the activities of which "will be aimed at strengthening educational and cultural ties between the two countries, creating conditions for studying the language, history and ethnic characteristics of Uzbekistan"³¹⁹.

The cooperation agreement between BSU and Tashkent State Law University has been in force since 2020. This year, this cooperation will be expanded through joint education of Uzbek students on the basis of the law college of the Belarusian university with the prospect of further enrolment in the BSU Law Faculty, as well as the opening of joint programmes with the BSU Faculty of International Relations. It is worth noting here that the Uzbek partners were very "interested in the experience of BSU participation in international rankings, according to which the Belarusian university is close to the top 1% of the world's best universities"³²⁰. In April 2021, the parties agreed to set up a working group to promptly develop documents on the implementation of the proposed initiatives, as well as to organise a joint educational programme to train legal personnel in September. Finally, in cooperation with the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, the two sides are currently discussing the issues of Uzbek teachers' internships at BSU, their training in advanced training programmes, and inviting Belarusian university staff to lecture in Tashkent.

Another important outcome of the work of the intergovernmental commission was the first meeting of the Belarusian-Uzbek business council held in Tashkent, which brought together more than 170 representatives of business circles of the two countries who were able to discuss "specific cooperation projects in agriculture, machine building, logistics, food industry, chemical and pharmaceutical production, science and education, and

³¹⁸ BSU plans to expand joint educational programmes with Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-planiruet-rasshirit-s-uzbekistanom-sovmestnye-obrazovatelnye-programmy-435893-2021/>

³¹⁹ Cabinet of Uzbek language and culture will be opened in BSU [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/kabinet-uzbekskogo-jazyka-i-kultury-otkrojut-v-bgu-435914-2021/>

³²⁰ BSU will expand cooperation with Uzbekistan in the field of education [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-rasshirit-sotrudnistvo-s-uzbekistanom-v-oblasti-obrazovaniya-436565-2021/>

information technologies"³²¹ . The potential for the implementation of these projects is very eloquently demonstrated by the example of the Minsk Motor Plant, whose representatives brought to the Uzbek capital contracts worth more than four million dollars. This is largely due to the fact that "MMZ's distribution network in Tashkent is represented by BURAN-SAVDO, SIGMA, INDUSTRIAL MARKETING, FUTURE GENERATION MARKETING. In 2019-2020, MMZ sold more than 1 thousand engines to the primary and secondary markets of Uzbekistan"³²² .

A logical continuation of the first meeting of the Business Council was the participation of 23 Belarusian companies in April 2021 in the international exhibition "INNOPROM. Big Industrial Week in Uzbekistan", where exporters from Belarus presented products of mechanical engineering, metallurgy, chemical industry, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, as well as scientific developments and consumer goods. One of the concrete results of the participation of Belarusian manufacturers in this exhibition event was the signing of a letter of intent by MAZ-Tashkent LLC, a subsidiary of the Minsk Automobile Plant in Uzbekistan, "for the supply of chassis and machine kits for the assembly of vehicles to the Uzbek market for the amount of \$10 million. A contract was also signed with a private Uzbek company for the supply of 50 units of MAZ machinery for a total of \$3 million.³²³ . So the prospects for the development of economic ties between the two countries are serious.

We would like to remind that the basic document of trade and economic interaction between Belarus and Uzbekistan is the roadmap of cooperation between the two countries, adopted in November 2018 and comprising 158 measures. By May 2020, more than a third of them had already been fulfilled. This had an immediate impact on the state of Belarusian-Uzbek partnership ties: "At the end of 2019, the volume of trade turnover between the countries reached \$239 million and increased 1.5 times by 2018"³²⁴ . This means that the parties intend to achieve as quickly as possible the goal, which was outlined in

³²¹ More than 170 business representatives of Belarus and Uzbekistan took part in the meeting of the Business Council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-170-predstavitelej-biznesa-belorussi-i-uzbekistana-prinjali-uchastie-v-zasedanii-delovogo-soveta-431374-2021>

³²² MMZ during the intergovernmental commission in Uzbekistan plans to sign contracts for more than \$4 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mmz-vo-vremja-mezhpravkomissii-v-uzbekistane-planiruet-podpisat-kontrakty-bolee-chem-na-4-mln-431277-2021/>

³²³ More than 20 Belarusian enterprises took part in a major industrial exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-20-belorusskikh-predpriyatiy-prinjali-uchastie-v-krupnoj-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-436286-2021/>

³²⁴ Vladimir Dvornik held talks with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sardor Umurzakov [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.govt.gov.uz/content/9423>

the same 2018 by the heads of the two states - to increase the volume of bilateral trade turnover to one billion dollars. "The task is supposed to be solved in three to four years, actualising all possible areas of cooperation"³²⁵, among which agriculture is one of the most promising.

The fact is that the main trend in the development of the agro-industrial complex of Uzbekistan today is the formation of a cluster system of production. In other words, clusters should unite producers of agricultural raw materials and their processors into industrial enterprises. Uzbek partners view the Belarusian experience in this regard as very positive and therefore demonstrate their high interest in establishing direct business contacts and partnerships with Belarusian producers and processors, the effectiveness of which is evidenced by the figures.

In 2019, agricultural products and foodstuffs worth \$35 million were supplied to the Uzbek market from Belarus, which more than doubled the level of 2018. The positive dynamics of mutual trade in this area continued next year, despite the restrictions caused by the spread of the coronavirus. "Belarusian food exports more than doubled in 2020 and reached \$73 million. supplies of Belarusian beef more than doubled, sugar 3.5 times, milk powder twice, fish and fish products 1.5 times increased to Uzbekistan"³²⁶.

At the same time, cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan, of course, is not limited only to mutual supplies of food products, but also includes a wide range of interaction, including the development of joint scientific approaches and modern technologies. In particular, "promising areas of cooperation in the agro-industrial sector include participation of the Belarusian side in the construction of dairy complexes, organisation of milk processing, establishment of joint ventures for the production of veterinary drugs, cooperation in the field of breeding, organisation of training and retraining of Uzbek specialists on the basis of Belarusian agrarian educational institutions"³²⁷.

The first Belarusian-Uzbek Agrarian Forum, which took place in 2020 and was attended by more than 700 people, demonstrated this diversity of effective partnerships. The business part of the Belarusian delegation alone

³²⁵ Zaleskii, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. View from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 223.

³²⁶ Belarusian food exports to Uzbekistan more than doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-uzbekistan-y-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-431838-2021/>

³²⁷ On the results of Vladimir Dvornik's visit to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9301>

included about 150 representatives of agricultural and food exporting companies, scientific and educational institutions of the country. In particular, an active participant of the forum was Gomselmash OJSC, which signed an agreement with the Tashkent Agricultural Machinery Plant in autumn 2019. "The document provides for the creation of an assembly production of combines in the capital of Uzbekistan"³²⁸. From the Uzbek side were delegations from all regions of the country, as well as from the relevant ministries and organisations of the agro-industrial complex. As a result, on the margins of the forum, "Belarusian exporting enterprises signed more than 30 agreements and contracts with Uzbek partners"³²⁹. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan adopted a Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation.

Simultaneously with the agrarian forum, an exhibition was organised in Tashkent, where the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus alone presented more than 60 innovative developments and technologies for agriculture in Uzbekistan. Among the novelties of Belarusian scientists from the Scientific and Practical Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on Food, vegetable marmalade aroused great interest. "The line includes marmalade made of sweet corn, red carrots, ripe pumpkin, juicy tomato and spicy celery. The marmalade contains prebiotics and no artificial colours"³³⁰. The Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry demonstrated a range of complex mineral fertilisers with a balanced ratio of nutritional elements for cultivated crops. The S.N. Vyshellesky Institute of Experimental Veterinary Medicine showed vaccines for the prevention and treatment of viral and bacterial diseases of farm animals. Scientists from the Centre for Identification Systems and Electronic Business Operations offered technologies for digital identification and traceability of animals and animal products. The Scientific and Practical Centre for Potato Breeding interested the visitors of the exhibition with new potato varieties - "Manifest", "Uladar", "Palats" - resistant to a complex of diseases. As we can see, even this short list of novelties presented in Tashkent clearly

³²⁸ "Gomselmash" will present its potential at the agrarian forum in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-predstavit-svoi-potentsial-na-agrarnom-forume-v-uzbekistane-380486-2020>

³²⁹ More than 30 agreements and contracts signed as a result of the Belarusian-Uzbek agrarian forum [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-30-soglashenij-i-kontraktov-podpisano-po-ityogam-belorussko-uzbekskogo-agrarnogo-foruma-381350-2020/>

³³⁰ NAS of Belarus presented in Uzbekistan more than 60 innovative developments for agriculture [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nan-belorussi-predstavila-v-uzbekistane-bolee-60-innovatsionnyh-razrabotok-dlya-selskogo-hozjajstva-381057-2020/>

shows what tempting prospects are opening up in the development of Belarusian-Uzbek partnership in agriculture in the near future.

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Belarus - Hungary: trade turnover demonstrates sustainability and business community shows interest in partnership

In April 2021, at the initiative of the Hungarian business community, a Hungarian-Belarusian business forum was held online, attended by more than 80 companies from both countries. This took place while trade relations between Budapest and Minsk remained very active. Suffice it to say that "Belarus's trade turnover with Hungary has generally demonstrated resilience to external shocks during the pandemic. In 2020, it reached \$245.5 million, with Belarusian exports totalling \$121.8 million"³³¹. The main supplies from Belarus to the Hungarian market were railway cars, potash and mineral fertilisers, plywood, parts and accessories for cars and tractors, and furniture. In addition, 412 Belarusian tractors worth more than seven million dollars were delivered to Hungary via Poland in 2020. All these facts show that there is a serious potential for further increasing the volume and expanding the range of mutual trade turnover, as well as attracting mutual investments.

Based on the understanding of the existing prospects in bilateral trade and economic cooperation, the participants of the business forum came to the conclusion that it was necessary to establish a joint Belarusian-Hungarian business council on the basis of the chambers of commerce of the two countries. It was decided to formalise its composition at the next meeting of the intergovernmental trade and economic commission, which is scheduled for the second half of 2021. With the emergence of such a council, the parties connect not only hopes for new business contacts, revival of the export-import and investment component of bilateral interaction. "This platform could become a discussion platform where problematic issues are discussed, new ideas and recommendations for the governments of the two countries to develop bilateral trade are developed"³³².

It should be noted that trade and economic interaction has traditionally been one of the main priorities in the development of partnership ties between Belarus and Hungary. Thus, the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental

³³¹ Belarus and Hungary will create a joint business council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-sozdatut-sovmestnyj-delovoj-sovet-439230-2021/>

³³² Ponomarev, A. Viktor Orban's visit - a new stage of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation / A. Ponomarev // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/vizit-viktora-orbana-novyj-etap-belorussko-vengerskogo-sotrudnichestva-7346/>

Belarusian-Hungarian Commission for Economic Cooperation, which took place in May 2020, discussed, first of all, pressing issues of trade interaction, as well as the state of partnership in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, energy, transport, science, education, and tourism. A month later, in June 2020, the issues of economic interaction were in the centre of attention during the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister V. Orban to Belarus. Orban, when the task for the next two-three years was announced - to increase trade turnover between the countries up to 500 million euros. This can happen through the implementation of various projects, "which include both the attraction and use of Belarusian technologies in Hungary in such areas as mechanical engineering and construction, and Hungarian technologies in Belarus - agriculture and pharmaceuticals"³³³. In this regard, cooperation between the parties in the field of electric transport can be particularly effective, since "given Hungary's plans to switch to green technologies, cooperation in the production of buses and electric buses is particularly promising..."³³⁴.

Another promising area of economic partnership between the two countries, which could focus the attention of the business council being formed, is the electricity sector. Recall that in June 2020, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by the Ministry of Energy of Belarus and the Office of the Prime Minister of Hungary, which cemented the mutual interest of the parties in cooperation in the nuclear energy sector in order to develop contacts between business entities whose activities are related to the construction of nuclear power facilities and infrastructure. "In addition, it is planned to exchange experience in the field of operation of nuclear power plants, storage and disposal of radioactive waste. The memorandum envisages various forms of interaction, including the establishment of joint ventures to participate in investment projects in the field of electric power industry"³³⁵. This interest of the parties in co-operation is explained by the fact that Hungary, like Belarus, "has decided to co-operate with Russia in the development of nuclear energy, a model identical to the Belarusian power units will be used in the expansion

³³³ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus is ready to share its experience in the development of electric transport with Hungary [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9444>

³³⁴ Negotiations with the Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://president.gov.by/ru/media/details/peregovory-s-premer-ministrom-vengrii-viktorom-orbanom-1591375023>

³³⁵ Belarus and Hungary signed a memorandum of co-operation in the field of electric power industry [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-v-oblasti-elektroenergetiki-393689-2020/>

of the Paks NPP. This opens up additional opportunities for finding points of contact"³³⁶ .

We would also like to recall that back in January 2019, Belarus and Hungary signed a number of important documents outlining promising areas for the development of bilateral relations. Among them, we would like to single out two - the intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian agreement on the promotion and mutual protection of investments, as well as the memorandum of the two countries' foreign ministries on the promotion of interregional cooperation. Minsk and Budapest see the agreement on mutual protection of investments as particularly important because "it is of exceptional importance for investors of any country. <...> It is an excellent impetus for the realisation of investment projects"³³⁷ . This document, which has been worked on for almost ten years, contains an important signal for the business community of the two countries to intensify co-operation. Especially since already "Hungary and Belarus are developing co-operation in many areas, there are joint projects in engineering, pharmaceuticals, construction, and finance"³³⁸ . In particular, in 2017, a joint venture with Belarusian partners in the construction sector appeared in Hungary. The company, established with the participation of Belstroycentre, participates in construction projects here and is also engaged in supplying Belarusian construction materials here. And the pharmaceutical company Gedeon Richter has been operating in Belarus for many years. In total, there are "eight enterprises with Hungarian capital"³³⁹ .

Nevertheless, according to the parties, "there is a need for joint new investment projects, deep industrial co-operation with the prospect of entering not only national markets, but also the capacious markets of the European Union for Belarus and the Eurasian Economic Union for Hungary"³⁴⁰ . And such plans should get their real outlines in the foreseeable future. In particular,

³³⁶ Hajnowski, A. Belarusian-Hungarian co-operation is pragmatic and effective / A. Hajnowski // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/interview/view/belorussko-vengerskoe-sotrudnichestvo-javlaetsja-pragmatichnym-i-effektivnym-6383/>

³³⁷ Agreement on mutual protection of investments between Belarus and Hungary gives impetus to the implementation of projects - Szijjártó [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/soglashenie-o-vzaimnoj-zaschite-investitsij-mezhdu-belarusju-i-vengriej-daet-impuls-dlya-realizatsii-333401-2019/>

³³⁸ Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-i-vneshnej-torgovli-vengrii-peterom-sijjarto-20273/

³³⁹ Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8529>

³⁴⁰ Transcript of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei following the talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary (14 January 2019) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c74a125b79ae2a47.html

it was assumed that as early as 2019, "the first Belarusian-Hungarian agricultural enterprise, which will use Hungarian technologies for corn processing, will be established in Mogilev region"³⁴¹. And in the same year, the two countries planned to open a joint line for the production of double-decker cars for railway trains. "A total of 19 double-decker trains are to be manufactured. This will be a first in the history of Hungarian railways. They will be used on the most popular destinations"³⁴².

It is to be assumed that the future business council will also focus on the issues of intensification of interregional cooperation, the potential of which the parties have yet to really master. Thus, the free economic zone (FEZ) Grodnoinvest, whose administration was among the participants of the April Hungarian-Belarusian business forum, is ready to become one of the active participants of this partnership. The interest of Hrodna residents is based on the already existing foundation of co-operation with partners from this European country. In particular, "the trade turnover of residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest with Hungary totalled \$2.1 million in 2020, including exports of \$575 million. In particular, "the trade turnover of FEZ Hrodna residents with Hungary totalled USD 2.1 million in 2020, including exports of USD 575 thousand. US DOLLARS. The main exports are chipboard, furniture, plastic products"³⁴³.

An important role in this context should also be played by the memorandum on promoting interregional cooperation, which gives the parties an opportunity to expand cooperation between the regions not only within the two capitals - Minsk and Budapest - but also within their respective countries. Recall that the Cooperation Agreement between the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Municipality of Budapest was signed in 2016. At that time, the Belarusian capital was seriously interested in the experience of Hungarian partners in the use of large sports facilities, public transport management, waste recycling, and water treatment. In April 2018, Budapest hosted the Days of Minsk, which once again showed what serious potential of the partnership the parties can still use in practice. Suffice it to say that Minsk companies sold

³⁴¹ Grishkevich, A. The first Belarusian-Hungarian agricultural enterprise will be created in Mogilev region / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervoe-belorussko-vengerskoe-selzhpredpriyatie-sozdadut-v-mogilevskoj-oblasti-332570-2019/>

³⁴² Belarus and Hungary will produce double-decker cars for trains [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-budut-proizvodit-dvuhetazhnye-vagonny-dlya-poezdov-332532-2019/>

³⁴³ Administration of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" took part in the Hungarian-Belarusian business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/administraciya-sez-grodnoinvest-prinyala-uchastie-v-rabote-vengersko-belorusskogo-biznes-foruma/>

goods "worth over \$26 million on the Hungarian market in 2017, increasing the volume of exports by 37.2% compared to 2016"³⁴⁴ . At the same time, in April 2018, a co-operation agreement was signed between the Partizansky district of Minsk and the Csepel district of Budapest, which opened new opportunities, first of all, for economic interaction. After all, both districts are industrial, so the enterprises located on their territory will be able to co-operate mutually beneficially. And they are already doing it. For example, "the Kozlov plant works with Siemens. <...> The search for points of contact continues"³⁴⁵ . In June 2020, representatives of the Gomel region and the Hungarian region of Gyor-Moshon-Szopron, one of the leading in the country in terms of economic indicators, also discussed the possibilities of establishing interregional partnerships. The discussion was primarily about the implementation of the "memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of poultry breeding" signed in 2020³⁴⁶ , where very tempting prospects are opening up.

In May 2020, as noted above, the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian Commission for Economic Cooperation - the leading bilateral platform where positions are brought closer together and solutions are worked out on a wide range of topical issues on the economic and humanitarian agenda - was held. For the first time in the practice of bilateral relations, this event was held in the videoconference format for quite understandable reasons, but it did not lose its relevance in terms of comprehending the prospects of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation, the development of which can be characterised by several major trends.

One of the drivers of growth back in 2020 was agriculture, as evidenced by the following facts. At the end of 2019, the trade turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs between Belarus and Hungary increased by almost 15 per cent and exceeded \$17 million. An important detail: "Exports of Belarusian agro-industrial complex products more than tripled during this period. Among the main export items are seeds and fruits of various oilseeds, shellfish"³⁴⁷ .

³⁴⁴ Parukova, E. Days of Minsk in Budapest: what links the two capitals and how their cooperation will develop / E. Parukova // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://minsknews.by/dni-minska-v-budapeshte-cto-svyazyvaet-dve-stolitsyi-i-kak-budet-razvivatsya-ih-sotrudnichestvo/>

³⁴⁵ The leaders of Partizansky district of Minsk and Csepel district of Budapest signed an agreement on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://part.gov.by/3744-rukovoditeli-partizanskogo-rajona-minska-i-rajona-chepel-budapeshta-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve>

³⁴⁶ Grishkevich, A. Gomel region establishes ties with the Hungarian region / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblstanalazhivaet-svjazi-s-vengerskim-regionom-396832-2020/>

³⁴⁷ Markovich, E. Belarus in 2019 increased exports of agricultural products to Hungary more than three times / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

The first quarter of 2020 saw a similar picture: the turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs grew by almost ten per cent and Belarusian exports by twenty per cent. At the same time, the parties continued to actively increase their efforts to implement new joint projects in this area. In March 2020, during the visit to Belarus of P. Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations of Hungary, the parties "identified the main areas for further cooperation in food supplies, investments, and poultry farming"³⁴⁸.

In June 2020, the 1st Minsk Poultry Farm and the Hungarian company Babolna Tetra signed a framework cooperation agreement totalling about three and a half million euros. This document, which will last for three years, provides for breeding poultry and egg breeding stock. Thanks to this project, Belarus will be "practically exempt from importing breeding laying hens from 2020, and from 2023 it will be able to fully supply the domestic market with its own breed of egg chickens"³⁴⁹.

Belarus is also interested in commodity supplies from Hungary in those areas of the agricultural sector that are very well developed in this country - corn, cattle, and poultry. In particular, we are talking about the implementation of a joint project with Hungarian partners to grow geese in Gomel region "to restore the regions affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe"³⁵⁰. At least, during the negotiations held on this issue in June 2020, the financing of this project was already discussed, as well as where this production will be organised and who from the Belarusian side will take part in it. In addition, in June 2020, Belarus and Hungary "agreed to develop an agreement on cooperation in the field of training of personnel for agricultural industries, to establish cooperation between agricultural universities, as well as to establish a working group for cooperation in the field of agriculture"³⁵¹.

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2019-godu-uvelichila-eksport-produktsii-apk-v-vengriju-bolee-chem-v-tri-raza-393476-2020/>

³⁴⁸ Belarus and Hungary plan to expand co-operation in the agro-industrial complex [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-planirujut-rasshirjat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-apk-381906-2020/>

³⁴⁹ Markovich, E. Belarus and Hungary will co-operate in poultry farming / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-budut-sotrudnichat-v-sfere-ptitsevodstva-393454-2020/>

³⁵⁰ Markovich, E. Belarus is interested in the implementation of a joint project with Hungary on goose breeding / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-realizatsii-sovmestnogo-s-vengrij-proekta-po-vyraschivaniyu-gusej-393464-2020/>

³⁵¹ Belarus and Hungary will develop an agreement on cooperation in training of personnel for agro-industrial complex [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-razrabotajut-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-v-podgotovke-kadrov-dlya-apk-398804-2020/>

Other promising areas of cooperation include medicine. Thus, back in July 2020, the Belarusian JLLC Nativita and the Hungarian company Pharma Gap Kft signed an agreement in Budapest on the intention to cooperate in order to speed up the registration and distribution "in Hungary and other countries of vital medicines produced in Belarus. The list of medicines includes medicines used in the treatment of oncological diseases, as well as cytokine storm in infection caused by COVID-19"³⁵². And in December 2020, the parties, discussing cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector and current approaches to drug treatment of complications caused by coronavirus infection, oncological and other serious diseases, reached an agreement "on the conditions of access of Belarusian medicines to the Hungarian market"³⁵³. The agreements between the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of Belarus and the Hungarian Competition Authority reached in 2020 should also play a positive role in the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries. In particular, the parties agreed on the "final version of the memorandum of co-operation in the field of competition policy"³⁵⁴.

It only remains to add that the legal framework of Belarusian-Hungarian bilateral cooperation today "includes about 20 international treaties regulating trade and economic, scientific and cultural cooperation, cooperation on legal and tax issues, agriculture, sports, tourism, education, defence, and road transport"³⁵⁵. This creates a solid basis for the successful activity of the joint business council to be formed, the appearance of which, as noted above, is scheduled for the second half of 2021.

³⁵² Grishkevich, A. Belarusian drugs enter the pharmaceutical market of Hungary / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-lekarstva-vygodat-na-farmatsevticheskij-rynek-vengrii-399319-2020/>

³⁵³ Belarus and Hungary discussed co-operation in the pharmaceutical industry [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-vengrija-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-v-farmatsevticheskoy-otrasli-420817-2020/>

³⁵⁴ MART and the Hungarian Competition Authority plan to sign a memorandum of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mart-i-vengerskoe-konkurentnoe-vedomstvo-planirujut-podpisat-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-400521-2020/>

³⁵⁵ Bilateral relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://hungary.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/HUN/pol/

Belarus: Sustainable Development Goals and 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, which includes specialists of the ministry in the field of media relations and representatives of television and print media. The aim of this group is to raise awareness of the Belarusian society about the implementation of the SDGs in our country.

We recall that in September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it fixed 17 Sustainable Development Goals, aimed, in particular, at eliminating poverty and hunger, combating inequality and injustice, and addressing climate change. This event required all states of the planet, including the Republic of Belarus, to start creating mechanisms to achieve the SDGs.

A year and a half later - in May 2017 - the institutional framework for managing the implementation of the plans has been established in our country: firstly, the post of the national coordinator for the Sustainable Development Goals has been established; secondly, the national architecture for managing the implementation of the SDGs has been built, which includes the Sustainable Development Council, parliamentary, regional and partnership groups for sustainable development, ensuring effective interaction between the public sector and public organisations. The Council for Sustainable Development has assigned each of the 17 SDGs to the Belarusian government agencies that are responsible for addressing the relevant issues. As a result, "all involved state bodies are part of four sectoral blocks: economy, ecology, social sphere, monitoring"³⁵⁶.

Following the recommendation of the United Nations to conduct a three-level - global, regional, national - analysis of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, Belarus presented its voluntary report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the international level as early as 2017, then took part in the presentation of the Eurasian Economic Union's report on sustainable development at the UN headquarters, and in 2018, it organised a regional forum of national coordinators dedicated to building partnerships

³⁵⁶ Shchetkina, M. Sustainable development depends on each of us / M. Shchetkina // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/ustojchivoe-razvitiie-zavist-ot-kazhdogo-iz-nas-6646/>

between countries and organisations in the region. As a result, Belarus ranked 23rd on the 2018 Global Sustainable Development Goals Index, which was calculated for 156 countries based on one hundred SDG-related indicators, with a "score above the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region"³⁵⁷.

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. Among them are laws on specially protected natural areas, on the production and circulation of organic products. In 2019, draft laws on healthcare, the rights of the disabled were considered. It is also assumed that it is the Sustainable Development Goals that will become an organic part of the country's socio-economic development to reach a gross domestic product of one hundred billion dollars by 2025 and "join the group of countries with average per capita incomes at purchasing power parity above the world average"³⁵⁸.

Another important condition for the successful achievement of the SDGs is the synchronisation of the work of regional groups, as "sustainable development of the country as a whole is possible only in case of sustainable development of all its regions"³⁵⁹. This is why territorial development plans should be proposed not only by the national government, but also, first of all, by representatives of local governments, taking into account the needs and interests of citizens. That is why the comprehensive development plan for more than 30 Belarusian regions lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development, the implementation of which would make it possible to pull these territories up to the national average level, developed in August 2019 by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus together with regional executive committees, seems to be extremely important in this context. Suffice it to say that "today a package of 280 projects has been formed. About 54 projects will be created from scratch, about 80 will be investments in existing production facilities and 140 projects are related to infrastructure (about 30%

³⁵⁷ Belarus ranked 23rd among 156 countries in achieving the SDGs for 2018 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/belarus-zanjala-23-e-mesto-sredi-156-stran-v-dostizhenii-tsur-za-2018-god-333890-2019/>

³⁵⁸ Belarus considers the 2030 Agenda as a basis for a new global policy - Myasnikovich [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-povestku-2030-kak-osnovu-dlya-novoj-globalnoj-politiki-myasnikovich-333892-2019/>

³⁵⁹ Meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8943>

- industrial infrastructure, the rest - social facilities)"³⁶⁰. In addition to these 280 projects, there are another 224 investment proposals. It is also important that some of the projects in this comprehensive plan will be financed by "foreign investors, as well as international financial institutions, which allocate funds primarily for infrastructure development, for example, the construction of water deferrization stations or the conversion of boiler houses to local fuels, the development of alternative forms of energy. World Bank funds will be used to renovate schools and hospitals"³⁶¹.

In January 2019, Minsk hosted the first National Forum on Sustainable Development, where more than four hundred participants reviewed the national experience of Belarus in achieving the SDGs, the progress of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the country until 2030, as well as the peculiarities of the preparation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2035. The positive experience of Brest and Mogilev oblasts in this respect was noted. And today it is a question of overcoming the varied progress in organising this work in other Belarusian regions.

At the same first National Sustainable Development Forum, it was noted that an important role in implementing the main provisions of the 2030 Agenda in national strategic documents, sectoral and regional programmes should be played by the country's mass media, which "still have a lot to do for a broad public understanding of the essence of the SDGs and the role of each person in their achievement"³⁶². That is why in August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus established a working group in the national architecture of SDG management, composed of journalists deeply immersed in the topic, to conduct information work on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. But it is already clear that the efforts of one working group alone will not be enough to realise such a large-scale media project.³⁶³ That is why, in August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the country,

³⁶⁰ It is proposed to include 280 projects in the development plan of the lagging regions of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-plan-razvitiya-otstajuschih-regionov-belarusi-predlagaetsja-vkljuchit-280-proektov-359816-2019/>

³⁶¹ Shchetkina: the work of regional groups on achieving the SDGs in Belarus should 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/>

³⁶² Media will make up a separate group in the work on achieving the SDGs in Belarus - Shchetkina [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-sostavljat-otdelnuju-gruppu-v-rabote-nad-dostizheniem-tsur-v-belarusi-schetkina-333874-2019/>

³⁶³ The republican competition for mass media "From Global Goals to Local Actions" is announced [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/objavljen-respublikanskij-konkurs-dlya-smi-ot-globalnyh-tselej-k-lokalnym-dejstvijam-359398-2019/>

with the support of the national coordinator of the project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) "Supporting the functioning of the governance architecture of the Sustainable Development Goals achievement process in the Republic of Belarus", announced a national contest "From Global Goals to Local Actions" to engage the Belarusian society in the process of achieving the SDGs and activate the work of journalists.

Until 1 December 2019, this competition accepted essays, interviews, articles, TV and radio spots, cycles of publications and broadcasts in seven categories, which include areas such as: 1) environmental; 2) social topics, including gender equality and youth issues; 3) economic; 4) topics related to vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, and the implementation of the principle "Leave No One Behind"; 5) interagency cooperation to achieve the SDGs; 6) projects aimed at achieving the SDGs and implemented by businesses, including impact investing projects; 7) public initiatives aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The results of the contest showed that it was a good test of the level of competence of, first of all, Belarusian journalists and another opportunity for them to unlock their creative potential. Thanks to this format of creative competition, the Belarusian press had a very diverse discussion of the main directions and Sustainable Development Goals, as well as opportunities for their implementation and realisation. After all, it was not only leading journalists who took part in it. The competition also attracted a wide audience of readers, TV and radio listeners, once again confirming the conclusion that "Mass media are 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"³⁶⁴.

An important detail: in 2020, the Republic of Belarus should significantly strengthen the work on the Sustainable Development Goals, first of all, at the regional level. The regional mass media should again have their own weighty word in addressing this issue, because, according to M. Shchetkina, the national SDG coordinator, "without informing the population,

³⁶⁴ The editorial teams of "7 Days" and "Belaruskaya Dumki" won the competition for coverage of the SDGs [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/kollektivny-redaktsij-7-dnej-i-beloruskaj-dumki-pobedili-v-konkurse-po-osvescheniju-tsentr-373180-2019/>

without involving them in the work to achieve the SDGs, practically nothing can be done"³⁶⁵. This means that the range of publications on this topic in regional media should be very broad, dealing with virtually all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and taking into account the priorities of socio-economic development of the country until 2030. It is worth recalling here that media work is very closely linked to Goal 16, which is to promote peaceful, open societies and partnerships.

As for other SDGs, Goal No. 5: "Decent Work and Economic Growth", which sets the task to develop the economy of Belarusian regions at an accelerated pace, is of particular relevance for the Republic of Belarus in the current conditions. A characteristic detail in this regard is that "the traditional economy has practically exhausted its growth reserves, and further development is possible only through the creation of new industries, including those involving foreign investors"³⁶⁶. 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 the relevant legislation and revise the entire investment agenda"³⁶⁷. At the same time, regional policy will be put in the centre of attention. In particular, the Belarusian government is already actively engaged in three large pilot projects: Orsha district of Vitebsk region, working with territories lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development, as well as 11 major cities.

In addition, in 2019, the country implemented the most important investment projects in such areas as automotive, metallurgical and construction industries, pulp and paper, woodworking and light industries, oil refining, petrochemical and energy complexes. In total, as of mid-December 2019, "out of 34 particularly significant investment projects, 22 have already been commissioned"³⁶⁸, 12 of which have reached their design capacity. But not only these major projects should be in the sphere of special attention of the regional media.

Thus, Vitebsk region demonstrates positive dynamics in attracting foreign investments, in particular Latvian investments, at the regional level. In

³⁶⁵ In Belarus in 2020 will strengthen the work on achieving the SDGs at the regional level [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belorusi-v-2020-godu-usiljat-rabotu-po-dostizheniju-tsur-na-regionalmu-urovne-373167-2019/>

³⁶⁶ Sergei Rumas: Belarus is developing an action plan to create conditions for economic development [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9175>

³⁶⁷ Serhiy Rumas presented to the staff of the First Deputy Prime Minister [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9155>

³⁶⁸ Sergey Rumas: 22 out of 34 especially significant investment objects have been put into operation. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9174>

the three quarters of 2019, the volume of investments from Latvian investors has grown here three and a half times, exceeding two million dollars. There are already 90 organisations registered on the territory of Vitebsk region in the sphere of trade, woodworking, provision of motor transport services, tailoring services, production of plastic products. The fact that "33 co-operation agreements have been concluded between districts and towns of Vitebsk region and Latvian municipalities"³⁶⁹.

In this context, even more significant indicators are characteristic for Brest region, in which economy in 2020 it is planned to attract at least 90 million dollars of foreign direct investment on a net basis. Half of them are supposed to be directed to the free economic zone "Brest". As for specific cities of the region, "the task for Brest is about \$15 million of direct foreign investment, Baranavichy and Pinsk - over \$6 million"³⁷⁰. A little less than half of these funds will be used for the purchase of machinery, equipment and vehicles, in order to open about six and a half thousand new jobs through modernisation and technical re-equipment of existing enterprises and the creation of new production facilities.

At the level of specific economic entities, an interesting experience of working with foreign investments is demonstrated by the company with almost 60-year history - JSC "Gorynski Agrokombinat", located in the working settlement of Rechitsa, Stolin district, Brest region, which only in August 2019 came out of the rehabilitation procedure by concluding 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. Modernisation of the existing production facilities allowed to expand the range of products. In particular, the company "started production of a new type of product - boiled sterilised vegetables in vacuum packaging. This is an absolutely natural product without the addition of preservatives, even such harmless ones as sugar and salt. The shelf life of such ready-to-eat vegetables is six months, and the colour, quality and taste of the product are preserved"³⁷¹. If we take into account that the work

³⁶⁹ Scherbitsky, A. The volume of Latvian investments in Vitebsk region for 9 months increased by 3.5 times / A. Scherbitsky // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/objem-latvijskih-investitsij-v-vitebskuju-oblaster-za-9-mesjatsev-vyros-v-35-raza-371103-2019/>

³⁷⁰ Foreign direct investment in the economy of Brest region in 2020 will be at least \$90 million [- Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/priamye-inostrannye-investitsii-v-ekonomiku-brestskoj-oblasti-v-2020-godu-sostavljat-ne-menee-90-mln-374236-2019/>

³⁷¹ Polish investor invested Br1.6 million in the production of Goryn agrocompany [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/poljskij-investor-vlozhil-v-proizvodstvo-gorynskogo-agrokombinata-br16-mln-373083-2019/>

on the introduction of new technology in production at the agro-company has been practically completed and even made it possible to conclude a contract with a Russian company for the delivery of a new line of products to the retail network, then this experience of attracting foreign investment can be considered doubly successful. And it can become the subject of detailed study not only in the Brest regional press, but also in the media of other Belarusian regions.

All the above facts eloquently illustrate the conclusion that the implementation of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG No. 5 related to the topic of attracting foreign investment and its effective use in the Belarusian regions, should be firmly anchored on the front pages of regional, district and city newspapers and reflect as fully as possible the experience of specific economic entities already accumulated in this regard. It is also important to intensify the work of the mass media in this direction because "the media not only record our perception of reality, but actually model reality itself, the scenario and dynamics of events..."³⁷². At the same time, the task of the media is to reflect reality with all its problems, complexities and contradictions, "to further influence the change of the situation for the better"³⁷³.

³⁷² 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-drugih-subjektov-sozdanija-informatsii-7110/>

³⁷³ Karlyukevich, A. The main task of the media is to reflect reality with all the problems and difficulties / A. Karlyukevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/12/11/1940593.html>

Belarus: global information security and the regional press

Global digitalisation, which we are all witnessing today, is rapidly changing the world around us, including the information and media sphere. At the same time, new technologies affect not only the nature of the creative labour of modern journalists, but also actualise a number of challenges and threats to which the journalistic community must respond. At the international scientific-practical conference "Security and Sustainable Development: Theory and Practice in Digital Transformation" held in Minsk in December 2019, it was noted that "the leading players in the information field are now hastily building lines of defence. At the same time, while a few years ago the information sphere was dominated by the topics of free trade and human rights, now the issue of security is the dominant one"³⁷⁴. The obvious militarisation of the information space in a number of countries, which has a destructive impact on other participants in the media and information sphere, is also alarming.

Taking into account all these challenges and threats, a number of initiatives were put forward in the Republic of Belarus in 2019 to settle the issues of global information security. In particular, in March, the Concept of Information Security of the country was approved, which refers to information sovereignty as a new approach to ensuring information security, and information neutrality as a form of state-responsible behaviour and self-restraint on the use of destructive technologies to the detriment of other states. More precisely, information sovereignty in Belarus will be achieved through the formation of a system of legal regulation of relations in the information sphere, ensuring safe sustainable development, social justice and consent. Within the framework of this approach, the development of national mass media and telecommunications should be ensured, educating and stimulating in society "a critical attitude towards manifestations of disrespect for national foundations, traditions and violations of moral and legal norms in the information sphere, intolerance to disinformation, information manipulation and other implicit information and psychological influences"³⁷⁵.

³⁷⁴ Offensive potential in the information sphere has already been formed 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/>

³⁷⁵ Concept of information security of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf>

At the same time, the information sovereignty of the Belarusian state should be ensured in international relations based on the principle of information neutrality.³⁷⁶ Its essence boils down to the fact that, defending its own national interests in the information sphere using all available forces and means, the Belarusian side aims at pursuing a peace-loving foreign information policy, respecting the universally recognised and generally accepted rights of any state in this sphere, excluding the initiative of "interference in the information sphere of other countries aimed at discrediting or challenging their political, economic, social and spiritual standards and priorities, as well as harming the information society". Important for representatives of the journalistic community in this context is the provision contained in the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus that in order to ensure a policy of information neutrality it is necessary to increase the degree of Belarus' presence in the world information space and expand international information exchange.

In other words, the existing security threats point to the need to expand interstate co-operation 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 "Combating Terrorism through Innovative Approaches and the Use of New Emerging Technologies", the Belarusian side proposed to form a "digital neighbourhood belt" aimed at defusing tensions in the information sphere. According to the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko, "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 each other's information resources"³⁷⁷. The Belarusian side sees the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements on ensuring information security as a mechanism for implementing this initiative.

Speaking in September 2019 from the high rostrum of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly on the need to expand interstate digital cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere, the Belarusian side once again focused the attention of the entire global community on the need to implement the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, as well as non-interference of countries in each other's information resources. It was particularly emphasised: "Digital sovereignty should

³⁷⁶ Concept of information security of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf>

³⁷⁷ Participation in an international conference on counter-terrorism [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnoj-konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terorizmom-21910/

guarantee the ability of a state to control its information field, prevent and block cyberattacks, and ensure reliable protection of critical infrastructure. Digital neutrality implies that countries will not take actions in cyberspace that harm the security of other states. Ultimately, such agreements could lay the groundwork for international rules for responsible behaviour in virtual space"³⁷⁸.

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 organisations, and where, first of all, "it is necessary to agree so that we do not roll over each other in the media and do not wage this information war against each other"³⁷⁹. It should be noted that the Belarusian initiative to create a "digital 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 this country Sergey Lavrov in November 2019. According to him, this initiative "fully meets Russia's focus on the formation of the largest possible number of digital neighbourhoods"³⁸⁰. The Belarusian side also expressed the need to expand international cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere at the summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in November 2019 in Bishkek, stressing that "information security should be firmly established among the priority areas of the CSTO"³⁸¹. In addition, in December 2019, at the 26th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the participating States of the Organisation 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-

³⁷⁸ Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei in the general discussion at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (26 September 2019, New York) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b698116bea64ee66.html

³⁷⁹ Participation in the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the CIS [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.ru/news_ru/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistan-22184/

³⁸⁰ Lavrov: Moscow welcomes Minsk's proposal to ensure digital security [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/7145127>

³⁸¹ Collective Security Treaty Organisation Summit [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.ru/news_ru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-22481/

and security-building measures in the politico-military sphere"³⁸² , in order to better adapt to the changing security environment and, thus, increase joint actions on An important aspect of the fulfilment of this initiative is also the consistent development of partnerships between 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 utilised is the resource of analytical and expert communities, which have a unique research potential"³⁸³ . It should be assumed that representatives of the international segment of Belarusian journalism could also contribute to the development of certain areas of analysing security reserves in the information sphere. Especially as regards the fight against fake information, methodology of responsible behaviour in the information and media sphere, and ways of verifying information on the Internet.

It should be reminded that the above-mentioned Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus singled out "manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, erosion of national sovereignty, and instability of the information infrastructure" among the modern challenges and threats emerging in the information sphere and posing a danger to the constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state³⁸⁴ . Proceeding from the fact that today the information sphere has already become of key importance for any state and every person, Belarus sets the task to expand the sphere of influence of the national mass media and to take "measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting, the trust of the population to the official mass media"³⁸⁵ .

The fact is that in the course of the Big Talk with the President held in early March 2019, the head of the Belarusian state drew attention to the fact that "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a deficit of content that would enjoy absolute trust of the audience, One of the reasons is

³⁸² Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus 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/e8f7cc1b86026dad.html/>

³⁸³ Building a reliable security system by the state alone is impossible - Vakulchik [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/postroenie-nadezhnoj-sistemy-bezopasnosti-tolko-silami-gosudarstva-nevozmozhno-vakulchik-371768-2019/>

³⁸⁴ Matveev, V. The concept of information security of Belarus is planned to be approved in the near future / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/konseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belorussi-planiruetja-utverdit-v-blizhaishee-vremja-339646-2019/>

³⁸⁵ Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belorussi-20668/

the so-called fake news. They spread instantly, capture the audience, stir up thoughts"³⁸⁶ . In this regard, the role of a deterrent in the fight against fake news should take on today:

1) authoritative **media**;

2) professional **journalists** who steadfastly observe the laws of ethics and morality in 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 resolution of the XIII Belarusian International Media Forum "Partnership for the Future: Digital Agenda for Media Space", which was held in Minsk in September 2018, stated that traditional media should become a powerful unifying factor in the fight against fake information and unprofessional approaches to the coverage of current foreign and domestic issues. The resolution of the forum then emphasised that preserving the authority and positions of traditional media - print and electronic - is extremely important, as it is these subjects of the information field that are able to fully "bear responsibility to society for the quality, completeness and reliability of the information presented, and have the ability to ensure a professional approach to the creation and dissemination of information products"³⁸⁷ .

Real practice shows that the general audience's trust in the mass media arises when the media competently analyse events taking place in society and promptly provide comprehensive answers to current issues arising among readers, viewers and listeners. In other words, it is possible and necessary to minimise the threat of negative information impact in the form of fake news by creating one's own interesting, relevant and truthful content, so that "any fake can be confidently responded to and destroyed at the root"³⁸⁸ . It is clear that without close and constant co-operation with representatives of the expert

³⁸⁶ Meeting with representatives of the public and expert community, Belarusian and foreign mass media "Big Talk with the President". [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstavitelem-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/

³⁸⁷ Media need to unite in the fight against fake information and unprofessionalism - resolution of the media forum [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/sminuzhno-objedinitsja-v-borbe-s-fejkovoj-informatsiej-i-neprofessionalizmom-rezoljutsija-mediaforum-317622-2018/>

³⁸⁸ Pavel Legky: the main tool in the fight against misleading information on the Internet - people's trust [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/pavel-legkij-glavyj-instrument-v-borbe-s-nedostovernoj-informatsiej-v-internete-doverie-ljudej-317648-2018/>

community, media structures will hardly be able to fully solve such a large-scale task.

In order to strengthen the coordination of actions of the media and expert communities in this direction, it seems that it is time to start forming professional **media and expert** pools on the most important areas of Belarusian foreign and domestic policy. Professionalism in the information sphere in this case should be understood as qualitative and interesting presentation of materials, skilful technical organisation of the creative process, availability of expert opinions and analytics based on reliable data. We see something similar, for example, in the course of implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus, where among partner groups, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, a media-expert group was created in the national architecture of SDGs achievement management to conduct information work in the media space on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Another interesting example in this direction is the Plan of Joint Actions for Covering Belarus' Export Potential in the Mass Media for 2019, 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 on the development of national exports, strengthening international contacts of Belarusian enterprises, and the entry of their products into new markets"³⁸⁹. The basic component of this media-expert interaction should be a series of seminars for journalists working on foreign economic issues to not only highlight the key problems of Belarusian export development for them, but also to generally contribute to the expansion of the presence of topical economic issues in the Belarusian mass media at all levels - from central to regional. It should be reminded that the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 among the eight main tasks contains the requirement to **promote export culture** in the form of consolidating in the mass consciousness the significance of exports for the development of the country and society and raising its priority. In this regard, the adoption by the Ministry of Information and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of a plan of joint actions to

³⁸⁹ Mininform and BelCCI signed a plan of joint actions on media coverage of Belarusian exports [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/mininform-i-beltpp-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-po-osvescheniju-v-smi-belorusskogo-eksporta-339703-2019/>

highlight the export potential of Belarus in the media sphere appears to be an extremely important and necessary step.

In this context, the topic of interaction between media and expert communities at the regional level, including the implementation of the policy of international cooperation of Belarusian regions, deserves a separate discussion. The fact is that "regional mass media occupy their own unique niche in which neither national nor international mass media can compete"³⁹⁰ . But at the same time, "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is still a lack of content that would enjoy absolute trust of the audience"³⁹¹ . And this is in conditions when the thematic spectrum, in which the Belarusian regional press should be embedded, has been expanding with exceptional speed in recent years. These are just some of the directions emphasising the geography of international cooperation between the regions of Belarus that have emerged in recent years and which should be adequately reflected in the regional media in order to contribute to the effective solution of the problems arising here:

- 1) development of large-scale economic integration with the regions of the Eurasian Economic Union countries and especially with the Russian federative entities within the Union State, as well as with the regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States;
- 2) expansion of comprehensive cooperation with the regions of the European Union countries and especially within the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative, as well as with the regions of the Neighbourhood Belt countries - Poland, Lithuania, Latvia;
- 3) deepening cooperation with the regions of the countries involved in the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" megaproject and especially with the provinces, autonomous regions and cities of the People's Republic of China;
- 4) further intensification of trade and economic ties with the regions of the "far arc" countries - South-East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America - and especially with those where there is significant potential for mutually beneficial interregional cooperation.

³⁹⁰ Digitalisation boosts regional media - Lung [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsifrovizatsija-sposobstvuet-povysheniju-urovnja-regionalnyh-smi-legkij-317725-2018/>

³⁹¹ Trust of the audience district editions can be maintained by exceptional truthfulness - Melnikova [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/doverie-auditorii-rajonne-izdanija-mogut-podderzhivat-iskljuchitelnoj-pravdivostju-melnikova-338797-2019/>

In the Republic of Belarus, it is assumed that the role of traditional regional mass media will be increasingly growing, 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"³⁹². That is why here, too, information strategies specific to international regional issues are already required, which can significantly expand the sphere of influence of a particular media outlet due to the high quality of the media product it creates.

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³⁹² The role of local media in the socio-economic development of regions will be discussed at the republican meeting [Electronic resource]. - 2019. URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/rol-mestnyh-smi-v-sotsialno-ekonomicheskem-razvitiu-regionov-obsudjat-na-respublikanskem-soveschanii-337842-2019/>

Belarus: exports as a response to challenges

Sustainable economic growth at a rate of three to four per cent per year - this is the specific task set in the Republic of Belarus today to ensure stable socio-economic development of the country for the medium term. In order to successfully achieve this goal, a number of conditions must be met - "to ensure the efficient operation of each enterprise, the even and sustainable development of the country's regions; to create conditions for attracting foreign and domestic investment; to increase exports, including to new markets"³⁹³. 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 foreign currency into the country, profits to enterprises, and taxes to the budget of the Republic of Belarus"³⁹⁴. Among the Belarusian companies active in the current challenging conditions in foreign markets, we should name, first of all, the world's largest manufacturer of dump trucks and transport equipment for the mining and construction industry, which occupies about one third of the world market of dump trucks of particularly high payload capacity - the **Belarusian Automobile Plant**, whose exports in 2020 are developing in several major vectors at once.

The first vector is the **regions of Russia**. Thus, 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 in accordance with the** agreement signed in September 2019. In February 2020, three 130-tonne vehicles have already arrived in this Russian region. In total, at least 50 dump trucks will be sent there in the next three years to be used in the development of apatite-nepheline deposits in the Khibiny. It is expected that the 180-tonne dump trucks "will be subsequently modified into intelligent dump trucks and will acquire new technical characteristics. The additionally installed equipment will make it possible to control them at a great distance. An

³⁹³ Address by Kochanova 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-republiki-natsionalnogo-sobraniya-belarusi-385692-2020/>

³⁹⁴ Zaleskii, B.L. Export culture and mass consciousness / B.L. Zaleskii // Journalism-2016: status, problems and prospects: proceedings of the 18th International Scientific and Practical Conference, celebrating the 95th anniversary of the BDU, 10-11 October 2016, Minsk / edited by S.V. Dubovik (ed.) [and others]. 2016, Minsk / edited by: S.V. Dubovik (ed.) [and others]. - Vyp. 18. - Minsk : AAT "Paligrafkabinat imen Ya. Kolas", 2016. - C. 234.

experimental site for operation of quarry equipment in unmanned mode is planned to be created in the Nyorpakhh open pit of the Eastern mine"³⁹⁵ .

Also in April 2020, six more dump trucks from the Belarusian manufacturer started work in the Krasnoyarsk **region** at the Achinsk Alumina Plant, part of JSC Rusal Achinsk. The renewal of the mining and transport equipment fleet at the Mazulsky mine will improve labour productivity and reduce costs in the technological process of raw material extraction. A characteristic detail: in 2020, Rusal, one of the world's largest aluminium producers, plans to purchase several dozens of Belarusian machines, as "this equipment has high performance characteristics and is more economical in terms of fuel and lubricant consumption. The driver's cabins have improved visibility and control system, equipped with comfortable seats and climate control systems"³⁹⁶ .

Another Russian region, where this spring the second 130-tonne dump truck BELAZ-75131 has been shipped since the beginning of 2020, is the **Sverdlovsk region**, where eleven 130-tonne Belarusian machines are already working at the mining and processing enterprise Uralasbest OJSC, each of which transports up to 1,500 tonnes of rock per shift. Such figures show how important it is for the Russian side. The BELAZ trucks work "on the basis of the Bazhenovskoye deposit, the explored reserves of which will last for more than 150 years. The deposit is developed by open-pit mining. The length of the open pit is 8 kilometres, width - 2.5 kilometres, depth - 350 metres"³⁹⁷ .

The second vector is the countries of the **Eurasian Economic Union**. In particular, **Armenia**, where three 90-tonne BELAZ-75585 dump trucks were delivered in the spring of 2020. They were added to the fleet of equipment at the Sotq mine, a gold ore deposit, the largest pure gold mine in Armenia, whose reserves are estimated at more than 120 tonnes. It should be noted that 130-tonne Belarusian machines are already working here with high efficiency. The new dump trucks were equipped with diesel engines with a capacity of up to 1,200 horsepower. "New high-strength steels have been used to improve the

³⁹⁵ BELAZ delivered another batch of dump trucks to the Russian "Apatit" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavil-ocherednuju-partiju-samosvalov-rossijskomu-apatitu-386828-2020/>

³⁹⁶ Nemankova, Yu. BELAZ dump trucks started working in Krasnoyarsk Krai / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/karjernye-samosvaly-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-krasnojarskom-krae-386202-2020/>

³⁹⁷ Nemankova, Y. Another 130-tonne dump truck BELAZ will start working at the 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/>

reliability of the main load-bearing elements of the dump trucks, and cast elements have been used in the most stressed places"³⁹⁸.

The third vector is the countries of the **far arc**, the share of which in the exports of the Belarusian Automobile Plant has increased almost one and a half times since the beginning of 2020 and amounted to 40 per cent. For example, in April, eight 130-tonne dump trucks BELAZ-75131 started working at a coal mine located on the island of Kalimantan in **Indonesia**. All the wishes of the Indonesian partners and climatic conditions of operation were taken into account in their configuration. And these are such tropical options as "appropriate rubber, air conditioning, special cooling system"³⁹⁹. The Belarusian Automobile Plant is actively working to increase its presence on the African continent in **Algeria**, where in the spring of 2020 it shipped another batch of five front loaders BELAZ-78221. The company's plans include "participation in specialised exhibitions and direct negotiations with interested consumers of quarry equipment in the region"⁴⁰⁰.

Gomselmash Holding, a manufacturer of grain and forage harvesters, cob harvesters, potato harvesters, mowers, and other agricultural machinery that is already operating in the fields of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Chile, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Argentina, China, South Korea, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, is one of the Belarusian companies that are active on foreign markets even in such difficult conditions as we see today. In the first quarter of 2020, the holding's enterprises shipped more than 400 units of machinery to their customers. "At the same time, 278 self-propelled combines and machine kits to them were delivered outside Belarus. Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova are on the list of countries where the machinery was shipped to. <...> In total, the shipment increased by 373% by the same period of 2019"⁴⁰¹.

³⁹⁸ Nemankova, Y. BELAZ has sent dump trucks to Armenia / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-otpravil-v-armeniju-karjernye-samosvaly-385547-2020/>

³⁹⁹ Eight dump trucks BELAZ started work in Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vosem-karjernyh-samosvalov-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-indonezii-387074-2020/>

⁴⁰⁰ Nemankova, Yu. A batch of BELAZ loaders shipped to Algeria / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/partija-pogruzchikov-belaz-otgruzhena-v-alzhir-385911-2020/>

⁴⁰¹ "Gomselmash" in the first quarter delivered to foreign markets more than 270 combines and machine kits [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-v-i-kvartale-postavil-na-vneshnie-rynki-bolee-270-kombajnov-i-mashinokomplektov-388443-2020>

Minsk Tractor Plant is another enterprise that is now actively promoting its products to foreign markets. For example, more than 250 tractors have been shipped to Pakistan alone since the beginning of 2020. This is eloquent evidence that "even despite the crisis in many Asian countries and restrictive measures introduced due to the difficult epidemiological situation, the deliveries remain at the planned level"⁴⁰². In total, since 1955, Minsk tractor builders have shipped more than 120 thousand machines to this country of South Asia. The enterprise does not forget about other export directions. In particular, in the first quarter of this year about five hundred units of machinery and tractor kits were shipped to the markets of European countries. The following fact speaks volumes: "Export of MTW products to African countries for the first quarter of 2020 increased by 70%"⁴⁰³. For one of the countries of this continent - Sudan - in April this year another "batch of more than 100 tractors <...> was formed. This is the second shipment in 2020"⁴⁰⁴. The following figures also add to this picture quite convincingly. "Since the beginning of the year, the company has increased deliveries to Russian regions by 20%. Exports of Belarusian agricultural machinery to Uzbekistan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia have also increased"⁴⁰⁵. The supplies to Tajikistan have increased especially significantly - twice - with more than a hundred tractors and tractor kits shipped there in the first three months of this year. In many respects, such dynamics is explained by the fact that "from January 2020, spare parts and components imported into Tajikistan for further assembly of agricultural machinery are not subject to VAT and customs duties"⁴⁰⁶. In the first quarter of this year, the Minsk Tractor Plant's products were shipped to the markets of more than thirty countries, including 22 non-CIS countries.

In the first quarter of 2020, **Minsk Automobile Plant** increased its supplies of equipment to non-CIS countries almost two and a half times. An

⁴⁰² MTZ has supplied 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/>

⁴⁰³ Nemankova, Y. Export 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/>

⁴⁰⁴ 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-vtoruju-partiju-tehniki-v-sudan-386164-2020/>

⁴⁰⁵ MTZ has good export indicators: 20% increase in deliveries to Russia, 70% - to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://ont.by/news/u-mtz-horoshie-pokazateli-po-eksportu-na-20-vyrosli-postavki-v-rossiyu-na-70-v-afriku>

⁴⁰⁶ MTW increased export of products to Tajikistan in 2 times [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-uvvelichil-eksport-produktsii-v-tadzhikistan-v-2-raza-387386-2020/>

important component in achieving this indicator was the fact that at the beginning of this year, the company, together with the Barysau-based Pozhsnab LLC, signed a contract for the supply of 73 units of fire and rescue vehicles to the Mongolian Agency for Emergency Situations. And MAZ has already "started to fulfil the contract to supply chassis and assemble passenger vehicles for export to Mongolia. The joint project will be realised during this year"⁴⁰⁷.

In spring 2020, **Amkodor-DOMZ**, a unitary enterprise based in Dzerzhinsk, Minsk region, seriously updated its export plans by shipping the first batch of its products to the Russian region of the Republic of Karelia in April. There, these seven overhead cranes with lifting capacities from 3.2 to 16 tonnes will be used to implement an investment project, to which the Karelian government attaches great importance, "to set up a high-tech import-substituting full-cycle production facility on the premises of the former Onega Tractor Plant to manufacture forestry equipment: harvesters and forwarders of medium and heavy class"⁴⁰⁸. A characteristic detail: the overhead travelling cranes sent to Karelia are new generation equipment, which is controlled from the floor by radio signal, which ensures high safety standards for the personnel. It is also important that a second batch of equipment is planned to be sent to Karelia this spring from Dzerzhinsk in Belarus.

Another Belarusian company that significantly strengthened its position in the Russian market in the first quarter of 2020 is **BELJI SZAO**. The company assembled 5,059 cars in the first three months of this year, and sold a total of 5,230 cars. At the same time, "deliveries to the Russian market increased 2.5 times, 2,705 cars were exported there in the first quarter"⁴⁰⁹. The company plans to sell a total of 28,000 cars in 2020, of which 18,000 will be shipped to Russia.

Belarusian producers of agricultural products and foodstuffs continue to increase their supplies abroad. In the first quarter of 2020, their exports to 83 countries grew by almost 10 per cent to almost \$1.5 billion. An important detail: the increase in supplies was observed in almost all directions. In

⁴⁰⁷ Nemankova, Yu. MAZ in the I quarter increased exports to far abroad almost 2.4 times / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-v-i-kvartale-uvelichil-eksport-v-dalnee-zarubezhje-pochti-v-24-raza-387079-2020/>

⁴⁰⁸ "Amkodor-Onego" in Karelia received the first batch of overhead travelling cranes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-onego-v-karelji-poluchil-pervuju-partiju-mostovyh-kranov-388008-2020/>

⁴⁰⁹ "BELJI" in the I quarter increased exports to Russia by 2.5 times / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-v-i-kvartale-uvelichil-eksport-v-rossiju-v-25-raza-386430-2020/>

particular, "exports to Russia increased by 4.4 per cent, to CIS countries excluding Russia - by 24.7 per cent, to Asia and Oceania - by 2.2 times, to America and the Caribbean - by 52.4 per cent, to the EU - by 54.3 per cent. The Chinese direction showed a 2.4-fold growth"⁴¹⁰. In the first three months of 2020, supplies of Belarusian meat and meat products, milk and milk products, and potatoes to foreign markets increased particularly intensively. These positive trends were largely a continuation of the strong export performance that the Belarusian agro-industrial complex demonstrated in 2019.

It should be recalled that at that time the supplies of agricultural products and foodstuffs to 104 countries of the world exceeded the figure of five and a half billion dollars in monetary terms, accounting for almost one sixth of the merchandise exports of the Republic of Belarus 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 vegetables and fruits, soybean oil, poultry meat, eggs, chocolate and other finished products containing cocoa, and potatoes increased"⁴¹¹. Second, the geographical diversification of Belarusian exports increased. New markets included 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 could be seen in the following examples. Thus, supplies of whey and skimmed milk powder were launched to Afghanistan, malt to Angola and Burkina Faso, skimmed 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.

Third, Belarusian exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs to the markets of Belarus's strategic partners - Russia and China - increased in 2019. In particular, the volume of exports to Russia increased by three per cent to \$4.3 billion. It should be noted that "dairy products became the main driver of growth of supplies to Russia. Revenue from its exports increased by 23 per

⁴¹⁰ Export of Belarusian agricultural products in the first quarter increased by 9.8% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhозproduksii-v-i-kvartale-vyros-na-98-389760-2020/>

⁴¹¹ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products in 2019 exceeded \$5.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhозproduksii-v-2019-godu-preysil-55-mlrd-378531-2020>

cent. Supplies of eggs, flax fibre, gelatin, seeds and rapeseed oil also increased"⁴¹².

As for China, Belarus' shipments to China increased by almost 60 per cent to USD 131.5 million. This brought the share of Belarusian exports to the Chinese market in the structure of total exports to Asia and Oceania to 68 per cent. At the same time, "the volume of supplies of processed meat products with high added value (beef and poultry) increased by \$53.3 million and reached 44.1 per cent in the total structure of food exports to China"⁴¹³. And this is along with the fact that supplies of rapeseed oil, flax fibre, chocolate, alcoholic beverages, mineral waters, skimmed milk powder and whey powder increased to the Celestial Empire.

Even more intense plans for the development of exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs were adopted in Belarus for 2020 - "to increase supplies by 4.2% compared to 2019 and reach the amount exceeding \$5.7 billion"⁴¹⁴. At the same time, hopes were pinned not only on dairy products, but also on crop products, as well as meat products. In particular, 3.6 million tonnes of dairy products and 316 thousand tonnes of meat products will be shipped to Russia alone. Interesting prospects are also opening up for China, where 14 new meat producers from Belarus were accredited in January 2020. These include 11 new beef producers - Minsk, Brest, Zhlobin, Gomel, Grodno, Vitebsk, Slonim, Volkovysk, meat processing plants, Brest Traditions, Vahavyak Plus, Miron, as well as three chicken meat producers - Belorusneft-Osobino and two sites of Rassvet poultry farm. Another five enterprises have expanded the range of products possible for export to the Chinese market, "including chicken feet, wing tips and by-products"⁴¹⁵.

All these facts demonstrate the main point: whoever stays strong in the most difficult conditions wins in the end, contributing to overcoming the consequences of the unfavourable epidemiological situation in the world.

⁴¹² Nemankova, Y. Belarus plans to supply more than 3 million tonnes of dairy products and 316 thousand tonnes of meat to Russia in 2020 / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-postavit-bolee-3-mln-t-molochki-i-316-tys-t-mjasja-v-rossiju-v-2020-godu-378543-2020>

⁴¹³ The first container train with meat products is planned to send to China this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervyj-kontejnernyj-poezd-s-mjasnoj-produktsiej-planirujut-otpravit-v-kitaj-v-etom-godu-378553-2020>

⁴¹⁴ Belarus plans to increase food exports by 4.2% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-uvelichit-eksport-prodovolstvija-na-42-v-2020-godu-378535-2020>

⁴¹⁵ Another 14 producers have been accredited to supply Belarusian meat products to China [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/dlja-postavok-belorusskoj-mjasnoj-produktsii-v-kitaj-akkreditovany-esche-14-proizvoditelej-375197-2020/>

Belarus: on the way to export diversification

One of the priority tasks for the development of the Belarusian economy, set out in the Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, is commodity and country diversification of exports, which should ensure the growth of Belarusian exports to \$50 billion in 2025, as well as "promotion of goods and services to new markets"⁴¹⁶. It is clear that those enterprises that have already created a certain foundation for the development of foreign markets can contribute to this task. These include, of course, first of all, the flagships of the Belarusian industry.

Thus, despite the coronavirus pandemic, Minsk Tractor Plant exported \$530 million worth of products in 2020. At the same time, it increased deliveries to far abroad by 18.5 per cent. Although the main importers of its equipment remained Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, "in total, the products were supplied to 45 countries, including nine countries where they were not sold in 2019 (Burundi, Great Britain, Haiti, Guatemala, Guinea, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Spain)"⁴¹⁷.

The Belarusian Steel Works shipped two million tonnes of steel products to 52 countries in 2020. The share of the European Union countries in total exports exceeded 45 per cent. The fact that "the volume of shipments to Spain, Slovenia and France has grown two or more times. Shipments to Austria, Ireland, Romania, Poland and Finland increased by more than 30 per cent"⁴¹⁸. The highest demand on the markets of these countries was for wire rod, flat-rolled bronze and steel wire, as well as structural rolled products intended for the automotive industry.

The Minsk Motor Works (MMZ), on the other hand, increased its deliveries to Russia by more than 12 per cent in 2020 alone, exceeding the value of \$40 million. This is largely due to the fact that in the neighbouring

⁴¹⁶ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 46.

⁴¹⁷ MTZ in 2020 increased export of products to far abroad by 18.5% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-v-2020-godu-uvelichil-eksport-produktu-v-dalnee-zarubezhje-na-185-427593-2021/>

⁴¹⁸ BMZ has increased export of steel products to 13 countries of the European Union [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bmz-narastil-eksport-metalloproductu-v-13-stran-evrosojuza-426139-2021/>

country MMZ "cooperates with 59 Russian industrial assembly enterprises and is also working on establishing partnerships with ten more"⁴¹⁹.

Enterprises of the Bellegprom Concern are starting the new five-year period from a rather high position in terms of exports. Last year they shipped to 52 countries about 60 per cent of all their manufactured goods, having achieved a foreign trade surplus of more than \$170 million. Exports to Lithuania (128.7 per cent), Germany (104.6 per cent), Estonia (115.3 per cent), Japan (296.2 per cent), Uzbekistan (107.3 per cent), Sweden (102.8 per cent), Bulgaria (158.2 per cent), Slovakia (176.2 per cent), Czech Republic (115.8 per cent), Israel (129.4 per cent), Denmark (360.3 per cent), Australia (361.2 per cent), Austria (261.4 per cent)"⁴²⁰.

In 2020, the enterprises of Bellesbumprom Concern increased their exports of goods by five per cent. The volume of exports to the markets of 70 countries reached almost \$610 million and accounted for a record three quarters of the total volume of the Concern's products. This was largely due to the increased sales of export items to non-CIS countries. In particular, supplies to Albania, Ireland, Iceland, Cyprus, Mexico were resumed, but the highest growth rate was noted in the USA, Canada, Austria, Great Britain, Switzerland, Finland, Turkey, India, Indonesia. In addition, "exports to China grew almost 1.3 times by the end of the year. Exports to Russia increased by 5.2 per cent and to Ukraine by 7 per cent"⁴²¹.

It should be assumed that in 2021, these and other Belarusian enterprises will try to keep up the momentum. At least, the results of January of this year show that economic entities in our country have taken up the task of export quite responsibly, having increased the supply of goods and services to foreign countries by 13.5 per cent - up to more than three billion dollars. At the same time, "exports of goods increased by 19.4 per cent to \$2.36 billion <...>. The balance was positive in the amount of \$100.2 million (in January 2020 it was negative and amounted to \$61.2 million"⁴²².

⁴¹⁹ MMZ in 2020 increased the volume of supplies to Russia by more than 12% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mmz-v-2020-godu-narastil-objemy-postavok-v-rossiju-bolee-chem-na-12-425977-2021/>

⁴²⁰ "Bellegprom" in 2020 supplied products to 52 countries of the world [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellegprom-v-2020-godu-postavil-produktsiju-v-52-strany-mira-427383-2021/>

⁴²¹ Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2020 increased the export of products by 5% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-bellesbumproma-v-2020-godu-uvelichili-eksport-produktsii-na-5-427809-2021/>

⁴²² Belarus increased exports of goods and services by 13.3% to \$3.057 billion in January [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-janvare-uvelichila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-135-do-3057-mldr-432023-2021/>

Among those who have already made a significant contribution to the achievement of this indicator, it is worth mentioning again the enterprises of Bellesbumprom Concern, which in January were able to increase the supply of their products abroad by another 18 per cent - up to \$55.5 million. This was due to the growth of exports of wood boards, furniture, pulp, plywood, paper and cardboard. In total, almost 50 commodity items were shipped to the markets of 48 countries. An important detail: more than half of the export volume - almost \$30 million - was shipped to non-CIS countries. In addition, "shipments to the European Union increased by 15.5 per cent, to China - by 35.9 per cent. Shipments to CIS markets increased by 10.6%"⁴²³. Among the countries, Russia, Poland and China became the leaders in this list. In general, in 2021 the enterprises of the concern "Bellesbumprom" plan to "continue increasing exports of goods by less than 6.5% to the level of 2020"⁴²⁴. In particular, in this regard, a plant for the production of multilayer cardboard on the basis of the Dobrush paper mill "Hero of Labour" and a new production facility for wood fuel - pellets - in Vitebsk are planned to be put into operation this year.

Domestic high-tech products can and should contribute to achieving high export diversification indicators. In 2020, the Republic of Belarus set a task to maintain the volume of its exports at the level of USD 15 billion, both through supplies of existing items and the emergence of new priorities. Recall that last year the supplies of such products abroad were carried out in such areas as radio electronics, instrumentation, machine building, pharmaceuticals. "A significant contribution to exports is made by the ICT sector. The demand for Belarusian intellectual property is also growing"⁴²⁵. The participation of domestic developers in international exhibitions held in autumn 2020 was a very effective tool for promoting 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

⁴²³ Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in January increased the export of products by 18% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-bellesbumproma-v-janvare-uvelichili-eksport-produktsei-na-18-432143-2021/>

⁴²⁴ The enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2021 plan to increase exports by at least 6.5% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-bellesbumproma-v-2021-godu-planirujut-uvelichit-eksport-ne-menee-chem-na-65-429310-2021/>

⁴²⁵ Belarus expects to maintain the volume of exports of high-tech products at the level of \$15 billion this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-etom-godu-sohranit-objem-eksporta-vysokotekhnologichnoj-produktseii-na-urovne-15-421250-2020/>

Egypt, attended by more than 400 companies from such countries as Russia, China, the USA, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, the Republic of Korea, and Saudi Arabia. A distinctive feature of the Belarusian exposition was the latest developments of research organisations of the National Academy of Sciences and higher educational institutions of the Ministry of Education, which have high export potential. In particular, the Belarusian State University demonstrated in Cairo a number of developments for medical purposes: a set of medical software for cardiology, mathematical models for surgical practice, computer modelling for creating drugs against SARS-CoV coronavirus. The Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics presented developments in the field of information security for banking and customs companies. 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 micromodule for onboard recognition of surface and object images, as well as a cluster personal supercomputer UIIP-OFFICE, designed for complex scientific calculations, modelling, solving engineering problems and teaching parallel programming technologies at universities"⁴²⁶.

Belarus' national exposition at the Third China International Import Expo in the online format was also a good help in promoting Belarusian high-tech exports. Suffice it to say that the Belarusian side presented more than a hundred scientific, technical and innovative developments in information and communication technologies, healthcare, biotechnology, new materials, and agriculture. Among them it is worth mentioning a more than actual development of the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Transfusiology and Medical Biotechnologies - "anticoviral immunoglobulin for the treatment of patients with severe COVID-19 infection, as well as patients with viral encephalitis and meningoencephalitis"⁴²⁷. The Belarusian National Technical University showed here a unique acoustic system for the treatment of skin oncological diseases, which has a higher efficiency compared

⁴²⁶ Exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus is presented at the international exhibition in Cairo [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-made-in-belarus-predstavlena-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-kaire-417549-2020/>

⁴²⁷ More than 100 scientific and technical developments will be presented by Belarus at the China Import Expo [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolej-100-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavljat-belarus-na-kitajskoj-vystavke-importa-414174-2020/>

to traditional methods and at the same time allows to reduce the radiation dose to the patient by a quarter. The National Academy of Sciences demonstrated at the exhibition of imports an office supercomputer, which has small dimensions and at the same time provides complex scientific calculations and processing of a large amount of data, and the Belarusian State University - preparations for plant protection based on natural components that can be used in organic farming. Among the innovative developments of the Belarusian State Technological University at the China International Import Expo in Shanghai were presented "the technology of nickel-diamond coating, self-cleaning antibacterial composite coatings, radio-protective glass, thin nominal sheet glass and flexible glass films for solar batteries"⁴²⁸, as well as the technology of forming imitation decorative coatings on wood, board, facing and composite materials, and dental cements and materiazine materials.

Finally, a wide range of Belarusian high-tech scientific and technical developments was presented at the TeMEx international online industrial exhibition, which was held under the auspices of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for three months starting from mid-October 2020 and attended by more than 70 companies from eight countries. The Minsk Automobile Plant showed an absolute novelty - an electric bus. The project "Intelligent Quarry" was demonstrated by the Belarusian Automobile Plant. All these and a number of other facts confirm the conclusion that "the main core factor in the development of the industrial complex of Belarus is the growth of the innovation component of its output"⁴²⁹, which, in turn, will inevitably contribute to the growth of Belarusian high-tech exports in the near future.

Another priority area for Belarusian exports is agricultural products and foodstuffs. The above-mentioned Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025 in the section "Efficient and Environmentally Safe Agriculture" sets tasks to improve the competitiveness of agricultural production and increase export potential in order to eventually reach "exports of food products and agricultural raw

⁴²⁸ Innovative developments of BSTU will be presented at the exhibition of goods and services in Shanghai [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/innovatsionnye-razrabotki-bgtu-predstavljat-na-vystavke-tovarov-i-uslug-v-shanhae-414078-2020/>

⁴²⁹ Kharitonchik: the main factor in the development of industrial complex of Belarus is the growth of innovative products [Electronic resource]. 2020. - URL: https://www.belta.by/economics/view/haritonchik-glavnym-faktorom-razvitiya-promkompleksa-belarusi-javlaetsja-rost-innovatsionnoj-410940-2020/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent

materials in 2025 - USD 7 billion"⁴³⁰. At the same time, the government plans to bet "on all segments: both crop and livestock production"⁴³¹, as well as on diversification of export supplies.

In addition, the Republic of Belarus has approved the State Programme "Agrarian Business" for 2021-2025. It provides for the achievement of such goals as increasing the competitiveness of agricultural products and foodstuffs, developing environmentally friendly agriculture, ensuring a nutritious diet and healthy lifestyle for the population, and "building up export potential"⁴³². The programme contains nine sub-programmes dealing with areas such as: 1) crop production; 2) seed production; 3) livestock breeding; 4) breeding; 5) fishery activities; 6) land reclamation; 7) engineering flood control measures for the protection of agricultural land; 8) ensuring general conditions for the functioning of the agro-industrial complex; and 9) support for small forms of farming. Subject to their successful implementation, "the export of food products and agricultural raw materials in 2025 is projected to increase by 21.3 per cent by 2020 (up to USD 7 billion)"⁴³³. It is quite realistic to achieve this provided that the raw material base of agro-industrial production is strengthened, existing industries are modernised and new competitive industries are developed, industries and sub-branches of the agro-industrial complex are digitalised, and breeding and genetics are developed for the needs of sustainable agriculture. And the immediate task - for 2021 - is "to increase exports of agricultural products by 4.3% to the level of 2020. This will amount to just over \$6bn"⁴³⁴.

Belarusian exporters intend to move forward in this direction based on several basic priorities. First, it is important to maintain what has been achieved in traditional markets, which include Russia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. Suffice it to say that the share of the Russian market in Belarusian agricultural exports in 2020 was almost three quarters of the total volume, or

⁴³⁰ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 35.

⁴³¹ Growth of production volumes and export diversification - Alexander Subbotin outlined the tasks for the meat industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9783>

⁴³² Prodbezopasnost' and increase of export - the directions of development of agrarian business are defined [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prodbezopasnost-i-naraschivanie-eksporta-opredeleny-napravlenija-razvitiya-agrarnogo-biznesa-427294-2021/>

⁴³³ State programme "Agrarian business" for 2021-2025 years [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22100059&p1=1&p5=0>

⁴³⁴ Belarus expects to increase exports of agricultural products up to \$7 billion in 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-2025-godu-narastit-eksport-selholzproduktsii-do-7-mldr-427628-2021/>

\$4.3 billion. And this is not only meat and dairy products, but also high-tech products. "These are seeds and planting material, pedigree livestock, plant protection products, veterinary drugs, fodder additives, modern agricultural machinery"⁴³⁵. At the joint meeting of the board of the agricultural departments of the two countries held in March 2021, the parties outlined further necessary measures to increase mutual trade and the main directions of integration of the Belarusian and Russian agro-complexes in the Union State, which gives good reason to believe: co-operation in agriculture between Belarus and Russia will only increase.

As for Uzbekistan, in 2020, the trade turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs with this country in Central Asia exceeded \$87 million, increasing by 76 per cent at once. An important detail is that "Belarusian food exports more than doubled in 2020 and reached \$73 million. The supplies of Belarusian beef to Uzbekistan increased by more than two times, sugar by 3.5 times, milk powder by two times, fish and fish products by 1.5 times"⁴³⁶. The parties also actively co-operated in other areas of the industry. Speaking of cattle breeding, one should recall the supply of about 400 cattle of Belarusian selection to Uzbekistan in 2020. In order to increase the volume of this cooperation, the Belarusian Belplemzhivobedinenie and Uzbek VostokMedGeruda have set up a joint breeding and genetic centre to purchase and supply Belarusian breeding cattle to Uzbekistan, as well as provide scientific and technological support. In the field of veterinary medicine, Belarusian BelVitunifarm together with the Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine and the Research Institute of Veterinary Medicine decided to set up a joint venture to produce veterinary drugs and vaccines on Uzbek territory. In the field of breeding, the result of cooperation between the Research Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Research Institute of Vegetable and Melon Crops and Potatoes of Uzbekistan was the production of 45 varieties of vegetables and 6 varieties of melons of Belarusian selection. There are also results in seed breeding, where partnership ties are actively developed by Belsemena and the Seed Breeding Centre of Uzbekistan. In 2020, samples of seeds of peas, beans, carrots, onions and tomatoes of Uzbek selection were sent to Belarus for testing, while tomato, onion, beetroot, radish, carrot and bean seeds of Belarusian selection were successfully grown on

⁴³⁵ More than 70% of Belarusian food exports to Russia in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-70-belorusskogo-eksporta-prodovolstvija-v-2020-godu-prihodilos-na-rossiju-432008-2021/>

⁴³⁶ Belarusian food exports to Uzbekistan more than doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-uzbekistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-431838-2021/>

Uzbek soil. Finally, in the field of education, the Tashkent State Agrarian University and the Grodno State Agrarian University established joint faculties in Tashkent and Andijan and began admitting students to bachelor's programmes in Plant Protection and Quarantine and Technology of Storage and Processing of Animal Raw Materials.

Belarusian agricultural exports to Azerbaijan also increased by more than 10 per cent last year. More precisely, "in 2020, trade turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs reached \$35 million and increased by 5.3% compared to 2019. Exports of goods - \$30.4 million (or 110.7%), imports \$4.6 million"⁴³⁷. This was due to supplies from Belarus of a wide range of dairy and meat products from such Belarusian exporting enterprises as SOAO 'Belovezhskie Cheese', OJSC 'Luninetsky Dairy Plant', OJSC 'Molochny Mir', OJSC 'Rogachev Dairy Plant', PUE 'Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant', OJSC 'Lidsky Dairy Plant', OJSC 'Minsk Dairy Plant No. 1'. In June 2021, enterprises from Belarus will become participants of the international exhibition of food industry InterFood Azerbaijan, which will allow them to open new opportunities to enter the consumer market of this country of the South Caucasus. So the prospects for increasing exports are not bad.

Secondly, special attention will be paid to the diversification of sales markets and the development of exports to other countries of the world. In particular, it is planned to actively develop food supplies to the Chinese market, which in 2020 alone almost doubled due to exports of beef, poultry meat, dried milk, dried whey, 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, Belarusian agricultural products and foodstuffs were supplied to 116 countries of the world. At the same time, 20 new markets were opened. "These include Kuwait (started supplying flour confectionery and candy), Nepal (protein substrates), Algeria and Madagascar (flour), Congo (maize seeds), Mali (maize groats), Morocco (beet cake), Namibia (milk powder), Somalia (sugar), Sierra Leone (egg processing products), Equatorial Guinea (poultry meat), South Sudan (whole milk powder). Also on the list are Paraguay, St Lucia, Djibouti, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal Croatia"⁴³⁸. In general, the share of the countries of the far arc in the total volume of Belarusian

⁴³⁷ Exports of Belarusian products to Azerbaijan increased by 10.7% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktsii-v-azerbajdzhan-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-107-433105-2021/>

⁴³⁸ Belarus in 2020 started supplying agricultural products to 20 new markets [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2020-godu-nachala-postavki-selhozproduktsii-na-20-novyh-rynkov-427631-2021/>

agricultural exports in 2020 increased to \$796 million and amounted to almost 14 per cent.

Overall, in 2020, food exports from Belarus grew by 4.3 per cent and exceeded \$5.8 billion. For example, this allowed our country to become one of the world's top five exporters of a number of dairy products - butter, cheese, milk powder, whey. At the same time, the Belarusian side seeks "not to export raw materials, but to process grain, milk and meat in the country to the maximum extent possible and to supply abroad products with high added value, so that these goods reach the shelves of shops and customers form a stable loyal opinion about Belarusian goods"⁴³⁹.

A good example of such an approach to the development and consolidation of its positions in foreign markets is demonstrated, in particular, by OJSC "Rogachevsky MKK". The main trends of the company's foreign economic development in 2020 are: increasing supplies to the already developed markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Israel, USA, as well as entering new markets - 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 appreciated condensed milk with cocoa, coffee and chicory"⁴⁴⁰, choosing in favour of safe and natural products.

Another interesting example in this context is the Turov Dairy Plant, which "now accounts for 80% of production for foreign consumers. Deliveries to other countries brought the company almost \$87 million - 20% more than in 2019"⁴⁴¹. In total, dairy products from Turow were supplied to 16 countries in 2020. At the same time, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Iraq became new markets. In 2021, the plant plans to increase export volumes by more than a quarter. These plans are based on the active re-equipment of the enterprise. In 2020, it increased the capacity for the production of cream cheese, installed lines for whey processing and thickening. In 2021, the modernisation of the extraction cheese line is planned.

⁴³⁹ Export of Belarusian agricultural products in 2020 increased by 4.3% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoy-selholzproduktsii-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-43-427620-2021>

⁴⁴⁰ Rogachev MCC in 2020 expanded exports 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>

⁴⁴¹ Turovsky dairy plant in 2020 produced one third more cheese and earned \$110 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turovskij-molochnyj-kombinat-v-2020-godu-proizvel-na-tret-bolshe-syrov-i-vyrychil-110-mln-427862-2021/>

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 realistic and achievable with the active work of Belarusian economic entities both in industry, in the production of high-tech products, and in the agro-industrial complex.

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Belarus: free and special economic zones as regional growth points

The Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Free Economic Zones", adopted on 7 December 1998, defines the attraction of "investments in the creation and development of export-oriented and import-substituting industries based on new and high technologies" as one of the main objectives of FEZ creation⁴⁴². More than 20 years of experience of FEZs established in the country shows 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 FEZ, established in Belarus in 1998, has been quite successful in achieving this goal. As of the beginning of February 2020, it has already united 116 resident enterprises on its territory, 57 of which are foreign-invested. Over its more than 20-year history, the capital's FEZ has attracted investments in excess of two billion dollars, including from investors from more than 20 countries. Occupying an area of about three thousand hectares, it now includes 23 sites in Minsk and the capital region, including such cities as Molodechno, Zhodino, Fanipol, Borisov, where machine-building and metalworking, chemical and petrochemical, timber and construction industries successfully operate. A kind of business card of FEZ "Minsk" are such well-known not only in Belarus, but also abroad manufacturers as: "Stadler-Minsk" - electric trains and trams; "Alutech" group of companies - components for security rollers, gate systems; "Adani" - X-ray equipment; "BELJI" - passenger cars and low-tonnage vehicles; "S.N.E. Europe Industries Bisov" - bimetallic 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 administration of FEZ Minsk registered another 17 new resident companies. One of them in December 2019 became JSC Belagromash, which intends to create the production of specialised steel railway containers on the territory of Molodechno Metalware Plant, whose innovative properties will increase the speed of loading and unloading of goods due to the fact that the new containers can be lifted from one type of transport to another - from a

⁴⁴² Law of the Republic of Belarus On Free Economic Zones [Electronic resource]. - 1998. - URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=H19800213>

railway platform to a motor vehicle platform and vice versa. This project is also attracted by the fact that "the main customer of the containers is a foreign company, so the new production will be maximally export-oriented. At least 130 jobs will be created"⁴⁴³.

On the eve of 2020, BelMetr Limited Liability Company became a resident of the FEZ. Its plans include the implementation of an investment project in Zhodzina for the production of vandal-proof water consumption meters with improved characteristics. These include: anti-magnetic protection; anti-fraud device against external impact on the cover; high sensitivity of the meter; elimination of misting of the upper part of the case. And let "production at the initial stage will be carried out on rented premises, in the future it is planned to build a new production building"⁴⁴⁴.

The ranks of FEZ Minsk residents began to swell quite intensively in 2020. In mid-January, the company Techno-Express, one of the leading Belarusian manufacturers of passenger car life support systems, was registered here. The company plans to implement an investment project in the FEZ to produce electrical equipment for passenger cars of locomotive traction. In particular, it concerns the production of air-conditioning converters - "devices designed to power asynchronous motors of air-conditioning installation on railway passenger cars as part of electrical equipment and life support complexes"⁴⁴⁵. This project has both import-substituting and export-oriented potential, as the main consumer of the above products will be not only the Belarusian railway, but also interested companies in neighbouring countries.

A week later, the FEZ welcomed its second resident in 2020 - BEL-DOZER LLC. It plans to build a plant in Fanipol to produce a wide range of specialised machinery for earthmoving, construction and transport works. It intends to "produce loaders-excavators - multifunctional machines for construction and repair works, as well as graders - productive special equipment, which is actively used in the construction and maintenance of

⁴⁴³ Production of freight containers will be established in Molodechno [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-gruzovyh-kontejnerov-naladjan-v-molodechno-372673-2019/>

⁴⁴⁴ Investment project for the production of water meters will be realised in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/investisjionnyj-proekt-po-proizvodstvu-schetchikov-vody-budet-realizovan-v-zhodino-374581-2019/>

⁴⁴⁵ The first resident in 2020 is registered in FEZ "Minsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyj-v-2020-godu-rezident-zaregistrovan-v-sez-minsk-376013-2020/>

motorways and aerodromes. <...> The volume of investments in the project implementation will amount to more than 1 million euros"⁴⁴⁶.

Another new resident of FEZ Minsk - Emfil Oil LLC, registered here at the beginning of February 2020, will be located in Fanipol. A distinctive feature of its investment project will be a pronounced export-orientation of products. The fact is that "the enterprise plans to establish production of dedusting, as well as chemically active filter elements for air purification, on the basis of which the production of innovative high-tech equipment will be organised"⁴⁴⁷, the design, development and manufacture of which will be carried out exclusively to order.

Finally, a very recent example. In May, the FEZ "Minsk" registered its seventh resident in 2020 - LLC "Zaslavskie paints", which intends to organise the production of special paint and varnish materials for road markings in Zhodzina. "The cost of the investment project is estimated at \$10 million"⁴⁴⁸. As we can see, with the arrival of 2020 in FEZ "Minsk" does not reduce growth rates, contributing to the socio-economic development not only of the capital region, but also of the country as a whole.

The Brest Free Economic Zone was the first to be established in the Republic of Belarus. It took place in 1996. Today it is a multi-profile economic territory, where production, technological and logistic activities can be developed. Moreover, part of it is adjacent to the road and railway checkpoints across the state border and can be used as a logistics component. Since the creation of the FEZ, the total volume of investments here has exceeded one and a half billion dollars. These investments are certainly giving their return. For three quarters of 2019, residents of FEZ "Brest" have almost doubled their contributions to the budget - from 20.9 million Belarusian rubles in 2018 to 41 million now. Today, 73 enterprises from 20 countries are already operating on its territory. It is noteworthy that in 2018 they "exported goods worth \$700

⁴⁴⁶ A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will build a plant for the production of special equipment in Fanipol [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyi-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-v-fanipole-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetsstehniki-376899-2020/>

⁴⁴⁷ A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will produce non-standard equipment for air purification [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-vypuskat-nestandardnoe-oborudovanie-dlya-ochistki-vozduha-378734-2020>

⁴⁴⁸ The plant for the production of paint and varnish materials will be built on the territory of FEZ "Minsk" in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-lakokrasochnyh-materialov-postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsk-v-zhodino-390518-2020>

million, the geography of exports includes 70 countries of the world"⁴⁴⁹ . A year later - at the beginning of 2020 - "FEZ economic entities exported goods worth \$718 million, and the export geography includes 75 countries of the world"⁴⁵⁰ .

Germany is the leader among foreign countries in terms of investment in FEZs. German investors account for one third of the total amount of foreign investments made here. And enterprises with German capital show high economic efficiency. Among them are Santa Bremore, Discom, and Salamander Window and Door Systems, whose products are well known both in Belarus and abroad. In particular, in April 2019, Discom opened a new production facility for paint and varnish materials 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 created about 20 additional jobs for the residents of Brest"⁴⁵¹ .

Italian entrepreneurs are very active in the FEZ "Brest", who "have already invested 3 million euros in new projects and created 150 jobs. In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian company Frieza Industri was opened at the Airport site. Here they manufacture energy-saving devices for refrigeration equipment"⁴⁵² and show one of the highest export growth rates among FEZ enterprises. It should be reminded that back in 2010 the Ministry of Economic Development of Italy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Brest Regional Executive Committee signed a declaration on the creation of an Italian industrial district on the territory of the FEZ, the territory of which is 26 hectares. A year later, a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of this industrial district was adopted in Trieste, which provided for the creation of the most favourable conditions for attracting Italian investors and envisaged "the development of the Italian industrial zone in Brest as a transport and logistics centre providing transshipment and transit of goods

⁴⁴⁹ Residents of FEZ "Brest" doubled the deductions to the budget [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-brest-vdvoe-uvelichili-otchislenija-v-bjudzhet-367876-2019/3>

⁴⁵⁰ History [Electronic resource]. -2020. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/history>

⁴⁵¹ Opening of new production "Discom" [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/otkrytie-novogo-proizvodstva-%C2%ABdiskom%C2%BB>

⁴⁵² Discussion of the Belarusian-Italian business forum continued in Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/obsuzhdenie-voprosov-belorusko-italianskogo-biznes-foruma-prodolzhilos-v-breste>

between the European Union, the Customs Union and, in the future, China"⁴⁵³ . So, the prospects for Italian business in FEZ "Brest" are simply huge.

Polish businessmen also show great interest in the FEZ. Today, 11 companies with Polish capital, including Stomil Sanok BR, operate here. Investors from this European country "rank third after Germany and Russia. In the total volume, the share of Polish investments is 17 per cent"⁴⁵⁴ . In particular, the English Windows Ltd with Polish investment was registered here in March 2019. "It is planned to create at least 20 jobs at the new enterprise"⁴⁵⁵ . It is quite possible that in 2020 the co-operation agreement signed in April 2017 between the administration of FEZ "Brest" and the Lower Silesia Economic Development Agency will be further developed in the form of concrete projects.

Israeli entrepreneurs are also interested in co-operation with FEZ "Brest", as they have a good example to follow: the current resident of the free economic zone is "a company with Israeli capital Fa-UN, which has established in the FEZ the production of feed additives for agricultural production"⁴⁵⁶ . In September 2019, the experience of FEZ "Brest" was thoroughly studied by a delegation from the Israeli city of Ashdod, whose port is the largest in Israel, as 60% of all cargo imported to this Middle Eastern country passes through it, including from the FEZ resident - the company "Santa Bremore". It should be assumed that the dialogue that has begun between the parties on establishing cooperation ties between the enterprises of Brest and Ashdod will develop in the near future.

Swiss entrepreneurs have their own interest in the FEZ. They are attracted, first of all, by the favourable location of Brest airport, which makes it possible to use it for flights of private aviation. And further it can be a question of locating here "production facilities of enterprises with Swiss capital related to mechanical engineering and food production"⁴⁵⁷ .

⁴⁵³ Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 147.

⁴⁵⁴ Strengthening partnerships [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/2-ukrepljaya-partnerskie-svyazi>

⁴⁵⁵ A new resident of FEZ "Brest" is registered [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/zaregistrovani-novyij-rezident-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB>

⁴⁵⁶ The administration of FEZ "Brest" held a meeting with a delegation from Israel [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administracii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegacijej-iz-izrailya>

⁴⁵⁷ In the administration of FEZ "Brest" discussed the proposals of the Swiss business community [Electronic resource]. - 2018 . - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administracii-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyix-krugov-shvezcarii>

In 2019, the export volume of resident enterprises of the **free economic zone Grodnoinvest** approached one billion dollars, having increased by almost 10 per cent compared to 2018. This allowed to increase the share of the free economic zone in the total export of industrial goods of Grodno region to 42 per cent. In general, the trade turnover of FEZ residents exceeded one and a half billion dollars with a surplus of more than 380 million dollars. Two main vectors can be identified in the geography of these exports: post-Soviet - Russia, Ukraine; European - Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Latvia. At the same time, the basis of supplies outside Belarus "was formed by companies from the sectors of woodworking and furniture production (30% of total exports), food production (27%), machine building and metalworking"⁴⁵⁸. In the same row should be noted the enterprises of chemical and textile industries, as well as manufacturers of vehicles and equipment, rubber and plastic products. The FEZ sees prospects for development in attracting new residents who could contribute to further increase of exports of goods and services.

It should be reminded that the FEZ Grodnoinvest, established in 2002, now comprises 12 territories not only in Grodno, but also in such cities of Grodno Region as Mosty, Novahrudak, Slonim, Shchuchyn, 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 woodworking and non-metallic mineral products production, 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, allowing to significantly reduce project costs and increase the competitiveness of products, with a total volume of declared investments of more than \$190 million, including in fixed capital - four companies from Belarus, Austria and Poland. They intend to build highly efficient plants in Grodno and Svisloch, creating more than 560 new jobs. At the same time, "most of the output will be supplied to the countries of the European Union"⁴⁵⁹.

In this context, the year 2020 has also started very productively for the FEZ. In particular, in February, the company EUECOPAK was registered as a resident here. The company intends to invest more than one million dollars in

⁴⁵⁸ Exports of FEZ residents "Grodnoinvest" in 2019 approached \$1 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-pribilisja-k-1mlrd-379958-2020>

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

the creation of production facilities to produce disposable paper packaging and tableware. This topic is certainly very relevant for Belarus, where legislative measures are now being taken to stimulate the transition of enterprises to the use of environmentally friendly packaging, including that made of paper. The new FEZ resident intends to produce paper kraft bags with and without handle, carton packaging of the Lunchbox type, paper cocktail tubes and cups for cold and hot drinks. It is expected that these products "will be sold mainly on foreign markets. The share of export supplies will exceed 85%. The main markets will be the countries of the European Union"⁴⁶⁰. In addition, 25 new jobs will be created here.

In the same February 2020, the company ZOV-MARKET became a resident of the FEZ, which will create a modern enterprise for the production of dry trimmed boards, timber and furniture blanks on the basis of an unfinished construction site in Hrodna. It is characteristic that "70% of production will be exported to the countries of the European Union"⁴⁶¹. One of the new FEZ residents in the near future may become Berango logistics company from France, which is interested in the implementation of the investment project "on the creation of a multimodal logistics terminal for processing and cleaning of containers and tanks"⁴⁶². Negotiations on this particular issue took place with the FEZ administration in Hrodna in February 2020.

The existing FEZ residents are also actively expanding the production of export-oriented products. Thus, in February 2020, LLC "Terrazit Plus" demonstrated a new innovative control handle VPC ALPHA Grip of Constellation series within the innovative project Virpil Controls on creation of devices for virtual control of aeroplanes, helicopters, prototypes of spaceships. What is important in this regard is that this "product is in demand in the Western European market, almost all production is for export"⁴⁶³, and the project involves pilots, designers, constructors and software developers.

⁴⁶⁰ Production of paper packaging will be created by a new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest". [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvodstvo-bumazhnoj-upakovki-sozdast-novyj-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-379035-2020/>

⁴⁶¹ 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/>

⁴⁶² The company from France considers the possibility of creating 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/>

⁴⁶³ Resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" LLC "Terrazit Plus" presented new innovative products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-ooo-terrazit-plus-predstavil-novyyu-innovacionnyu-produkciyu/>

In 2019, Belabedding IOOO, which has been a resident of the FEZ since 2006, started producing new products - continental beds of the Boxspringbett type. And now "more than 80% of the company's products are exported to the countries of Western Europe"⁴⁶⁴. It should be assumed that the measures taken in the FEZ will bring even more significant results in terms of increasing exports of products of residents of the free economic zone Hrodnainvest 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 the second economic complex operating in such a mode. The first in this list of SEZs was the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" back in 2015. It should be noted that the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) strictly limits the possibility of creating such territorial formations in the member states of the integration association. In particular, only "three such zones can be created in Russia, two in Belarus, one each in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan"⁴⁶⁵. It should be reminded that the term "special economic zone" is usually used to designate a territory with "a special legal status in relation to the rest of the country and favourable economic conditions for entrepreneurs"⁴⁶⁶. SEZs are created in order to attract foreign direct investment, create new jobs for highly qualified personnel, develop the export base, minimise costs due to the absence of export and import duties, bring production closer to the consumer, use cheaper labour, and develop territories.

The Bremino-Orsha SEZ intends to attract investors with a number of incentives and tax advantages. In particular, zero tax rates on profit (for 9 years), on real estate (for 20 years), on dividends (until 1 January 2033), as well as zero rates of offshore duty, export value added tax (VAT) when exporting manufactured goods outside the EAEU, VAT on the sale, rental or leasing of real estate by residents (until 1 January 2033), finally, a special legal regime for 50 years to engage in industrial processing, wholesale trade, e-commerce, logistics and warehousing services, postal services, information and administrative services, research and development. For this purpose, two

⁴⁶⁴ The resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" IOOO "Belabedding" launched the production of new products [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-ioooo-belabedding-zapustila-vypusk-novoj-produkciu/>

⁴⁶⁵ Special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" started operating in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/06/27/1827049.html>

⁴⁶⁶ Special economic zone (SEZ) [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya_ekonomicheskaya_zona.html

sectors - industrial and logistics - are being created in the SEZ. The first of them will house the production of household appliances and electronics, pharmaceutical products and preparations, foodstuffs - coffee, tea, rice, as well as auto parts, perfumes and cosmetics, household chemicals, jewellery. There will also be shops of finished products, showrooms, warehouses, a business centre and a car park.

As for the logistics sector, it "will include road, railway and air terminals. Within the territory of the special economic zone there will be a departmental customs clearance point operating round the clock, phytosanitary and veterinary services, a bank branch, an insurance agent and a customs brokers' office"⁴⁶⁷ . By December 2023 - the project completion date - the investment in this multimodal industrial-logistics complex will amount to 200 million dollars. In total, 17 thousand square metres of office space, 190 thousand square metres of warehouse space and 280 thousand square metres of production space are to be built here. Plus 1.7 thousand parking places for lorries. The railway terminal will handle cargo flows between European and Asian countries, which allow already today to plan that "in 2018-2022 the total transit flow through "Bremino-Orsha" will be 10 million tonnes, reaching full capacity - 12 million tonnes of cargo per year is planned for 2026"⁴⁶⁸ .

It is important to note that the first steps in the implementation of this project have already been made. In February 2019, the first export train with Belarusian goods - more than forty containers - travelled from here to the Chinese city of Nanchang. Its travelling time is ten days. "Carriage by sea would take 40 days. The train will run once a month"⁴⁶⁹ . Also in February 2019, Bremino Group LLC opened the first phase of the Bremino-Orsha complex in Bolbasovo, in which about 20 million dollars were invested. A road logistics terminal with a car park for 212 trucks has started operating here, which already ensures the transhipment of almost two million tonnes of cargo per year. Customs, veterinary and phytosanitary control services, which work 24 hours a day without holidays, are located in the administrative building. The established infrastructure already allows for the picking and processing of cargo and the receipt of necessary services to support the logistics process.

⁴⁶⁷ Special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" has started operating in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/osobaja-ekonomicheskaja-zona-bremino-orsha-nachala-rabotat-v-bolbasovo-352502-2019/>

⁴⁶⁸ The second special economic zone with a favourable tax regime has started functioning in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://interfax.by/news/biznes/novosti_kompaniy/1260614/

⁴⁶⁹ Zakrzewski, G. "Bremino-Orsha": at the crossroads / G. Zakrzewski // Transport bulletin. - 2019. - 14 February - P. 9.

And in early December 2019, Bremino Group signed an agreement with Chinese partner Shaanxi Zhongqiao Silk Road Technology Development Co. Ltd an agreement providing for the emergence in the SEZ of the Silk Road International Trade City, which, spread over 62 hectares, will be a large-scale trade and exhibition complex, It is expected that here "will be carried out wholesale and small wholesale trade in consumer goods, delivery of goods and warehousing, trading operations from electronic platforms, as well as exhibitions of products from various Asian countries"⁴⁷⁰. The amount of investments in this project, which is being implemented within the framework of the Chinese initiative "Belt and Road", will exceed 128 million Belarusian rubles.

All these examples very eloquently illustrate one simple truth: despite the difficult situation in the global economy due to the coronavirus pandemic, we must never stop looking for new ways of development. Moreover, the contours of tomorrow are already beginning to appear today. The functioning of free and special economic zones, the impact of which on the economic life of the country is becoming more and more noticeable and significant, is one of them in Belarus.

⁴⁷⁰ The international trading town will appear in the special economic zone "Bremino-Orša" [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mezhdunarodnyj-torgovyj-gorodok-pojavitsja-v-osoboj-ekonomicheskoye-zone-bremino-orsha-371406-2019/>

Belarus: investment and export locomotives of regional development

The five-year development programme and the target forecast for the next three years, which are currently being developed in the Republic of Belarus, identify free economic zones (FEZs) operating in the country among the most important segments that should receive new impulses for development in the medium term, the number of residents in which exceeded 450 business entities as of the beginning of autumn 2020. The high potential of FEZs is also evidenced by the fact that "today free economic zones account for almost 17% of industrial production, 20% of foreign direct investment and almost 20% of the country's exports"⁴⁷¹. And there is every reason to believe that in the current difficult conditions of development of the Belarusian economy it is FEZs that can and should become the main investment locomotive, on the basis of which the innovation, production and export potential of the territories where they are located could be developed. Especially since "our neighbours are forming zones with completely different conditions of preferential treatment and functions"⁴⁷². Today, Belarus should continue to actively develop FEZs not only in terms of improving legislation, land relations and infrastructure development, but also in terms of ways to increase the inflow of investment and improve economic efficiency. Moreover, Belarusian FEZs have already gained some experience in addressing 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 business entities. And in the first quarter of the same year, foreign investors invested in the real sector of the country's economy by almost three billion dollars. "The main investors of Belarusian organisations were business entities from Russia (35.7% of all incoming investments), Cyprus (15%) and Austria (8.4%). Foreign direct investment inflows totalled \$2.1bn, or 75.1% of all foreign investment inflows"⁴⁷³. These facts clearly show that Belarus has many

⁴⁷¹ More than 60 residents registered in FEZ of Belarus in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-60-rezidentov-zaregistrirovano-v-sez-belorussi-v-i-polugodii-405375-2020/>

⁴⁷² FEZs should become the main investment locomotive - Nikitina // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sez-dolzhny-stat-osnovnym-investitsionnym-lokomotivom-nikitina-405379-2020/>

⁴⁷³ Foreign investors invested \$2.8 billion in the economy of Belarus in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannye-investory-vlozhili-v-i-kvartale-v-ekonomiku-belorussi-28-mlrd-390601-2020/>

examples of successful investment solutions that contribute to the socio-economic development of the country as a whole.

In particular, the **FEZ "Minsk"** demonstrated high rates of development in 2020, where at the beginning of September there were 118 resident companies, 69 of which - with foreign investment, and which received more than \$118 million from abroad in the first half of the year. At the same time, "foreign direct investment on a net basis for January-June amounted to almost \$70 million, an increase of 76% compared to the same period last year. The key investors were the Swiss Confederation, the Republic of Cyprus and the People's Republic of China"⁴⁷⁴.

This inflow of investments had a very positive impact on the volume of exports of FEZ residents, which for the first half of 2020 came close to 560 million dollars. Its main part was made up of electronic products and components, medical equipment, cable products, metal structures, auto and electric transport, railway and tram cars, parts and equipment for cars, electrical equipment for passenger cars. It should be assumed that the range of export positions of the capital's FEZ will only expand in the near future, as a number of significant investment projects are being implemented here. Among them are production of regulating valves for petrochemical industry, innovative high-tech equipment and air filtration systems, special paint and varnish materials for road markings, electrical equipment for locomotive traction passenger cars, paper packaging, as well as assembly of structures and products from ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Each of these projects is already opening new jobs in the FEZ. Suffice it to say that in the first six months of 2020, 482 people were employed here.

The facts show that FEZ Minsk did not intend to slow down the pace of development in the second half of 2020. Thus, in October, the 14th resident was registered here in 2020. (There were 17 such residents in the whole 2019!). This is the company "BASISPRO-GRO GROUP", whose intentions include the implementation of the investment project "for the production of aluminium distance frame for translucent enclosures"⁴⁷⁵, the consumers of which will be not only Belarusian construction companies, but also from neighbouring countries. After all, fences made with the use of aluminium frames are widely

⁴⁷⁴ Over \$118 million of investments came to FEZ "Minsk" from abroad in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/svyshe-118-mln-investitsij-postupilo-v-i-polugodii-v-sez-minsk-iz-za-rubezha-406018-2020/>

⁴⁷⁵ A new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will build a plant for the production of aluminium products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-izdelij-iz-aluminija-411877-2020/>

used today in the construction of modern buildings. And in November 2020, the 15th resident of the current year was registered in the FEZ - the company MKtrade, which specialises in the manufacture of galvanised steel products with various types of polymer coatings. Its arrival here is connected with the fact that it plans to open a new production facility for the production of fence and roofing elements for cottage-type buildings, for which "it intends to expand its own capacities and organise a new workshop at the production facilities in Fanipol"⁴⁷⁶.

The investment project of InKata to create a science and technology park in the capital's FEZ to provide services to technology start-ups is also very promising. For its successful implementation, fast-erecting pneumatic-frame buildings will be constructed near the village Privolny in the Minsk region, which "will house a design office, a research and development (R&D) centre and a prototyping centre. There will be dedicated offices for manufacturing consultants, investors and business mentors"⁴⁷⁷. This will allow to actualise in FEZ "Minsk" the development of innovative entrepreneurship in such areas of science and technology as nanotechnology, microelectronics, aerospace technologies, power electronics, robotics, in order to help residents of this science and technology park to eventually successfully enter the international market due to additional competitive advantages.

In terms of investment co-operation, the capital's FEZ and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development may turn out to be interesting. In June 2020 it became known about the intention of this international financial institution to allocate a loan of nearly 15 million euros "for the construction of substation "Cherkasy" for power supply of the free economic zone "Minsk"⁴⁷⁸. It is expected that this loan will be attracted in 2020-2022 for a period of 15 years.

As for FEZ "**Brest**", 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 district, but also in such cities as Baranavichy, Pinsk, Kobrin, Gantsevichy. As of mid-February 2020, over 70 residents from two

⁴⁷⁶ The new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will produce roofing and facade materials [Electronic resource]. - 20230. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-proizvodit-krovelnye-i-fasadnye-materialy-415998-2020/>

⁴⁷⁷ Scientific and technological park to help startups will be built on the territory of FEZ "Minsk". [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/nauchno-tehnologicheskij-park-v-pomosch-startapam-postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsk-411305-2020/>

⁴⁷⁸ Belarus wants to attract €14.11 million from the EBRD to build a substation for FEZ "Minsk". [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-hochet-privlech-ot-ebrr-1411-mln-evro-na-stroitelstvo-podstantsii-dlya-sez-minsk-394602-2020/>

dozen countries were registered here, including 47 with foreign capital, where more than 21 thousand people are already working. In 2019, the FEZ attracted 107 million dollars of investment, and the exports of its residents to 75 countries reached almost 730 million dollars. These positive trends continued in 2020, during the first quarter of which the FEZ attracted foreign direct investment on a net basis in the amount of almost 50 million dollars, which is four times more than the target. The dynamics of FEZ development today is such that all performance indicators of 2019 in 2020 can be exceeded. The prerequisites for this were serious. Thus, if in 2018 due to the opening of new production facilities of residents in FEZ created 721 jobs, and in 2019 - 890, in 2020 it was planned to open at least one thousand of them. With such development potential, five new residents with Polish and German capital are coming here at once, whose areas of activity are focused on light industry, woodworking, cosmetology, production of metal products, units and assemblies 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 were included in the FEZ "Brest", located in Ivatsevichi and Ivatsevichi district and intended for the implementation of investment projects with the participation of foreign capital. Already in June 2020, a new FEZ resident was registered here - Polipol Mebel Bel LLC, which is a part of Polipol Produktions Verwalfund GmbH, a well-known holding company in the European market, which has been producing upholstered furniture for 30 years. Its ten factories employing more than seven thousand people are located not only in Germany, but also in other European countries. On the industrial site in Ivatsevichy, the new resident plans to build a workshop for the production of upholstered furniture and a number of other related facilities. "The project realisation is designed for six years. During this time the company intends to invest more than 25 million euros in furniture production and create more than 1 thousand jobs. At the same time, 90% of production will be exported"⁴⁷⁹. An important detail: Polipol Mebel Bel LLC has already become the seventh company in the FEZ with German capital. In general, entrepreneurs from Germany occupy the first place in terms of investments, as their share is more than one third of the total investment portfolio of the FEZ.

⁴⁷⁹ The new resident of FEZ "Brest" intends to invest more than 25 million euros in furniture production [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-na meren-investirovat-v-proizvodstvo-mebeli-bolee-25-mln-evro-394124-2020/>.

Other new residents are also coming here with interesting projects. For example, half a million euros is planned to be invested in the organisation of the production of sawn timber - planks, beams, and various building structures - by the company with Belarusian capital Savantdrev LLC, which was registered as a FEZ resident in May 2020. The production site near Krasnogvardeyskaya Street in Brest is supposed to produce fuel pellets or pellets, which are very popular in the European Union countries, from wood waste. That is why "Savantdrev expects to supply up to 85 per cent of its products to the foreign market"⁴⁸⁰. The full-scale production cycle will start here in 2021. At least 15 jobs will be created at the new enterprise.

In the same May 2020, Lady-X LLC was registered in the FEZ, which plans to locate its production facilities on the unused premises of Baranavichy Automated Line Plant. The Belarusian company plans to "invest about 2 million euros in the project for the production of collection clothes. <...> When reaching the design capacity in 2024, the number of employees of the enterprise will reach 260 people"⁴⁸¹. In addition, previously registered residents should start their activities in the FEZ. In particular, "BTV-Agro LLC has built the first mushroom cultivation complex for Bonche SOOO, which is engaged in the production of champignons. Jobs will also be created there. The issue of organising the production of car wiring and campers on the FEZ territory is under consideration"⁴⁸².

The Italian industrial district is also expected to contribute to the fulfilment of the tasks facing the FEZ, and its infrastructure is planned to be completed in the near future. A 5 MW transformer substation and a sewage pumping station have already been built there, in the Airport industrial zone. In addition, a street and road network, water supply and storm water drainage are being laid. In 2021 the facility should be put into operation. Since a significant part of this territory is already provided with the necessary engineering infrastructure, including power, gas and water supply, sewerage

⁴⁸⁰ A new resident of FEZ "Brest" will be engaged in woodworking [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-derevoobrabotkoj-392514-2020/>

⁴⁸¹ . A new resident of FEZ "Brest" will produce collectible clothes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-budet-vypuskat-kolekcionnuju-odezhdu-392737-2020/>

⁴⁸² The FEZ "Brest" plans to create 1 thousand jobs [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-380116-2020/>

and telephony, "it allowed FEZ business entities to locate 10 enterprises here. Two more are under construction"⁴⁸³.

It should be reminded that the idea of creating such a district in the industrial zone "Airport" sounded about ten years ago, when in June 2011 in Trieste a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of an industrial district in Brest region was adopted, which envisaged "the creation of the most favourable conditions for attracting Italian investors and their implementation of projects in Belarus"⁴⁸⁴. Today not only Italians can come to the territory of the district, but also any investor willing to organise and develop his business here, using the advantages of the free economic zone. Therefore, two companies with investments from Germany, as well as companies with Israeli, British, Polish, Russian capital are already working here. "In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian enterprise Frieza Industri for the manufacture of energy-saving elements for commercial refrigeration equipment started operating at the Aeroport site. Today the JV has one of the highest export growth rates among FEZ enterprises"⁴⁸⁵. All these examples certainly give optimism when assessing the development prospects of FEZ "Brest".

An interesting example of development is also shown by **the FEZ Hrodnainvest**, whose residents attracted a record amount of foreign direct investment on a net basis - \$59.8 million - out of the total volume of \$157 million of foreign capital received in the first three months of 2020. "The main investor countries were Russia (over \$45 million), Austria (\$39 million), and the Netherlands (\$34 million). Investments came from 15 countries, including UAE, Germany, USA, UK"⁴⁸⁶. In total, over the 18 years of its existence, the FEZ Grodnoinvest has attracted more than \$900 million of foreign investments from 40 countries, including Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, Canada, and Poland.

The growing investment attractiveness of this production site, of course, could not have come from nothing. It is largely due to the attention of the FEZ

⁴⁸³ FEZ 'Brest' completes the development of the Italian industrial district [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-brest-zavershaet-obustrojstvo-italijanskogo-promyshlennogo-okruga-418092-2020/>

⁴⁸⁴ Zalessky, B. Belarus - Europe: Partnership Potential. Multi-vector policy in the context of global challenges / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 43.

⁴⁸⁵ FEZ "Brest" completes this year the creation of infrastructure in the Italian industrial district [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/sez-brest-zavershaet-v-etom-godu-sozdanie-infrastruktury-v-italijanskom-promyshlennom-okruge-380751-2020/>

⁴⁸⁶ Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" attracted a record volume of FDI on a net basis in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-i-kvartale-privlekl-rekordnyj-objem-pii-na-chistoj-osnove-389251-2020/>

administration to the development of the free economic zone infrastructure. The following statistics is quite eloquent: since 2015, about nine million Belarusian rubles have been invested in their infrastructure from the FEZ Development Fund to increase the investment attractiveness of industrial sites in Grodno and Grodno district, Lida and Smorgoni. For example, a transformer substation was built at the FEZ site near Grodno in the "Novaya Gozha" neighbourhood, which provided electricity for the residents' new production facilities and created the necessary reserve for potential investors. In Lida, at the industrial site in the Severny district, water supply, sewerage, communication and power supply networks were laid.

In 2019, Smargon, at the expense of the same FEZ Development Fund, started a large-scale project to reconstruct Industrial Avenue, which connects the city with the industrial site of the FEZ, where the production facilities of such residents as Kronospan Group, Smargon Aggregate Plant, Europlastic Invest, and Shinaka Mebel Bel are located. The project should result in a four-lane motorway with stop pavilions and small architectural forms, outdoor lighting, electricity and water supply, rainwater drainage and outdoor communication systems. All this is being done with a single purpose: "The new infrastructure will make the site more attractive for potential investors and participants of the Furniture Cluster in the FEZ "Grodnoinvest"" .⁴⁸⁷

Here it should be explained that today "an effective furniture cluster has been formed in Grodno region, which includes more than 20 enterprises producing packaging wood products, wood panels, furniture and much more"⁴⁸⁸. It should be noted that wood processing accounts for about half of all investments in FEZ. Therefore, one should not be surprised by the fact that in 2019 residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest attracted \$436 million of investments, which was a fourth of the figure for all FEZs in Belarus. And as a result, this one of the youngest Belarusian FEZs became the leader in terms of attracted investments from foreign investors.

In November 2020, 75 companies with capital from 40 countries were already operating here. At the same time, a number of new FEZ residents appeared in 2020. Among them are the Irish company Skywatt with a project to build a photovoltaic power plant, the Belarusian company ZOV-MARKET

⁴⁸⁷ 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-pjat-let-investirovala-v-razvitiie-infrastruktury-około-br9-mln-387801-2020/>

⁴⁸⁸ FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents attracted \$436 million of investments in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-privleklj-436-mln-investitsij-385388-2020/>

with a project to create wood processing production, the Belarusian-Russian company EUEcoPak with an actual project to create paper packaging production. Another company, IBA Investment, is implementing a project as a resident of the special tourist and recreational park Avgustovsky Kanal⁴⁸⁹. Especially interesting in this series is the project of the Irish investor "Skywatt", the volume of investments in which exceeds five million euros, to create a network of photovoltaic stations to provide FEZ residents with green energy. Its implementation will allow, among other things, "to establish co-operative relations with international concerns with requirements for the use of energy from renewable sources"⁴⁹⁰.

In mid-December 2020, the foundation stone was laid by HSBelakon LLC, a subsidiary of Austrian HS Timber Group, which is one of the leading woodworking companies in Europe, at the construction site of a modern woodworking enterprise in Svisloch district in plot No. 12 of FEZ GrodnoInvest. The construction is planned to be completed in 2022. "The investment amount will be about \$84 million. Here they plan to process up to 500 thousand cubic metres of softwood per year. The main focus will be on zero-waste production and creation of pellets"⁴⁹¹. In addition to all this, it will provide jobs for about 230 people, which is important for such a district as 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 railway tracks. This allows logistics companies to deliver goods from Asia to Europe and back quickly and efficiently"⁴⁹². That is why in the summer of 2020 the FEZ administration offered potential investors to participate in the creation of a multimodal logistics centre on the Belarusian-Polish border, where ten pairs of trains per day could be processed. We are talking about the implementation of infrastructure subprojects here - the construction of a motorway, access and

⁴⁸⁹ Since the beginning of the year the residents of the SMEZ "GrodnoInvest" have paid more than Br157 million of taxes [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/s-nachala-goda-rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-uplatili-bolee-br157-mln-nalogov-415012-2020/>

⁴⁹⁰ FEZ resident GrodnoInvest will create a network of photovoltaic power plants [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-set-fotoelektricheskikh-stantsij-410108-2020/>

⁴⁹¹ Austrian investor will build a woodworking enterprise in Svisloch district [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/avstrijskij-investor-postroit-derevoobrabatyvajuschee-predprijatie-v-svislochskom-rajone-420771-2020/>

⁴⁹² Investor from Germany considers the possibility of building a container terminal near Hrodna [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investor-iz-germanii-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-stroitelstva-pod-grodno-kontejernogo-terminala-417507-2020/>

exhibition railway tracks, and 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 Hrodnainvest in the logistics sector"⁴⁹³.

And in 2020, their active investment policy continued to be a characteristic feature of FEZ residents' activity. Over the first 10 months of this year, they invested almost a hundred and fifty million Belarusian rubles in fixed assets, of which the majority - over 60 per cent - was spent on the purchase of technological machinery and equipment. This trend is especially visible at the enterprises located at the industrial sites of the FEZ in Smargon district, where more than 90 million Belarusian rubles were invested and where such companies with foreign capital as Kronospan, Szynaka, Sodrugestvo are successfully operating. Recall that the industrial zone FEZ Grodnoinvest in Smarhon district was created in 2015. Now it consists of three sectors. "In just a few years, eight new residents with investments from the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and Cyprus have appeared here. <...> FEZ residents have invested \$425 million in the creation of joint productions"⁴⁹⁴. As a result, FEZ residents today form more than 90 per cent of Smarhon district industry, employing more than two thousand people, and the export volume is approaching \$500 million. As for FEZ residents in Grodno and Grodno district, they invested 30 million Belarusian rubles in fixed capital from January to November 2020. At the same time, "the companies "Bigan", "ZOV", "Makey", "Gronitex", "Belagrofert" are actively modernising and expanding their production facilities"⁴⁹⁵.

The active investment policy of the residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest allows them to successfully solve the issues of exporting their products. In the first 10 months of 2020, they delivered almost 778 million dollars to 55 countries. At the same time, exports to the USA alone grew threefold. In addition, "supplies of FEZ residents' products to Canada (4.7 times), the Netherlands (2.4 times), the United Arab Emirates (2.3 times), Estonia (1.9

⁴⁹³ Investors are offered the project of multimodal logistics centre on the Belarusian-Polish border [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investoram-predlagajut-proekt-multimodalnogo-tsentralki-na-belorussko-polskoi-granitse-396558-2020/>

⁴⁹⁴ In Smargon the reconstruction of the main part of Industrial Avenue was completed [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-smorgoni-zavershili-rekonstruktsiju-osnovnoj-chasti-industrialnogo-prospekta-405149-2020/>

⁴⁹⁵ Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" invested Br144 million in fixed assets [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-vlozhili-br144-mln-investitsij-v-osnovnoj-kapital-417225-2020/>

times), Turkey (1.5 times), as well as Switzerland and Afghanistan"⁴⁹⁶. But the main export destinations remain Russia, Poland and Ukraine. Two thirds of all supplies to other countries from FEZs are food and agricultural products, furniture and wood products.

All these facts once again confirm the idea that it is free economic zones in the Republic of Belarus that are becoming the instrument of economic development, the potential of which is only beginning to be truly realised and can bring even more significant results for the benefit of the whole country.

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⁴⁹⁶ Exports of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents to the USA tripled in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-y-ssha-za-janvar-sentjabr-vozros-v-tri-raza-416050-2020/>

Belarus: projects of the future are being laid today

The Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025 sets a goal to reach the level of innovative development of the leading countries in the Eastern Europe region in five years. For this purpose, 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: electric industry, electric transport, bioindustry, pharmaceuticals, robotics, instrumentation, composite materials production"⁴⁹⁷ , as well as the development of a line of prototypes of equipment fundamentally new for Belarus and the organisation of serial production on their basis.

It should be noted that the solution to this problem should and will be based on certain experience of previous years. Moreover, there is a lot to draw from. Suffice it to say that over the last five years Belarus has increased the production of innovative products by one and a half times - almost to seven and a half billion dollars. At the same time, "the share of exports of knowledge-intensive and high-tech products increased from 30% in 2015 to 38% in 2020, the share of innovation-active organisations - from 19.6% to 26%"⁴⁹⁸ . In addition, the country has already created a network of 17 technoparks, which cover all Belarusian regions and become centres of attraction for innovative production and development.

Great hopes in this regard are now pinned on the residents of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen, where 68 companies from 14 countries were registered at the end of 2020. An important detail: 12 residents already belong to the sphere of science, innovations, new, absolutely unique developments. One of such business entities is the innovative Chinese-Belarusian enterprise "Aviation Technologies and Complexes", whose products were presented in Veliky Kamen in December 2020 - unmanned aerial vehicles of multi-rotor and aeroplane types, as well as multi-purpose unmanned aerial complexes of hybrid type. It is no secret that the demand for such equipment in the world is very high now. That is why the manufacturing company has already reached an agreement with the Belarusian Chamber of

⁴⁹⁷ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 25.

⁴⁹⁸ Belarus has increased the production of innovative products by 1.5 times in five years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-za-pjat-let-uvelichila-proizvodstvo-innovatsionnoj-produktsii-v-15-raza-415135-2020/>

Commerce and Industry "to facilitate active promotion of Belarusian remote control equipment and technologies in foreign markets"⁴⁹⁹. We can be sure that such innovative products will have no delays in sales in the near and far abroad. Another promising resident appeared here in December 2020 - the company Solidpipe System, which will implement a project in the field of new materials related to the production and application of innovative protective coating on components for equipment used in the mining industry. The fact is that "this technology is unique for Belarus and the countries of the Eurasian region. The start of production is scheduled for 2021"⁵⁰⁰.

The Sino-Belarusian centre for cooperation in the field of scientific and technological achievements, which was opened here in December 2020, is intended to promote the development of innovative production in the Great Stone industrial park. The centre will house research laboratories, startup incubation and acceleration zones, a testing and small-scale production centre, and a hall for the demonstration of scientific and technological achievements. It is noteworthy that "among those who will work in the opened centre is the China-Belarus Innovation Centre for Industrial Technologies, which was created by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of Guangdong Province (PRC). In the first quarter of 2021, the Spark programme will be launched here, which will help develop research projects of the two countries"⁵⁰¹. In addition, in December 2020, construction of an international exhibition centre began here, which "will become one of the important links in the business infrastructure of the industrial park, along with a trade and logistics park, commercial and trade and exhibition centres"⁵⁰².

In general, in 2021, Veliky Kamen's priorities include support for the implementation of residents' investment projects, as well as the development of a high-quality development programme for the industrial park and a feasibility study for the facilities of its second phase, which envisages "further expansion of production sectors to attract investment, and active promotion of

⁴⁹⁹ The company "Aviation Technologies and Complexes" was presented in "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-prezentovali-kompaniju-aviationskiye-tehnologii-i-kompleksy-421952-2020/>

⁵⁰⁰ The resident of "Great Stone" realises a project in the sphere of new materials [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezident-velikogo-kamnja-realizuet-proekt-v-sfere-novyh-materialov-420268-2020/>

⁵⁰¹ The Chinese-Belarusian centre of cooperation in the field of scientific and technical achievements is opened in "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajsko-belorusskij-tsentr-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-dostizhenij-otkryt-v-421475-2020/>

⁵⁰² Construction of the international exhibition centre started in "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stroitelstvo-mezhdunarodnogo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-nachalo-v-velikom-kamne-421518-2020/>

the creation of a platform for regional research and development cooperation"⁵⁰³. More specifically, during the implementation of the second stage of Velikiy Kamen development and the development of the territory with an area of almost one thousand hectares, "it is planned to create a smart city - environmentally friendly, with non-standard solutions, introduction of advanced innovations in the field of telecommunications, information, mobile, drone technologies, artificial intelligence, quantum computing"⁵⁰⁴. All these facts testify to the fact that the plans related to 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, which are understood as "comfortable and safe living and working conditions, high-quality and affordable social infrastructure, high mobility, investment in new industries and productive employment", are also named among the main priorities of the programme of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus until 2025⁵⁰⁵. At the same time, the regional development strategy implies the implementation of investment projects in lagging regions - on the use of local resources and the creation of new industries, and in territories with preferential treatment - on the creation of high-tech export-oriented industries. It is clear that the more efficient the workplaces in the regions, the higher the productivity there, the more attractive life outside the capital will become. 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"⁵⁰⁶. The Belarusian free economic zones (FEZs), which "are becoming an instrument of economic development, whose potential is just beginning to be truly realised and which

⁵⁰³ Yan, G. Will Chinese business continue to invest 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-pritjazhenija-7602/>

⁵⁰⁴ Declared investments of the residents of "Great Stone" are estimated at more than \$1.2 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zajavlennye-investitsii-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-otsenivajutsja-v-bolee-chem-12-mllrd-421491-2020/>

⁵⁰⁵ 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-na-202.html>

⁵⁰⁶ GDP growth and development of regions - Minister of Economy on the plans for the five-year period [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rost-vvp-i-razvitiie-regionov-ministr-ekonomiki-o-planah-na-pjatiletku-428671-2021/>

can bring even more significant results for the benefit of the whole country"⁵⁰⁷. 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 involving investments from more than 30 countries totalling about seven billion dollars are being implemented there. Only in 2020, 43 new residents were attracted to the FEZ of Belarus, of which about half - with foreign capital, with a total volume of declared investments of about two hundred million dollars. Yes, and by other indicators, the dynamics of these territorial complexes can't help but please. "Compared to 2019, an increase in foreign direct investment on a net basis by 1.5 times (up to \$307 million), industrial output and sales revenue by 10% <...>, exports of goods by 2.2% (up to \$5.9 billion) has been achieved. Depending on FEZ residents formed up to 85 per cent of investments, up to half of goods exports and one third of regional industrial production volumes"⁵⁰⁸.

Thus, only in FEZ "Gomel-Raton", where at the beginning of 2021 there were 70 business entities operating as residents, including 32 companies with foreign capital from 16 countries of the world, almost 110 million dollars of direct foreign investments were attracted for the implementation of investment projects in 2020, which was almost half of the total volume of investments in the region. And it gave a corresponding result. FEZ residents sold most of their products outside Belarus. The volume of these supplies exceeded one billion dollars. In total, the goods were supplied to the markets of 63 countries. "The largest share in exports is occupied by Russia (48.1%), Ukraine (18.6%), Poland (7.8%), China (6.1%), Lithuania (6.6%) <...>. Foreign trade turnover of goods in 2020 totalled \$1.7 billion"⁵⁰⁹ with a surplus of over \$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.

The residents of the FEZ Grodnoinvest, which currently account for about 40 per cent of Grodno Region's total exports, also achieved a positive foreign trade balance of \$438 million in 2020. This is due to the supply of wood and paper products, furniture, food products, as well as machinery and

⁵⁰⁷ Zaleskii, B. With a focus on co-operation. Chronicle of international co-operation in the post-Soviet space / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 104.

⁵⁰⁸ Residents of free economic zones in 2020 formed almost 5% of GDP of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-v-2020-godu-sformirovali-pochti-5-vvp-belarusi-428975-2021>

⁵⁰⁹ FEZ "Gomel-Raton" residents increased the volume of production by 13.1% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-uvvelichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-131-v-2020-godu-429328-2021/>

equipment, computing, electronic and optical equipment, electrical equipment, vehicles, finished metal and textile products, chemical products and fertilisers. In total, in 2020, the products of FEZ residents were exported to 65 countries. Even to such rather exotic ones as Zimbabwe, Peru, Somalia. But the main markets remained Russia, Poland and Ukraine. Nevertheless, "in 2020, supplies of Belarusian products to the United States of America (337% growth rate), the United Arab Emirates (229%), Estonia (210%), Egypt (209%), Canada (194%) and the Netherlands (185%) increased significantly"⁵¹⁰. It is also characteristic that supplies to the European Union countries grew to almost 200 million dollars, making up one fifth of all exports of FEZ Hrodnainvest residents.

In FEZ "Minsk" exports of residents in 2020 increased by 11 per cent and amounted to almost \$1.5 billion, while the inflow of foreign direct investment on a net basis increased by 3.7 times - to \$68 million. In addition, in 2020 here "just over 1 thousand people were hired for additionally commissioned jobs"⁵¹¹, and in the future it is planned to implement projects in mechanical engineering, instrumentation and green technologies to create about four thousand more high-performance jobs in the FEZ by 2025.

FEZ Vitebsk is also one of the real tools for the development of the Vitebsk region's economy in the innovative direction. 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 their products for more than 550 million dollars, which was almost a third of the volume of supplies to foreign markets of the entire Vitebsk region. This allowed them to get a positive balance of foreign trade: goods - more than 177, services - more than 13 million dollars. "At the same time FEZ "Vitebsk" is the only one among free economic zones that has worked on services with excess of exports over imports. In total, services worth \$24.4 million were rendered to foreign partners"⁵¹².

⁵¹⁰ FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents exported products to 65 countries in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2020-godu-eksporirovali-produktsiju-v-65-stran-429156-2021>

⁵¹¹ Exports of FEZ "Minsk" residents in 2020 totalled almost \$1.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-minsk-v-2020-godu-sostavil-pochti-15-mlrd-429290-2021/>

⁵¹² FEZ "Vitebsk" residents in 2020 increased production by 17% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-2020-godu-uvelichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-17-429730-2021>

These high indicators would not have been possible without relying 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 per cent and exceeded \$30 million. Thanks to this, 235 new jobs were created here, more than one and a half times exceeding the level stated in the business plans. An important detail: in 2020, six new business entities were registered as residents in the FEZ with a total volume of declared investments of more than 35 million dollars, which will create at least another hundred jobs here. Five of them are companies with foreign capital. "Businessmen from Russia, Canada, Ireland and Azerbaijan intend to implement projects to organise the production of food tins, special purpose protective equipment and products, match straw, build photovoltaic power stations for energy supply of residents' activities, as well as to establish the production of plastic lubricants of a wide temperature range of operation"⁵¹³.

Three more enterprises received FEZ resident status in two incomplete months of 2021. The first of them, in early January, was STS-Beton LLC with an investment project to develop the production of construction materials. The new resident, specialising in the production of cement and concrete, plans to expand its nomenclature and master the production of new products for the construction industry after purchasing new equipment. "This will make it possible to increase volumetric indicators, as well as to enter new markets, including exporting products"⁵¹⁴.

In mid-January, Gidropress LLC was registered in the FEZ with a project to develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment. The company, which operates in Polotsk and specialises in the development and production of special hydraulic presses for enterprises of general machine building, railways, military-industrial complex, plans to renew the machine park, replenish it with new machines, which will make it possible to master the production of new types of products of its own design. "Among the novelties will be equipment for the production of pipeline valves for the oil and gas industry by moulding method, as well as a large hydroforming press, which is in demand in the manufacture of shells of vehicles for the rocket and space industry. In addition, the production of equipment for recycling 200-litre

⁵¹³ JSC "Vityaz" is recognised as the best resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" according to the results of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/oao-vityaz-priznano-luchshim-rezidentom-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2020-goda-429541-2021/>

⁵¹⁴ The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of construction materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-ravvivat-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-422919-2021/>

barrels of fuel and lubricants in the field will be further developed"⁵¹⁵. As we know, the environmental problem associated with 200-litre barrels is typical for the Arctic zone. That is why its solution will allow the new FEZ resident to export its products almost completely.

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 FEZ will allow to increase the total output by one and a half times, expand the range of spring teeth, tension and compression springs produced for machine-building enterprises, as well as create additional opportunities for diversifying exports and increasing the volume of supplies to foreign markets. And this is despite the fact that already today this enterprise exports more than half of its products to partners from Russia.

In addition, "two more investment projects are considered as promising for registration in FEZ "Vitebsk" - the creation of a wood processing park and the organisation of a bio-coal production facility, in which investors from China and Sweden have shown interest"⁵¹⁶. ⁵¹⁷To make these and other promising projects successful, the FEZ is now taking active measures to develop additional power capacities, a water supply facility and to build railway access roads on the territory of the Zhurzhevo sector on the outskirts of Vitebsk, where "the development of the engineering and transport infrastructure of the site will make it possible in the long term to attract at least \$165 million of foreign investment and to organise about 1,000 jobs under projects that are already being implemented or are being prepared for registration in the current [2021] year" xml-ph-0000@deepl.inte. It should be assumed that the fulfilment of all these plans will mean that FEZ Vitebsk will reach a qualitatively new level of innovative development.

⁵¹⁵ A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of special hydro-pressing equipment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-spesialnogo-gidropressovogo-oborudovaniya-424231-2021/>

⁵¹⁶ A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of components for agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-komplektujuschih-dlya-selzhozmashin-429288-2021/>

⁵¹⁷ About Br40 million is planned to be invested in the construction of infrastructure facilities of FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-br40-mln-planiruetsja-investirovat-v-stroitelstvo-objektov-infrastruktury-sez-vitebsk-429858-2021/>

Another important mechanism for implementing the strategy of innovative development in Belarus should be the implementation of investment projects to create 13 clusters and technoparks on unused and inefficiently used production areas of state-owned enterprises. It should be recalled that a technopark is currently understood as a form of territorial integration of science, education and production in the form of an association of scientific organisations, design and development bureaus, educational institutions, production enterprises or their subdivisions. In other words, "the purpose of creating a technopark is to concentrate specialists with a common profile of activity on one territory. Scientists can conduct research in them, teach in educational institutions and participate in the process of implementing the results of their research in life"⁵¹⁸. Organisations acquiring technopark resident status receive additional opportunities for development in the form of tax and rent benefits, use of special equipment and production facilities of technoparks, legal and business consulting services.

In Belarus, the first project "to create a science and technology park was implemented in Mogilev. The founders of the CJSC "Technological Park Mogilev" were the city and regional executive committees, as well as universities of the city⁵¹⁹. Its registration took place in March 2011. Today our country's innovation infrastructure network covers all regional centres, as well as Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Gorki, Barysau and Lyakhovichi districts, and includes 17 technoparks, 7 technology transfer centres and the Belarusian Innovation Fund. An important detail: residents of Belarusian technoparks have increased their output six times over the last five years - almost to 200 million Belarusian rubles in 2020. At the same time, "the number of residents of technoparks has increased 2.2 times over this period, and the total number of their employees - 2.7 times. In 2016-2020, 2,566 jobs were created in technoparks against the plan of 1,536"⁵²⁰. The main areas of activity of residents of Belarusian technoparks today are instrumentation and mechanical engineering, electronics, information technology and software development, medicine, pharmaceuticals and production of medical equipment, as well as

⁵¹⁸ Xiaojuan, L. Formation of the Belarusian model of technoparks development / L. Xiaojuan // Economics and Banks. - 2018. - №2. - C. 54.

⁵¹⁹ Pinyagin, Y. Technoparks as an element of the country's innovation infrastructure / Y. Pinyagin, L. Xiaojuan // Banking Bulletin. - 2016. - №12. - C. 52.

⁵²⁰ Residents of the Belarusian technoparks for 5 years increased the output of products 6 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-belorusskikh-tehnoparkov-za-5-let-uvvelichili-vypusk-produktsii-v-6-raz-428037-2021/>

"optics, laser technologies, energy, energy saving, bio- and nanotechnology"⁵²¹ . And good results have already been achieved in a number of these areas.

Thus, 61 residents were registered in the technoparks of Belarusian universities at the beginning of 2021. The volume of products manufactured in them in 2020 exceeded 17 million Belarusian rubles, including innovative products - more than 10 million rubles. The peculiarity 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, technopark "Unitehprom BSU" specialises in the production of veterinary drugs and pharmacological preparations, science and technology park BNTU "Polytechnik" on the creation and production of medical equipment products"⁵²² . The technopark of Vitebsk State Technological University specialises in the creation of innovative production in the light industry. In addition, in Vitebsk region "a medical and pharmaceutical cluster has been formed on the basis of 10 organisations, including two universities and a technopark. Its core is Vitebsk Medical University, where personnel for pharmacy are trained. And this is a model for the future"⁵²³ .

Another interesting example is the science and technology park of Hrodna State University named after Yanka Kupala, the total profit of its residents "in 2020 increased 2.5 times - to more than Br 800 thousand"⁵²⁴ . In 2018, an unused building of one of Grodno enterprises on Gospodarchey Street was reconstructed for this technopark. Soon 14 companies, half of which were founded by students and teachers of the university, became its residents. Now the technopark is completing construction works on its second stage, for which the former building of the industrial enterprise workshop with the area of more than six thousand square metres was repurposed. The building will house office and production premises with all the infrastructure necessary for the work of an innovative enterprise. It is noteworthy that some of this space has already been reserved by companies working in the fields of electric transport,

⁵²¹ Subjects of innovation infrastructure of the Republic of Belarus / edited by A.G. Shumilin. - Minsk: GU "BelISA", 2018. - C. 3.

⁵²² Technoparks of higher education institutions of Belarus in 2020 produced products worth Br 17 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tehnoparki-vuzov-belorussii-za-2020-god-proizveli-produktsii-na-br17-mln-425772-2021/>

⁵²³ Report of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus Roman Golovchenko at the VI All-Belarusian People's Assembly "On the policy of economic growth". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9740>

⁵²⁴ Opinion: creation of technoparks on unused areas - an example of advanced development of regions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mnenie-sozdanie-tehnoparkov-na-neispolzuemyh-ploschadjah-primer-operezhajuscheho-razvitiya-regionov-428389-2021>

bioengineering, and energy efficiency. And this indicates good prospects for the development not only of the technopark itself, but also of the region where it is located.

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Belarus: the goal is comprehensive development of the regions

The Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025 plans to pay much attention to the implementation of the regional development strategy in order to reduce the number of backward regions in the country by 18 by the end of the new five-year plan. For this purpose, it is envisaged to implement investment projects in cities and districts with a population of 80 thousand people and more to prepare industrial sites and create infrastructure for the establishment of two or three new enterprises that have no analogues in the country, as well as to "create 1-2 medium-sized industrial enterprises in each district"⁵²⁵. At the same time, the lagging Belarusian regions will receive a certain set of privileges for the creation of new breakthrough industries, and efficiency will be at the centre of the new investment cycle. In other words, "at least one new efficient company should appear in each such region"⁵²⁶. And it should be said that concrete steps are already being taken in the Belarusian regions for the successful implementation of the plans.

Thus, the first half of 2021 is scheduled for the completion of the investment project for the production of special electronics for large-sized vehicles in Braslav district of Vitebsk region, which is being implemented by the unitary enterprise "Plant of Special Electronics "Zaryad" with Russian capital - a developer and manufacturer of electronic and electromechanical products, including electronic, switching blocks, key switches and automotive lighting equipment for heavy-duty operation, which already has one production facility. Characteristically, the products of the new company will be predominantly export-oriented and import-substituting. The main direction is Russia. More than Br503 thousand has been invested in the implementation of this project⁵²⁷. An important detail: this investment project with the participation of foreign capital is not the only one for Braslav district. In 2020,

⁵²⁵ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file2635c85fcdb1ca5.PDF>

⁵²⁶ 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-chebotar-421034-2020/>

⁵²⁷ Pushnyakova, A. The plant for the production of special electronics in Braslav will start operating in 2021 / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetsialnoj-elektroniki-v-braslawenachnet-rabotu-v-2021-godu-422488-2020>

a new enterprise for the production of prefabricated metal structures appeared here, in which an investor from Latvia invested more than USD 370 thousand and whose products are already being sold not only on the Belarusian market, but also in neighbouring countries.

Another new production facility with an investment volume of about two million Belarusian rubles in the same Vitebsk region opened at the end of 2020 in the urban settlement of Begoml, Dokshitsky district. It is JSC "Plant "Vetraz" - a subsidiary of "Mogilevliftmash" - has set up an electrical assembly shop here, which already employs more than 80 people, and which "will make it possible, together with an Italian firm, to create new types of products and increase the volume of production by 150% in 2021. It will also contribute to the opening of new production facilities"⁵²⁸. In particular, a plastic moulding area will soon be opened, for which two machines have already been purchased.

In the Minsk region, a new production facility was opened in Zhodzina on the eve of 2021. The Minsk Automobile Plant organised here the assembly of electric transport - trolleybuses of various modifications and the latest electric buses, where they intend to assemble at least three hundred vehicles annually, which will be supplied both to Belarusian cities and to countries near and far abroad. This project - the result of the public-private partnership between Minsk Automobile Plant and ETON LLC - has already created more than 130 jobs. It is also important that only half a year passed from the idea to the creation of assembly lines, while the assembly of electric transport in Zhodino is carried out on a full cycle, including welding, adjusting and painting works, adjustment of control systems, diagnostics of electronic systems, control and acceptance of products. At the same time, the large-scale prospects of this project are obvious, as "the development of competences in the field of electric transport construction will allow to create a full line of passenger transport and will allow to be present in all market segments"⁵²⁹.

In Grodno region on the eve of 2021, the State Experimental Forestry Institution "Smarhon Experimental Forestry" registered as a resident of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" with an investment project for the creation of woodworking production for the production of wood fuel - pellets. The idea of

⁵²⁸ The new shop of the plant "Vetraz" in Begoml will allow to increase the volume of production [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-tsch-zavoda-vetraz-y-begomle-pozvolit-narastit-objem-proizvodstva-422131-2020/>

⁵²⁹ MAZ opened assembly production of electric transport in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/maz-otkryl-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-elektrotransporta-y-zhodino-422142-2020/>

the project is to organise pellet production in Smargon with the involvement of low-quality wood and sawing waste into economic turnover. The whole volume of the product produced here is supposed to be exported. The volume of investments in the new production will exceed two and a half million euros, and the production is planned for the second half of 2021. As a result, "the implementation of the project will make it possible to expand the range of products, increase the scale of production and export volumes, improve the profitability and efficiency of production, create additional jobs and increase contributions to the budget"⁵³⁰.

It is easy to see that all these examples testify to the fact that the Belarusian regions intend to successfully solve the tasks of socio-economic development set before them in the new five-year period, relying on the existing experience of investment activities, including in co-operation with foreign partners. The formats of international co-operation at the regional level that exist in our country and continue to operate are also designed to facilitate this.

Thus, with the arrival of 2021, the period of implementation of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Poland - Belarus - Ukraine" for 2014-2020, which is an important tool for the development of cooperation between the European Union and partner states in Eastern Europe in order to ensure integrated and sustainable regional relations, has come to an end. It should be reminded that this programme, and the first programme period was implemented back in 2004-2006, "for 17 years already supports development processes in the border areas of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine by co-financing various projects"⁵³¹. All projects are non-commercial and contribute to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the eastern voivodships of Poland, as well as some western regions of Belarus and Ukraine. More specifically, the programme covers the following areas in the three countries: Poland - Krosnienki, Przemysl, Rzeszów, Tarnobrzeski, Chelmsko-Zamoyski, Pulawski, Lubelski, Bialski, Ostrolecko-Siedlce, Lomzynski, Bialystok and Suwalski counties; Belarus - Grodno, Brest, Minsk, Gomel regions and the city of Minsk; Ukraine - Lviv, Volyn, Zakarpattya, 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 in 2014-2020: large infrastructure, regular and

⁵³⁰ Smarhon Experimental Forestry became a new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest". [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/smorgonskij-opytnyj-leshoz-stal-novym-rezidentom-sez-grodnoinvest-422374-2020/>

⁵³¹ Programme [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/pages/135>

micro projects. In 2020 alone, 139 projects were underway at once, 12 of which were completed.

In particular, under the thematic objective "Accessibility", 85 kilometres of local roads connecting towns and villages were built or reconstructed and repair works were carried out in the Grodno and Brest regions, the Lublin, Mazowieckie and Podkarpackie voivodships, as well as in the Lviv and Volyn regions. Just in January 2021, two new roundabouts were opened in the Polish city of Biala Podlaska, built in accordance with the project "Improving Transport Accessibility in Brest and Biala Podlaska". And the Brest Road Maintenance Company under the same project "reconstructed seven intersections in Brest, equipping them with an adaptive traffic control system. Subsequently, an Intelligent Transport System (ITS) was developed, which reduces travelling time by regulating the traffic mode"⁵³². To be absolutely precise, in this case we are talking about the installation of "smart traffic lights" and embedding sensors in the carriageway, which transmit information to special controllers, at the intersections in Brest of Moskovskaya Street with Partizansky and Respublika avenues, Gavrilov and Pionerskaya Streets, as well as Warsaw Highway with Oktyabrskaya Revolution, Krasnoznamennaya and Makhnovich Streets.

As for the thematic objective of the Borders, the main result of the joint work was two additional control lanes and new pavilions for customs and passport control at the border crossing "Kuznica Białystokowska - Bruzgi". "These activities were among other parallel tasks increasing the efficiency of the border. As a result of the completion of these two projects, throughput capacity has increased by almost 76 per cent, which significantly speeds up border controls."⁵³³. In addition, a number of other projects have been implemented by the customs authorities of the programme countries. Firstly, a major infrastructure project "Construction of the X-ray scanning system for vehicle control at the Berestovitsa road crossing", which involved the construction of an inspection and examination complex "including an X-ray scanning system, a protective building for it and a building for personnel, engineering systems, training of experts for the work, organisation of accelerated vehicle inspection, exchange of experience on the use of scanograms with Polish partners"⁵³⁴. And several regular projects, including

⁵³² New roundabouts in Byala Podlaska [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1961>

⁵³³ Results of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1952>

⁵³⁴ Cross-border cooperation programme Poland - Belarus - Ukraine for 2014-2020. [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://www.customs.gov.by/ru/2014-2020-ru/>

"Improving the Efficiency of Customs Control at the Domachevo Road Checkpoint" and "Strengthening the Capabilities of the Canine Service of the Customs Agencies of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Poland". The first of these projects, aimed at improving the security of the Belarusian-Polish border and the quality of customs control operations, involved the installation of weighing equipment, which reduced the time required to carry out these operations and accelerated throughput at the border. The second project, aimed at preventing the illegal movement of illicitly trafficked narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and tobacco products and preventing illegal migration, involved the purchase of six vehicles equipped with cages for transporting service dogs for the Grodno and Brest Customs Houses and the Minsk-2 Customs House.

All these facts show that the completed Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Poland - Belarus - Ukraine" for 2014-2020 helped its participants to solve many specific issues of interaction between border regions. 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 interested parties. In particular, the Belarusian city of Brest and the Polish city of Biala Podlaska are working on the possibility of implementing joint projects in three areas at once: the possibility of converting public transport to electric transport, energy saving projects, energy and heat rehabilitation of social facilities, and "purification and further use of rainwater"⁵³⁵.

Another important aspect of the topic under consideration is that in the Republic of Belarus today there is a significant intensification of work at the local level on sustainable energy development and adaptation to climate change. Suffice it to say that 53 Belarusian cities have already declared their readiness to join the Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy - a large-scale European initiative for cooperation in the climate sphere, which appeared in 2008 and "as of 2020, more than 10000 cities and communities with about 320 million inhabitants have joined it"⁵³⁶. Recall that by signing this agreement, "local governments make voluntary commitments to reduce

⁵³⁵ Brest and Biala Podlaska are working out joint projects in the green economy [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brest-i-bjala-podljaska-prorabatyvajut-sovmestnye-proekty-v-zelenoj-ekonomike-424871-2021>

⁵³⁶ 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.

greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30 per cent by 2030"⁵³⁷ . It is clear that each city is approaching the goal in its own way.

For example, in the Belarusian town of Kostyukovichi, Mogilev region, the project "Construction of a photovoltaic system. Decentralised energy supply of a gymnasium from an ecological point of view". It was initiated and financed by partners from the German twin town Dietzenbach, with which Kostyukovichi co-operates in various spheres: education, health care, sports, culture, tourism and ecology. Within the framework of the already mentioned project "135 photovoltaic panels with a total capacity of 35.8 kW were installed on the roof of the gymnasium. A monitoring system is also provided for tracking electricity generation, collecting and storing data on the operation of the plant for at least a year for each day, month"⁵³⁸ . A new solar power plant (SPP), which started operation in 2020 near the village of Asmolovichi, Mstislavl district, is also located there, in the Mogilev region. Here, 4,752 solar panels have been installed on an area of about four hectares. "The nominal power of each of the panels is 335 watts. As a result, the cumulative installed capacity of the new SES totalled 1.6 MW."⁵³⁹ . In addition, the highest wind power plant in Belarus with a height of 142 metres is also erected in the Asmolovichi area in 2020.

Note that the presence of these environmentally orientated facilities in the Mstislavl district is not a coincidence. The city of Mstislavl itself signed the Mayors' Agreement on Climate and Energy in 2017. Since then, a wide variety of activities have been organised here to promote an energy-saving culture 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 online marathon of Sustainable Development Goals "EcoMy Mstislavl". Its participants placed their materials related to energy saving, ecology, sustainable development of the region in the global network. Interactive classes "How to live ecologically on Earth" were held in pre-school institutions and health camps of the district, a competition "Share with us" was held, and film screenings of "Energy Saving Schools" - about modern ways and methods of saving and conserving energy at home, at school

⁵³⁷ More than 50 Belarusian cities are ready to undertake obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolee-50-belorusskih-gorodov-gotovy-vzjat-na-sebja-objazatelstva-po-snizheniju-vybrosov-parnikovyh-424013-2021/>

⁵³⁸ A photovoltaic station will be built on the roof of the gymnasium in Kostyukovichi [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

⁵³⁹ A new solar power plant has started operating in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

and at work - were organised. Environmental campaigns "We cleaned up here! How about you?". And near the gymnasium in Mstislavl they planted an alley "Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow" of young tui trees, next to which they placed signs with information about each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The Energy Days ended with the "Mstislavl Ring" bicycle race, which was held for the third time and gathered about one hundred participants of different ages from all over the district. These facts show that by participating in all these events, the residents of Mstislavl rayon could see by their own example that the main goal of the Covenant of Mayors Climate and Energy Initiative is sustainable energy development at the local level and the adoption of concrete measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and that "an important role in the work of the rayon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is played by residents who can make a valuable contribution to the common cause through their personal behaviour"⁵⁴⁰ .

Another effective tool that is also actively used in Covenant of Mayors member cities is the European Mobility Week, an international campaign that aims at greening urban transport systems, changing people's transport behaviour, making smarter use of public spaces, and which traditionally takes place every year from 16 to 22 September, ending with a "Car Free Day". The week's events typically involve more than 50 countries around the world. The 2020 theme, "Emission-Free Travel for All," focused on "reducing greenhouse gas emissions and making emission-free infrastructure and transport accessible to all categories of citizens."⁵⁴¹ . The popularity of this theme in our country is evidenced by the fact that a record number of cities in Belarus - more than 80 - joined this campaign in 2020. For example, during this week Minsk alone organised a bicycle rally, offered free travel for motorists in the city public transport, and opened the first in Belarus eco-route of bicycle riders, which connected three ecological trails of the Belarusian capital - "City of Birds", "Serebryanyi Log" and "Chizhovka". Its peculiarity was "the possibility of cycling and birdwatching"⁵⁴² , as well as familiarisation along the whole route with information stands telling about local birds.

⁵⁴⁰ Mstislavl is in favour of an ecological way of life! And the Energy Days are the confirmation of it [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/616>

⁵⁴¹ European Mobility Week [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://rosavtovtransport.ru/ru/activities/european-mobility-week/>

⁵⁴² A new eco-route, a bicycle race and free transport - what will be the European Mobility Week in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-ekomarshrut-veloprobeg-i-besplatnyj-proezd-kakoj-budet-europejskaja-nedelja-mobilnosti-v-minske-406811-2020/>

To summarise these considerations, it should be noted that "the strategic goal of Belarusian regional policy is the integrated development of each region and reduction of existing regional differences, taking into account the effective use of its resource potential and competitive advantages in the interests of ensuring high standards of living of the population, nature conservation and positive contribution of the regions to national competitiveness and security"⁵⁴³. As we can see, within the framework of the second stage of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030, Belarusian regions are already taking many concrete steps aimed at expanding local self-governance in addressing socio-economic, environmental and ecological problems, reducing subsidisation and ensuring a high standard of living of the population.

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⁵⁴³ Zalessky, B. The point of reference - multi-vectorality. Part I / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 24-25.

Belarus: the road to the future is paved by a comprehensive programme

The Republic of Belarus has prepared a draft State Programme of Innovative Development for 2021-2025, which envisages the implementation of about 80 innovative projects to create high-tech industries. Among the priority projects is the development of six "projects of the future", which are oriented towards new production, technologies and goods that correspond to global trends and take into account the development of sales markets. One of the most notable among them concerns national electric transport. The implementation of the prepared comprehensive programme for the development of this industry in 2021-2025 will not only create a new sector of machine building in Belarus - electric vehicle construction, but will also have a large-scale multiplicative effect on the innovative development of other industries, such as metallurgy, electrical engineering, robotics, and information technologies. In addition, "it is envisaged to develop samples of new equipment, create 14 production facilities for freight, passenger and special electric vehicles, including assembly production of electric passenger cars in BELJI SZAO, as well as basic components for it"⁵⁴⁴ .

As a reminder, back in March 2020, the Republic of Belarus adopted a decree "On Stimulating the Use of Electric Vehicles", which envisaged measures designed to stimulate demand for this environmentally friendly vehicle in the country, as well as the creation of appropriate charging and service infrastructure in the regions. The appearance of this document was caused by a number of circumstances. First, let us recall that "at the 24th United Nations World Climate Change Conference held in December 2018 in the Polish city of Katowice, Belarus stated that it considers the green economy and low-carbon sustainable development as a strategic vector"⁵⁴⁵ .

Secondly, existing forecasts by experts show that "by 2030, every fifth car in the world will be electric. This process is fuelled by government policies in a number of countries, where they are going to impose restrictions on cars with internal combustion engines"⁵⁴⁶ . Thirdly, the growing number of electric

⁵⁴⁴ Shumilin, A. How Belarus plans to develop the high-tech sector / A. Shumilin // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-belarus-planiruet-razvivat-vysokotekhnologichnyj-sektor-7711/>

⁵⁴⁵ Zalessky, B. Growth Points. Features of sustainable development in the context of global challenges / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 57.

⁵⁴⁶ The measures taken will contribute to the creation of electric vehicle production in Belarus - Ministry of Economy [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL:

cars will contribute to the reduction of air pollution in Belarus. Fourthly, "the use of electric transport is one of the directions of a competent increase in electricity consumption"⁵⁴⁷, which becomes especially relevant in connection with the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Fifth, the transition to electric vehicles is an appeal to the general public to new technologies that are in line with international best practices, so that by 2025, about 40 per cent of the internal combustion engine vehicles in Belarus could be replaced by electric vehicles.

Turning to the decree, we note some of the measures contained therein. For example, this document exempted owners of electric vehicles from paying a fee for the issuance of a permit to participate in road traffic. Individuals will not have to pay value added tax when importing electric cars into our country for personal use. In addition, "owners of electric vehicles are exempt from parking fees in specially equipped parking spaces in municipal car parks until 1 April 2026"⁵⁴⁸.

The decree also contained measures for manufacturers of electric cars and electric charging stations, as well as for organisations operating them. In particular, charging stations were exempted from value added tax if they were used in Belarus. And the Belorusneft Production Association started to lease land plots for construction and maintenance of electric charging complexes without holding an auction. Perhaps for this reason, Belorusneft planned to open 180 fast-charging stations at once in 2020.

At that time, the situation with electric charging stations (ECS) in Belarus was as follows. Since the beginning of 2020 "the network of Echarging stations has expanded to 251 such stations (plus 13 sites)"⁵⁴⁹. And it could already serve up to nine thousand electric cars. The network of filling stations on the Belarusian territory includes two types of stations: firstly, Mode 3, where an electric car needs six to eight hours to charge; secondly, Mode 4, where the battery can be charged in less than an hour. An important detail: at

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prinimaemye-mery-budut-sposobstvovat-sozdaniju-v-belorussi-proizvodstva-elektromobilej-minekonomiki-383056-2020/>

⁵⁴⁷ Ecology and competent consumption of electricity - how the growth of electric cars in Belarus is beneficial [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekologija-i-gramotnoe-potreblenie-elektroenergii-chem-vygoden-rost-chisla-elektromobilej-v-belorussi-383046-2020>

⁵⁴⁸ Lukashenko signed a decree on stimulating the purchase of electric cars [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-podpisal-ukaz-o-stimulirovaniu-zakupok-elektromobilej-383041-2020>

⁵⁴⁹ "Belorusneft" plans to open 180 electric charging stations this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusneft-planiruet-otkryt-180-elektrozarjadnyh-stantsij-v-etom-godu-383042-2020>

the beginning of 2020, Belorusneft's network of filling stations got a new brand - Malanka, under which 639 charging stations will be operating by 2022. And by 2030, there should be enough of them to serve up to three hundred thousand electric cars.

Speaking about the production of our own electric cars in our country, we recall that the first Belarusian sample of such vehicles based on Geely was presented 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]"⁵⁵⁰. 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. "This is an urgent need already today. <...> Many states are already developing this promising direction. Countries like us, export-oriented countries that do not have huge reserves under the ground, have long ago orientated themselves towards electric transport"⁵⁵¹.

With the appearance of the decree "On stimulating the use of electric cars" it became clear that BELJI SZAQ, which "is ready to consider the production of electric cars in Belarus on condition of selling 5-10 thousand cars a year"⁵⁵². At the same time, the company received four Chinese electric cars of Geely Geometry A model, which were to be tested: one - at the factory, three - in dealer centres. This version of the electric car attracted by the fact that it has a range of five hundred kilometres, systems of adaptive cruise control and response to pedestrians and cyclists, as well as an intelligent system of automatic parking. At the same time, there were hopes that with the adoption of the presidential decree, the production of the Geely Geometry A model at BELJI SZAQ would go much faster.

In January 2021, the draft Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport for 2021-2025, developed by the National Academy of Sciences together with other stakeholders, which envisaged increasing the share of public electric transport in Belarus to 30% by 2025, was

⁵⁵⁰ Gavrilova, V. Ecological, modern and manoeuvrable: scientists presented the first Belarusian electric car / V. Gavrilova // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/reportazh-ekologichnyj-sovremennoj-i-manevrennoj-uchenye-prezentovali-pervyj-beloruskij-elektromobil-262688-2017>

⁵⁵¹ Meeting with the leadership of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveschanie-s-rukovodstvom-soveta-ministrov-23197/

⁵⁵² "BELJI" is ready to consider the release of electric cars when selling 5-10 thousand cars per year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-gotov-rassmatriva-vypusk-elektromobilej-pri-prudazhe-5-10-tys-avto-v-god-382660-2020/>

considered at a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, where the main requirements of the government to the content of the document were voiced: "The programme should be truly comprehensive - from research and development to incentives for the development of electric transport. That is, it should be "cross-cutting" and affect virtually all spheres, in one way or another related to electric transport"⁵⁵³. Perhaps for this reason, the development of electric transport in Belarus is also discussed in other relevant high-level documents. In particular, the State Programme "Energy Saving" for 2021-2025 provides for the development of production of electric vehicles, components and charging infrastructure for them in the industrial sector in order to achieve the set goals, while in the sphere of transport it is envisaged to "develop the segment of electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles and charging network, electrification of urban passenger transport in order to replace the use of hydrocarbon fuel"⁵⁵⁴.

As for the research component of this topic, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus outlined its plans to create an experimental production of Belarusian electric cars back in 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 the release of several models at once: a lorry, a car, a minivan, even a sports car. It is characteristic that "this is not Geely, it is a fundamentally different electric car with completely Belarusian stuffing. <...> Several models of batteries are being worked out for the Belarusian electric car - lithium-ion, graphene and graphene-lead"⁵⁵⁵ with the expectation that they will have 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 innovative activities "Days of Belarusian Science - 2021", held in Minsk in January 2021, at the open area it was already possible to get acquainted with a mock-up model of the Academic Electro electric car of the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering, designed for transport in closed areas, i.e. without going on public roads, and designed for two passengers. "The maximum speed of the electric vehicle is 50 kilometres per hour. The frame-panel type of the body allows

⁵⁵³ The share of public electric transport in Belarus by 2025 they want to increase to 30% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9713>

⁵⁵⁴ State Programme "Engergosberezhenie" for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 15.

⁵⁵⁵ NAS expects to create an experimental production of Belarusian electric cars [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nan-rasschityvaet-sozdat-eksperimentalnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskikh-elektromobilej-425463-2021/>

production in small series according to the customer's requirements⁵⁵⁶ . Another feature of this novelty is that the power part of its cabin does not contain metal elements: it is made of fibreglass. 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, "together with MAZ, an electric truck is being developed, which will be equipped with an electric power plant developed at the Institute"⁵⁵⁷ . And the result of work with Minsk Tractor Plant will be an electric harvester for pouring ice on ice rinks, the first serial batch of which is scheduled for 2021. As for the production of electric cars on the basis of BELJI, it was planned to deliver five hundred to one thousand of these electric cars to Belarus in 2021, "in order to study the demand, understand the possibilities, and then carry out all the necessary work to prepare production. We should expect electric cars closer to the second half of the year"⁵⁵⁸ . In short, the measures taken in Belarus to create its own electric cars promised to yield results in the near future.

Finally, in April 2021, the Republic of Belarus has already finally approved the Comprehensive Electric Transport Development Programme for 2021-2025, which aims to achieve key objectives such as:

- 1) creation of a new branch of mechanical engineering - production of electric transport;
- 2) ensuring conditions for increasing the number of electric traction vehicles in use;
- 3) expansion of electric transport infrastructure; 4) minimising negative environmental impacts.

To this end, the integrated programme involves seven tasks:

⁵⁵⁶ New drone and electric car - NAS will present about 200 developments at the exhibition for the Day of Science [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/novyyj-bespilotnik-i-elektromobil-nan-predstavit-okolo-200-razrabotok-na-vystavke-ko-dnju-nauki-425608-2021/>

⁵⁵⁷ Electric trucks, electric combines and electric cars - what Belarusian scientists are working on [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/elektrogruzoviki-elektrokombajny-i-legkovye-elektromobili-nad-chem-rabotajut-belorusskie-uchenye-426333-2021/>

⁵⁵⁸ "BELJI to study demand for electric vehicles 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/>

- 1) creation of a system of scientific support, including ensuring the scientific and technological security of the country in the field of mechanical engineering;
- 2) organisation of production of electric transport, its basic components and infrastructure elements and their maximum localisation;
- 3) formation of a set of institutional conditions for the development of electric transport on the basis of systemic provision of its standardisation, conformity assessment and regulatory legal support;
- 4) creation of electric transport infrastructure, including EHS, with its optimal spatial location and taking into account the specifics of consumers (public passenger and freight transport, personal electric transport);
- 5) coordination of actions of state bodies on the development of electric transport and its infrastructure on a national and regional scale; optimisation of investments in the creation of production facilities and acquisition of electric transport;
- 6) formation and implementation of measures to stimulate the development of electric transport from scientific support, acquisition and operation to utilisation and recycling, including for attracting investments for accelerated development of electric transport;
- 7) minimisation of economic, environmental, social and other risks.

Two subprogrammes - "Production and technological base of electric vehicles" and "Creation of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles" - envisage the creation of research and production facilities to increase the number of electric vehicles in use, as well as a well-developed network of filling stations that will ensure unimpeded movement of electric vehicles throughout Belarus. And among the measures planned by the comprehensive programme we should mention the creation of a pilot experimental production of electric vehicles, as well as "exemption of electric vehicle road users from charging for the use of communally owned car parks"⁵⁵⁹. In addition, this type of transport is exempt from transport tax in the Republic of Belarus. More precisely, "owners of vehicles of categories M1, M1G (electric passenger cars and electric passenger cars of high cross-country ability) driven solely by an

⁵⁵⁹ On the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport up to 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://government.by/ru/content/9804>

electric motor will not pay transport tax. This benefit is granted until 31 December 2025⁵⁶⁰.

Of course, all these measures create good conditions for the growth in the 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 in 2020 almost doubled compared to 2019 - up to 7.7 million kWh"⁵⁶¹. Every month up to two hundred new users are registered in the EHS network. And "an average of 250 charging sessions are carried out at stations every day, and in the last two months [January and February] their total number exceeded 15 thousand"⁵⁶². The Comprehensive Programme contains serious measures to develop the EHS network. While this network now consists of 288 EHSs, by the end of 2021 there should already be 471. At the second stage (2022-2025), 466 will be added, and at the third stage (2026-2030) - another 407.

Another important issue of this topic is that budget Chinese electric cars continue to be particularly popular among Belarusian consumers today, because domestic models do not yet exist. The comprehensive programme states that "it is planned to master serial production of electric cars in BELJI and to produce 1,000 electric cars based on the Geometry C model in 2021"⁵⁶³, as well as to create an experimental assembly production of single samples and small series of electric cars of various modifications in the State National Scientific Institution "United Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus" on the basis of maximum use of Belarusian-made components and units.

As for other types of electric-powered transport vehicles, a very extensive development programme is planned. In particular, by the end of 2023, the production of electric buses for transporting passengers at airports with Belarusian-made powertrain components is to be mastered. The United Institute of Mechanical Engineering together with the Minsk Automobile Plant

⁵⁶⁰ MNS: electric vehicles are exempt from transport tax until the end of 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mns-elektromobili-osvobozhdeny-ot-transportnogo-naloga-do-kontsa-2025-goda-434965-2021/>

⁵⁶¹ Electricity consumption by charging stations for electric transport in Belarus in 2020 almost doubled [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://atom.belta.by/ru/news_ru/view/elektropotreblenie-zarjadnymi-stantsijami-dlya-elektrotransporta-v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-vyroslo-pochti-vdvoe-11190/

⁵⁶² The number of electric cars in Belarus exceeded 2.5 thousand. [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-elektromobilej-v-belarusi-prevysilo-25-tys-431822-2021/>

⁵⁶³ Comprehensive programme for the development of electric transport for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 20.

will create a model of an electric truck with a load capacity of about four and a half tonnes, and with Belkommunmash - up to ten tonnes. A domestic electric rubbish truck is also to be added to the Belarusian electric transport fleet. Finally, the Belarusian Automobile Plant "within the framework of the programme intends to create a sample of a battery-powered dump truck. The gross weight of such a vehicle will be 176 tonnes, with a payload of 90 tonnes"⁵⁶⁴.

As we can see, increasing the use of electric vehicles in Belarus in the coming years should become one of the most promising areas of development, which will not only contribute to reducing the use of imported energy carriers, but will also improve the environmental situation and ensure the utilisation of the capacity of the Belarusian energy system.

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⁵⁶⁴ Electric dump truck, electric garbage truck and electric car of Belarusian production are planned to be created by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://doingbusiness.by/elektrosamosval-elektromusorovoz-i-elektromobil-belorusskogo-proizvodstva-planiruetsya-sozdat-do-2025-goda>

Belarus: there are incentives for investors

In December 2021, the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus approved amendments to the law "On Free Economic Zones" (FEZ), which provide for the transfer of powers to change the boundaries of these territories from the head of state to the government. "At the same time, the President of the country will still agree on the inclusion of agricultural and forestry territories within the boundaries of FEZs"⁵⁶⁵. This innovation is expected to reduce the time from idea to the start of new investment projects in the territories, which are considered growth points in the regions, as it will encourage potential investors to invest resources in FEZs. For them "a clear rule remains unchanged: FEZ boundaries can be expanded exclusively for specific investment projects"⁵⁶⁶. It should be reminded that the law "On Free Economic Zones" was adopted in December 1998. It defines one of the main goals of free economic zones as "attracting investments in the creation and development of export-oriented and import-substituting industries based on new and high technologies"⁵⁶⁷. It should be noted that there are only six FEZs in Belarus. As of 1 October 2021, there were 429 companies with the number of employees - about 137 thousand people, where projects are being implemented with investments of almost seven billion dollars from more than 30 countries of the world. The fact that FEZs are territories where it is possible to build a successful business today is confirmed by the statistics of 2021. In three quarters, the volume of exports here grew almost one and a half times, and the inflow of foreign direct investment accounted for a fifth of the country's total.

In particular, residents of **FEZ Grodnoinvest** are achieving high results in 2021, with exports exceeding one billion dollars in January-September. The geography of these supplies is very wide: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Germany, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Lithuania, Great Britain, Turkey. "For 9 months a foreign trade surplus of \$540 million was obtained.

⁵⁶⁵ The Council of the Republic approved the bill on free economic zones [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sovet-respubliki-odobril-zakonoproekt-o-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zonah-476194-2021/>

⁵⁶⁶ Nikitina: attractive national jurisdiction activates the inflow of investments [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nikitina-privlekatelnaja-natsionalnaja-jurisdiktsija-aktiviziruet-pritok-investitsij-475406-2021/>

⁵⁶⁷ Zaleskii, B.L. Free and special economic zones as points of growth in the regions / B.L. Zaleskii // Socio-humanitarian researches. - 2020. - №3. - C. 64.

This is the best indicator among FEZs of Belarus⁵⁶⁸. As a result, FEZ residents already account for over 43% of exports and over 30% of industrial production of the entire Grodno region. The machine-building segment is developing especially dynamically in this FEZ. Suffice it to say that here "exports of computing, electronic and optical equipment doubled in the first nine months of the current [2021] year"⁵⁶⁹. In total, nine companies in machine-building and another seven in metalworking have been registered in Grodnoinvest so far. In general, 75 companies with investments from 40 countries are residents of the FEZ. They successfully implement investment projects in woodworking and furniture production, machine building and metalworking, food, chemical and light industry, agriculture and export a wide range of products, with the largest share of foreign supplies being woodworking and furniture products, food and chemical products, machinery and equipment, textiles.

It is characteristic that today new investment projects are being laid in the FEZ Grodnoinvest, which in the near future will have a very positive impact on the export component of both the FEZ itself and the whole Grodno region. In particular, at the FEZ site in Smargon, Europlastex Invest LLC has already started the second project as a resident of Grodnoinvest. The first one involves the construction of a vertically integrated complex for the production of cotton yarn and cotton yarn products. The second project is the organisation of a metal processing plant in Smarhon, the total cost of which will exceed five million euros. The first products are planned to be produced here already in 2022. Most of them "will be oriented towards export to the countries of Central Asia, Western Europe, Middle East"⁵⁷⁰. For this purpose, new and modernised production facilities will be built, as well as modern technological equipment for the production of steel pipes and profiles will be purchased. As a result, the new investment project will create dozens of new jobs, utilise unused premises and partially replace imported products from abroad.

It should be noted that nine resident enterprises, including those with investments from the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and other countries, which

⁵⁶⁸ Exports of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents in January-September exceeded \$1 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-janvare-sentjabre-prevysil-1-mlrd-472551-2021/>

⁵⁶⁹ FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents doubled the export of electronic and optical equipment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-udvoili-eksport-elektronnoj-i-opticheskoy-apparatury-473562-2021/>

⁵⁷⁰ Foreign investor organises steel pipe production in Smargon [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/inostrannyj-investor-organizuet-v-smorgoni-proizvodstvo-stalnyh-trub-454884-2021/>

since 2015 "have invested over \$470 million in the creation of modern export-oriented enterprises"⁵⁷¹ are already successfully operating on the industrial sites of FEZ Hrodnainvest in Smarhon district. It was here that almost half - 48 per cent - of all industrial output of the FEZ Grodnoinvest was produced in 2020. As for other industrial sites of FEZ, "29 per cent of production falls on the city of Grodno, 8 per cent - on Lida district. The leaders in terms of growth rate for 2020 were Smorgon (136 per cent), Grodno (123 per cent) and Svisloch (123 per cent) districts"⁵⁷².

And there are good reasons to believe that new domestic and foreign investors will soon appear here. The fact is that in August 2021, Smorgoni commissioned the second start-up complex of a large-scale infrastructure project to reconstruct the main transport artery of the city - Industrial Avenue, which connects residential development with the industrial park of the Free Economic Zone and includes a modern four-lane road, engineering infrastructure networks, landscaping and gardening of the adjacent territory, lighting. In 2021, the implementation of the third stage of the project started here, which involves the creation of a roundabout, as well as providing the industrial park with additional electricity. All this will make the operating conditions for both existing and potential FEZ residents even more attractive.

The FEZ industrial site in Hrodna also continues to develop, with two new residents registered in 2021. The first one, the company Unis Trade, is setting up the production of metal structures in Hrandichi. The second one, OV-PlastSnab LLC, which will organise an enterprise for the production of a wide range of synthetic polymer products, was registered here in June 2021. Besides export of finished products and import substitution, the investment project of the new resident will allow to form additional prerequisites for the development of the chemical cluster in the FEZ on the industrial site in the area "Auls", where such residents as "PCC Consumer Products Navigator" LLC, "Belagrofert" LLC, JSC "Grodnorayagroservice", PT "Typhoon" LLC are already successfully implementing their projects. And "the construction of a

⁵⁷¹ The second part of the infrastructure project of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" is completed in Smarhon [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vtoraja-ochered-infrastrukturnogo-proekta-sez-grodnoinvest-zavershena-v-smorgoni-455912-2021/>

⁵⁷² Industrial production of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents increased by 14% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/promyshlennoe-proizvodstvo-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vyroslo-na-14-430320-2021/>

unique plant for the production of glass products has recently begun"⁵⁷³ . So the prospects for the growth of the export component are very serious here.

FEZ "Vitebsk" residents increased exports by more than 60 per cent in the three quarters of 2021, bringing their volume to \$623 million and interacting with partners from 73 countries. As a result of work on diversification of exports FEZ participants managed to almost half increase the shipment of their products to the markets of the "far arc" countries, and to the UK, the United Arab Emirates, India, Pakistan, Israel, Brazil - three and more times. In addition, "for the first time supplies of fibre-optic cable were made to Afghanistan, gas and smoke analysers were shipped to Poland, fur pelts to China, linen to Chile, insulated cables to France"⁵⁷⁴ . To all appearances, more than 50 investment projects implemented in this FEZ will soon be joined by a number of new ones, as foreign investors show interest in organising here the production of composite materials, in the sphere of machine-tool construction, woodworking and creation of finished products from wood raw materials, as well as microfertilisers. In particular, "an investor from Sweden in co-operation with a partner from China is ready to invest about \$100 million in the construction of a plant for processing low-grade wood. Representatives of the Netherlands are looking for a site to organise furniture production with an investment volume of about 100 million euros. <...> A German company is planning to set up a terrace board production facility worth about \$9 million"⁵⁷⁵ . In addition, Chinese businessmen have already registered a legal entity in Vitebsk to implement a project in woodworking with an expected investment of about \$26 million. In total, there are "about 8 more projects under consideration, the implementation of which will attract at least \$160 million to the economy of Vitebsk region"⁵⁷⁶ .

It should be reminded that 56 investment projects with the participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Great Britain, Israel, Cyprus and Spain, are currently being

⁵⁷³ A new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" will create an innovative production of synthetic polymer products in Grodno [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://grodnoinvest.by/press-center/novyy-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-v-grodno-innovacionnoe-proizvodstvo-izdelij/>

⁵⁷⁴ FEZ "Vitebsk" residents in January-September increased the export of goods by almost 62% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-janvare-sentjabre-uvelichili-eksport-tovarov-pochti-na-62-471298-2021/>

⁵⁷⁵ Investors from 4 countries show interest in the implementation of projects on the sites of FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investory-iz-4-stran-projavljajut-interes-k-realizatsii-proektov-na-ploschadkah-sez-vitebsk-472892-2021/>

⁵⁷⁶ FEZ "Vitebsk" residents for 9 months increased production by more than 40% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-za-9-mesjatsev-narastili-proizvodstvo-produktsii-bollee-chem-na-40-471323-2021/>

implemented in this FEZ on the territory of 16 sectors. In the first quarter of 2021, three new residents were registered here with projects to develop the production of special hydro-pressing equipment, construction materials and modernise facilities for the production of import-substituting components for agricultural machinery and passenger cars. "The projects attracted \$12.2 million of foreign direct investment on a net basis, which was more than 40% of the figure for Vitebsk region as a whole"⁵⁷⁷.

FEZ Gomel-Raton residents exported more than half of the products produced in January-September 2021. More than 1.1 billion dollars worth of goods were shipped to the markets of 63 countries. The top five importers here are Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and China. These are not bad indicators, considering that as of 1 October 2021, 69 business entities were operating in the FEZ, of which 30 were companies with foreign capital from 16 countries. In 2021, three new resident enterprises with the volume of declared investments of about 50 million dollars were registered here. And in total "\$76.3 million of foreign direct investment was attracted in FEZ "Gomel-Raton" for the implementation of investment projects for 9 months"⁵⁷⁸. This is almost half of the total volume of investments in Gomel region.

By the end of 2021, the FEZ expected to increase the volume of production by 18.5 per cent due to the modernisation of existing production facilities and registration of new residents with promising investment projects. Thus, "Alcopack" enterprise is building a new building, where it plans to produce new medical products. "Polycap" is working on a project to produce disposable tableware from cellulose⁵⁷⁹. Residents such as Veza-G and Multipak will also expand their production. MIRTEK-engineering LLC, which produces energy metering devices, already supplies more than half of its output to foreign markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and European countries. Recently, it has started to work on outsourcing the production of SMD and DIP-components surface mount printed circuit boards - a promising direction, which is relevant for all companies that are associated with the production of

⁵⁷⁷ FEZ "Vitebsk" residents for 9 months increased production by more than 40% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-za-9-mesjatsev-narastili-proizvodstvo-produktstii-bolee-chem-na-40-471323-2021/>

⁵⁷⁸ FEZ "Gomel-Raton" residents for 9 months increased the production of industrial products by more than 42% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-za-9-mesjatsev-uvelichili-proizvodstvo-promproduktsii-bolee-chem-na-42-471389-2021/>

⁵⁷⁹ FEZ "Gomel-Raton" residents intend to increase the volume of production by 18.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-namereny-uvelichit-objem-proizvodstva-na-185-v-2021-godu-434576-2021/>

electronic modules and assemblies. Note that "in 2020, \$230 million of investments were made in FEZ Gomel-Raton"⁵⁸⁰.

As for the **FEZ "Brest"**, in January 2022 at the world exhibition "EXPO-2020" in the United Arab Emirates, its potential was presented for the first time at the Belarusian national exposition in a separate pavilion. Such FEZ resident enterprises as JV "Santa Bremore" Ltd, group of companies "STiM", JSC "Barkhim" demonstrated their capabilities and exhibits to the numerous visitors of the world forum. The very fact of FEZ "Brest" presence at "EXPO-2020" eloquently illustrates the growing role of this "multi-profile economic territory, where production, technological, logistic activities can be developed"⁵⁸¹, for the economy of Brest region.

Recall that residents of this FEZ in 2021 provided already a fifth of the total industrial output of this Belarusian region. "\$936 million worth of goods were supplied outside the country (growth rate - 123.9%). The specific weight of FEZ in the total volume of exports of Brest region was 29% with a foreign trade surplus of \$289 million"⁵⁸². And this is despite the fact that in December 2021 there were 72 residents, including 42 - with foreign capital, and the number of employees totalled 21.5 thousand people. In 2021, 700 additional jobs were created in the FEZ. At the end of December 2021, the 73rd resident of FEZ "Brest" became LLC "Green-Glass" with an investment project to modernise the production of glassware to a full cycle. "The investor intends to invest more than 500 thousand euros in this business within three years. The product range includes sheet processed glass, reinforced (tempered) and laminated flat glass, glass mirrors, single- and double-chamber double-glazed windows"⁵⁸³.

Before that, in October 2021, Kesar Industrial LLC, a company with Belarusian-Israeli capital, located in Kobrin and specialising in lumbering, became a resident of the FEZ. The new resident leased a land plot and acquired ownership of the buildings located on it, where after the reconstruction the production of "furniture boards made of laminated chipboard, laminated timber

⁵⁸⁰ FEZs are a driver of territorial development - Asliuk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-javljajutsja-drajverom-razvitiya-territorij-asljuk-434551-2021/>

⁵⁸¹ Zaleskii, B.L. Free and special economic zones as points of growth in the regions / B.L. Zaleskii // Socio-humanitarian researches. - 2020. - №3. - C. 67.

⁵⁸² Investment potential of FEZ "Brest" will be presented at the exhibition in Dubai [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investitsionnyj-potentsial-sez-brest-predstavljat-na-vystavke-v-dubae-480588-2022/>

⁵⁸³ A new resident was registered in FEZ "Brest" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novogo-rezidenta-zaregistrovali-v-sez-brest-476969-2021/>

products with a wide range of applications will be transferred. A significant share of the products is expected to be supplied to foreign markets"⁵⁸⁴ . The production of these products is planned to start within three years. Kesar Industrial Ltd. intends to invest more than half a million euros in the first stage of this investment project. Interestingly, the new resident will be the fifth company operating in the FEZ in the field of wood processing.

It should be noted that the FEZ "Brest" today is characterised not only by the emergence of new residents, but also by the expansion of activities of companies that have been operating here for a long time. The fact is that in 2016 its territory was expanded mainly at the expense of companies that had free space. In five years, about 80 enterprises have settled down on the unused capacities of former industrial giants, including electric lamp, carpet, and electromechanical plants. In general, FEZ "Brest" residents are now located in the regional centre and Brest district, as well as in Baranavichy, Pinsk, Kobrin and Ivatsevichy.

For example, in August 2021, Anrex IOOO, which has been a FEZ resident for a quarter of a century, acquired production and administrative and household premises from Brest-based Tsvetotron OJSC and set up furniture production there. "It is planned to invest about Br60 million in the project and create 500 jobs. The first start-up complex has already been commissioned ..." ⁵⁸⁵ . As a result, the city got rid of unprofitable buildings of the former factory and got new production. Another example in this context is Arlight and K LLC, a company with Russian-Chinese capital, registered in the Brest FEZ in November 2015 and located in the Aeroport industrial zone. Over the past six years, the company has established here a high-tech LED production facility, which is used to produce LED strips and lighting devices that are in demand not only in Belarus, but also in Russia, as well as in Poland and Germany. Suffice it to say that in 2020 it shipped \$3.7 million worth of products to foreign partners. In 2021, a new line was launched here, which "will double the capacity of the plant and produce up to 3 thousand linear lights

⁵⁸⁴ Woodworking enterprise joined the number of FEZ "Brest" residents [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/derevoobrabatyvajuschee-predpriyatie-popolnilo-chislo-rezidentov-sez-brest-462782-2021/>

⁵⁸⁵ Investor on the premises of Brest "Tsvetotron" created furniture production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investor-na-ploschadjah-brestskogo-tsvetotrona-sozdal-mebelnoe-proizvodstvo-457323-2021/>

and up to 350 km of LED tape per month"⁵⁸⁶ . This will make it possible to increase the number of labour to 250 people.

A number of other existing FEZ resident companies are also planning to expand their production facilities. For example, Polipol Mebel Bel LLC, registered here in the summer of 2020, which became "the seventh company in the FEZ with German capital"⁵⁸⁷ , is building a large factory for the production of upholstered furniture in Ivatsevichy with a planned investment volume of 26 million euros. "A new line for the production of raw smoked sausages is going to be launched by IE "Inko-Food" Ltd. JV "Santa Bremore" LLC invests at least \$5 million annually in the development of production"⁵⁸⁸ . All these facts clearly show what serious investment and production potential FEZ "Brest" has today in terms of future development. And which after demonstration at the world exhibition "EXPO-2020" in Dubai can get new powerful impulses in terms of further development.

In general, it remains to add that free economic zones in Belarus, as a model of economic relations in the regions, have already become an effective tool for the development of the national economy. And the adoption of amendments to the Law "On Free Economic Zones" will certainly only contribute to the preservation of the positive dynamics of development, which they have already managed to achieve over the past 20 years since the emergence of free economic zones in Belarus.

⁵⁸⁶ LED manufacturer in FEZ "Brest" plans to double the volume of production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvoditel-svetodiodov-v-sez-brest-planiruet-udvoit-objem-proizvodstva-450766-2021/>

⁵⁸⁷ Zalessky, B.L. FEZ "Brest": prospects inspire optimism / B.L. Zalessky // Materials of the XVI International scientific and practical conference "Modern european science - 2020", June 30 - July 7, 2020: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 7.

⁵⁸⁸ Five new enterprises will be launched this year in FEZ "Brest". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pjat-novyh-predpriatij-zapustят-v-etoj-godu-v-sez-brest-433948-2021/>

Belarus: from modernisation to maximum localisation of production and import substitution

As early as in the Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2020, the task was outlined to create conditions for the implementation of the policy of rational import substitution and development of import-substituting industries, including using the potential of small and medium-sized companies in order to improve the trade balance of the country to eventually reach "an annual increase in the production of import-substituting products in the amount of at least USD 600 million"⁵⁸⁹. It should be noted that in Belarus the main objective of import substitution, which is understood as a state policy aimed at rationalising imports of goods and services by stimulating domestic producers, including those with the participation of foreign capital, to organise the production of goods that were previously imported, is formulated as "not the mechanical substitution of imported goods, but the development of competitive national production"⁵⁹⁰. According to the Belarusian Ministry of Economy, the share of import-substituting products in the country has already approached 40 per cent or, in monetary terms, \$20 billion. At the same time, "the share of sales of import-substituting products for export has grown to 50 per cent. This shows that it is not only competitive in the domestic market, but is also in demand abroad"⁵⁹¹.

Among the economic entities in Belarus that have been quite successful in addressing the issues of import substitution in recent years are the enterprises of the Bellesbumprom Concern. In 2019, they increased the output of such products by almost 10 per cent and produced them for more than \$530 million. More specifically, 26 enterprises produced import-substituting products in 38 commodity items, including pulp, fibreboard, chipboard, plywood, uncoated paper and cardboard, corrugated and non-corrugated cardboard, paper sacks, newsprint and sanitary paper. In particular, "in 2019 Svetlogorsk CCP produced 145,000 tonnes of pulp, which is 5.6 times more

⁵⁸⁹ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file253cf6b5b538838e.PDF>

⁵⁹⁰ Ideas for import substitution [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/idei_importozames-ru/

⁵⁹¹ The share of import-substituting products in the industry of Belarus is approaching 40% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/dolja-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-v-promyshlennosti-belarusi-priblizhaetsja-k-40-379006-2020/>

than in 2018⁵⁹². Another interesting example in this context is JSC Rechitsadrev. A few years ago in Rechitsa began to operate a Plant of synthetic resins. One of the uses of this resin is the production of decorative film from ordinary paper used in the manufacture of laminated wood panels. The result: whereas previously furniture makers had to buy synthetic resin abroad, they have now started to export their surplus resin themselves. In 2019 alone, this generated around three million euros for the company. Overall, however, "the production of our own resin saved around 10 million euros over the entire period"⁵⁹³.

The secret of success of the Concern's enterprises lies in the modernisation of the basic woodworking plants, which allowed to significantly expand the range of products and ensure their high quality. The result: over the last five years, when the new plants started operating, the production volume of import-substituting products more than doubled. Continuing to develop this topical priority, the Bellesbumprom Concern sees such promising areas as expanding the range and increasing the production of various types of paper packaging as an alternative to polyethylene packaging, as well as producing high-quality coated paperboard, which is used in significant quantities in the printing, food, pharmaceutical, and cosmetics industries. As a result, "in 2020, the Concern's enterprises plan to increase the output of import-substituting products by \$30 million to \$560 million"⁵⁹⁴.

The Energokomplekt production association in Vitebsk has also accumulated interesting experience in developing import substitution, where in 2019 "86% of the total volume worth \$112 million was supplied for export. At the same time, the Vitebsk company accounts for 70% of all cable products manufactured in Belarus"⁵⁹⁵. It is appropriate to add that this association, founded in 1992 and now a resident of the Vitebsk free economic zone, employs 650 people providing innovative products to both domestic and foreign consumers.

⁵⁹² Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2019 increased the production of import-substituting products by 9.3% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-bellesbumproma-v-2019-godu-uvelichili-proizvodstvo-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-379049-2020/>

⁵⁹³ Kapba, E. In the lens - "JSC Rechitsadrev". Successful import substitution / E. Kapba // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://dneprvec.by/companynews/2020/02/14/25898>

⁵⁹⁴ Igor Lyashenko directs "Bellesbumprom" to more active production of import-substituting products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9267>

⁵⁹⁵ Bogacheva, O. More attention should be paid to the issues of import substitution - Anfimov / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/voprosam-importozameschenija-neobhodimo-udeljat-bolshe-vnimaniya-anfimov-378866-2020/>

A number of examples of successful implementation of the import substitution policy can be observed at the enterprises of Gomel region. In particular, "one of them is the activity of the Turov Dairy Plant to produce traditional Italian cheeses for sale on the national Belarusian market"⁵⁹⁶. All these examples show that the import substitution policy in Belarus, although it is developing, still has a huge potential, which many market players will have to master, guided by the best practices already available in the country.

That is why the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025, adopted in mid-2021, envisaged strengthening the policy of rational import substitution, taking into account the production of new high-tech and export-oriented goods, including within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. This document states that the production of import-substituting products by the end of the five-year plan in the country "will increase to USD 22.3 billion with a total production growth of USD 4 billion"⁵⁹⁷.

In December 2021, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, while considering the problems of uninterrupted supply of necessary components and materials faced by domestic manufacturers, set the task to maximise the localisation of Belarusian products, including through cooperation with Russia and other countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, taking into account the positive trends observed in the work on import substitution. Indeed, over the five-year period - from 2016 to 2020 - the output of import-substituting products in Belarus increased by about a third - from \$13.6 billion to \$18 billion. Over the same period, its share in total industrial production increased from 34.2 to 38 per cent. And now "more than 53 per cent of import-substituting products are not only used inside the country, but also exported. The balance of foreign trade in goods under the approved import substitution scheme has improved by \$412 million over the last five years"⁵⁹⁸.

Among the measures stimulating enterprises to import substitution, the following were named at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of

⁵⁹⁶ Shumel, K.V. Development of import-substituting industries in the context of the concept of innovative development of the Republic of Belarus / K.V. Shumel // Women scientists of Belarus and Kazakhstan: proceedings of the International scientific and practical conference, Minsk, 1-2 March 2018 / edited by I.V. Kazakova [and others]. I.V. Kazakova [and others]. - Minsk: RIVSH, 2018. - C. 553.

⁵⁹⁷ Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 28.

⁵⁹⁸ In the conditions of sanctions it is necessary to increase the localisation of production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10092>

Ministers: increase in localisation, development of technological chains, processing of local raw materials, attraction of small and medium-sized businesses. And "about 170 import-substituting projects have already been proposed for a total amount of almost Br13 billion of investments"⁵⁹⁹, of which the Ministry of Economy has selected 47 most significant projects with investments of about eight billion Belarusian rubles, the implementation of which will make it possible to produce import-substituting products for more than nine billion Belarusian rubles.

A tight action plan for the development of import-substituting industries for 2022 was formed again in the concern "Bellesbumprom", which "set the task to produce and sell import-substituting products worth \$876.1 million (which is 31% higher than the task of the national target plan)"⁶⁰⁰. The concern intends to solve this task based on the development of new production facilities in the woodworking and pulp and paper industries. Today, 26 enterprises of Bellesbumprom produce such products in 50 commodity items, "including pulp, chipboard, fibreboard (MDF), plywood, uncoated paper and cardboard, corrugated cardboard and boxes made of it, paper bags, non-corrugated cardboard, newsprint and sanitary paper, and products made of it. For 2021, the growth rate of import-substituting products output by the Concern was 163% by 2020"⁶⁰¹.

In 2021, interesting import substitution measures were also implemented in Krichev cementosilfer, one of the largest Belarusian enterprises producing construction materials. In particular, they started to actively use sandy cement for this purpose. And compared to 2020, its supply in January-October 2021 increased fourfold - up to 270 thousand tonnes. Local "river sand with high silicon content" was added to this cement instead of foreign slag. The cement grade and its quality remain at the same level, but the cost of the product is significantly reduced⁶⁰². In other words, at the same production rate, the

⁵⁹⁹ Cherviakov: import substitution acquires special importance as a tool to counteract sanctions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherviakov-importozameschenie-priobrjetaet-osoboe-znachenie-kak-instrument-protivodejstvija-sanktsijam-473567-2021/>

⁶⁰⁰ Increasing import substitution and reducing costs: Chairman of "Bellesbumprom" on the tasks for the year [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/naraschivanie-importozameschenija-i-snizhenie-zatrata-predsedatel-bellesbumproma-o-zadachah-na-god-485290-2022/>

⁶⁰¹ Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2021 increased exports by 48.2% [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-bellesbumproma-v-2021-godu-uvyelichili-eksport-na-482-485259-2022/>

⁶⁰² Yevmenkova, Yu. "Krichev cementosilfer" exported almost 40% of products for 10 months / Yu. Yevmenkova // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

company increased the profitability of each tonne of cement at the expense of cheap domestic sand.

Another interesting example in this context is the opening in late December 2021 of a site for the production of vacuum tubes for venous blood collection at Medplast OJSC in Gomel. This product "is an import substitute - it has not been produced in the country so far, and the needs of medical institutions were met by imported supplies. Modern equipment has been installed at the site. In compliance with all sanitary norms, 121 types of tubes of different sizes and volumes will be produced here"⁶⁰³. An important detail: Belarus has become the fourth country in the world, after the USA, China and Turkey, where there is a full production of such medical devices.

The enterprises of the Belarusian Ministry of Industry are currently facing particularly strenuous tasks in this area. In 2022, they must produce import-substituting products worth four and a half billion dollars, which is almost 20 per cent more than in 2021. "Solving this task requires a significant increase in exports - up to 70 per cent of the output of goods (\$3.19 billion). The organisations of the Ministry of Industry should master in production almost 400 items of new products"⁶⁰⁴. It should be noted that in the current economic situation many enterprises not only state the emerging problems, but also see in them actual impulses for technological advancement to the opening of new directions and development of new niches.

For example, OJSC "Mogilevliftmash" produced the first batch of gearless winches at the production site of electric motors in March 2022. "Previously, the company purchased such winches in Spain, but due to sanctions restrictions there are interruptions with the import of winches"⁶⁰⁵. Now the JSC plans to increase the output of these components and completely avoid import purchases, as well as to start their sale to other enterprises. Zenit JSC is also actively engaged in import substitution, where they are working on the development of high-tech electronic components and control stations,

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/krichevtsementnoshifer-eksportiroval-za-10-mesyatsev-pochni-40-produktssi-470044-2021/>

⁶⁰³ Production of vacuum tubes for venous blood sampling opened in Gomel [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvodstvo-vakuumnyh-probirok-dlya-zabora-venoznoj-krovi-otkryli-v-gomele-477229-2021/>

⁶⁰⁴ Parkhomchik, P. Belarusian industry under sanctions / P. Parkhomchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/belorusskaja-promyshlennost-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-ministr-o-borbe-s-novymi-vyzovami-planah-po-proizvodstvu-i-8121/>

⁶⁰⁵ "Mogilevliftmash" has mastered the production of new components and intends to completely avoid import purchases [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mogilevliftmash-osvoil-vypusk-novyh-komplektujuschih-inameren-polnostju-ujiti-ot-importnyh-zakupok-494830-2022/>

which will make it possible to create high-quality import-substituting components that will find their consumers not only in the Belarusian market, but also in other post-Soviet countries.

There are such enterprises in the Belneftekhim Concern as well. In particular, the framework agreement on further modernisation of the enterprise, signed in November 2021 within the framework of the investment forum "Mill of Success" held in Mogilev, is intended to update the work on import substitution in OJSC "Mogilevkhimvolokno". The fact is that "a company with Turkish capital BelEmsa is operating in Mogilev. In its production it uses spunlace, which are produced from the threads of "Mogilevkhimvolokna", but in Rostov region. Then this raw material goes back to Mogilev"⁶⁰⁶. As a result of the agreement reached with BelEmsa, the spunlace will now be moved from one end of Mogilev to the other.

Multifaceted work on import substitution is also characteristic of the Belarusian energy sector, where great opportunities are opening up for organisations in the peat industry. It should be reminded that about two million tonnes of peat are extracted in Belarus every year. The priority here is given to the production of peat fuel, which makes it possible to replace the use of imported natural gas and hard coal. At the same time, "special attention is paid to increasing supplies of these products to organisations in the cement industry and the housing and utilities sector. Thus, over the last five years, the volume of milling peat consumption by housing and utilities boilers has increased 2.5 times: from 25.9 thousand tonnes in 2016 to 75.3 thousand tonnes in 2021"⁶⁰⁷. By the end of 2025, these volumes are expected to increase to 160 thousand tonnes. And the use of peat in the cement industry after the implementation of the peat drying combustion project allowed to increase its consumption from 80 thousand tonnes in 2015 to 358 thousand tonnes in 2021. The output of peat products for non-fuel purposes is also growing. In particular, the Brest region is now working out the issue of creating the production of its new type - cover material for mushroom cultivation. "The total volume of the domestic market for these products in the country is estimated at about 50,000 tonnes per year.

⁶⁰⁶ Thanks to new investment projects in Mogilev region about 600 jobs will appear [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/blagodarja-novym-investproektam-v-mogilevskoj-oblasti-pojavitsja-okolo-600-rabochih-mest-468164-2021/>

⁶⁰⁷ Karankevich, V. Organisations of the Ministry of Energy strengthened the work on import substitution under sanctions / V. Karankevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/organizatsii-minenergo-usilili-rabotu-po-importozamescheniju-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8135>

Most of this volume was previously imported. Given the availability of our own raw material base, there are opportunities to replace these imports"⁶⁰⁸.

Brest region is also working on the development of other areas of substitution of imported goods for domestic ones. In particular, an appeal was sent to the Academy of Sciences on the need to finalise the technologies of refractory clay enrichment for JSC "Berezastroymaterialy" and quartz sands in Stolin district. Another interesting example concerns small and medium-sized businesses ready to produce import-substituting products. For example, a private investor plans to produce raw materials "from granitoids at RUPP "Granit" to replace Ukrainian basalt raw materials for a Gomel enterprise that produces mineral wool. Riona LLC, a domestic producer of polymer products, is ready to expand production of polypropylene disposable tableware. For this purpose, meat and dairy industry enterprises are attracting 3 million euros of investment from the Development Bank"⁶⁰⁹.

It should be noted that the appeal to the private sector in this context is very relevant. Suffice it to say that in 2021, "637 small and medium-sized businesses [were] involved in the implementation of import-substitution projects in the country. They produced \$2.5 billion worth of products, or almost 36 per cent of the country's total import-substituting production"⁶¹⁰. So the potential here lies quite serious. In 2022, this interaction between the public sector and small and medium-sized businesses will be significantly expanded so that entrepreneurs can organically integrate into co-operative technological chains to replace foreign suppliers who have left the market. Work here is being carried out in several areas at once.

In particular, Belarus has already launched a 24/7 operational contact centre at the National Agency for Investment and Privatisation. In addition, the Belarusian Fund for Financial Support of Entrepreneurs has created a nationwide contracting information resource to facilitate the search for organisations interested in cooperative cooperation as much as possible. Finally, another important element of all this work, according to the Belarusian Ministry of Economy, is to bring information "about this area of co-operation

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Shuleiko told the deputies of Brest Regional Council about the main directions of import substitution [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/shulejkorasskazal-deputatam-brestskogo-oblsoveta-ob-osnovnyh-napravlenijah-importozameschenija-492478-2022/>

⁶¹⁰ Rusinovich, O. On the development of import substitution and industrial cooperation under sanctions / O. Rusinovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/o-razvitiu-importozameschenija-i-proizvodstvennoj-kooperatsii-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8115/>

to every producer, even the smallest one. <...> It is necessary to painstakingly "manually" promote this idea to each entrepreneur, explain the benefits and advantages of participation in co-operation chains"⁶¹¹. And such work is already unfolding in Belarus.

For example, in March 2022, the Minsk Automobile Plant, for which import substitution is an important factor of "strategic security contributing to the rhythmic operation of the plants of the entire Belavtomaz holding and dozens of other enterprises in Belarus"⁶¹², held an exhibition and seminar for small and medium-sized businesses. The event was attended by more than one hundred representatives from 63 organisations that can be involved in cooperation with the flagship of the Belarusian automotive industry. The company is confident that the development of new positions by entrepreneurs will, of course, require both time and investments, but the import-substituting products obtained as a result of this interaction will be in demand not only at the Minsk Automobile Plant, but also by other participants of the automotive market in Belarus, Russia, and other countries of the Eurasian Economic Union.

All these examples show that in 2022 import substitution should become the most important task of every import-related enterprise in order to work ahead of the curve. That is why all regions of Belarus have been given challenging tasks in this regard, which cannot be failed to fulfil.

⁶¹¹ Rusinovich, O. On the development of import substitution and industrial cooperation under sanctions / O. Rusinovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/o-razvitiu-importozameschenija-i-proizvodstvennoj-kooperatsii-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8115/>

⁶¹² Kravchenko: sanctions restrictions will intensify the work on import substitution of components for MAZ [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kravchenko-sanktsionnye-organichenija-aktivizirujut-rabotu-po-importozamescheniju-komplektujuschih-492137-2022/>

Belarus - Asia: Prospects for Effective Co-operation

In June 2021, the Belarus-Asia Forum was held, attended by representatives of the embassies of those Asian states in Russia and Belarus part-time, which do not have their diplomatic missions in Minsk and where there are no Belarusian diplomatic missions abroad. In particular, the participants included heads of diplomatic missions and other diplomats from Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Afghanistan, Laos, and the Philippines. The attention of the Belarusian side to the Asian region is quite understandable. After all, "there are no political problems on the bilateral agenda here, and approaches to major international issues are quite similar. This creates a good basis for the development of trade and economic cooperation as the main area of bilateral interaction"⁶¹³.

Suffice it to say that in 2020, Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent totalled about two billion dollars. And this, of course, is not the limit. "It is obvious that the Asian market is still underdeveloped by exporters from Belarus in terms of promoting many of their products there, including those produced by machine-building, electronic and petrochemical enterprises"⁶¹⁴. The experience of this interaction in recent years shows that there are still many opportunities to promote Belarusian trade and economic interests in Asia. In order to successfully use them, it is necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new forms of contacts, as is actually happening in the development of partnership relations with a number of Asian countries.

In particular, the Republic of Belarus has already achieved a strategic partnership with the **People's Republic of China**. In the language of numbers, this looks as follows. In 2020, the volume of Belarusian-Chinese trade showed significant growth - by more than 10 per cent. Even higher dynamics of development of this partnership is characteristic of 2021. "From January to April this year, total imports and exports of goods between the countries

⁶¹³ Co-operation with the countries of the Asian region has been and remains one of the priorities of Belarus' foreign policy - Barysevich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sotrudnichestvo-so-stranami-aziatskogo-regiona-bylo-i-ostaetsja-odnim-iz-prioritetov-vneshnej-politiki-445159-2021/>

⁶¹⁴ Zalessky, B. Belarus - Asia: vector of partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 5.

totalled \$1.25 billion, up 58 per cent year-on-year. China has become Belarus' second largest trading partner"⁶¹⁵.

A considerable number of projects already successfully implemented and still being implemented by Belarus can be seen in a number of other Asian countries. Thus, in early June 2021, Minsk Tractor Works and the Indian company Erisha Agritech Private Limited signed a cooperation agreement, which stipulated that "the Indian partner will purchase at least 200 BELARUS tractors by the end of 2021. Besides, the parties intend to organise in **India** localisation and assembly of tractors under the joint brand DARSH BELARUS"⁶¹⁶, in order to then supply them to other countries of the continent - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal.

Another interesting Asian country in this context is **Mongolia**. In June 2021, it became known that the Belarusian Development Bank will finance the export delivery of tractors and agricultural machinery produced at Minsk Tractor Works OJSC for four and a half million euros - to the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia. And this will be the third individual credit line within the framework of the general Belarusian-Mongolian intergovernmental agreement on export credit, signed in April 2019, aimed at expanding the geography of Belarusian export supplies and strengthening foreign economic and trade relations between specific enterprises. It should be reminded that under this agreement, the Development Bank has already "financed deliveries of fire-fighting equipment manufactured by Pozhsnab LLC to the National Emergency Situations Agency of Mongolia, as well as equipment sold by MAZ OJSC, the managing company of the BELAVTOMAZ holding, to the Centre for Road and Transport Development under the Ministry of Road and Transport Development of Mongolia"⁶¹⁷. These facts testify to the fact that Belarusian industrial enterprises consider the Asian region as one of the key regions for increasing their export supplies. And they see huge potential in it, "because the countries included in it show very

⁶¹⁵ Political interaction between Belarus and China is continuously strengthening - Xie Xiaoyun [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/politicheskoe-vzaimodoverie-belorussi-i-kitaja-nepreryvno-ukrepljaetsja-se-siaojun-446045-2021/>

⁶¹⁶ MTZ signed an agreement on supply and assembly of tractors in India [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-podpisal-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-s-indijskoj-kompaniej-444577-2021/>

⁶¹⁷ The Development Bank will provide an export credit for the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery to Mongolia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bank-razvitija-predostavil-eksportnyj-kredit-na-postavku-belorusskoj-selzotehniki-v-mongoliu-445880-2021/>

good economic growth"⁶¹⁸ , which makes Belarusian products in demand in this market. And such exporters as BelAZ, BMZ, MAZ, MTZ, Amkodor, and Integral have good opportunities to expand their supplies here.

Today, the Asian region looks even more promising for Belarusian food exports, the volume of which has grown 13(!) times over the past five years. In 2020, it totalled \$356 million. In the first four months of 2021, 37 Asian countries have already shipped food products from Belarus worth \$167 million, "which is 60% more than last year. A wide range of dairy, meat products, sugar, flax fibre, rapeseed oil..."⁶¹⁹ . It is obvious that both the geography and range of these supplies will only expand, as evidenced by the interest of the Belarusian-Asian Forum participants in the proposals of Belarusian producers in their presentations at the event. In addition, the year 2021 saw a noticeable increase in Belarus's interaction with a number of other Asian countries - Iran, Pakistan, South Korea, and Oman.

As for **Iran**, in April 2021, it became known about the intention of the Belarusian Homiel Region to resume and develop cooperation with the Iranian province of Mazandaran, which had signed a document on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation back in 2009, but failed to implement its plans. At that time, when signing the memorandum of cooperation, the parties noted good prospects for exports of agricultural products, metal and agricultural machinery from Belarus. And Iranian exporters planned to establish permanent supplies of citrus fruits and other southern fruits to the Homiel market. "Besides, there are large deposits of solid fuels in Mazandaran province, in the development of which economic entities of Homiel region could take part"⁶²⁰ .

Among the projects that the Belarusian region and the Iranian province intend to return to now are "the production of copper rods in Rechitsa district, the development of a chalk deposit in Vetskovi, and the mining of rocks in

⁶¹⁸ Pivovar, E. Ministry of Industry of Belarus considers the Asian region as one of the key ones for the supply of products / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minprom-belorussi-rassmatrivaet-aziatskij-region-kak-odin-iz-kljuchevyh-dlja-postavok-produktsii-445212-2021/>

⁶¹⁹ Pivovar, E. Belarusian food supplies to Asian countries have grown 13 times in 5 years / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavki-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-strany-azi-za-5-let-vyrosli-v-13-raz-445207-2021/>

⁶²⁰ Sidorchik, V. Homiel region and Iranian province Mazandaran will sign a memorandum of cooperation / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: <http://cenadm.gov.by/ru/region/view/gomelskaja-oblaster-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-podpisut-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-1957/>

Lelchitsy district"⁶²¹. In addition, the Belarusian side made proposals to supply the Iranian market with machine tools, timber, cardboard, cellulose, confectionery products, as well as gas-powered harvesters. Noting the great potential in co-operation between the two regions, the Iranian side added such spheres as oil production, chemical industry and industry to the possible areas of partnership. Specific steps to implement all these proposals will be discussed during a webinar to be held in the near future.

The very fact of the actualisation of partnership ties between Gomel Region and Mazandaran Province indicates that Belarus and Iran, having survived the coronavirus pandemic, are beginning to return the bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation to the growth trajectory. Recall that the 14th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Iranian Commission on Economic Cooperation was held in January 2018, which resulted in the signing of the Roadmap for the Development of Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Iran for 2018-2020. It talked about the development of bilateral cooperation "in various areas of politics, investment, trade, industry, transport, agriculture, healthcare, education, science, technology and energy"⁶²², and also contained the intention to increase Belarusian-Iranian trade turnover to \$500 million. However, a serious obstacle to the development of economic cooperation between Belarus and Iran was then American sanctions, which blocked bilateral cooperation between Minsk and Tehran in a number of important areas. But "despite the restrictions, trade turnover between Belarus and Iran totalled \$24.7 million in 2020"⁶²³. The bulk of Belarusian exports to the Iranian market were tyres, wood products, newsprint, and bearings.

The parties are currently preparing for the 15th meeting of the joint commission, where they intend to develop a roadmap for trade and economic cooperation to give additional impetus to the relationship. The high level of the parties' interest in such a partnership development can be judged by the composition of the participants of the Belarusian-Iranian business forum, which was held in Minsk in July 2019 under the auspices of the Belarusian

⁶²¹ Homiel region and the Iranian province of Mazandaran will resume trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-vozobnovyat-torgovo-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnistvo-439208-2021/>

⁶²² Belarus and Iran have developed a roadmap of cooperation for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-razrabotali-dorozhnuju-kartu-sotrudnistva-na-2018-2020-gody-285761-2018/>

⁶²³ Trade and economic relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://iran.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/economic/

Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. At that time, the talks with Belarusian business circles were attended by Iranian companies interested in cooperating "in the areas of banking, medical and pharmaceutical products, gas equipment, parts and equipment for refrigerators, agricultural machinery, construction materials and construction equipment, petrochemical and oil refining industry, production and supply of food and spices, textile industry (supply of Persian carpets)"⁶²⁴.

Cooperation between the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) and the Iranian Commodity Exchange (ITB) may also become one of the promising areas of economic interaction between the two countries. The parties agreed to update the partnership back in October 2019, as "the use of the exchange mechanism will reduce commercial risks and simplify the search for business partners for Belarusian and Iranian business entities"⁶²⁵. Iranian businessmen are interested in using the BUTB platform to promote ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy products, textiles, nuts and dried fruits to Belarus. Belarusian companies are interested in the exchange platform for exporting sawn timber, wood boards, and petrochemical products to Iran.

Another promising resource in terms of expanding Belarusian-Iranian trade and economic interaction contains the Interim Agreement leading to the formation of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran, which entered into force in October 2019. This document established a list of goods for which exporters of EAEU countries, including Belarus, received preferences in the Iranian market. It "includes meat and oil and fat products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics"⁶²⁶. So, the parties have a lot of opportunities for solving the tasks set for the activation of trade and economic relations. It is necessary to use them.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of the states in South Asia, in relations with which the Republic of Belarus has over the past five years created the necessary legal and infrastructural framework to strengthen and develop bilateral interaction aimed at the full-scale realisation of the existing

⁶²⁴ Belarusian-Iranian business forum will be held on 24 July in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorussko-iranskij-biznes-forum-projdet-24-ijulja-v-minske-355013-2019/>

⁶²⁵ BUTB and Iran Commodity Exchange intends to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-iranskaja-tovarnaja-birzha-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-364553-2019/>

⁶²⁶ Zalessky, B. Potential of multi-vectoriality. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 7.

potential of partnership ties. It should be recalled that in 2015, the Islamabad Declaration of Belarusian-Pakistani Cooperation was adopted at the highest level, "in which the parties consolidated the basic principles of political dialogue"⁶²⁷. At the same time, the Roadmap for Bilateral Cooperation for 2015-2020 was signed to make a gradual transition from simple trade to more advanced forms of co-operative interaction. Joint efforts to create a contractual and legal framework for Belarusian-Pakistani co-operation resulted in "77 memoranda of understanding and agreements signed by the parties by early 2021. At the moment, many agreements are under development"⁶²⁸. For example, an amended intergovernmental agreement on co-operation in the field of industrial and scientific-technical co-operation.

Also in 2015, Minsk and Islamabad established the basic institutional mechanism of bilateral trade and economic relations - the joint Belarus-Pakistan Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, having organised five of its meetings to date. Working groups in various areas - industry, agriculture - focus their attention on specific issues of bilateral interaction within the framework of the joint commission. And in December 2020, the first meeting of the Belarusian-Pakistani working group on cooperation in the field of healthcare and pharmaceuticals was held, which "identified possible areas of mutual cooperation in the export of medical and educational services"⁶²⁹ and outlined the prospects for further interaction.

As for partnerships between the business communities of the two countries, they are structured within the framework of the activities of the Joint Belarusian-Pakistani Business Council, the first three meetings of which were held in August 2015, March 2016 and 2017. In April 2021, the parties held the fourth meeting of this council, which was attended by representatives of more than a hundred Belarusian and Pakistani companies. They discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also opportunities to increase investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, and the creation of joint companies and production facilities, noting industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technology, and logistics

⁶²⁷ Zalessky, B. Belarus - Asia: vector of partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 86.

⁶²⁸ Sajjad, H.H. How the pandemic affected the relations between Belarus and Pakistan / H.H. Sajjad. Sajjad // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-pandemija-povlijala-na-otnoshenija-belorussi-i-pakistana-7589/>

⁶²⁹ International co-operation. Meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Pakistani Working Group on Cooperation in the Sphere of Health Care and Pharmaceuticals [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://belmapo.by/mezhdunarodnaya-sotrudnichestvo.-zasedanie-sovmestnoj-belorussko-pakistanskoj-rabochej-gruppyi-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-sfere-zdravooxraneniya-i-farmaczviki.html>

among the priority areas of interaction. In addition, they considered "opportunities for Pakistani enterprises to do business within the framework of the Great Stone Industrial Park, the main directions of the new policy of automotive development in Pakistan and the preferences for foreign companies operating in connection with it, the prospects for the development of urban electric transport in Pakistan, as well as the main areas of work of chambers of commerce and industry to promote business contacts"⁶³⁰.

The fact that there is a lot of potential for the expansion of Belarusian-Pakistani relations is evidenced by the figures. "In 2020, trade turnover between the countries totalled \$52.2 million, which is 4% more compared to 2019"⁶³¹. At the same time, the surplus for the Belarusian side exceeded \$20 million. This was facilitated by supplies from Belarus to Pakistan of such export items as "tractors and spare parts for them, trucks, potash fertilizers, bundles of synthetic yarns and synthetic fibers, tyres, machine tools, polycarboxylic acids (phthalic anhydride), newsprint, baby food (dry mixes)"⁶³².

In 2021, the Belarusian side plans to only increase its exports to the Pakistani market, using a variety of tools to promote products from Belarus to Pakistan. One of them is participation in international exhibitions organised in this South Asian country. In particular, "in October [2021], Belarusian companies are scheduled to participate in an industrial exhibition in Karachi"⁶³³. It should be noted that a year and a half ago, in September 2019, Belarus' national exposition was organised at the largest exhibition event in the South Asian region - the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) in the Pakistani city of Lahore, where "such leading enterprises of the country as BelAZ, MAZ, MTZ, Mogilev Metallurgical Plant, organisations of the Belneftekhim Concern (Belshina, Naftan, Polotsk-

⁶³⁰ Online meeting of the Belarusian-Pakistani Business Council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://grotpp.by/onlayn-zasedanie-belorussko-pakista-2/>

⁶³¹ Belarus is interested in developing mutually beneficial co-operation with Pakistan - Karankevich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-razvitiu-vzaimovvgodnogo-sotrudnichestva-s-pakistanom-karankevich-436781-2021/>

⁶³² Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/

⁶³³ Ulakhovich: there are many opportunities for strengthening co-operation between Belarus and Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ulahovich-dlia-ukrepleniya-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-belorussiju-i-pakistanom-est-mnogo-vozmozhnostej-429292-2021/>

Steklovolokno) presented their products⁶³⁴. At that time, numerous visitors of this business forum could also get acquainted with the best Belarusian higher educational institutions and advanced scientific developments of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Only the Belarusian State University demonstrated in Lahore "more than 20 scientific and technical developments in the field of instrumentation, new materials, metal optics, tribophatics"⁶³⁵, having signed a protocol of intentions to develop academic, scientific and technological co-operation with Ali Power from Islamabad. It was a good experience of participation.

Speaking about the development of cooperation with **South Korea**, it should be recalled that in July 2021, the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Korea International Trade Association established a business cooperation council, putting into practice the agreements reached in December 2020, when the parties signed a cooperation agreement. It is expected that participants in this new platform for discussing business issues and strengthening economic, investment and scientific and technical cooperation will be Belarusian and Korean companies with a successful track record of co-operation, which "contribute to the expansion of bilateral business and economic relations, as well as enterprises interested in implementing joint projects in the most promising areas"⁶³⁶. Judging by the composition of the participants of the inaugural session of the Belarusian-Korean Business Cooperation Council, the Belarusian High Technology Park, the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone", and more than twenty other leading companies in electronics, machine tools, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and information technologies are among them.

It should be recalled that 2022 will mark 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. And today Minsk and Seoul seek to take concrete steps to intensify bilateral interaction, as well as to "practically fill cooperation within the framework of the 'New Northern

⁶³⁴ The national exposition of Belarus opened at the IEMA exhibition in Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belorussi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-iema-v-pakistane-363543-2019/>

⁶³⁵ Results of BSU participation in the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) (Lahore, Islamic Republic of Pakistan) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://research.bsu.by/2019/10/08/bsu-results-in-the-international-exhibition-international-engineering-machinery-asia-exhibition-iema/>

⁶³⁶ Belarus and the Republic of Korea set up a business co-operation council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-respublika-koreja-sozdali-sovet-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-449731-2021/>

Policy"⁶³⁷ , which is understood as a set of measures to intensify economic cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the states and integration associations of the Eurasian region, including the Eurasian Economic Union. Following this policy, the Korean side divides the entire northern space into three main regions: the eastern region - Siberia and the Far East, Mongolia, three north-eastern provinces of China; the central region - five countries of Central Asia; the western region - the western part of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The western region is assessed in Seoul as the most industrially developed and receptive to innovations. For this reason, they consider it "a kind of a centre of innovative industry in the northern direction of economic cooperation, important also for the creation of new composite materials and the development of information technologies"⁶³⁸ .

The Belarusian side is also generally interested in relations with its Korean partners, first of all, in expanding industrial co-operation and creating joint productions in various fields. Not only in machine-tool construction, car manufacturing, production of automotive components, electronics and household appliances, but also in the production of tyres, medical equipment and agricultural machinery, as well as in "financing and implementation of infrastructure projects in the field of innovation, information and communication technologies, industry, science and technology"⁶³⁹ . In this regard, one of the relevant areas of co-operation with Korean partners is as follows.

Since 2019, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus has been implementing a series of international cooperation projects regarding the creation of infrastructure to support and develop the smart industry in our country. First, a set of works was carried out to assess the readiness of the digital transformation of the national economy, including its real sector. The project resulted in recommendations that provide for the development of a strategy aimed at co-operation between large manufacturing companies and small and medium-sized enterprises. New instruments of state support for the digital transformation of organisations in the real sector of the economy have also been introduced. So, this work was carried out with the support of a

⁶³⁷ Belarus and the Republic of Korea discussed practical steps to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-respublika-koreja-obsudili-prakticheskie-shagi-po-aktivizatsii-sotrudnichestva-436200-2021/>

⁶³⁸ Pak, C.H. Programme approach / C.H. Pak // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://export.by/programme_approach

⁶³⁹ Belarus is interested in expanding investment co-operation with the Republic of Korea [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshireniu-investitsionnogo-sotrudnichestva-s-respublikoj-koreja-436524-2021/>

knowledge exchange programme with the Republic of Korea. More specifically, "from 2020, this programme provides consulting support for the implementation of a pilot project of digital transformation of a machine-building enterprise. It is planned that the obtained results and recommendations will be used to organise the digital transformation of machine-building enterprises throughout our country"⁶⁴⁰. The seriousness of this interaction with Korean partners is also evidenced by the fact that in March 2021 Minsk hosted a national seminar-meeting on the theme "Studying the experience of the Republic of Korea in the digital transformation of the industrial sector of the economy (machine building)", which was attended by more than 160 representatives of government agencies and organisations, the business community of Belarus, free economic zones, science and technology parks, scientific and educational sphere. Importantly, with the help of experts from the Republic of Korea, they reviewed the specific experience of backbone Korean manufacturing companies - LG and Hyundai - in launching the process of digital transformation in the machine-building sector of industry. After that, the Belarusian Ministry of Economy expressed confidence that "the results of the discussion of the Korean experience will become a solid basis for launching projects in the field of digital development of the organisations of the industrial complex of the country and involving the SME sector engaged in the manufacturing sector in this process"⁶⁴¹. It should be assumed that the Belarusian-Korean Business Co-operation Council will make its contribution to solving all these issues. After all, its field of activity is very wide.

Oman is another Asian state whose interaction with Belarus intensified in 2021. In August 2021, the Belarus-Oman Business Forum was held online. The attention of the Belarusian side to intensifying business interaction with this Middle Eastern country can be explained by several reasons. Firstly, it exports oil, oil products and gas. And it always considers opportunities to buy foodstuffs and engineering products from its foreign partners. Secondly, Oman is interesting for Belarus due to its geographical location. Its port infrastructure makes it possible to seriously consider Belarusian exports to the entire Arabian Peninsula region. All this makes Oman one of Belarus's promising trade, economic, and investment partners in the Middle East.

⁶⁴⁰ Experimental and demonstration centre in Brest Technopark is planned to be put into operation in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/opytno-demonstratsionnyj-tsentr-v-brestskom-tehnoparke-planiruetsja-vvesti-v-ekspluatatsiju-v-2022-godu-448204-2021/>

⁶⁴¹ The Republic of Korea presented in Minsk its experience of digital transformation of mechanical engineering [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/respublika-koreja-predstavila-v-minske-svoj-opyt-tsifrovoj-transformatsii-mashinostroenija-432451-2021/>

However, in 2020, the trade turnover between the countries was only \$1.15 million with the share of Belarusian exports of \$850 thousand, the basis of which "was potash fertilisers and food products"⁶⁴². This is significantly inferior to the indicators that were observed in the Belarusian-Omani trade almost ten years ago. Recall that "the highest level of trade between Belarus and Oman was recorded in 2012 - \$12 million"⁶⁴³. That is why the task of returning the volume of trade and economic cooperation to the growth trajectory was among the main tasks for the participants of the business seminar, during which they discussed both the current state and prospects for the development of bilateral partnership ties in the areas of industrial production, agriculture and foodstuffs, the potential for investment cooperation and the implementation of joint projects in the two countries, "as well as the possibility of holding a meeting of the Belarusian-Omani Business Council"⁶⁴⁴

The parties' attention to the activities of the business council is explained by the fact that it is one of the most actively used tools for developing trade and economic interaction between the two countries. Belarus and Oman signed an agreement on its establishment back in 2010, but the first meeting of the Business Council took place only in August 2015 in Minsk. The Omani side saw its task of coming to the Belarusian capital then as to identify the most promising areas for expanding trade and economic cooperation here. "If we talk about Oman's investments in Belarus, the prospects are seen primarily in such areas as heavy industry and petrochemical complex"⁶⁴⁵. A few months later, the partners from Oman became interested in investing in the development of Belarusian agriculture, the real estate sector and eco-tourism, and agreed with the Belarusian side to "jointly develop scientific innovation

⁶⁴² Co-operation in the trade and economic sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://egypt.mfa.gov.by/ru/blr_oman/economical/

⁶⁴³ Ogneva, Y. Koltovich: the visit of the business delegation from Oman will contribute to the increase in trade turnover / Y. Ogneva // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/koltovich-vizit-biznes-delegatsii-iz-omana-posposobstvuet-uvelicheniju-tovarooborota-211012-2016/>

⁶⁴⁴ There is a significant potential for co-operation between Belarus and Oman in various areas - Ulakhovich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/mezhdu-belorussiju-i-omanom-est-znachitelnyj-potentsial-sotrudnichestva-v-razlichnyh-oblajtah-ulahovich-455263-2021/>

⁶⁴⁵ Ogneva, Y. Oman will study the possibilities of participation in the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park / Y. Ogneva // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/oman-izuchit-vozmozhnosti-uchastija-v-kitajsko-belorusskom-industrialnom-parke-160157-2015/>

projects, work out proposals and set up Belarusian assembly plants in Oman"⁶⁴⁶

In September 2016, a representative delegation of more than 40 major businessmen from Oman came to Minsk from Oman for the first time to participate in the second meeting of the Belarusian-Omani Business Council, whose areas of activity and interests included "investment, banking, construction, food and agriculture, industrial production, mining, insurance, financial consulting, transport services, retail, hospitality and tourism"⁶⁴⁷. One of the main topics of this forum was "investment in agricultural production in Belarus in order to increase production here and supply both the Gulf and Eurasian Economic Union markets"⁶⁴⁸. There was also a discussion about the possibility of establishing a joint venture in Oman for sales, assembly and after-sales service of Amkodor machinery.

In October 2017, Belarus took part for the first time in Food and Hospitality, the largest food industry and hospitality exhibition in Oman. The interest in it was fuelled by the fact that food production remains a problem in this country, as well as in the entire Middle East. Up to half of Oman's imports are consumer goods and food products. "At present, Oman is particularly interested in supplies of poultry meat, chicken eggs and dairy products: skimmed and whole milk powder, animal oil, whey powder, cheese"⁶⁴⁹. Finally, the third meeting of the Belarus-Oman Business Council was held in Minsk in April 2019. At it, the participants considered opportunities for bilateral business interaction and prospects for investment projects "in the areas of logistics, oil and gas industry, development of security and safety systems, tourism, organisation of exhibitions and fairs, business events..."⁶⁵⁰.

⁶⁴⁶ Business of Oman shows interest in investing in the agro-industrial complex of Belarus, real estate sector, ecological tourism [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/biznes-omana-projavljaet-interes-k-investirovaniyu-v-apk-belorussi-sektor-nedvizhimosti-ekologicheskogo-166686-2015/>

⁶⁴⁷ More than 40 major businessmen of Oman will visit Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-40-krupnyh-biznesmenov-omana-posetят-belorussii-210359-2016/>

⁶⁴⁸ Omani businessmen plan to invest in agricultural production in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/omanskie-biznesmeny-planirujut-investirovat-v-proizvodstvo-selzoproduktsii-v-belorussii-210859-2016/>

⁶⁴⁹ Belarusian products will be presented at the international exhibition in Oman [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-produkty-budut-predstavleny-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-omane-266188-2017/>

⁶⁵⁰ The meeting of the Belarusian-Omani Business Cooperation Council will be held in Minsk on 10 April [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zasedanie-belorussko-omanskogo-soveta-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-projdet-v-minsk-10-aprelja-342835-2019/>

In addition, the Omani delegation included "an enterprise that is interested in the development of innovative technologies and IT-sphere"⁶⁵¹.

All this shows that the parties have considerable potential for the development of business cooperation, which now needs to be capitalised into concrete projects. I believe this is what will be discussed at the fourth meeting of the Business Council, which the parties plan to hold in 2021.

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⁶⁵¹ Lisatovich, T. Belarus is interested in the entry of Omani business into the country - Koltovich / T. Lisatovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-prihode-v-stranu-biznesa-omana-koltovich-343395-2019/>

Belarus - Asia: there are opportunities for interaction, we should use them

Asia is currently the most important area of trade and economic cooperation for the Republic of Belarus. For instance, Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent totalled about USD two billion in 2020 alone. Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities for promoting Belarusian economic interests in this area. "In order to successfully utilise them, it is necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new formats of contacts, as is actually the case in the development of partnership ties with a number of Asian countries"⁶⁵² , which include **Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia**.

When referring to **Pakistan** in this context, we would like to recall that in October 2021, the fifth meeting of the Belarusian-Pakistani Business Council was held, which was attended by representatives of more than 60 companies from this South Asian country, representing such areas of economy as chemical industry, pharmaceuticals, textiles, food production, construction, transport, logistics, and tourism. On the Belarusian side, representatives of almost one hundred enterprises and companies took part in the meeting. Such a composition of the participants of the business council very eloquently demonstrated the fact that "the relations between Belarus and Pakistan are currently at a high level, especially in trade, investment and industry"⁶⁵³ . This is largely facilitated by a very extensive legal and contractual framework, which already includes more than 80 agreements. Another "about 20 agreements / memoranda of understanding are at the final stage of negotiations"⁶⁵⁴ . The established mechanisms for the implementation of partnerships in the form of commissions and working groups, as well as the existing system of interregional co-operation, are also active.

As for the business council, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Pakistan and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and

⁶⁵² Zaleskii, B. The goal is stable growth. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 66.

⁶⁵³ Pakistan is interested in strengthening economic co-operation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-zainteresovan-v-ukrepleniie-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belorussiей-462939-2021/>

⁶⁵⁴ Khan, S.H. About business plans, tractor deliveries and a masterclass on van painting / S.H. Khan // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/posol-pakistana-o-biznes-planah-postavkah-traktorov-i-master-klassie-po-rosopisi-furgonov-7887/>

Industry held its fourth online meeting in April 2021. At the meeting, the parties "discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also opportunities to increase investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, and the creation of joint companies and production facilities, noting among the priority areas of interaction industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technology and logistics"⁶⁵⁵. At the fifth meeting of the Council, the Belarusian side made the key areas of cooperation with its Pakistani partners more specific, noting among them "increasing mutual sales of traditional products, setting up joint production facilities for Belarusian machinery in Pakistan, as well as joint production facilities for surgical instruments and leather goods in Belarus. The creation of joint clusters for the production of pharmaceuticals in demand is promising; this can take place both in Belarus and Pakistan"⁶⁵⁶. Besides, the issues of attracting Pakistani capital for the implementation of projects on modernisation of Belarusian textile enterprises, development of joint production of agricultural products, implementation of joint projects in science and technology with access to the production cycle are topical now. The project to set up a university of applied technologies in Pakistan is also relevant in order to raise the level of professional and technical training of Pakistani specialists using Belarusian educational technologies to a qualitatively new level.

If we take into account such a priority of interaction as agriculture, we note that in 2020, about three hundred units of Belarusian agricultural machinery - tractors and combines - were sold to Pakistan. In 2021, Minsk and Islamabad intend to increase this figure to three thousand units. At the same time, the fifth meeting of the business council discussed the idea of setting up an assembly facility for Belarusian tractors on Pakistani soil. "We are talking about assembling 10 thousand tractors a year in Pakistan, this project is in the works today and preliminary documents have been signed,"⁶⁵⁷.

Another promising area of Belarusian-Pakistani business interaction is the development of exchange trade, which can give new impulses to the development of bilateral trade and economic relations. In particular, the

⁶⁵⁵ Zaleskii, B.L. Key task - realisation of cooperation potential / B.L. Zaleskii // Proceedings of the XVII International Scientific and Practical Conference, Novinata za nadrednali nauka - 2021, 17 - 25 May 2021: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 19.

⁶⁵⁶ Barysevich: the relations between Belarus and Pakistan are becoming strategic [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/borisevich-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistana-priobretajut-strategicheskij-harakter-462932-2021/>

⁶⁵⁷ Belarus and Pakistan are considering the possibility of creating an assembly production of Belarusian tractors [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-rassmatrivaют-vozmozhnost-sozdanija-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-beloruskikh-traktorov-462934-2021/>

Pakistani side sees significant potential here "primarily in such areas as agriculture, woodworking, metallurgy, and petrochemicals"⁶⁵⁸. The fact is that, according to both sides, the Belarusian-Pakistani trade turnover is still small - just over \$50 million for 2020. The significant potential for its growth through the exchange mechanism lies in the fact that "Pakistan is one of the world's largest exporters of rice, wheat and other grain crops"⁶⁵⁹. The textile industry is also developed there. The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) is ready to relieve Pakistani companies of most of the problems associated with entering the Belarusian market and minimise their possible risks. Besides, exporters from Pakistan could use the Belarusian exchange platform to supply their goods to the European Union countries, where BUTB has about four thousand accredited participants. In turn, Belarusian companies could successfully export chemical and petrochemical products to the Pakistani market, which are traditionally in high demand there.

We would like to remind that in the first eight months of 2021, the trade turnover between Belarus and Pakistan exceeded \$53 million. At the same time, "exports of Belarusian goods totalled \$44.3 million..."⁶⁶⁰, while the trade surplus for the Belarusian side was more than \$35 million. The dynamics of these indicators shows that the growth potential here is far from being exhausted. The opportunities for expanding trade and economic cooperation between the parties are quite diverse, and the plans for their implementation are concrete and realistic.

As for the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE), trade and economic relations with this state, located in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, have been developing particularly intensively for the Republic of Belarus in recent years. "Belarus has been steadily increasing supplies of goods and services to the UAE <...>. The main items of Belarusian exports are petrochemical products, wood processing, food products and various types of equipment. In the services sector, computer and transport services are actively exported"⁶⁶¹. The

⁶⁵⁸ Pakistan is ready to trade with Belarus through the BUTB platform [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-gotov-torgovat-s-belarusuju-cherez-ploschadku-butb-462927-2021/>

⁶⁵⁹ BUTB opens wide prospects for the development of mutual trade between Belarus and Pakistan - Ambassador [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-otkryvaet-shirokie-perspektivy-dlja-razvitiya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-belarusi-i-pakistana-posol-453692-2021/>

⁶⁶⁰ Trade and Economic Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/

⁶⁶¹ Golovchenko: Belarus is interested in expanding cooperation with the UAE in trade and investment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

dynamics of the development of these bilateral ties is eloquently illustrated by the fact that "trade turnover has tripled over the past five years, while investments have increased more than 10-fold since 2011"⁶⁶².

A good example of the expansion of bilateral Belarusian-Emirati interaction in the investment sphere in recent years is "the largest construction and real estate project being implemented in Minsk under the patronage of the founder of the world-famous Emaar company"⁶⁶³. Recall that Minsk City Executive Committee signed an agreement with the Emirati company Riverside Development Holdings Limited on the construction of the object "Experimental multifunctional complex "North Bank", which will be located within the boundaries of Minsk Ring Road - Pobediteley Avenue - Orlovskaya Street - Tsniansky reservoir. The cost of the project is four billion dollars. In this complex will be built "residential buildings with all necessary engineering and transport infrastructure, social facilities and public purposes with a total area of more than 6 million square metres. It is also envisaged to build the National Exhibition Centre, the Institute of Artificial Intelligence and the Minsk International Trade Centre"⁶⁶⁴.

Among other Belarusian regions successfully developing mutually beneficial ties with partners from the UAE is Brest Region. "Over the past [2021] year, the foreign trade turnover between Brest region and the UAE increased 1.5 times and exceeded \$5 million. This is a small amount against the background of \$3 billion of exports in the region as a whole. But the market is promising..."⁶⁶⁵. The high interest of Brest region enterprises to the Emirati market is evidenced by the fact that the heads and leading specialists of almost ten large companies of the region have travelled to Dubai in January 2022 to participate in the events of "Expo 2020". Among them are JV "Santa Bremore" Ltd, JSC "Barhim", 1AK-GROUP, group of companies "STiM", Kobrin Butter

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshireniu-sotrudnichestva-s-uae-v-sfere-torgovli-i-investitsij-470873-2021/>

⁶⁶² Cherviakov: National Day of Belarus at Expo 2020 will allow to show the capabilities of enterprises [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-natsionalnyj-den-belorussi-na-ekspo-2020-pozvolit-pokazat-vozmozhnosti-predpriatij-470830-2021/>

⁶⁶³ Roman Golovchenko: At the EXPO we are working on cooperation with the countries of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10068>

⁶⁶⁴ Construction of the exhibition centre in the complex "Severny Bereg" in Minsk is planned to start this year [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/stroitelstvo-vystavochnogo-tsentrav-komplekse-severnyj-bereg-v-minskie-planirujut-nachat-v-etom-godu-470841-2021/>

⁶⁶⁵ Foreign trade turnover between Brest region and the UAE increased 1.5 times [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vneshnetorgovyyj-oborot-mezhdu-brestskoj-oblajtii-i-uae-vyros-v-15-raza-479871-2022/>

and Cheese Factory, Brest Meat Processing Plant, Concern "Brestmyasomolprom", Brest Science and Technology Park and National Park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha". As a result, they signed contracts worth \$18 million at the world exhibition. Including four contracts with residents from the UAE - for eight million dollars. "In particular, contracts have been concluded for the supply of milk powder and ice-cream powder <...> to the Arab market. Santa Bremore and the STiM Group of Companies will increase sales of products." "Barkhim" signed an agreement with a Dubai company to promote its products on the UAE market"⁶⁶⁶.

The exhibition in Dubai did not leave aside the topic of attracting foreign investments in innovative projects of Brest region. Thus, about two dozen Arab companies - logistics, investment, food distributors, raw materials trading, and companies operating in the petrochemical industry - were able to learn in detail about the proposals of the Brest Free Economic Zone, including the production of chargers for electric cars and ultrasound machines. And Brest Science and Technology Park - the largest innovation centre and the main incubator of small business in the region - demonstrated the SmartBrest smart city project at Expo 2020, showing not only modern technologies and solutions that already exist and work in Brest, but also what may interest major investors. In particular, they talked about the territory of innovative development, into which "the current factory quarter, bounded by Moskovskaya, Pionerskaya and Ya. Kupaly. The area of the site is about 120 hectares. The production buildings remain unused on it"⁶⁶⁷. Potential investors are offered to create here enterprises with clean production in such areas as IT, artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, electronics, quantum computing. The attention with which this smart city project was met by the participants of the presentation allows us to hope that SmartBrest will be able to find interested investors not only in the UAE, but also in other countries.

If we talk about the relations between the Republic of Belarus and the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**, we should recall that 2022 marks a quarter of a century since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It is true that their level is, of course, far from what it could be. But the fact is that in January 2022, the parties expressed their mutual desire to

⁶⁶⁶ Contracts for \$18 million concluded by the enterprises of Brest region at the exhibition in Dubai [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kontrakty-na-18-mln-zakljuchili-predpriatija-brestskoj-oblasti-na-vystavke-v-dubae-481397-2022/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kontrakty-na-18-mln-zakljuchili-predpriyatija-brestskoj-oblasti-na-vystavke-v-dubae-481397-2022/)

⁶⁶⁷ Brest Technopark presents the project of smart city at the exhibition in Dubai [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brestskij-tehnopark-prezentuet-proekt-umnogo-goroda-na-vystavke-v-dubae-480835-2022/>

deepen and develop contacts and intensify dialogue. Minsk proceeds from the fact that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a recognised leader in the Arab world, and Belarus is interested in developing relations in all directions"⁶⁶⁸. Today the parties consider several vectors of joint work as the first priorities of interaction: firstly, it is necessary to significantly expand the legal framework of relations; secondly, partnership ties in the economic sphere require significant activation, as the parties "have a serious potential in trade and economic cooperation"⁶⁶⁹.

⁶⁷⁰ As for the legal framework of the Belarusian-Saudi relations, today it consists of the General Agreement, intergovernmental agreements on the avoidance of double taxation and mutual protection of investments, on cooperation in science and technology, interdepartmental memoranda in the field of sports, education, cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the King Abdulaziz Science and Technology Campus, as well as the "agreement on cooperation between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Council of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the KSA, the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of science and technology, and the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the King Abdulaziz Science and Technology Campus.

Speaking about the need to intensify Belarusian-Saudi trade and economic cooperation, it should be noted that back in December 2020, the parties agreed to "work out the next meeting of the joint intergovernmental committee"⁶⁷¹. The fact is that the first two meetings of this committee were held in 2015 and 2016 in Riyadh and Minsk, respectively. At the first one, the parties agreed to set up the Belarusian-Saudi Business Council to make it a platform for fruitful interaction between representatives of business circles of the two countries. At the same time, "a contract was concluded for the supply

⁶⁶⁸ Andreichenko: Belarus is interested in deepening and developing contacts with Saudi Arabia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-belarus-zainteresovana-uglubljat-i-razvivat-kontakty-s-saudovskoj-araviej-480335-2022/>

⁶⁶⁹ Kochanova: Belarus attaches great importance to friendly relations with Saudi Arabia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kochanova-belarus-pridaet-bolshoe-znachenie-druzheskim-otnoshenijam-s-saudovskoj-araviej-480404-2022/>

⁶⁷⁰ Political co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://uae.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/KSA/politics/

⁶⁷¹ Belarus and Saudi Arabia will work on holding a meeting of the joint intergovernmental committee [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-saudovskaja-aravija-prorabotajut-provedenie-zasedaniya-sovmestnogo-mezhpravkomiteta-420253-2020/>

of soil mixtures by the Belarusian company EridGrow Production⁶⁷². Within the framework of the second meeting of the intergovernmental committee a wide range of issues of co-operation in the field of economy, trade, investments, industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, water resources, higher education, science and technology, and business circles of the two countries were considered. The Belarusian-Saudi business forum and contact and cooperation exchange were held at the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. 18 Saudi and more than 70 Belarusian companies and organisations took part in the forum. At that time, "Belarus supplied Saudi Arabia with 37 commodity items, including machinery and complex technical equipment"⁶⁷³. At the forum, the Saudi partners were offered a much wider range of machine-building products, including specialised ones, as well as high-tech goods in the field of instrumentation. The Saudi side, in turn, expressed "interest in cooperation with Belarusian companies in the areas of information and communication technologies, real estate, security, agriculture, and engineering"⁶⁷⁴.

One of the most promising areas for intensifying trade and economic cooperation is to increase food supplies from Belarus to the Saudi market. Suffice it to say that "exports of Belarusian food products and agricultural raw materials to Saudi Arabia in 2020 grew 3.1 times against 2019 and totalled \$6.2 million. Belarus supplied Saudi Arabia with skimmed milk powder, whey, jams, fruit purees, and eggs. In January-March 2021, \$1.7 million worth of products were exported (24.3% growth)"⁶⁷⁵. Belarusian producers are now planning to continue co-operation with the Saudi Food and Drug Agency on accreditation for their supplies. In the first place, this involves such dairy products as butter, cheese, skimmed and whole milk powder, and, in the future, meat products such as beef and poultry produced in accordance with Halal requirements.

⁶⁷² Belarus and Saudi Arabia agreed on the establishment of a joint business council [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-saudovskaja-aravija-dogovorilis-o-sozdanii-sovmestnogo-delovogo-soveta-2523-2015>

⁶⁷³ Kiseleva, O. Belarus intends to seriously expand the range of products in the market of Saudi Arabia / O. Kiseleva // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-namerena-serjezno-rasshirit-assortiment-produktuyna-rynke-saudovskoj-aravii-193602-2016/>

⁶⁷⁴ Business forum "Belarus - Saudi Arabia". [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.cci.by/o-palate/novosti/biznes-forum-belarus-saudovskaya-araviya/#>

⁶⁷⁵ Belarus is interested in increasing food supplies to Saudi Arabia - Krupko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-naraschivaniipostavok-prodovolstvija-v-saudovskuju-araviju-krupko-441447-2021/>

It should be noted that a number of Belarusian exporters have already successfully tapped the market of the Persian Gulf country. Thus, in July 2021, the first batch of concentrated milk was shipped to Saudi Arabia by Rogachev Dairy Canning Plant. "This happened thanks to a contract signed with one of the leaders in this country in distribution, which covers retail chains, shops, restaurants, cafes"⁶⁷⁶. Another interesting example in this series is the Polotsk Dairy Plant, which more than doubled its export volumes in 2021, the geography of which is already 22 countries. "There are also plans to ship milk powder to Saudi Arabia in the near future"⁶⁷⁷.

All these facts show that the parties have a certain groundwork for the successful development of mutually beneficial relations in the post-Cold War period, the starting point for which may well be 2022. There are many proposals, directions and initiatives on both sides.

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⁶⁷⁶ Zaleskii, B.L. Export of food and agricultural products: growth of supplies and geographical expansion / B.L. Zaleskii // Proceedings of the XVII International Scientific Conference, Scientific Potential for Light - 2021, 17 - 25 September 2021: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 5.

⁶⁷⁷ Polotsk Dairy Plant has more than doubled its exports in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-uvelichil-eksport-v-2021-godu-polotskij-molochnyj-kombinat-479923-2022>

Belarus - Asia: growth points yield results

In 2021, Asian countries continued to be the growth points of Belarus's foreign policy and foreign trade activity. The implementation of the policy of reorienting the trade and economic cooperation of our republic towards the countries of the far arc "made it possible to increase Belarusian exports to this region to USD 2.4 billion in 2021 (114.3% compared to USD 2.1 billion in 2020"⁶⁷⁸ . At the same time, active engagement with many countries on the Asian continent is also observed in 2022. These include Vietnam, India and Syria.

The year 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and **Vietnam**. This Southeast Asian country is among those with which the Belarusian side is developing large-scale interaction in all areas of bilateral cooperation, and "diversification of trade and deepening of economic cooperation with them are important prerequisites for the growth of the export-oriented Belarusian economy"⁶⁷⁹ . This is evidenced, in particular, by the fact that in 2021, in order to expand its diplomatic presence in the financial and industrial centres of the Asian continent, the Belarusian government decided to open a consulate general in the Vietnamese city of Ho Chi Minh City.

Recall also that in 2021, trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$200 million. "Belarus exported potash fertilisers, livestock products, instrumentation products, medicines and cosmetics"⁶⁸⁰ . And in terms of industrial cooperation in Hungien province, "key Belarusian-Vietnamese projects are being implemented, including the assembly production of MAZ trucks (JV Maz-Asia LLC) and the production of dairy products from Belarusian raw materials (Au Viet Milk)"⁶⁸¹ . And important in this regard was the entry into force in 2021 of "an additional protocol to the agreement on

⁶⁷⁸ Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/c0b615e3c82db7a8.html>

⁶⁷⁹ Zaleskii, B. Journalism of regional communities. Theory and practice / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2013. - C. 99-100.

⁶⁸⁰ Ambassador of Vietnam sees the potential for doubling trade turnover with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-vietnama-vidit-potentsial-dlia-udvoenija-tovaroooborota-s-belorussju-493021-2022/>

⁶⁸¹ Belarus and Vietnam discussed the prospects for the development of joint ventures [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-vietnam-obsudili-perspektivy-razvitiya-sovmestnyh-predpriyatij-478965-2022/>

industrial assembly with Vietnam, which creates favourable conditions for localisation and development of assembly production of MAZ⁶⁸². The issues of supplying Belarusian tractors to work in Vietnamese rice fields and quarry equipment of the Belarusian Automobile Plant are under consideration. In addition, Vietnam is interested in organising the production of firefighting equipment and sewing protective clothing for firefighting services using Belarusian technologies. In particular, in April 2022, the parties have already discussed "practical steps of cooperation to organise joint production of Belarusian special-purpose equipment in Vietnam, as well as the manufacture of outfits for Vietnamese firefighting services"⁶⁸³.

Another area of Belarusian-Vietnamese interaction that is likely to be significantly intensified in 2022 is food supplies from Belarus. Back in 2020, after passing all the stages of approval and certification, full-fledged work on supplies of Belarusian dairy products to Vietnam began. Now, similar work is underway to certify meat products from Belarus - pork and beef - in the Vietnamese market. There is every reason to believe that 2022 will become a kind of "growth point" in the development of this type of Belarusian supplies.

The collective stand of Belgospischemprom Concern at the 31st International Exhibition Vietnam Expo - one of the largest in this region of the Asian continent, held in April 2022 and attended by more than 350 companies from 16 countries, including Russia, China, the USA, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Cuba - is an indication of what exports from Belarus to this Southeast Asian country will be like in the near future. Thirteen enterprises of the concern "presented their products in Hanoi: "Krinitsa", "Belsolod", "Spartak", "Minskcrystal", Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, "Slodych", "Kommunarka", "Red Foods", "Mashpischemprod", "Lidapischekoncentratty", Malorita Canning and Vegetable Washing Plant, Minsk Margarine Plant and Pinsk Winery"⁶⁸⁴. And not just presented. For example, Belsolod OJSC even signed a contract for the supply of light malt with Trust & Future Viet Nam Joint Stock Company.

⁶⁸² Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/c0b615e3c82db7a8.html>

⁶⁸³ Belarus and Vietnam are working out the possibility of joint production of equipment for fire services [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-vietnam-prorabatyvajut-vozmozhnost-sovmestnogo-proizvodstva-ekipirovki-dlja-pozharnykh-sluzhb-494398-2022/>

⁶⁸⁴ Enterprises of Belgospischemprom presented their products at an exhibition in Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-belgospischemroma-predstavili-produktsiju-na-vystavke-vo-vjetname-495887-2022/>

An important detail: at this exhibition, the Belarusian national exposition received the status of "Special Guest", which "implies central placement in the exhibition pavilion, active advertising and information support and large-scale congress events, including the Belarusian-Vietnamese business forum"⁶⁸⁵, the purpose of which is to find business partners and conclude export contracts. And this status was very useful for the scientific and technical section of the Belarusian exposition, where more than a hundred innovative developments in the field of high-tech equipment were presented. About 30 of them were presented by the Belarusian State University - food additives, pharmaceuticals, technological equipment. Among them are "antitumour drugs Cisplacel, Prospidelong, Temodex, aimed at counteracting malignant tumours of the head, neck, stomach cancer, and a medical unit of general hyperthermia "Ptich-M" for treatment of oncological diseases of internal organs"⁶⁸⁶. An innovative series of biopreparations for the treatment and prevention of diseases in farm animals also attracted the attention of the visitors. Finally, another exhibition novelty of BSU specialists is "Smart Windows". This invention, which has no analogues in the post-Soviet space, protects the room from sunlight, penetration of ultraviolet radiation and partially blocks infrared radiation, which makes it possible to refuse curtains and blinds. So, in the field of scientific and technological and innovative developments, the Belarusian side has something to offer to its Vietnamese partners, which will certainly be reflected in new contracts.

Speaking about **India**, it should be recalled that April 2022 also marks the 30th anniversary of Belarus's diplomatic relations with this South Asian country. Minsk considers the development of co-operation with India "as one of the priorities of Belarus's foreign policy in Asia. Today India is a powerful modern state with a developed economy, a large market, and serious scientific and industrial potential"⁶⁸⁷. And the existing experience of diplomatic relations in both multilateral and bilateral formats shows that "India is one of

⁶⁸⁵ The national exposition of Belarus will be presented at the Vietnam Expo in April [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belorussi-budet-predstavlena-na-vietnam-expo-v-aprele-485336-2022/>

⁶⁸⁶ About 30 scientific and technical developments will present BSU at the International Exhibition VietnamExpo-2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-30-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavit-bgu-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-vietnamexpo-2022-495450-2022/>

⁶⁸⁷ Andreichenko: the relations between Belarus and India are developing on the principles of equality, trust and respect [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-otnoshenija-belorussi-i-indii-razvivajutsja-na-printsipah-ravenstva-doverija-i-uvazhenija-479047-2022/>

the partner countries of Belarus in Asia, large-scale interaction with which is developing in all areas of cooperation"⁶⁸⁸.

By developing interaction based on the principles of equality, trust and respect, the two sides were able to achieve an annual trade turnover consistently exceeding half a billion dollars in 2019-2021. But "as in any relationship, there are areas that are not fully developed. This is especially true of trade and economic relations"⁶⁸⁹. That is why the year 2022 can be called the time of defining new spheres of development in the cooperation between Belarus and India. Belarusian regions are now very active in this process.

For example, **Hrodna** Region plans to significantly strengthen co-operation with India in pharmaceuticals, high technology and education. In this regard, the project to build a pharmaceutical plant in Skidel with Indian capital has great potential. The enterprise has been built. Now <...> it is important to jointly bring it to sustainable operation, ensure the expansion of the range of products, and realise its export potential"⁶⁹⁰. As for co-operation in the field of education, 150 Indian citizens are studying at Grodno State Medical University alone this academic year. There are also them at the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno. And their number, to all appearances, will continue to increase there. New joint projects in the fields of pharmaceuticals, chemical industry, production of agricultural machinery and food products, including dairy products, will not go unnoticed in the near future.

Innovative technologies, IT and medicine should become the main points of growth in cooperation with India in **Homiel** Region. Experience shows that the interaction of the Belarusian southeastern region with Indian partners in recent years has been, as they call it, on the rise. "Since 2018, the growth rate of trade turnover has more than doubled. In 2021, the figure stood at 508.4 per cent. Such products of the Gomel region's industrial sector as cellulose, timber, electric current control apparatus, stone products are in demand in India"⁶⁹¹. In 2022, the parties put the issue of resuming the production of Gomel combine harvesters for Indian agriculture into practical

⁶⁸⁸ Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 452.

⁶⁸⁹ Kochanova: India is a long-standing friend and reliable partner in Asia for Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kochanova-indija-dlja-belorussi-davnij-drug-i-nadezhnyj-partner-v-azii-482540-2022/>

⁶⁹⁰ Pharmaceuticals, IT-sphere and education: Grodno region increases cooperation with India [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/farmatsevtika-it-sfera-i-obrazovanie-grodzenskaja-oblast-naraschivaet-sotrudnistvo-s-indijei-485022-2022/>

⁶⁹¹ Innovative technologies, IT and medicine: India and Gomel region are ready to develop new spheres [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/innovatsionnye-tehnologii-it-i-meditsina-indija-i-gomelskaja-oblast-gotovy-razvivat-novye-sfery-492016-2022>

terms. A separate topic is partnership in the educational sphere, which already has its own history. The fact is that the first Indian graduate graduated from Gomel State Medical University (GSMU) back in 2005. Since then, only 178 representatives of India have received a diploma from this university. In 2022, 51 more graduates will be added to them. In total, 290 students from this South Asian country are currently studying at the State Medical University. And in the nearest plans - more active involvement of Gomel State University named after Francysk Skaryna in this co-operation.

Mogilev Region is also planning to expand the areas of co-operation with India in the near future. Among the promising areas here are agriculture, education, textile industry and innovative technologies. In 2021, the trade turnover between the two sides totalled almost six million dollars. The bulk of supplies from the Belarusian region was made up of carbon black, newsprint and timber, while from India - complex synthetic yarns, medicines, shoe parts, and parts for internal combustion engines. And there is every reason to believe that this list of mutual supplies will only expand. In particular, Technolit, which specialises in the production of components and spare parts for various machinery, is successfully cooperating with the Indian market. It receives from India "blanks, which are processed here on high-precision equipment and then sent to other countries. Exports have been set up to more than 30 countries <...>. In addition, discussions have already started on supplying finished products of Technolit to the Indian market"⁶⁹² . Another interesting example of co-operation in the field of innovative technologies is Energitechgreen LLC operating in Mogilev with Indian capital, registered in August 2021. "The main area of activity is environmentally friendly innovations. Here they are engaged in the recovery (regeneration) of all types of batteries used in road, railway and river transport, special vehicles, industry and communications, wind turbines and solar panels"⁶⁹³ . The FEZ "Mogilev" is significantly intensifying its cooperation with India, which in March 2022 at the World Expo 2020 exhibition in Dubai signed agreements with two companies from this country on the implementation of investment projects on the basis of the FEZ.

⁶⁹² Strahar: Mogilev "Tekhnolit" in difficult conditions shows its efficiency [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/strahar-mogilevskij-tehnolit-v-neprostyh-uslovijah-pokazyvaet-svoju-effektivnost-493160-2022>

⁶⁹³ Agriculture, textile industry: Indian ambassador on the need to expand co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/amp/regions/view/selskoe-hozjajstvo-tekstilnaja-promyshlennost-posol-indii-o-neobhodimosti-rasshirenija-sotrudnichestva-492918-2022>

All these facts testify to the fact that the Indian direction of co-operation is becoming more and more in demand for Belarusian regions. And significant prospects of foreign economic activity are opening up for them there.

As for **Syria**, the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and **Syria** will be marked in August 2023. All this time, political interaction with this country has been characterised by a high level and regularity of interstate contacts, coincidence of approaches of Minsk and Damascus to solving most international problems, and mutual support in international organisations. In the economic sphere, cooperation between the two countries has been developing on its own steady trajectory and has been manifested in the supply of hundreds of Belarusian trucks to the Syrian market and thorough elaboration of a project for the assembly of Belarusian automotive equipment. Due to the aggravation of the internal situation in Syria in 2011, the implementation of these plans had to be slowed down. However, even in the most difficult time for Damascus, the Belarusian side expressed its conviction in Syria's successful recovery from the crisis and interest in further developing and strengthening bilateral relations in all areas.

The highest level of Belarusian-Syrian interaction was recorded in 2008, when bilateral trade totalled \$85.5 million. Five years later, this indicator decreased almost tenfold to \$8.9 million due to the well-known events in that country. But already 2014 showed the dynamics of the beginning of overcoming the crisis on Syrian soil, which awakened hopes in Minsk to restore the previously existing level of bilateral cooperation. And this was immediately reflected in the rapid growth of Belarusian exports to Syria to \$32.2 million, with the total trade turnover reaching \$33.8 million. Belarusian semi-finished products made of non-alloyed steel, instrumentation, medicines, and liquid crystal devices began to find their niche in the Syrian market. Against this background of an obvious revival of trade and economic ties in 2015, Minsk and Damascus actively searched for new areas of cooperation in order to "not only restore the previous level of trade turnover in the best years, but also to surpass it many times over"⁶⁹⁴. At the same time, the parties decided to adhere to the principle of mutual complementarity, whereby Belarus produces products in which Syrians are interested, while Syria has a number of goods in which Belarusians are interested.

⁶⁹⁴ Materials of the press conference following the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Vladimir Makei to Syria (9 February 2015, Damascus) [Electronic resource]. - 2015. URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html

It should be recalled that when a trend towards stabilisation in the security sphere emerged in the central regions of Syria and around Damascus in 2014-2015, the government of this country immediately expressed its interest "in developing trade and investment cooperation, in resuming and expanding cooperation ties with countries that during the most difficult moments of the ordeal <...> did not cease political, economic and other support"⁶⁹⁵. Among these states was Belarus, which already then saw significant opportunities in intensifying co-operation with its Syrian partners across the entire spectrum of bilateral relations, which are based on a legal framework of a dozen and a half documents. Among them are agreements on trade, economic and technical cooperation; on promotion and mutual protection of investments; on avoidance of double taxation; on military-technical cooperation; on cooperation in the field of education, science and culture; on air communication; on scientific and technical cooperation; on international road transport of passengers and cargo. There are also agreements on bank payments, in the field of agro-industrial complex, veterinary medicine, quarantine and plant protection.

Today, Minsk is well aware of the challenges facing the Syrian government in restoring the country's infrastructure and economy, finding resources that would make it possible to finance the most important projects for the state, and in this connection sees two directions for further development of bilateral Belarusian-Syrian interaction. Firstly, it is necessary "to organise framework or umbrella agreements at the level of the governments, to determine the principal schemes for organising joint work. The second level is the level of business, which should build mutually beneficial and safe schemes for their implementation on the basis of these agreements"⁶⁹⁶.

It should be noted that in the first 11 months of 2021, Belarusian-Syrian trade turnover increased by more than 40 per cent, while exports from Belarus increased by almost 45 per cent. The bulk of Belarusian supplies was made up of medicines, condensed and dried cream, and milk whey. At the same time, the Belarusian side expressed confidence that it could meet most of Syria's needs not only in these commodity items, but also in machine-building products, passenger, agricultural, cargo and construction machinery, as well as

⁶⁹⁵ The project of creating an assembly plant of Belarusian automobiles in Syria has been resumed [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/vozobnovleniaprorabotka-proekta-sozdanija-v-sirii-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskoj-avtotehniki-155561-2015/>

⁶⁹⁶ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus can meet most of Syria's needs in machine-building products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10143>

"in the construction of high-quality and comfortable housing"⁶⁹⁷ . The fact is that today in this country works are unfolding to restore industry, agriculture, construction and services. Suffice it to say that "115 projects are being implemented here to recreate water and electricity supply systems, transport infrastructure, oil and gas industry, telecommunications. The total cost of the work is estimated at \$540 billion. In this regard, the country needs a wide range of materials, services and technologies"⁶⁹⁸ .

To attract the attention of the wider international community to address these issues, the Rebuild Syria International Industrial Exhibition was organised in Damascus in September 2021, bringing together 190 companies from 25 countries, including Russia, China, India and Cuba. It included ten thematic sections: "Construction technologies and building materials"; "Finishing and decorative products"; "Kitchens, bathrooms, plumbing, water supply technologies"; "Air conditioning, heating, lighting, power generation and electrical engineering"; "Oil and gas"; "Ecology and infrastructure management"; "Insurance and banking"; "Communication systems"; "Information technologies and software"; and "Food and beverages".

For the first time at this exhibition, which has been held since 2015, an exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus was organised, where a number of domestic companies presented their products. For example, Minsk Tractor Plant, more than two thousand machines of which are currently working in the fields of Syria, demonstrated new models of tractors adapted to work in the hot climate. Minsk Motor Plant showed a line of modern diesel engines and spare parts for them, and Minsk Automobile Plant showed the capabilities of its products. The Brest Electrotechnical Plant presented railway automation, telemechanics and communication equipment, which, as it turned out, fully meets the requirements of the Syrian market, as "Syria's railway infrastructure was designed according to Soviet standards. Today, Syria's railway communication system is 80% destroyed, so its restoration has become an important task for the government"⁶⁹⁹ .

⁶⁹⁷ Belarus and Syria are interested in co-operation in the construction sector [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-sirija-zainteresovany-sotrudnichat-v-stroitelnoj-sfere-481516-2022/>

⁶⁹⁸ Belarusian companies will take part in the largest industrial exhibition in Syria [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-kompanii-primut-uchastie-v-krupnejshej-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-sirii-458048-2021/>

⁶⁹⁹ Sluka: Syria today needs modern achievements of the Belarusian economy [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sluka-sirija-segodnja-nuzhdaetsja-v-sovremennyh-dostizhenijah-belorusskoj-ekonomiki-462466-2021/>

Another participant of the Belarusian exposition, the European Agrarian Agency Spetsstroy, aroused considerable interest on the Syrian side due to the fact that it specialises in the construction of buildings and structures, including multi-storey buildings, dismantling and demolition, sorting and recycling construction waste, and building dairy farms. Belagro Bel', a group of companies supplying agricultural complexes of various manufacturers, took part in this business forum in a remote format, which did not prevent it from holding business negotiations with potential partners.

In general, during this international exhibition forum, representatives of the Belarusian side were able to discuss with representatives of the Syrian business community a wide range of issues related to cooperation "in water treatment plants, construction works in Syria, supplies of agricultural equipment"⁷⁰⁰, in the field of breeding in livestock breeding and creation of dairy farms, as well as promising areas for promoting exports of Belarusian goods and services to the Syrian market. All these facts show that the participation of Belarusian companies in the Rebuild Syria industrial exhibition was another concrete step forward towards the development of the Syrian market both in machine building and tractor construction, as well as in housing, industrial and road construction.

Another important aspect in the context of this topic is the relations in the information sphere between Belarus and Syria, which are based on the provisions of the relevant agreement of 11 March 1998, as well as the Agreement on Cooperation between the National State Television and Radio Company of the Republic of Belarus and the General Organisation for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Syria of 12 November 2007 and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Belarusian Telegraph Agency and the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) of 27 November 2008. These documents note "the importance of objective information support for inter-State co-operation. The role of the mass media in strengthening mutual understanding between the countries and peoples is particularly emphasised"⁷⁰¹. After all, the thematic spectrum of Belarusian-Syrian co-operation should be actively expanded today. These include cooperation in the electric power industry; resumption of supplies of Belarusian motor vehicles

⁷⁰⁰ Syria will study the experience of building dairy farms in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021.
- URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sirija-izuchit-opyty-stroitelstva-molochno-tovarnykh-ferm-v-belorussi-462158-2021/>

⁷⁰¹ Co-operation between Belarus and Syria in the information sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2015.
- URL: <http://mininform.gov.by/special/ru/news-ru/view/sotrudnichestvo-belorussi-i-sirii-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-275/>

to the Syrian market; establishment of an assembly plant of Minsk Automobile Plant machinery in Syria; expansion of regional cooperation; supply of Belarusian construction machinery for the needs of public works related to the reconstruction of Syria. Finally, cooperation in science and technology, within the framework of which "Belarusian and Syrian scientific institutes have signed 7 'pilot' contracts for joint research and development work"⁷⁰². In this regard, the task of journalists is to comprehensively reflect these trends in the media sphere.

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⁷⁰² Co-operation in the field of science, education, culture [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://syria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/cooperation/ec5318cc4fb8b9c5.html

Belarus - China: Regional co-operation is the engine of development

In 2019, the Belarus-China relationship of trusting comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation continued to develop intensively, demonstrating impressive dynamics. Suffice it to say that "in January-June of this [2019] year, the trade volume between China and Belarus reached \$2.053 billion, up 22.3% year-on-year, and exports of Belarusian goods to China increased by 81.9%"⁷⁰³.

Among the Belarusian regions that have made their considerable contribution to achieving such indicators is **Minsk Region**, whose exports "to China more than doubled in the first nine months of this [2019] year - from \$178 million to \$367 million (growth rate - 206%"⁷⁰⁴. The basis of these supplies were potash fertilisers, as well as meat and dairy products of such enterprises of the capital region as OJSC Agrokombinat Dzerzhinsky, LLC Velez-Mit, OJSC Smolevichi Broiler, KUP Minoblmyasomolprom, OJSC Minsk Dairy Plant No. 1, OJSC Slutsk Cheese Factory. Such positive export dynamics is largely due to the fact that almost all milk processing and a number of meat processing enterprises of Minsk region already have permission to supply their products to the Chinese market. Therefore, more than \$17 million worth of meat and dairy products were shipped to China in the first eight months of 2019. And, to all appearances, the scale of these shipments will only increase.

The volume of direct Chinese investments in the economy of Minsk region continues to increase in 2019. Their growth for the first nine months of this year was almost ten per cent, reaching the value of \$115 million. The bulk of them - more than \$90 million - was attracted due to the development of the production of passenger car assembly of BELJI. But there are other interesting examples. In particular, in November 2019, the first stage of the Belkali-Migao LLC plant opened in Soligorsk district of Minsk region. This is not only the first joint project of Belaruskali and the Chinese company Migao Corporation Limited, but also the first potassium nitrate plant on the Belarusian soil, whose

⁷⁰³ Grishkevich, A. China's development cannot do without the support and assistance of Belarus - Cui Qiming // A. Grishkevich [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/razvitiye-kitaja-ne-mozhet-objekt-bez-podderzhki-i-pomoschi-belarusi-tsui-367736-2019/>

⁷⁰⁴ Minsk region increased exports to China more than twice in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-obl-velichila-eksport-produktsii-v-kitaj-za-janvar-sentjabr-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-369062-2019/>

products are expected to be sold to the European Union, Turkey, Russia, China, as well as to enter the markets of North Africa and Latin America. Today this enterprise with a total staff of 150 people is already working in a round-the-clock mode. It is also important that "30 graduates - technologists of Soligorsk Mining and Chemical College - have been employed at the new workplaces. The annual capacity of the first stage of the new plant is 80 thousand tonnes of potassium nitrate and 62 thousand tonnes of granulated nitrogen-potassium fertilisers"⁷⁰⁵. Within the next year, the second stage of the Belkali-Migao plant should be completed and put into operation, which will bring the annual capacity of the enterprise to 160 thousand tonnes of potassium nitrate, which, in addition to agriculture, is also successfully used in the metallurgical industry, in the production of glass, pyrotechnics and explosives.

A significant event for the development of the Chinese vector of international cooperation of Minsk region was the participation of five enterprises of the capital's Belarusian region in the second international exhibition of imported goods and services China International Import Expo in **Shanghai**, held in November 2019. One of the exhibitors, Slutsk Cheese Factory, even managed to sign a \$2 million supply contract with Greenland Group Corporation. Another document was signed with Shanghai Pujia Food Technology Co.⁷⁰⁶. And the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen, located in the Minsk region, registered two new residents at the same exhibition in Shanghai - "Satellite Communications of Eurasia LLC (PRC), which will establish a research centre in the park for the development of satellite communication and control systems, and Flex-n-Roll Pro LLC (Belarus, USA) with a project in the field of industrial printing"⁷⁰⁷.

Another important factor that contributes to the successful promotion of Minsk Region's enterprises to the Chinese market is the development of effective interregional cooperation with partners in China, which, first of all, includes **Guangdong** Province, with which the Belarusian capital region signed a roadmap of cooperation for 2020-2021 in November 2019. This document, according to the parties, will make it possible to form a common

⁷⁰⁵ "Belaruskali" and Chinese Migao launched an enterprise for the production of potassium nitrate [Electronic resource]. -2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskalij-i-kitajskij-migao-zapustili-predprijatie-po-proizvodstvu-nitrata-kalija-368329-2019/>

⁷⁰⁶ Minsk region and the Chinese province of Guangdong signed a roadmap for cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsiya-guandun-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-sotrudnichestva-368717-2019/>

⁷⁰⁷ Research centre of satellite communication systems will be created in "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nauchno-issledovatel'skij-tsentr-sputnikovyh-sistem-kommunikatsii-sozdadut-v-velikom-kamne-368325-2019/>

market based on the principles of transparency and mutual benefit, as well as strengthen trade and economic ties. Among the main goals here is the direct co-operation of the regions. In particular, we are already talking about the creation of a joint milk-processing enterprise in the Chinese province. And in the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" a project related to medical equipment may be realised. We are talking about the fact that the Chinese enterprise from Guangdong province, interested in this project, "has already passed the certification for the European market and is interested in placing production in "Velikiy Kamen". <...> This will be a large-scale and significant project not only for Minsk region, but also for the country"⁷⁰⁸.

Other Chinese regions that have noticeably intensified their interaction with Belarusian partners recently include **Sichuan** Province. In November 2019, the international railway port of its administrative centre, Chengdu, a city of 20 million people, hosted the registration of the Belarusian National e-commerce pavilion, the completion of construction and assembly work on the construction of which is scheduled for early 2020. Here, in seven zones on an area of almost 1,500 square metres, Belarusian companies of various kinds will be able to present their export potential, including food and beverages, agricultural products and handicrafts, with rooms for negotiations and business forums. The very location of this pavilion is very promising - in a free trade zone with good logistics, as there is a railway port and two large wholesale markets nearby, each of which has more than seven thousand Chinese wholesale operators. It is also interesting that the pavilion will be presented in the form of Mir Castle and decorated with Belarusian national symbols. It is also important that "on the basis of the Belarusian National Pavilion, China and Belarus are ready to create a comprehensive bilateral platform of ties, which will include such areas as economy, culture, education, tourism, investment, and services"⁷⁰⁹.

Exporters from **Homiel Region** are going to actively use the potential of the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu. They will be mainly producers of food products - "meat and dairy products <...>, alcoholic beverages, as well as confectionery products, which have already proved themselves on foreign

⁷⁰⁸ Minsk region increased exports to China more than twice in January-September [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblaster-velichila-eksporthproduktsii-v-kitaj-za-janvar-sentjabr-bolej-chem-v-dva-raza-369062-2019/>

⁷⁰⁹ In Chinese Chengdu the ceremony of awarding the plaque of the Belarusian National Pavilion took place [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-kitajskom-chendu-sostojalas-tseremonija-vruchenija-tablichki-belorusskogo-natsionalnogo-paviljona-368575-2019/>

markets"⁷¹⁰ . This is explained by a number of reasons. Thus, back in May 2015, Homiel Region and Sichuan Province signed an agreement on cooperation, which provided for the organisation of cooperation on the principles of partnership, equality, trust and mutual benefit in such areas as economy, agriculture, health and culture, education, sports and tourism. In addition, "direct contacts and twinning ties will be established between the cities of the two regions to develop co-operation in the above-mentioned areas"⁷¹¹ .

And, indeed, three years later - in August 2018 - the agreement on the establishment of twinning relations was signed by the administrative centres of the region and the province - Homel and Chengdu, declaring their intention to develop cooperation in trade, education, culture, tourism, with special emphasis on the great prospects for fruitful cooperation in the economic sphere. The fact is that Chengdu is called the window that opens the way for international co-operation of the western part of China with the countries of Europe. A kind of business card of this Chinese city has already become a "goods train of international importance "Chengdu - Europe" connecting China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus"⁷¹² . In addition to the economy, the parties see education and healthcare among the promising areas of partnership development, as evidenced by the documents signed at the same time, in August 2018 - the Memorandum on Strategic Partnership between Chengdu Health Investment Corporation and Gomel Regional Clinical Hospital for Invalids of the Patriotic War and the Agreement on Establishing Cooperation between Wuhou Higher Secondary School and Gymnasium No. 71 of Gomel.

Among the Homiel enterprises, whose products will be presented at the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu, we should name, first of all, OJSC Milkavita, which for seven months of 2019 shipped seven times (!) more of its products to the Chinese market than for the same period of 2018. "Every month the company supplies about 500 tonnes of products to the PRC - dry dairy products and liquid products with a long shelf life. The main volume in exports

⁷¹⁰ Homiel manufacturers will present their products in the Belarusian pavilion in Chengdu [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskie-proizvoditeli-predstavят-пісчеву-продукцію-в-білоруському-павільйоні-в-чэнду-358191-2019>

⁷¹¹ Sidorchik, V. Gomel region and the Chinese province of Sichuan will cooperate / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://news.tut.by/society/447548.html>

⁷¹² Homiel and Chinese Chengdu have become twin cities [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-i-kitajskij-chendu-stali-gorodami-pobratimami-315608-2018/>

to China is whey powder - about 80%"⁷¹³. By exhibiting their products at the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu, Homiel exporters hope to significantly expand their presence in Sichuan province. This would allow the same JSC "Milkavita" to increase the supply of its products to China at the end of 2019 to the planned three million dollars.

It should be noted that Homiel Region is developing partnership and twinning ties with other Chinese regions as well. Thus, in June 2019, "Homiel Region and the Chinese Autonomous Region of **Inner Mongolia** signed a cooperation programme for 2020"⁷¹⁴. Gomel has also established partnership and twinning ties with several Chinese cities. In particular, in 2015, an agreement on friendship and cooperation was signed with Harbin, the administrative centre of **Heilongjiang** Province. The parties agreed that "the creation of joint ventures in such areas as mechanical engineering, electronics, processing of agricultural products <...> should eventually become a priority of economic cooperation between Homiel and Harbin"⁷¹⁵. However, the longest relations between Homiel and Huai'an city in **Jiangsu** province have been established since 1997. Thanks to these ties, Mlekovita OJSC, already mentioned above, took part in the International Exhibition of Food Industry in this Chinese city in May 2019, and in June 2019 at the meeting of the leaders of Gomel and Huai'an it was stated that the parties have "great potential for further development of cooperation in various areas, <...> that food products produced in Gomel are of particular interest"⁷¹⁶. All this variety of ties with Chinese partners allowed Gomel to exceed the volume of mutual trade with China at the level of forty million dollars at the end of 2018, and in the first four months of 2019 to come close to a trade turnover of 17 million dollars.

The Chinese vector of foreign economic activity in **Vitebsk region** also received quite a powerful development in 2019, as evidenced by the figures. Suffice it to say that in the first eight months of this year, the trade turnover of

⁷¹³ Gomel enterprise "Milkavita" increased exports to China by 7 times [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskoe-predprijatie-milkavita-narastilo-eksport-v-kitaj-v-7-raz-358197-2019/>

⁷¹⁴ Grishkevich, A. Gomel region and the Chinese Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia signed a cooperation programme / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblasti-i-kitajskij-avtonomnyj-rajon-vnutrennjaja-mongolija-podpisali-programmu-sotrudnichestva-4-2019/>

⁷¹⁵ Sidorchik, V. Creating a joint venture may become a priority of economic cooperation between Homiel and Harbin / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mozrissp.gov.by/special/ru/obl-news-ru/view/sozdanie-sp-mozhet-stat-prioritetom-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-gomelem-i-xarbinomn-2135/>

⁷¹⁶ Chinese partners are interested in the supply of Homiel food products [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kitajskie-partnery-zainteresovany-v-postavkakh-gomelskoj-pischevoj-produktsii-354606-2019/>

this Belarusian region "with the provinces of China totalled \$69.6 million, exports - \$13.5 million, which is 2.1 times higher than in the same period of 2018"⁷¹⁷. One of Vitebskchina's effective partners in China is **Shandong** Province, which is among the top three Chinese regions. It should be recalled that the first Memorandum of Co-operation was signed by the parties back in 2006. Within the framework of the agreements reached then, the cities located in these regions began to cooperate: Vitebsk and Jinan, Novopolotsk and Weihai, Orsha and Qingdao.

In particular, Vitebsk and Jinan established twinning relations in April 2009. At that time, the two cities named heavy and light industry, machine-tool construction, logistics, information technologies, as well as production of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals as promising areas of co-operation. The fact is that more than seven million people live in this Chinese city. And there is a steady demand for quality goods there, which certainly opens up interesting opportunities for Vitebsk manufacturers. In September 2017, the parties specified their co-operation intentions in the protocol of implementation of the agreement on the development of twinning cooperation for 2017-2020. In particular, in the field of education, the Chinese side proposed two projects: "scholarships for students allocated annually for Jinan twin cities, as well as summer schools for secondary school students, where children get acquainted with Chinese culture and lifestyle"⁷¹⁸. And in terms of more fully utilising the tourism potential of the two cities, it was proposed to create a joint tourism product that would be in demand and popular, primarily with Chinese citizens.

As for the cities of Novopolotsk and Weihai, twinning relations between them were established in 2006, "but they have not been particularly active so far"⁷¹⁹. Nevertheless, already in October 2019, on the margins of the Forum of Sister Regions held in the Chinese province of Shandong, representatives of the two cities were able to note for themselves the areas in which twinning ties could successfully develop. First of all, it was about ecology and logistics within the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" project. Secondly, given

⁷¹⁷ Bogacheva, O. In Vitebsk region together with China will produce peat products / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-vitebskoj-oblasti-sovmestno-s-kitaem-budut-vyuskat-torfoproduktsiju-366630-2019/>

⁷¹⁸ Antonov, S. Vitebsk and Jinan have identified the main areas of cooperation for the period until 2020 / S. Antonov // [Electronic reshmurs]. - 2017. - URL: <http://vitvesti.by/politics/vitebsk-i-tczinan.html>

⁷¹⁹ Demidov, D. Shandong - Novopolotsk: horizons of co-operation. What mutual interests determined the forum of twin regions in China? / D. Demidov // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.novaya.by/2019/10/22/shandun-novopolock-gorizonty-sotrudnichestva-kakie-vzaimnye-interesy-opredelil-forum-regionov-pobratimov-v-kitaе/>

the fact that the city of Weihai is famous for its production of state-of-the-art medical equipment, Novopolotsk sees great prospects for cooperation in this area as well. In its turn, Weihai is very interested in co-operation with the Belarusian city in the sphere of higher and secondary specialised education. Therefore, we can hope that the emergence of concrete twinning projects is not far off.

Finally, the Chinese city of Qingdao and Orsha District of Vitebsk Region signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly relations in September 2018. At the same time, "representatives of Chinese business expressed interest in opening in Qingdao a trade facility for Belarusian meat and dairy and bakery products"⁷²⁰, as well as in cooperation within the framework of the construction of the multimodal industrial and logistics complex "Bremino-Orsha". In addition, in July 2019, it became known about the intention of the municipal education department of Qingdao to participate in the construction of a school in Orsha for 1020 places. "Such a school can become an experimental platform for testing the jointly developed programmes of optional classes in Chinese language, literature, theatre and art in general"⁷²¹

Returning to the interregional interaction between Vitebsk region and Shandong province as a whole, it should be noted that in October 2019, these regions have already reached the signing of the Agreement on Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation, in which they identified as priorities for the development of partnership ties "the development of an effective mechanism for cooperation in trade and investment, the development of cooperation ties in industry, transport logistics, the creation of joint companies in petrochemicals, water treatment, electronics"⁷²². All these directions will be embodied in the road map of co-operation, which will be developed in the near

⁷²¹ In Orsha they plan to build a new school. Not a simple one, but with Chinese investments [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://gorod216.by/new/2723>

⁷²² Bogacheva, O. Vitebsk region and Shandong province signed an agreement on friendship and cooperation / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskaja-oblasc-i-provintsija-shandun-podpisali-soglashenie-o-druzhbe-i-sotrudnichestve-366479-2019/>

future. One of the real projects, which, to all appearances, will be included in this programme of cooperation between the Belarusian and Chinese regions, will be a joint venture to produce peat products, which is planned to be set up in Vitebsk region. Its participants will be "a Chinese agricultural company interested in supplying peat products in large volumes and Vitebskoblgaz, which includes a branch for peat extraction and processing in Dokshitsky district"⁷²³.

To summarise, it should be noted that "the Year of Belarusian Regions in China is planned to be held in 2020"⁷²⁴. These plans mean that in the near future both countries intend to develop interregional cooperation even more actively and strengthen trade and economic, scientific and technological, industrial and co-operative, cultural and tourist ties, expanding the number of participants in this interaction.

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⁷²³ Bogacheva, O. In Vitebsk region together with China will produce peat products / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-vitebskoj-oblasti-sovmestno-s-kitajem-budut-vypuskat-torfoproduktsiju-366630-2019/>

⁷²⁴ Belarus and China are interested in intensifying interregional cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-zainteresovany-v-aktivizatsii-mezhregionalnogo-sotrudnichestva-369121-2019/>

Belarus-China: to build on the existing potential for co-operation

⁷²⁵In 2021, the People's Republic of China launched the 14th Five-Year Plan for the country's socio-economic development until 2025, which will take new steps in reform policies and form a new architectonics of mutually beneficial international cooperation to "comprehensively enhance the country's opening up to the outside world, promote the liberalisation and facilitation of trade and investment, promote innovation and trade development, and advance the high-quality development of the joint construction of the One Belt One Road project". Meanwhile, the Chinese side will aim to create new advantages in international cooperation and competition, as it believes that "international economic interaction and exchanges are still objective requirements for the world's economic development. Openness to the outside world is the basic state policy of the country"⁷²⁶ . As for Belarus, the Chinese side expresses confidence that the two states should continue to mutually utilise the advantages of their economies, which are largely complementary, develop the existing potential for cooperation, including within the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" project and the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park, and expand cooperation "in such areas as epidemic control, trade and economy, education, science and technology, culture, and interregional ties"⁷²⁷ .

It should be recalled that by today the Republic of Belarus has built quite strong and open relations with the People's Republic of China, which are now characteristic of only three countries - Russia, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. This is confirmed by such figures. "The People's Republic of China is Belarus' second foreign trade partner after Russia, with an annual turnover of \$5 billion. <...> About 500 Belarusian exporters have already established themselves in this competitive market. More than 100 agricultural enterprises

⁷²⁵ Communiqué of the Fifth Plenum of the 19th CPC Central Committee [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://ru.china-embassy.org/rus/ggl/11832267.htm>

⁷²⁶ Qiming, C. China in 2021-2025 intends to implement a new development plan / C. Qiming. Qimin // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/kitaj-v-2021-2025-godah-nameren-realizovat-novyj-plan-razvitiija-7479/>

⁷²⁷ Xiaoyun, S. Taking the Bull by the Horns / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/vzjat-byka-za-roga-sovety-posla-knr-kak-pravilno-vstretit-kitajskij-novyj-god-7657/>

have been accredited. 24 projects worth almost \$4.5 billion have already been implemented in Belarus using PRC resources⁷²⁸.

Undoubtedly, the flagship project in this context is the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen, which has already invested \$650 million in the incomplete six years of its existence and has already registered 68 residents from 14 countries with declared investments of \$1.2 billion, of which about half have started operations. As a result, "a supercapacitor, truck cranes, laser equipment, drones, Euro-6 engines and heavy-duty gearboxes, a 5G communications pilot zone and a multimodal container terminal are just a few examples of projects currently underway in the park"⁷²⁹. In 2021, they plan to attract 17 more new residents here. Great hopes in this regard are pinned on the project to create a multimodal railway terminal with the participation of Germany, China and Switzerland, which will begin construction in the near future, as well as on the arrival here of the American company Ivy Global, which is considering the possibility of opening in Velikiy Kamen "a pharmaceutical plant for the production of a wide range of drugs, including those to combat COVID-19"⁷³⁰. In the same year, "when the second phase of the park's development begins, plans also include the construction of a second residential complex with 173 flats and a second substation"⁷³¹.

Continuing the theme of construction, it should be noted that in 2021, the construction of a national football stadium and a swimming pool of international standard in Belarus with the help of China's gratuitous technical and economic assistance will also come to the fore with the completion of these projects in 2023, as well as the start of the third phase of construction of social housing on Belarusian soil in the first half of 2021 with the use of Chinese gratuitous assistance. Recall that during the first two stages of the project, 38 houses for 3,286 flats were built in six regions and Minsk, which improved the living conditions of more than ten thousand people. Within the framework of the third stage "it is planned to build 1,166 flats of social housing in 20 houses.

⁷²⁸ Yaroshenko: Belarus has built strong and open relations with China [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/jaroshenko-belarus-vystroila-prochnye-i-otkrytie-otnoshenija-s-kitaem-428410-2021>

⁷²⁹ Investments in "Great Stone" during the project implementation totalled \$650 million - Yaroshenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/investitsii-v-velikij-kamen-za-vremja-realizatsii-proekta-sostavili-650-mln-jaroshenko-428432-2021/>

⁷³⁰ American company Ivy Global is considering the possibility of opening a pharmaceutical plant in "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amerikanskaja-kompanija-ivy-global-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-otkrytija-v-velikom-kamne-farmzavoda-426540-2021/>

⁷³¹ Industrial park "Velikiy Kamen" expects to attract about 17 residents in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-rasschityvaet-v-2021-godu-privlech-okolo-17-rezidentov-423412-2021/>

The total construction area will be about 66 thousand square metres. The flats will be given to citizens who are on the register of those in need of better housing conditions and have the right to receive social housing"⁷³².

Finally, as far as the coronavirus pandemic is concerned, the two countries have joined forces to combat it from the very beginning, providing each other with assistance and support. As a result, "40 tonnes of humanitarian medical supplies were sent from Belarus to China. From China - two shipments of emergency medical aid goods worth about 32.6 million yuan, provided by the Chinese government, as well as 110 tonnes from twin regions and partner companies"⁷³³. Taking into account the current situation with repeated outbreaks of the epidemic, the parties intend to continue to actively cooperate together in confronting this global challenge, confirming by concrete actions the existing level of trustful comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial co-operation.

As for the interaction between the regions of the two countries, back in January 2021, the parties "in order to develop interregional cooperation, it was proposed to declare the Year of the Regions of Belarus and China and to hold it within three years, from 2021 to 2023"⁷³⁴. A number of Belarusian and Chinese regions are already taking active steps to actualise these partnerships. Thus, back in 2020, the Belarusian **Grodno region** and the Chinese province of **Hainan** signed an agreement on establishing twinning ties, which provides for a significant expansion of interaction between the regions in the economic, trade and cultural spheres. This is not the first partner in the Celestial Empire for Hrodna.

Back in 2007, Hrodna residents established twinning relations with **Gansu** Province. In 2014, "the parties signed a memorandum of cooperation to strengthen economic and trade interaction and developed the Programme of Cooperation between Hrodna Region and Gansu Province for 2014-2020, in which they tried to take into account the most important aspects of the

⁷³² China is going to build 20 more social houses in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitaj-sobiraetsja-postroit-v-belorussi-esche-20-sotsialnyh-domov-426882-2021/>

⁷³³ Quyan, C. Covid is not a hindrance - trade between Belarus and China turned out to be stress-resistant / C. Quyan // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/kovid-ne-pomeha-torgovlya-belorussi-i-knr-okazalas-stressoustoichivoj-7641/>

⁷³⁴ Telephone conversation with President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/telefonnyy-razgovor-s-predsedatelem-kitayskoy-narodnoy-respubliki-si-czinpinom>

development of bilateral partnership and twinning ties on a systematic basis"⁷³⁵

One of the active participants in this interregional interaction is the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, which has established multifaceted co-operation with 10 Chinese universities. Today, Chinese students study in Grodno "at all levels - from preparatory department to postgraduate studies. Several joint scientific projects in the field of biochemistry are also being developed. Earlier a project in the field of mechanical engineering was realised, now we also count on a project in the field of logistics"⁷³⁶. In August 2018, in the building of Yanka Kupala GrSU, a centre for the internship of workers from Gansu Province was opened. In 2019, four investment projects based on Chinese investments were implemented in Grodno. In particular, the former Grodno Hotel was being reconstructed. A resident from China registered in the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" and planned to implement a project in the logistics sector. In addition, "a centre of traditional Chinese medicine and a trade and exhibition centre where the goods of the region's partners from China are presented" were also opened in Hrodna⁷³⁷.

In 2018, Grodno Region signed a Protocol of Intentions to establish friendly ties with **Fujian** Province. In official language, "the document outlines important areas of interregional complementary cooperation - trade, investment, logistics, culture"⁷³⁸. It can be added that the fact that the Chinese province has a well-developed industrial sector - electronics, machine building, and agriculture - and the Belarusian region has a well-developed agricultural sector, contributed to the rapprochement of the regions. And this is "just one of the areas of complementary cooperation that can be established in the trade and economic sphere"⁷³⁹. In addition, Belarusian flax and woodworking products are in demand in the Chinese market, and the Chinese side has

⁷³⁵ Zalessky, B. Vector of partnership - China. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 105.

⁷³⁶ Yanka Kupala GrSU develops joint scientific projects with Chinese universities [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grgu-im-janki-kupaly-razvivaet-s-kitajskimi-vuzami-sovmestnye-nauchnye-proekty-344391-2019/>

⁷³⁷ 4 investment projects with Chinese capital are being implemented in Grodno region [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-grodnenskoj-oblasti-realizujutsja-4-investproekta-s-kitajskim-kapitalom-344505-2019/>

⁷³⁸ On the establishment of regional ties of Grodno region with the Chinese province of Fujian [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://shanghai.mfa.gov.by/ru/o_generalnom_consulstv/news/b1e61ad9861a3f9c.html

⁷³⁹ Grodno region and Fujian province of the People's Republic of China will develop co-operation more actively [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-knr-futsjan-budut-aktivnee-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-313085-2018/>

declared its readiness to increase investments in Grodno region in a wide range of areas: from nuclear power plants to high technologies. The parties are now working on the implementation of the agreements reached.

In short, the People's Republic of China has become a strategic partner for the Belarusian western region, as evidenced by the figures. In the first 10 months of 2020, Hrodna Region's enterprises exported more than \$160 million worth of goods to the Chinese market. These are mainly foodstuffs and oil refining products. The emergence of new Chinese partners, namely Hainan Province, means for the Grodno side the actualisation of cooperation in other areas - in the sphere of high technologies, electrical engineering production, as well as the implementation of more global and ambitious projects. Such projects include "construction of a logistics centre on the basis of Grodno airport, opening of direct flights between Grodno and Hainan province. This will allow, firstly, to develop tourism and cooperation in the humanitarian sphere more actively, and secondly, to promote mutual deliveries of products"⁷⁴⁰. At the same time, the logistics centre may become a transport hub and a gateway to promote Chinese goods not only to Belarus, but also to the nearest European countries. Besides, one can say with confidence that the establishment of twinning ties between Grodno Region and Hainan Province will contribute to the development of cooperation between the cities of the Belarusian and Chinese regions. Thus, agreements between such cities as **Lida** and **Sanya**, **Astravets** and **Qionghai** are already at the stage of elaboration. The administrative centres of **Hrodna** and **Haikou** will not be left out of this process either.

Another interesting example is **Homiel Region**, which signed an agreement with the Chinese province of **Sichuan** in April 2021 to establish twinning ties, which envisages expanding cooperation in the economic, social, and cultural spheres. Recall that the Belarusian and Chinese regions established friendly relations six years ago, when in May 2015 they signed an agreement on cooperation, which provided for "the organisation of cooperation on the principles of partnership, equality, trust and mutual benefit in such areas as economy, agriculture, health and culture, education, sports and tourism"⁷⁴¹, as well as agreed to establish direct contacts and twinning ties between the cities of the region and the province. And already three years later - in August

⁷⁴⁰ Grodno region and the Chinese province of Hainan signed an agreement on twinning ties [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblaster-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-hajnan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskih-svjazjah-421086-2020/>

⁷⁴¹ Zalessky, B. Potential of multi-vectorality. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 63.

2018 - the agreement to establish twinning relations was adopted by the administrative centres of the regions - the cities of **Homel** and **Chengdu**.

By this time, interregional cooperation of Gomel region on the Chinese vector was developing in three more directions - with the autonomous regions of **Inner Mongolia** (2011) and **Xinjiang Uygur** (2016), as well as **Jiangsu** Province (2016). This allowed the region's enterprises to increase exports of goods to China almost three and a half times in 2018, from \$3.9 million to \$13.5 million. The main export positions then were dairy products, flax, wool, sawn timber. At that time, the list of accredited companies to supply dairy products to the Chinese market already included "five Homiel producers: Milkavita, Rogachev Dairy Canning Plant, Turov and Kalinkovichi dairy plants, Mozyr Dairy Products"⁷⁴².

The next two years showed even more impressive growth of export supplies from Gomel region to China, convincingly demonstrating how much these products are in demand in the Chinese market. In particular, "in 2020, with an increase of 32%, goods worth \$91 million were sent to this country"⁷⁴³. The basis of these supplies was already wood pulp, timber, meat and dairy products, confectionery. And it should be assumed that the current level of interaction with Chinese regions is far from exhausting its potential, as "Homiel producers are ready to meet the needs of the Chinese side in flax, confectionery, chocolate, alcoholic beverages, carbon threads, non-woven carbon fibre, sawn timber, furniture"⁷⁴⁴. In addition, there is considerable interest in expanding supplies of Gomselmash's cob harvesters and forage harvesters to the Celestial Empire.

It should be noted that great development reserves exist for the Homiel Region in cooperation with almost every Chinese region - partner or twin, the agreements reached earlier with which need to be updated today. For example, in the same province of Sichuan, where more than 90 million people live, in its administrative centre - Chengdu, in November 2019, the Belarusian National Pavilion was opened, divided into seven zones, where Belarusian goods, including food and beverages, agricultural products and handicrafts,

⁷⁴² Enterprises of Gomel region in 2018 increased the export of goods to China almost 3.5 times [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predprijatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-v-2018-godu-uvelichili-eksport-tovarov-v-kitaj-pochti-v-35-raza-338253-2019/>

⁷⁴³ Enterprises of Gomel region increased the export of products to the PRC by one third [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predprijatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-na-tret-uvelichili-eksport-produktuji-v-knr-434841-2021/>

⁷⁴⁴ Gomel region and the Chinese province of Sichuan signed agreements on twinning ties [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-sychuan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskikh-svazjakh-436511-2021/>

were sold. At the same time, the Belarusian and Chinese sides declared their readiness to use the pavilion to "create a comprehensive bilateral platform of ties that will cover such areas as economy, culture, education, tourism, investment and services"⁷⁴⁵. Let's hope that the agreement on establishing twinning ties between Homiel Oblast and Sichuan Province, signed in April 2021, will become another real tool to fulfil this task.

Interesting opportunities may open up in 2021 in the interaction between Gomel Region and the Chinese Autonomous Region of **Inner Mongolia**. After all, in 2019, the regions already adopted a cooperation programme for 2020. And they reinforced this document at the same time with the Agreement of Intentions on the establishment of twinning ties between the administrative centres of the region and the autonomous region - the cities of **Gomel** and **Huh-Hoto**, which envisaged the development of cooperation in the field of economy, trade, science, technology, ecology, culture, education, sports, tourism, health care. The fact that Inner Mongolia is an area rich in "natural resources: forests in the east, iron ore in the west, cattle breeding is developed in the north, grain is grown in the south"⁷⁴⁶. At the same time, Huh-Hoto named "mechanical engineering, particularly the production of agricultural machinery"⁷⁴⁷, as well as the food industry and construction among the priority areas of co-operation. The seriousness of the intentions of Gomel enterprises to enter the Inner Mongolia market with their products is evidenced by the fact of their participation in the Belarusian-Chinese regional forum held in Huh-Hoto in June 2019, where "the investment potential of Gomel region, <...> Gomel meat and dairy company, JSC "Spartak" were presented in separate presentations"⁷⁴⁸. It should be assumed that all these intentions of the parties on co-operation are now entering the phase of implementation of specific joint projects.

In the end, we would like to emphasise that all the above facts once again confirm the correctness of the course chosen in Belarus for the establishment

⁷⁴⁵ Mozgov, E. The Belarusian National Pavilion opened in Chinese Chengdu / E. Mozgov // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-kitayskom-chendu-otkrylsya-belorusskiy-natsionalnyy-pavilon.html>

⁷⁴⁶ A letter of intent has been signed [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://gomel.gov.by/ru/news/podpisano-soglashenie-o-namereniyakh/?NEWS_FILTER_TYPE=sotrudnichestvo

⁷⁴⁷ The authorities of the Chinese city of Huh-Hoto intend to develop relations with Gomel in industry [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vlasti-kitajskogo-goroda-huh-hoto-namereny Razvivat-otnoshenija-s-gomelom-v-promyshlennosti-366222-2019/>

⁷⁴⁸ Grishkevich, A. Belarusian-Chinese regional forum was held in the city of Huh-Hoto / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://www.belarus.by/ru/business/business-news/belorussko-kitajskij-regionalnyj-forum-proshel-v-gorode-xux-xoto_i_99900.html

and development of various twinning and partnership relations between Belarusian regions and their colleagues from other countries. The existing experience of their implementation shows that this is "an important and effective sector of international cooperation, the peculiarity of which is openness, mutual trust, tolerance and good-heartedness"⁷⁴⁹, with the consistent and steady development of which the partners move to the promotion of international cooperation.

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⁷⁴⁹ Batura, B. Twinning - small links of a great friendship / B. Batura // [Electronic resource]. - 2020.
- URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/pobratimskoe-dvizhenie-malenkie-zvenija-bolshoj-druzhby-7603>

Belarus - China: Regions as a factor of comprehensive strategic partnership

In January 2021, the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China reached an agreement at the highest level to hold the Year of Regions of the two countries within the next three years - from 2021 to 2023. This decision once again emphasises the huge role that intensified interaction at the level of autonomous districts, regions, provinces, and cities of the two countries plays in the development of bilateral Belarusian-Chinese relations, and the potential of which has only just begun to be truly explored by the parties. This is evidenced by the results of 2020, when trade turnover between Belarus and China exceeded \$4.5 billion, and exports of Belarusian products increased by almost 10 per cent. At the same time, "the driver of Belarusian exports to China was agricultural and woodworking products, the supplies of which increased twofold"⁷⁵⁰. It is also important that over a hundred Belarusian agricultural producers, the overwhelming majority of which are located in the regions of our country, have already been accredited in the Celestial Empire.

The facts show that the parties are now taking a wide range of measures to unlock the full potential of bilateral Belarusian-Chinese interaction. In this regard, special attention is being paid to addressing issues related to ensuring access of Belarusian goods to the Chinese market. In particular, at the December 2020 meeting of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation, a practical platform was created to work out all the issues of access to the Chinese market, as well as veterinary, quarantine supervision and logistics chains, in the form of the Commission on Customs and Quarantine Cooperation. A working group formed at the end of 2020, which includes specialists from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the Belarusian Ministry of Economy, will also work on simplifying trade procedures and creating a basis for active trade. The working group is to develop an agreement on trade in services and investment, "the implementation of which will change the essence and depth of joint development, simplify the provision of mutual investment without restrictions and prohibitive lists. Simplifying trade in services at the present stage is the basis for robust trade,

⁷⁵⁰ On the results of bilateral trade with China in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c603710a55ba783e.html>

as modern goods are 80 per cent services⁷⁵¹. The same December (2020) meeting of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee also noted the need to promptly engage in economic turnover in Belarusian regions the remaining Chinese credit resources in the amount of about USD 4 billion for specific projects to develop social and transport infrastructure.

As we can see, the tasks set at the interstate level are characterised by scale and specificity. Of course, it will hardly be possible to solve them without the most interested participation of the regions themselves. And this is where the regional mass media should say their weighty word in promoting the ideas of the Belarusian-Chinese comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation in the next three years. All the more so because they are now facing no less ambitious tasks to renew both their form and their content.

It should be recalled that at the February 2021 board meeting of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, regional print media, which constitute a significant segment of the Belarusian media sphere and cover practically the entire territory of the country, were named among the most important issues of the development of the information field of our country that should be worked out and solved as a matter of priority. Their priority should be the creation of high-quality media products. At the same time, they "should respond to the challenges of the time, be able to quickly adapt to the needs of the reader"⁷⁵², as well as contribute to the formation of a positive image of Belarus. In this connection, the most active participation of the Belarusian regional press in covering the implementation of the "three-year plan" of the regions of Belarus and China can and should become a very important step in the formation and development of its international segment. Moreover, the thematic focus of the publications devoted to the co-operation between the regions of the two countries can and should already be quite diverse.

In particular, such a form of cooperation between the regions of the two countries as twinning and partnership ties should receive particularly powerful impulses of development in the next three years. Their current level is very eloquently evidenced by the fact that every Belarusian region and Minsk have already become twinned or partners of two or more Chinese regions, thus

⁷⁵¹ Belarus and China have created a platform for working out the issues of access to the Chinese market [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-knr-sozdali-ploschadku-dlya-otrabotki-voprosov-dostupa-na-kitajskij-rynok-420487-2020/>

⁷⁵² Igor Petrishenko: Today a journalist should be a universal media worker, able to work on different platforms - in the newspaper, on the website, in social networks and messengers [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9758>

covering almost all provinces in the Celestial Empire. Thus, the Brest region has the provinces of Hubei (since 1994), Qinghai (2015.), Qinghai (2015), Anhui (2016), Shanxi (2019); Vitebsk - Shandong (2004), Heilongjiang (2005), Guizhou (2015), Jiangxi (2018); from Gomel - Inner Mongolia (2011) and Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regions (2016), Sichuan (2011) and Jiangsu (2016) provinces; from Grodno - Gansu (2007), Fujian (2018), Hainan (2019) provinces; from Minsk - Chongqing (2002), Guangdong (2012) and Zhejiang (2015); from Mogilev - Jiangsu (1997), Henan (2008), Hunan (2016), Shaanxi (2018), Tianjin (2019); from the Belarusian capital - Changchun (1992), Beijing (1997), Shenzhen (2013), Shenyang (2016), Shanghai (2018). In addition, "more than 20 agreements have been concluded on the establishment and development of cooperation at the city-city level between regional centres and cities of Belarus and administrative centres and cities of central subordination of China"⁷⁵³.

Characteristically, the process of expansion and actualisation of twinning and partnership ties continues today. Thus, in terms of the development of twinning ties between **Grodno Region** and **Hainan Province**, "agreements between such cities as Lida and Sanya, Astravets and Qionghai are already at the stage of elaboration"⁷⁵⁴. In April 2021, **Homiel Region** and **Sichuan Province** decided to significantly expand twinning ties in the economic, social and cultural spheres. At the end of March 2021, **Brest** region and **Hubei** province discussed the whole range of interaction. As a result, "the parties agreed to agree on a roadmap for the development of co-operation in the near future"⁷⁵⁵.

As for the **Mogilev** region, it signed a roadmap for co-operation with China's **Henan** province in June 2021 to continue co-operation in trade and increase it in the investment sphere. In addition, according to the parties, "among the important issues to be worked on is the improvement of transport links and logistics between our countries"⁷⁵⁶. Recall that Mogilev region

⁷⁵³ Belarusian-Chinese interregional co-operation and twinning ties [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral/regional/info/>

⁷⁵⁴ Zalesky, B.L. Grodno region: Chinese vector of interregional cooperation / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2021", Volume 4. Przemysł: Nauka i studia.- C. 8.

⁷⁵⁵ Chinese Hubei and Brest region intensify co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kitajskij-hubej-i-brestskaja-oblasteraktivizirujutsotrudnichestvo-434998-2021/>

⁷⁵⁶ Mogilev region and the Chinese province Henan signed a roadmap for the development of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dorozhnujukartupo-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-podpisali-mogilevskaja-oblasteri-kitajskaja-provintsija-444325-2021/>

signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly relations with Henan province back in 2004. Ten years later, "in July 2014, the administrative centre of this province - the city of Zhengzhou - became Mogilev's twin"⁷⁵⁷. Perhaps for this reason, the development of interaction with Chinese partners has been gaining momentum for this Belarusian region since then, as evidenced by the figures. In particular, since 2015, the trade turnover of Mogilev region with the People's Republic of China has increased 13 times, totalling almost \$95 million in 2020.

It should be noted that in addition to Henan Province, Mogilev Region has four other partners among Chinese regions. These are Jiangsu, Hunan, Shaanxi provinces and the city of Tianjin. In addition, friendly relations have been established between the partner cities: Mogilev - Nanjing, Bobruisk - Wuxi, Osipovichi - Yangzhou, Krichev - Lianyungang. In September 2019, during the first Regional Belarusian-Chinese Cooperation Week held in Mogilev, it was noted that "with each of these partners, relations are developing in several areas: the parties are interested in cooperation in the medical and educational spheres, industrial and tourism sectors, as well as in terms of interregional exchange"⁷⁵⁸. Back in July 2017, the same Henan province discussed the possibility of implementing investment projects in the free economic zone (FEZ) "Mogilev" and the south-eastern region, where there are serious preferences for business. In particular, there is vast free land in the south-east of Mogilev region for "the establishment of a joint venture for beef production taking into account the culinary requests and needs of the Chinese side with the subsequent supply of products to the Celestial Empire"⁷⁵⁹.

As for **Shaanxi** Province, its Department of Commerce in April 2019 signed an agreement of intent to promote economic development and friendly cooperation with the Committee of Economy of Mogilev Regional Executive Committee, in which the parties agreed to "provide active support and information assistance to enterprises interested in investing and establishing

⁷⁵⁷ Zalessky, B. Real multivectorality. Belarus in the system of foreign relations / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2015. - C. 26.

⁷⁵⁸ Over the last year Mogilev region has increased beef exports to the PRC by 9 times [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/za-poslednij-god-mogilevskaja-oblasy-9-raz-uvelichila-eksport-govjadiny-v-knr-360961-2019/>

⁷⁵⁹ Kulyagin, S. Mogilev region and the Chinese province Henan intend to more actively develop investment co-operation / S. Kulyagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2017 - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblasy-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-henan-namereny-aktivnee-razvivat-investsotrudnichestvo-257928-2017/>

import-export relations"⁷⁶⁰ . In December 2020, the Mogilev Regional Development Agency hosted an online meeting of more than 30 representatives of the parties' enterprises, including FEZ "Mogilev", JSC "Krasny Vyshevik", Bobruisk Meat Processing Plant, Oasis Group, JSC "Babushkina Krynska", Mogilev Ice Cream Factory, SZAQ "Servolux", Belarusian State Agricultural Academy (BSAA). One of the concrete results of this meeting was the partnership "between the BGSAA and the North-West University of Agriculture and Forestry. There are already certain developments on approbation of Chinese varieties of wheat and other cereals"⁷⁶¹ .

Mogilev residents received a concrete result of cooperation with the city of **Tianjin** back in June 2017, when a social house was commissioned in the regional centre, with Tianjin Electric Construction Company acting as the general contractor. "The new building of 10 floors with 120 flats is located in the Kazimirovka neighbourhood under construction on Grunvaldskaya Street. This is one of the three houses that were erected in Mogilev region thanks to the implementation of the first stage of the project "Construction of social housing" with the technical and economic assistance of the People's Republic of China. Similar objects appeared in Bobruisk and Osipovichi"⁷⁶² . In May 2019, the parties signed a Memorandum on the establishment of twinning ties. In November 2020, such companies from the Chinese city as Tianjin Constant Towards International Trade Co., Bonyum International Trading Co., Tianjin Mengdong International Trade Co., Zhonggong Huamu (Tianjin) Food Co., Zhonggong Huamu (Tianjin) Food Co.

The Chinese province of **Jiangsu**, which in 2015 signed an agreement on the establishment of twinning ties with Mogilev region, became the first of the Chinese regions, with whom Mogilev residents in July 2020 held a contact and co-operation exchange in videoconference mode, the participants of which from the Chinese side were more than 20 companies working in the meat and dairy industries, flax processing, production of alcoholic beverages and drinks. Their interest in this event is understandable, because only on the basis of

⁷⁶⁰ Mogilev region and the Chinese province of Shaanxi intend to develop economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-obl-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-shensi-namereny-razvivat-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnistvo-342757-2019/>

⁷⁶¹ Emelyanova, O. Issues of trade and economic cooperation and education discussed during the online meeting of representatives of Mogilev region and Shaanxi province / O. Emelyanova [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://mogilev-region.gov.by/news/voprosy-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnistva-i-obrazovaniya-obsudili-vo-vremya-onlayn>

⁷⁶² Emelyanova, O. The social house built with the technical assistance of China was commissioned in Mogilev / O. Emelyanova // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/postroennyj-s-tehpomoschju-kitaja-sotsialnyj-dom-sdali-v-ekspluatatsiju-v-mogileve-254650-2017/>

previously implemented projects the entrepreneurs of Jiangsu province in 2020 "additionally allocated more than \$2 million for the further development of their enterprises. Today, Chinese investors are implementing and planning to realise projects on growing and processing flax, producing mushrooms and various medical products"⁷⁶³. Finally, **Hunan** Province is interesting in this context because in January 2018 it presented Mogilev with two new electric buses at once. And the Zoomlion company is implementing a project to produce specialised machinery here.

Speaking about **Minsk** Oblast in this context, it should be noted that in July 2021, the Minsk Oblast Executive Committee and JSC "China SAMSE Engineering Corporation" signed a memorandum under which major healthcare facilities will be built in the Belarusian capital region with the help of the Chinese side. In particular, the adopted document provides for "the construction of an infectious disease hospital in Borisov and a surgical building in the regional hospital, export-import trade in agricultural products, the creation of a factory for the production of baby food and solving problems with rubbish processing.⁷⁶⁴ . It should be recalled that in our country, SAMCE, a subsidiary of China National Machinery Corporation Sinomach of Beijing, owns shares in the Industrial Park Development Corporation NWR, acted as the general contractor for the construction project of a bleached sulphate pulp plant at the Svetlogorsk Paper Mill and for such facilities in the Velikiy Kamen industrial park as the engineering and transport infrastructure, the administrative building, the Zumlion Bel-Rus LLC and MAZ-Veichai LLC plants.

It should be noted that the Chinese vector of trade and economic cooperation plays an increasingly significant role in the foreign economic activities of Minsk Region today. According to the results of 2020, the People's Republic of China became the second largest trade partner of the Belarusian capital region in terms of turnover, accounting for 14.3 per cent of the total volume of foreign trade. And there is every reason to believe that this figure will only increase in the coming years, as Minsk Region "pays special attention

⁷⁶³ Business circles of the Mogilev region and the Chinese province of Jiangsu discuss the prospects of cooperation at the contact and co-operation exchange [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://mogilev-region.gov.by/news/delovye-krugi-mogilevskoy-oblasti-i-kitayskoy-provincii-czansu-obsuzhdayut-perspektivy>

⁷⁶⁴ In Minsk region with the participation of the Chinese corporation will build health care facilities [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-minskoj-oblasti-priuchastii-kitajskoj-korporatsii-postrojat-objekty-zdravooхранения-449374-2021/>

to the Chinese market, which is promising for the supply of food products⁷⁶⁵. In particular, all dairy processing enterprises of Myasomolprom holding have already received permission to export butter, cheese, whey, skimmed and sterilised milk powder to this country. As for meat-processing enterprises and poultry farms of Minsk region, they are actively working on accreditation to supply their products to China. And already LLC "Veles-Mit", JSC "Slutsk Meat Processing Plant" and JSC "Stolbtsovsky Meat Canning Plant" have received permission to export frozen beef, and JSC "Agrocombinat Dzerzhinsky" and JSC "Smolevichi Broiler" - to ship poultry products. The Niasvizh Baby Food Plant LLC also received permission to supply pasteurised milk, cream and milkshakes to the Celestial Empire.

Here too, the great potential for intensifying co-operation with Chinese partners lies in the already existing twinning ties. In particular, back in June 2002, an agreement on co-operation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural areas was signed between the Minsk Regional Executive Committee and the People's Government of **Chongqing**, where more than 30 million people live today. In 2016, at the initiative of the Belarusian capital region, this interaction was resumed. At the same time, a memorandum on the development of twinning relations between the Kopyl District of Minsk Region and the Wanzhou District of Chongqing was signed. A year later, the matter came to the adoption of the Agreement on the Establishment of Twinning Relations between the Belarusian region and the Chinese city.

⁷⁶⁶In March 2019, the Days of Minsk Region were held in Chongqing, during which the Roadmap of Cooperation for 2019-2020, cooperation agreements between the Chongqing International Chamber of Commerce and the Minsk Branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Education Committee of Chongqing and the Main Department of Education of the Minsk City Executive Committee, as well as a number of "contracts for the supply of products between business representatives totalling \$24 million" xml-ph-0000@ were signed at a business forum with the participation of more than 225 representatives of business circles from both sides. At the same time, a representative office of Veles-Mit LLC was opened in Chongqing. Only two months later a representative office of the capital region itself appeared here to assist in finding "potential partners to promote the products of the Minsk region

⁷⁶⁵ Foreign economic activity [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.minsk-region.gov.by/ekonomika-i-finansy/vneshneekonomicheskaya-deyatelnost5898/>

⁷⁶⁶ A delegation of the Minsk region is visiting Chongqing [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://minsk-region.gov.by/novosti/glavnye-novosti/v-g-chuntsin-prohodit-vizit-delegatsii-minskoy-oblasti/>

enterprises to the market of Chongqing" . Chongqing⁷⁶⁷ . And in August 2019, the parties signed two agreements on investment cooperation within the framework of the projects "Village with Chongqing flavour in Belarus" and "Village with Belarusian flavour in Chongqing", where "rural dwellings of the Baiyu culture of Chongqing and architectural features of eastern Sichuan"⁷⁶⁸ will serve as prototypes for the development, respectively, and an exact copy of the Niasvih Castle will be one of the dominants of the future village in China.

However, the arrival of the pandemic somewhat slowed down the realisation of the plan. And in 2020, the interaction between the parties was expressed in the provision of humanitarian assistance to each other at the most crucial moments. In particular, last February, when the whole COVID-19 thing was just beginning, a batch of medical masks was sent from Minsk Region to Chongqing in response to the appeal of the Chinese side. Now, opportunities are opening up for a return to the projects of the "pre-coronavirus" era.

This is also typical of the interaction between Minsk Region and another Chinese twin region - **Guangdong** Province, the roadmap for cooperation with which for 2020-2021 was signed in November 2019 and included "the supply of Belarusian agricultural products to China and the establishment of a joint milk-processing enterprise"⁷⁶⁹ . Let's hope that the effective implementation of Minsk Region's cooperation plans with this Chinese region is not far off.

The Belarusian capital also has interesting developments in co-operation with Chinese partners. In November 2019, **Minsk** and **Shanghai** signed an agreement on the establishment of twinning ties. Interestingly, before this document appeared, the Belarusian capital had already "signed 22 agreements on cooperation with the cities of the People's Republic of China, including 3 agreements on twinning (Beijing, Changchun, Shenzhen)"⁷⁷⁰ . Perhaps for this reason Chinese companies have already invested about \$30 million of direct

⁷⁶⁷ On the opening of the representative office of Minsk region in Chongqing [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/a7ecb1467556d183.html>

⁷⁶⁸ A settlement with Chinese flavour will be built near Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.belmir.by/2019/08/01/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC-%D0%BC%D0%BC%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%8F%D1%82-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BA-%D1%81-%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B9%D1%81/>

⁷⁶⁹ Minsk region and the Chinese province of Guangdong signed a roadmap for cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://belaruschina.by/ru/news/2019/November/12November-2087.html>

⁷⁷⁰ Days of Minsk in Shanghai will be held on 7-9 November [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dni-minska-v-shanhae-projekt-7-9-nojabrja-368252-2019/>

investments in Minsk. Signing a new document on twinning, the parties "identified priority areas of cooperation - building up mutual trade, infrastructure construction, tourism"⁷⁷¹. Minsk citizens are highly interested in Shanghai's experience in a number of areas. In particular, in the organisation of the working process in educational institutions, medical infrastructure, social services and rehabilitation centres for people with disabilities. The attention of Minsk's administrative and business circles is also attracted by the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, which is used in the People's Republic of China for economic and social reforms.

One of the most effective forms of coordinating trade and economic cooperation between Minsk and Shanghai has already become an annual business forum of business circles of the Belarusian and Chinese cities. For example, a similar forum organised in Minsk in September 2018 brought together "more than 130 domestic and Chinese companies interested in cooperating in the fields of engineering, construction, information technology, chemical industry, food, and jewellery production"⁷⁷². At the same time, the Belarusian capital was visited by Chinese manufacturers of electronics and household appliances, clothing and fabrics, packaging for medical equipment, cosmetics, toys, jewellery, as well as importers of cars, electrical and welding equipment, computer equipment, interested in finding business partners in Minsk.

The Shanghai-Minsk Business Forum, which took place in November 2019 and brought together over a hundred Chinese and over thirty Belarusian enterprises and companies, was equally wide-ranging. The forum programme provided for discussion of topical issues of cooperation "in specialised three sections: 1) Food products, food industry; 2) Tourism and hospitality of Minsk and Shanghai; 3) Industry"⁷⁷³. The documents adopted as a result of the event show its high practical impact. In particular, the Minsk City Executive Committee signed a Memorandum of Intent to establish co-operation with Lotusland Shanghai Corporation on the introduction of heat pump technologies and equipment in the construction of industrial and civil structures in the Belarusian capital. The point is that "the use of heat pump units for Minsk

⁷⁷¹ Grishkevich, A. Minsk and Shanghai have established twinning ties / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-shanhaj-ustanovili-pobratimskie-svazi-368815-2019/>

⁷⁷² Zalessky, B. Vector of partnership - China. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 149.

⁷⁷³ Business forum "Shanghai-Minsk", 8 November 2019. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://www.tppm.by/annoucment/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=23213

satellite cities would make it possible to refuse laying multi-kilometre heat networks"⁷⁷⁴.

The memorandum on strategic partnership in the sphere of tourist exchanges was the result of negotiations between representatives of the Belarusian Republican Unitary Enterprise Centrokurot and the Chinese group travel company Shanghai Airlines Tours International (Group) Co., Ltd. The agreement on cooperation in the field of international exhibitions was signed by Minskexpo CJSC and Shanghai industry and commerce exhibition Co. Besides, the Free Economic Zone "Minsk" and Shanghai Allynar Technology Co., Ltd., as well as JSC "Slodoch Confectionery Factory" and Shanghai Teemo Foods have confirmed their intentions to actively cooperate in the near future. SOAO Kommunarka is also going to increase supplies of its confectionery products to the Shanghai market, having signed a relevant memorandum with the Chinese Trade and Economic Company Misier.

The fact that the market of this Chinese city attracts serious attention of the Belarusian capital's producers is also evidenced by the fact that nine Minsk companies took part in the second China International Import Goods and Services Exhibition held in Shanghai in November 2019. Among them were SOAO Kommunarka, CJSC Minsk Winery, OJSC Krinitsa, OJSC Slodoch, OJSC Kristall, OJSC Minsk Bread Products Plant, CUP Minskikhlebprom, and TPKUP Minsk Khladokombinat No. 2.

Also. The memorandum on establishing friendly ties between Maskouski District of the Belarusian capital and Jiading District of Shanghai, signed in November 2019, also opens up interesting prospects for interregional cooperation. Just a month later - in December - a delegation from Jiading District visited Minsk, where they discussed with the leadership of the Maskouski District of the Belarusian capital ways to implement the memorandum in the context of "intensifying bilateral trade and economic cooperation, as well as cooperation in the field of student exchanges between the two districts"⁷⁷⁵. One of the concrete outcomes of this visit was an invitation from the Chinese side for students of Minsk's Maskouski district to attend a summer camp in Shanghai. Apparently, in the near future, friendly

⁷⁷⁴ Beluga, V. Forum of business cooperation "Minsk - Shanghai" was held in China / V. Beluga // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://minsknews.by/forum-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-minsk-shanhaj-prohodit-v-kitae/>

⁷⁷⁵ On the visit of the delegation of the Jiading district of Shanghai to Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://shanghai.mfa.gov.by/ru/o_generalnom_consulstv/news/b8beff0b9304c615.html

relations between the Soviet district of Minsk and another Shanghai district, Changning, will also be intensified.

All these facts suggest that the topic of Belarusian-Chinese interregional co-operation should be firmly and permanently "anchored in the Belarusian regional press and reflect the experience already accumulated in this respect as much as possible"⁷⁷⁶ . For this purpose, creative strategies specific to international regional issues will be required in the near future, and representatives of this segment of Belarusian journalism should be engaged in the development of such strategies.

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⁷⁷⁶ Zalessky, B.L. Information sovereignty and international journalism / B.L. Zalessky // Regional media of the Republic of Belarus in the political epoch: from local problems to the information aspect of the state: proceedings of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference, Minsk, 5 May 2020 / Belarusian State University; edited by V.M. Samusevich (ed. by V.M. Samusevich). practical conference, Minsk, 5 May 2020 / Belarusian State University; edited by V.M. Samusevich (ed.) [i others]. - Minsk: BDU, 2020. - C. 114.

Velikiy Kamen Industrial Park: a project that will shape the future

May 2020 marked five years since the visit of the leaders of the two countries - A. Lukashenka and S. Jinping - to the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Great Stone". Jinping. This event became a kind of starting point in the history of the park for its rapid development. And, indeed, in such a short period of time roads were laid here, water supply, electricity, heating and gas were brought in, more than 60 thousand square metres of standard production buildings were erected, the first office building, residential building and research centre were built, about 60 investment projects were attracted, the declared volume of investments exceeding one billion dollars. All this allows us to agree with the conclusion that "in five years, the China-Belarus Industrial Park has become a good testing ground for bilateral cooperation, promoted mutual understanding between China and Belarus and ties between their enterprises, and facilitated cultural exchange. That is why the Great Stone, as a comprehensive strategic platform for trade and economic cooperation between China and Belarus, has attracted the attention of potential partners from both our two countries and from other countries, and has become a model of cooperation on the Belt and Road"⁷⁷⁷.

It should be noted that it is not only in Belarus or China that such high praise for the Great Stone is voiced. In November 2019, the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (FEMOZA) held a summit in Monaco, the main theme of which was strengthening cooperation and transforming the successful experience of free economic zones (FEZ) into working tools. More than 400 representatives of FEZs from the UK, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Asia and Africa, as well as chambers of commerce and industry, public authorities and potential foreign investors took part in this large-scale event. It should be reminded that FEMOZA is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation supported by the United Nations, which was founded in 1999 in Geneva to support and promote free and special economic zones all over the world, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assist in bringing projects of FEZ residents to the international market and attracting foreign investment. FEMOZA functions include elaboration of

⁷⁷⁷ Zheng, H. "The Great Stone" symbolises the firm friendship between Belarus and China / H. Zheng // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/velikij-kamen-simvoliziruet-tverduju-druzhbu-belarusi-i-knr-hu-chzhen-7289/>

norms, rules and directions of FEZ development, providing them with technical, legal and economic assistance, training of specialists. Statistics state that "today there are 3,500 free zones in 130 countries, accounting for more than 70 million jobs"⁷⁷⁸. But, "despite the benefits and preferences given to them in all countries, <...> only 300-400 are effective. All this is due to the technological lag that prevents FEZs from becoming part of the global economy"⁷⁷⁹.

The Republic of Belarus has been a very active participant in FEMOZA activities for a number of years. The summit in Monaco was truly significant for the Belarusian side, as it was there that the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park was honoured with the FEMOZA Awards 2019, winning in the category "The Fastest Growing Industrial Park". The peculiarity of this nomination is that "the key factors in determining the winner were Velikiy Kamen's prospects for global investment and the rapid pace of its development"⁷⁸⁰. Indeed, today in Velikiy Kamen the Belarusian side has created solid privileges for residents - both tax and land ownership privileges, as well as a favourable regime in which the registration of enterprises takes place in the shortest possible time according to the "one window" principle. As a result, "today this park is showing tremendous growth, with investors coming to us from all over the world"⁷⁸¹.

The facts show that Great Stone has already become an international platform for the creation of high-tech enterprises. At the beginning of November 2019, 57 residents were registered here. And there is every reason to believe that the number of them "may grow to 80 by the end of 2020"⁷⁸². A project to create the production of solar panels is already underway here. In

⁷⁷⁸ Barcelona will become the capital of free zones in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: https://ru.wikinews.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%B9_%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85_%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B2_2019_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%83

⁷⁷⁹ Grigorieva, V. President of the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (Femoza) Juan Torrents Tolosa visited Gomel [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.sby/articles/vse-sezy-v-gostii-k-nam.html>

⁷⁸⁰ "Great Stone" recognised as the fastest growing industrial park in the world [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-priznan-samy-bystrorastuschim-industrialnym-parkom-v-mire-369159-2019/>

⁷⁸¹ Megalgals in "Great Stone" and IT records - Rumas spoke about opportunities to invest in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/megalgoty-v-velikom-kamne-i-rekordy-it-rumas-rasskazal-o-vozmozhnostjah-investirovat-v-belarus-370269-2019/>

⁷⁸² The number of residents of "Great Stone" may increase to 80 by the end of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kolichestvo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamna-k-kontsu-2020-goda-mozhet-uvelichitsja-do-80-365696-2019/>

July 2019, the construction of a Belarusian-Chinese plant for the production of mechanical gearboxes with an investment of \$17 million started in the industrial park. In October 2019, the engine production plant MAZ-Veichai LLC opened here, where they produce "small-unit assembly of engines of Euro-5 and Euro-6 standards for trucks, special vehicles and buses." The production capacity at one-shift operation mode will amount to 10 thousand engines per year⁷⁸³. But even more impressive plans are accepted here for realisation in the near future.

At the end of October 2019, the 12th meeting of the Working Group on the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Great Stone" was held in Beijing, during which its participants focused on such areas of development of this special economic zone as: improving the legal environment of the park; establishing additional comfortable conditions for attracting investment in the creation of competitive industries; creating a sustainable engineering and transport infrastructure; digital construction; and developing the park as a smart city. Among the tasks for the development of the industrial park in 2020 were highlighted "priority export orientation, attraction of anchor investors with high-tech projects, expansion of international activities"⁷⁸⁴. At the same time, they intend to continue to be guided by four main principles of development: "Firstly, it is globalisation, as the industrial park is not Chinese or Belarusian, but international. Secondly, industrialisation. The main task is to attract international industry clusters. Thirdly, it is digitalisation, which should give great advantages to the development of the park. <...> Fourthly, ecologisation. Environmental protection and compliance with environmental requirements are the key to sustainable development"⁷⁸⁵.

It should be recalled that as of the beginning of 2020, 60 residents from 15 countries were already registered in Veliky Kamen, including: 33 - from the People's Republic of China; 15 - involving companies from Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Switzerland and the United States of America; 12 - created by Belarusian business entities. By this time, in less than five years, 32 kilometres of roads have been built here,

⁷⁸³ Opening of the plant for the production of engines of LLC "Maz-Veichai" in the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9051>

⁷⁸⁴ The Great Stone industrial park will be presented at the Chinese international import exhibition in November [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-v-nojabre-predstavят-na-kitajskoj-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-importa-367476-2019/>

⁷⁸⁵ Zheng, H. "Great Stone" becomes a strategic platform for Belarusian-Chinese cooperation / H. Zheng // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/velikij-kamen-stanovitsja-strategicheskoy-platfromoj-dlya-belorussko-kitajskogo-sotrudnichestva-7152/>

about 400 kilometres of water and gas pipelines, electric lines, sewage branches have been laid, 25 buildings with a total area of about 300 thousand square metres have been completed. And the total volume of contracts and investments exceeded one billion dollars from 11 countries of the world.

Speaking about the trends observed in the industrial park today, there are several main ones. One of them is the development of Veliky Kamen as a smart city with innovative industry and high quality of life. To achieve this goal, in February 2020, the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation of the Republic of Belarus, the Industrial Park Development Company and the Veliky Kamen administration signed an agreement on the development of 5G technology in the industrial park. It was noted that one of the most promising areas of 5G technology development here is unmanned transport. As a result, the China-Belarus Industrial Park should become "the first model base in Belarus for the introduction of 5G technologies"⁷⁸⁶.

It should be noted that the priority areas of Veliky Kamen's development remain mechanical engineering, electronics and telecommunications, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, new materials, and logistics. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the innovative activity of residents. And about 20 projects are already yielding results. Among them is the commercial and logistics company China Merchants, which received a certificate for the operation of the only bonded bonded bonded warehouse for general use in Belarus. In November 2019, Veliky Stone hosted the opening of the production building of Hess Great Stone LLC, a subsidiary of the Swiss company Garrosserie Hess AG, to produce electric passenger transport. "This type of transport will be characterised by zero carbon emissions and quiet running. The rooftop batteries will be charged at the terminus in minutes."⁷⁸⁷. This resident of the industrial park plans to reach the full production cycle in 2021, when up to fifty bus bodies will already be produced here.

The following fact also speaks volumes in terms of innovative activity of the park residents: in March 2020, the manufacturer of medical devices of a wide range of products Assomedica LLC, registered in Veliky Kamen as a resident in 2017, "mastered a new production of respiratory masks and

⁷⁸⁶ Nemankova, Y. Pilot project for the development of 5G will be implemented in Velikiy Kamen / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pilotnyj-proekt-po-razvitiyu-5g-realizujut-v-velikom-kamene-381000-2020/>

⁷⁸⁷ Alexander Turchin: Belarusian-Swiss co-operation has a serious potential [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9136>

bacterial-virus filters of single use for adults, children and newborns"⁷⁸⁸ - products that provide maximum respiratory protection from the ingress of germs and viruses, which can be used for 12-24 hours.

The industrial park is also thinking about the future. This is evidenced by the fact that in March 2020, the Chinese company Sinomach registered as a resident of Veliky Kamen with a project to create a zone for scientific and technological cooperation and innovative developments, within the framework of which it is planned to build a complex of administrative buildings for scientific research and auxiliary infrastructure. In the first phase, the company intends to "implement four research and development projects related to such developments as optical devices, automotive sensors, semiconductors and new materials". The company also plans to realise the second phase of the project"⁷⁸⁹.

In terms of expanding the international activities of the Veliky Kamen Industrial Park, one of the most effective tools can be such a form of attracting new residents as the creation of subparks, which means "the arrival of not one investor, but a pool of significant companies under the leadership of a separate management company. This opens up broad prospects for large corporations"⁷⁹⁰. It should be added that the park administration addresses this proposal not only to Chinese provinces, "but also to investors from Europe, in particular Switzerland, and Japan"⁷⁹¹. The main condition for future residents, which must be fulfilled, is the creation of high-tech enterprises in the industrial park. And there is enough space and opportunities for building technological clusters and subparks on a national basis for everyone.

It should be noted that the subpark format is already used in practice in Veliky Kamen. Back in May 2017, the first phase of the trade and logistics subpark was opened here, spread over 29 hectares. This is one hundred thousand square metres of real estate, half of which was taken up by warehouses and another almost a quarter by an exhibition centre. "About \$120

⁷⁸⁸ Production of breathing masks is opened in the industrial park "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-dyhatelnyh-masok-otkryto-v-industrialnom-parke-velikij-kamen-383799-2020/>

⁷⁸⁹ New resident with Chinese capital registered in "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novij-rezident-s-kitajskim-kapitalom-zaregistrirovan-v-velikom-kamne-384192-2020>

⁷⁹⁰ Konoga, P. Alexander Yaroshenko told about the new residents of the industrial park "Velikiy Kamen", satellite town and plans for 2019 / P. Konoga // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/vysech-pribyl-iz-kamnya.html>

⁷⁹¹ "Velikiy Kamen" offers foreign partners to create subparks [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-predlagat-zarubezhnym-partneram-sozdavat-subparki-365694-2019/>

million has been invested in the construction of the sub-park. In the near future it is planned to start the construction of the second stage. In total, the subpark will occupy an area of more than 90 hectares, the volume of investments is \$500 million"⁷⁹².

At the 11th meeting of the Working Group on the China-Belarus Industrial Park, held in November 2018 in Beijing, it was noted that in the near future the necessary support would be provided for the practical implementation of the subparks of Harbin city, which is in Heilongjiang province, and Guangdong province in the Great Stone. It was also planned to "substantively work out the establishment of sub-parks in the industrial park with Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces and Hangzhou city by the end of 2019"⁷⁹³. As for Guangdong province, back in January 2017 in its administrative centre - Guangzhou city - "the signing ceremony of the agreement on the establishment of the China (Guangdong) LED products subpark in the Great Stone Industrial Park"⁷⁹⁴, as well as five more documents on the intention to join this subpark of specific companies.

Another document, which is significant in the context of this topic, was signed in November 2018 at the first Chinese exhibition of imported goods and services in Shanghai. This is an agreement on the establishment of the Chengdu-European Industrial Subpark on the territory of the Great Stone. The fact is that Chengdu - the administrative centre of Sichuan province - has a significant industrial potential, including developed automotive and aerospace industries, which corresponds to the priorities of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park. In addition, "Chengdu is the most economically close city in China to Europe"⁷⁹⁵.

Let us note an important detail: recently, a number of important meetings and negotiations have taken place to consider the creation of national subparks of European countries in Veliky Kamen. In particular, in August 2019, this topic was discussed in the Government of the Republic of Belarus with representatives of Swiss business circles, including the management of Ceres

⁷⁹² Anatoly Kalinin took part in the opening of the first stage of the trade and logistics sub-park in the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7228>

⁷⁹³ Minutes of the 11th meeting of the Working Group on China-Belarus Industrial Park [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://belaruschina.by/data/fck/file/minekonomiki/protocol_11.pdf

⁷⁹⁴ A sub-park of LED products will be created in the Industrial Park "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://industrialpark.by/novosti/2017/v-industrialnom-parke-velikij-kamen-budet-sozdan-subpark-svetodiodnoj-produkcii.html>

⁷⁹⁵ Chinese Chengdu considers the possibility of creating high-tech industries in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: https://interfax.by/news/policy/ekonomicheskaya_politika/1251824/

Group Holding AG and the Swiss industrial park BUSS, who positively assessed the Belarusian proposal not only to create a Swiss subpark in Veliky Kamen, but also "to act as a developer in it and both engage in development and attract Swiss business to cooperate with Belarus"⁷⁹⁶. It is noteworthy that already in December 2019 the 60th resident was registered in the industrial park - the already mentioned above "Swiss company Hess Great Stone for the production of electric passenger transport"⁷⁹⁷. And in January 2020, the issue of "possible future creation of an Italian-Belarusian sub-park in Velikiy Kamen"⁷⁹⁸ was considered in practical terms at a meeting in Rome with owners and managers of Italian companies interested in investing in the industrial park's projects.

Undoubtedly, all these facts emphasise the very high dynamics of development of the Great Stone Industrial Park - a project, the role of which in the Belarusian economy will very soon become significant both in terms of innovation and investment and technology.

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⁷⁹⁶ Kryzhevich, I. On the territory of the "Great Stone" can create a Swiss subpark / I. Kryzhevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/na-territorii-velikogo-kamnya-mogut-sozdat-shveytsarskiy-subpark-.html>

⁷⁹⁷ The 60th resident appeared in the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://interfax.by/news/biznes/businesses/1268182/>

⁷⁹⁸ Belarus and Italy will consider the creation of a joint subpark in "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-italija-rassmotrят-vopros-sozdanija-sovmestnogo-subparka-v-velikom-kamne-376060-2020/>

Velikiy Kamen Industrial Park: the goal is to introduce innovations

The science and innovation vector occupies an important place among the main areas of trustful comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China. Three priority components can be identified in this segment of bilateral interaction. "The first is in the field of scientific research, where the parties are involved in the implementation of major joint projects. The second is in the sphere of innovation activities, where a network of joint innovation centres and scientific laboratories is being formed and developed. The third is in the field of education, where joint training and mutual internships of specialists, teachers and students take place"⁷⁹⁹ . The development of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen is particularly innovation-oriented, which allows for the creation of competitive production facilities, sustainable engineering and transport infrastructure, and digital construction to turn the park into a "smart city". At the same time, the pace of innovative progress has noticeably accelerated in 2020. Here are just a few examples confirming this observation.

In May 2020, the foundation stone was laid in Velikiy Kamen at the site of the future construction of the scientific and technological cooperation and development zone or Fakel project by the Chinese Sinomach Corporation. It should be reminded that in June 2014, the Belarusian government signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with this corporation, on the basis of which large-scale investment projects are now being implemented in Belarus. As for the Fakel project, this zone will be "aimed at creating conditions for attracting Chinese and European technologies, introducing and testing them in the park and further exporting them to Europe and China"⁸⁰⁰ . Here it is planned to build office buildings and premises for scientific developments, where "it is planned to realise four research and development projects - in the field of optical technologies, mechanics, electronics and new materials. It is also envisaged to erect laboratories, office-type co-working spaces, integrated construction of

⁷⁹⁹ Zaleskii, B. On the terms of reciprocity. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2017. - C. 63.

⁸⁰⁰ On the development of the SINOMACH zone of scientific and technological cooperation and development in the park "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/cf39e9ad1f75824a.html>

educational facilities and high-tech pilot commercial facilities⁸⁰¹. This project will involve not only research institutes and enterprises of Sinomach Corporation, but also enterprises of the Chinese Zhongguancun Technopark and structures of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

The mentioning of the Zhongguancun Technopark in this context shows the very serious attitude of the Chinese side to the Torch project in Great Stone. The fact is that this technopark, founded in 1988 in the north-western part of Beijing, is considered the Chinese analogue of Silicon Valley, is the first in China, one of the largest in the capital and consists of 16 scientific zones. It was here that the first Chinese vacuum cylinder, the first computer, the first switchboard, etc., "appeared in due course. A total of 5,000-plus products were developed, which filled a void in the history of Chinese high-tech"⁸⁰². Now the research and development science bureaus of many multinational corporations are concentrated here. China has high hopes for this technology park in terms of "fulfilment of the ambitious Made in China 2025 strategy, which will make the country technologically independent and make it a leader in many fields. The Chinese authorities will spend about \$300 billion to implement the programme"⁸⁰³. Speaking about this technopark, one cannot but mention such a figure: from January to November 2019, it recorded an increase in revenues by almost 14 per cent. At the same time, "the revenues of leading high-tech enterprises in the technology park reached 5.43 trillion yuan (about \$779 billion) during this period"⁸⁰⁴.

Returning to innovative activities at Veliky Kamen, we note that in May 2020, another milestone event took place here, showing that one of the promising facets of the development of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park is digitalisation. An unmanned, electric-powered bus developed using technology from Singaporean scientists was tested here for the first time. "The maximum speed that the prototype can reach is 40 kilometres per hour. <...> The driving range is about 180 kilometres. A full charge will take no more than

⁸⁰¹ Sinomach "Torch" park will be built in "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-postrojat-park-sinomach-fakel-390613-2020/>

⁸⁰² Wei, W. China's Silicon Valley / W. Wei // Models, Systems, Networks in Economics, Technology, Nature and Society. - 2013. - C. 19.

⁸⁰³ Krasilnikova, Y. Beijing launches a programme to attract foreign IT-specialists / Y. Krasilnikova // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: https://hightech.fni/2018/02/28/beijing_lures_talant

⁸⁰⁴ Beijing's Zhongguancun Technopark recorded 13.8 per cent revenue growth in the first 11 months of 2019 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: http://russian.news.cn/2020-01/07/c_138685700.htm?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyandex.by%2Fnews

4 hours⁸⁰⁵. On the territory of Velikiy Kamen they plan to work out the technology of operation of the novelty, after which, apparently, in the not too distant future commercial operation of this unmanned transport will be possible.

In the same May 2020, the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park registered a new resident - Crownhomes Scientific and Technical Company for Wooden Structures LLC, which will create in Velikiy Kamen "a centre for the production of production lines for the woodworking industry based on the principles of Industry 4.0"⁸⁰⁶. This production centre, which is based on innovative technologies, is expected to be put into operation in 2022.

Moreover, in 2020, the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Great Stone, despite the alarming epidemic situation, continued to demonstrate quite high rates of development, remaining a landmark project of the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road" in Eastern Europe. Suffice it to say that "by the end of October, 66 enterprises from 14 countries were among its residents, and the volume of agreed investments was about \$1.2 billion"⁸⁰⁷. This fact also speaks volumes: in the first nine months of 2020, the revenue of the industrial park's residents increased almost three and a half times compared to the same period in 2019. "At the same time, the revenue from the sale of goods, products, works, services outside Belarus amounted to Br36.8 million (8.7 times growth)⁸⁰⁸. And the number of employees employed at Velikiy Kamen came close to one thousand - 970 people. And, to all appearances, the industrial park is not going to rest on its laurels, as evidenced by a number of facts from the second half of 2020, which show that this special economic zone is now actively searching for new ways of development in many areas, including optimisation of logistics and introduction of innovations.

Thus, in September 2020, CJSC Eurasian Railway Gateway, a company that "will implement an investment project to build a bimodal railway terminal

⁸⁰⁵ The first unmanned electric bus tested in "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervyj-bespilotnyj-elektrobus-protestirovali-v-velikom-kamne-390612-2020>

⁸⁰⁶ The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce woodworking products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamna-budet-vypuskat-produktsiju-dlia-derevoobrabotki-390684-2020>

⁸⁰⁷ Xiaoyun, S. China opposes external interference in the internal affairs of Belarus / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kitaj-vystupaet-protiv-vmeshatelstva-izvne-vo-vnutrennie-dela-belarusi-7572/>

⁸⁰⁸ Revenues of Velikiy Kamen residents in January-September increased 3.4 times to Br126.2 million [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vyrychka-rezidentov-velikogo-kamna-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyrosila-v-34-raza-do-br1262-mln-416031-2020/>

in the park," was registered as a resident of Veliky Kamen⁸⁰⁹ . The list of participants in this project, construction work on which will begin in 2021, is very solid. They include the world's largest inland port Duisburger Hafen from Germany, the leading intermodal transport network operator in Europe Hupak Intermodal SA from Switzerland, the Brest branch of the Belarusian Railway, and the resident of the park China Merchants China Commercial and Logistics Company. It is expected that the terminal reaching its design capacity will bring Veliky Kamen residents to a qualitatively new level of realisation of their logistical opportunities.

Speaking about the innovative perspective of the industrial park's development, it should be recalled that again in September 2020, the China-Belarus Innovation Centre for Industrial Technologies, established by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Guangdong Academy of Sciences, and the Foshan Research Institute of Industrial Technologies, became a new resident of Veliky Kamen. The creators of this centre see it as a platform for "the implementation of scientific and technological achievements between the two countries. The task of this platform is to develop scientific ideas and bring them to industrial realisation"⁸¹⁰ . It is expected that the research and development work started here today in such areas as new materials, modern industrial technologies, digitalisation in production, bio- and eco-technologies will develop into specific technologies and production in two to three years. In addition to serving as a link for scientific and technological cooperation between institutes of the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the centre will provide business consulting and other support services for selected incubated enterprises, including business plan consulting and training. Certain hopes for the successful development of this structure are also linked to the fact that "to ensure commercialisation of the results of the research and development work of the industrial technology centre, it is planned to establish a special fund of the Belt and Road Initiative in the amount of \$1.5 million"⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁹ The new resident of "Velikiy Kamen" will build a railway terminal [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-resident-velikogo-kamnja-postroit-zhd-terminal-407959-2020/>

⁸¹⁰ The Chinese-Belarusian innovation centre of industrial technologies appeared in "Veliky Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajsko-belorusskij-innovatsionnyj-tsentr-promyshlennyh-tehnologij-pojavilsja-v-velikom-kamne-408221-2020/>

⁸¹¹ Innovation Centre in "Veliky Kamen" is planned to be opened by the end of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/innovatsionnyj-tsentr-v-velikom-kamne-planirujut-otkryt-do-kontsa-goda-408059-2020/>

, the funds of which will be used to support the commercialisation of selected research projects and incubated enterprises.

Another innovation centre for the commercialisation of scientific and technological achievements was planned to be opened in Veliky Kamen by the end of 2020. It was in this vein that this issue was discussed in September 2020 at a meeting of the Belarusian part of the commission for scientific and technical cooperation of the Belarusian-Chinese intergovernmental cooperation committee, where the implementation of the programme of scientific and technical cooperation between Belarus and China for 2019-2020 was considered. The centre should become a comprehensive platform for nurturing startups.

Finally, in November 2020, another event took place that can seriously contribute to the introduction of innovations in this special economic zone. It is about the agreement signed by the National Centre for Intellectual Property and the administration of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Veliky Kamen on the establishment of a Technology and Innovation Support Centre on the territory of the park. This new structure is expected to "facilitate researchers' search for information on existing scientific achievements and activate the scientific work of young scientists and start-up organisations"⁸¹². In particular, this centre will provide free access to patent and non-patent databases of the World Intellectual Property Organisation for all employees of the park's residents. So the opportunities for innovations here are considerable.

It should be noted that Veliky Kamen today also tries to maximise the experience of other innovative structures operating in different parts of the world. This is evidenced by the fact that the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park joined the Innovation Alliance of Special Free Trade Zone Special Economic Zones, established in autumn 2020 in the Chinese city of Shenzhen. The initiative, whose participants also include 47 counties and regions of the Innovation Alliance of Free Trade Zones of the People's Republic of China, intends to "actively respond to global and regional plans such as the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Belt and Road Initiative, the EU Investment Plan, Africa's Agenda 2063"⁸¹³. In addition to the Great Stone, the new alliance includes quite a few other foreign participants, whose co-

⁸¹² Technology and Innovation Support Centre created in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tsentr-podderzhki-tehnologij-i-innovatsij-sozdali-v-velikom-kamne-415194-2020/>

⁸¹³ "Great Stone" entered the innovation alliance of special economic zones of free trade [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-voshel-v-innovatsionnyj-aljans-osobyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-svobodnoj-torgovli-405052-2020/>

operation may yield interesting results in the future, as each of them is an innovative platform with its own unique creative experience of activity. Among them are Lekki Free Trade Zone in Nigeria, Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone in Cambodia, Djibouti International Free Trade Zone in East Africa, Hambantota Industrial Park in Sri Lanka, Eastern Industrial Park in Ethiopia, Thailand-China Industrial Park in Rayong, Suez Canal Economic Zone. Let's get to know them better.

For example, the **Lekki Free Trade Zone**, located in the Nigerian state of Lagos, is one of the most promising in this African country. Its project is a universal complex "divided into separate sectors for the oil and gas industry, industrial production, financial and commercial sphere, tourism, health improvement and private housing"⁸¹⁴. The FTZ accounts for five kilometres of coastline. Apapa Port, the largest in West Africa, is fifty kilometres away and Murtala Mohammad International Airport is 70 kilometres away.

The **Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone** is an overseas economic and trade cooperation area in Cambodia, which was established by Chinese companies together with the Cambodia International Investment and Development Group to promote favourable market conditions, where a large industrial centre was built in 2010 in addition to a port. By early 2019, 153 enterprises from China, Europe, America, Southeast Asia and other countries and regions were "registered here. Among them are 139 industrial enterprises, mainly engaged in industries such as textiles and garments, suitcases, bags and other leather goods, machinery and mechanisms, electronics, woodworking"⁸¹⁵. In five years, more than 22,000 jobs have been created here.

As for the **Djibouti International Free Trade Zone** in East Africa, it was inaugurated in July 2018 with the active participation of China State Construction. It is expected to "become the largest free trade zone in Africa and <...> a new engine for Djibouti's economic development, helping Djibouti build a financial, shipping and trade centre in North East Africa" once all construction phases are completed⁸¹⁶. The creators of this FTZ see it as a

⁸¹⁴ Rendeavour expands the Lekki Free Trade Zone development project [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.prnewswire.com/ru/press-releases/ru-584836431.html>

⁸¹⁵ Yifeng, H. A new industrial district is being built in Sihanoukville province / H. Yifeng, S. Mengkhou // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/beltandroad/khm/ruindex.shtml>

⁸¹⁶ Heads of State of five countries participated in the opening ceremony of the International Free Trade Area in Djibouti [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: https://ru.cscec.com/xwzx_ru/gsxw_ru/201810/2891561.html

testing ground for the so-called "Silk Road Station" to replicate China's successful experience in developing global enterprises here.

Creating a transit maritime hub for the entire South Asian region is the goal of a **Sino-Lankan** project to **revamp the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka**, which sits very close to the main international shipping routes. "In the past, there were hardly any ships entering this small fishing town. But that all changed after the launch of a joint Sino-Lankan project to revive the maritime harbour."⁸¹⁷ . Thousands of new jobs have already been created here as part of China's "port-industrial park-city" model, the essence of which is that once the port is developed, an industrial park will be created to help develop the city. This, in turn, will make the Hambantota port one of the key elements of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road.

Ethiopia's Eastern Industrial Park is another "Chinese overseas trade and economic co-operation zone of national level, it already hosts more than 80 enterprises, most of them Chinese"⁸¹⁸ , engaged in pharmaceutical, textile, metallurgical and a number of other industries. It should be noted that this is not the only project implemented by the Chinese side in this African country. "Based on the experience of China's economic growth, 15 industrial parks will be built in Ethiopia in the coming years using Chinese technologies"⁸¹⁹ , which, according to Adis Ababa, will allow this East African country to join the group of middle-income countries in the next ten years.

The Thailand-China Industrial Park in Rayong Province was built back in 2005. This cluster became the only one in Thailand certified by the Chinese government as an overseas trade and economic co-operation area. By 2017, more than 90 enterprises were already operating here, which "brought more than \$2.5 billion worth of investment to Thailand, solved the employment problem for more than 20,000 local residents, and became an industrial centre and export base for priority traditional Chinese industries in Thailand"⁸²⁰ . An interesting detail: based on the experience of the industrial park in Thailand's

⁸¹⁷ A Sino-Lankan cooperation project is being implemented at the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://newsru.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414e6646444d77597a6333566d54/p.html>

⁸¹⁸ Ethiopia-China cooperation is a classic model of China's co-operation with Africa - Ethiopian President [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://russian.news.cn/2018-08/14/c_137387915.htm

⁸¹⁹ Stronger the belt of co-operation, shorter the way out of the "backwardness trap" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://finance.rambler.ru/markets/43964485-zhenmin-zhibao-kitay-obedinennye-obschey-tselyu-chast-2/>

⁸²⁰ Corporation "Huaili": let's create "industrial Chinese quarter" on "One Belt, One Road" [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://russian.china.org.cn/exclusive/txt/2017-04/13/content_40612178.htm

Rayong province, China's Huali Corporation opened the Beimei Huafushan industrial cluster in Mexico in October 2015 to help other Chinese companies enter and develop the US market.

The Suez Canal Economic Zone in Egypt was established in 2015, when a new 72 kilometre-long channel of the canal was put into operation to attract foreign investment here for the implementation of an international industrial and logistics hub project. It is expected that "with the development of the Suez Canal, the manufacturing and service industries housed there will form up to a third of the country's total economy"⁸²¹. In spring 2019, there were already 77 residents operating in the Sino-Egyptian part of this seven square kilometre zone. In May 2018, an agreement was signed to establish a Russian industrial zone in this region. In February 2020, the Belarusian side also announced its intention to participate in the creation of the Suez Canal Special Economic Zone.

Undoubtedly, the innovative experience in the development of all these special special free trade zones will be very useful to the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen, which, in turn, has something to share with its partners in the new alliance.

⁸²¹ The President of Egypt issued a decree on the establishment of the Suez Canal Special Economic Zone [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/2181686>

Belarus-China: Industrial Park Development and Regional Co-operation

Directive No. 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China", adopted in December 2021, lists building up trade and economic, financial, and investment interaction and expanding interregional ties among the priority tasks until 2025. Within the framework of the declared course to raise the status of Belarusian-Chinese relations to the level of iron brotherhood, exemplary all-round strategic cooperation and all-weather partnership, an important component is the activity of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone", one of the main tasks of which is to ensure the efficient operation of its residents, attract new ones, actively develop innovative activities, startups, cluster cooperation, as well as attract Belarusian enterprises to participate in the industrial park "Great Stone". At the same time, a specific goal is outlined: "To ensure that by 2025 the number of park residents is not less than 170 companies..." .⁸²²

It should be noted that a number of specific measures to fulfil this task were taken in Veliky Kamen back in 2021. In particular, over the three quarters of this year, residents of the industrial park increased investment in fixed assets by more than a third. At the same time, "the volume of industrial production increased more than 2.5 times to Br222.6 million. <...> Exports of residents' products and services increased by more than 16% and are exported to 20 countries of the world"⁸²³ . An important detail: if "at the end of 2020, 68 companies from 14 countries were registered [in the park]"⁸²⁴ , then by mid-November 2021, 81 companies from 15 countries were already registered as residents. The work on the expansion of Veliky Kamen continues unabated.

Thus, in October, the Belarusian-Latvian SMD Bai LLC was registered here, which "plans to create a high-tech production of electronic products

⁸²² Directive of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China". - Minsk, 2021. - C. 6.

⁸²³ In "Velikiy Kamen" for 9 months by more than a third increased investment in fixed capital [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-za-9-mesjatsev-bolee-chem-na-tret-uvelichilis-investitsii-v-osnovnoj-kapital-470611-2021/>

⁸²⁴ Zaleskii, B. With the aim of sustainable development. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 13.

(boards) of small and medium series⁸²⁵, widely used in telecommunications, medicine, automotive industry, instrumentation, to supply them to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. In November, the list of residents of the industrial park was supplemented by several more business entities. One of them is Rufais LLC. The investment project of the new resident is related to the production and application of the latest polymer materials in construction. The innovative approach here is that "the composite material is the company's own development and differs from its analogues by higher operational properties. It has a wide sphere of application, including the production of roofing and other elements of buildings and structures"⁸²⁶, which gives good reason to hope for the realisation of this product not only in the domestic market, but also in Russia and the countries of the European Union.

Among the new residents is the Belarusian InKata LLC, which was previously registered in Veliky Kamen as an investor to build facilities here to support subjects of innovative activities of the industrial park. "The project will provide design, prototyping, and technical documentation development services, as well as workplaces and equipment"⁸²⁷. Another November resident of Veliky Kamen is the China-Belarus Centre for Innovative Bioengineering Technologies LLC, which intends to cooperate closely with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. "The company will produce reagents for diagnostics of coronavirus and some other diseases, as well as for food safety diagnostics"⁸²⁸, which are supposed to be exported to the countries of the Eurasian Economic and European Unions, as well as to China.

In the first half of December, the industrial park registered a new subject of innovation activity - Needle Med LLC, which is going to implement in Veliky Kamen a project to create an ideal simulator for practicing practical manual skills by workers of various specialities - surgeons, tattoo masters, medical students. Interestingly, this project was created in 2019 by a group of students. "Its idea is to create a simulator, as close as possible to real human

⁸²⁵ The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce electronic boards [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyi-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-elektronnye-platy-465743-2021/>

⁸²⁶ The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce composite materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyi-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-kompozitnye-materiyaly-469205-2021/>

⁸²⁷ LLC "InKata" became a resident of "Velikiy Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ooo-inkata-stalo-rezidentom-velikogo-kamnja-471320-2021/>

⁸²⁸ The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce reagents for diagnostics and diagnostics of diseases [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyi-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-reagenty-dlya-diagnostiki-zabolevanij-471849-2021/>

tissues, to prepare specialists for practical activities⁸²⁹ . Thanks to the opportunities that the industrial park provides to innovators, the development of young specialists, it must be assumed, will find a wide application in real life. In the second half of December, Veliky Kamen registered another resident - Tianyu Changyin UAV Science and Technology Company (MSC) LLC, the founder of which is one of China's leading enterprises in the development and production of intelligent unmanned systems - Beijing Tianyu Changyin UAV Science and Technology Company. The purpose of this investment project in the industrial park is to "establish a high-tech production facility for universal logistics systems of unmanned aerial vehicles and equipment for them"⁸³⁰ .

Speaking about the development of cluster co-operation in Veliky Kamen, it should be recalled that back in June 2021, the Republic of Belarus adopted a decree that improves the legal regulation aimed at improving the investment climate in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Veliky Kamen. In particular, this document provides for: 1) making the park administration more independent by transferring additional powers from local authorities in terms of administrative procedures; 2) expanding the types of activities of the industrial park; 3) supporting start-ups; 4) creating preferential conditions for large investment projects with investments of more than \$50 million.

Among the new areas of Veliky Kamen's activities are, first of all, the creation and development of production facilities in the fields of biopharmaceuticals, medical products and medical services. A very attractive innovation in this regard is the special conditions for the development of medical activities on the territory of the park, where it will be possible to provide medical services using medicines, medical equipment and products, treatment methods from foreign countries without mandatory registration in Belarus and without the need to obtain a licence for medical services. The terms and procedures for registration and re-registration of medicines and medical devices, as well as clinical trials will be significantly reduced and simplified for manufacturers. In other words, all these changes "open wide opportunities for the development of a medical and pharmaceutical cluster in the park, and primarily in the field of traditional Chinese medicine"⁸³¹ .

⁸²⁹ The new company "Great Stone" will create simulators for practising manual skills in surgery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/novaja-kompanija-velikogo-kamnja-budet-sozdavat-trenazhery-dlya-otrabotki-manualnyh-navykov-v-hirurgii-474239-2021/>

⁸³⁰ The new resident of "Great Stone" will start to produce unmanned aerial vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-proizvodit-bespilotnye-letatelnyye-apparaty-476043-2021/>

⁸³¹ Koroteev, K. Support for startups, preferences for investors, simplification of land relations - about the innovations of the decree on the development of the park "Great Stone" / K. Koroteev //

Focusing on the development of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in the field of medicine in the context of the fight against the coronavirus epidemic is very timely. After all, Chinese traditional medicine "has unique advantages in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases. <...> It not only has a good curative effect on mild COVID-19, but also has obvious advantages in treating critically ill patients, which has reduced the lethality rate of severe cases from 21% to 5%"⁸³². Using the Great Stone platform to realise the existing potential of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in the field of public health could have a serious positive result in terms of preventing new "waves" of the coronavirus epidemic.

Recall that the Velikiy Kamen industrial park has 12 residents operating within the medical direction. "These are companies from Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Russia, and the USA"⁸³³. An important component of the medical cluster being created here will be Novoera Biotech, which became a resident of the industrial park in March 2021. Among its founders are Jingtai Institute of Culture and Economics, Xishanqingxue Chinese Medicine Clinic LLC (Beijing) and Xishanqingxue Pharmaceutical Technology Company LLC (Beijing). The new resident will undertake a project related to Chinese traditional medicine. "Medicines, supplements that are planned to be produced are based on environmentally friendly natural material. They will be in demand not only to help in the treatment of coronavirus, but also in the treatment of colds, flu, asthma"⁸³⁴. In particular, the production of Linlan Yiqing, a drug aimed at effectively treating coronavirus infection, will be organised. It was assumed that at the first stage the produced medicines, the production of which was planned to start in 2021, would be exported to Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and India.

In March 2021, plans were also announced to establish a Eurasian Centre of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Veliky Kamen, which will provide medical services to residents of the industrial park, its Chinese and foreign employees,

[Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/podderzhka-startapov-preferentsii-investoram-uproschenie-zemelnyh-otnoshenij-koroteev-o-novatsijah-ukaza-po-7805/>

⁸³² Xiaoyun, S. Belarus and China: the growth of business cooperation and interaction in the release of drugs in the treatment of coronavirus / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/belarus-i-kitaj-rost-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-i-vzaimodejstvie-v-vypuske-lekarstv-pri-lechenii-koronavirusa-7873/>

⁸³³ The Centre for Expertise and Testing in Healthcare and the Great Stone Park agreed on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsentr-ekspertiz-i-ispytanij-v-zdravoohranenii-i-park-velikij-kamen-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-441421-2021/>

⁸³⁴ The new resident of "Great Stone" starts the project in the sphere of Chinese medicine [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyi-rezident-velikogo-kamnya-nachinaet-proekt-v-sfere-kitajskoj-meditsiny-433283-2021/>

as well as interact with research institutions, healthcare institutions of Belarus and neighbouring countries to share experience in the field of traditional Chinese medicine. In May 2021, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by the Industrial Park Development Company and the Centre for Expertise and Testing in Healthcare RUE. In July, an agreement was signed in Veliky Kamen to establish a Sino-Belarusian zone of in-depth cooperation and an international park of traditional Chinese medicine and healthcare, which imply a new model of cooperation between Belarus and China in the above-mentioned area.

All these facts testify to the active steps to deploy in the industrial park "an extensive cluster, which will bring together developments in the field of Chinese medicine. <...> A medical centre for diagnostic services is expected to appear in the future. This direction is already in the works"⁸³⁵. In addition, the development of medical tourism is also envisaged here, for which a kind of medical village will be built near the Volmyanskoye reservoir - clinics and various medical institutions in the field of rehabilitation. It should also be reminded that in the complex of measures for the development of the national innovation system in Belarus for 2021-2025 the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Veliky Kamen" is defined "as a platform for the organisation of innovative productions"⁸³⁶. Judging by the above facts, this site is developing quite successfully, confidently and dynamically in the current five-year period.

Turning to the task of expanding interregional ties, which is one of the priorities in the development of Belarusian-Chinese relations, one can note the successful experience of such Belarusian regions as Minsk and Homiel Oblast in addressing this task. Speaking about the Belarusian capital, it is enough to say that "in January - May of this [2021] year, Minsk's trade turnover with the PRC totalled \$730.6 million, while last year for the same period it was \$613.8 million"⁸³⁷. The main exporters were RUE Bellesexport, Best Meat Company LLC, Meat and Dairy Company CJSC, Mobiora CJSC, Integral OJSC. The basis of Minsk supplies to the Celestial Empire were timber, meat and food by-products of poultry, milk and condensed cream, rapeseed oil, electronic

⁸³⁵ Kryzhevich, I. Two new residents of "Great Stone" will be engaged in the development of artificial intelligence and the development of equipment for data processing and storage / I. Kryzhevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/zvanny-biznes.html>

⁸³⁶ Measures for the development of the national innovation system up to 2025 are defined [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/opredeleny-meropriyatija-po-razvitiyu-natsionalnoj-innovatsionnoj-sistemy-do-2025-goda-475735-2021>

⁸³⁷ Kukharev and the Ambassador of China discussed cooperation between Minsk and the cities of the People's Republic of China [Electronic resource] - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kuharev-i-posol-kitaja-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-minska-s-gorodami-knr-453612-2021/>

integrated circuits and microassemblies, tanned or dressed fur pelts, measuring or control devices, collections and collectibles on zoology, equipment for measuring or controlling electrical values, ready-made carriers for sound recording. In terms of consolidating this trend in the future, it is important to intensify the Belarusian capital's ties with Chinese sister cities, of which Minsk has four - Changchun (1992), Shenzhen (2014), Beijing (2016), and Shanghai (2019).

Changchun, the administrative centre of Jilin Province, located in the north-east of China, where science, automotive and optical instrumentation industries are developed and about eight million people live, occupies a special place in this list of sister cities. May 2022 will mark 30 years since the signing of the Agreement on the establishment of twinning ties between Changchun and the Belarusian capital. In 2010, a Belarusian-Chinese technopark was opened in the high-tech manufacturing zone of this Chinese city to become a platform for working on joint projects and further promotion of products not only in China but also in neighbouring countries. It was based on about 15 enterprises that were part of the zone and had long-standing sustainable ties with Belarusian scientific and innovation enterprises. At that time, among the joint projects planned in the technopark were "the establishment of an enterprise for the production of medical laser equipment, an agreement on the creation of a joint venture for the production of high-precision electric motor. At the first stage, about 30 hectares of land for construction of office and production premises have been allocated for the project, and another 30 hectares may be allocated in the future"⁸³⁸. More specifically, the technopark is divided into six functional zones: a research and development centre, a project incubator, a museum, as well as three complexes - international cooperation, regional cooperation and service. In addition, it is planned to create an art gallery, bookshop, exhibition and concert halls on its territory. But the main thing is that here "the developments are based, among other things, on a fund of 80 Belarusian projects"⁸³⁹.

Today, "a complex of technopark buildings has already been built there, and one of the pressing issues at present is to fill it with joint high-tech

⁸³⁸ Palezhai, T. Belarusian-Chinese technopark opened in the city of Changchun / T. Palezhai // [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/belorussko-kitajskij-tehnopark-otkrylsja-v-gorode-changchun-134192-2010>

⁸³⁹ Chinese-Belarusian technopark is being built in Changchun [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://primgazeta.ru/news/v-chanchune-stroyat-kitajsko-belorusskij-tehnopark-08-07-2019-05-00-12>

projects"⁸⁴⁰ . And it has already accepted its first three residents: Sino-Belarusian Centre for Research and Development of Precision Medical Equipment of BNTU Technopark "Polytechnik" and Belarusian-Chinese Technopark in Changchun; Belarusian-Chinese Centre for Joint Development and Application of Carbon-Carbon Composite Materials between SvetlogorskKhimvolokno OJSC and Jilin Lenke Company; Belarusian-Chinese centre for the development of functional berry crops between the Central Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences, Polesskie Zhuraviny Ltd. and the Northeast Institute of Geography and Ecology of Agriculture of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. To support this growing dynamics of bilateral interaction, the Belarusian and Chinese sides set the task to "focus on improving conditions for mutually beneficial co-operation, expanding and deepening contacts, including among young people"⁸⁴¹ . And today, the main thematic areas of the Technopark already include "photo-electronics, laser technology, new materials, construction and energy, agricultural technology and biotechnology, informatics"⁸⁴² .

The Belarusian-Chinese technology park in Changchun is not the only area of cooperation between Minsk and this sister city. Back in June 2014, the parties agreed to develop business co-operation, for which they planned to hold business forums. "During such events, businessmen will have an opportunity to agree on the implementation of specific projects. In addition, the forums will contribute to further strengthening the economic basis of our co-operation"⁸⁴³ . In June 2017, in order to expand twinning ties, the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Changchun People's Government adopted an agreement to establish cooperation in the field of tourism and the development of cultural ties. And within the framework of the bilateral business forum held in the Chinese city at the same time, "memoranda of cooperation with Chinese partners were signed by SOAO Kommunarka, KUP MinskKhlebprom, KUP

⁸⁴⁰ Technopark in Changchun will make a significant contribution to the development of relations between Belarus and China - Shumilin [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tehnopark-v-changchune-vneset-suschestvennyj-vklad-v-razvitiye-otnoshenij-belorussii-i-kitaja-shumilin-405335-2020/>

⁸⁴¹ About 300 applications are submitted to the Chinese-Belarusian youth competition of innovative projects [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-300-zajavok-podano-na-kitajsko-belorusskij-molodezhnyj-konkurs-innovatsionnyh-proektov-442132-2021/>

⁸⁴² Belarusian-Chinese Science and Technology Park in Changchun [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://changchun.park.bntu.by/about-technology-park/>

⁸⁴³ Minsk and Chinese Changchun plan to develop business co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-kitajskij-changchun-planirujut-razvivat-biznes-sotrudnichestvo-47498-2014/>

Small Wholesale Base on Western, OJSC Belryba, OJSC Minotel"⁸⁴⁴ . So the opportunities for expanding co-operation between the two twin cities are undoubtedly very extensive. It is only necessary to use them without wasting time and with mutual benefit.

As for Homiel Region, it has already signed documents on bilateral cooperation with four Chinese regions - the autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia (2011) and Xinjiang Uygur (2016), Sichuan (2015) and Jiangsu (2016). Naming Sichuan Province in this list, we note that in April 2021, the two sides raised the level of their friendly relations by signing "an agreement on the establishment of twinning ties, which provides for the expansion of co-operation in the economic, social and cultural spheres"⁸⁴⁵ .

Such a variety of partnership and twinning ties could not but affect the interaction between Homiel Region and China in general. Suffice it to say that over the past three years, supplies from this Belarusian region to the Chinese market have grown 20(!) times. And "the export of Gomel enterprises to China in January-November last year [2021] exceeded \$100 million. The main export positions to China are wood pulp, timber, wool, meat, dairy and confectionery products"⁸⁴⁶ . And this level in the region is not considered the limit, as they see serious potential in increasing supplies to this East Asian country of beef, meat and edible by-products of poultry, whole-milk products, milk, condensed and dried cream, whey powder. For this purpose 16 enterprises of the region have already been accredited in the Celestial Empire: 6 meat processing, 7 milk processing, 2 distilleries and one confectionery. And three enterprises with Chinese capital have already been registered in the Belarusian region itself - one producing electricity by hydroelectric power plants, one producing concrete and one engaged in restaurant activities.

An important detail: Homiel will continue to actively expand ties with Chinese regions in 2022. Thus, in January, they held a round table on multifunctional cooperation with Hebei Province, whose business entities have been interacting with Homiel partners in terms of production cooperation for quite a long time. In particular, in September 2015, Chongqing Agricultural

⁸⁴⁴ Minsk and Chinese Changchun signed an agreement on cooperation in tourism and culture [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-kitajskij-changchun-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-turizma-i-kultury-250871-2017/>

⁸⁴⁵ Zalesky, B.L. Gomel region: Chinese vector of partnership / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVIII Mezinardni vedecko-prakticka konference "Efektivni nastroje modernich ved - 2021". Volume 5: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 16.

⁸⁴⁶ Gomel region has increased exports to China 20 times in three years [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblazt-za-tri-goda-uvelichila-eksport-v-kitaj-v-20-raz-481090-2022/>

Machinery Enterprise Zongshen - Homel LLC was established in Hebei Province to assemble cob harvesters, forage harvesters and grain harvesters. The investor on the Belarusian side was Gomselmash OJSC and the investor on the Chinese side was Zongshen Industrial Corporation Ltd. This co-operation project enabled the Belarusian manufacturer to strengthen and expand its presence in the Chinese market. "In 2016, the amount of machine parts supplied to China totalled about USD 2.6 million," the company said. In 2016, the amount of machine parts supplied to the PRC was about USD 2.6 million, in 2017. - USD 10 million. In 2017, the amount of machine kits supplied to the PRC was about USD 2.6 million, in 2018. - USD 7 million. USD"⁸⁴⁷.

As a follow-up to this project, in March 2017, the construction of a new plant for the production of combines for harvesting maize, grain and rapeseed was launched in Weixian County of Handan City District of the same Hebei Province by the Belarusian-Chinese joint venture Chongqing Zongshen-Homel Agricultural Machinery Enterprise. And at the same time "the first contracts were signed with agricultural companies of Hebei and Heilongjiang provinces for the purchase of Belarusian-Chinese-made combines"⁸⁴⁸. And in June 2019, a new contract was signed to supply another batch of forage harvester kits to China for more than \$1.5 million. And by mid-2019, "the company produced 500 harvesters"⁸⁴⁹.

A logical continuation of these partnerships was the adoption in October 2019 by the cities of Gomel and Handan of a memorandum of intent on the establishment of twinning ties to promote the development of mutually beneficial cooperation. In particular, the topic of increasing exports of food products, the same beef, was very relevant for the Gomel side in this context. It was also mentioned that "the parties should develop industrial co-operation on a partnership basis, in particular between Gomselmash and Hebei

⁸⁴⁷ Interregional ties between Belarus and China: state, problems and prospects of development / T.S. Vertinskaya [et al.]. - Minsk: Belaruskaya nauvuka, 2020. - C. 221-222.

⁸⁴⁸ Grishkevich, A. A new Belarusian-Chinese plant for the production of combines started to build in the province of Hebei / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-belorussko-kitajskij-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-kombajnov-nachali-stroit-v-provintsi-hebei-237889-2017>

⁸⁴⁹ Gomselmash will supply to China machine sets of forage harvesters for the amount of more than \$1.5 million. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://export.by/news/gomselmash-postavit-v-kitay-mashinokomplekti-kormouborochnih-kombaynov-na-summu-bolee-15-mln-doll>

agricultural machinery enterprise Zongshen-Gomel. There are prospects for the implementation of joint ideas in tourism, culture and education"⁸⁵⁰.

In this regard, it should be said that the twinning ties between the cities of Gomel region and Chinese partners very organically complement the whole complex of interregional interaction between this Belarusian region and China. At the beginning of 2022, seven bilateral documents were concluded between the administrative-territorial units of Gomel region and China. The eighth was the agreement on the establishment of twinning relations between Svetlogorsk district and the city of Baoding, located in Hebei province and having more than ten million inhabitants, signed in January 2022. This document "envisages the development of mutually beneficial co-operation in various spheres - economic, trade and humanitarian"⁸⁵¹. The parties certainly have the necessary potential for the development of effective co-operation. And let's hope that the next step in the development of the Chinese vector of foreign economic relations of Gomel region will be the establishment of twinning ties with the whole province of Hebei.

⁸⁵⁰ Gomel and Chinese Handan intend to develop twinning ties [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-i-kitajskij-handan-namereny-razvivat-pobratimskie-svjazi-366580-2019/>

⁸⁵¹ Svetlogorskiy district and Chinese Baoding signed an agreement on twinning relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/svetlogorskij-rajon-i-kitajskij-baodin-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskikh-otnoshenijah-481071-2022/>

Belarus-Africa: both export expansion and search for new markets

In May 2022, the third Belarusian-African Economic Forum is to be held in Cairo, where the prospects of implementing joint projects in agriculture, engineering, education, and other areas with a number of African countries will be considered. This fact once again testifies to the fact that "intensification of interaction with African countries is one of the important components of the modern Belarusian foreign policy"⁸⁵². It should be recalled that by the beginning of 2022, the Republic of Belarus had established diplomatic relations with 51 countries of the African continent, four of which - Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa - successfully operate Belarusian diplomatic missions. "The key area of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and African states in the trade and economic sphere is the expansion of exports of products and services. Systematic work is underway to develop new markets on the African continent"⁸⁵³. An important component of this work is the organisation and holding of Belarusian-African economic and business forums.

Thus, the business forum "Africa - Belarus: Current Situation and New Guidelines for Joint Business Projects", attended by representatives of 17 embassies of African countries, including Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Morocco, Namibia, Sudan, South Sudan, South Africa, Zambia, and Zambia, as well as more than two hundred Belarusian enterprises, was held in December 2020 in the format of a videoconference. The relevance of this event for the Belarusian side was explained by the fact that official Minsk pays great attention to the development of ties with the countries of this continent, as "Africa is a treasure trove of natural resources, an important source of global labour resources, and a huge untapped market"⁸⁵⁴. In this regard, it is important not only to increase mutual trade with the continent's countries, but also to diversify Belarusian exports, deepen economic and industrial cooperation, and actively use the project approach, the essence of which is the implementation of projects to establish joint ventures and enterprises in Africa, promote

⁸⁵² Zalessky, B. Vectors of the far arc. Opportunities for sectoral co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing: Saarbrucken, Deutschland / Germany, 2018. - C. 17.

⁸⁵³ Belarus and the countries of Africa and the Middle East [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/countries_regions/africa_middle_east/

⁸⁵⁴ Africa is becoming a promising and long-term partner of Belarus - Ulakhovich [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/afrika-stanovitsja-perspektivnym-i-dolgosrochnym-partnerom-belarusi-ulahovich-413176-2020/>

industrial and food products, as well as scientific, technical and production developments in the industrial, agricultural, energy and transnational sectors.

Developing this thesis, the participants of the December Africa-Belarus Business Forum noted that "there are three main areas of co-operation with African countries for Belarus from the point of view of business"⁸⁵⁵. Firstly, everything related to mechanical engineering and the development of the relevant infrastructure. Secondly, everything related to food production, agrarian technologies, agricultural machinery. Thirdly, everything that includes the concept of "service sector", and especially education, medicine, IT-technologies. Of course, the Belarusian side has already accumulated a certain experience of cooperation in each of these areas, which can be used to further realise the huge potential for the development of foreign economic relations.

A good example in this regard is the Minsk Tractor Plant, which in the first ten months of 2020 almost three and a half times increased its exports to African countries, opening two new markets - Zimbabwe and Burundi. But the address of the main deliveries of Belarusian tractors to the "black continent" is Sudan, where 153 machines were shipped in 2019 and 510 in January-October 2020. This is the result of the co-operation between MTZ and the Sudanese company MIG Agricultural Co. Ltd, which started back in 2003, thanks to which more than two and a half thousand BELARUS tractors are already working in Sudanese fields.

In addition, Minsk Tractor Plant in Africa has also created a certain plan for the future in the form of a roadmap for cooperation with the Ministry of Military Industry of Egypt signed back in February 2020, which envisages the organisation of assembly production of tractors and engines on the basis of the plant of Helwan Diesel Engines Co. with localisation of up to 40 per cent in the next three years. It is important that the Egyptian partners have already "received a standard project for the organisation of assembly production for 500 units of machinery, as well as a list of necessary equipment and tooling. In addition, MTW will prepare and hand over a standard project of assembly production designed for the production of 10 thousand machines per year"⁸⁵⁶.

⁸⁵⁵ Belarus offers African countries to co-operate in the sphere of services, agro-industrial complex and machine-building [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlagayet-afrikanskim-stranam-sotrudnichat-v-sfere-uslug-apk-i-mashinostroenii-419342-2020>

⁸⁵⁶ MTZ tripled exports to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-vtroe-uvelichil-eksport-v-afriku-416304-2020/>

In the first eight months of 2020, OJSC BMZ, the managing company of BMK Holding, increased its deliveries to Africa by almost 20 per cent, shipping more than \$11 million worth of valves to Africa. This allowed to increase the share of African countries in the total exports of the company to 12 per cent. Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin and Ghana are among the main importers of Belarusian metallurgists' products. Interestingly, "shipments to the last listed country [Ghana] in the current [2020] year increased threefold in physical terms"⁸⁵⁷.

Another African country where the Belarusian presence is growing quite rapidly is Zimbabwe, whose government reached an agreement with Belarus a few years ago to supply agricultural machinery worth \$58 million. And "100 tractors, 20 combine harvesters, 52 seeders, five tractors and five semi-trailers made in Belarus have already been delivered to Zimbabwe. By the end of this [2020] year, another 370 tractors, 20 combine harvesters and 138 seeders will arrive by sea"⁸⁵⁸. The fact is that the agricultural sector is a key segment of the economy of this country, along with the mining industry. And mechanisation is seen here as the main way of development of national agriculture. For this reason, in September 2020, Zimbabwe announced at the state level the launch of a joint government programme with Belarus to mechanise the country's agricultural sector. In this regard, a Belarusian trade and service centre was opened in the capital, Harare, where "machinery will be provided to Zimbabwean farmers as part of the government's programme to mechanise the country's agriculture"⁸⁵⁹. Also, Efforts to build ties between Belarus and Namibia will soon be significantly intensified. In November 2020, the two countries declared their intention to pay special attention to "the development of a legal framework and the establishment of a joint intergovernmental committee on trade and economic cooperation."⁸⁶⁰.

The Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum, attended by representatives of government agencies, business and financial circles from 14

⁸⁵⁷ BMZ increased sales of rebar to Africa by almost 20% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-uvvelichil-prodazhi-armatury-v-afriku-pochti-na-20-407746-2020/>

⁸⁵⁸ Zimbabwe launched a joint programme with Belarus to provide farms with agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-zimbabwe-zapuschena-sovmestnaja-s-belarusju-programma-obespechenija-ferm-selzhoztekhnikoj-408853-2020/>

⁸⁵⁹ "Gomselmash" strengthens its position in the market of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-ukrepljaet-pozitsii-na-rynke-zimbabwe-408968-2020>

⁸⁶⁰ Belarus and Namibia plan to set up a committee for trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-namibija-planirujut-sozdat-komitet-po-torgovo-ekonomicheskemu-sotrudnichestvu-417026-2020/>

African states - Angola, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Eritrea - was held in Minsk at the junction of spring and summer 2021. On the Belarusian side, the event was attended by over 175 companies and industrial enterprises interested in establishing contacts with African partners and implementing joint mutually beneficial projects. Minsk described the forum as an important dialogue platform aimed at further strengthening and developing bilateral and multilateral relations between Belarus and African countries, expanding trade, economic and cooperation ties, and increasing mutual trade turnover. Suffice it to say that "in the three years after the first Belarus-Africa Forum, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and African states totalled over USD 1.8 billion. Belarus and its African partners have gone from an annual trade turnover of \$158 million in the early 2000s to \$553 million in 2020"⁸⁶¹. This dynamics largely explains why this continent is considered to be one of the important elements of Belarus's multi-vector foreign policy, where Belarus has considerable opportunities for joint and mutually beneficial movement towards the creation of new strongholds and strengthening cooperation in a wide range of areas.

It is a fact that Belarus has long been exporting to many African countries. Moreover, "practically half of the states of the southern continent know Belarusian products: from food to machine building"⁸⁶². For example, Egypt has an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors and trucks, while Sudan and Algeria are already actively working on similar projects. Potash fertilisers and tyres are exported to South Africa. "Major projects are being implemented and contracts for the supply of Belarusian machinery and equipment to Zimbabwe and Angola are being worked out"⁸⁶³.

However, the very fact that the second Belarus-Africa Economic Forum was held testified to the fact that the achieved indicators of co-operation with African partners can and should be much higher. The existing level of co-operation is just a starting point for the introduction of new forms and methods of trade and economic interaction and diversification of mutual trade. In fact,

⁸⁶¹ About the Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html

⁸⁶² Experts link the development of the world economy with Africa. How can Belarus take advantage of this? [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksperty-svjazyvajut-razvitiye-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikoj-kak-etim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/>

⁸⁶³ Grishkevich, A. Belarusian dump trucks and agricultural machinery have taken strong positions in the markets of many African countries / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-samosvaly-i-selzhoztechnika-zanjali-prochnye-poziitsii-na-rynkah-mnogih-afrikanskih-stran-443820-2021/>

for this reason, at this economic forum, Belarus offered African countries to use a comprehensive systematic approach in the development of partnerships, from assessing local agricultural conditions to supplying a full range of machinery and equipment. The implementation of such an approach could significantly increase supplies to Africa of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components under various forms of industrial cooperation with the possible use of various instruments of financing Belarusian exports"⁸⁶⁴, as well as accelerate the creation of joint production facilities using Belarusian technologies and the construction of turnkey industrial and agricultural facilities.

It should be noted that Belarusian proposals at the economic forum were met with considerable interest by the African participants. Thus, the Egyptian side, represented by about 35 companies in Minsk, expressing its interest in industrial cooperation with partners from Belarus, suggested promoting trilateral cooperation under which Belarusian tractors assembled in Egypt could be supplied to other countries of the continent using the opportunities of free trade zones available there, which would remove a number of tariff barriers. Among other vectors of co-operation, according to Egyptian business, several others look promising today. "The first is a coronavirus vaccine produced by Belarus, and the second is an electric bus produced by Belarus"⁸⁶⁵.

As for other African countries, for example, Uganda, which is rich in mineral resources and where oil and gas are extracted, "intends to seriously engage in residential infrastructure and construction of hotels to develop tourism. Belarusian partners could help the country"⁸⁶⁶. Among other promising areas of mutual Belarusian-Ugandan interest were oil products processing, information and communication technologies, and education. Congo would like to develop relations with Belarusian partners in order to modernise its agricultural policy. Namibia sees prospects for such cooperation in mining, energy, industry, agriculture, and even fishing.

⁸⁶⁴ About the meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei with the participants of the Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc66b6a8ee1bbd02.html

⁸⁶⁵ Egypt is interested in industrial cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/egipet-zainteresovan-v-promyshlennoj-kooperatsii-s-belarusju-443740-2021/>

⁸⁶⁶ "We can start working right now" - African countries voiced promising areas of cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mozhem-nachinat-rabotat-prjamo-sejchas-strany-afriki-ozvuchili-perspektivnye-sfery-sotrudnichestva-s-443755-2021/>

The interaction of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of South Africa (RSA) deserves a separate discussion in this context. March 2023 will mark 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In 2020, trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$25 million, with Belarusian exports accounting for \$18 million. This was due to supplies from Belarus of quarry automotive equipment and spare parts for it, oversized tyres, potash fertilisers, linen fabrics, X-ray equipment, and certain types of food products. An important point in this case is that "the commodity distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in South Africa includes the trading house of Belshina, a dealer (certified service centre) of BELAZ"⁸⁶⁷.

The revival of trade and economic relations between Belarus and South Africa has become a characteristic feature of the recent interaction between the two countries. In particular, "in 2020, after a six-year break, deliveries of BELAZ mining machinery to South Africa resumed"⁸⁶⁸. As of the end of September 2021, the fleet of these machines in this African country already numbered 49 dump trucks. This fact is an obvious evidence of the fact that Minsk and Pretoria are now starting to gradually return to the full realisation of the potential inherent in cooperation between the regions of the two countries. Recall that in 2013, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the parties spoke of good prospects for "co-operation in the areas of industry, agriculture, interregional development..."⁸⁶⁹. And in 2021 this aspiration became especially noticeable.

For example, in late September 2021, the head of the South African diplomatic mission in Russia and Belarus, M.D. Maketuka, was talking about intensifying cooperation with partners from the Free State province in Minsk Regional Executive Committee. The meeting resulted in the decision to co-operate in two areas: agriculture and machinery production. It should be noted that these regions signed a co-operation agreement back in December 2015. In September 2016, a representative delegation from the Free State visited the Belarusian capital region, where it was particularly interested in the technologies and experience of Minsk region in processing agricultural products. This was explained by the fact that agriculture is central to the

⁸⁶⁷ Co-operation of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/

⁸⁶⁸ Turchin discussed with the Ambassador of South Africa cooperation in the field of agriculture and machinery production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turchin-obsudil-s-poslom-juar-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasci-selskogo-hozjajstva-i-proizvodstva-tehniki-462069-2021/>

⁸⁶⁹ Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 539.

economy of this province. In addition, the South African side expressed great interest "in the assistance of Belarusian partners in personnel training, and they also intend to develop co-operation in construction and health care"⁸⁷⁰. And in November 2020, the partners from South Africa confirmed their readiness to cooperate in various areas, including "in the areas of trade in milk and meat, exchange of students for training"⁸⁷¹, as well as in the development of tourism. Apparently, the time for the implementation of all these plans of interaction has come.

Another South African province that has noticeably intensified its interest in co-operation with Belarusian partners in 2021 is KwaZulu-Natal, which is the second most populous (11.5 million people) in South Africa and ranks second in the country in terms of economic indicators. Thus, in April, a video conference "Opportunities for trade and investment cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in the field of textiles and clothing" was held, where "from the South African side were represented companies working in the field of linen products supply, clothing and footwear sewing, designers"⁸⁷². It should be assumed that as a result of the discussion such Belarusian enterprises as Orsha Flax Factory, Kamvol, Mogotex, and Luch will soon find reliable business partners in the south of the African continent.

This province of South Africa is also interesting for Belarus because it is here that a project to set up an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors is to be implemented in a special economic zone. "The parties to the project are Nqawana Holdings and the administration of the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ) on the South African side, and MTZ OJSC and Round Bay LLC on the Belarusian side"⁸⁷³. In August 2021, the technical details of this project have already been discussed here and concrete steps have been outlined for the implementation of the agreements reached.

⁸⁷⁰ Martyniuk, E. Free State Province of South Africa intends to adopt the Belarusian experience in processing agricultural products / E. Martyniuk // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/provintsiya-fri-stejt-juar-namerena-perenjat-belorusskij-opty-po-pererabotke-selhозproduktsii-211004-2016/>

⁸⁷¹ South Africa is interested in co-operation with Minsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/juar-zainteresovana-v-sotrudnichestve-s-minskoj-oblajstju-417308-2020/>

⁸⁷² About the videoconference "Opportunities for trade and investment co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in the field of textiles and clothing". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b561f2d89c659bd7.html>

⁸⁷³ On the visit of Ambassador A. Sidoruk to Richards Bay [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/ad33cd30a4281477.html>

An interesting example of partner regions from Belarus and South Africa is Mogilev Oblast and Mpumalanga Province, one of the most industrially powerful in the country, where mining, telecommunication services, energy, and about 40 per cent of South Africa's forest land are well developed. The two sides signed a memorandum of co-operation in December 2016. In it, they expressed interest in developing partnerships in trade and industry, agriculture, education, sports, tourism and culture. The province also expressed interest in developing not only projects in the agro-industrial complex, but also in training specialists in agriculture, forestry, medicine, and information technology in Belarusian universities. In addition, there was talk about the possibilities of "co-operation in woodworking, creation of joint ventures for processing agricultural products and production of foodstuffs"⁸⁷⁴. Let us hope that it is time for these regions to return to the partnership plans once adopted in order to successfully implement them today.

Kenya is another country on the African continent where mutually beneficial co-operation with Belarus has great potential. In August 2019, Nairobi hosted the Belarus-Kenya Business Forum, during which the participants outlined promising growth points for bilateral trade and economic cooperation. At the same time, the parties' attention was focused on the prospects for joint projects that would contribute to the implementation of the Kenyan government's strategic "Big Four Programme", which includes "food security and nutrition, universal health coverage, affordable housing and manufacturing"⁸⁷⁵. As a result, agreements were signed at the forum for the construction of a reinforced concrete plant on Kenyan soil and the establishment of a fish farm with a total value exceeding one hundred million dollars. Agreements were also reached on the supply of motor tractor machinery and equipment from Belarus to Kenya for almost twenty million dollars, with the subsequent establishment of an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors with an annual capacity of up to five thousand units in this African country.

These facts demonstrate that the business forum was an important concrete step towards the establishment of bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Kenya, which established diplomatic relations almost 30 years

⁸⁷⁴ Kulyagin, S. Mogilev region and Mpumalanga province of South Africa signed a memorandum of co-operation / S. Kulyagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblasti-i-provintsija-mpumalanga-juar-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-222724-2016/>

⁸⁷⁵ About the Belarusian-Kenyan business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/e02ca9530a8dcc63.html>

ago. It is true that the legal framework for Belarusian-Kenyan co-operation is still in the process of formation. However, it is encouraging that the parties are now preparing to sign a number of joint documents regulating bilateral relations in various areas, including agriculture, higher education, science, and technology.

A positive trend of recent years in the development of partnership ties between the two countries is the rapid growth - by more than forty per cent - of mutual trade turnover in 2018, which came close to \$50 million. "Traditional items of Belarusian exports to Kenya are: potash and mixed mineral fertilisers, newsprint, and printing products. The basis of Kenyan imports to Belarus is formed by supplies of flowers and buds, nuts, vegetables and fruits, coffee, tea"⁸⁷⁶. And this gives grounds for the Belarusian side to forecast at the highest level that "Kenya will soon become one of the key partners of Belarus in Africa"⁸⁷⁷.

The seriousness of the Belarusian side's intentions to thoroughly settle down in the Kenyan market is confirmed by the fact that Belarus organised its first national exposition at the FoodAgro International Food, Hospitality and Agriculture Exhibition held in Nairobi in early August 2019. Minsk is confident that participation in this exhibition, which is part of the largest exhibition event in East Africa - Kenya International Trade Exhibition, "will promote Belarusian agricultural machinery and equipment, fertilizers, food, agricultural products to the Kenyan market, as well as become a launching pad for Belarusian companies to enter the KOMECA countries (integration association of Eastern and Southern Africa)"⁸⁷⁸.

In the Kenyan capital, the enterprises of Belgospischeprom Concern, Lidselmarsh Holding Management Company, Gomselmarsh, MTZ, MAZ, Bobruiskagromash, Lidakhlebprodukt, and Smarhon Bread Products Combine unitary enterprise presented their products. The participation of these Belarusian exporters in the said exhibition is explained by the fact that Kenya is an agrarian country where "more than 35% of GDP is accounted for by the

⁸⁷⁶ Belarus - Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/

⁸⁷⁷ Lukashenko expects Kenya to become one of the key partners of Belarus in Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasschityvaet-cto-kenija-stanet-odnim-iz-kljuchevyh-partnerov-belorussi-v-afrike-328984-2018/>

⁸⁷⁸ The national exposition of Belarus opened at the FoodAgro exhibition in Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belorussi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-foodagro-v-kenii-356957-2019/>

agricultural sector"⁸⁷⁹, where in December 2017, a new programme of planned economic development of the country until 2022 was launched with a focus on the development of national production, food security and construction of affordable housing. In this regard, with a competent approach, Belarusian producers can realistically claim to increase supplies of their agricultural equipment, fertilisers, and chemical plant protection products here. The development of meat and dairy production is also promising in this African country, as "the range of such products in Kenya is not wide, so they respond with interest to proposals to create meat and dairy complexes, poultry complexes, meat processing lines, cheese production"⁸⁸⁰. Another interesting fact is this. There are many manufacturers working in Kenya today who assemble tractors, tractors and cars here. There is a company that assembles three models of Volkswagen cars on its premises. It would like to expand the range of vehicles assembled there by adding Belarusian tractors.

It should be noted that the exhibition in Nairobi was a continuation of the Belarusian side's course of active participation in various business events held on the African continent in the pre-pandemic period - in 2019. Thus, in March of the same year, Belarus' national exposition was organised for the first time at the International Exhibition of Agriculture and Livestock, Food, Beverages and Packaging Technologies Agrofood, which was held in the Nigerian city of Lagos. And in April, the Made in Belarus exposition was presented at the 60th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair 2019 in the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo, one of the largest in the southern African region. Apparently, 2022 should become a new "starting point" in this issue in the post-pandemic era. This is evidenced by the Plan of National Exhibitions of Belarus in Foreign Countries for this year, which talks about the demonstration of national expositions of our country in Africa at least at two international exhibition forums: in the first half of the year - Kenya International Trade Exhibition in Nairobi (Kenya); in the second half - Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). These events, along with the third Belarusian-African Economic Forum in Cairo in May 2022, should give new powerful impulses to systematic work to expand Belarusian exports and develop new markets in Africa.

⁸⁷⁹ FoodAgro exhibition will allow Belarus to expand its presence in the Kenyan market - Sadoho [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vystavka-foodagro-pozvolit-belarusi-rasshirit-svoe-prisutstvie-na-rynke-kenii-sadoho-349941-2019/>

⁸⁸⁰ Demand for Belarusian agricultural machinery in Kenya is constantly growing [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/spros-na-belorusskiju-selhotzhehniku-v-kenii-postojanno-rastet-349964-2019/>

Vitebsk region: growth points - in the free economic zone

Vitebsk region is among those regions of Belarus where, in the opinion of the head of the Belarusian state, "it is necessary to take technological and organisational measures to cope with the problems that exist there"⁸⁸¹ and to direct the development of the region in an innovative direction. One of the real tools used in the region to solve the task is the free economic zone (FEZ) "Vitebsk", formed twenty years ago - in 1999. Until August 2018, it consisted of 13 sectors, including 7 in Vitebsk, 4 in Orsha, and one each in Vitebsk and Postavy districts.

In August 2018, Decree No. 346 was adopted in the Republic of Belarus to further develop free economic zones and intensify the attraction of national and foreign investments, which stated the need to expand the territory and optimise the existing FEZs in the country - Minsk, Vitebsk, Grodnoinvest, Mogilev, and Gomel-Raton. It was assumed that the measures adopted in the decree "will allow to accommodate residents taking into account the prospects for their further growth, organise jobs, make optimal use of free land plots with available engineering and transport infrastructure, as well as promote investment in the creation of export-oriented and import-substituting industries"⁸⁸².

It should be noted that in FEZ "Vitebsk" alone this decree defined 16 sectors located not only in the Vitebsk area, but also in other cities and urban settlements of the region - Postavy, Orsha, Baran, Bolbasovo, Novopolotsk, Polotsk district, as well as near the villages of Kosachi and Kopti of Vitebsk district, each of which can and should receive powerful impulses for development. And these plans have already started to be realised in practice. On their territory 48 enterprises with the participation of investors from 14 countries, including Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Great Britain, USA, Israel, Cyprus, Estonia, including German "Vitella", Polish "Decorah East", British "LINPAK Pekedging East", Estonian "Soyuz-Kabel", American "CHESS-Bel" and a number of others, which operate in 25 production areas, including mechanical engineering, electronics, veterinary medicine, chemical,

⁸⁸¹ Meeting on the development of agro-industrial complex of Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveschanie-po-voprosam-razvitiya-agropromyshlennogo-kompleksa-vitebskoj-oblasti-22434/

⁸⁸² Belarus will consider the possibility of attracting a loan for the construction of energy infrastructure in FEZ [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-privlechenija-zajma-dlya-stroitelstva-energeticheskoy-infrastruktury-330424-2018/>

fuel, food and light industries. And the total number of employees at the resident enterprises was about 11 thousand people.

In December 2018, the FEZ Vitebsk welcomed its first resident with Lithuanian capital - 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 goes by the name Zhurzhevo. The new resident is part of one of the largest manufacturers and exporters of furniture and particleboard in the Baltic States - the international holding "VMG", whose head office is located in Klaipeda and unites a number of enterprises in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus. The project proposed for FEZ Vitebsk involves the creation of a sawmill and factories for the production of particleboard and furniture. Its realisation will take place in two stages. "Initially in the period until 2023 it is planned to invest more than 50 million euros in the development of production activities, to create about 200 jobs. The total volume of wood processing at the holding's enterprises will be about 700 thousand cubic metres per year. In total, at least 500 jobs will be created"⁸⁸³.

Among the states with which Vitebsk FEZ residents are successfully developing co-operation is Latvia. For three quarters of 2018, their trade turnover with Latvian economic entities approached close to \$25 million, which 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 operations with Latvia: LLC BelGigaSint, LLC PO Energokomplekt, OJSC Vityaz, LLC Modern-Expo, LLC Alliansplast, RUPTP Orsha Flax Factory"⁸⁸⁴.

Even more significant results are characteristic of the interaction of FEZ "Vitebsk" resident enterprises with Russian partners, especially from Moscow and the Moscow region. Thus, only in the first half of 2018, the trade turnover with them exceeded \$60 million, and the leaders of business cooperation with Muscovites include not only JSC "Vitebsk carpets", but also "foreign enterprise "VIK Animal Health", IOOO "Prodexim", SOOO "TransExpedition", CJSC "Pozhtekhnika"⁸⁸⁵ and a number of others.

⁸⁸³ Resident with Lithuanian capital registered in FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-s-litovskim-kapitalom-zaregistrirovan-v-sez-vitebsk-330553-2018/>

⁸⁸⁴ Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in the Belarusian-Latvian business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

⁸⁸⁵ Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in the complex presentation of Vitebsk region in Moscow [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

Other specific plans of FEZ Vitebsk to expand the geography of international co-operation are also of interest. Thus, the Chinese company "Blue Lotus" planned to launch a project with an investment volume of at least \$300 million in 2019. It is about the creation by the Chinese investor on the territory of the FEZ of "up to ten production enterprises for wood products - from fuel biomaterials to furniture"⁸⁸⁶. AL Maya Group, a group of companies from the United Arab Emirates, whose representatives visited Vitebsk in July 2018, saw one of the promising areas of investment cooperation in pharmaceuticals, "as the Middle Eastern partners have extensive experience in this area"⁸⁸⁷. Finally, in September 2018, the administration of FEZ "Vitebsk" signed a cooperation agreement with the Indian company India Advisory, which, according to the parties, "will serve as an impetus for further fruitful cooperation and attraction of Indian investments in Vitebsk region"⁸⁸⁸.

Residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" demonstrated high growth dynamics in attracting foreign direct investment in 2019 - at once three and a half times, reaching the mark of \$16.5 million. As a result, "the specific weight of FEZ "Vitebsk" in the investment portfolio of Vitebsk region in 2019 amounted to almost 39% and increased by 10 percentage points compared to 2018"⁸⁸⁹. Among the FEZ residents that have shown the greatest investment activity are Natrix JLLC, Chess-Bell LLC, Akitama LLC, and VIC Animal Health. In total, 50 residents have started to implement their projects in the FEZ, of which almost half are foreign capitalised. It should be noted that in 2019, eight organisations created with the participation of investors from Lithuania, Sweden, Spain, Russia and Belarus received the "FEZ Vitebsk resident status". The total volume of investments in new projects exceeds \$52 million, it is envisaged to create at least 270 jobs⁸⁹⁰. To all appearances, these indicators will only grow in the near future.

In November 2019, a new resident was added to them - Rubovsky Dolomite Quarry LLC with the participation of an investor from Lithuania and

⁸⁸⁶ Intentions agreement signed between the administration of FEZ "Vitebsk" and a Chinese company [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

⁸⁸⁷ The administration of FEZ "Vitebsk" was visited by businessmen from the UAE [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

⁸⁸⁸ Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in the Belarusian-Indian business forum [Electronic resource]. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

⁸⁸⁹ FEZ "Vitebsk" residents increased the volume of direct foreign investments by 3.5 times [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-uvvelichili-objem-priamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-35-raza-379775-2020/>

⁸⁹⁰ Investors from 4 countries plan to start implementing projects in FEZ "Vitebsk" this year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investory-iz-4-stran-planirujut-v-etom-godu-nachat-realizatsiju-proektov-v-sez-vitebsk-379788-2020/>

a project to create production of building materials based on dolomite. In this case it is about the organisation of production of hyperpressed bricks of "Lego" type and other decorative building materials from environmentally friendly raw materials. The production will be located on the territory of the former aerodrome on the outskirts of Vitebsk. Apparently, the project is designed for a long-term perspective, as the total reserves of dolomites in the Vitebsk region "are estimated at more than 5 billion tonnes at depths from 2.5 to 38 metres, of which the volume of approved reserves is 878 million tonnes. The Ruba dolomite deposit is one of the largest among the explored deposits in Belarus"⁸⁹¹. For this reason, the production of construction materials based on natural raw materials is one of the priority areas of economic development in Vitebsk region.

Another very promising area of FEZ "Vitebsk" development is woodworking production. There are already five resident enterprises specialising in this sector. In particular, VMG Wood Art LLC is creating a vertically integrated woodworking complex. Another company - "Akitama" - is building a plant for processing low-grade wood and producing wood-fuel pellets. And the company Karelia Venirs is organising the production of veneer. In addition, two more projects were in the process of registration in the FEZ, including the organisation of production of machine tools and equipment for the woodworking industry.

Given the obvious growing interest of investors in wood processing projects, FEZ "Vitebsk" came up with an initiative to create a wood processing cluster in the region, which implies an association of manufacturers, research centres and educational institutions, which is expected to provide favourable conditions for the introduction of innovations. After all, "this form of co-operation 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"⁸⁹². The participants of this cluster can be enterprises, institutions of additional education, educational institutions that train specialists for this industry, including Vitebsk State Technical College. The agreement on the creation of the woodworking cluster was planned to be signed in the spring of 2020 within the framework of the

⁸⁹¹ A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will create the production of construction materials from dolomite [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyi-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-iz-dolomita-371163-2019/>

⁸⁹² FEZ "Vitebsk" offers to create a woodworking cluster [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-predlagaet-sozdat-derevoobrabatyvajuschij-klaster-371147-2019/>

International Economic Forum in Vitebsk. It should be assumed that this form of coordination, which implies a synergetic effect at the end, 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 Vitebsk region can continue and complement the innovative development direction of the northern Belarusian region. It should be reminded that in October 2017, the Novopolotsk innovation-industrial petrochemical cluster was already established here, which included the Novopolotsk City Executive Committee, the Polotsk State University, Naftan OJSC, Construction and Assembly Centre No. 16, Novopolotsk, Interservice LLC, and the Novopolotsk Centre for Entrepreneurship and Real Estate. Already in 2020, the number of its participants is expected to almost double, including foreign participants. In particular, these may be Chinese partners from Weihai, in Shandong Province, Novopolotsk's sister city, who are interested in the innovative developments of Polotsk scientists to create new types of petrochemical products and improve the characteristics of the fuel produced. It seems that a company from the Czech Republic, which is interested in entering the Belarusian market, is also among the potential partners of the cluster.

The growing interest of foreign partners in the petrochemical cluster pushes its organisers to optimise the mechanisms of interaction between its participants. For this reason, an association is planned to be established here in 2020, which will act as a coordinating centre and will formulate proposals to improve the regulatory requirements governing the activities of the subjects of this innovation infrastructure. In addition, "the association will also undertake the organisation of activities to develop effective interaction between the participants, the formation of a portfolio of joint orders, promotion of the cluster's image and improvement of personnel support for its activities"⁸⁹³. There is every reason to believe that this format of cooperation can also have the most favourable impact on the innovative development of the Vitebsk region's economy.

The first resident registered in the FEZ in 2020 was BelBanka LLC, established with the participation of an investor from Russia. The investment project of this company involves the reconstruction and modernisation of

⁸⁹³ The number of participants of the Novopolotsk petrochemical cluster is planned to almost double [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chislo-uchastnikov-novopolotskogo-neftehimicheskogo-klastera-planiruetsja-uvelichit-pochti-v-dva-raza-371161-2019/>

production facilities on the outskirts of Vitebsk and on the site of Vityaz OJSC, as well as the installation of two lines for the production of tin cans for industrial canning of food products. Production activities are planned to start here already in 2021. Supplies of raw materials - white tinplate - will be provided by the Miorsky Metal Rolling Plant, located in the Vitebsk region, which is scheduled to be commissioned in the second quarter of 2021. As a result, BelBanka LLC "will first produce solid cans, where the bottom and the side surface are a single unit, with only the lid being rolled on. At the second stage, the company will produce prefabricated products consisting of three parts (bottom, body and lid)"⁸⁹⁴. An important detail: when the new enterprise reaches full capacity, the volume of products manufactured here will double. And all of it will be shipped to foreign markets.

The investment picture of 2020 in FEZ "Vitebsk" is significantly complemented by the fact that at least six enterprises created with the participation of investors from Canada, China, Azerbaijan and Russia are already planned to be registered here as residents. The total volume of investments in these projects will exceed \$100 million, and the number of jobs to be created will be at least 300. In particular, in Polotsk FEZ resident - LLC "International Corporation "Belsun" on high technologies" - will create a high-tech production of low-tonnage chemistry products that have no analogues in the post-Soviet space. The Azerbaijani investor will produce innovative products designed "for maintenance of various types of machinery, including in harsh operating conditions. The production is expected to be launched by the end of 2020, and the products will be fully shipped to foreign markets"⁸⁹⁵.

In the same Polotsk, a Belarusian investor intends to set up production of stainless steel containers and create about 20 jobs. The Belarusian-Russian JLLC "Novopolotsk Plant of Technological Metal Structures" is considering the possibility of implementing a project with an investment of about \$10 million in the production of hot-dip galvanising in the village of Farinovo, Polotsk district. A Chinese company intends to invest about \$28 million in a woodworking complex on the outskirts of Vitsebsk. In Postavy, Belmatch LLC, which is being set up with the participation of an investor from Canada, will specialise in the production of match straw. In Orsha, a Belarusian

⁸⁹⁴ In FEZ "Vitebsk" with the participation of a Russian investor will create the production of tin cans [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-sez-vitebsk-s-uchastiem-rossijskogo-investora-sozdadut-proizvodstvo-zhestjanyh-banok-377712-2020/>

⁸⁹⁵ Investor from Azerbaijan will create high-tech production of low-tonnage chemistry in FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/investor-iz-azerbajdzhana-sozdast-vysokotehnologichnoe-proizvodstvo-malotonnazhnoj-himii-v-sez-vitebsk-381432-2020>

company will try to set up the production of fuel pellets, while Zavod PAK OJSC will initiate a project to organise the production of components for dump trucks.

In 2020, another significant investment event will take place in the FEZ "Vitebsk" due to the fact that the Lithuanian holding company "VMG Group" decided to expand the financing of the investment project already being implemented in the FEZ from 100 to 200 million euros. For this purpose, the investor is ready to additionally organise the production of solid wood furniture to the vertically integrated woodworking complex being created. As a result, the number of jobs created under the holding's projects will increase to 1 thousand⁸⁹⁶. This is done in order to start in 2021 at the new furniture production facility the production of new products - tables and chairs, the main buyer of which will be the IKEA concern, which is currently assisting in financing this project.

It should be noted that the economy of Vitebsk region attracted more than one billion dollars of investments in 2019. Thanks to the active investment policy, the first plant for the production of seamless steel cylinders in Belarus was put into operation here. New enterprises and wood processing facilities were opened in Rossinsky, Sharkovshchinsky, Beshenkovichi, Gorodoksky and Polotsk districts. "The grain drying complex of the Vitebsk broiler poultry farm in the urban settlement of Surazh, the soya processing shop of the enterprise "Ekomol-Agro" were put into operation⁸⁹⁷. In addition, the construction of the largest dairy complex in Belarus, Kupalinka, for more than two thousand heads, is being completed at the Yubileiny agro-company. In the first half of 2020, two more innovative objects of the agricultural enterprise 'Ustye' will be put into operation - a grain drying complex for preparation of seeds of agricultural crops for 10 thousand tonnes and a dairy complex with a milking system "robotic carousel". And this is not a complete list. This is the pace at which the attracted investments are setting today for the development of only one Belarusian region, stimulating the creation of new points of growth in its territory.

⁸⁹⁶ Lithuanian holding "VMG Group" will increase the volume of investments in projects in FEZ "Vitebsk" up to 200 million euros [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/litovskij-holding-vmg-grupp-uvelichit-objem-investitsij-po-proektam-v-sel-vitebsk-do-200-mln-evro-379950-2020/>

⁸⁹⁷ Bogacheva, O. More than \$1 billion of investments attracted to the economy of Vitebsk region in 2019 / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-1-mlrd-investitsij-privlecheno-v-ekonomiku-vitebskoj-oblasti-za-2019-god-378810-2020/>

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: the goal is to maximise the realisation of potential

The year 2020 marks 15 years since the first trading on the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB), when the Belarusian company Bellesexport and the Polish company International Paper Kwidzyn S.A. concluded the first exchange deal for the sale of balance timber worth \$189,000. In total, over the past decade and a half, "3.2 million transactions totalling \$21 billion were made here, and the export volume amounted to \$5.8 billion"⁸⁹⁸. These figures show that BUTB has already turned into one of the largest commodity exchanges in Eastern Europe, the main function of which is to assist Belarusian companies in exporting products and to 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 traders to receive additional revenue and save almost \$1.5 billion since 2005. It should be reminded that the companies accredited on the BUTB participate in electronic trading in five commodity items: 1) metal products; 2) forest products; 3) agricultural products; 4) industrial and consumer goods; 5) promising exchange commodities. At the same time, round timber, ferrous metal products and oilseed meal are in particular demand in the domestic Belarusian market, while in foreign trade transactions their participants give preference to sawn timber and dairy products. These trends are characteristic for the development of BUTB in 2020.

At the beginning of December 2020, 24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 from 63 countries. In the period from January to November, the trade turnover grew by 12 per cent and amounted to almost five billion Belarusian rubles. It is estimated that from one and a half to three thousand deals are made here every day. In addition, the export of goods through the exchange is showing positive dynamics. "With the total amount of export transactions of Br1 billion, last year's result was exceeded by 5%. The leaders of sales in the foreign market were sawn timber, wood chips and

⁸⁹⁸ Deals worth \$21bn concluded at BUTB over 15 years [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sdelki-na-21-mlrd-zakljucheny-na-butb-za-15-let-393174-2020>

agricultural crop products"⁸⁹⁹. Interestingly, in October 2020, BUTB recorded a record amount of export transactions this year - \$46.5 million, more than half of which came from wood products - sawn timber and wood chips. The largest buyers of sawn timber were companies from Germany, Latvia and Lithuania, while wood chips were mainly purchased by businesses from Lithuania, Poland and Estonia. Another characteristic detail is that "in October, foreign buyers of cement also became more active. The amount of transactions with this commodity increased 4.3 times, up to \$2.6 million. The main market was Russia"⁹⁰⁰.

It should be noted that cement is not the only item that attracts Russian business people to BUTB. In particular, they are highly interested in Belarusian dairy products, the export of which through the exchange for ten months of 2020 amounted to about thirty million dollars. At the same time, "about 80% of this amount was accounted for transactions with companies from Russia. Predominantly purchased milk powder, butter and whey powder. Butter dominated the sales structure, with sales totalling \$14.9 million"⁹⁰¹.

These facts indicate quite eloquently the potential of the Russian vector in BUTB's activities, where 2,482 residents from Russia were accredited as of 1 December 2020. And this figure does not seem to be final, as the BUTB in 2020 took energetic measures to develop new business contacts in the eastern direction of interaction, which bring results. Suffice it to say that since the beginning of 2020, 183 new Russian companies have been accredited at the exchange, most of which are active trading participants, which, of course, has a positive impact on the dynamics of exchange turnover. In particular, "deliveries of ferrous rolled metal products for the needs of Belarusian industrial enterprises increased by 68 per cent over 11 months, while exports of dried milk to Russia increased by 53 per cent <...>. Positive dynamics is also characteristic of rapeseed oil, flour, and construction materials"⁹⁰².

⁸⁹⁹ BUTB turnover in January - November increased by 12% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-butb-v-janvare-nojabre-vyros-na-12-420279-2020/>

⁹⁰⁰ Exports of goods through BUTB in October increased by 22 per cent [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tovarov-cherez-butb-v-oktjabre-vyros-na-22-415863-2020/>

⁹⁰¹ About 80% of dairy exports through BUTB are to Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-80-eksporta-molochnoj-produktsii-cherez-butb-prihoditsja-na-rossiju-414442-2020/>

⁹⁰² BUTB expects to expand co-operation with the Omsk region of Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-omskoj-oblajstju-rossii-420606-2020/>

The Russian vector is characterised by the following detail: the interest in BUTB is growing particularly fast among business circles in those regions of Russia that border Belarus. An example is the Smolensk region. Today about four hundred Smolensk companies are accredited at the exchange - more than any other region of Russia. At the same time, many of them regularly participate in trading both in imports and exports. But, as it turned out during the pilot webinar held in December 2020 by BUTB together with the Smolensk Export Support Centre, even the enterprises of this Russian region have not yet fully realised the potential of the exchange mechanism. In fact, "among the promising areas are the sale 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 become the basis for long-term mutually beneficial co-operation"⁹⁰³. The Digital Contact Exchange held in December 2020 in the online conference mode showed that BUTB can develop similar mutually beneficial co-operation with more remote regions of Russia. In particular, with enterprises in the Omsk region, for whom the exchange can become an effective tool for sales and procurement of materials in the short term.

The fact that in the case of BUTB, the distance between the seller and the buyer no longer plays a decisive role is demonstrated by the experience of the exchange's contacts with Egypt. In December 2020, BUTB reached an agreement with the Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export to organise the export of sawn timber to this North African country through the exchange. The intrigue here lies in the fact that up to now "almost all imports of sawn timber products to Egypt are organised through intermediaries, and prices are sometimes very high"⁹⁰⁴. The use of the exchange platform will allow Egyptian companies to buy woodworking products directly from Belarusian producers in almost unlimited quantities and without intermediaries, and Belarusian exporters will be able to enter the very tempting market of Egypt, where the annual consumption of sawn timber is about five million cubic metres. The Egyptian side sees this as an optimal solution, since by participating in the bidding, it gets access to a large number of specialised companies ready to supply the goods it needs on acceptable terms. The benefits of the Belarusian side are no less obvious. Thus, the geography of mutually

⁹⁰³ . BUTB counts on the development of co-operation with the Smolensk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-razvitiye-sotrudnichestva-so-smolenskoj-oblajtiju-421404-2020>

⁹⁰⁴ Through BUTB it is planned to organise deliveries of sawn timber to Egypt [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherez-butb-planiruetsja-organizovat-postavki-pilomaterialov-v-egipet-419296-2020/>

beneficial contacts of BUTB is developing today in a very diverse and quite effective way. And this is in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, which has not had the best effect on the economy of most countries of the planet and which requires all market participants to search for new forms of work with business partners in order to ultimately achieve success.

BUTB is no exception in this respect. Back in May 2020, the first Belarusian-Canadian-British webinar or online seminar Timber: Doing Business in Belarus was held here, attended by over forty representatives of Canadian and British business circles. It should be noted that 63 companies from the UK and 6 from Canada have already been accredited to the BUTB. The videoconference discussion of the specifics of exchange trading in timber products and the key advantages of the Belarusian exchange platform, including control over the execution of transactions, transparent pricing, absence of intermediaries, and the possibility of using trade finance instruments, led to the fact that "a number of British and Canadian companies expressed interest in accreditation at BUTB to participate in exchange trading in sawn timber and wood chips"⁹⁰⁵.

It should be noted that BUTB also uses the online seminar format to train its prospective business partners. For this purpose, in May 2020, they held the first training webinar for specialists from the Uzbek Republican Commodity Exchange, with which BUTB signed a strategic cooperation agreement back in September 2018. Thanks to this modern format of interaction, Uzbek partners were able to get better acquainted not only with the structure and specifics 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 to be expected that the information obtained by the Uzbek side will not only contribute to the intensification of interaction between Belarus and Uzbekistan in the field of e-procurement, but will also "serve as a guide to action for Uzbek companies planning to work in the Belarusian market"⁹⁰⁶.

The topic of BUTB's co-operation with Chinese partners deserves a separate discussion in this context. In December 2020, the Belarusian-Chinese

⁹⁰⁵ British and Canadian business is interested in purchasing Belarusian sawn timber at the exchange trading [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskij-i-kanadskij-biznes-zainteresovan-v-zakupke-beloruskih-pilomaterialov-na-birzhevyh-torgah-391809-2020>

⁹⁰⁶ Belarus and Uzbekistan develop co-operation in the field of electronic procurement [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-ravvivajut-yzaimodejstvie-v-oblasti-elektronnyh-zakupok-390898-2020/>

Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation held a meeting, which highlighted positive changes in the trade interaction between the two countries due to changes in the structure of Belarusian exports. First, the product mix of supplies from Belarus to China is expanding. Second, the dependence of bilateral trade turnover on exports of Belarusian potash fertilisers to Chinese consumers is decreasing. The main priorities that will be used to intensify joint actions to expand cooperation include "inclusion of Belarusian products in China's state reserves, establishment of joint production facilities in China to process Belarusian raw materials, simplification of trade procedures and elimination of trade barriers, and optimisation of financial settlements"⁹⁰⁷, as well as the use of electronic trading platforms as a promising mechanism for bilateral trade, where the key role is likely to be given to the use of electronic commerce.

Suffice it to say that in the three quarters of 2020, the amount of purchase transactions made by companies from China on the exchange increased more than ten(!) times and totalled two million dollars. At the same time, the commodity structure was dominated by wooden billets and trimmed sawn timber. It should be noted that until recently, most of the Belarusian lumber products reached the Celestial Empire mainly through the Baltic States, which made them more expensive for end consumers and reduced the foreign currency earnings of Belarusian exporters. "Thanks to the joint project with Bellesexport and Beltamozhservice, dozens of Belarusian forestry enterprises were able to sell their products to the high-margin Chinese market without intermediaries"⁹⁰⁸.

BUTB believes that this sharp increase in interest in exchange trading on the part of Chinese businesses is due not only to the favourable price environment, but also to "convenient logistics that Belarusian exporters were able to offer. In particular, since this [2020] year, it has become possible to buy lumber products on different delivery bases (multi-base lots), which allowed Chinese companies to choose the most suitable point of acceptance of goods. In addition, delivery times have been significantly reduced through the use of

⁹⁰⁷ Nikolai Snopkov: Belarus considers agricultural products as a new driver of exports to China [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9682>

⁹⁰⁸ Belarusian sawn timber for \$5.1 million sold to China through BUTB since the beginning of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-na-51-mln-prodali-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-s-nachala-goda-400531-2020/>

railway transport as part of the Chinese government's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative".⁹⁰⁹

After receiving such statistics, BUTB began to consider the possibility of introducing a separate trading session for the sale of timber products to the Chinese market, in which all lots put up for this auction would be maximally adapted to Chinese consumers, and the necessary level of competition would be ensured due to the dense concentration of buyers. Moreover, the increased activity of companies from China has become especially visible since October 2020, when they purchased more than one million dollars worth of lumber through the exchange. This was also a result of the simplification of the accreditation procedure at BUTB, which now takes no more than three days to complete all the documents. And "in January-November woodworking products totalling over \$9 million were sold through the exchange platform in the Chinese direction"⁹¹⁰. A year earlier this figure was only about two hundred thousand dollars. Building on this successful experience, BUTB held the first specialised trading session for the sale of sawn timber to China in mid-December 2020. Let's hope that this new form of work will also open new horizons of interaction with Chinese partners, as there is every reason to believe that in the near future the export nomenclature here will expand significantly, especially due to the products of the agro-industrial complex. After all, "in addition to products of the timber industry complex, the number of promising exchange goods demanded in the Chinese market includes rapeseed oil, beet pulp, meat, sugar and milk products. The number of requests from Chinese companies interested in purchasing these products has recently increased significantly"⁹¹¹.

In particular, interesting prospects in this "Chinese" context are opening up for rapeseed oil, whose exports through the BUTB have tripled in value terms in the first eight months of 2020. This is because rapeseed products are widely used both in the food industry and for the production of biodiesel. Perhaps also for this reason, the largest buyer of these products at BUTB is Switzerland, with transaction volumes from January to August 2020 totalling

⁹⁰⁹ More than 10-fold increase in the amount of transactions by companies from China on BUTB in January - September [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-chem-v-10-raz-vyrosla-summa-sdelok-kompanijami-iz-kitaja-na-butb-v-janvare-sentjabre-413129-2020/>

⁹¹⁰ BUTB to hold the first specialised export bidding for the Chinese market on 15 December [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-provedet-pervee-spesializirovannye-eksportnye-torgi-dlya-kitajskogo-ryntka-15-dekabrja-420090-2020>

⁹¹¹ Chinese companies in October purchased lumber at BUTB for more than \$1 million [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskie-kompanii-v-oktjabre-zakupili-pilomaterialy-cherez-butb-na-summu-bolee-1-mln-417473-2020/>

almost six million dollars. "The top three key markets for Belarusian rapeseed oil also include Lithuania with a transaction value of \$3.5 million and Estonia with \$3.3 million."⁹¹².

As for China, where rapeseed oil is also in high demand, its traditional partner for this import item was Canada. "However, due to the protracted trade conflict, supplies of this product have noticeably decreased. 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"⁹¹³. The Chinese trading company Shandong Liuqing decided to take advantage of this situation back in September 2020. It declared its intention to pass the accreditation procedure and start working at BUTB. At the same time, the company expressed its readiness to invest in Belarusian forestry. It is also interested in the development of the Belarusian transport and logistics infrastructure. This is the result of a multi-purpose approach, the beginning of which was laid by co-operation with BUTB.

Another important trend in the development of BUTB in 2020 is the growth of exports of metal products by one third at once - up to BYR27 million, where the bulk of transactions fell on ferrous and non-ferrous metals, as well as their scrap and waste. Suffice it to say that "in the first half of the year, companies from Germany, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine purchased Br24 million worth of these products, exceeding the 2019 figure by 20%"⁹¹⁴. In the same period, a joint project with the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant was actively developed at BUTB, thanks to which rebar was sold to the Polish market for Br3 million. In the future, the Exchange plans to expand the commodity nomenclature of steel products exports by developing new promising markets in order to increase the share of this section in export transactions from five to twenty per cent in the next five years.

In this regard, BUTB's plans to introduce other Belarusian enterprises to foreign markets are of great interest. In particular, the exchange plans to join efforts to achieve this goal with Miorsk Metal Rolling Plant, an innovative industrial enterprise in Vitebsk region with a significant amount of foreign

⁹¹² Export of rapeseed oil through BUTB increased 3 times, the largest buyer - Switzerland [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-vyros-v-3-raza-krupnejshij-pokupatel-shveitsarija-406915-2020/>

⁹¹³ . Belarusian pallet board and rapeseed oil will be exported to China via BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskuju-palletnuju-dosku-i-rapsove-maslo-budut-eksportirovat-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-408061-2020/>

⁹¹⁴ Export of steel products through BUTB in the first half of the year increased by 33% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-metalloproductsii-cherez-butb-v-i-polugodii-vyros-na-33-399873-2020/>

investments, which will be able to produce about 240 thousand tonnes of white tin plate per year after reaching its design capacity. It should be noted that only Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works in Russia and ArcelorMittal Temirtau in Kazakhstan produce similar products in the post-Soviet space. For the export-oriented Belarusian company, "Scandinavia is of the greatest interest <...> as a promising sales market. First of all, because of the favourable price environment and consistently high demand for white tinplate"⁹¹⁵. It should be recalled that white tinplate is widely used in the manufacture of containers for food and chemical products. At the same time, Miori plans to produce ultra-thin tinplate with a thickness of 0.1 mm. With the help of BUTB, the company hopes to find not only new buyers and in time to establish regular supplies of white tinplate to Europe, but also to determine partners for raw materials, as the mechanism of exchange trading is effective in both directions - both in exporting finished products and in purchasing raw materials.

All these facts testify to the fact that the pace of development of the BUTB today is such that it can and should soon become a driver of electronic commerce in the Republic of Belarus, which believes that in order to ensure sustainable development and competitiveness of the Belarusian state in the global arena "it is necessary to create its own digital platforms in key sectors of the economy, so that foreign businesses coming to the Belarusian market do not impose their technological solutions, but integrate into the digital infrastructure of the country"⁹¹⁶. In this regard, we can confidently say: the first fifteen years of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange's activity are evidence that the foundation for solving the set tasks has been laid here.

⁹¹⁵ BUTB and Miora Metal Rolling Plant plan to jointly develop export of white tinplate [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-miorskij-metalloprokatnyj-zavod-planirujut-sovmestno-razvivat-eksport-beloj-zhesti-400676-2020/>

⁹¹⁶ BUTB should become a driver of e-commerce in the country - Koltovich [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-dolzhna-stat-drajverom-elektronnoj-torgovli-v-strane-koltovich-401009-2020>

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: Features of Multi-Directional Partnership

Deepening integration with the Russian Federation will remain the most important task of the Belarusian government in terms of foreign economic activity and international co-operation in the next five years. For this purpose, it is envisaged to implement plans of joint measures by sectors of the economy, as well as "on trade and economic, scientific and technical, and socio-cultural cooperation with the regions of the Russian Federation"⁹¹⁷. And today in our country many market players are taking active measures to actualise activities in this direction. Among them is the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB), for which the Russian vector of interaction has serious potential.

It should be recalled that as of 1 December 2020, 2,482 residents from Russia used the services of BUTB. And this is despite the fact that at the same time "24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 from 63 countries"⁹¹⁸. But the experience of interaction with Russian partners in 2020 showed that even in the regions neighbouring Belarus - Smolensk, Bryansk and Pskov regions - do not yet fully realise the opportunities offered by this e-commerce mechanism. When this perception changes for the better, the result does not take long to come. A good example in this context is the record export sales in January 2021 at BUTB of cement, which increased tenfold to \$5.3 million. This growth was "due to increased attention to the exchange platform from Russian trading and construction companies <...>. After Ukraine introduced an anti-dumping duty and actually closed its market for Belarusian cement, Russia became a priority"⁹¹⁹. And now no less than eight Russian companies regularly participate in these export auctions for cement on BUTB.

Perhaps for this reason, the BUTB has seriously intensified its activities in the Russian direction with the arrival of 2021. Thus, 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. To this end, it is planned to make full use of

⁹¹⁷ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - C. 44.

⁹¹⁸ Zaleskii, B.L. Perspective mechanism of electronic commerce on the way to the maximum realisation of potential / B.L. Zaleskii // Socio-humanitarian researches. - 2020. - №5. - C. 20.

⁹¹⁹ Cement exports through BUTB in January increased 10 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tsementa-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-v-10-raz-428027-2021/>

the trade mission's business contacts to inform Russian businesses about the opportunities of BUTB as an effective platform for trade and procurement activities. In addition, the parties will join efforts to organise and conduct events aimed at intensifying interaction between business entities of Belarus and Russia, so that eventually BUTB will become the primary entry point to the Belarusian market for all representatives of Russian business. After all, registration on this trading platform "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"⁹²⁰. Indeed, this work to expand business contacts with Russian regions is already starting to yield results. During one week in February 2021 alone, eight companies from Russia were accredited to BUTB. This demonstrates that strengthening co-operation with Russian regions has indeed become one of BUTB's priorities for the current year, with a wide range of collaboration tools being used.

Thus, in the first decade of February 2021, the possibilities of increasing mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia were discussed at an online conference with the participation of representatives of the government of this Russian region. It should be noted that in 2020 "the trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia totalled \$184.5 million, or 112.5% of the level of 2019"⁹²¹. In the course of the discussion, the parties agreed that even these relatively good indicators can be significantly improved through the implementation of exchange trade, which can become an effective tool for increasing the volume and expanding the range of goods demanded in the Belarusian and Udmurtian markets. If we take into account that over the last few years Udmurtia has become one of the most export-oriented regions of Russia and today ranks first in the neighbouring country in terms of growth rates of non-energy exports, we can be sure that in the nearest future representatives of Udmurt business will become permanent participants of trading on the BUTB.

In the second decade of February 2021, an online conference was held on the expansion of BUTB's cooperation with the business community of the

⁹²⁰ BUTB and the Trade Representation of the Russian Federation intend to promote an increase in trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-torgovoe-predstavitelstvo-rf-namereny-sodejstvovat-uvelenicheniju-tovarooborota-428409-2021/>

⁹²¹ Belarus and Udmurtia intend to increase trade turnover through a more active use of exchange trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-udmurtija-namereny-uvelichit-tovarooborot-za-schet-bolee-aktivnogo-ispolzovaniya-birzhevoj-427781-2021/>

Volgograd Region. The participants in this discussion noted a steady trend towards an increase in the number of exchange residents from Russia, which has been observed since the end of 2020. And it is not only exports of Belarusian goods to the Russian market and purchases of Russian products by Belarusian enterprises, but also more frequent "transit transactions between companies from Russia and third countries. That is, the exchange is used as a tool for insuring foreign trade risks"⁹²² . And this, of course, expands its opportunities in terms of attracting business partners, which, it is to be assumed, will soon include many more business representatives of the Volgograd Region.

While developing partnerships with the regions of the Russian Federation, BUTB is also planning to seriously expand cooperation with the business community of European countries in 2021, due to the huge and still unrealised potential in this partnership vector. This can be judged on the basis of the data on exchange trading in January 2021, according to the results of which the export of sawn timber through BUTB increased by 27 per cent and exceeded 30 million dollars. At the same time, "the main markets were Germany, Latvia and Lithuania. Companies from these countries purchased Belarusian sawn timber products for a total of \$24.4 million"⁹²³ . The largest buyers of this type of products also included representatives of such European countries as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, and Estonia, where wood billets for export were in the greatest demand. Suffice it to say that during the first export trades on BUTB in 2021, more than one and a half million wooden household stakes were sold to the UK alone, worth more than one million euros, which immediately exceeded the exports to this country in 2020. An important detail: previously, these products were supplied to the British market in much smaller volumes and mainly through intermediaries in the Baltic States. The results of this trading session in January clearly confirmed the high export potential of wood products manufactured in our country, as well as the trend observed last year, when "the amount of exchange transactions for exports of products made of cylindrical and debarked wood in

⁹²² BUTB expects to expand co-operation with the business community of the Volgograd region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-delovymi-krugami-volgogradskoj-oblasti-429055-2021/>

⁹²³ In January, lumber exports through BUTB increased by 27% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-janvare-eksport-pilomaterialov-cherez-butb-vyros-na-27-429846-2021/>

2020 amounted to 4.2 million euros. The main markets were Germany, Latvia Lithuania and Poland"⁹²⁴.

Planning to expand the geography of sales of the same woodworking products on the European vector in 2021, BUTB is already working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian sawn timber, for example, to France. Thus, in February 2021, they outlined the prospects of using the mechanism of exchange trading with the French importer of wood - Bois Import SA. The fact is that this company has been buying sawn timber, including Belarusian timber, in the Baltic countries for a long time. But the coronavirus pandemic has made adjustments to this arrangement, forcing the company to look for alternative markets. Thus, Belarus, where about half of all produced sawn timber - about two million cubic metres - is already sold for export through the mechanism of exchange trading, came into the field of vision of the French buyers. It is clear that the opportunities for importers from France in this connection are considerable. Moreover, the French company was also offered to "not limit itself to sawn timber, but to consider the possibility of purchasing other wood products, including wood pellets. In 2020, six new pellet plants were built and commissioned in Belarus. Another six are planned to be built in the current [2021] year"⁹²⁵. As a result, annual exports from Belarus could reach about 250 thousand tonnes of pellets.

The interest of European businessmen in the Nordic Pellets Conference 2021, an online conference organised by the Swedish bioenergy association Svebio at the end of January 2021. Participants in this event included leading bioenergy experts and biofuel producers from the UK, Denmark, France, Germany, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Denmark. They were brought to this conference by the fact that today there is a steady growth in demand for pellets in the countries of the European Union. This, in turn, favours not only the increase of own production capacities of European producers, but also the import of such products from other countries, including Belarus. BUTB believes that "given the low capacity of the domestic market, almost the entire volume of pellets produced in Belarus can be supplied abroad,

⁹²⁴ British company bought woodworking products for more than 1 million euros through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskaja-kompanija-kupila-cherez-butb-produktsiju-derevoobrabotki-bolee-chem-na-1-mln-evro-424714-2021/>

⁹²⁵ BUTB is working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian sawn timber to France [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-eksporta-belorusskih-pilomaterialov-vo-frantsiju-430040-2021/>

which will make our country one of the largest exporters in the region"⁹²⁶ . After all, the use of the BUTB platform by European companies will allow them to buy any necessary volume of products directly from Belarusian producers under both one-off and annual contracts. The demand for this type of e-commerce is evidenced by the statistics of 2020, when only sawn timber was sold for \$260 million, and companies from 30 countries acted as buyers.

Another type of products in demand in European countries is vegetable oils and feed additives, the export of which grew 2.3 times in the first 10 months of 2020 and reached \$26 million, accounting for more than 40 per cent of agricultural exports through BUTB. "The growth of export supplies was facilitated by the increased demand for Belarusian vegetable oils in the Baltic States: oilseed processing products worth \$14.7 million were sold there. At the same time, Lithuania became the leader in purchases with the amount of transactions of \$6.2 million"⁹²⁷ . At the same time, in just a month and a half, almost two million dollars worth of beet pulp and molasses was sold through BUTB, the main buyers of which were again the European Union countries. Finally, in January 2021, exports of rapeseed oil through BUTB increased almost tenfold, "reaching \$8.4 million"⁹²⁸ . Here, Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland are among the leaders in terms of the amount of transactions. The very dynamics of sales growth in the European direction suggests that the possibilities of expanding Belarusian exports in this external track are far from being exhausted.

Finally, another priority for the BUTB in 2021 is to increase the share of companies from the "far arc" countries - Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America - in the exchange turnover. This is explained by the significant potential that exists in interaction with these partners and the successful realisation of which promises considerable benefits to both Belarusian exporters and foreign importers. Among the countries of the "far arc", the People's Republic of China is one of the most intensively developing business contacts with their representatives. Suffice it to say that "in terms of growth rates of exchange transactions, China has surpassed almost all major markets

⁹²⁶ BUTB is ready to facilitate the export of fuel pellets to Northern Europe [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotova-sodejstvovat-eksportu-toplivnyh-granul-v-severnuju-evropu-426052-2021/>

⁹²⁷ 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-selozhoprudkstii-cherez-butb-415013-2020/>

⁹²⁸ Export of rapeseed oil through BUTB in January increased almost 10 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/>

with which Belarus currently trades on the stock exchange in the first two months of the year [2021]"⁹²⁹ .

In this context, it is significant that the 5,000th foreign company accredited to participate in trading on the BUTB at the beginning of March 2021 was the Chinese trading and manufacturing company Wenzhou Ruijun Steel Co. Ltd, which also became the 36th company from China on the exchange. The company is going to use this exchange platform to supply rolled steel and other ferrous metal products to Belarus. At the initial stage it will be the sale of pipe products at the auction, and then, depending on the dynamics of sales and market conditions, the range of products will be gradually expanded. Probably, approximately in the same way as it happens at BUTB with woodworking products.

Recall that special trading sessions for the sale of sawn timber for export with delivery in containers to the destination point in the Chinese market have been held at BUTB since December 2020. "As a result, the volume of supplies of domestic sawn timber products to China has increased significantly and totalled almost \$5 million in monetary terms by the end of January-February"⁹³⁰ . This is largely fuelled by the fact that almost every month two or three new Chinese companies are added to the BUTB timber products auction. This positively affects the formation of a highly competitive environment here and allows woodworkers from Belarus to sell sawn timber on more favourable terms. In particular, at the first export trading of timber products for the Chinese market in January 2021, more than 11 thousand cubic metres of sawn timber were sold for almost two and a half million dollars. Due to rising prices during the trading session, exporters from Belarus received additional revenue of more than \$90 thousand. And "the entire volume of sawn timber products put up for sale was purchased with delivery to Qingdao - the largest seaport in Shandong province. In this way, the attractiveness of Belarusian goods for Chinese buyers increases, and domestic exporters get an opportunity to expand their sales geography and increase their revenue"⁹³¹ .

⁹²⁹ The 5,000th non-resident company has been accredited on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovalas-5-tysjachnaja-kompanija-nerezident-431246-2021/>

⁹³⁰ Belarusian sawn timber for \$2.6 million sold to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-na-26-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-431434-2021/>

⁹³¹ Belarusian sawn timber for \$2.4 million sold to China at the exchange trades [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-na-24-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-na-birzhevyh-torgah-425850-2021/>

It is also important in terms of the development of the Chinese vector on the BUTB that in 2021 export deals were launched here for 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 platform, according to the results of the first two trading sessions, transactions were made for a total amount of about one and a half million dollars. This allowed China to take the second place in terms of the amount of transactions with this product, displacing the leaders of the whole 2020 - Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland. At the same time, there were prerequisites for further significant increase in other export indicators. "First of all, it is the growth in the number of companies from China accredited at the Exchange"⁹³², which contributes to an increase in the level of competition during trading.

In January 2021, the first batch of milk powder was also sold to the Chinese market via BUTB. "Two lots of 300 and 100 tonnes were put up for exchange trading. The total amount of transactions made at the end of the trading session was \$940 thousand."⁹³³. This happened after global food prices began to rise in the second half of 2020, which significantly increased the attractiveness of Belarusian dairy products not only in China, but also in other countries of the "far arc". This, in particular, is evidenced by the return of one of the world's largest agro-traders, Singapore-based Olam International, to BUTB at the end of 2020. And it shows that the prospects for exporting dairy products from Belarus to the Asian continent through the mechanism of exchange trading are now very significant.

Egypt is another country in the "far arc" whose representatives are beginning to actively engage in BUTB. In early March 2021, the Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export made its first deal to export Belarusian goods to this North African country, purchasing a trial batch of Belarusian sawn timber. The company's strategic goal is "to become the largest importer of Belarusian timber products to Egypt and, in the future, to other North African countries. The first step in this direction has already been

⁹³² Export of rapeseed oil through BUTB in January increased almost 10 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/>

⁹³³ A batch of milk powder was sold to China for the first time through the exchange [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/partiju-suhogo-moloka-vpervye-prodali-v-kitaj-cherez-birzhu-424904-2021/>

made"⁹³⁴ . Its next step in co-operation with BUTB may be the role of a stock broker on this electronic trading platform. And then the market of practically the whole African continent can shine with new colours for Belarusian exporters. With the help of such an export mechanism as the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange.

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⁹³⁴ The first deal with a company from Egypt was made on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervuju-sdelku-s-kompaniej-iz-egipta-sovershili-na-butb-431073-2021>

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: the main priority is multidirectionality

In 2021, the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) demonstrated high growth rates of export transactions, where their volume grew by 80 per cent to \$369 million in the first half of the year. At the same time, "companies from 29 countries bought Belarusian goods through BUTB. The top five largest markets were Lithuania, Germany, Latvia, Estonia and Russia"⁹³⁵. For Lithuania, the main export items were sawn timber, wood chips and oilseed products. The total value of these products was 101 million dollars. German companies bought through BUTB 64 million dollars worth of sawn timber and one million dollars worth of household stakes, milk powder and technical casein. Latvia was characterised by the purchase of Belarusian lumber products, wooden poles and stakes, rapeseed oil and ferrous and non-ferrous metal scrap worth 57 million dollars. As for Russia, there was a significant increase in exports of such commodity items as cement - 6 times - up to \$10.7 million, butter - 61(!) times - up to \$10 million, milk powder - 7 times - up to \$6.6 million. In total, as of 1 July 2021, 300 new foreign companies were accredited to BUTB in the first half of the year, with a total of 5,218.

There was also an increase in transactions through the Belarusian exchange platform in a number of other countries, including Ukraine. The number of its representatives on the BUTB increased to 326 in the first half of 2021. "Exchange trade turnover with Ukraine has also grown significantly: at the end of six months it reached \$24.6 million, which is 58% more than in the same period of 2020"⁹³⁶. And already in August 2021, the first deal was made here to export milk powder to the Ukrainian market - a trial batch of 40 tonnes for \$108,000. Previously, traders from this country were more interested in scrap metals, construction materials, flour, and plant seeds.

Another country that should be mentioned in this context is Poland, to whose market in the first half of 2021 rebar produced by OJSC BMZ, the managing company of BMK Holding, was shipped almost four times more

⁹³⁵ Export of goods through BUTB in the first half of the year increased by 80% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tovarov-cherez-butb-v-i-polugodii-vyros-na-80-451881-2021/>

⁹³⁶ BUTB conducted the first deal on export of milk powder to Ukraine [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-provela-pervuju-sdelku-po-eksportu-suhogo-moloka-v-ukrainu-453373-2021/>

than in the first six months of 2020 - by almost four and a half million dollars. This result is the result of very painstaking work with this market. After all, not every Polish company was ready to work on the terms of full prepayment and delayed delivery. But now, not two or three Polish importers participate in each trading session on BUTB, as it was in the beginning, but at least ten. Thus, firstly, a high level of competition in the course of trading is ensured, and secondly, the volume of sales of Belarusian valves to Poland is steadily growing⁹³⁷.

The BUTB is also taking energetic steps to increase sales of Belarusian goods to China. At present, 48 Chinese participants - small and medium-sized enterprises - are accredited on this exchange platform. In July 2021, BUTB agreed to develop cooperation with BR-Consult, a subsidiary of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus, which specialises in the implementation of export-oriented investment projects. The essence of the agreements reached is to attract one of the largest shareholders of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen - the Chinese corporation China Merchants Group - to the stock exchange trading, whose arrival at BUTB would significantly expand "opportunities for supplying Belarusian products to China. And this concerns not only sawn timber, but practically the entire export nomenclature, including rapeseed oil, dairy products, meat, leather semi-finished products"⁹³⁸.

Another interesting trend related to Chinese companies accredited on the BUTB became apparent in July 2021. Kangkai Zhiguan (Heze) Industrial Development, a large importer of sawn timber from China, which has been operating on the Belarusian stock exchange since May 2020 and in April 2021 received the status of a non-resident stock broker, announced its intention to invest in Belarusian wood processing and develop its business in our country in order to 'not only increase the volume of purchases of sawn timber products, but also to create its own production in Belarus'⁹³⁹. The company intends to purchase raw materials and sell the finished product exclusively through BUTB.

⁹³⁷ BUTB almost 4 times increased export of BMP products to Poland [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-pochti-v-4-raza-narastila-eksportu-produktu-bmz-v-polshu-449067-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-pochti-v-4-raza-narastila-eksport-produktu-bmz-v-polshu-449067-2021/)

⁹³⁸ BUTB and the Development Bank intend to develop co-operation in the field of exports and investments [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-bank-razvitiya-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnistvo-v-sfere-eksporta-i-investitsij-452308-2021/>

⁹³⁹ Large Chinese importer of sawn timber plans to invest in Belarusian woodworking [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/krupnyj-kitajskij-importer-pilomaterialov-planiruet-investirovat-v-belorusskuju-derevoobrabotku-451402-2021/>

As for the Chinese vector, it should be noted that the BUTB considers the market of this country to be among the most promising. As noted above, the exchange has already accredited almost 50 Chinese companies, more than half of which regularly participate in trading. "In addition, special trading sessions are held once a fortnight for the sale of sawn timber in the PRC"⁹⁴⁰. All of this combined contributes to the fact that in the first half of 2021, BUTB's turnover with Chinese partners exceeded \$25 million, almost double that of the whole of 2020. To further increase the attractiveness of the exchange platform for customers from China, BUTB has decided to provide them with the opportunity to make all necessary settlements in RMB. This will include settlements under exchange contracts, payment of exchange fees and transfer of the deposit. In general, it will simplify the financial side of exchange activities for Chinese participants.

Speaking about the Asian vector of BUTB's activities, we would like to recall the following fact: in June 2021, the first company from the Republic of Korea, Nam Chang Co. Ltd., which is a major supplier of timber products to the Korean market and has its own production facilities and extensive warehouse network. It is going to buy sawn timber and fuel pellets produced in Belarus at BUTB. "Delivery of goods is planned to the port of Poussaint using railway and sea transport"⁹⁴¹. It is interesting that with the appearance of this Korean participant, the geography of exchange trading on BUTB now covers 65 countries.

A little earlier - in March 2021 - the first BUTB broker in Israel was Global Edge Sourcing Ltd, a major distributor of furniture and finishing materials, which plans to "organise direct supplies of Belarusian sawn timber to the Israeli market, where there is currently a high demand for these products"⁹⁴². In the future, it is a question of expanding the range of goods purchased through BUTB. In particular, this may happen at the expense of reinforcing bars produced by the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant. It should be noted that as of the end of March 2021, over 50 brokerage companies, including those from Germany, China, Lithuania, Latvia, Latvia, Poland, Russia, and Estonia, had already been accredited with BUTB.

⁹⁴⁰ The possibility to make settlements in Chinese yuan will appear on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vozmozhnost-proizvodit-raschety-v-kitajskih-juanjah-pojavitsja-na-butb-449604-2021/>

⁹⁴¹ BUTB organises deliveries of Belarusian products to the Republic of Korea [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-organizuet-postavki-belorusskoj-lesoproduktseii-v-respubliku-koreja-444466-2021/>

⁹⁴² BUTB accredits the first broker in Israel [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-akkreditovala-pervogo-brokera-v-izraile-433901-2021/>

Along with China, one of the fastest growing export destinations for BUTB in 2021 is such a European country as Great Britain. At the end of the first half of the year, deliveries of Belarusian sawn timber to the British market through the exchange platform increased 11(!) times at once, exceeding \$12 million, and wooden stakes - 16(!) times, up to \$3.7 million. Back in April 2021, regular sales of tanned semi-finished products "vet-blue", produced by Belarusian tanneries, were launched here. And in just a couple of months the amount of transactions for this commodity item exceeded \$740 thousand. Apparently, this is only the beginning of a very dynamic and promising growth. And at the end of June 2021, a special trading session was organised at BUTB, which became "the first experience of selling timber products to the British market in the form of complex multi-basic lots"⁹⁴³. As a result of these trades, almost five thousand cubic metres of sawn timber worth two and a half million dollars were sold to the UK.

In June 2021, the BUTB also registered the first transaction for the sale of Belarusian leather products to Italy. At an export auction of leather raw materials, "an Italian company purchased a trial batch of tanned semi-finished tan "vet-blue" for \$35 thousand"⁹⁴⁴. And there is every reason to believe that this pilot deal will become a starting point for long-term co-operation.

In 2021, the BUTB experts also began to seriously develop the African vector of activities. In particular, its Egyptian direction. In March, "the first deal to export Belarusian goods to this North African country was made by the Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export, which bought a trial batch of Belarusian lumber"⁹⁴⁵. And the goods were safely delivered to the end consumer. In June 2021, a delegation of Egyptian business circles visited the BUTB to study the Belarusian experience of stock exchange trading and use it as a basis for the creation of the first Egyptian stock exchange. The business partners from this North African country studied the peculiarities of exchange trading in agricultural products with particular attention, "as pilot trading at the first commodity exchange in Egypt is planned to be held in this

⁹⁴³ Belarusian sawn timber for \$2.5 million sold to the UK at the exchange trades [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-na-25-mln-prodali-v-velikobritaniyu-na-birzhevyh-torgah-448128-2021/>

⁹⁴⁴ Italy started to buy Belarusian leather products at BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/italija-nachala-pokupat-belorusskuju-kozhevennuju-produktsiju-na-butb-444946-2021/>

⁹⁴⁵ Zaleskii, B. To move forward. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 266.

group of goods"⁹⁴⁶ . In the future, the parties plan to cooperate in other areas, including supplies of Belarusian lumber products, construction materials and industrial goods to the north of the African continent. In the meantime, information about the possibilities of the Belarusian exchange platform has already been included in the materials of events organised by the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce.

Another trend, which very eloquently shows that the Belarusian exchange platform is gradually gaining popularity among representatives of foreign business, for whom risk minimisation is of paramount importance, is the rapid growth - three and a half times in the first half of 2021 - of the number of transit transactions made by foreign companies. The peculiarity of these transactions is that their participants are non-residents of Belarus - companies from Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, and Estonia. An important detail: if in 2020 these transactions concerned only industrial and consumer goods, now they are registered in almost all areas available on BUTB. In particular, "Russian companies have been actively supplying softwood lumber to the Baltic States and Poland. As a result, 77 transit transactions worth \$968 thousand were registered in the first half of the year"⁹⁴⁷ . And in the section of industrial and consumer goods the subjects of 76 transactions were fabrics, lighting equipment, furniture, motor oil - a total of \$2.3 million. And there is every reason to believe that in future these indicators will only increase.

Speaking about the Russian vector, and as of 1 June 2021, 2,589 business entities from Russia were accredited with BUTB, it should be emphasised that the intensification of work with companies from the regions was one of the main trends in BUTB's interaction with the Russian Federation in the first half of 2021. The total amount of exchange transactions between Russian and Belarusian economic entities during this period increased 1.8 times and totalled \$63 million. This is largely due to the fact that 126 new participants from Russia came to BUTB in 2021. And the largest volume of transactions falls on representatives of the Leningrad, Moscow and Smolensk regions. "The leadership of the Leningrad region is due, on the one hand, to significant volumes of purchases of Belarusian cement and dairy products, and,

⁹⁴⁶ Egyptian business sees significant potential in the development of exchange trade with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/egipetskij-biznes-vidit-znachitelnyj-potentsial-v-razvitiu-birzhevoj-torgovli-s-belarusju-444144-2021/>

⁹⁴⁷ The amount of transit transactions on BUTB has grown 3.5 times since the beginning of the year [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/summa-tranzitnyh-sdelok-na-butb-s-nachala-goda-vyrosla-v-35-raza-452802-2021/>

on the other hand, to coal supplies for the needs of Belarusian enterprises"⁹⁴⁸. The Novosibirsk Region, the largest buyer of Belarusian dried milk, and the Ivanovo Region, the leader in exchange purchases of butter in Belarus, join the leaders.

It is quite possible that this list will include other Russian regions as early as 2021. In particular, the BUTB plans to provide a single sales and procurement channel for agricultural producers in Voronezh Region, as it is the products of the agro-industrial complex that have every chance to become the driver of exchange trade with this Russian region. The fact is that "oilseed meal, feed additives, cereals and grains are always in demand on the Belarusian market, and the Voronezh Region is one of the leaders in this segment"⁹⁴⁹. On the other hand, according to the results of the first half of 2021, the turnover of agricultural products at the BUTB has already increased by 70 per cent, and Belarusian exports have almost quadrupled, exceeding \$60 million.

As for Yaroslavl region, it is planned to organise exports of Belarusian butter and milk powder through the BUTB site. This became known in July 2021, when "the management of one of the leading producers of sour-milk products and ice cream in the Yaroslavl region expressed interest in purchasing large volumes of butter and skimmed milk powder on exchange trading to meet the needs of the enterprise in high-quality raw materials"⁹⁵⁰. At the same time, we are also talking about using the BUTB platform to sell Yaroslavl products to China using a transit transaction mechanism.

It was discussed at a business forum at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of this Russian region in June 2021 at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of this Russian region that the use of the exchange mechanism can give a powerful impetus to the development of trade and economic cooperation between Belarus and the Pskov region, the volume of which has noticeably decreased in 2020. The attention of its participants was focused not only on the supply of products of Pskov enterprises to the Belarusian market, but also to third countries through transit deals. After all, this is now one of the most

⁹⁴⁸ Exchange trade turnover of Belarus and Russia in the first half of the year increased 2 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/birzhevoj-tovarooborot-belorussi-i-rossii-za-i-polugodie-vyros-v-2-raza-450765-2021/>

⁹⁴⁹ BUTB will provide a single channel of sales and purchases for agricultural producers of Belarus and Voronezh region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-obespechit-edinyj-kanal-sbyta-i-zakupok-dlya-selhозproizvoditelej-belorussi-i-voronezhskoj-oblasti-450418-2021/>

⁹⁵⁰ BUTB plans to develop exchange trade in dairy products with the Yaroslavl region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-razvivat-birzhevuju-torgovlyu-molochnoj-produktsiej-s-jaroslavskoj-oblascju-450278-2021/>

demanded instruments for Russian participants of exchange trading. And agreements have already been reached to sell through BUTB "a wide range of sawn timber, oilseeds and products of their processing, feed additives, electrical equipment, BOPET films and polyester produced by Pskov companies"⁹⁵¹.

The BUTB and the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry agreed to join efforts to develop Belarusian-Russian trade in June 2021. Recall that in 2020 the trade turnover of Belarus with St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region "came close to \$2 billion, and this despite the negative consequences of the pandemic"⁹⁵². The fact that the interest in business interaction between the parties continues to grow is evidenced by the BUTB seminar for the business community of St. Petersburg held in June 2021, which was attended by the heads of 30 companies representing various sectors of the economy, including the production of rolled metal and electrical products, machine building, wholesale trade in agricultural products, supply of equipment for the railway and agro-industrial enterprises.

The Orel region also sees great potential for co-operation with the BUTB in 2021. This is evidenced by the agreements reached in June 2021 and related to the organisation of "deliveries to Belarus of cable and wire products, lifting equipment and solid-state relays"⁹⁵³. It should be noted that for this Russian region Belarusian business entities are among the three main trade and economic partners together with Latvian and Kazakh ones. In 2020, the enterprises of the Orel region supplied almost \$41 million worth of products to the Belarusian market. The BUTB will provide them with an additional sales channel and the possibility of direct access to the largest Belarusian consumers.

The activation of exchange trade with the Kaliningrad region was discussed at a seminar held at the end of June 2021, which was attended by representatives of small and medium-sized businesses from this Russian region interested in expanding sales of their products. As a result, the participants of the business meeting agreed that the most promising area of exchange trade is agro-industrial products. In particular, goods of the oil and fat group, which

⁹⁵¹ BUTB will expand co-operation with the Pskov region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirjaet-sotrudnichestvo-s-pskovskoj-oblajtu-445547-2021/>

⁹⁵² BUTB and the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry agreed on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-sankt-peterburgskaja-torgovo-promyshlennaja-palata-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-445340-2021/>

⁹⁵³ Enterprises of the Orel region of Russia plan to sell metal products and equipment through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriatija-orlovskoj-oblasti-rossii-planirujut-prodavat-metallproduktsiju-i-oborudovanie-cherez-445119-2021/>

traditionally occupy a significant share in the export of the Kaliningrad region, and "the region's largest oilseed processor regularly tops the ranking of meal sellers at exchange trading. Moreover, the exchange platform can not only serve as an entry point to the Belarusian market, but also simplify the access of Kaliningrad companies to the markets of third countries"⁹⁵⁴.

Exchange trade can become an important element of trade and economic interaction with other Russian regions as well. In particular, this was discussed in June 2021 at the meeting of the working group on cooperation between Belarus and Kalmykia, where BUTB demonstrated its readiness to provide Kalmyk exporters with direct access to more than 21 thousand Belarusian companies and also to become an electronic window to the markets of other countries, revealing the experience of transit deals "to sell Russian rapeseed oil to China and sawn timber to the Baltic States"⁹⁵⁵.

The business community of the Orenburg region intends to cooperate with BUTB in several areas at once, which was discussed at the webinar of the parties held in early July 2021. Firstly, it is a question of organising the export of Orenburg pig iron and sheet metal to the Belarusian market. Secondly, entrepreneurs in this Russian region are interested in the supply of oilseed processing products to the markets of third countries through the mechanism of transit transactions. The fact is that the structure of the Orenburg region's exports is dominated by non-resource non-energy goods. And for the Belarusian side, metal products - pig iron and rolled sheets - are of particular interest. As for transit deals, BUTB "is ready to help oilseed processors from the Orenburg Region to enter the markets of China, Switzerland and the Baltic States"⁹⁵⁶.

The Republic of Bashkortostan also considers exchange trading as an effective tool for intensifying trade and economic cooperation with Belarus. At the meeting of business circles of this Russian region in July 2021 with the representatives of the BUTB, "12 Bashkir enterprises engaged in the production and sale of compressor equipment, air purification systems, food products, biofertilisers, reagents for the oil industry and water circulation

⁹⁵⁴ BUTB and the Kaliningrad Chamber of Commerce and Industry agreed on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-kaliningradskaja-torgovo-promyshlennaja-palata-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnicestve-448294-2021/>

⁹⁵⁵ BUTB plans to develop exchange trade with Kalmykia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-razvivat-birzhevuju-torgovlyu-s-kalmykijei-446923-2021/>

⁹⁵⁶ Orenburg region is interested in the development of exchange trade with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/orenburgskaja-oblazt-zainteresovana-v-razvitiu-birzhevoj-torgovli-s-belorussiju-448484-2021/>

systems" showed interest in participating in electronic trading on the Belarusian exchange platform⁹⁵⁷.

All these facts convincingly show that BUTB is now taking active measures to actualise interaction with Russian regions, as "deepening integration with the Russian Federation in the next five years will remain the most important task of the Belarusian government in terms of the development of foreign economic activity and international cooperation"⁹⁵⁸, for which the implementation of plans of joint activities is envisaged both by sectors of the economy and by Russian regions.

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⁹⁵⁷ BUTB is ready to facilitate the restoration of mutual trade volumes between Belarus and Bashkortostan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotova-sodejstvovat-vosstanovleniju-objemov-vzaimnoj-torgovli-belorussi-i-bashkortostana-452420-2021/>

⁹⁵⁸ Zaleskii, B. With the aim of sustainable development. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 29.

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: every vector requires attention

One of the priority tasks of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) in 2021 is to increase the share of companies from the countries of the "far arc" - Asia, Africa, and Latin America - in the exchange turnover. "This is explained by the significant potential that exists in interaction with these partners, and the successful realisation of which promises considerable benefits to both Belarusian exporters and foreign importers"⁹⁵⁹. By the end of 2021, more than 27.5 thousand business entities from 69 countries were registered on the BUTB. The largest number of companies from Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine are currently operating on the exchange. As for the dynamics of growth in the number of new traders, in 2021 China was the leader. At the same time, BUTB continued to steadily expand the geography of new participants in the trading sessions held here.

Thus, in mid-September 2021, one of the largest suppliers of wood products to the **Japanese** market - Shimizu Lumber, founded in 1950 and headquartered in Kobe on the island of Honshu - completed the paperwork, becoming the first accredited BUTB resident in Japan. "The company considers its entry into the Belarusian market as an opportunity to diversify the sources of supply of woodworking products, primarily softwood sawn timber, which is in high demand in Japan"⁹⁶⁰. It should be noted that this company already buys significant volumes of wood raw materials and sawn timber in South-East Asia, North America and Europe. Nevertheless, it expects to establish long-term fruitful co-operation with local suppliers in Belarus as well.

At the end of December 2021, the first company from **Pakistan**, Sakafat Forever, was accredited at BUTB. It intends to work here "in both directions - import of goods from Belarus and export of Pakistani products to the Belarusian market"⁹⁶¹, not excluding trade through BUTB with companies from other countries through transit deals. In the Belarusian market, the

⁹⁵⁹ Zalessky, B. Goal - trajectory of growth. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 272.

⁹⁶⁰ Belarusian sawn timber will be supplied to Japan through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-budut-postavlja-v-japoniju-cherez-butb-460335-2021/>

⁹⁶¹ BUTB accredits first company from Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-akkreditovala-pervuju-kompaniju-iz-pakistana-477387-2021/>

Pakistani company will start by purchasing sawn timber, as wood products are in high demand in this South Asian country. On the other hand, the company has already started working on opportunities to sell rice and other agricultural products, which are key exports from Pakistan, in Belarus.

At the beginning of December 2021, the first lumber purchase transaction was made on BUTB by an **Israeli** company accredited here as a non-resident broker. "The volume of the pilot shipment was 150 cc with delivery to Ashdod port. The pilot deal is expected to become the starting point for regular export deliveries of domestic [Belarusian] lumber products to the Israeli market"⁹⁶² . An important detail: in parallel with the export of sawn timber, the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant is currently working on supplies of metal products to Israel. As early as in the first decade of December 2021, a circle of potential Israeli buyers was formed. It is expected that after their accreditation at BUTB, the first purchase orders will also be placed. "In this commodity category, the Israeli market is estimated at about \$4bn, which means that almost any volume can potentially be sold through the exchange platform. In addition, we [in Israel] are currently experiencing a real construction boom, and the demand for rebar and steel structures is very high"⁹⁶³ .

At the end of November 2021, **Indian** manufacturers of facing materials, spare parts for agricultural machinery and industrial equipment expressed serious interest in trading their products on the BUTB. In particular, they were talking about listing ceramic tiles, porcelain tiles and epoxy mortars produced in India, which are in significant demand among Belarusian construction organisations. Considering that in 2021, construction industry products have been the subject of transit transactions on BUTB more than once - most often between Russian and Baltic residents, if Indian companies place bids for sale, there is a very high probability that buyers for them will be found quite quickly. "In addition to building materials, Indian companies have announced their readiness to put bearings, thrust rings, spigots and other spare parts for tractors, cars and construction equipment on the exchange. LED lamps and equipment

⁹⁶² BUTB broker in Israel made the first transaction [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/broker-butb-v-izraile-sovershil-pervuju-sdelku-473363-2021/>

⁹⁶³ BUTB is working out the possibility of supplying Belarusian sawn timber and metal products to Israel [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnost-postavok-belorusskikh-pilomaterialov-i-metalloproduktov-i-v-izrail-466415-2021/>

for the confectionery industry are also among the promising commodity positions"⁹⁶⁴ .

Another interesting example of expanding the geography of BUTB's business co-operation is in European countries. In December 2021, an agreement was reached to develop co-operation in the field of exchange trading of agricultural products with the **Serbian** Novi Sad commodity exchange NSCOMEX. The parties agreed to work out the issue of mutual access of Serbian and Belarusian companies to the trades, which will contribute to the growth of trade turnover between Belarus and Serbia as a whole. For this purpose, the agro-industrial enterprises of both countries will be provided with an additional tool for export-import operations. The BUTB sees great prospects in reaching such agreements, as "the most effective way to promote exchange services abroad is accreditation of non-resident brokers, who take over the issues of attracting new companies and, as a rule, provide assistance with settlements and logistics"⁹⁶⁵ . It should be assumed that the results of this interaction between the two exchanges will not be long in coming as early as 2022.

In January 2022, the geography of electronic transactions on BUTB expanded to 70 countries. This happened after the first **Indian** company - Ark Packaging Solutions - was accredited here. It should be noted that during the whole year 2021, five new countries - Brazil, Gibraltar, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea and Gibraltar - were added to BUTB. Also, "at the end of 2021, the top ten largest markets for Belarusian goods include Lithuania, Germany, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Poland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Slovakia and China"⁹⁶⁶ . It is clear that various products from Belarus were supplied to different markets through BUTB: lumber, fuel pellets, rapeseed oil, sugar beet products to European countries; lumber products, wooden poles, stakes and tannery semi-finished products "vet-blue" to British buyers; dried milk, butter, cheese and oilseed products to Russian consumers. As for the People's Republic of China, "whose market is considered by BUTB to be among the most

⁹⁶⁴ Indian manufacturers of building materials and promotional equipment are interested in B2B-platform BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/indijskie-proizvoditeli-strojmaterialov-i-promoborudovanija-zainteresovalis-b2b-ploschadkoj-butb-471997-2021/>

⁹⁶⁵ BUTB and the Serbian Commodity Exchange agreed on co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-tovarnaja-birzha-serbii-dogovorilos-o-sotrudnichestve-475901-2021/>

⁹⁶⁶ BUTB expanded the geography of exchange trading to 70 countries [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirila-geografiju-birzhevoj-torgovli-do-70-stran-479981-2022>

promising"⁹⁶⁷, the leaders so far are lumber, rapeseed oil and sugar. But, to all appearances, in 2022, this balance may seriously change.

The fact is that **China is one** of the countries whose presence on the BUTB platform is growing rapidly. Suffice it to say that in 2021, the Belarusian-Chinese exchange turnover grew three and a half times. And there were several reasons for this. "Firstly, the number of Chinese companies accredited on the Belarusian exchange platform almost doubled. At the same time, two of them received the status of brokers and are engaged in promoting Belarusian products on the PRC market"⁹⁶⁸. For reference, 64 companies from the Celestial Empire were accredited on the BUTB as of 1 December 2021. In January 2022, Zhejiang Pinke Textile Co., Ltd became a new BUTB broker in China. The company plans to attract buyers of agro-industrial products to the auction and considers rapeseed oil and meat and dairy products as the most promising products in this regard.

The intention of the China SAMS Engineering Corporation (CAMSE), announced in January 2022, to purchase meat and other products of the agro-industrial complex using an exchange mechanism, also looks promising in this context. It should be recalled that SAMSE is the largest shareholder of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone". This, of course, opens wide opportunities for BUTB to co-operate in the field of logistics. "Given the existing infrastructure and location, Velikiy Kamen could become an ideal logistics hub for consolidation of containerised cargo with goods that are sold to China through the exchange. First of all, these are sawn timber, rapeseed oil, milk powder, meat and flax fibre"⁹⁶⁹. An important detail: a subsidiary of SAMSE bought four million dollars worth of beef from Belarus in 2021. In 2022, it plans to further increase purchases not only of meat, but also of other agricultural products produced in Belarus. They expect to expand the range of suppliers and conclude deals on more favourable terms with the help of BUTB.

The next important trend is the expansion of the list of products involved in mutual trade. Previously, Chinese representatives were more interested in Belarusian sawn timber, while now sales of sugar and oilseed products through

⁹⁶⁷ Zalesky, B.L. Reference point of co-operation - far abroad / B.L. Zalesky // Matrialy XVIII Mezinárodní vedecko-praktická konference "Aplikované vedecké novinky - 2021". Volume 7: Praha: Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 16.

⁹⁶⁸ New BUTB broker in China will focus on imports of Belarusian agricultural products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-broker-butb-v-kitae-sosredotochitsja-na-importe-beloruskoj-selhозproduktsii-479109-2022/>

⁹⁶⁹ BUTB is ready to ensure uninterrupted supplies of Belarusian agricultural products to China [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotova-obespechit-besprebojnye-postavki-beloruskoj-selhозproduktsii-v-kitaj-481488-2022/>

BUTB are growing. Another important point is the holding of special trade sessions focused on the Chinese market, with delivery to the final buyer. In addition, at the end of 2021, thanks to the implementation of a set of measures to develop exchange trade with China, it became possible to specify the cost of goods and settle exchange transactions in Chinese yuan. In January 2022, the first such export transaction on the BUTB took place. The seller was a woodworking company from China, and the buyer was a European trader supplying lumber products to the European Union, Asia and Africa. "As a result of the transaction, softwood sawn timber was sold for a total amount of 1.8 million Chinese yuan, or \$287 thousand in equivalent"⁹⁷⁰. It should be assumed that this first successful experience of settlements in the national currency will become a good example for all Chinese companies accredited at BUTB, as in this case the currency risks of the transaction participants are reduced, as well as the time of receipt of funds to the seller's account is shortened.

The following fact complements the picture of interaction between the Belarusian exchange platform and Chinese partners. In January 2022, the first transit transaction between Chinese residents, who decided to use this trading platform to minimise the risk of counterparty default, was made on BUTB. As a result, "a company from Hong Kong sold a shipment of 80 tonnes of beef to a company from mainland China. The transaction amounted to \$354 thousand. Previously, such transactions were concluded mainly to companies from Russia and the Baltic States to insure foreign trade risks"⁹⁷¹. Of course, this fact very eloquently testifies to the growing confidence in the Belarusian exchange platform on the part of representatives of Chinese business. And there is every reason to believe that the volumes of transit trade with the participation of Chinese residents on the BUTB will only increase. As well as in other areas of cooperation.

Another outcome of 2021 is that the Russian vector of interaction continues to be a priority area of BUTB's activities, as **Russia** retained the first place in terms of the amount of exchange turnover with Belarus. Moreover, as of 1 January 2022, almost half of the 5,539 foreign companies accredited on this exchange platform were Russian - 2,745. This also indicates that

⁹⁷⁰ The first transaction in Chinese yuan was made on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. [URL: https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervuju-sdelku-v-kitajskih-juanjah-sovershili-na-butb-481365-2022/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervuju-sdelku-v-kitajskih-juanjah-sovershili-na-butb-481365-2022/)

⁹⁷¹ The first transit transaction between Chinese residents was made on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervaja-tranzitnaja-sdelka-mezhdurezidentami-kitaja-sovershena-na-butb-474701-2021/>

"exchange trading is gradually becoming one of the drivers of Belarusian-Russian integration and a very promising project implemented within the framework of the Union State"⁹⁷². And, to all appearances, this positive trend will only steadily gain momentum in 2022.

For example, in January 2022, in order to increase exchange turnover and the number of Russian traders, the third broker on the Russian market, Alor Asset Management, which has many years of experience in providing brokerage services, was accredited on the BUTB. Among its partners are such major trading platforms as the Moscow Exchange and the St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange. With the help of the new broker BUTB plans to significantly increase the inflow of clients from the neighbouring country, as well as to expand the list of Belarusian products sold in Russia. And this is despite the fact that in 2021 a wide range of goods was already supplied to the Russian market through BUTB. These included butter, milk powder, oilseed products and cement, which accounted for about 80 per cent of export sales. Plus, "Russian participants regularly purchased vet-blue leather, scrap metal, construction materials and foodstuffs through the exchange"⁹⁷³. The appearance of the new broker should give new impulses to the partnership of the Belarusian exchange in Russia.

In 2022, BUTB will also prioritise such a new and promising area as the sale of Belarusian-made feed additives - L-lysine sulphate, wheat gluten and premixes - in the Union State. This will be facilitated by BUTB's partnership with the Belarusian National Biotechnology Company (BNBC), which is now rapidly increasing exports of feed additives. In December 2021, the co-operation of BNBK "with the stock exchange moved to a new stage. At that time, the first deal was made to export L-lysine sulphate to Russia"⁹⁷⁴. And in January 2022 the amount of export transactions of BNBK has already doubled. So the prospects here are very encouraging.

Attracting potential buyers of Belarusian goods from Russian regions will remain a clear priority for the BUTB in 2022, although in 2021, the volume of exchange trade with Russian regions grew very significantly, some of them by several times. For example, trade turnover with Moscow Region, where

⁹⁷² Zaleskii, B.L. Exchange trade as a promising integration project of interaction between regions / B.L. Zaleskii // Materiały XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Wyksztalcenie i nauka bez granic - 2021", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 10.

⁹⁷³ BUTB expands the network of brokers in Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirjaet-set-brokerov-v-rossii-480545-2022/>

⁹⁷⁴ BNBK increases exports of feed additives through the exchange [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bnbk-naraschivaet-eksport-kormovyh-dobavok-cherez-birzhu-482306-2022/>

Belarusian companies supplied butter, flour, crushed stone, and tannery semi-finished products, doubled. The same growth rate was observed in Leningrad Oblast. One of the reasons for this success appears to be that as of the beginning of December 2021, 296 business entities of the Leningrad Region were "accredited on BUTB, about one third of which regularly participate in trading. Portland cement and meat and dairy products are mainly supplied to this region through the exchange platform, while ferrous metal products and coal are purchased"⁹⁷⁵. In 2022, this range of exchange trading will be significantly expanded to include confectionery, packaging materials and office furniture. The Chelyabinsk Region also has good indicators in this respect, 64 representatives of which are accredited on the BUTB, and "the amount of transactions made by them reached \$76 million".⁹⁷⁶

There is every reason to believe that in 2022, entrepreneurs from Bashkortostan will start to take an active part in the BUTB bidding process. After all, about 70 Bashkir companies engaged in ferrous metallurgy, petrochemicals, agriculture and light industry took part in a business seminar held in December 2021, where they were able to see for themselves how the active use of the exchange mechanism in cross-border trade has a positive impact on export volumes, contributes to the diversification of its structure and creates a favourable environment for strengthening business contacts.

Udmurtia is another Russian region that intends to significantly intensify its interaction with the BUTB in 2022. At the end of 2021, several Udmurt producers of agricultural products, metal products, machinery and equipment expressed their readiness to be accredited on the Belarusian exchange platform. In particular, a specific agreement to use BUTB as an additional sales channel for sawn timber and wood panels in Belarus, the European Union and Asian countries was reached with two leading Udmurt forest products producers - Orion LLC and Vostok-resource TPK LLC. In addition, the sale of sawn timber and board products to third countries through transit deals is being considered as another direction of BUTB's interaction with Udmurtia's timber enterprises. "In this respect, the most promising markets are the Baltic States and China, where BUTB efforts have already formed a circle of regular

⁹⁷⁵ Enterprises of the Leningrad region intend to sell confectionery and furniture on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predprijatija-leningradskoj-oblasti-namereny-prodavat-na-butb-konditerskie-izdelija-i-mebel-472442-2021/>

⁹⁷⁶ Development of exchange trade between Belarus and Bashkortostan will contribute to the growth of commodity turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/razvitiye-birzhevoj-torgovli-mezhdu-belarusju-i-bashkortostanom-posposobstvuet-rostu-vzaimnogo-473580-2021/>

buyers"⁹⁷⁷ . There are about 120 such companies in the Baltic States alone, and the total amount of transactions in 2021 exceeded 300 million dollars.

The development of exchange trade as a factor contributing to the growth of trade turnover was also discussed in February 2022 at a meeting of the working group on cooperation between Belarus and Karachay-Cherkessia. During the discussion, it was noted that the most promising area of exchange interaction is the segment of the agro-industrial complex, as "Belarusian enterprises engaged in grain processing would certainly be interested in buying these products in Karachay-Cherkessia. First of all, these are wheat, oats, buckwheat, and maize. Besides, the production of vegetable oils is well developed in Belarus, so the seeds of rape, sunflower and other oilseed crops are also in great demand at the exchange trades"⁹⁷⁸ . Apparently, these proposals have found their place in the road map for the development of co-operation for 2022-2024 adopted by the parties. Exchange trading will become another tool with the help of which Belarus and Karachay-Cherkessia plan to increase the volume of trade turnover and expand the range of mutual supplies in the near future.

⁹⁷⁷ BUTB plans to trade in lumber products from Udmurtia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-torgovat-piloproduktsiej-iz-udmurtii-476203-2021/>

⁹⁷⁸ BUTB proposes to develop exchange trade in agricultural products between Belarus and Karachay-Cherkessia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-predlagat-razvivat-birzhevuju-torgovlyu-selhозproduktsiej-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-karachaevо-483814-2022/>

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