

# Challenges of multi-vectorism

In October 2022, at the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, the key factors of growth of the Belarusian economy in 2023 were named. First, it is the outstripping increase in demand due to the build-up of investments in the main capital. It is planned to implement 129 regional, more than 50 import-substituting and 14 integration projects, which are provided with sources and mechanisms of financing. Secondly, it is the growth of exports by five and a half percent. It should be noted that in the first nine months of 2022, Belarus had a foreign trade surplus of four billion dollars. This suggests that the Belarusian economy has entered a sustainable trajectory of recovery growth in 2022. In particular, the main contribution was made by agriculture, and since September - by industry, where the recovery dynamics is also taking shape, growing in sectors that produce high-tech products. How does international cooperation influence the solution of urgent issues of the Belarusian economy development? How does the Belarusian side interact very effectively with key partners on different continents? This is the subject of the proposed study.



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*The ideology of international cooperation in the context of global turbulence*

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The ideology of international co-operation  
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## Towards the first Forum of the 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 the Council participants' attention 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"<sup>1</sup>. 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 particularly active 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 on the Russian side participate in this interregional cooperation"<sup>2</sup>. 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 for the Belarusian side of more than \$1.2 billion. This was due to the supplies of cars, leather shoes, non-alloyed 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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-bazisom-dlja-razvitiija-vzaimnoj-torgovli-v-sng-474946-2021/>

<sup>2</sup> 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.

Belarusian-made motor vehicles are used by the city municipal structures and services, the population especially appreciates modern environmentally friendly electric transport..."<sup>3</sup>. 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 its trade turnover 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"<sup>4</sup>. 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 partners from Bishkek. Especially since there "recently appeared a few watering cars produced in Belarus"<sup>5</sup>, which were liked by the capital's residents. As a result, Minsk discussed not only the

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<sup>3</sup> 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/>

<sup>4</sup> 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-razvitiju-sotrudnichestva-podpisali-grodnenskaja-i-kostanajskaja-oblasti-462339-2021/>

<sup>5</sup> 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-v-zakupke-belorusskoj-tehniki-469870-2021/>

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"<sup>6</sup>.

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 Gomel"<sup>7</sup>. 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

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<sup>6</sup> 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-dlja-uborki-ulits-470601-2021/>

<sup>7</sup> 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/>

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 interaction<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, the enterprise "Gomselmash" 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)"<sup>9</sup>.

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"<sup>10</sup>. More than 200 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

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<sup>8</sup> 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/>

<sup>9</sup> 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-navoijskij-region-uzbekistana-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-it-otrasli-440395-2021/>

<sup>10</sup> The Forum of Regions has opened new horizons for Belarus and Uzbekistan in many areas - Safaev [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/forum-regionov-otkrylye-novye-gorizonty-dlja-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-vo-mnogih-oblastjakh-safaev-356612-2019/>

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 signed<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>. 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"<sup>13</sup>, then only in January-August 2021 trade turnover came close to the mark of \$110 million, "including Belarusian exports - \$107.5 million"<sup>14</sup>. 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

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<sup>11</sup> 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/>

<sup>12</sup> 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/tovarooborot-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-uzbekistanom-za-i-kvartal-uvlechilsja-na-253-do-675-mln-440482-2021/>

<sup>13</sup> 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-v-tadzhikistane-ne-prosto-obosnovany-a-dajut-ekonomicheskij-effekt-459969-2021/>

<sup>14</sup> Trade and economic co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/belarus\\_tajikistan/trade\\_economic/](https://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/belarus_tajikistan/trade_economic/)

projects in the dairy industry are also being prepared"<sup>15</sup> , 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 considered<sup>16</sup> . 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 rest on their laurels, 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, 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"<sup>17</sup> . 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

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<sup>15</sup> 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-druzha-liderov-belarusi-i-tadzhikistana-horoshaja-osnova-dlja-vsestoronnego-sotrudnichestva-460655-2021/>

<sup>16</sup> Zaleski, B.L. In the line of positive dynamics of co-operation / B.L. Zaleski // Materialy XVIII Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Efektivni nastroje modernich ved - 2021". Volume 5: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 13.

<sup>17</sup> 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-oblast-planiruet-naraschivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-tadzhikistanom-467756-2021/>

enterprises held talks on possible co-operation in machine building, healthcare, woodworking, food and processing industries"<sup>18</sup> . 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]"<sup>19</sup> . 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 equipment for the production of asbestos-cement sheets"<sup>20</sup> . 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

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<sup>18</sup> Enterprises of Minsk and Sughd regions are interested in co-operation in industry [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-minskoj-i-sogdijskoj-oblastej-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnicestve-v-sfere-promyshlennosti-468050-2021/>

<sup>19</sup> 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-oblast-tadzhikistana-zainteresovany-v-tesnom-sotrudnicestve-i-467893-2021/>

<sup>20</sup> 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-beltp-i-tpp-sogdijskoj-oblasti-tadzhikistana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-468065-2021/>

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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## To build on the co-operation mechanisms already in place

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"<sup>21</sup> .

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..."<sup>22</sup> . 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.

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.<sup>23</sup> An undoubted priority in this regard

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<sup>21</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Eurasian integration in the context of a large partnership on the continent / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Naukowa myśl informacyjnej powieki - 2021", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C.24.

<sup>22</sup> The EAEU approved the main directions of international activities for 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/v-caes-utverdili-osnovnye-napravleniya-mezhdunarodnoj-deyatelnosti-na-2022-god/>

<sup>23</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Vectors of Eurasian integration - Indonesia, Chile, Egypt / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XV Międzynarodni vedecko-praktická konference "Vedecky prumysl evropskeho kontinentu - 2019". Volume 6: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 11.

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..."<sup>24</sup>, 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"<sup>25</sup>. 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 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"<sup>26</sup>. Recently, co-operation in such spheres as pharmaceuticals, machine building, information and

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<sup>24</sup> 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/obrashchenie-prezidenta-sadyra-zhaparova-k-glavam-gosudarstv-%E2%80%93chlenov-eaes-po-sluchayu-predsedatelstvovaniya-kyrgyzstana-v-organakh-soyuza-v-2022-godu/>

<sup>25</sup> 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-snizheniya-eksportnoj-aktivnosti-predstavitel-mid-o-vneshnetorgovoj-477276-2021/>

<sup>26</sup> 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-amereny-vyjti-na-dokrizisnye-pokazateli-torgovli-po-itogam-2021-goda/>

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"<sup>27</sup>. 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 cooperation were the post-water 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"<sup>28</sup>.

Other international organisations with which the EAEU plans to intensify mutually beneficial cooperation in the near future include the International Sugar Organisation (ISO), which currently unites 87 states 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

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<sup>27</sup> 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/cek-i-postoyannyj-sekretariat-latinoamerikanskoj-ekonomicheskoy-sistemy-zayavili-o-perehode-k-predmetnym-peregovoram-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sotrudnichestve/>

<sup>28</sup> 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-/>

horizon of practical interaction <...> to develop effective measures for the development of a common market for sugar and sugar-containing products"<sup>29</sup> .

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"<sup>30</sup> . 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"<sup>31</sup> . 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 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"<sup>32</sup> . In December 2021,

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<sup>29</sup> ECE and the International Sugar Organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/cek-i-mezhdunarodnaya-organizatsiya-posaharu-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimoponimanii/>

<sup>30</sup> 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-caes-knr-nabiraet-obodory-ono-organichno-dopolnyaet-dvustoronnne-otnosheniya-nashih-gosudarstv/>

<sup>31</sup> Formation of "single window" and intelligent customs discussed by representatives of the EEC and China [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/formirovanie-%C2%ABedinogo-okna%C2%BB-i-intellektualnuyu-tamozhnyu-obsudili-predstaviteli-cek-i-kitaya/>

<sup>32</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Vectors of Eurasian integration - Serbia, Iran, China / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XV Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Perspektywiczne opracowania sa nauka i technikami - 2019", Volume 6. Przemysl: Nauka i studia. - C. 20.

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, imports - by 34% to \$825 million"<sup>33</sup> , 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"<sup>34</sup> . 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 \$2.2 billion. USD"<sup>35</sup> . 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.

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<sup>33</sup> 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/dejstvje-vremennogo-soglashenija-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-mezhdu-caes-i-iranom-prodleno-do-2025-goda-474217-2021>

<sup>34</sup> EEC and the Government of Mongolia discuss plans of interaction until 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/cek-i-pravitelstvo-mongolii-obsuzhdayut-plan-vzaimodejstviya-do-2025-goda/>

<sup>35</sup> EAEU countries and Bangladesh have the potential to increase trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/strany-caes-i-bangladesh-imeyut-potencial-dlya-dostizheniya-tovarooborota-v-3-mlrd-dollarov-ssha/>

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"<sup>36</sup>.

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"<sup>37</sup>. 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."<sup>38</sup>. 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 <...> to continue interaction in this format in 2022, as well as to consider the possibility of holding specialized webinars on topical issues"<sup>39</sup>.

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

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<sup>36</sup> . Strategic directions for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025. - M., 2020. - C. 53-54.

<sup>37</sup> Sergey Glazyev: "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-evropejskogo-biznesa%C2%BB/>

<sup>38</sup> 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-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoy-komissii-s-associaciej-evropejskogo-biznesa/>

<sup>39</sup> EEC and the European Commission held consultations on topical issues of business work [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/cek-i-evrokomissiya-proveli-konsultacii-po-aktualnym-voprosam-raboty-biznesa/>

determination of customs value were discussed in practical terms.<sup>40</sup> 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"<sup>41</sup>. As a result, the forum participants were able to consider promising projects of cooperation 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 interaction as "digital agenda, green economy, customs co-operation"<sup>42</sup>. 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.

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<sup>40</sup> Ruslan Beketaev: "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-%20vzaimodejstviya-eek-s-evropejskimi-predprimatelyami-i-investorami%C2%BB/>

<sup>41</sup> 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/>

<sup>42</sup> 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/eek-provela-seminar-dlya-germanskogo-biznesa-po-voprosam-regulirovaniya-vneshneekonomicheskoy-deyatelnosti-v-eaes/>

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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## The trust and co-operation factor

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 cooperation on the part of Russia"<sup>43</sup>.

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"<sup>44</sup>. 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."<sup>45</sup>. In many respects, the achievement of such indicators was facilitated by the dealer network of Belarusian enterprises operating in Astrakhan Oblast, including Minsk automobile and tractor plants, Gomselmash, Bobruiskagromash, AMKODOR, as well as "work is underway to create a trade and service centre of MTZ, which is planned to be put into operation in 2022"<sup>46</sup>. 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 3500 trade enterprises

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<sup>43</sup> Zalesky, B. The Partnership Orientation - Success. Chronicle of multi-vector interaction / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Roman Golovchenko: Belarus intends to strengthen trade and economic ties with Russian regions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10081>

<sup>45</sup>. Governor: Astrakhan Oblast and Belarus are linked by long-standing partnership relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gubernator-astrahanskuju-oblast-s-belarusiju-svjazyvajut-mnogoletnie-partnerskie-otnoshenija-472693-2021/>

<sup>46</sup> 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-astrahanskoj-oblasti-uspehi-v-selskom-hozjajstve-my-svjazyvaem-s-ispolzovaniem-belorusskoj-472691-2021/>

sell Belarusian-made goods in the region - linen, cosmetics, clothes, bedding, household chemicals" .<sup>47</sup>

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"<sup>48</sup> . 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"<sup>49</sup> . 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. "In the future, ferry communication with

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<sup>47</sup> 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.

<sup>48</sup> 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-oblast-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-na-2022-2024-gody-472832-2021/>

<sup>49</sup> 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-oblast-predlozila-belarusi-ispolzovat-port-olja-dlja-eksporta-v-jugo-vostochnuju-aziju-472703-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/astrahanskaja-oblast-predlozila-belarusi-ispolzovat-port-olja-dlja-eksporta-v-jugo-vostochnuju-aziju-472703-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/astrahanskaja-oblast-predlozila-belarusi-ispolzovat-port-olja-dlja-eksporta-v-jugo-vostochnuju-aziju-472703-2021/)

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan will be developed"<sup>50</sup>. 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"<sup>51</sup>. 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"<sup>52</sup>. 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

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<sup>50</sup> Vinokurov, E. International transport corridor "North-South": creation of the transport framework of Eurasia. Report 21/5. / E. Vinokurov, A. Akhunbaev, M. Shashkenov, A. Zaboiev. - Almaty, Moscow: Eurasian Development Bank, 2021. - C. 28-29.

<sup>51</sup> 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.

<sup>52</sup> 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/razvitie-birzhevoj-torgovli-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-bashkortostanom-posposobstvuet-rostu-vzaimnogo-473580-2021/>

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"<sup>53</sup> . 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"<sup>54</sup> . 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 are wallpaper. Belarusian Wallpaper Holding has signed a long-term contract with a company from Ufa for the supply of wallpaper products of various assortment"<sup>55</sup> .

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, based 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"<sup>56</sup> . 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 Bashselkhoztehnika enterprise, is in urgent need of caterpillar-based machinery - "we need caterpillar tractors -

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<sup>53</sup> 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>

<sup>54</sup> "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-belarusiju-473499-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nas-ne-pugajut-ni-kovid-ni-sanktsii-bashkortostan-nameren-uglubljat-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusiju-473499-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/nas-ne-pugajut-ni-kovid-ni-sanktsii-bashkortostan-nameren-uglubljat-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusiju-473499-2021/)

<sup>55</sup> Export of the enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" to Bashkortostan in January-October increased by 27% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-predpriyatij-bellesbumproma-v-bashkortostan-v-janvare-oktjabre-vyros-na-27-473805-2021/>

<sup>56</sup> 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>

not dozens, but hundreds"<sup>57</sup> . 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"<sup>58</sup> . 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 \$47.5 thousand. "The basis of supplies from our republic [Belarus] was the supply of machines and devices for

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<sup>57</sup> 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-belorusskih-traktorov-i-zainteresovalsja-bespilotnikami-473514-2021/>

<sup>58</sup> Bashkortostan is interested in studying the Belarusian experience of road maintenance [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bashkortostan-zainteresovan-izuchenii-belorusskogo-opyta-dorozhnogo-hozjajstva-473566-2021/>

lifting, moving, loading or unloading, metal structures made of ferrous metals, corsetry products and women's knitwear"<sup>59</sup> .

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"<sup>60</sup> . 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"<sup>61</sup> . 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"<sup>62</sup> , 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 already has a good experience of co-operation with Siberian regions in the agricultural sector. Suffice it to say that "in the Siberian

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<sup>59</sup> 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/>

<sup>60</sup> 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/98cd50e57373.html>

<sup>61</sup> Roman Golovchenko: Belarus intends to increase trade turnover with the Republic of Tyva [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10135>

<sup>62</sup> 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/>

Federal District, of which Tyva is a part, Belarus [in 2021] supplied more than \$100 million worth of agricultural products"<sup>63</sup> .

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"<sup>64</sup> .

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 may participate in the development of infrastructure of the Ak-Sug mining and processing plant under construction"<sup>65</sup> . 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 Gomselmash 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"<sup>66</sup> . It is quite possible that it will become an active participant in this interregional cooperation to support the

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<sup>63</sup> 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/>

<sup>64</sup> 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/>

<sup>65</sup> 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-sotrudnicestve-s-respublikoj-tyva-nado-prevratit-potentsial-v-konkretnye-proekty-480387-2022/>

<sup>66</sup> Economics, technologies, agro-industrial complex: Gomel region and the Republic of Tyva intend to develop co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/ekonomika-tehnologii-apk-gomelskaja-oblast-i-respublika-tyva-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-480782-2022/>

implementation of projects in Tyva from the moment of design to the launch of the farm.

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## On the road of friendship and co-operation

Belarus and Kazakhstan signed the Treaty on Social and Economic Cooperation until 2026 in November 2017. In this document, the parties outlined the implementation of a qualitatively new stage in their bilateral relations. At the end of June 2021, during the visit of the Belarusian government delegation to this Central Asian country, a task corresponding to this new stage was announced - to "reach new indicators in mutual trade - more than \$1bn in goods and services per year"<sup>67</sup>.

In February 2022, summarising the results of the past year, the parties stated at a high level that Belarusian-Kazakh trade turnover exceeded one billion dollars for the first time in history. To be absolutely precise, it "totalled \$1,092.5 billion and increased by 31.9% compared to the same period last year [2020], exports - \$911.8 million (up 25%). The balance is positive - \$731.1 million"<sup>68</sup>. Belarusian supplies were based on a variety of food products - fresh or chilled beef, condensed and dried milk and cream, cheese and cottage cheese, sausages and similar meat products, sugar, as well as parts of rolling stock, combine harvesters, furniture and its parts. The commodity distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in Kazakhstan includes more than 40 companies, as well as more than 170 entities of the dealer network. There are also a number of joint assembly plants for Belarusian machinery and equipment.

In October 2022, high-level working meetings of representatives of the governments of Belarus and Kazakhstan were held in Astana, where the parties outlined priorities in the field of industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, and construction.

In the area of industrial co-operation, we note that seven Belarusian enterprises operate in Kazakhstan, including Gomselmash, Minsk Tractor Plant, and Bobruiskagromash. They are steadily increasing supplies of machinery components to this country for the production of equipment. Within the framework of one of the largest projects on creation of tractor production in the industrial zone in Kostanai, construction of a workshop for manufacturing of

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<sup>67</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. With an eye on trade and production co-operation / B.L. Zaleskii // Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Dynamika naukowych badań - 2021", Volume 6. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 21.

<sup>68</sup> Golovchenko: trade turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2021 for the first time exceeded \$1 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-tovarooborot-belarusi-i-kazachstana-v-2021-godu-vpervye-prevysil-1-mlrd-486829-2022/>

unified cabins with production capacity of up to 10 thousand units per year has been completed. "The parties are studying the possibility of organising the production of not only elements and units of tractor equipment, but also machine tools, engines for tractor equipment, diesel generators, pumping units, optical products"<sup>69</sup> .

As for new prospects for cooperation, the production of fire trucks based on the chassis of the Minsk Automobile Plant and the Pozhsnab enterprise is being discussed. This is a new promising niche that needs to be filled with Belarusian equipment. In general, "we can increase mutual supplies with Kazakhstan by \$200 million"<sup>70</sup> . The experience of Minsk Motor Plant (MMZ), whose trading house was opened in early 2022 in Kazakhstan and which successfully sells Belarusian engines, special equipment and spare parts with increasing indicators, is interesting in this regard. In this context, in October 2022, MMZ took part in the KazAgro-2022 international exhibition, which is the largest and most visited in Central Asia. The goal of the Belarusian company at the forum is "to expand business and commercial prospects, opportunities to promote products, and increase brand recognition"<sup>71</sup> . For the same purpose, in September 2022 in Astana, more than 30 Belarusian business entities took part in international specialised exhibitions on mechanical engineering and metalworking, as well as on the manufacturing industry. Collective stands were "presented by enterprises of the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Education, individual stands were presented by Minsk Tractor Plant and machine-tool enterprises"<sup>72</sup> . This suggests that new projects in Belarusian-Kazakh industrial co-operation are on the way.

In the agro-industrial sector, the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan confirmed its interest in building a 1200-head dairy farm on Kazakh soil, where "Belarusian technologies, materials, equipment and dairy cattle will be used.

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<sup>69</sup> Golovchenko: Belarus and Kazakhstan need to move forward in the field of industrial cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarusi-i-kazahstanu-nuzhno-dvigatsja-dalshe-v-oblasti-promkooperatsii-531879-2022/>

<sup>70</sup> Snopkov: The basis of cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan is production cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/snopkov-bazoj-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-kazahstana-javljaetsja-proizvodstvennaja-kooperatsija-506651-2022/>

<sup>71</sup> Minsk Motor Plant presented its products at the exhibition in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskij-motornyj-zavod-predstavil-produktsiju-na-vystavke-v-kazahstane-528774-2022/>

<sup>72</sup> More than 30 Belarusian enterprises participate in industry exhibitions in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-30-belorusskih-predpriatij-uchastvujut-v-vystavkah-promyshlennosti-v-kazahstane-525159-2022/>

Work will start this year and will continue in 2023"<sup>73</sup>. Belarus continues to study the creation of veterinary drugs production in Kazakhstan to meet the needs of both the domestic market and prospective exports to third countries. BelVitinopharm will participate in this project on the Belarusian side. In addition, the Kazakh side expressed interest in supplies of Belarusian mixed fodders, premixes, amino acids, and in switching to potato seeds of Belarusian selection.

The Belarusian and Kazakh partners are also planning several projects in the construction sector in the near future. "Among them there are symmetrical ones - the construction of a Belarusian neighbourhood in Astana and a Kazakh neighbourhood in Minsk. <...> At this stage, the plan is to determine the land plots and concept, to attract state developers"<sup>74</sup>. Another project is the joint production of ceramic tiles. Kazakhstan has a lot of mineral resources, so it is planned to set up production with the involvement of Belarusian specialists and technologies.

Another interesting fact: Belarus and Kazakhstan are also planning to develop freight transport by railway. In October 2022, a Belarus-Kazakhstan round table was held in Astana, where more than 80 participants, including about 40 Kazakh companies from the mining, oil, chemical, gas, metallurgical and agricultural industries, carriers and transport and logistics companies of the country, as well as representatives of Belarusian forestry, woodworking and food industries, transport and freight forwarding companies, discussed the prospects for the development of existing projects and current transport and logistics solutions for long-distance transport. At the same time, "considerable attention was paid to the issues of unimpeded passage of cargo from Belarus to Kazakhstan, as well as to China in transit through Kazakhstan, including as part of container trains"<sup>75</sup>.

Interregional co-operation is another important component of Belarusian-Kazakh bilateral interaction. Let us recall that "there are about 30 agreements between the regions of Belarus and Kazakhstan"<sup>76</sup>. Among the Belarusian

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<sup>73</sup> Production of veterinary preparations and construction of MTFs. How Belarus and Kazakhstan will co-operate in agro-industrial complex [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-vetpreparatov-i-stroitelstvo-mtf-kak-budut-sotrudnicat-belarus-i-kazahstan-v-apk-531987-2022/>

<sup>74</sup> Belarusian quarter in Astana, Kazakh quarter in Minsk. What new projects are discussed in construction [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskij-kvartal-v-astane-kazahstanskij-v-minske-kakie-novye-proekty-obsuzhdajut-v-stroitelstve-531980-2022/>

<sup>75</sup> Belarus and Kazakhstan plan to develop freight traffic by railway [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kazahstan-planirujut-razvivat-gruzoperevozki-po-zheleznoj-doroge-530740-2022/>

<sup>76</sup> Zaleskii, B. The goal is stable growth. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 52.

participants of this effective interaction is **Minsk Region**, whose trade turnover with Kazakhstan in 2021 increased by another 7.5 per cent to \$190 million. At the same time, "exports accounted for almost \$180 million, with a growth rate of 107.2 per cent. In foreign trade there was a surplus of almost \$170 million. The volume of foreign direct investment from Kazakhstan was more than \$1.2 million, or 137.2 per cent of the 2020 level"<sup>77</sup>. Karaganda and Pavlodar regions are among the active Kazakh partners of the Belarusian capital region.

Thus, the agreement on cooperation between Minsk **Region** and **Karaganda Region** was signed back in 1996 and included measures on cooperation in industry, agriculture, healthcare, and education. In June 2013, in this Kazakh region began its work LLP "JV KazBelAZ" - a joint venture for overhaul of units and assemblies, production of spare parts and manufacture of machinery of the Belarusian Automobile Plant. "The production is based at Karaganda Foundry and Machine Building Plant (KLMZ) - a branch of Kazakhmys Corporation LLP"<sup>78</sup>. This JV became one of the largest in the State Programme of Forced Industrial and Innovative Development and was included in the Kazakhstan Industrialisation Map for 2010-2014. The first Belarusian dump truck was assembled in Karaganda in August 2013 by "Karaganda automobile masters who were trained at the Belarusian plant"<sup>79</sup>. And in October 2021, the parties have already discussed the establishment of a joint production of fire-fighting equipment in Karaganda region. At that time, "21 joint ventures were already operating in the Kazakh region. Among them is a company for the assembly of dump trucks, repair and maintenance of BelAZ equipment"<sup>80</sup>. Apparently, this interaction can be further expanded, as the region is interested in attracting Belarusian companies and is ready to create favourable conditions for them so that they could "take part in the implementation of agricultural projects, construction of schools. Co-operation in the IT sphere is also possible"<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Turchin discussed with Beisenbayev the development of cooperation between Minsk region and Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turchin-obsudil-s-bejsenbaevym-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-minskoj-oblastju-i-kazakhstanom-486296-2022/>

<sup>78</sup> Potylitsyn, S. The process of regular evolution / S. Potylitsyn // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://kazpravda.kz/n/protsess-zakonomernoy-evolyutsii/>

<sup>79</sup> Akhmetova, A. Karaganda residents assembled the first Belarusian dump truck / A. Akhmetova // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <https://www.altyn-orda.kz/karagandincy-sobrali-pervyj-belorusskij-samosval/>

<sup>80</sup> Belarus and Kazakhstan can launch joint production of fire-fighting equipment in the territory of Karaganda region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://primepress.by/news/kompanii/belarus-i-kazakhstan-mogut-zapustit-sovmestnoe-proizvodstvo-pozharnoy-tekhniki-na-territorii-karagan-38483/>

<sup>81</sup> About the visit of the Ambassador of Belarus to Karaganda region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://kazakhstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c25b80e259079cad.html>

As for **Pavlodar Region**, Minsk Region signed an agreement with it on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation in 2009. In 2017, the parties agreed to cooperate in agriculture. A great interest of the Kazakhs then aroused the Belarusian experience in the construction of dairy and cattle complexes. "Handing over a package of model projects of agricultural facilities to Pavlodar residents, representatives of the capital region of Belarus expressed their readiness not only to advise them on this topic, but also to build dairy complexes at their place on mutually beneficial terms"<sup>82</sup>. In addition, the free economic zones of Pavlodar region invited interested companies of Minsk region to participate in projects on joint use of subsoil resources of the region. One of them is an aluminium cluster involving large companies from Germany, Poland, and Turkey. It should be noted that the machinery of the Belarusian Automobile Plant is already very actively used in this area of Kazakhstan. In particular, in February 2021, at the assembly site of the technopark of the technopark of the Vostochny open-pit mine of JSC "EEC" of the Eurasian Group (ERG), the assembly of three BELAZ dump trucks with a payload capacity of 130 tonnes, which were added to this coal mine enterprise, was completed. They joined "seven of their brethren, which have been in operation for two years at the cyclic-flow stripping areas of the open-pit mine, having earned the Ekibastuz miners a reputation of reliable and highly productive mining machines"<sup>83</sup>. As we can see, the range of development of relations between Minsk and Pavlodar regions can still be very wide.

In particular, co-operation with Kazakhstan is among the priority areas of development of foreign economic relations of **Gomel region**. The enterprises of the south-eastern region of Belarus have the most serious intentions to develop co-operation ties with Kazakh partners in import substitution and logistics opportunities. A good example is the joint production of Gomselmash OJSC and AgromashHolding KZ JSC, which has been operating in Kazakhstan since 2007. Today it is not just an assembly shop, but a real production facility. "During the period of cooperation, more than \$320 million worth of the plant's products have been delivered to the Kazakhstan market, and a total of over 3,700 units of jointly

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<sup>82</sup> Zalesky, B. Actual media topics of Belarusian-Kazakh interaction / B. Zalesky // International Journalism-2018: global challenges, regional partnership and media: materials of the VII International scientific and practical conference, Minsk, 15 February. 2018 / comp. B.L. Zaleskii ; ed. by T.N. Dasaeva. - Minsk: Izd. Centre BSU, 2018. - C. 98.

<sup>83</sup> BELAZ delivered 130-tonne dump trucks to Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavil-130-tonnye-samosvaly-v-kazahstan-428544-2021/>

produced machinery have been sold"<sup>84</sup> . The products of other enterprises of Gomel region, including Belarusian Metallurgical Plant and Milkavita open joint-stock company, are also in demand in Kazakhstan.

**The Mogilev region** also cooperates closely with this country in Central Asia, which is beginning to step up its work in trade and economic co-operation. "In the first seven months of this year [2022], the foreign trade turnover between Mogilev Oblast and Kazakhstan totalled about \$40 million"<sup>85</sup> . But there are still plenty of opportunities for the parties to work together. Kazakhstan is one of the most important trade and economic partners for the Belarusian region, ranking second in terms of foreign trade turnover among the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union both at the end of 2021 and for the first seven months of 2022. The main export items are machinery and spare parts for cars, dairy products, poultry meat, lifts, and railway cars. In turn, Mogilev region buys equipment, chemical products and various raw materials in Kazakhstan. It should be noted that almost 45 per cent of all imports of the region is paraxylene, which is used by Mogilevkhimvolokno. Other enterprises of the Belarusian region, including those from the free economic zone Mogilev, also have a number of proposals for co-operation with Kazakh partners.

**Hrodna Region** is also intensifying its co-operation with Kazakhstan, having already concluded five agreements with Kazakh regions. Hrodna region actively supplies agricultural, processing and woodworking products to its partners. But "the time has come to intensify the work, to fill these agreements with real projects and contracts that will intensify the relations between the two countries"<sup>86</sup> .

As for cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan in the educational sphere, the interaction between the parties was also enriched with new colours in 2022. In particular, in October, Baranavichy State University offered co-operation to Shakarim University, which is located in Semey, Abay region. More than seven thousand students study at five faculties in this educational and scientific centre

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<sup>84</sup> Enterprises of Gomel region intend to develop co-operative relations with Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-namereny-razvivat-kooperatsionnye-svjazi-s-kazahstanom-512360-2022>

<sup>85</sup> Isachenko at the meeting with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan: it's time to strengthen work in trade and economic sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/isachenko-na-vstreche-s-poslom-kazahstana-prishlo-vremja-usilit-rabotu-v-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sfere-525098-2022/>

<sup>86</sup> Ambassador of Kazakhstan at the meeting with Karanik: our task is to help businessmen of the two countries to find each other [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/posol-kazahstana-na-vstreche-s-karanikom-nasha-zadacha-pomoch-biznesmenam-dvuh-stran-najti-drug-druga-514826-2022/>

of the north-eastern region of Kazakhstan. The two universities are interested in "jointly implementing educational programmes for students and teachers, organising academic exchanges, summer and winter schools. There are ideas for scientific and innovative projects"<sup>87</sup> .

And one more thing: in September 2022, a round table "Kazakhstan and Belarus: the Road of Friendship and Cooperation" was held in Minsk, where it was noted that "in 2021, trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Belarus exceeded \$1 billion"<sup>88</sup> , but there are still solid reserves for increasing trade turnover: it is not only industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, transport, deepening interregional cooperation, joint ventures, but also interaction in cultural and humanitarian spheres.

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<sup>87</sup> BarSU aims to cooperate closely with the university from Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bargu-natselen-tesno-sotrudnicat-s-universitetom-iz-kazahstana-530948-2022/>

<sup>88</sup> Ambassador of Kazakhstan: Belarus is a country that one always wants to return to [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/posol-kazahstana-belarus-strana-v-kotoruju-vsegda-hochetsja-vozvrachatsja-526048-2022/>

## The goal is a qualitatively new level of co-operation

In April 2022, a Belarusian government delegation visited Uzbekistan and signed contracts worth more than USD 25 million. An equally important outcome was the statement by Minsk and Tashkent that new points of growth in co-operation have been found. And "now the task is to fill it with new content"<sup>89</sup>, in order to bring the annual volume of mutual trade up to half a billion dollars.

The beginning of 2022 showed that the parties were confidently approaching the set goal. While in 2021 Belarusian-Uzbek trade turnover grew by almost 8 per cent and exceeded \$300 million with a surplus of almost \$190 million for the Belarusian side, "in January-February 2022 trade turnover amounted to \$53.5 million and increased by 9.9 per cent against the level of the corresponding period of 2021"<sup>90</sup>. The trade and investment volumes are expected to increase further, primarily through the implementation of joint co-operation projects.

It should be noted that 103 organisations with Belarusian investments have already been registered in Uzbekistan, as well as representative offices of Avtopromsnabpedition LLC, Softclub LLC, AmantisMed LLC, Belvitunifarm LLC. One assembly production of Belarusian machinery with the participation of Belarusian capital - JV AMKODOR-AGROTEXMASH LLC - has been set up there. In particular, "the production of loaders has been set up at the Tashkent Tractor Plant, which shows the demand for these products in the local and regional market"<sup>91</sup>. In addition, co-operation between MAZ OJSC and KRANTAS GROUP LLC, MTZ OJSC and Uzavtosanoat JSC in the field of production of motor vehicles and tractors continues. And "Marko Company" is implementing a joint project in Uzbekistan for the production of footwear. Svetlogorsk Welding Electrode Plant LLC is implementing an investment project in this country to produce welding electrodes. For this purpose, the FE "MONOLITH ASIA" LLC

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<sup>89</sup> Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Uzbekistan can increase trade and investment, growth points have been found [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10260>

<sup>90</sup> Belarus and Uzbekistan intensify the implementation of production and co-operation projects [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-aktivizirujut-realizatsiju-proizvodstvenno-kooperatsionnyh-proektov-495026-2022/>

<sup>91</sup> Machinery, equipment, scientific and technical developments. What Belarus will present at the exhibition in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/tehnika-oborudovanie-nauchno-tehnicheskie-razrabotki-chto-belarus-prezentuet-na-vystavke-v-tashkente-8158/>

was established in Tashkent<sup>92</sup> . And these ties continue to be actively strengthened.

Thus, in April 2022, the official distributor of Minsk Automobile Plant in this Central Asian country - MAZ-TASHKENT LLC - started industrial assembly of MAZ vehicles from SKD kits. "The first model was the MAZ-5337 chassis. Localisation of assembly production in Uzbekistan will allow Minsk Automobile Plant to expand its presence in the market of Central Asian countries, and in the future - Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan"<sup>93</sup> . And within the framework of the Uzbek-Belarusian business forum held in April in Tashkent, the MAZ distributor "signed a contract with PE OLIY TEXNIK for the purchase of 41 MAZ vehicles. <...> The contract amount exceeded \$3 million"<sup>94</sup> .

The Minsk Tractor Plant is also actively increasing its presence in the Uzbek market, having increased shipments of its machines by almost a quarter in the first quarter of 2022. "In total, more than \$10 million worth of machinery was shipped"<sup>95</sup> . Interestingly, Belarusian tractors worth \$31 million were shipped to Uzbek partners for the whole of 2021. In late April and early May, a sales and service centre for Belarusian agricultural machinery was opened in Tashkent, which combines "a showroom and sales centre, a service point and production facilities"<sup>96</sup> . There is also a branch of the bank, which is focused on providing services on lending and leasing of machinery. It is noteworthy that the Belarusian side plans to open similar centres in other Uzbek regions.

Belarusian-Uzbek cooperation in the implementation of joint projects in the field of medicine is very promising. One of them is the joint venture Belpharm, which will produce antibiotics and has already invested over USD 8 million. In addition, the Belarusian side offered its partners to build a joint venture to process blood. An important detail: "Today, the organisations of Belpharmprom Holding have 166 registration certificates for medicines in Uzbekistan. The holding's

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<sup>92</sup> Roman Golovchenko: Trade turnover between Belarus and Uzbekistan should be increased to at least \$500 million [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10257>

<sup>93</sup> . Minsk Automobile Plant has established the assembly of machinery in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-naladil-sborku-tehniki-v-uzbekistane-496181-2022/>

<sup>94</sup> "MAZ-Tashkent" signed a large contract with an Uzbek company for the delivery of 41 vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-tashkent-podpisal-kрупnyj-kontrakt-s-uzbekskoj-kompaniej-na-postavku-41-avtomobilja-498224-2022/>

<sup>95</sup> MTZ in the I quarter increased supplies of machinery to Uzbekistan by more than 23% [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-v-i-kvartale-narastil-postavki-tehniki-v-uzbekistan-bolee-chem-na-23-499321-2022/>

<sup>96</sup> Sales and service centre for Belarusian agricultural machinery opened in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tsentr-prodazh-i-servisnogo-obsluzhivanija-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-otkrylja-v-tashkente-499290-2022/>

members have signed 12 contracts with Uzbek partners for the supply of pharmaceutical products. At the end of 2021, exports of Belpharmprom Holding organisations' products to Uzbekistan totalled \$14 million, in January-February 2022 - \$3 million"<sup>97</sup> .

If we talk about other prospects for co-operation, we can name several other areas. One of them concerns electric transport. The fact is that "Tashkent is considering the possibility of resuming tram service. The Belarusian side is ready to provide comprehensive solutions with the necessary infrastructure, planning and supply of rolling stock"<sup>98</sup> . If the decision on this matter is made, the creation of a joint production facility on Uzbek soil will become a real possibility. The issue of supplying wooden houses from Belarus to Uzbekistan, where "it is now a very fashionable trend <...> and there is a great demand"<sup>99</sup> . This may open up good prospects for the Belarusian Newsprint Plant, which has a conveyor belt production of such houses.

In the same context, it is worth recalling that in late April 2022, the parties considered "the possibility of organising supplies of Belarusian peat substrates to forestry enterprises in Uzbekistan for further use as a basis for growing plantation seedlings"<sup>100</sup> . Given the considerable experience of Belarusian peat enterprises in this area, and in 2021 exports of peat industry organisations of Beltopgaz grew by more than a quarter, it is quite predictable that Uzbekistan will become the 25th country to receive Belarusian peat as early as this year.

Belarusian light industry enterprises, which produce worsted, linen, synthetic and artificial fabrics with various properties, pile fabrics, corsetry and hosiery products, also see their prospects for increasing supplies to the Uzbek market. These are Orsha Flax Factory, OJSC "Mogotex", OJSC "Kamvol", which became participants of the 4th International Exhibition of Textile and Fashion Industry UzTextileExpo Spring 2022, held in April 2022 in Tashkent. Together with them, five more Belarusian enterprises of the chemical and petrochemical industry were also represented, which demonstrated to the numerous visitors of

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<sup>97</sup> Belarus and Uzbekistan discuss deepening co-operation in the pharmaceutical industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-obsuzhdajut-uglublenie-sotrudnichestva-v-farmotrasli-498163-2022/>

<sup>98</sup> Roman Golovchenko: Trade turnover between Belarus and Uzbekistan should be increased to at least \$500 million [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10257>

<sup>99</sup> Golovchenko: Belarus is working out the supply of wooden houses to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-prorabatvyaet-postavki-v-uzbekistan-derevjannyh-domov-498185-2022/>

<sup>100</sup> Belarus is interested in supplying peat substrates to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zaintersovana-v-postavkah-torfjanyh-substratov-v-uzbekistan-499019-2022/>

this business forum "artificial and chemical fibres for textile production, technical textiles for construction, polymer products, chemicals and fertilizers for agriculture, glass fibre"<sup>101</sup>. In short, everything that arouses a keen interest among partners from Uzbekistan and can become the basis for concluding new contracts.

Speaking about the participation of Belarusian exporters in foreign exhibitions, it should be noted that in 2021, participating in exhibitions and forums organised by Belinterexpo, the exhibition enterprise of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, they signed 86 agreements and contracts worth more than \$80 million. At the same time, "agreements and contracts worth \$15 million were signed within the framework of national expositions"<sup>102</sup>. What is important here is that the most productive in terms of the amount of contracts signed included national expositions organised within the framework of exhibitions in Uzbekistan - "INNOPROM. Big Industrial Week" and UzProdExpo/UzAgroExpo.

Speaking about the first of them, it should be noted that the "Big Industrial Week in Uzbekistan", held in April 2021 in Tashkent, was the largest event in this Central Asian country after a pause caused by the pandemic. At that time, the exhibition was attended by "more than 200 enterprises working in the fields of mechanical engineering, metallurgy, energy, pharmaceuticals, chemical industry and medicine from Armenia, Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, the Czech Republic, the EAEU and Central Asia"<sup>103</sup>. As for the Belarusian pavilion, it included stands of 65 companies and organisations that presented engineering, metallurgical, chemical, pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, scientific developments and consumer goods. One of the concrete results of their participation in this exhibition was "the signing by the subsidiary of Minsk Automobile Plant in Uzbekistan - MAZ-Tashkent LLC - of a letter of intent for the supply of chassis and machine kits for the assembly of vehicles to the Uzbek market for the amount of \$10 million. Also, a contract was signed with a private Uzbek company for the supply of 50 units of MAZ machinery for a total of \$3

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<sup>101</sup> Belarusian enterprises of light industry present their potential in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-predpriyatija-legkoj-promyshlennosti-prezentujut-svoj-potencial-v-uzbekistane-498369-2022/>

<sup>102</sup> At the forums and exhibitions "Belinterexpo" domestic enterprises signed contracts for \$80 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-forumah-i-vystavkah-belinterekspo-otechestvennye-predpriyatija-podpisali-kontrakty-na-80-mln-476100-2021/>

<sup>103</sup> More than 20 Belarusian enterprises took part in a major industrial exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bole-20-beloruskih-predpriyatij-prinjali-uchastie-v-krupnoj-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-436286-2021/>

million"<sup>104</sup>. Interestingly, in April 2022, this exhibition in the Uzbek capital was held under a new name - "INNOPROM. Central Asia" - and included six thematic sections: mechanical engineering, metallurgy, energy, chemistry, industrial automation, pharmaceuticals and medicine. There was also a plenary session "Central Asia. Space of Technological Breakthrough" and specialised sessions on infrastructure projects, logistics, financial instruments, and education. Belarusian participation in this business forum was no less representative due to the fact that "exports of Belarusian goods to Uzbekistan have grown six times in five years. The greatest demand is for machinery from Belarus (tractors and tractors-tractors, trucks), chemical products, foodstuffs, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, energy carriers, and oil products. In total, Belarus supplies Uzbekistan with 360 commodity items of all industries"<sup>105</sup>.

As for the agriculture and food exhibitions UzAgroExpo and UzProdExpo, held in Tashkent in November 2021, they are the largest sectoral business forums in Uzbekistan, which this time brought together 120 companies from 18 countries. The national pavilion of Belarus, where 17 companies were represented, demonstrated export opportunities of domestic enterprises in three main areas: food industry; agrarian engineering; and science. Especially many original novelties were presented in the first of them - beef in lingonberry sauce, soft cheese made according to Italian technology from ricotta whey, high quality coffee made according to own patented technology, peanut paste with sea salt, fruit bars made from a mixture of dried prunes, dried apple, oat flakes and syrup, protein milk chocolate with increased protein content, as well as "Belarusian whisky, an alcoholic blended drink made from artesian water on the basis of national grain crops - rye, wheat and barley malt"<sup>106</sup>. The Belarusian State University, Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian-Russian University and Belarusian State University of Food and Chemical Technologies showed numerous visitors the scientific developments in agro-industrial and food spheres, including technologies of restoring damaged soils, methods of producing innovative fermented milk drinks, cosmetics. The Minsk Automobile Plant and the Lidselmash enterprise also brought innovative machinery to the Uzbek capital - a specially designed for the Uzbek market MAZ-65012K cargo dump truck,

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<sup>104</sup> Zaleskii, B. Key task - development. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 40-41.

<sup>105</sup> Belarusian national pavilion will be presented at the exhibition 'INNOPROM' in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskij-natsionalnyj-paviljon-budet-predstavlen-na-vystavke-innoprom-v-uzbekistane-480872-2022/>

<sup>106</sup> The National Pavilion of Belarus is presented at the exhibitions in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-paviljon-belarusi-predstavlen-na-vystavke-v-tashkente-471340-2021/>

which "is equipped with a metal body tilted by a hydraulic mechanism and is designed for transporting bulk cargo, including agricultural goods"<sup>107</sup>, and new modifications of a cultivator for cultivating cotton, the most popular agricultural crop in this Central Asian country. The concrete result of the work at these exhibitions was "an agreement between MAZ-Tashkent, the official distributor of Minsk Automobile Plant in Uzbekistan, and Nurafshon Maxsus Texnika on the supply of engineering products worth \$1 million"<sup>108</sup>. At the Uzbekistan-Belarus agrarian forum, agreements were reached on the construction and reconstruction of a dairy complex using Belarusian technologies on Uzbek soil.

Another important area of interaction between the two countries is the intensification of partnership Belarusian-Uzbek regional ties, which are becoming one of the most important areas of cooperation in the current environment. The First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, which took place in Minsk in July 2019 and opened up new partnership opportunities in such areas as industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, and food industry, and brought together "more than two hundred representatives of such regions as Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzak, Namangan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana, and Tashkent oblasts" from the Uzbek side alone<sup>109</sup>.

On the Belarusian side, Vitebsk region became one of the active participants of this forum, as the positive dynamics of trade and economic cooperation with Uzbek partners has been observed over the past few years. Suffice it to say that in 2019 Uzbekistan entered the list of key partners of Vitebsk among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. At that time, the foreign trade turnover between the parties increased by more than a quarter and exceeded nine million dollars. Export supplies from the Belarusian region "increased one and a half times - up to \$6.7 million. Exports of food products amounted to \$0.9 million, or 13.4% of the total volume. <...> Cheese and dairy products of the Postavy Dairy Plant, Verkhnedvinsk Creamery, Polotsk Dairy Plant, as well as meat products of the Vitebsk Meat Processing Plant are already familiar to Uzbek consumers and are in good demand among them"<sup>110</sup>. In

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<sup>107</sup> Minsk Automobile Plant presented a new gas dump truck at the exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. -2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-predstavil-novyj-gazovyj-samosval-na-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-471501-2021/>

<sup>108</sup> MAZ signed a contract for delivery of machinery to Uzbekistan for \$1 million [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-podpisal-kontrakt-na-postavku-tehniki-v-uzbekistan-na-1-mln-471344-2021/>

<sup>109</sup> Zalesky, B. Sustainability as a formula for growth. Features of international co-operation based on the innovative component / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 37.

<sup>110</sup> Tikhonov, A. Belarusian-Uzbek agrarian forum: afterword / A. Tikhonov // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://produkt.by/story/belorusko-uzbekskiy-agrarnyy-forum-posleslovie>

addition, the Vitebsk region successfully supplied the Uzbek market with baby food, a wide range of vaccines to combat diseases in domestic animals, and pharmaceuticals.

In 2021, the Belarusian region's mutual trade with this Central Asian country exceeded \$12.5 million, with Vitebsk's exports accounting for almost \$10 million, which were again based on medicines, cattle meat, milk and whey powder, butter, cheese, as well as polyethylene, plastic and glass fibre products, and fibre-optic cable. In addition, a joint venture of the Marco leather and footwear holding company began operations on Uzbek soil. Other projects in the sphere of production co-operation are in the pipeline. In particular, starting from 2020, Vitebsk region is negotiating the opening of a joint venture with BelVitinipharm OJSC in Uzbekistan, which will initially trade in medicines with a subsequent transition to their production. In December 2021, a representative office of the Belarusian manufacturer of veterinary drugs was opened in Tashkent. And already "the issues of project financing are being worked out in order to reach the sales of medicines in the amount of \$2 million per year"<sup>111</sup> .

Among other promising areas of interaction between the region's enterprises and Uzbek partners in March 2022 were discussed supplies of fruit and vegetable and meat and dairy products, as well as cooperation in such segments of the industrial sector as mechanical engineering, energy, chemical and gas industry. The activation of partnership ties of Vitebshchina with a number of Uzbek regions and especially with Namangan region should play an important role. The fact is that Vitebsk and Namangan regions signed an agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific, technical and cultural areas in July 2019 in the framework of the I Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, already mentioned above. This document should help build mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between enterprises and organisations of the regions, provide "comprehensive support to business structures in concluding mutually acceptable contracts for the supply of goods and services". There is also talk of joint business seminars, exhibitions and fairs with the participation of representatives of entrepreneurial and business circles"<sup>112</sup> .

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<sup>111</sup> Pushnyakova, A. Uzbekistan can become for the enterprises of Vitebsk region a springboard for supplies to Asia / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/uzbekistan-mozhet-stat-dlja-predpriyatij-vitebskoj-oblasti-tramplinom-dlja-postavok-v-aziju-491940-2022/>

<sup>112</sup> Namangan region will co-operate with Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: [https://nampravda.uz/ekonomika/namanganskaya\\_oblast\\_budet\\_sotrudnichat\\_s\\_vitebskom.html](https://nampravda.uz/ekonomika/namanganskaya_oblast_budet_sotrudnichat_s_vitebskom.html)

The agreement on cooperation between the administrations of the Vitebsk Free Economic Zones (FEZ) and Kosonsoy-Pharm, signed at the same time, is also intended to expand possible areas of trade, economic, and investment interaction between the Belarusian and Uzbek regions; it not only creates a basis for sharing experience and promoting partnership between FEZ residents, but also forms the basis for combining the potential of the parties in carrying out joint activities. Note that "Kosonsoy-Pharm" was among the seven pharmaceutical FEZs established in May 2017 in six Uzbek regions. In addition to it, then appeared "in Karakalpakstan - "Nukus-pharm", Jizzak region - "Zomin-pharm", <...> Syrdarya region - "Sirdaryo-pharm", Surkhandarya region - "Boysun-pharm" and Tashkent region - "Bustonlik-pharm" and ""Parkent-pharm""<sup>113</sup> . They have special tax, customs and currency regimes on their territories. All of them specialise in the development of pharmaceutical enterprises. Several residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" are also engaged in the same sphere. That is why "attraction of investments into projects on creation of production of medicines, medical products is one of the most promising areas of co-operation between the administrations of the two FEZs"<sup>114</sup> . And there is every reason to believe that this interaction between the Belarusian and Uzbek free economic zones will further strengthen the emerging partnership ties between the Vitebsk and Namangan regions.

The documents signed during the visit of the Belarusian government delegation to Tashkent in April 2022 can also serve as an indication of what other areas of Belarusian-Uzbek cooperation will be intensified in the very near future. Thus, the Ministry of Innovative Development of Uzbekistan signed a memorandum of cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and an executive programme of scientific, technical and innovative cooperation for 2022-2023 with the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus also signed two significant documents: a memorandum of understanding with the State Committee for Veterinary Medicine and Livestock Development of Uzbekistan; a roadmap for further development of cooperation in agrarian science, education and innovation development for 2022-2023 with the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan, which, in turn, also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on further development of scientific and

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<sup>113</sup> Seven pharmaceutical FEZs are being created in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2017/05/05/pharm/>

<sup>114</sup> FEZ "Vitebsk" and Uzbek "Kosonsoy-farm" will develop investment co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-i-uzbekskaja-kosonsoj-farm-budut-razvivat-investitsionoe-sotrudnichestvo-352766-2019/>

technical cooperation in the field of agrarian science, education and innovation for 2022-2023. Finally, an agreement on co-operation in the field of livestock breeding was concluded by Belplemzhivobedinenie and the Uzbekchorvanasl agency.

Back in autumn 2018, Belarus and Uzbekistan signed an intergovernmental agreement on socio-economic cooperation for 2019-2023, which "reflects the key agreements at the highest level on developing Belarusian-Uzbek relations and bringing them to a qualitatively new level"<sup>115</sup>. As we can see, the tasks set in this document are being fulfilled by the parties very actively and successfully.

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<sup>115</sup> Zaleskii, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. View from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 228.

## The key area is long-term co-operation

In 2023, Belarus and Armenia will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In recent years, they have been experiencing positive dynamics in mutual trade. The interaction between the two countries in virtually all the main vectors of bilateral relations is gradually "gaining momentum". In the current international environment, Minsk and Yerevan emphasise the development of economic relations. Armenia has been and remains for Belarus the state in which the Belarusian side aims to expand its trade and economic component and is ready to participate in any projects, including those in Armenia, that would be of interest to its Armenian partners.

Recall that back in 2018, the Belarusian-Armenian trade turnover had positive growth dynamics, increasing by more than 17 per cent and exceeding \$50 million. Investment cooperation has become an important element of bilateral interaction. Suffice it to say that "\$7.6 million of investments came from Armenia to Belarus in 2018, including \$7.5 million of direct investments. \$3.5 million of foreign direct investments were attracted in the first quarter of this [2019] year"<sup>116</sup>. This picture of partnership ties between Belarus and Armenia was significantly supplemented by more than 80 entities of the commodity distribution network of Belarusian enterprises operating on Armenian soil, as well as 57 enterprises with Armenian capital - 17 joint ventures and 40 foreign ones operating in Belarus. In addition, there are three enterprises with Belarusian capital operating in Armenia: Ar-Be Armenian-Belarusian Trading House "Ar-Be" LLC, BelAZ Caucasus Trans Service LLC and BelAR Trading House CJSC"<sup>117</sup>. Nevertheless, according to the parties, "so far there are few joint investment projects, and those that are being implemented are often in a sluggish mode"<sup>118</sup>. That is why several years ago Belarus and Armenia raised an urgent issue: not just to trade with each other, but to create joint companies so that the business of the two countries would work more actively with each other. And there are such opportunities in many vectors of co-operation.

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<sup>116</sup> Armenian President Sarkisian arrived in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/prezident-armenii-sarkisjan-pribyl-v-belarus-353322-2019/>

<sup>117</sup> Meeting with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8605>

<sup>118</sup> Myasnikovich offered Armenia to intensify investment co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mjasnikovich-predlozhit-armenii-aktivizirovat-investsotrudnichestvo-343419-2019/>

Agriculture has become one of the priority areas of bilateral Belarusian-Armenian interaction, as the issue of saturating the market with safe and high-quality food products is currently very important for Armenia. That is why international co-operation in this area has great prospects. The Armenian partners want to "create a food safety platform on the basis of which certain agreements with producers from different countries will be implemented"<sup>119</sup>. And the partnership with the Belarusian side looks very promising in this regard. This is evidenced by the fact that in 2018, agricultural exports from Belarus to Armenia increased by 30 per cent to \$13 million. The parties considered not only joint actions in the area of food trade, but also the expansion of supplies of agricultural and other machinery, strengthening the role of Belarus' trade house in Yerevan, the establishment of Armenia's trade house on Belarusian soil, as well as the organisation of joint ventures and cooperation in the area of livestock farming as measures to promote the growth of trade turnover in agriculture. Understanding that the next step in the bilateral relations should be to reach a higher level of cooperation in the context of growing trade turnover, the Belarusian side also proposed, inter alia, "to take part in the renewal of Armenia's fleet of passenger vehicles and in the programme of renewal of lift facilities"<sup>120</sup>.

Another promising area of Belarusian-Armenian partnership is improving transport links between the two former Soviet republics. As is well known, there are no direct communications between Belarus and Armenia, but there is an opportunity to create them within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union along with the relevant infrastructure to ensure the delivery of goods and transit traffic between the countries. In particular, the parties are considering the possibility of transporting Armenian goods to Belarus and transit through its territory by rail. A promising logistical direction in this regard is the use of "the North-South road under construction, which will connect Georgia with Iran, and the FEZ in Meghri, where there is a free economic zone. This is a good opportunity to expand the geography of supplies of Belarusian goods"<sup>121</sup>.

In November 2021, the 15th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Armenian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held, where the

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<sup>119</sup> Armenia is interested in developing co-operation with Belarus in the field of agriculture [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/armenija-zainteresovana-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusju-v-oblasti-selskogo-hozjajstva-353502-2019/>

<sup>120</sup> Belarus is ready to participate in the renewal of Armenia's passenger vehicle fleet [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-uchastvovat-v-obnovlenii-parka-passazhirskoj-tehniki-armenii-334782-2019/>

<sup>121</sup> Heads of transport departments of Belarus and Armenia outlined the points of growth of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/glavy-transportnyh-vedomstv-belarusi-i-armenii-nametili-tochki-rosta-sotrudnichestva-354239-2019/>

parties considered opportunities to strengthen the positions of Belarusian and Armenian exporters in each other's markets, expand the trade network, and cooperate in agriculture, science, and technology. A characteristic feature of the partnership ties between the two countries is the fact that trade turnover between them continues to grow annually. "Thus, if in 2016 it was a little over \$32 million, in 2020 - already over \$82 million. The growth of trade turnover was also recorded at the end of 9 months of this year [2021], it exceeded \$62 million"<sup>122</sup>. At the same time, Belarusian exports to the Armenian market are based on dairy products, furniture, computers for automatic information processing and medicines. This allowed Belarus to achieve a surplus in mutual trade of more than \$32 million in 2020. Another positive trend observed in the relations between the two republics is the further growth of Armenian investments in the Belarusian economy. In the first half of 2021, they received more than ten million dollars.

Discussing at the meeting of the intergovernmental commission the prospects for the development of partnership ties, the parties noted that there are significant reserves for increasing the volume of mutual trade. One of them is that "the economic way of developing trade by increasing supplies of traditional groups of goods is outdated and it is necessary to enter into co-operative projects"<sup>123</sup>, which will ensure long-term and fruitful cooperation, less dependent on various market fluctuations. The parties are already making certain practical steps in this direction. Thus, participating in the programme of modernisation of lift facilities in Yerevan, OJSC "Mogilevliftmash" supplied five hundred sets of lift equipment to Armenia. The issue of setting up a joint lift assembly plant in Armenia is already under consideration. Belarusian companies have great opportunities to participate in other Armenian government programmes on infrastructure and industrial development.

It should be noted that the volume of Belarusian-Armenian trade grew again in 2021 and totalled about USD 100 million. This trend continues in the current year as well. "Thus, in January-June 2022, trade turnover increased by more than 70% to \$60.3 million"<sup>124</sup>. This applies to both exports of goods to Armenia and imports of Armenian goods to Belarus. In addition, the countries ensured mutual

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<sup>122</sup> Belarus and Armenia have increased trade turnover by 2.5 times in 5 years [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-armenija-za-5-let-uvlichili-tovarooborot-v-25-raza-471337-2021/>

<sup>123</sup> Drozhzha: Belarus and Armenia have reserves for increasing mutual trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/drozhzha-u-belarusi-i-armenii-est-rezervy-dlja-naraschivanija-vzaimnoj-torgovli-471650-2021/>

<sup>124</sup> Belarus is interested in supplying lumber products to Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-piloproduktsii-v-armeniju-523446-2022/>

growth in the supply of agricultural and food products, outlined industrial co-operation projects and maintained a high frequency of air flights on the Minsk-Yerevan-Minsk route.

In October 2022, the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Armenian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held in Yerevan, where the parties again came to the conclusion that the extensive way of developing trade by increasing supplies of traditional groups of goods is outdated and it is necessary to develop cooperation projects that would guarantee long-term interaction. At the same time, "the key direction of this work should be the strengthening of production co-operation ties, joining efforts to create joint competitive products that are in demand not only in domestic and EAEU markets, but also in third countries"<sup>125</sup> .

In general, the signed protocol of the 16th meeting of the intergovernmental commission included a variety of measures aimed at strengthening and developing cooperation in a number of areas: mutual trade; industry and industrial cooperation; innovation, digital transformation and postal communications; transport and energy; agriculture; scientific and technical cooperation; education, culture, youth, sports, tourism, health care, labour and social protection; environmental protection; interregional cooperation. In particular, "Belarus and Armenia will work out the issue of using national currencies in settlements"<sup>126</sup> . The parties agreed to assist Armenian and Belarusian economic entities in expanding the trade network in the territory of the two countries. The Armenian side will work out the issue of establishing an "Armenia Trade House" in Belarus, which will have the status of exporter/importer. The partners will also "continue cooperation in the sphere of mechanisation of the Armenian agro-industrial complex, consider the possibility of creating cooperation projects in Armenia. It is planned to hold an agro-industrial forum where products of Belarusian and Armenian producers will be exhibited"<sup>127</sup> . In addition, the Armenian side expressed interest in the introduction of Belarusian experience in the use of innovative technologies in agriculture.

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<sup>125</sup> Kulik on the development of trade with Armenia: we need co-operation projects [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kulik-o-razvittii-torgovli-s-armeniej-nuzhny-kooperatsionnye-proekty-526560-2022/>

<sup>126</sup> Belarus and Armenia are interested in the use of national currencies in settlements [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-armenija-zainteresovany-v-ispolzovanii-natsionalnyh-valjut-pri-raschetah-526881-2022>

<sup>127</sup> The 16th session of the Armenian-Belarusian intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation was held in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/news/24151/v-erevane-sostojalos-16-e-zasedanie-armjano-belorusskoj-mezhpravitelstvennoj-komissii-po-torgovo-ekonomicheskomu-sotrudnichestvu>

Speaking about Belarusian-Armenian production cooperation, in October 2022, "Minsk Automobile Plant signed a contract for the supply of 500 passenger vehicles to Armenia for \$73 million <...>. The passenger vehicles assembled in Armenia are intended for delivery to third countries"<sup>128</sup>. Belarus is also ready to further expand co-operation in the forestry sector. Construction and reconstruction of housing is actively underway in Armenia. The Belarusian side is ready to supply construction materials, including lumber products, to this South Caucasus country.

The Belarusian side sees another reserve for increasing trade with its Armenian partners in the active use of trade fairs and exhibitions that take place in this Transcaucasian country. Thus, the high interest of Belarusian manufacturers in the Armenian market was very eloquently demonstrated by the Made in Belarus exposition at the 20th universal regional trade and industrial forum Armenia EXPO, which was held in September 2021 in Yerevan. Suffice it to say that 17 enterprises of Belgospischeprom Concern became exhibitors of this one of the largest exhibitions in Transcaucasia: "Krasny Pivovyvik", "Kommunarka", "Krasny Mozyryanin", "Spartak", "KF Slodych", "Maloritsky KOSK", "Gamma Vkusa", "Mashpischeprod", Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, Slutsk Sugar Refinery, Gorodeisky Sugar Refinery, Minsk Kristall - the managing company of Minsk Kristall Group holding, Krinitza, Minsk Margarine Plant, Lidapischekoncentraty, Belkofe, Interferm. Their presence at this business forum in Yerevan can be explained by the fact that "almost all the products of the Concern's organisations are supplied to Armenia. In January-July 2021 the volume of export supplies to this country amounted to \$640.7 thousand or 215.4% of the level of the same period of the last year"<sup>129</sup>.

Having demonstrated the best samples of their products at the exhibition, Belarusian exporters continue to significantly expand their presence in the Armenian market. A good example in this regard was demonstrated by the unitary enterprise Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant, which signed a \$55,000 contract for the supply of skimmed milk powder for the production of ice cream within the framework of the exhibition. "The enterprise also has agreements on concluding more contracts for the supply of products for ice-cream production"<sup>130</sup>. Slutsk

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<sup>128</sup> Minsk Automobile Plant will supply 500 passenger vehicles to Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-postavit-500-mashinokomplektov-passazhirskoj-tehniki-v-armeniju-527026-2022>

<sup>129</sup> "Belgospischeprom" presented its products at the exhibition Armenia Expo in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospischeprom-predstavil-produktsiju-na-vystavke-armenia-expo-v-erevane-460163-2021/>

<sup>130</sup> Kalinkovichi dairy plant concluded a contract for \$55 thousand at Armenia Expo. [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kalinkovichskij-molochnyj->

Cheese Factory is also planning to seriously increase its supplies to the Armenian market. It demonstrated in Yerevan the products of the trademark "Yas Belous" - cheese, milk powder and butter, which, together with cream and cottage cheese, dominated the export of Belarusian products to Armenia in 2020. Belarusian manufacturers of agricultural machinery also see good prospects here: Gomselmash, whose two machines under the Palesse brand have been operating in the fields of Armenia since 2020; JSC Managing Company of Grodnooblselkhoztehnika Holding, which produces tillage, forage harvesting, post-harvest machinery and milking units; and JSC Gomel Electromechanical Plant, a manufacturer of railway locomotives and rolling stock.

A year later - in September 2022 - companies from Belarus again took part in the regional trade and industrial forum Armenia EXPO, where "a wide range of thematic sections were presented: engineering, petrochemicals, construction, interior design, transport, trucking, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, woodworking, financial services, tourism and recreation"<sup>131</sup>. More than 170 companies, associations, unions and organisations took part in the exhibition. Among the participating countries were Armenia, China, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, India, Iran, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. The Made in Belarus exposition was also presented. In particular, 12 enterprises of Belgospischeprom Concern demonstrated their products. For example, the exposition presented a wide range of confectionery products, instant food, food concentrates, baby food, alcoholic beverages, sauces and vegetable oil, fruit and berry products, including a new line of morses and nectars, jams, mushrooms and other food products. It should be noted that almost all the products manufactured by the organisations of the concern are supplied to Armenia this year. "For the first 7 months of 2022, the export volume increased 1.2 times compared to the same period last year, primarily due to increased supplies of malt, beer, food concentrates, potato products and oil and fat products"<sup>132</sup>.

The potential for interaction between Belarus and Armenia is still very extensive today in interregional co-operation as well. In particular, cooperation

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[kombinat-na-armenia-expo-zakljuchil-kontrakt-na-55-tys-460231-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/kalinkovichskij-molochnyj-kombinat-na-armenia-expo-zakljuchil-kontrakt-na-55-tys-460231-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kalinkovichskij-molochnyj-kombinat-na-armenia-expo-zakljuchil-kontrakt-na-55-tys-460231-2021/)

<sup>131</sup> The exposition of Belarus will be presented at the trade and industrial forum in Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekspozitsija-belarusi-budet-predstavlena-na-torgovo-promyshlennom-forume-v-armenii-512548-2022/>

<sup>132</sup> "Belgospischeprom" presented its products at the exhibition "Armenia EXPO 2022" in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospischeprom-predstavil-svoju-produktsiju-na-vystavke-armenia-expo-2022-v-erevane-524117-2022/>

between Vitebsk Region and Armenian regions is intensifying in all spheres, from science to trade and culture. "The Vitebsk region's trade turnover with Armenia in January-March [2022] exceeded \$1.6 million. Almost all of these funds were exports of goods. Vitebsk region supplies meat and dairy products (accounting for more than 71 per cent), special purpose vehicles, medicines, carpeting, and imports fire detectors. A total of 8 organisations with Armenian capital operate in Vitebsk region"<sup>133</sup>. It is interesting that in Vitebsk region it is possible to set up production of Armenian medicinal product Narine, a fermented milk product created by Armenian scientists in the 60s and very popular in this country. The supplement helps regulate digestive problems. "The preparation has an EAEU certificate, it may well be applied in Vitebsk region, if there are those willing to create such a line at the dairy production. In Armenia, this product is produced in the form of paste, powder, kefir, tablets. This will be another good article of trade turnover between Armenia and Belarus"<sup>134</sup>. The proposal to master the production of Armenian sour-milk product, which is used as a medicine, in Vitebsk region was supported by Vitebsk authorities. The implementation of such a project will strengthen and expand the range of plants and make them even more competitive.

Another Belarusian region intends to intensify cooperation with its partners from Armenia - Brest Oblast. So far, the trade turnover between the parties is insignificant. "However, there has been a positive trend recently: in the first quarter of 2022, it increased by 71 per cent, and the region's enterprises increased export supplies by 50 per cent"<sup>135</sup>. Brest region intends to intensify cooperation with Armenian partners in the production of livestock products, machine building, woodworking, light industry. Another interesting fact: there has been a co-operation agreement between Brest region and Ararat marz for more than 10 years. The pandemic was a hindrance for maintaining contacts between the regions, but there are already intentions to restore ties.

On the whole, as it was noted at the 16th session of the intergovernmental commission, the potential of interaction between Belarus and Armenia continues to develop: from deepening mutually beneficial trade-economic and innovation

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<sup>133</sup> Trade, science and culture: Vitebsk region and Armenia intend to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/torgovlja-nauka-i-kultura-vitebskaja-oblast-i-armenija-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-505369-2022/>

<sup>134</sup> The Armenian ambassador offered to master the production of sour-milk product Narine in Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/posol-armenii-predlozhit-osvoit-v-vitebskoj-oblasti-proizvodstvo-kislomolochnogo-produkta-narine-505390-2022/>

<sup>135</sup> Armenia is interested in interregional ties with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/armenija-zainteresovana-v-mezhregionalnyh-svjazjah-s-belarusiju-502868-2022/>

cooperation to industrial and inter-sectoral cooperation, humanitarian and interregional partnership ties.

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## **Co-operation in a spirit of openness, trust and mutual assistance**

Azerbaijan is one of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the interaction with which is of strategic importance for the Republic of Belarus. For less than thirty years, while diplomatic relations between the two former Soviet republics were established back in June 1993, Belarusian-Azerbaijani interaction has shaped the traditions of the two peoples, which are based on "openness, trust, friendship and mutual assistance"<sup>136</sup>. Among the significant interstate documents that Minsk and Baku consider basic are: 1) the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Azerbaijan (2007); 2) the Treaty between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Azerbaijan on Social and Economic Cooperation until 2025 (2015).

In 2018, when Belarus and Azerbaijan celebrated the 25th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, the two sides noted high dynamics of expanding interaction in all areas, including in the trade and economic sphere, where the main priorities were production cooperation, joint projects in the fields of science and technology, as well as investment cooperation. This was evidenced, in particular, by the results of 2018, when the Belarusian-Azerbaijani trade turnover "totalled about \$465.3 million and increased threefold compared to 2017"<sup>137</sup>. The fact that Belarusian products were supplied to the Azerbaijani market in more than 220 commodity items at that time also spoke volumes.

One of the key areas of cooperation between Belarus and Azerbaijan was industrial co-operation, the flagship of which was the Ganja Automobile Plant. Ganja Automobile Plant was the flagship of this co-operation. This enterprise has set up assembly facilities for Belarusian tractors, Gomselmash grain harvesters, Minsk Automobile Plant machinery, and Belkommunmash electric buses. Their efficiency is evidenced at least by the fact that more than 11 thousand tractors, as well as about 3.5 thousand units of automotive and special equipment have been assembled here since 2007. In May 2019, a new assembly line was opened at the

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<sup>136</sup> Belarusian-Azerbaijani bilateral relations [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/political/](https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/political/)

<sup>137</sup> Igor Lyashenko made a working visit to Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8786>

Azerbaijani enterprise, "for the first time a grain harvester KZS-575 "Palesse GS575" and an electric bus E321"<sup>138</sup> .

Of particular interest in Ganja was the launch of electric buses - public transport for 83 passengers, equipped with 26 seats, air conditioning, an information monitor and a video control system. This technique is favourable both in terms of minimal environmental impact on the environment and saving energy consumption. "The time to fully charge the batteries of an electric bus capable of travelling up to 60 km/h <...> is only six minutes"<sup>139</sup> . The Ganja Automobile Plant is expected to produce up to 40 per cent of spare parts for these eco-friendly vehicles in the future. If demand is high enough, the plant's capacity will allow it to produce up to 150 electric buses a year. And projects to assemble and supply municipal vehicles from Minsk Automobile Plant and medium-capacity passenger vehicles were still under development. In addition, in July 2019, in the Turkish town of Kırıkkale, 80 kilometres from Ankara, with the support of the Ganja Automobile Plant, the assembly of Minsk tractors began with the expectation to produce one hundred machines by the end of the year and two hundred next year. And in the end "the capacity of the plant will allow to assemble up to three thousand tractors per year"<sup>140</sup> . The assistance of the Azerbaijani side in this matter made it possible to save about one million dollars only on the construction of one building of the future production in Turkey.

Another important area of Belarusian-Azerbaijani interaction, which received a strong boost in spring 2019, is the participation of Belarusian exporters in Azerbaijan's exhibition events. In May, the exposition of Belarusian producers "Belarus. Taste of Nature" was presented in Baku at the international agricultural exhibition Caspian Agro, which has already "proved to be an important platform for promoting Belarusian interests in agriculture in the Azerbaijani market"<sup>141</sup> . Among more than two hundred companies from 25 countries that presented their

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<sup>138</sup> The President of Azerbaijan met with Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Lyashenko [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/prezident-azerbajdzhana-vstretitsja-s-vitse-premjerom-belarusi-ljashenko-347392-2019/>

<sup>139</sup> Azerbaijan has started to produce Belarusian grain harvesters and electric buses [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-azerbajdzhane-pristupili-k-vypusku-belorusskih-zernouborochnyh-kombajnov-i-elektrobusov-347363-2019/>

<sup>140</sup> Matievsky, M. The assembly production of Belarusian tractors in Turkey should start in July / M. Matievsky // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-tractorov-v-turtsii-dolzno-zarabotat-v-ijule-344079-2019/>

<sup>141</sup> Belarus is interested in developing cooperation with Azerbaijan in agro-industrial complex and industrial co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-razvivat-s-azerbajdzhanom-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-i-promkooperatsiju-347429-2019/www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-razvivat-s-azerbajdzhanom-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-i-promkooperatsiju-347429-2019/>

traditional products and novelties in various sectors of the agricultural industry, 25 organisations and enterprises from Belarus showed their capabilities. For example, organisations of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus demonstrated innovative equipment for agriculture - an energy-efficient harvester for berry harvesting, LED lights and greenhouse irradiators for growing plants in greenhouse farms. Belagro Bel offered visitors to the exhibition "a multi-brand portfolio of Belarusian-made agricultural machinery and integrated solutions for processing a wide range of crops"<sup>142</sup> .

Even more diverse Belarusian products could be seen at the exhibition in the section of confectionery, beverages and groceries. In particular, Krasny Izhevik from Bobruisk attracted attention with such novelties as: marshmallows - in the form of rose flower, pomegranate and duchesse flavours; marmalade - in the form of bottles with tequila, wine and cognac flavours. "Spartak" from Gomel demonstrated chocolate - bitter and milk chocolate, as well as white chocolate with almonds and coconut, with hazelnut and biscuit balls, with hazelnut and cereals. The Belarusian exposition in Baku was complemented by baby food, meat and poultry products, as well as products of the Minsk Margarine Plant. The business part of the Caspian Agro exhibition was also very effective for the Belarusian participants. In particular, a co-operation document was signed by the Belgospisheprom Concern and the Azerbaijan Industrial Corporation, in which the parties agreed to co-operate "in the sphere of tobacco product supplies between the Azertabak agro-industrial complex and the Grodno tobacco factory, which is part of the Belgospisheprom Concern"<sup>143</sup> , as well as to exchange production experience.

Now let's look at the results of 2021. They show that Azerbaijan has become one of Belarus's main trade and economic partners, with which cooperation is developing particularly intensively today. This is evidenced by the fact that Belarusian-Azerbaijani trade turnover in 2021 almost doubled to \$885.5 million. At the same time, "Belarusian exports of goods increased 2.5 times and totalled \$478.0 million, reaching record figures in the history of bilateral relations"<sup>144</sup> . The main export items from Belarus to Azerbaijan were railway trains, fibreboard, medicines, furniture, timber, electric transformers, as well as beef, butter, cheese

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<sup>142</sup> Belarus presented the largest national exposition at the agricultural exhibition in Baku [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavila-krupnejshuju-natsionalnuju-ekspozitsiju-na-selskohozjajstvennoj-vystavke-v-baku-347619-2019/>

<sup>143</sup> "Belgospisheprom" and Azerbaijan Industrial Corporation signed a protocol on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospisheprom-i-azerbajdzhanskaja-promyshlennaja-korporatsija-podpisali-protokol-o-sotrudnichestve-347723-2019/>

<sup>144</sup> On the results of the Belarusian-Azerbaijani trade in goods in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/a81fa7c9e40a3b23.html>

and cottage cheese. "A reliable channel for the purchase of Azerbaijani vegetables and fruits has also been established, which have replaced imports from unfriendly countries. The Belarusian side is interested in further expansion and diversification of trade and economic co-operation"<sup>145</sup> .

The parties paid much attention to such a promising area of bilateral cooperation as agriculture **and food**. In September 2021, they even held the first meeting of the Belarusian-Azerbaijani Working Group on Agriculture and Food Security, where "issues of cooperation in the field of crop and livestock breeding, food security, agrarian education, expansion of trade and economic ties in agriculture... were discussed..."<sup>146</sup> . Coordination of joint efforts in this area allowed for good results in bilateral trade in agricultural goods and agricultural raw materials, the volume of which increased by almost 20 per cent to \$41.6 million in 2021, with Belarusian exports accounting for \$35 million. It is important that these positive trends continue now. "In January-February 2022, trade turnover of food products and agricultural raw materials between Belarus and Azerbaijan totalled \$5.7 million. Belarusian exports of goods amounted to \$4.6 million"<sup>147</sup> .

**Construction** is another promising area of Belarusian-Azerbaijani cooperation where serious positive developments are expected. The fact is that this segment of the economy ranks second after oil in Azerbaijan in terms of state investments. Belarusian companies may also be interested in the fact that there is a very high demand for sawn timber in this country, and a simplified tax is provided for companies in the industry. In 2021, reinforced concrete and metal structures, equipment and spare parts formed the basis of Belarusian construction exports to the Azerbaijani market. The dynamics of these supplies are illustrated by the following figures: "In the first quarter of 2021, organisations of the Belarusian construction industry supplied Azerbaijan with over \$3.5 million worth of products, which is 2.2 times more than in the same period in 2020"<sup>148</sup> . Further bilateral interaction in this area can be judged by some of the Belarusian

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<sup>145</sup> Petrishenko: Belarus is interested in expanding trade and economic cooperation with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/petrishenko-belarus-zainteressovana-v-rasshirenii-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-526693-2022/>

<sup>146</sup> On the meeting of the Belarusian-Azerbaijani Working Group on Agriculture and Food Safety [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b29ba1099335e43e.html>

<sup>147</sup> Belarus and Azerbaijan in 2021 increased foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials by almost 20% [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-azerbajdzhan-v-2021-godu-uvelichili-tovarooborot-prodovarov-i-selhozsvyrjja-pochti-na-20-496191-2022/>

<sup>148</sup> The National Pavilion of Belarus will be presented at the BakuBuild exhibition [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-paviljon-belarusi-budet-predstavlena-vystavke-bakubuild-463807-2021/>

exhibitors at the 26th International Specialised Exhibition BakuBuild, held in October 2021 in the Azerbaijani capital. In particular, the research and production company OKB TSP demonstrated there its own innovative technology for the erection of arch structures for various purposes, developed by specialists from the company Spetsmashinostroenie, which is part of OKB TSP. Interestingly, the company has already constructed 19 industrial buildings in Azerbaijan using this technology.

Belarusian regions also see their own prospects for developing co-operation with Azerbaijani partners. Thus, **Hrodna Region** is going to actively expand these ties. Recall that in 2021, exports of Hrodna enterprises to Azerbaijan doubled to \$17.4 million. In total, about 40 business entities of all forms of ownership supplied supplies from the Belarusian region to this country of the South Caucasus. At the same time, the Azerbaijani side remains highly interested in importing Belarusian agricultural machinery, woodworking products and food industry. According to the parties, "we have enough promising areas for co-operation. These are agriculture and machine building. We will redouble our efforts to develop the relationship"<sup>149</sup> .

Another interesting example in this context is **Brest region**, whose trade turnover with Azerbaijan in the first quarter of 2022 increased by almost half. For example, "the supplies of machines and mechanisms for harvesting and threshing of agricultural crops increased 15 times. Brest residents also export batteries, furniture"<sup>150</sup> . The main type of exports from the Belarusian region is food products, among which dairy products prevail.

Finally, the cities of **Homiel** and **Ganja**, which signed an agreement on friendship and cooperation back in November 2013, are active participants in Belarusian-Azerbaijani interregional cooperation. This Azerbaijani city is known to have an automobile factory, where assembly plants of Belarusian companies - Minsk Tractor and Automobile Plants, Gomselmash and Belkommunmash - have already been set up. In 2019, the first PALESSE KZS-575 combine harvester was assembled here. At the same time, the parties noted that "there are many points of contact for further development of relations between the Belarusian and Azerbaijani cities in various industries, cultural, educational and sports

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<sup>149</sup> Grodno region is interested in expanding co-operation with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-sotrudnichestva-s-azerbajdzhanom-494171-2022/>

<sup>150</sup> Azerbaijan is interested in co-operation with the regions of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/azerbajdzhan-zainteresovan-v-sotrudnichestve-s-regionami-belarusi-499846-2022/>

spheres"<sup>151</sup> . So, there are a lot of reserves for the development of co-operation here.

The 12th meeting of the Belarusian-Azerbaijani Intergovernmental Commission was held in June 2022. At the meeting, the parties named among the promising areas of cooperation: expansion of industrial cooperation, interaction in the spheres of machine-building, transport, agriculture, woodworking, healthcare, education and science. In particular, "it is necessary to fully implement the contract on supplying unassembled tractors to Ganja Automobile Plant, as well as to work out economic and technical aspects of the joint project of this plant and MTZ on entering the markets of third countries"<sup>152</sup> . It is also necessary to ensure the completion of tests of the grain harvester produced by Gomselmash and modified to meet the technical requirements of the Azerbaijani side, as well as to agree on the volume of supplies. Joint production of electric transport is among the proposals. Lift manufacturer Mogilevliftmash expects to take part in lift modernisation programmes in Azerbaijani cities. In the near future, preparatory work will also be completed to set up a joint production of veterinary drugs on Azerbaijani territory.

In terms of exhibition activities, Belarus presented national expositions at major international exhibitions in Baku in 2022: the Caspian Agro agricultural exhibition and the InterFood Azerbaijan food industry exhibition, the Caspian Oil and Gas exhibition, the ADEX defence exhibition, and the International Exhibition of Medical Innovations. For example, the Belarusian pavilion was presented at the 27th Caspian Oil and Gas International Exhibition in early June 2022, where Belarusian enterprises Grodno Azot, Mogilevkhimvolokno, Mozyr Oil Refinery, Naftan, Polotsk-Steklovolokno, and Seismotekhnika participated. The exposition was notable for its diversity: nitrogen fertilisers, polyamide and polyester yarns, cord fabrics, polymer composites, polyester technical yarns, nonwoven fabrics, motor gasoline, diesel fuel, furnace fuel oil, oil bitumen, fuel gases, glass fibre and materials on its basis, oilfield and geophysical equipment. "Among the unique products presented at the exhibition is polyester fibre of the

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<sup>151</sup> Ganja Automobile Plant is interested in joint production of combines with "Gomselmash" [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gjandzhinskij-avtozavod-zainteresovan-v-sovmestnom-proizvodstve-kombajnov-s-gomselmashem-333783-2019/>

<sup>152</sup> Machine building, construction, agro-industrial complex. Petrishenko on the plans of interaction with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mashinostroenie-stroitelstvo-apk-petrishenko-o-planah-zaimodejstvija-s-azerbajdzhanom-505333-2022/>

conjugate type for use as a filler in textile products, which is produced by Mogilevkhimvolokno."<sup>153</sup> .

In the transport sector, in August 2022, the Belarusian Railway started delivering cargo by accelerated trains from Belarus to Azerbaijan. "This makes it possible to deliver cargoes produced in Belarus <...> to Azerbaijan in the shortest possible time (in a week) and at competitive tariffs. The first three trains loaded with timber products have already set off from Orsha-Zapadnaya station (Belarus) to Apsheron station (Azerbaijan)"<sup>154</sup> .

Bilateral contacts are also developing closely in the educational sphere. In particular, the Belarusian State University (BSU) is intensifying co-operation with institutions in Azerbaijan. In September 2022, BSU signed a cooperation agreement with Baku State University, which is the oldest and leading higher education institution in this South Caucasus country and includes 16 faculties of different profiles, two scientific institutes and the Confucius Institute. The document prescribes agreements in the field of education and science. "In particular, the parties agreed to implement joint projects in scientific, educational and cultural spheres, develop publication partnership, academic scientific and cultural mobility, exchange information, students, researchers and teachers"<sup>155</sup> . It is also envisaged to develop and implement joint research projects, educational programmes, courses and curricula, cooperation in the field of scientific supervision of master's and postgraduate students. It should be noted that BSU is currently co-operating with other Azerbaijani scientific and educational institutions. Since 2019, there is an agreement on co-operation and exchange of students with ADA University (Baku). In 2021, the International State Environmental Institute named after A.D. Sakharov BSU signed a cooperation agreement with Hazar University (Baku) and an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation with the Scientific Research Institute of Animal Husbandry of the Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan. Two joint projects were submitted for participation in the contest of joint scientific projects for 2022-2023, announced by the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Azerbaijan: the Institute of Nuclear

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<sup>153</sup> Belarus presented a pavilion at the oil and gas exhibition in Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavila-paviljon-na-neftegazovoj-vystavke-v-azerbajdzhane-505359-2022/>

<sup>154</sup> BZHD started to supply cargoes by accelerated trains from Belarus to Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bzhd-nachala-postavljat-gruzy-uskorennymi-poezdami-iz-belarusi-v-azerbajdzhan-517606-2022/>

<sup>155</sup> BSU and Baku State University concluded a co-operation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-bakinskij-gosuniversitet-zakljuchili-soglashenie-otsotrudnichestve-525475-2022/>

Problems and the Institute of Physics of the NAS of Azerbaijan; the Faculty of Chemistry and the Institute of Catalysis and Inorganic Chemistry named after Academician M. Nagiyev of the NAS of Azerbaijan. One more thing: six Azerbaijani students are currently studying at BSU.

So, despite the new geopolitical challenges, the dynamics of Belarusian-Azerbaijani interaction continues to develop at all levels: from industrial cooperation and transport to participation in exhibitions, science and education.

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## Priority task is to accelerate co-operation

The Republic of Belarus has traditionally been interested in the closest partnership with the Kyrgyz Republic, a country in Central Asia that possesses rich natural resources and minerals, high potential for the development of agriculture, hydropower and tourism. All the more so, trade and economic co-operation between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan has been noticeably intensified recently.

Back in May 2013, the Kyrgyz side noted: "I would like the economic relations between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan to develop dynamically. Belarus has a number of goods in which Kyrgyzstan is interested. In turn, we are also ready to supply goods that are interesting for the Belarusian economy"<sup>156</sup>. In September 2015, at the meeting of the heads of government of the two countries, focusing on the need to increase mutual trade turnover, the parties agreed that "in addition to trade interaction, efforts should be directed at the development of production cooperation"<sup>157</sup>. And already in the first quarter of 2017, the Belarusian-Kyrgyz trade turnover increased by one and a half times, totalling \$15.2 million. The Intergovernmental Belarusian-Kyrgyz Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, whose sixth and seventh meetings were held in Bishkek in June 2016 and in Minsk in June 2017, played an important role in boosting bilateral interaction between the countries.

In particular, during the seventh meeting of the Commission, the parties noted a significant intensification of contacts between Belarusian enterprises and Kyrgyz partners, which only contributes to the expansion of interaction between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan in terms of supplies of machinery and production cooperation, energy, agriculture, healthcare, education, science, culture, information and tourism, as well as the development of cooperation between the regions and free economic zones of the two countries. This extensive list of areas of Belarusian-Kyrgyz cooperation also included "training of specialists, raising their qualifications, creation of trade networks, joint ventures for the production of agricultural machinery, supplies of Belarusian lifts to Kyrgyzstan"<sup>158</sup>.

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<sup>156</sup> Kyrgyzstan is interested in the development of trade and economic relations with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://www.belvpo.com/ru/26710.html>

<sup>157</sup> Andrei Kobayakov met with the head of the Government of Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6027>

<sup>158</sup> About the meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Kyrgyz Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://kyrgyzstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b7a170b217ff5943.html>

As far as mutual trade is concerned, Belarusian agricultural products are clearly in the lead, as evidenced by the figures: "At the end of 2016, exports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to Kyrgyzstan grew 3.1 times, and in the first quarter of 2017 - almost 14 times. The basis of export supplies is meat and dairy products"<sup>159</sup>. Agreeing to further increase mutual supplies of agricultural products, expand their commodity nomenclature, the parties also decided to consider the possibility of implementing joint projects in the development of livestock and crop production.

The flagship of Belarusian-Kyrgyz industrial cooperation is the tractor assembly production and service centre for agricultural machinery from Belarus opened in Bishkek in November 2016 on the basis of Avtomash-Radiator LLC. An important detail is that "about 90% of radiators for Minsk-assembled tractors are supplied from Kyrgyzstan. The same assembly shop has now started assembling combines of Gomselmash OJSC"<sup>160</sup>. In addition, the parties have been actively working on the issue of establishing joint ventures in the light industry, the prerequisite for which was the actualisation of trade relations in this area. Thus, in April 2017, the Kyrgyz company Opt-Invest first delivered a batch of textile products to Belarus, and in September 2017, it signed a contract with Belarus for the supply of garments.

In February 2020, Minsk hosted the ninth meeting of the intergovernmental Belarusian-Kyrgyz commission on trade and economic co-operation, which addressed topical issues of developing and strengthening systemic mutually beneficial partnership ties. In Minsk and Bishkek, this meeting of the intergovernmental commission, where the status of co-chairs has already been raised to the level of deputy prime ministers, was seen as "a new impetus for the development of relations between our countries"<sup>161</sup>. Recall that in 2019, the volume of Belarusian-Kyrgyz trade totalled more than \$105 million with a surplus of over \$90 million for the Belarusian side, which was ensured by supplies from Belarus of dairy products, tractors and tractor-trailers, meat and poultry by-products, medicines, furniture and chipboard. However, according to the parties, the volume of mutual trade between Kyrgyzstan and Belarus does not meet the

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<sup>159</sup> Kyrgyzstan is interested in the establishment of assembly facilities for Belarusian agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/kyrgyzstan-zainteresovan-v-sozdanii-sborochnyh-proizvodstv-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-251058-2017/>

<sup>160</sup> Omuraliev noted a positive trend in the development of relations between Kyrgyzstan and Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/omuraliev-otmetil-pozitivnuju-tendentsiju-v-razvitii-otnoshenij-mezhdu-kyrgyzstanom-i-belarusiju-269017-2017/>

<sup>161</sup> The meeting of the Belarusian-Kyrgyz intergovernmental commission will be held in Minsk on 21 February [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zasedanie-belorussko-kyrgyzskoj-mezhpravkomissii-projdet-v-minske-21-fevralja-378085-2020/>

economic potential of the countries. Actually, and for this reason, at the next meeting of the intergovernmental commission, the attention of the parties was focused on the priority areas of interaction: 1) **increasing the** volume of mutual trade; 2) **deepening of** industrial cooperation and creation of joint assembly production; 3) **expansion of** interregional cooperation.

In terms of **increasing the volume of mutual trade, the** Belarusian side made specific proposals to increase supplies of passenger, cargo, and municipal vehicles to Kyrgyzstan, which is in line with the plans of the Kyrgyz side to upgrade, for example, the fleet of passenger vehicles in Bishkek and other cities. In addition, in 2020, Belarus continued to actively participate in exhibition events in Kyrgyzstan to promote its products to the Kyrgyz market. Thus, in April, the exposition of Belarusian exporters was presented for the third time at the FoodExpo international food industry exhibition in Bishkek, where visitors were able to familiarise themselves with products and beverages from Belarus. The emphasis was placed on healthy food and products with Halal certificate. For the first time, the exposition "presented food additives, casings for meat and sausage products, baby food"<sup>162</sup> .

Speaking about **deepening production cooperation**, the Kyrgyz side suggested intensifying cooperation in agriculture and agro-industrial complex. First of all, it is about the creation of a joint agro-cluster for milk processing in Kyrgyzstan using Belarusian technologies, as well as the "construction of dairy complexes with the necessary Belarusian-made equipment and supplies of pedigree cattle"<sup>163</sup> . To consolidate these agreements in the legal field, an agreement on cooperation in agriculture and food between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of Belarus and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation of Kyrgyzstan was signed following the meeting of the intergovernmental commission. As for industrial cooperation, the plans voiced in Minsk look quite realistic: "assembly production of transformers may be established with the Kozlov Minsk Electrotechnical Plant, lifts - with Mogilevliftmash, gas meters - with BelOMO"<sup>164</sup> . The seriousness of these intentions of the parties is evidenced, in particular, by the fact of signing an

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<sup>162</sup> Nemankova, Y. The exposition of Belarusian producers will be presented at the FoodExpo in Bishkek / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-budet-predstavlena-na-vystavke-foodexpo-v-bishkeke-378791-2020/>

<sup>163</sup> Kyrgyzstan offers Belarus to create an agrocluster for milk processing [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kyrgyzstan-predlagaet-belarusi-sozdat-agroklaster-po-pererabotke-moloka-380586-2020/>

<sup>164</sup> Vladimir Kukharev: Belarusian electric buses may appear on the streets of Bishkek [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9293>

agreement on co-operation between the V.I. Kozlov Minsk Electromechanical Plant and Mashelectrosnab LLC following the meeting of the intergovernmental commission.

Speaking about the **expansion of interregional cooperation between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan**, so far the tone has been set by the capitals Minsk and Bishkek, which signed an agreement on economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation back in 1997 and established twinning relations in 2008. In the language of figures, this interregional co-operation looks as follows: "The growth rate of trade turnover of Minsk enterprises with Kyrgyzstan in January-June 2017 to the level of the same period of 2016 was 306%, exports of goods - 393.7%, exports of services - 176.1%"<sup>165</sup>. At the same time, tractors, paving slabs, radiators, air heaters, refrigerators, and medicines were supplied to Kyrgyz partners. New goods exported from Minsk were dairy products, chipboard, and tools. In the future, cooperation between the two capitals in the development of public transport may become very promising. After all, Bishkek plans to buy about 400 large-capacity buses. And the authorities of the Kyrgyz capital are studying the market of suppliers. It should be assumed that Minsk manufacturers of transport equipment have good chances to become participants in the implementation of this project. After all, back in 2009 Minsk Belkommunmash delivered 20 trolleybuses to Bishkek, and later won a tender for the export of another 30 units of electric transport.

At the 9th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission in Minsk, the agreement on co-operation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural spheres was signed by the Gomel Regional Executive Committee and the Office of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of Kyrgyzstan in Chui Oblast. Although this agreement is the first one with Kyrgyz partners for the Belarusian region, even before that, the enterprises of Homiel region were already present in the market of the Central Asian country. Suffice it to say that in 2019, the region's trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan exceeded ten million dollars. "At the same time, exports totalled \$8.5 million. 26 enterprises of the region supplied their goods, including OJSC "Gomselmash", IPUP "Multipak", OJSC "Mozyrsol", manufacturers of doors,

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<sup>165</sup> Matveeva, N. Bishkek plans to buy equipment from Minsk enterprises for the development of public transport / N. Matveeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/bishkek-planiruet-zakupit-u-minskih-predpriyatij-tehniku-dlja-razvitiya-obschestvennogo-transporta-265609-2017/>

wallpaper. The promotion of products of the Turov Dairy Plant, in particular, soft cheeses, to the Kyrgyz market has begun"<sup>166</sup> .

It should be noted that in 2021, Belarus's trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan totalled almost \$100 million, including Belarusian exports of over \$86 million. The balance was positive in the amount of \$75.4 million. "Last year [2021], the nomenclature of goods supplied by Belarus totalled 749 commodity items (for comparison, in 2020 - 620). In January-June this year, bilateral trade turnover totalled \$56.4 million, up 44.3% compared to the same period in 2021, including Belarusian exports of \$42.8 million (up 24.8%)."<sup>167</sup> . The main Belarusian export commodities to Kyrgyzstan are fresh or chilled beef, sugar, poultry meat, medicines, finished meat products, carpets and other textile products, fibre optic cables, cheese and cottage cheese, diagnostic reagents, and chicken eggs. And there are reasons to believe that Belarusian enterprises have every chance not only to consolidate and increase their presence in the Kyrgyz market in terms of products already supplied, but also to expand the list of export items. In particular, Belarusian manufacturers of agricultural, passenger and municipal machinery have prospects for increasing supplies to Kyrgyzstan.

Another interesting component of exports from Belarus to this Central Asian country is medical products. "Belarusian pharmaceutical companies are active in the Kyrgyz market. Thus, in 2021, the volume of exports of medicines to Kyrgyzstan totalled \$4.3 million"<sup>168</sup> . In April 2022, Belarusian manufacturers took an active part in the 16th International Specialised Healthcare Exhibition MedExpo Kyrgyzstan-2022 in Bishkek. Their well-known and well-established drugs, as well as new products that have no analogues in the Kyrgyz market, were presented by LLC "Technology and Medicine 2030", RUE "Belmedpreparaty", OJSC "Borisov Plant of Medical Preparations", UE "Minskintercaps", OJSC "Exon", SE "Akadempharm" and NP LLC "Medbiotech". In particular, "JSC Exon presented a line of VITAX vitamins, haematogen with new flavours (apple,

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<sup>166</sup> Gomel region will develop co-operation with the Chui region of Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskij-region-budet-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-chujskoj-oblastju-kyrgyzstana-381123-2020>

<sup>167</sup> NCM told about the prospects of promoting Belarusian goods and services in Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ntsm-rasskazal-o-perspektivah-prodvizhenija-belorusskih-tovarov-i-uslug-v-kyrgyzstan-519484-2022/>

<sup>168</sup> Belarusian enterprises presented their products at the exhibition of health care [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-predprijatija-predstavili-produktsiju-na-vystavke-zdravoothranenija-v-bishkeke-494393-2022/>

apple with cinnamon, cranberry)"<sup>169</sup> . As a result, the Belarusian companies signed contracts for the supply of products and planned to organise training seminars for medical representatives to promote medicines in Kyrgyzstan.

In the second half of 2022 - in September - the 10th meeting of the intergovernmental commission was held in the city of Osh, during which it was stated that a promising direction for the development of Kyrgyz-Belarusian cooperation is to increase production potential, capacity to produce products with high added value, as well as the creation of joint ventures in all industrial sectors. "Currently, there are 54 representative offices of entities of the commodity distribution network and distributors of Belarusian enterprises in the country, including the assembly production of tractors of the joint-stock company Minsk Tractor Plant"<sup>170</sup> . The Kyrgyz side is also interested in attracting investment in such areas as information technology, agriculture, and tourism.

In this regard, the Kyrgyz-Belarusian Business Forum was also held in Osh in September 2022, which demonstrated the growing interest of Belarusian businesses in developing bilateral business contacts with Kyrgyzstan. Representatives of the Belarusian side - the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Belgospisheprom concern, and the Belkommunmash holding company - presented to the forum participants opportunities for co-operation with enterprises in the agricultural, food, and industrial sectors of Belarus. A business contacts exchange was organised at the forum. "Meetings were held between Belarusian and Kyrgyz enterprises working in the food sector, mechanical engineering, health care and economy. As a result of the business forum, bilateral contracts totalling \$900 thousand were signed"<sup>171</sup> .

The international universal exhibition "South Expo-2022" was also held in Osh, where the Belarusian exposition was represented by the concern "Belgospisheprom" and its 16 enterprises, which combined export goods - "confectionery, snacks, instant food, food concentrates, baby food, strong alcoholic beverages - gaist, tinctures and balms on Belarusian herbs, distillates,

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<sup>169</sup> Pharmaceutical companies of Belarus plan to expand the range and volume of drug supplies to Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/farmpredpriyatija-belarusi-planirujut-rasshirit-assortiment-i-objemy-postavok-lekarstv-v-kyrgyzstan-494553-2022/>

<sup>170</sup> Within the framework of the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental Kyrgyz-Belarusian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation in Osh a business forum was held [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://cis.minsk.by/news/24072/v-ramkah-10-go-zasedanija-mezhpravitelstvennoj-kyrgyzsko-belorusskoj-komissii-po-torgovo-ekonomicheskomu-sotrudnichestvu-v-oshe-sostojalsja-biznes-forum>

<sup>171</sup> Contracts for \$900 thousand signed as a result of the Belarusian-Kyrgyz business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kontrakty-na-900-tys-podpisany-potogam-belorussko-kyrgyzskogo-biznes-foruma-523912-2022/>

whiskey of full cycle production from Belarusian grain, products from fruits and berries...."<sup>172</sup>. The world-famous Belarusian brands Gomselmash, MTZ and MAZ were represented at the exhibition by the local dealer AUTOMASH-RADIATOR. Among the exhibitors were other Belarusian enterprises: one of the largest European manufacturers of electrical equipment - V.I. Kozlov Minsk Electrotechnical Plant OJSC, leading medical institutions - N.N. Aleksandrov RNPC Oncology and Medical Radiology (OMR) and Cardiology RNPC, as well as a manufacturer of veterinary medicines - Belzoovetsnabprom OJSC. In particular, at the stand of RNPC MPA Kyrgyz specialists were offered educational services in radiology, surgery and ultrasound diagnostics. As a result of negotiations between the RNPC MPA and Osh State University, "a cooperation agreement was prepared, providing for the exchange of experience between the staff of the institutions on educational programmes of advanced training and internships; organisation of conferences, seminars, symposiums, round tables"<sup>173</sup>.

All these facts confirm that Belarus and Kyrgyzstan intend to realise the potential of bilateral relations in all areas of cooperation and especially accelerate interaction in the economic sphere, including partnerships in industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, transport, as well as in a variety of issues on the cultural, humanitarian and regional agenda.

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<sup>172</sup> 16 enterprises of Belgospisheprom presented their products at the exhibition "Yug Expo" in Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/produktsiju-na-vystavke-jug-ekspo-v-kyrgyzstane-predstavili-16-predpriyatij-belgospisheprom-523807-2022>

<sup>173</sup> 6th International Universal Exhibition-Fair "Yug Expo-2022". [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://omr.by/news/news-main/6-ya-mezhdunarodnaya-universalnaya-vystavka-yarmarka-yug-ekspo-2022>

## From commission decisions to roadmap priorities

Belarus and Tajikistan have traditionally enjoyed close relations, and the countries have been consistently strengthening their mutually beneficial strategic partnership. The Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation (IGC), established back in 1999, plays a key role in the development of effective Belarusian-Tajik bilateral interaction. The scope of its interests "touches upon such priority areas as: supply of machine-building products on the basis of new leasing schemes; cooperation in the agro-industrial complex and energy sector; participation in joint economic projects; creation of a network of joint production enterprises in both countries"<sup>174</sup>.

In April 2021, the 14th meeting of the IGC was held in Dushanbe to discuss topical issues of interaction in industry and production cooperation, agriculture and transport, healthcare and education, investment and information technologies. At the same time, an exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus, a business forum Belarus-Tajikistan-Afghanistan, and a forum TajBelAgro were organised in the capital of Tajikistan. All these events once again demonstrated that "despite the crisis phenomena in the world, the Belarusian-Tajik trade and economic cooperation shows a positive and dynamic character. Since 2016, mutual trade turnover has grown 5.5 times and totalled \$111.7 million in 2020"<sup>175</sup>. At the same time, Belarusian exports to the Tajik market increased more than sixfold over the same period of time and reached almost \$110 million, while the positive balance totalled \$107.5 million due to supplies from Belarus of cars, sugar, tractors and tractor-trailers, flour, meat by-products and fish, stationery made of paper and cardboard, chipboard.

Among the major joint projects implemented recently is the shipment to Afghanistan of the first batch of Belarusian tractors assembled at Agrotekhservis in the Tajik city of Gissar, where it is planned not only to produce modern machinery for the agro-industrial complex - forage harvesters, attachments, and expand the model range of assembled tractors, but also to create more than a hundred more qualified jobs, taking into account the further development of this project. In this regard, within the framework of the meeting of the intergovernmental commission, an agreement on the expansion of assembly

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<sup>174</sup> Zaleskii, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 211.

<sup>175</sup> Belarus and Tajikistan need to more actively implement projects in agriculture - Krupko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarusi-i-tadzhikistanu-nuzhno-aktivnee-realizovyvat-proekty-v-selskom-hozjajstve-krupko-435795-2021/>

production through the development of tractor semi-trailers PST-9 at the site in Gissar was signed by JSC "UKH Bobruiskagromash" and JSC "Agrotekhservis". "In addition, the companies signed a contract for the supply of the first batch of machine kits, the shipment of which is scheduled for the second quarter of 2021"<sup>176</sup>. It should be recalled that in Gissar, with Belarusian assistance, "a training centre is also functioning to train specialists for efficient operation and maintenance of machinery and equipment working in the fields of Tajikistan"<sup>177</sup>. The contract for the delivery of one hundred Belarusian autonomous trolleybuses to Dushanbe is in its final stages.

Belarusian-Tajik co-operation in agriculture was also very dynamic in 2020. Suffice it to say that the volume of mutual trade in agricultural products and foodstuffs between the two former Soviet republics reached almost ten million dollars. An important detail is that "Belarusian food exports to this country increased 1.4 times to \$9.5 million <...>. In January 2021, domestic agricultural products and foodstuffs worth \$775 thousand were supplied to Tajikistan (a sevenfold increase over the same period last year)"<sup>178</sup>. And there is every reason to believe that this positive trend will continue in the medium term. Bellegprom Concern is also working on the possibilities of supplying flax to this Central Asian country, which is of great interest to Tajik business circles. In particular, the IGC discussed "the issue of supplying products of Orsha Flax Factory and flax-containing fabrics of Kamvol to the Tajik market"<sup>179</sup>.

The exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus, which took place in Dushanbe in 2021, was also designed to promote the growth of exports from Belarus to Tajikistan. It showcased the products of 40 domestic companies from key industries: Agrofood - agriculture and food products; TechMach - engineering and technology; Wood - woodworking and furniture products; Health - healthcare and pharmaceuticals; and FMCG - consumer goods. Tajik partners

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<sup>176</sup> "Bobruiskagromash" will expand assembly production in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bobrujskagromash-rasshirit-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-v-tadzhikistane-436621-2021/>

<sup>177</sup> Belarus and Tajikistan discussed the development of trade and economic cooperation and industrial co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-obsudili-razvitie-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-i-promkooperatsiju-436006-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-obsudili-razvitie-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-i-promkooperatsiju-436006-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-obsudili-razvitie-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-i-promkooperatsiju-436006-2021/)

<sup>178</sup> Export of Belarusian agricultural products to Tajikistan in 2020 increased 1.4 times [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktov-v-tadzhikistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-v-14-raza-434869-2021/>

<sup>179</sup> "Bellegprom" is working on the possibility of supplying flax to Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellegprom-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnosti-postavok-lna-v-tadzhikistan-435980-2021/>

were also able to learn about the export opportunities of the Belarusian agro-industrial complex and prospects for bilateral cooperation in crop and livestock farming at the agricultural forum TajBelAgro, where they discussed not only the conclusion of contracts for mutual supplies of agricultural products and machinery, but also the elaboration of cooperation options. Finally, within the framework of the business forum "Tajikistan-Belarus-Afghanistan", which was attended by more than two hundred enterprises from the three countries, "eight documents were signed on the development of partnership in the spheres of industry, education, food and beverage supplies"<sup>180</sup>, which indicates the growing dynamics of partnership in this trilateral format as well.

It should be noted that in June 2022, Minsk hosted the 15th meeting of the IGC, where the parties noted the most significant areas of bilateral interaction: investment, industry, agriculture, transport, social, cultural and scientific-technical spheres. Recall that "in 2021, Belarus' trade turnover with Tajikistan totalled more than \$126 million and increased by 12.6% compared to 2020, exports - just over \$122 million (up 11.1%), imports - \$4 million (up 90.5%)"<sup>181</sup>. Today, the two countries are mutually interested in expanding areas of cooperation, which could include the development of assembly production of Belarusian lifts in Tajikistan, the establishment of a joint venture to produce carpets, supplies of Belarusian passenger, quarry and construction equipment, as well as pedigree cattle of Belarusian selection, and increasing exports of food products, including those certified according to Halal standards. Belarus, in turn, is interested in importing from Tajikistan raw materials for the Belarusian light industry, as well as in continuing co-operation in education, culture, and sports.

In this context, it is important that in Tajikistan 2022-2026 are declared the years of industrial development. "During this period, it is planned to ensure average annual economic development at the level of at least 7 per cent and double GDP per capita, create more than 500,000 new jobs and reduce poverty to 15 per cent. Belarusian companies were invited to take an active part in solving these tasks. A separate wish was expressed to continue training Tajik specialists in Minsk for different areas of the economy"<sup>182</sup>. In this regard, the Belarusian side

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<sup>180</sup> Belarus, Tajikistan and Afghanistan signed 8 documents on partnership development at the business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-tadzhikistan-i-afganistan-podpisali-na-biznes-forume-8-dokumentov-o-razvitii-partnerstva-435998-2021/>

<sup>181</sup> Belarus and Tajikistan are interested in expanding areas of co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-zainteresovany-v-rasshirenii-napravlenij-sotrudnichestva-506166-2022>

<sup>182</sup> Pivovar, E. Krutoy stated about the readiness of Belarus to provide Tajikistan with any types of engineering equipment / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL:

is ready to provide Tajik partners with any types of engineering machinery, primarily quarry and road machinery, for the implementation of infrastructure projects in the country's mining and electric power industries. There is a possibility to significantly increase supplies of new models of Belarusian buses, trucks, woodworking, petrochemical and metallurgical products to the Tajik market, as well as to open joint production facilities for assembling lifts, household appliances and furniture.

In the agro-industrial sector, Tajikistan is interested in increasing supplies of Belarusian agricultural machinery and meat and dairy products. In particular, significant work is underway on the shipment of agricultural machinery from Belarus, which is badly needed by the Tajik agrarian sector. "In 2021, 411 units of tractors of various brands and more than 124 agricultural machinery were delivered to Tajikistan"<sup>183</sup>. At the same time, the Tajik side expresses interest in continuing co-operation in this area. In addition, partners from Tajikistan plan to expand the range of supplies of beef meat products, dairy products and raw materials. Within the framework of the 15th IGC meeting, the parties also noted "the potential for growth in supplies of pedigree cattle of Belarusian selection and the possibility to provide Tajik agrarians with highly productive, balanced mixed fodder and admixtures"<sup>184</sup>.

The topic of co-operation between the regions of Belarus and Tajikistan is also developing successfully in 2022. In particular, on the agenda is the development of cooperation between the capitals of the two countries in a number of areas, including technology, production of pharmaceuticals, and education. Recall that in 2019 Minsk implemented a large project to provide Dushanbe with Belkommunmash trolleybuses. And today these vehicles are already decorating the Tajik capital. Another project is being implemented in the field of dairy production - cooperation of Tajik partners with Minsk Dairy Plant No. 1. There are plans to develop co-operative ties and create a joint production of municipal machinery. As for the educational sphere, about 600 Tajik students are currently studying in Belarus. They mainly choose Minsk and technical universities for their studies. Many of them study at the Academy of Aviation and various

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<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/krutoj-zajavil-o-gotovnosti-belarusi-obespechit-tadzhikistan-ljubymi-vidami-mashinostroitelnoj-tehniki-523859-2022/>

<sup>183</sup> Tajikistan is interested in increasing supplies of Belarusian meat and dairy products and agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tadzhikistan-zainteresovan-v-uvelichenii-postavok-belorusskoj-mjaso-molochnoj-produktsii-i-506657-2022/>

<sup>184</sup> Belarus is ready to supply halal products to Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-postavljat-v-tadzhikistan-haljalnuju-produktsiju-506619-2022/>

faculties of the Belarusian State University. In addition, there are four joint faculties of Belarusian and Tajik universities. So the two capitals are developing many mechanisms of co-operation. And "in the future, a document will be signed to regulate further development of relations between Minsk and Dushanbe"<sup>185</sup> .

Another example of regional cooperation is the Gomel and Khatlon regions, which intend to develop co-operation in agriculture and industry. Thus, Gomel specialists are ready to build turnkey farms in the Tajik region. Partners from Khatlon region have "intentions in purchasing mineral fertilisers, timber, cattle, as well as fodder for poultry farms"<sup>186</sup> . Khatlon Oblast is a large region of Tajikistan, where 48 to 78 per cent of the total republican volume is grown for some agricultural products. These include vegetables, early fruits, melons, and citrus fruits.

Another important document was signed by Belarus and Tajikistan in Dushanbe in October 2022 - a roadmap for 2022-2026. In the context of implementing the accelerated industrial development programme of this Central Asian country, Tajik partners are interested in developing cooperation with the Belarusian side in the light, food, pharmaceutical, chemical, and mining industries. In addition, "the agrarian sector in the sphere of industrial cooperation and interregional cooperation were identified as priority areas of economic interaction"<sup>187</sup> . In addition, the two republics adopted a number of important bilateral documents. These include intergovernmental agreements on a system of mutual trade facilitation and on co-operation in the field of youth policy. The Prosecutor General's Office of Belarus and the Agency for State Financial Control and Anti-Corruption of Tajikistan adopted a document on cooperation in combating corruption. The Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Belarus and the Committee for Tourism Development under the Government of Tajikistan agreed to develop co-operation in the tourism sector. The National Centre for Marketing and Price Study of Belarus and the Agency for Export under the Government of Tajikistan also signed an agreement on cooperation. The National Academies of Sciences of the two countries agreed to train personnel in virology, microbiology, molecular biology, epidemiology, biotechnology and pharmacology. In addition,

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<sup>185</sup> Co-operation between Belarus and Tajikistan was discussed in Minsk city executive committee [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-tadzhikistana-obsudili-v-mingorispolkome-525441-2022/>

<sup>186</sup> Gomel and Khatlon regions intend to develop co-operation in agro-industrial complex and industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-i-hatlonskaja-oblasti-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-i-promyshlennosti-507131-2022/>

<sup>187</sup> Rakhmon outlined priority areas of co-operation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/rahmon-oboznachil-prioritetnye-napравlenija-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusju-528619-2022/>

an action plan for the development of trade, economic and humanitarian co-operation between the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Dushanbe City Executive Body for 2023-2024 was approved. Mahiliou district established twinning ties with Spitamen district of Sughd region of Tajikistan..."<sup>188</sup>

During these October days, a Tajik-Belarusian business forum was also held in Dushanbe, attended by representatives of 73 enterprises from Belarus, almost fifty of which showed their products at the Made in Belarus exhibition. "Almost all sectors of the Belarusian economy were represented at the business forum: machine building, metallurgy, foodstuffs, woodworking, light industry. The total amount of contracts signed was about \$46 million. In addition, another \$2 million was secured during online negotiations"<sup>189</sup>.

In particular, Minsk Tractor Plant signed contracts with Tajik companies for \$11 million. "Thus, 170 units of BELARUS tractor equipment worth about \$4 million will be delivered to Madadi Tursunzoda. A trade agreement was signed with Agrotekhservis for the delivery of 320 tractors worth more than \$7 million"<sup>190</sup>. It should be noted that about 370 Belarusian tractors have already been delivered to Tajikistan in the first three quarters of this year. This is more than in January-September 2021 by almost 50 per cent. For reference: in November 2017, an assembly facility for BELARUS tractors was opened in the city of Hissar and contracts were signed for the production of seven models.

Another fact: Minsk Automobile Plant will supply 14 units of motor vehicles to the Tajik market for almost \$500,000. The contract within the framework of the Tajik-Belarusian business forum was signed by MAZ and CJSC Obi Zulol - "the largest producer of bottled water, carbonated beverages and natural juices in Tajikistan". In 2019, MAZ supplied the company with 18 units of machinery, including road trains and flatbed trucks with trailers"<sup>191</sup>.

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<sup>188</sup> Belarus and Tajikistan signed a road map for 2022-2026 and several other important documents [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-na-2022-2026-gody-i-esche-neskolko-vaznyh-dokumentov-528597-2022/>

<sup>189</sup> Tajik-Belarusian business forum is held in Dushanbe [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/fotofakt-tadzhiksko-belorusskij-biznes-forum-prohodit-v-dushanbe-528500-2022/>

<sup>190</sup> MTW signed contracts with companies from Tajikistan for \$11 million [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-zakljuchil-kontrakty-s-kompanijami-iz-tadzhikistana-na-11-mln-528650-2022/>

<sup>191</sup> MAZ will supply machinery to Tajikistan for almost \$500 th. [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-postavit-tehniku-v-tadzhikistan-pochti-na-500-tys-528637-2022/>

Another participant of the Tajik-Belarusian business forum was the Belgospisheprom concern, eight enterprises of which took part in the Made in Belarus exhibition and even signed a number of contracts with Tajik partners for the supply of sugar, brewing malt and confectionery products. By the way, "Tajikistan ranks first among the Concern's trading partner countries in Central Asia and the Middle East in terms of exports this year"<sup>192</sup>.

Representatives of Belleprom Concern explored the possibility of investing in cotton production in Tajikistan as part of a business forum. The heads of the Orsha Flax Mill and the Baranovichi Cotton Production Association, who visited Dushanbe, held talks on possible imports of cotton yarn and fibre, as the price of cotton yarn has become more acceptable for Belarusian producers in Tajikistan in recent years. Note that there are other interests in light industry cooperation between the two countries. "This [2022] year, the Belarusian company Mogotex supplied Tajikistan with its products for the first time. The exports included technical fabrics, with the transaction amounting to \$250,000. The Mogilev residents have agreed to supply Tajikistan in 2023 as well. <...> "Mogotex" will supply technical fabrics for \$300 thousand"<sup>193</sup>.

Vitebsk Carpets Holding, which is setting up a joint production facility in Khujand, Sughd Region, with Tajik partners, will also be represented on the Tajik market. Interestingly, in mid-April 2022, this city hosted the official opening ceremony of the joint Belarusian-Tajik assembly plant of lifts of OJSC "Mogilevliftmash", whose partner was Khujandtorgmash LLC. The new lift production shop provided jobs for 50 residents of Khujand, where "using modern equipment and technologies, production of different types of lifts will be carried out - passenger lifts for high-rise buildings, production enterprises, as well as health care institutions"<sup>194</sup>.

As for cooperation in education and science, at the forum of rectors of universities of Belarus and Tajikistan held in October 2022, the parties saw great potential in the innovation sphere, in the implementation of joint educational programmes, and in the training of Tajik students at Belarusian universities and

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<sup>192</sup> Zhidkov: Tajikistan is one of the key partners for Belgospisheprom in the Central Asian market [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zhidkov-tadzhikistan-odin-iz-kljuchevyh-partnerov-dlja-belgospisheproma-na-tsentralnoaziatskom-rynke-528642-2022/>

<sup>193</sup> Belarus is studying the possibility of investing in cotton production in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-izuchaet-vozmozhnost-investirovaniya-v-proizvodstvo-hloпка-v-tadzhikistane-528489-2022>

<sup>194</sup> Emomali Rahmon took part in the opening of the assembly production of lifts "Mogilevliftmash" in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/emomali-rahmon-prinjal-uchastie-v-otkrytii-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-liffov-mogilevliftmash-v-496483-2022/>

institutes. In particular, the Belarusian National Technical University (BNTU) signed a number of co-operation agreements with Tajik universities. These include the Dangara State University and the Tajik Agrarian University, the Tajik National University and the Technological University of Tajikistan, as well as the Mining and Metallurgical Institute of Tajikistan. Belarusian and Tajik partners already see a number of joint points for co-operation. "Interaction with the named universities is a new level of entering the Tajik market of educational services. <...> Opening new horizons of co-operation..."<sup>195</sup>. As a result, the parties believe that innovative interaction is the key to the creation of new joint ventures on the territory of Tajikistan and Belarus. And in general, all these facts "show the growing interest of the two former Soviet republics in fruitful co-operation in a wide variety of areas"<sup>196</sup>, which are reaching a new level in the form of comprehensive measures of the Road Map of Belarus and Tajikistan for 2022-2026.

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<sup>195</sup> BNTU and universities of Tajikistan to cooperate in the field of science, education and innovation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bntu-i-vuzy-tadzhikistana-budut-sotrudnicat-v-sfere-nauki-obrazovanija-i-innovatsij-528871-2022>

<sup>196</sup> Zalesky, B. International relations and media. Features of multi-vector international co-operation in the period of global challenges / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 129.

## Opportunities for interaction are there, we need to take advantage of 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"<sup>197</sup>, which include **Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.**

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 the 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"<sup>198</sup>. 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"<sup>199</sup>. 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 Industry held its fourth online meeting in April 2021. At the meeting, the parties "discussed not

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<sup>197</sup> Zaleskii, B. The goal is stable growth. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 66.

<sup>198</sup> Pakistan is interested in strengthening economic co-operation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-zainteresovan-v-ukreplenii-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusiju-462939-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-zainteresovan-v-ukreplenii-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusiju-462939-2021/>

<sup>199</sup> 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-tractorov-i-master-klasse-po-rospisi-furgonov-7887//>

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"<sup>200</sup>. 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"<sup>201</sup>. 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,"<sup>202</sup>.

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 Pakistani side sees significant potential here "primarily in such areas as agriculture, woodworking,

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<sup>200</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. Key task - realisation of cooperation potential / B.L. Zaleskii // Proceedings of the XVII International Scientific and Practical Conference, Novinata za nadrednala nauka - 2021, 17 - 25 May 2021; Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 19.

<sup>201</sup> Barysevich: the relations between Belarus and Pakistan are becoming strategic [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/borisevich-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistan-priobretajut-strategicheskij-harakter-462932-2021/>

<sup>202</sup> 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-rassmatrivajut-vozmozhnost-sozdaniya-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskih-tractorov-462934-2021/>

metallurgy, and petrochemicals"<sup>203</sup>. 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"<sup>204</sup>. 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..."<sup>205</sup>, 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"<sup>206</sup>. The dynamics of the development of these bilateral ties is eloquently illustrated by the fact that "trade

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<sup>203</sup> 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-belarusju-cherez-ploschadku-butb-462927-2021/>

<sup>204</sup> 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/>

<sup>205</sup> Trade and Economic Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade\\_and\\_economic\\_bilateral\\_relations/](https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/)

<sup>206</sup> Golovchenko: Belarus is interested in expanding cooperation with the UAE in trade and investment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-sotrudnichestva-s-oae-v-sfere-torgovli-i-investitsij-470873-2021/>

turnover has tripled over the past five years, while investments have increased more than 10-fold since 2011"<sup>207</sup>.

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"<sup>208</sup>. 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 the necessary engineering and transport infrastructure, social facilities and public purposes with a total area of more than 6 million sq. m. It is also envisaged to build the National Exhibition Centre, the Institute of Artificial Intelligence and the Minsk International Trade Centre"<sup>209</sup>.

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..."<sup>210</sup>. 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 take part in the "Expo 2020" events. Among them are JV "Santa Bremore" Ltd, JSC "Barhim", 1AK-GROUP, group of companies "STiM", Kobrin Butter 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

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<sup>207</sup> Chervjakov: 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-belarusi-na-ekspo-2020-pozvolit-pokazat-vozmozhnosti-predpriyatij-470830-2021/>

<sup>208</sup> 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>

<sup>209</sup> Construction of the exhibition centre in the complex "North Bank" in Minsk is planned to start this year [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/stroitelstvo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-v-komplekse-severnij-bereg-v-minske-planirujut-nachat-v-etom-godu-470841-2021/>

<sup>210</sup> Foreign trade turnover between Brest region and the UAE increased 1.5 times [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vneshnetorgovyj-oborot-mezhdu-brestskoj-oblastju-i-oe-vyros-v-15-raza-479871-2022/>

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 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"<sup>211</sup> .

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"<sup>212</sup> . 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 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"<sup>213</sup> . Today, the parties consider several

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<sup>211</sup> 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-predpriyatija-brestskoj-oblasti-na-vystavke-v-dubae-481397-2022/>

<sup>212</sup> 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/>

<sup>213</sup> 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/>

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"<sup>214</sup> .

<sup>215</sup>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"<sup>216</sup> . 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 of soil mixtures by the Belarusian company EridGrow Production"<sup>217</sup> . Within the framework of the second meeting of the intergovernmental committee a wide range of issues of cooperation 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

<sup>214</sup> 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>

<sup>215</sup> Political co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://uae.mfa.gov.ru/bilateral\\_relations/KSA/politics/](https://uae.mfa.gov.ru/bilateral_relations/KSA/politics/)

<sup>216</sup> 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-prorobotajut-provedenie-zasedanija-sovmestnogo-mezhpravkomiteta-420253-2020/>

<sup>217</sup> 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>

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"<sup>218</sup>. 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"<sup>219</sup>.

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)"<sup>220</sup>. 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.

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"<sup>221</sup>. Another interesting example in this series is the Polotsk Dairy Plant, which more than doubled its export volumes in 2021, the geography

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<sup>218</sup> 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-produktsii-na-rynke-saudovskoj-aravij-193602-2016/>

<sup>219</sup> Business forum "Belarus - Saudi Arabia". [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.cci.by/olalate/novosti/biznes-forum-belarus-saudovskaya-araviya/#>

<sup>220</sup> Belarus is interested in increasing food supplies to Saudi Arabia - Krupko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-naraschivanii-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-saudovskuju-araviju-krupko-441447-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-naraschivanii-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-saudovskuju-araviju-krupko-441447-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-naraschivanii-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-saudovskuju-araviju-krupko-441447-2021/)

<sup>221</sup> 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.

of which is already 22 countries. "There are also plans to ship milk powder to Saudi Arabia in the near future"<sup>222</sup> .

All these facts show that the parties have a certain reserve 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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<sup>222</sup> 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>

## Growth points get 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"<sup>223</sup> . 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"<sup>224</sup> . 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"<sup>225</sup> . 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)"<sup>226</sup> . And important in this regard was the entry into force in 2021 of "an additional protocol to the agreement on industrial assembly with Vietnam, which creates favourable conditions for localisation and development of assembly

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<sup>223</sup> 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>

<sup>224</sup> Zaleskii, B. Journalism of regional communities. Theory and practice / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2013. - C. 99-100.

<sup>225</sup> Ambassador of Vietnam sees the potential for doubling trade turnover with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-vjetnama-vidit-potensial-dlja-udvoenija-tovarooborota-s-belarusju-493021-2022/www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-vjetnama-vidit-potensial-dlja-udvoenija-tovarooborota-s-belarusju-493021-2022/>

<sup>226</sup> Belarus and Vietnam discussed the prospects for the development of joint ventures [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-vjetnam-obsudili-perspektivy-razvitiya-sovmestnyh-predpriyatij-478965-2022/>

production of MAZ"<sup>227</sup>. 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"<sup>228</sup>.

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, the full-fledged work on the supply 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 Belgospisheprom Concern at the 31st International Exhibition Vietnan 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: "Krnitsa", "Belsolod", "Spartak", "Minskcrystal", Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, "Slodych", "Kommunarka", "Red Foods", "Mashpischeprod", "Lidapischekoncentraty", Malorita Canning and Vegetable Washing Plant, Minsk Margarine Plant and Pinsk Winery"<sup>229</sup>. 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.

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

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<sup>227</sup> 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>

<sup>228</sup> 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-vjetnam-prorabatyvajut-vozmozhnost-sovmestnogo-proizvodstva-ekipirovki-dlja-pozharnyh-sluzhb-494398-2022/>

<sup>229</sup> Enterprises of Belgospisheprom presented their products at an exhibition in Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-belgospisheproma-predstavili-produktsiju-na-vystavke-vo-vjetname-495887-2022/>

congress events, including the Belarusian-Vietnamese business forum"<sup>230</sup> , 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"<sup>231</sup> . 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"<sup>232</sup> . And the existing experience of diplomatic relations in both multilateral and bilateral formats shows that "India is one of the partner countries of Belarus in Asia, large-scale interaction with which is developing in all areas of cooperation"<sup>233</sup> .

By developing interaction based on the principles of equality, trust and respect, the two sides were able to achieve an annual trade turnover consistently

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<sup>230</sup> 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-belarusi-budet-predstavlena-na-vietnam-expo-v-aprele-485336-2022/>

<sup>231</sup> 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/>

<sup>232</sup> 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/andrejchenko-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-indii-razvivajutsja-na-printsipah-ravenstva-doverija-i-uvazhenija-479047-2022/>

<sup>233</sup> Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 452.

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"<sup>234</sup>. 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"<sup>235</sup>. 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"<sup>236</sup>. In 2022, the parties put the issue of resuming the production of Gomel combine harvesters for Indian agriculture into practical 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

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<sup>234</sup> 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-belarusi-davnij-drug-i-nadezhnyj-partner-v-azii-482540-2022/>

<sup>235</sup> 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-grodnenskaja-oblast-naraschivaet-sotrudnichestvo-s-indiej-485022-2022/>

<sup>236</sup> 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-medsina-indija-i-gomelskaja-oblast-gotovy-razvivat-novye-sfery-492016-2022>

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"<sup>237</sup>. 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"<sup>238</sup>. 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.

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**, 30 years since 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

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<sup>237</sup> 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>

<sup>238</sup> 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>

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"<sup>239</sup>. 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.

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"<sup>240</sup>. Among these

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<sup>239</sup> 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://http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html](http://http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html)

<sup>240</sup> 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/vozobnovljena-prorabotka-projekta-sozdaniya-v-sirii-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskoj-avtotehniki-155561-2015/>

states was Belarus, which already then saw significant opportunities in intensifying co-operation with its Syrian partners across the whole range 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"<sup>241</sup> .

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 "in the construction of high-quality and comfortable housing"<sup>242</sup> . 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

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<sup>241</sup> 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>

<sup>242</sup> 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/>

regard, the country needs a wide range of materials, services and technologies"<sup>243</sup>

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 a 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"<sup>244</sup>.

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

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<sup>243</sup> Belarusian companies will take part in the largest industrial exhibition in Syria [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-kompanii-primut-uchastie-v-krupnejšej-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-sirii-458048-2021/>

<sup>244</sup> 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-beloruskoj-ekonomiki-462466-2021/>

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"<sup>245</sup>, 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"<sup>246</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>245</sup> Syria will study the experience of building dairy farms in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sirija-izuchit-opyt-stroitelstva-molochno-tovarnyh-ferm-v-belarusi-462158-2021/>

<sup>246</sup> Co-operation between Belarus and Syria in the information sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mininform.gov.by/special/ru/news-ru/view/sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-sirii-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-275/>

'pilot' contracts for joint research and development work"<sup>247</sup> . In this regard, the task of journalists is to comprehensively reflect these trends in the media sphere.

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<sup>247</sup> Co-operation in the field of science, education, culture [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: [http://syria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/cooperation/ec5318cc4fb8b9c5.html](http://syria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/cooperation/ec5318cc4fb8b9c5.html)

## 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..."<sup>248</sup>

It should be noted that a number of specific measures to fulfil this task were taken in Velikiy 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"<sup>249</sup>. An important detail: if "as of the end of 2020, 68 companies from 14 countries were registered in the park"<sup>250</sup>, then as of mid-November 2021, 81 companies from 15 countries were already registered as residents. The work on the expansion of Velikiy 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 (boards) of small and medium series"<sup>251</sup>, widely used in telecommunications, medicine, automotive industry, instrumentation, to supply them to the countries of the

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<sup>248</sup> 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.

<sup>249</sup> 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-mesjatev-bolee-chem-na-tret-uvlechilis-investitsii-v-osnovnoj-kapital-470611-2021/>

<sup>250</sup> Zaleskii, B. With the aim of sustainable development. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 13.

<sup>251</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce electronic boards [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-elektronnye-platy-465743-2021/>

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"<sup>252</sup>, which gives good reasons 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"<sup>253</sup>. 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"<sup>254</sup>, 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 tissues, to prepare specialists for practical activities"<sup>255</sup>. 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

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<sup>252</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce composite materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-kompozitnye-materialy-469205-2021/>

<sup>253</sup> LLC "InKata" became a resident of "Veliky Kamen" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ooo-inkata-stalo-rezidentom-velikogo-kamnja-471320-2021/>

<sup>254</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce reagents for disease diagnostics [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-reagenty-dlja-diagnostiki-zabolevanij-471849-2021/>

<sup>255</sup> 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-dlja-otrabotki-manualnyh-navykov-v-hirurgii-474239-2021/>

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"<sup>256</sup>.

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"<sup>257</sup>.

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

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<sup>256</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will start to produce unmanned aerial vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-proizvodit-bespilotnye-letatelnye-apparaty-476043-2021/>

<sup>257</sup> 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 // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/podderzhka-startapov-preferentsii-investoram-uproschenie-zemelnyh-otnoshenij-koroteev-o-novatsijah-ukaza-po-7805/>

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%"<sup>258</sup> . The use of 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"<sup>259</sup> . 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. Its founders include the 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"<sup>260</sup> . 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, 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

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<sup>258</sup> 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/>

<sup>259</sup> 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-zdravoochranenii-i-park-velikij-kamen-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-441421-2021/>

<sup>260</sup> 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/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnjanachinaet-proekt-v-sfere-kitajskoj-medsiny-433283-2021/>

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"<sup>261</sup>. 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"<sup>262</sup>. 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 it was \$613.8 million for the same period"<sup>263</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>261</sup> 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/zvanyy-biznes.html>

<sup>262</sup> 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-razvitiu-natsionalnoj-innovatsionnoj-sistemy-do-2025-goda-475735-2021>

<sup>263</sup> Kukharev and the Chinese Ambassador 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-kr-453612-2021/>

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 the centre 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"<sup>264</sup>. 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"<sup>265</sup>.

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 projects"<sup>266</sup>. 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 JSC SvetlogorskKhimvolokno and Jilin

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<sup>264</sup> Palezhai, T. Belarusian-Chinese technopark opened in the city of Changchun / T. Palezhai // [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/belorusko-kitajskij-tehnopark-otkrylsja-v-gorode-chanchun-134192-2010>

<sup>265</sup> 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>

<sup>266</sup> 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-chanchune-vneset-suschestvennyj-vklad-v-razvitie-otmoshenij-belarusi-i-kitaja-shumilin-405335-2020/>

Lenke; 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"<sup>267</sup>. 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"<sup>268</sup>.

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"<sup>269</sup>. 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 Kommunaraka, KUP MinskKhlebprom, KUP Small Wholesale Base on Western, OJSC Belyba, OJSC Minotel"<sup>270</sup>. 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

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<sup>267</sup> 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/>

<sup>268</sup> Belarusian-Chinese Science and Technology Park in Changchun [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://changchun.park.bntu.by/about-technology-park/>

<sup>269</sup> Minsk and Chinese Changchun plan to develop business co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-kitajskij-chanchun-planirujut-ravzivat-biznes-sotrudnichestvo-47498-2014/>

<sup>270</sup> 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-chanchun-podpisali-soglasenie-o-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-turizma-i-kulturny-250871-2017/>

establishment of twinning ties, which provides for the expansion of co-operation in the economic, social and cultural spheres"<sup>271</sup> .

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"<sup>272</sup> . 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 in the Belarusian region itself, three enterprises with Chinese capital have already been registered - 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 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 the PRC 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

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<sup>271</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Gomel region: Chinese vector of partnership / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVIII Mezinárodní vědecko-praktická konference "Efektivní nástroje moderních věd - 2021". Volume 5: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 16.

<sup>272</sup> Gomel region has increased exports to China 20 times in three years [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-za-tri-goda-uvlechila-eksport-v-kitaj-v-20-raz-481090-2022/>

2017, the amount of machine kits supplied to the PRC was about USD 2.6 million, in 2018. - USD 7 million. USD"<sup>273</sup> .

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"<sup>274</sup> . 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"<sup>275</sup> .

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 agricultural machinery enterprise Zongshen-Gomel. There are prospects for the implementation of joint ideas in tourism, culture and education"<sup>276</sup> .

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

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<sup>273</sup> Interregional ties between Belarus and China: state, problems and prospects of development / T.S. Vertinskaya [et al.]. - Minsk: Belaruskaya nauvuka, 2020. - C. 221-222.

<sup>274</sup> 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-provintsii-hebej-237889-2017>

<sup>275</sup> 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-kormoborochnih-kombaynov-na-summu-bolee-15-mln-doll>

<sup>276</sup> 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/>

million inhabitants, signed in January 2022. This document "envisages the development of mutually beneficial co-operation in various spheres - economic, trade and humanitarian"<sup>277</sup>. 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.

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<sup>277</sup> 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-pobratimskih-otmoshenijah-481071-2022/>

## Prospects for co-operation have been identified

In May 2022, the sixth meeting of the Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation of the Belarus-China Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee was held, where its participants discussed the status and prospects of bilateral trade and investment cooperation, transport and logistics partnership, and the implementation of the joint project - the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park. Recall that in 2021, the volume of mutual trade in goods and services between the two countries came close to six billion dollars, while the share of Belarusian supplies to the Celestial Empire has more than doubled. At the same time, "the capacity of Belarusian producers makes it possible to ship almost \$2 billion worth of Belarusian-made goods to the Chinese market by the end of this year [2022]. This requires consolidation of the parties' efforts to accelerate the opening of the Chinese market for new Belarusian producers, create joint trading companies, and develop China's largest electronic trading platforms."<sup>278</sup> .

During the commission meeting, the Belarusian side proposed to deepen trade co-operation in five promising areas. The first is the expansion of direct contacts between the business circles of the two countries. The second is to increase the range of products supplied to China from Belarus. The third is the promotion of new mechanisms for expanding bilateral trade with a focus on establishing joint export-import companies and positioning Belarusian goods on Chinese electronic trading platforms. Fourth, developing logistics through prompt delivery of goods by railway. Fifth - building up investment cooperation within the framework of existing bilateral projects and joint work on the creation of new import-substituting enterprises "through the prism of developing the Veliky Kamen industrial park and deepening interregional cooperation"<sup>279</sup> .

The results of the first quarter of 2022 testify to the fact that the work in these areas is quite active. In particular, Belarusian-Chinese trade turnover totalled \$1.2 billion over this period. The fact that Belarus is among the top ten largest suppliers of potash fertilisers, dairy whey, meat products and rapeseed oil to China is also indicative of a lot. The agreements reached during the work of the commission should contribute to the successful implementation of the planned

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<sup>278</sup> Cherviakov: friendly and partnership relations with China are especially significant for Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-druzhestvennye-i-partnerskie-otnoshenija-s-kitaem-osobo-znachimy-dlja-belarusi-504062-2022>

<sup>279</sup> Trade turnover between Belarus and China totalled \$1.2 billion in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-belarusi-i-kitaja-v-i-kvartale-sostavil-12-mlrd-504056-2022/>

areas of cooperation. For instance, the Ministry of Industry of Belarus intends to closely cooperate with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on import and export of machine-building and electronic products. The memorandum signed by the parties "is aimed at strengthening the Belarusian-Chinese partnership in industry"<sup>280</sup>. The memorandum of co-operation in the import and export of woodworking products was also adopted by Bellesbumprom Concern and the Chinese Association for the Circulation of Wood and Forest Products. The document is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of partnership ties, "analysing the problems of mutual trade and finding mutually acceptable ways to solve them"<sup>281</sup> by holding joint exhibitions, fairs, business meetings, exchange of economic, legal and scientific and technical information in all areas of cooperation.

The Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen has been identified as a site for the organisation of innovative production facilities in the set of measures for the development of the national innovation system in Belarus for 2021-2025. One of the main tasks set for the park for the next five years is "to ensure the efficient operation of its residents, attract new ones, actively develop innovation activities, startups, cluster co-operation..."<sup>282</sup>. The record increase in residents in 2021 - 21 - is evidence of how this task is being solved here. To be more precise, 85 residents were registered here at the end of 2021. By the beginning of 2022, "more than \$718 million has already been invested in the park, with 37 companies producing products, conducting research and development, and providing services. Velikiy Kamen enterprises have created more than 1,700 jobs<...>. The volume of exports has also grown - by almost 17 per cent compared to 2020. Deliveries are made to 20 countries of the world"<sup>283</sup>. In the last days of 2021, the 85th resident was the Belarusian SinRubEnergo LLC with a research and development project in the field of creating digital energy facilities and smart

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<sup>280</sup> Belarus and China strengthen partnership in industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-ukrepljajut-partnerstvo-v-promyslennosti-504071-2022/>

<sup>281</sup> "Bellesbumprom" will cooperate with the Chinese association for the export of woodworking products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellesbumprom-budet-sotrudniczat-s-kitajskoj-assotsiatsiej-po-eksportu-produktsii-derevoobrabotki-504024-2022>

<sup>282</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Industrial Park "Great Stone": new projects bring the future closer / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVIII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 3.

<sup>283</sup> Yaroshenko: Velikiy Kamen enterprises supply products to 20 countries of the world [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/jaroshenko-predpriyatija-velikogo-kamnja-postavljajut-produktsiju-v-20-stran-mira-479114-2022/>

city. "The company will develop complex automation and dispatching systems" .  
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With the arrival of 2022, the industrial park continued to work actively to expand the number of residents and increase the volume of their economic activities. Thus, as of mid-April 2022, 89 residents from 15 countries were "already registered here. The volume of declared investments amounts to \$1.24 billion, of which more than \$750 million has already been invested in the development of the park. Residents have created more than 1.8 thousand new jobs. In addition, almost half of the companies have started their business activities in the park"<sup>285</sup> .

The 86th resident of the industrial park in March 2022 was the Scientific and Technical Company Bel Samoyed Cloud LLC, which "will develop digital financial technologies and mobile payment systems. It is also planned to create an e-commerce centre in Belarus and provide Belarusian and Chinese companies with services in this area"<sup>286</sup> . An important detail: the initiator of this project is one of the largest providers of cloud solutions in China - Samoyed Cloud Technology Group Holdings Limited.

April 2022 was particularly "fruitful" for Great Stone in terms of registering new residents. For example, earlier this month, the 87th resident was Yuzhou Science and Technology Company LLC from Hong Kong, whose founder works in the field of product targeting and branding and has branches in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Hangzhou and Wuhan. The new resident "plans to establish a digital promotion centre for e-commerce using Internet marketing technologies"<sup>287</sup> , will cooperate with Belarusian manufacturers to promote their goods in China and intends to provide training on e-commerce.

A little later, the 88th resident - the Belarusian Cuby RND LLC - was registered in the industrial park with an investment project for the production of

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<sup>284</sup> A new resident of Velikiy Kamen will be engaged in the creation of digital energy facilities [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-sozdaniem-tsifrovih-energoobjektov-477402-2021/>

<sup>285</sup> Yakimov, P. "The Great Stone" opens wide opportunities for strengthening cooperation between Belarus and China / P. Yakimov // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/velikij-kamen-otkryvaet-shirokie-vozmozhnosti-dlja-ukrepljenja-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-kitaja-8150/>

<sup>286</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will deal with digital technologies and mobile payment systems [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-tsifrovymi-tehnologijami-i-sistemami-mobilnyh-platezhej-490657-2022/>

<sup>287</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will be engaged in digital promotion of goods [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-tsifrovym-prodvizheniem-tovarov-493650-2022/>

equipment and components for modular construction of smart houses. "The production is based on the innovative Cuby technology, which is the company's own development. It allows to produce high-tech structures with high environmental characteristics"<sup>288</sup>. It is expected that 90 per cent of the products manufactured in Veliky Kamen by the new resident will be exported.

The 89th resident was another Belarusian company - HomeLand Group LLC, which plans to produce multifunctional noise-insulated cabins 'Aerocapsule' with an automated control system based on the Internet of Things - the concept of data transfer - in the industrial park. Interestingly, this project won second place at the national competition of innovative developments in 2021. Aerocapsules, created with the use of smart technologies and equipped with innovative built-in facilities, "can be widely used in open-air offices, airports, shopping centres, production plants and allow creating optimal conditions for recreation and work"<sup>289</sup>.

By mid-May 2022, the number of residents increased to 90 with a declared investment volume of \$1.24 billion. In May 2022, a new resident of the industrial park was the Chinese company Transport Complex - AF LLC, which will create a transport monitoring centre using Internet of Things technology. At the same time, a letter of intent was signed for Hongju Corporation JSC to enter the park, which "plans to engage in biotechnology activities in Veliky Kamen"<sup>290</sup>. According to the results of the first quarter of 2022, the industrial park managed to ensure "growth of revenue from the sale of goods 1.8 times compared to the first quarter of last year (Br123.4 million), production of industrial products of residents 1.7 times (Br95.4 million), export of goods 1.4 times (\$22.6 million), investment in fixed assets 1.1 times (Br30.4 million)"<sup>291</sup>.

An important area of Great Stone's activity is the creation of subparks, which are understood as the arrival of not just one investor, but a pool of iconic companies under the leadership of a separate management company, which opens

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<sup>288</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will start to produce equipment for smart homes [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-vypuskat-oborudovanie-dlja-umnyh-domov-495324-2022/>

<sup>289</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will produce innovative aerocapsules [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-innovatsionnye-aerokapsuly-495913-2022/>

<sup>290</sup> The new resident of "Great Stone" will create a centre for monitoring cross-border traffic [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-sozdast-tsentr-monitoringa-transgranichnyh-perevozok-501098-2022/>

<sup>291</sup> The number of residents of "Great Stone" has increased to 90 with the declared volume of investments in \$1.24 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-vozroslo-do-90-s-zajavlennym-obъемom-investitsij-v-124-mlrd-502265-2022/>

up broad prospects for large corporations. Interaction with the Chinese province of Guangdong is developing particularly well in this respect. Recall that "back in January 2017 in its administrative centre - the city of Guangzhou - held a ceremony of signing an agreement on the establishment of the Chinese (Guangdong) subpark of LED products in the Industrial Park "Great Stone", as well as five more documents on the intention to join this subpark of specific companies"<sup>292</sup>. Today, this subpark already has 15 residents specialising in areas such as LED production, integrated logistics, electric transport, unmanned systems and research and development. They will soon be joined by a joint innovation centre established by the Guangdong Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, which will focus on R&D in industrial and digital technologies, as well as new materials, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. So, in this direction too, we see the successful realisation of the plans outlined several years ago.

The planned interaction of the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park with similar preferential economic zones in other countries should also contribute to further unlocking the potential of the Great Stone's innovative areas. In particular, in Cuba and Uzbekistan. Thus, back in January 2021, a memorandum of understanding was signed with Cuba's Mariel Special Development Zone (SDZ), which provides for cooperation "in attracting investment, strengthening ties between the business communities of Belarus and Cuba, and also provides for information interaction"<sup>293</sup>. The priority areas of activity of the Cuban ZOR, established in November 2013, located 45 kilometres from Havana, where at the end of 2021 there were more than 60 residents from 21 countries, are electronics, logistics, pharmaceuticals, energy, as well as financial and banking industries. In January 2022, the parties have already started discussing specific areas of co-operation, "particularly in the area of attracting residents and developing interaction with Cuban pharmaceutical companies"<sup>294</sup>. If we take into account that the pharmaceutical sector in Great Stone is on the rise, it is easy to assume that the emergence of concrete results from this co-operation will not be long in coming.

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<sup>292</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. "Great Stone": development perspective - subparks / B.L. Zaleskii // Materials of the XVI International scientific and practical conference "Science and civilisation - 2020", 30 January - 07 February, 2020. Economic sciences. : Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 21.

<sup>293</sup> "Great Stone" and Cuban special development zone "Mariel" will cooperate in attracting investments [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-i-kubinskaja-zona-osobogo-razvitija-mariel-budut-sotrudnichat-v-privlechenii-investitsij-426316-2021/>

<sup>294</sup> "Great Stone" intends to develop co-operation with Cuban pharmaceutical companies [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-nameren-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kubinskimi-fampredprijatijami-487548-2022/>

Another interesting example in this context is the Uzbek free economic zones (FEZ) "Jizzak" and "Syrdarya". In early April 2022, the Velikiy Kamen administration discussed with their representatives areas of possible cooperation, including "establishing interaction between residents of the park, free economic zones and enterprises in the field of import and export of component materials and finished products"<sup>295</sup>. The parties agreed to sign a memorandum of cooperation, which will enshrine their desire to implement joint projects. The specialisation of Uzbek FEZs indicates that there may well be such projects.

In particular, FEZ "Jizzak" was established in March 2013 in Jizzak region to attract direct investment in the creation of high-tech and innovative industries. And today there are already several interesting examples in this regard. Thus, in March 2020, an agreement was signed here on the establishment of production of Volkswagen light commercial vehicles on the basis of LLC "Jizzak Automobile Plant". The implementation of this project is divided into two stages. In 2020-2021, German cars were delivered here in a ready-made form for market research and marketing analysis. From 2022, "a full production cycle will begin, which includes welding, painting and assembly processes <...>. Dealer and service networks in every region of Uzbekistan will also be expanded"<sup>296</sup>.

Another interesting example is the Uzbek enterprise ADM Jizzakh, located in the Jizzakh FEZ and producing KIA and Lada models there. In October 2021, it announced that in early 2023 it would start small-unit assembly of these vehicles. In total, "it is planned to organise the production of 314 parts and components, as well as launch welding and painting shops"<sup>297</sup>. This will make it possible to produce 100 thousand of these models a year, to create three thousand new jobs and to bring the localisation of production up to 30 per cent. It is believed that such experience may be of great interest to the Belarusian side as well.

As for FEZ "Syrdarya", it was established on the basis of FEZ "Jizzak" branch in Syrdarya region in April 2018. One of its main objectives is to ensure the comprehensive and efficient use of the production and resource potential of this Uzbek region "on the basis of deep processing of mineral and raw material resources, expanding the production of products in demand in foreign markets, as

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<sup>295</sup> "Great Stone" and FEZ of Uzbekistan intend to develop co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-i-sez-uzbekistana-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-493658-2022/>

<sup>296</sup> Production of Volkswagen cars in Uzbekistan will begin in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/06/26/volkswagen/>

<sup>297</sup> Plant in Uzbekistan for the production of KIA and Lada in 2023 will increase localisation to 30% [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/2021/10/22/zavod-v-uzbekistane-po-vypusku-kia-i-lada-v-2023-godu-povysit-lokalizatsiyu-do-30-21019614.html>

well as import-substituting products with high added value<sup>298</sup>. Such production areas for attracting investments and advanced technologies as deep processing, storage and packaging of fruit and vegetables and other agricultural products, textile, footwear, leather goods, chemical, food, electrical industry, agricultural machine building, construction materials industry are identified as the main ones. With the help of the FEZ they intend to significantly strengthen the export component of the region, where "more than 80 exporters' enterprises, which supply abroad more than 50 types of products" are already operating<sup>299</sup>. So here, too, the range of joint interests with Great Stone can be quite extensive. All this indicates that the China-Belarus industrial park retains its strategic importance as a country-scale growth point for Belarus.

As regards interregional cooperation, in the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of an All-Weather and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, adopted in September 2022, the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China positively assessed the expansion of in-depth trade and economic interaction between Belarusian regions and cities and provinces of the Celestial Empire. Turning to the task of expanding interregional ties, "which is one of the priorities in the development of Belarusian-Chinese relations"<sup>300</sup>, one can note the successful experience of its fulfilment in 2022 by such Belarusian regions as Vitebsk, Grodno and Brest regions.

Thus, in October 2022, **Vitebsk Region** and the Chinese **province of Jiangxi** signed an agreement on cooperation in economy, education, healthcare, sports and will establish contacts in trade, science and technology. The parties will interact in a comprehensive manner. For example, it is planned to organise meetings via videoconference, at which the Chinese partners will be presented the leading enterprises of Vitebsk, their developments and technologies that may be useful and interesting to companies from Jiangxi. In particular, we are talking about joint projects for the development of agriculture, mechanical engineering, as well as scientific parks and university developments. It should be noted that the two regions - Belarusian and Chinese - have previously held events: a conference on vocational education and training of engineering specialists, as well as on the fight against COVID-19. In addition, "there are regular container trains to

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<sup>298</sup> A new free economic zone is being created in Syrdarya [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://kun.uz/ru/94899784?q=%2Fru%2F94899784>

<sup>299</sup> Mirzaev, G. Syr Darya opens its doors to investors / G. Mirzaev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://rg.ru/amp/2019/08/29/v-syrdarinskoj-oblasti-uzbekistana-gotovy-k-millionnym-investiciyam.html>

<sup>300</sup> Zaleskii, B. Time of concrete decisions. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. !00.

Nanchang, the urban district where the authorities of Jiangxi are located, which are formed, among other things, by a logistics company from Orsha. Nanchang and Orsha have established partnership ties, and another city of the province - Funzhou - with Polotsk<sup>301</sup> ". The signed agreement seems to help the northern region of Belarus and the Chinese province located in the south-east of China to reach a new level of relations. In the context of this topic, it is interesting that in September 2022, within the framework of the Year of Regions of Belarus and China, Days of Vitebsk Oblast were held in another Chinese province - **Heilongjiang**, where the "potential for cooperation between the twin regions in trade and economic, production, tourism and investment spheres" was presented<sup>302</sup> . By the way, this region of China is home to more than 30 million people.

And in October 2022, an agreement on establishing friendly exchanges and cooperation was also signed by the cities of **Grodno** and **Lanzhou** - the administrative centre of the Chinese province of Gansu, where the parties envisaged "deepening of bilateral interaction, expansion of exchanges and cooperation between the regions in trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and tourist and other spheres. The document is also aimed at strengthening friendly ties between the residents of the two cities"<sup>303</sup> . Recall that the memorandum on the establishment of twinning relations between **Gansu Province** and **Grodno Region** was signed in 2007. For 15 years more than 10 different agreements have been concluded between the regions, with trade and economic co-operation developing especially dynamically. In April 2022, Gansu and Hrodna signed the Cooperation Programme for 2022-2023, which is filled with concrete joint projects. It "further elaborated those areas where co-operation is not yet so actively developing <...>. These are agriculture, tourism, technology exchange, traditional Chinese medicine"<sup>304</sup> . And Novogrudok District and the Chinese city of Dunhuang from Gansu Province agreed to "conclude an

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<sup>301</sup> Pushnyakova, A. Trade, science, sport: Vitebsk region signed a cooperation agreement with Chinese Jiangxi / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/torgovlja-nauka-sport-vitebskaja-oblast-podpisala-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-s-kitajskoj-tszjansi-532401-2022>

<sup>302</sup> Days of Vitebsk region are held in the Chinese province Heilongjiang [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dni-vitebskoj-oblasti-prohodjat-v-kitajskoj-provintsii-hejluntszjan-525147-2022/>

<sup>303</sup> Hrodna and Chinese Lanzhou signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly exchanges [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodno-i-kitajskij-lanchzhou-podpisali-soglashenie-ob-ustanovlenii-druzhestvennyh-obmenov-532444-2022/>

<sup>304</sup> Grodno region intends to expand co-operation with the Chinese province of Gansu [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-namerena-rasshirjat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kitajskoj-provintsiej-gansu-498323-2022/>

agreement on establishing co-operation"<sup>305</sup>. For reference, Hrodna Region has also signed an agreement on twinning relations with **Hainan Province**.

And another interesting example: **Brest Oblast and Hubei Province**. In May 2022, the parties signed an action plan for the development of trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation for 2022-2024, which outlines the development of international interregional cooperation in four main areas: mutual trade, investment, medicine and education. In particular, the Chinese province has been receiving foodstuffs and woodworking products from Brestchyna producers for a number of years. But there are plans to significantly expand this interaction, including by establishing direct business relations between economic entities. For example, it is a question of establishing investment cooperation between the free economic zone "Brest" and enterprises of the automotive industry in Hubei province, as well as between the Berezovsky engine repair plant and manufacturers of diesel engines in this region of China. Also, "the possibility of participation of Chinese investors in the implementation of Brest region projects on the organisation of production of electric car charging units, production of powder and liquid detergents on the basis of JSC "Barkhim", technical re-equipment of Baranovichi cotton production association, production of clinker products on the basis of Goryn Construction Materials Plant, development of glass sands deposit "Gorodnoe" will be worked out"<sup>306</sup>. As for the medical sphere, the prospects of cooperation between Brest region and Hubei province are associated with the joint production of ultrasonic diagnostic devices, organisation of production of disposable systems for blood transfusion and medical solutions. There are also plans to establish a centre of traditional Chinese medicine on the basis of the Brest Regional Clinical Hospital, for which the physiotherapy building may be reconstructed.

All these facts are a good illustration of how the multifaceted Belarusian-Chinese interaction is now reaching the level of all-round strategic cooperation and all-weather partnership, as it is written in Directive No. 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China" signed in December 2021.

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<sup>305</sup> Novogrudok district and the Chinese city of Dunhuang intend to conclude an agreement on establishing co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novogrudskij-rajon-i-kitajskij-gorod-dunhuan-namereny-zakljuchit-soglashenie-ob-ustanovlenii-495725-2022/>

<sup>306</sup> Brest region and Hubei province signed a road map of cooperation for 2022-2024 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brestskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-hubej-podpisali-dorozhnyju-kartu-sotrudnichestva-na-2022-2024-gody-503065-2022/>

## Priorities for the new phase of the partnership

In September 2022, the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China adopted the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of an All-Weather and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which contains Belarusian-Chinese agreements to intensify scientific and technical cooperation, expand practical interaction between research institutes, higher education institutions and enterprises, and encourage the establishment of platforms as joint centres of applied scientific research and laboratories. It is noted that the development of bilateral relations has moved to a new stage where "the interaction between research institutions and enterprises of the two countries in the field of innovation has been continuously strengthened. The spheres, mechanisms and methods of scientific and technological co-operation are constantly being expanded, improved and enriched"<sup>307</sup>. In this regard, three priority components can be identified. "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 field of innovation, 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"<sup>308</sup>.

In particular, the National Academy of Sciences [NAS] of Belarus alone has already established more than 20 joint international research centres and laboratories with Chinese partners, which are engaged in the development and adaptation of advanced technologies, as well as their promotion in the markets of Belarus, China and third countries. "Contractual documents have already been signed by NAS of Belarus with leading scientific organisations of China - the Chinese Academy of Sciences, academies of sciences of a number of provinces of China, major manufacturing corporations of China - Huawei, AVIC..."<sup>309</sup>. In particular, in April 2022, the NAS of Belarus signed an agreement on scientific and technical co-operation with the Chinese company "SAMSE. Environmental Technologies", which specialises in environmental protection issues. The signed

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<sup>307</sup> Xie Xiaoyun: cooperation between Belarus and China in science and technology is continuously strengthening [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/se-sjaojun-sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-kitaja-v-sfere-nauki-i-tehnologii-nepreryvno-ukrepljaetsja-534171-2022>

<sup>308</sup> Zaleskii, B. Frontiers of multi-vectorism. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 471.

<sup>309</sup> NAS has established more than 20 joint centres and laboratories with partners from China [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-nan-sozdano-bolee-20-sovmestnyh-tsentrov-i-laboratorij-s-partnerami-iz-kitaja-494752-2022/>

agreement, which is designed to promote scientific and technical cooperation and practical implementation of joint scientific and technical developments in the field of environmental protection, primarily concerns soil remediation technologies, which are of particular interest to the Chinese partners. The fact is that the Chinese company, uniting designers, scientists, equipment manufacturers, investors, operators in the field of ecology, is now concentrating its efforts on the expansion of activities in the field of municipal water supply and wastewater disposal, industrial wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, energy saving and management of cyclic use of waste as a resource raw material. At the same time, China SAMS Engineering Corporation was established, which also signed a cooperation agreement with NAS of Belarus. In this document, the priority areas of cooperation are defined as "energy saving and environmental protection, new energy sources, new materials, optics, precision instruments, semiconductors and biomedicine, as well as the expansion of commercial application of the results of joint scientific activities"<sup>310</sup> .

When it comes to interaction between higher education institutions of the two countries, the parties will develop cooperation "on the basis of the development of joint educational programmes with the subsequent establishment of joint educational structures (faculties, institutes) between leading institutions of higher education, including with the use of distance learning technologies..."<sup>311</sup> . Suffice it to say that Belarusian and Chinese partners have already signed more than 540 direct co-operation agreements. "To date, almost 500 citizens of the Republic of Belarus are studying in the PRC, the number of Chinese students in Belarusian universities has reached 8,000 people. The parties have developed more than 30 joint educational programmes..."<sup>312</sup> . Belarusian universities actively developing cooperation with China in science and education include Belarusian State University, Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian State Technological University, Brest State Technical University, and Polesky State University.

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<sup>310</sup> Biomedicine and new energy sources. NAS of Belarus signed an agreement with the Chinese corporation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/biomeditsina-i-novye-istochniki-energii-nan-belarusi-podpisala-soglashenie-s-kitajskoj-korporatsiej-498676-2022/>

<sup>311</sup> China and Belarus issued the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the Relationship of All-Weather and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://rg.ru/2022/09/16/kitaj-i-belarus-opublikovali-sovmestnuiu-deklaraciu-ob-ustanovlenii-otnoshenij-vsepogodnogo-i-vsestoronnego-strategicheskogo-partnerstva.html>

<sup>312</sup> Belarus and China held a videoconference on cooperation in education [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-kitaj-proveli-videokonferentsiju-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-sfere-obrazovanija-526453-2022/>

For example, the first agreement between Belarusian State University (BSU) and Chinese partners was signed in 1990 with Chengdu University of Science and Technology. Today, BSU has more than 80 agreements with more than 50 Chinese institutions. Among the partners are Harbin University of Science and Technology, Henan, East China Normal University and Foshan University. "In 2019, bilateral partnership documents were signed with Peking University and Shanghai University of Transport"<sup>313</sup>. BSU has received the honourable right to host the Confucius Institute. The Chinese partner in this case is also Dalian Polytechnic University (DPU), co-operation with which has been developing since 2007. A significant result of co-operation was the opening of two joint institutes at BSU and DPU. Today there are 244 Chinese students in the Chinese-Belarusian institute. Two graduations have already taken place. "In 2021, 78 Chinese graduates and five Belarusians received diplomas of BSU and DPU, in 2022 - 74 Chinese and two Belarusian citizens. There are 142 Belarusian students studying at the Belarusian-Chinese joint institute. The first graduation will take place in 2023"<sup>314</sup>.

In May 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between BSU and Tsinghua University, which is ranked 17th among the best universities in the world. The Memorandum "provides for the exchange of students, invitation of teachers and scientists, implementation of joint research, educational projects, exchange of publications, information, teaching materials, organisation of scientific, educational and cultural events"<sup>315</sup>. This university was founded in 1911. It is located in the northwest of Beijing in the Haidian student neighbourhood. Today about 53 thousand students are studying in Tsinghua, more than 3200 of them are foreigners. The educational process is provided by more than 3600 teachers. The university structure includes 21 institutes and 59 faculties.

And in September 2022, another BSU partner appeared in China - Huzhou University of Zhejiang Province. The Memorandum of Understanding between the two universities "provides for the implementation of joint research projects,

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<sup>313</sup> Kreinina, O. BSU on the development of cooperation with leading universities of China / O. Kreinina // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/bgu-o-razvitijsotrudnichestva-s-veduschimi-universitetami-kitaja-8187/>

<sup>314</sup> Cooperation between BSU and Dalian Polytechnic University is depicted in the bronze tetrapod din [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/sotrudnichestvo-bgu-i-daljanskogo-politehnicheskogo-universiteta-zapechatleli-v-bronzovom-tetrapode-514967-2022/>

<sup>315</sup> BSU and Tsinghua University signed a memorandum of understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-universitet-tsinhua-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimoponimanii-441298-2021/>

educational programmes, student exchanges and other areas of cooperation"<sup>316</sup> . Huzhou University has a history of more than 100 years. Currently, the university specialises in a wide range of academic disciplines and has achieved internationally recognised results in research and teaching in mathematics, clinical medicine and engineering. In 2017, the university established the Intercultural Research Centre engaged in international projects, including with the Belarusian side.

As for the Belarusian National Technical University (BNTU), in February 2022, the Belarusian university signed an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation with Shenyang Technological University (STU) on the establishment of the China-Belarus Innovation Training, Research and Production Centre for Peening, Rehabilitation and Corrosion Peening, Rehabilitation and Corrosion Protection of Machine Parts, which will concentrate new technologies and equipment in one place, and will promptly produce prototypes of parts e "The centre will concentrate all new methods of hardening, restoration and corrosion protection of machine parts. There is no such centre in China in this form and of this type"<sup>317</sup> . At the request of STU, the centre includes such Belarusian technologies as: gas-flame spraying of thermoplastic polymer powders; hypersonic metallisation; deformation cladding with flexible tools; gas-flame spraying of metal, ceramic, polymer and composite powders; laser cleaning of the surface of materials from organic and inorganic contaminants, rust, scale and paint coatings; plasma coating with metal, ceramic and composite powders; restoration of working powders; and the use of plasma-assisted coating. And already in October 2022, this centre was opened at Shenyang University of Technology.

In addition, a conference on scientific exchange between BNTU and the Institute of Applied Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was held in Changchun in October 2022. Recall that in December 2019, the parties signed an agreement on the establishment of a joint Chinese-Belarusian laboratory of advanced materials and production "One Belt - One Road", which began its activities in February 2020. This structure is "engaged in the development of high-performance sodium-ion and potassium-ion batteries, catalysts for water electrolysis, hydrogen production, and research in solid oxide electrolysis for the

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<sup>316</sup> BSU and Chinese Huzhou University signed a memorandum of understanding [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-kitajskij-universitet-huchzhou-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimoponimanii-524518-2022/>

<sup>317</sup> Kravchuk, M.A. Opening of the Chinese-Belarusian innovative educational and research-production centre of hardening, restoration and corrosion protection of machine parts / M.A. Kravchuk // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://times.bntu.by/news/11923-otkrytie-kitajsko-belorusskogo-innovacionnogo-uchebno-nauchno-proizvodstvennogo-centra>

efficient production of green hydrogen and green ammonia<sup>318</sup>. During the conference, Belarusian specialists drew attention to BNTU's experience in modifying the surfaces of machine parts by high-energy impact methods and studying their structure and properties, which in the future will allow expanding the scope of scientific research and application of its results in the Chinese industry.

Speaking about the Belarusian State Technological University (BSTU), it has already signed 17 cooperation agreements with universities and organisations in China, which are located in many regions of the country, including Guangdong Province. "In cooperation with Chinese partners, joint educational programmes have been created and are successfully functioning in such areas as "Machines and apparatuses of chemical productions and enterprises of construction materials", "Automation of technological processes and productions", "Mechatronics"<sup>319</sup>. In addition, in March 2022 BSTU signed memoranda: with "Guangzhou Knowledge City - Technology Industrial Service Company" on strategic cooperation in the field of energy saving and environmental protection to promote the construction of "carbon-free community"; with JSC "Guangzhou Hengyun Group of Companies" - in the field of hydrogen technologies for the joint construction of the industrial park of hydrogen energy.

Another example in this context is Brest State Technical University (BrSTU), where a joint Belarusian-Chinese project in the field of information technologies, funded by the Belarusian Republican Foundation for Basic Research and the National Natural Science Foundation of China, was launched in 2022. And in April 2022, it became known about the launch of a joint educational programme between BrSTU and Xinxiang University, which concerns the training of students in mechanical engineering technology. "The training will take place in a full-time format on the territory of the PRC on the materials presented by Brest university. A large block of the programme will be presented to Chinese students directly by Brest State Technical University professors"<sup>320</sup>. In October 2022 Brest university also established cooperation with Guangdong Construction

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<sup>318</sup> Sheleg, V.K. Conference on scientific exchange between BNTU and the Institute of Applied Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences / V.K. Sheleg, M.A. Kravchuk // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://times.bntu.by/news/11931-konferenciya-po-nauchnomu-obmenu-bntu-i-institut-prikladnoj-himii-an-kitaya>

<sup>319</sup> BSTU and Belarusian companies signed memoranda of co-operation with Guangzhou [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bgtu-i-belorusskie-kompanii-podpisali-memorandumy-o-sotrudnichestve-s-guanchzhou-489362-2022>

<sup>320</sup> BrSTU and Xinyang University have started the implementation of the joint programme [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brgtu-i-sinsjanskij-universitet-nachali-realizatsiju-sovmestnoj-programmy-496937-2022/>

Vocational College to create long-term conditions for the training of qualified personnel in Belarus in the interests of the construction sector of China and to cooperate in organizing a joint educational programme for training specialists in architecture and construction. It should be noted that the Chinese partner of BrSTU is "the only state college in Guangdong province, which trains highly qualified specialists in the field of construction. The college was founded in 1979 and for 43 years has graduated more than 200 thousand highly qualified personnel"<sup>321</sup>.

As for the interaction between Polesky State University and colleagues from China, in September 2022, the Belarusian university held the first international scientific conference called "Pinsk Readings". Together with Belarusian and foreign partners, the Pinsk residents discussed topical issues for the economy, banking sector, development of biotechnology, engineering, healthy lifestyle, preservation of historical and cultural heritage. At the conference PolesSU signed a cooperation agreement with the Shanxi Institute of Science and Technology, which "specialises in nature management, engineering, biotechnology. We aim to build serious partnerships"<sup>322</sup>. In addition to joint research projects, the universities see prospects for cooperation in academic mobility.

The high scientific, technical and innovation cooperation between Belarus and China is also evidenced by the fact that at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai - the largest exhibition event in the Celestial Empire, where almost three thousand companies from 127 countries took part in 2021 - in November 2022, the Belarusian country pavilion "High-tech equipment and information technologies" presented 126 scientific and technical developments of scientists from 32 organisations of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science of Belarus.<sup>323</sup> In particular, the exposition of the Ministry of Education section included such areas of co-operation as "digital information and communication and interdisciplinary technologies and production based on them; biological, medical, pharmaceutical and chemical technologies and production; energy, construction, ecology and

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<sup>321</sup> BrSTU and Guangdong construction vocational college agreed to establish co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/brgtu-i-guandunskij-stroitelnyj-proftehkolledzh-dogovorilis-naladit-sotrudnichestvo-530263-2022/>

<sup>322</sup> PolesGU will co-operate with the Institute of Science and Technology from China [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/polesgu-budet-sotrudnichat-s-institutom-nauki-i-tehnologii-iz-kitaja-524605-2022/>

<sup>323</sup> Universities of Belarus at the V China International Import Expo [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://times.bntu.by/news/11970-vuzy-belarusi-na-v-china-international-import-expo>

environmental management; mechanical engineering, engineering technologies, instrumentation and innovative materials; agro-industrial and food technologies; ensuring the safety of man and society" xml-ph-0000@d

Among the presented novelties were ultra-small orbital spacecraft created by the Belarusian State University (BSU). The first nanosatellite was launched into orbit four years ago. Under the State programme "Science-intensive technologies and engineering", the second nanosatellite has already been created, "the design of which implements an innovative modular layout of on-board subsystems of a small spacecraft. BSU is also presenting anti-tumour drugs Temodex, Prospidelong, Cisplacel"<sup>324</sup>. Another interesting novelty is an electric scooter produced by the Optron Instrument-Making Plant of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Its maximum speed is 60 kilometres per hour and its carrying capacity is 200 kilograms. In addition, such advanced developments as "unmanned aerial vehicle Burevestnik (Scientific and Production Centre of Multifunctional Unmanned Complexes of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus), automated system of registration of welding processes (Belarusian-Russian University), heat-resistant impact-resistant coatings (Gomel State University named after F. Skaryna), bread of increased nutritional value (Belarusian State University of Food and Chemical Technologies) were presented in Shanghai..."<sup>325</sup>

Also. In November 2022, at the IX Belarusian-Chinese Youth Innovation Forum "New Horizons - 2022" held in Minsk, it was noted that this year the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus together with the Ministry of Science and Technology of China held a competition of Belarusian-Chinese scientific and technical projects. "Based on its results, 35 projects will receive state support from the two countries"<sup>326</sup>. All these facts show that multifaceted scientific, technical and innovation co-operation between the two countries with systematic and purposeful work of the partners to develop ties yields fruitful results.

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<sup>324</sup> More than 120 Belarusian developments are presented at the China International Import Exhibition [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/bolee-120-belorusskih-razrabotok-predstavleny-na-kitajskoj-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-importa-533702-2022/>

<sup>325</sup> Novelties of the food industry and spacecrafts: what Belarus will present at the import exhibition in China [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novinki-pisheproma-i-kosmicheskie-apparaty-cto-predstavit-belarus-na-vystavke-importa-v-kitae-533240-2022/>

<sup>326</sup> Young scientists of Belarus and China develop cooperation in the field of innovation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/molodye-uchenye-belarusi-i-kitaja-razvivajut-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-innovatsij-534160-2022/>

## The action plan aims to maximise results

In April 2022, the seventh meeting of the Belarusian-Indonesian Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Technical Co-operation was held. Within its framework, the parties discussed topical issues of bilateral partnership "with a focus on the development of cooperation in the spheres of industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, education, tourism, digital economy and creative industry"<sup>327</sup>. Recall that the sixth meeting of this Commission was held in October 2017 in Jakarta. At that time, an agreement was reached "to intensify trade, economic and investment cooperation between the countries, including the prospects for increasing supplies of MAZ, BelAZ and MTZ products to Indonesia"<sup>328</sup>.

Many facts prove that the Indonesian market is very promising for Belarus. Firstly, more than 270 million people live here now. Secondly, "Indonesia is an industrial and agrarian country where more than half of the gross domestic product is created in industry, agriculture and fishing, where the main industries are oil and gas processing, metallurgy, machine building, chemical, food and textile industries"<sup>329</sup>. And which is very interested in significantly increasing economic co-operation with Belarus, in increasing the supply of potassium chloride, automotive and tractor machinery, and dairy products from our country. In November 2019, at the Belarusian-Indonesian forum held in Minsk and attended by more than 30 enterprises and organisations of the two countries, it was noted that "the task set by the government to reach \$1 billion of mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Indonesia is quite realistic in the near future"<sup>330</sup>.

It is true that in 2020 the volume of mutual trade between the countries totalled only \$181 million, which, according to the parties, did not correspond to the existing partnership potential. But even then, 25 new items were supplied to the Indonesian market. And in 2021, the trade turnover already totalled \$232.3 million with the share of Belarusian exports - more than \$200 million. At the same

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<sup>327</sup> On the seventh meeting of the Belarusian-Indonesian Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [https://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/ee2bb4e24073dbac.html](https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ee2bb4e24073dbac.html)

<sup>328</sup> Belarus and Indonesia agreed to intensify trade and investment co-operation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-dogovorilis-aktivizirovat-torgovoe-i-investitsionoe-vzaimodejstvie-271768-2017/>

<sup>329</sup> Zaleskii, B. Partnership Journalism. Theory and practice / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2013. - C. 69.

<sup>330</sup> BelCCI: increasing trade turnover with Indonesia up to \$1 billion is a real task for the near future [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beltpu-velichenie-tovarooborota-s-indoneziej-do-1-mlrd-realnaja-zadacha-na-blizhajshuju-perspektivu-368953-2019/>

time, there was a "growth of non-resource exports to Indonesia by more than 2 times, including dairy products - by more than 4 times"<sup>331</sup>. Thus, further increase in the Belarusian-Indonesian trade turnover continues to be a priority area of bilateral cooperation, which should be filled with new content. In fact, this was the subject of the seventh meeting of the joint commission, the concrete results of which were: the adoption of the Plan of Practical Actions for the development of key areas of cooperation for 2022-2023; the decision to establish a working group in the field of agriculture, the first meeting of which will be held within the framework of the international agricultural exhibition Belagro-2022; reaching an agreement to hold a large-scale cooperation between Belarus and Indonesia in 2023, when the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Belarusian-Indonesian diplomatic relations will be celebrated.

It should be noted that the signed memoranda supplemented the legal framework of the bilateral relations, which already includes more than 30 documents, in the area that is extremely relevant for Belarus today. The first of the memorandums signed by the State Committee for Standardisation of the Republic of Belarus (Gosstandart) and the National Agency for Standardisation of Indonesia provides not only for the exchange of information and experience, but also for the implementation of joint activities and projects. In particular, the Belarusian side is interested in the official distribution of Indonesian national standards. The second document, signed by the Belarusian State Standard and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, concerns cooperation in the field of quality assurance of halal products and the readiness of the Belarusian partners "to demonstrate to their colleagues from Indonesia the infrastructure of quality of halal products created in the country, to confirm the possibility of implementing the Indonesian requirements to halal products and carrying out the necessary procedures for assessing their conformity in Belarus"<sup>332</sup>. An important detail: the only halal certification body in our country - BelHalal LLC - has already placed the necessary documents for registration in the Indonesian national system for certification of halal products. And the signed memorandum should officially launch the process of its accreditation in this Southeast Asian country.

Speaking about other areas of the food sector, a number of Belarusian enterprises have already been accredited as suppliers of dairy products to Indonesia. In particular, "the products of Savushkin Product OJSC, Babushkina

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<sup>331</sup> Trade and economic relations with the Republic of Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [http://indonesia.mfa.gov.by/be/bilateral\\_relations/trade\\_economic/](http://indonesia.mfa.gov.by/be/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/)

<sup>332</sup> Belarus and Indonesia signed memorandums in the field of standardisation and quality assurance of products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandumy-v-oblasti-standartizatsii-i-obespechenija-kachestva-497060-2022>

Krynka OJSC, Verkhnedvinsk Creamery OJSC have received the necessary certificates and have already entered the capacious Indonesian food market"<sup>333</sup> . And this immediately affected the results of mutual Belarusian-Indonesian trade in 2021. They are going to be joined by Bellakt OJSC, which is ready to "work out the issues of product supplies to Indonesia, as well as to expand the product mix and work out the supply of baby food"<sup>334</sup> , as well as Milkavita OJSC, Gluboka Dairy Canning Plant OJSC, and a number of other companies that took part in the third Belarusian-Indonesian videoconference on business and trade held in December 2020 and dedicated to the promotion of dairy products exports from Belarus to Indonesia. Now, exporters of halal products from Belarus should also become growth points in this regard, complementing such traditional positions as potassium chloride and dump trucks.

Speaking about other areas of Belarusian-Indonesian cooperation, we would like to recall that in February 2021, the National Marketing Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Indonesia Trade, Tourism and Investment Club signed a memorandum of cooperation and mutual support in the development of trade and economic relations. In the context of this document, the Belarusian side sees its goals in "activating contracts on a legal basis, exchanging information on bilateral export-import supplies and deepening cooperation between our countries"<sup>335</sup> . The development of partnership ties between the regions of the two countries has considerable potential in this regard. All the more so as "co-operation has already been established between the Brest region and the province of West Sumatra, the Mogilev region and the province of South Sumatra, the Minsk region and the provinces of East Kalimantan and East Java, as well as the cities of Minsk and Jakarta"<sup>336</sup> . With the help of regional branches of chambers of commerce and industry, cooperation has also been established with such provinces as Central Java, North Sumatra, West Nusa Tenggara, and the

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<sup>333</sup> Kolesnik, V. Indonesia and Belarus: from potassium chloride and BELAZs to the revival of the tourism market / V. Kolesnik // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/indonezija-i-belarus-ot-hloristogo-kalija-i-belazov-do-ozhivlenija-turisticheskogo-rynka-473916-2021>

<sup>334</sup> The third Belarusian-Indonesian videoconference on business and trade is devoted to the dairy industry [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://ncmps.by/news/tretya-belorussko-indoneziyskaya-videokonferentsiya-po-voprosam-biznesa-i-torgovli-posvyashchena-mol/>

<sup>335</sup> Belarus and Indonesia signed a memorandum on trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskom-sotrudnichestve-426979-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskom-sotrudnichestve-426979-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskom-sotrudnichestve-426979-2021/)

<sup>336</sup> Kolesnik, V. Indonesia and Belarus: from potassium chloride and BELAZs to the revival of the tourism market / V. Kolesnik // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/indonezija-i-belarus-ot-hloristogo-kalija-i-belazov-do-ozhivlenija-turisticheskogo-rynka-473916-2021>

special district of Yogyakarta, where they see considerable potential for the development of trade and economic cooperation, educational and tourist exchanges with Belarusian partners.

For example, Brest region and the province of West Sumatra announced their intention to establish close contacts back in November 2015. At that time, such areas as "fish farming, processing industry, tourism, healthcare, pharmacy" were named as promising in terms of mutually beneficial cooperation<sup>337</sup>. Some other Indonesian provinces have long been familiar with the products of the Belarusian Automobile Plant. For example, since 2012, the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan has been successfully operating a batch of nine Belarusian dump trucks with a load capacity of 45 tonnes. In 2016-2017, 40 dump trucks with a 110-tonne capacity were delivered to the South Sumatra province for the needs of the largest state-owned coal mining company PT Bukit Asam. In 2018-2019, seven more 130 tonne capacity dump trucks were shipped to PT Tambang Raya Usaha Tama, a private coal mining company. And in 2020, another "eight 130-tonne dump trucks BELAZ-75131 started working at the coal mine on the island of Kalimantan"<sup>338</sup>, where the machines from Belarus with a payload capacity from 45 to 130 tonnes, the equipment and characteristics of which are most suitable for the conditions of work in this country, were already working before them. The parties plan to actively continue this co-operation.

A logical continuation of cooperation between Belarusian and Indonesian regions is the development of partnership in the educational sphere, where interaction is carried out on the basis of signed agreements: on cooperation - between the Brest State Technical University and the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology; on mutual understanding - between the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy and the Bogor Agricultural Institute; on exchange of students - between the Minsk State Linguistic University; on cooperation between the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and the Grodno State Medical University. Over the past few years, the Belarusian State University (BSU), the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, and the Grodno State Medical University have also found partners in this Southeast Asian country.

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<sup>337</sup> Vechorko, S. Brest region establishes cooperation with the Indonesian province of West Sumatra / S. Vechorko // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brestskaja-oblast-nalazhivaet-sotrudnichestvo-s-indonezijskoj-provintsiej-zapadnaja-sumatra-59706-2014/>

<sup>338</sup> Eight dump trucks BELAZ started work in Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vosem-karjernih-samosvalov-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-indonezii-387074-2020/>

In particular, in November 2020, BSU and Airlangga University signed a memorandum of understanding. The parties agreed to organise academic exchanges, implement joint educational and research projects, and exchange research materials. The first step in implementing the agreements was "participation of BSU professors in the DECOTA educational programme. It is focused on attracting renowned scientists to give online lectures to students of Airlangga University"<sup>339</sup>. And BSU students were offered to take free online Sura-Bali Community Immersion Programme 2020, which involved studying Indonesian culture and tourism activities in the provinces of East Java and Bali. Note that this university is one of the oldest universities in Indonesia. It was founded in 1954 in the city of Surabaya. In its structure there are 14 faculties: from medical and law to sea and fishery, nursing and veterinary medicine. Almost forty thousand students receive higher education here. In passing, it should be noted that BSU has already had experience of co-operation with Indonesian partners. In particular, since 2016, Unitechprom BSU has been fulfilling a contract for the supply of medical equipment - spirometers - for Global systech medika from Jakarta.

In 2022, a number of other Belarusian universities signed documents on co-operation with Indonesian partners, indicating further expansion of these ties. Thus, in January 2022, the Minsk State Linguistic University (MSLU) and the Veteran National Development University in Yogyakarta signed a co-operation agreement, outlining in this document the main directions of interaction: "opening of the Centre of Indonesian Language and Culture on the basis of MSLU; opening of the Centre of Belarusian Culture and Russian Language on the basis of UNR "Veteran"; teaching Indonesian language at MSLU on an optional basis; teaching Russian language and lecturing about Belarusian culture at UNR "Veteran"; holding cultural events on the basis of the Centre of Indonesian Language and Culture at MSLU"<sup>340</sup>. Here it is appropriate to add that UNR "Veteran" is one of the state universities in Indonesia. It is a university with a patriotic orientation, actively building up its educational base. The university has opened the Faculty of Mineral Technology, Industrial Engineering, Agriculture, Economics and Business and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. The educational institution conducts active scientific work and broadcasts its civic position.

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<sup>339</sup> Memorandum of Understanding signed between BSU and Airlangga University [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/memorandum-o-vzaimoponimani-podpisan-mezhdu-bgu-i-universitetom-airlangga-414083-2020/>

<sup>340</sup> Co-operation with Veteran University in Yogyakarta (Republic of Indonesia) [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.mslu.by/news/sotrudnichestvo-s-universitetom-veteran-v-dzhok-yakarte-respublika-indoneziya>

In January 2022, the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy (BSAA) and Indonesia's Tidar University also signed a memorandum of co-operation. In March, Indonesian and Belarusian students were given the first lectures on sustainable agriculture, a topic that is particularly relevant in the current conditions, as "progress in the development of agricultural production inevitably leads to such global problems as climate change, the development of soil degradation processes, soil salinisation <...> and therefore requires close attention from the entire academic and scientific community" [14].<sup>341</sup> [14]. In this regard, both sides expressed their desire to make cooperation between the BGSCA and Tidar University as useful as possible for solving both local and global problems related to the search for ways to mitigate climate change and provide the inhabitants of Belarus and Indonesia with sufficient food.

The contest of joint Belarusian-Indonesian projects for 2021-2022 announced by the State Committee for Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia together with the National Agency for Research and Innovation of this country should also play its role in boosting scientific and technological ties between the two countries. The priority areas of the competition are such as: "health and medicine (raw materials, including natural ones, for pharmaceuticals; medical equipment, stem cells); emergency management and nature management; machine technologies for industry (energy optimization, food industry, computer modelling in engineering)"<sup>342</sup>

The fact that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Southeast Asian country are in the process of concluding a free trade agreement provides additional opportunities for Belarus-Indonesia cooperation. The parties signed a memorandum of co-operation in October 2029, thus cementing the agreement that "this document will contribute to building an effective infrastructure for the development of trade and economic co-operation"<sup>343</sup>. On its basis, a working group was established to focus on issues such as trade facilitation, customs and technical regulation, and financial market development. In mid-April 2022, the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved a draft decision to conclude a free trade agreement with Indonesia. The agreement itself is expected

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<sup>341</sup> Noskova, S.A. Indonesia - Belarus: mutual interest / S.A. Noskova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [http://baa.by/news/?ELEMENT\\_ID=5208](http://baa.by/news/?ELEMENT_ID=5208)

<sup>342</sup> Contest of joint Belarusian-Indonesian scientific and technical projects for 2021-2022. [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://science.bsuir.by/ru/konkursy-i-granty/konkurs-belorussko-indoneziyskikh-proektovscience.bsuir.by/ru/konkursy-i-granty/konkurs-belorussko-indoneziyskikh-proektov>

<sup>343</sup> Zaleskii, B. Integration as a factor of development. Features of regional co-operation in the post-Soviet space / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 62.

to be signed in May 2022 at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. In this regard, there are significant prospects for Belarus to supply cargo, agricultural and specialised machinery, X-ray equipment, bleached pulp and glued plywood to Indonesia at reduced customs duties. For reference, we note that the traditional commodity items of import to this country are oil and oil products, telephone sets, wheat, computing machines and their units, sugar and chemically pure sucrose. To these are now being added new ones that are in keeping with the spirit of the times. For this reason, "certain successes can be achieved by manufacturers of urban electric transport, as Indonesia's major cities are implementing a programme to renew their public transport fleets, and Belarusian companies have the opportunity to offer competitive and environmentally friendly goods"<sup>344</sup>.

All these facts indicate that in the near future, Indonesia may become Belarus' most important partner not only in Southeast Asia, but also in the entire Asia-Pacific region. At least, all the necessary prerequisites for this have already been created.

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<sup>344</sup> National Marketing Centre on the prospects of promoting Belarusian goods in Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/natsionalnyj-tsentr-marketinga-o-perspektivah-prodvizhenija-belorusskih-tovarov-v-indoneziju-8163/www.belta.by/comments/view/natsionalnyj-tsentr-marketinga-o-perspektivah-prodvizhenija-belorusskih-tovarov-v-indoneziju-8163/>

## And expanding exports and finding 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"<sup>345</sup>. 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"<sup>346</sup>. 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 companies, 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"<sup>347</sup>. 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 interaction, and actively use the project approach, the essence of which is the implementation of projects to establish joint ventures and enterprises in Africa, promote industrial and food products, as well

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<sup>345</sup> Zalessky, B. Vectors of the far arc. Opportunities for sectoral co-operation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing: Saarbrücken, Deutschland / Germany, 2018. - C. 17.

<sup>346</sup> Belarus and the countries of Africa and the Middle East [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: [https://www.mfa.gov.by/countries\\_regions/africa\\_middle\\_east/](https://www.mfa.gov.by/countries_regions/africa_middle_east/)

<sup>347</sup> 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/>

as scientific, technical and production developments in the industrial and agricultural sectors, energy and transnational industries.

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"<sup>348</sup>. 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"<sup>349</sup>.

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

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<sup>348</sup> 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-predlagaet-afrikanskim-stranam-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-uslug-apk-i-mashinostroenii-419342-2020>

<sup>349</sup> MTZ tripled exports to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-vtroe-uvelichil-eksport-v-afriku-416304-2020/>

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"<sup>350</sup> .

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"<sup>351</sup> . 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"<sup>352</sup> . Also. Efforts to build ties between Belarus and Namibia will soon be considerably 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."<sup>353</sup> .

The Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum, attended by representatives of government agencies, business and financial circles from 14 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

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<sup>350</sup> BMZ increased sales of rebar to Africa by almost 20% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-uvulichil-prodazhi-armaturny-v-afriku-pochtii-na-20-407746-2020/>

<sup>351</sup> 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-selhoztehniko-408853-2020/>

<sup>352</sup> "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/>

<sup>353</sup> 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-ekonomicheskomu-sotrudnicestvu-417026-2020/>

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"<sup>354</sup> . 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"<sup>355</sup> . 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"<sup>356</sup> .

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, 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

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<sup>354</sup> About the Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: [https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html](https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html)

<sup>355</sup> 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-razvitie-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikaj-kak-etim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/eksperty-svjazyvajut-razvitie-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikaj-kak-etim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/>

<sup>356</sup> 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/beloruskie-samosvaly-i-selhoztehnika-zanjali-prochnye-pozitsii-na-rynkah-mnogih-afrikanskih-stran-443820-2021/>

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"<sup>357</sup>, 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 the 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"<sup>358</sup>.

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"<sup>359</sup>. 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.

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

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<sup>357</sup> 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](https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc66b6a8ee1bbd02.html)

<sup>358</sup> Egypt is interested in industrial cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/egipet-zainteresovan-v-promyshlennoj-kooperatsii-s-belarusiju-443740-2021/www.belta.by/economics/view/egipet-zainteresovan-v-promyshlennoj-kooperatsii-s-belarusiju-443740-2021/>

<sup>359</sup> "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/www.belta.by/economics/view/mozhem-nachinat-rabotat-prjamo-sejchas-strany-afriki-ozvuchili-perspektivnye-sfery-sotrudnichestva-s-443755-2021/>

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"<sup>360</sup> .

A recent characteristic feature of the Belarusian-South African interaction has been the revival of trade and economic ties. In particular, "in 2020, after a six-year break, deliveries of BELAZ mining machinery to South Africa resumed"<sup>361</sup> . 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..."<sup>362</sup> . 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 cooperate 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 the Minsk region in processing agricultural products. This was explained by the fact that agriculture is central to the 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-

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<sup>360</sup> 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/](https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/)

<sup>361</sup> 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-oblasti-selskogo-hozjajstva-i-proizvodstva-tehniki-462069-2021/>

<sup>362</sup> Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 539.

operation in construction and health care"<sup>363</sup>. 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"<sup>364</sup>, 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"<sup>365</sup>. 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"<sup>366</sup>. In August 2021, the technical details of this project were already discussed here and concrete steps were outlined for the implementation of the agreements reached.

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

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<sup>363</sup> 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/provintsija-fri-stejt-juar-namerena-perenjat-belorusskij-opyt-popererabotke-selhozproduksii-211004-2016/>

<sup>364</sup> 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-oblastju-417308-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/juar-zainteresovana-v-sotrudnichestve-s-minskoj-oblastju-417308-2020/www.belta.by/regions/view/juar-zainteresovana-v-sotrudnichestve-s-minskoj-oblastju-417308-2020/)

<sup>365</sup> On 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>

<sup>366</sup> On the visit of Ambassador A. Sidoruk to Richards Bay [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/ad33cd30a4281477.html>

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"<sup>367</sup>. 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"<sup>368</sup>. 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 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.

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<sup>367</sup> 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-oblast-i-provintsija-mpumalanga-juar-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-222724-2016/>

<sup>368</sup> About the Belarusian-Kenyan business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/e02ca9530a8dcc63.html>

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"<sup>369</sup>. 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"<sup>370</sup>.

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)"<sup>371</sup>.

In the Kenyan capital, the enterprises of Belgospischeprom Concern, Lidselmash Holding Management Company, Gomselmash, MTZ, MAZ, Bobruiskagromash, Lidakhlebproukt, 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 agricultural sector"<sup>372</sup>, 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

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<sup>369</sup> Belarus - Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: [http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/](http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/)

<sup>370</sup> 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-belarusi-v-afrike-328984-2018/>

<sup>371</sup> The national exposition of Belarus opened at the FoodAgro exhibition in Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belarusi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-foodagro-v-kenii-356957-2019/>

<sup>372</sup> 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/>

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"<sup>373</sup>. 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 - Kenia 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.

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<sup>373</sup> Demand for Belarusian agricultural machinery in Kenya is constantly growing [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/spros-na-belorusskuju-selhoztehniku-v-kenii-postojanno-rastet-349964-2019/>

## 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"<sup>374</sup>. 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"<sup>375</sup>. 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"<sup>376</sup>. 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. This is the

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<sup>374</sup> 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-zakonproekt-o-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zonah-476194-2021/>

<sup>375</sup> Nikitina: attractive national jurisdiction activates the inflow of investments [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nikitina-privlekatelnaja-natsionalnaja-jurisdiktsija-aktiviziruetsj-475406-2021/>

<sup>376</sup> 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.

best indicator among FEZs of Belarus<sup>377</sup>. 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"<sup>378</sup>. 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 Smorgon, 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 Smarhoni, 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 Central Asia, Western Europe, Middle East"<sup>379</sup>. 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 since 2015 "have invested over \$470 million in the creation of modern export-

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<sup>377</sup> 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-y-janvare-sentjabre-prevysil-1-mlrd-472551-2021/>

<sup>378</sup> 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-opticheskoj-apparatury-473562-2021/>

<sup>379</sup> 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/>

oriented enterprises"<sup>380</sup> 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"<sup>381</sup>.

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, "Grodnorayagroservice" OJSC, PT "Typhoon" LLC are already successfully implementing their projects. And "the construction of a unique plant for the

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<sup>380</sup> The second part of the infrastructure project of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" is completed in Smarhoni [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vtoraja-ochered-infrastrukturnogo-proekta-sez-grodnoinvest-zavershena-v-smorgoni-455912-2021/>

<sup>381</sup> 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/>

production of glass products has recently begun"<sup>382</sup>. 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"<sup>383</sup>. 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 building, 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"<sup>384</sup>. 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"<sup>385</sup>.

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 implemented in this FEZ on the territory of 16 sectors. In the first quarter of 2021,

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<sup>382</sup> 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/novyj-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-v-grodno-innovacionnoe-proizvodstvo-izdelij/>

<sup>383</sup> 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-uvelicili-eksport-tovarov-pochti-na-62-471298-2021/>

<sup>384</sup> 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/>

<sup>385</sup> 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-bolee-chem-na-40-471323-2021/>

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"<sup>386</sup> .

**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"<sup>387</sup> . 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 cellulose"<sup>388</sup> . 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 electronic modules and

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<sup>386</sup> 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-bolee-chem-na-40-471323-2021/>

<sup>387</sup> 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-uvlichili-proizvodstvo-promproduksii-bolee-chem-na-42-471389-2021/>

<sup>388</sup> 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-amereny-uvlichit-objem-proizvodstva-na-185-v-2021-godu-434576-2021/>

assemblies. Note that "in 2020, \$230 million of investments were made in FEZ Gomel-Raton"<sup>389</sup>.

As for the **Brest FEZ**, in January 2022 at the Expo 2020 world exhibition in the United Arab Emirates, for the first time its potential was presented in a separate pavilion at the Belarusian national exposition. 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 "ECPO-2020" eloquently illustrates the growing role of this "multi-profile economic territory, where production, technological, logistic activities can be developed"<sup>390</sup>, 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"<sup>391</sup>. 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"<sup>392</sup>.

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 products with a wide range of applications will be transferred. A significant share

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<sup>389</sup> FEZs are a driver of territorial development - Asliuk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-javl'ajutsja-drajverom-razvitija-territorij-asljuk-434551-2021/>

<sup>390</sup> 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.

<sup>391</sup> 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-predstavjat-na-vystavke-v-dubae-480588-2022/>

<sup>392</sup> 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/>

of the products is expected to be supplied to foreign markets"<sup>393</sup>. 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.

Thus, 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 ..." <sup>394</sup>. 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 created here a high-tech production of LEDs, which are 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 and up to 350 km of LED tape per month" <sup>395</sup>. This will make it possible to bring the number of labour to 250 people.

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<sup>393</sup> Woodworking enterprise joined the number of FEZ "Brest" residents [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/derevoobrabatyvajushee-predpriyatje-popolnilo-chislo-rezidentov-sez-brest-462782-2021/>

<sup>394</sup> 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/>

<sup>395</sup> LED manufacturer in FEZ "Brest" plans to double the volume of production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvoditel-svetiododov-v-sez-brest-planiruet-udvoit-objem-proizvodstva-450766-2021/>

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"<sup>396</sup>, 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"<sup>397</sup>. 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.

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<sup>396</sup> 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.

<sup>397</sup> Five new enterprises will be launched this year in FEZ "Brest". [Electronic resource]. -2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pjat-novyh-predpriyatij-zapustjat-v-etom-godu-v-sez-brest-433948-2021/>

## Optimisation as an impetus for the development of growth points in the regions

The results of 2021 showed that residents of six free economic zones (FEZs) operating in the Republic of Belarus were able to generate up to 70 per cent of investment, up to half of exports of goods and a third of industrial output of their regions. And this is despite the fact that "as of the beginning of 2022, 432 economic entities were registered in FEZs, projects with investments from more than 30 countries are being implemented for a total amount of declared investments of about \$7.5 billion. In 2021, 25 new residents were added to FEZs with a total amount of declared investments of \$441 million, of which one third - with foreign capital (\$401 million)"<sup>398</sup>. In December 2021, the Republic of Belarus approved amendments to the law "On Free Economic Zones" (FEZ), which provided for the transfer of authority to change the boundaries of these preferential land plots from the head of state to the government. The purpose of these innovations is to "reduce the time from the idea to the start of implementation of new investment projects in the territories that are considered growth points in the regions"<sup>399</sup>.

Based on this decision, in April 2022, the Belarusian government adjusted the territory of the **FEZ Hrodnoinvest**, adding areas that represent zones of high demand for investors and excluding areas that are not promising. Recall that in 2018, this FEZ has already changed its contours. Then the territories of Svisloch were included in its borders for the first time, industrial parks in Smorgon and Grodno district were expanded. This allowed to attract more than one billion dollars of foreign investments into the FEZ since then. This time adjustments were made to the areas located in Hrodna, Svisloch and Smarhon districts, as well as in the cities of Lida, Novogrudok, Smarhon, Slonim and Hrodna, which should "improve the conditions for attracting investments to the regions, involve new industrial sites with an investment capacity of up to \$60 million, ensure the

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<sup>398</sup> FEZ residents in 2021 formed the fifth part of the main republican indicators [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-v-2021-godu-sformirovali-pjatuju-chast-osnovnyh-respublikanskih-pokazatelej-485111-2022/>

<sup>399</sup> Zaleskii, B. Time of concrete decisions. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 141.

possibility of further effective implementation of investment projects of existing FEZ residents worth more than \$120 million"<sup>400</sup> .

It should be noted that in 2021 the residents of FEZ Hrodnainvest have already seriously increased both industrial production and export supplies to near and far abroad countries, as well as attracted a record volume of foreign direct investment. In figures it looks like this: foreign trade turnover of residents increased by more than 40 per cent and exceeded two billion dollars. "The growth driver was the export of Belarusian products. Its volume amounted to \$1.4 billion with a growth rate of 146 per cent against the level of 2020. The foreign trade surplus totalled \$721 million, which is \$283 million more compared to 2020"<sup>401</sup> . The geography of supplies is 63 countries. Exports to Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Italy, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and the USA increased significantly. But Russia, Poland and Ukraine remained the key markets. The lion's share in the volume of shipped products - more than 70 per cent - came from wood and paper products, furniture, food and agricultural products. In addition, manufacturers of optical equipment, chemical products and metal products also increased their exports. These successful results of FEZ residents' activities are undoubtedly based on their active investment policy. In 2021, they were able to attract 160 million dollars of foreign investment. The key investors were Austria, Cyprus, Poland and the Netherlands. In total, the investment vectors of FEZs include 15 countries. Most investments were made in the production facilities located in the industrial parks in Smarhon, Svisloch and Grodno.

It is also important that in 2021, four companies engaged in the chemical, metalworking and logistics industries became new residents of the FEZ Grodnoinvest. Thus, the company Portela with Portuguese investments is implementing a project to build a transport and logistics centre in Hrodna district. Another resident - "Unis Trade" - is busy organising the production of metal structures in Grodno, where "a production and warehouse complex will be built, modern equipment for manufacturing various metal structures will be purchased. The production is planned to be launched by the end of 2022"<sup>402</sup> . And the OV-PlastSnab company at an industrial site in the Aulsa neighbourhood plans to

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<sup>400</sup> The government adjusted the boundaries of FEZ "Hrodnainvest" [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pravitelstvo-skorrektirovalo-granitsy-sez-grodnoinvest-496079-2022/>

<sup>401</sup> Export of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" grew 1.5 times last year [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-sez-grodnoinvest-za-proshlyj-god-vyros-v-15-raza-494540-2022/>

<sup>402</sup> Logistics, chemistry and metalworking: FEZ "Grodnoinvest" in 2021 added 4 new residents [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/logistika-himija-i-metallrobovotka-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2021-godu-popolnili-4-novyh-rezidenta-481367-2022/>

produce a wide range of synthetic polymer products. Finally, in December 2021, "ServicePromPak Group" LLC was registered in the FEZ with an investment project for the creation of a high-tech enterprise for the production of a wide range of types of packaging made of polyolefins for sale for export and to other FEZ residents, which will be implemented in the district of Grandice. "The production of the first batch of products is planned for the second quarter of 2022. It is planned that 45 jobs will be created"<sup>403</sup>.

Positive dynamics of export and attraction of foreign investments is maintained here in 2022. In particular, in January-March of this year, "over 70% of sold products were exported from here, which is 4 percentage points more compared to the 1st quarter of 2021. The geography of exports exceeded 60 countries"<sup>404</sup>. As for foreign investments, in the first quarter of 2022, they were received in the FEZ almost 135 million dollars from 12 countries, including the Netherlands, Cyprus, Austria, Great Britain, Poland, the United Arab Emirates. "The main volume of investments came from companies in the industrial park of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" in Smorgon district, where global manufacturers successfully operate. More than \$16 million was attracted by FEZ residents located in Grodno"<sup>405</sup>. Speaking of new residents, it should be said that the company "Unionway" has already been registered here in 2022, which is implementing a project to build a container terminal near the railway freight station "Svisloch". This terminal will "specialise in the transshipment of containers from the 1520 mm gauge to the 1435 mm gauge and back, depending on the direction of transport. Modern equipment will additionally allow to organise container transshipment to road transport and storage of containers both in the open air and inside warehouses"<sup>406</sup>. Investments in the project will amount to more than 23 million dollars. It is planned to create 70 new jobs here. The construction of the first stage will start already in 2022, and in 2025 the terminal should start providing services. A memorandum of intentions on the development

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<sup>403</sup> High-tech chemical production will be created by a new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vysokotehnologichnoe-himproizvodstvo-sozdast-novyy-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-477539-2021/>

<sup>404</sup> Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" paid over Br61 million of taxes and other fees in January-March [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-za-janvar-mart-uplatili-svyshe-br61-mln-nalogov-i-inyh-sborov-501549-2022/>

<sup>405</sup> In FEZ "Grodnoinvest" received more than \$134 million of foreign investments in January-March [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-grodnoinvest-za-janvar-mart-postupilo-bolee-134-mln-inostrannyh-investitsij-501557-2022/>

<sup>406</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" will build a container terminal in Svisloch [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyy-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-postroit-v-svislochi-kontejnernyj-terminal-492911-2022/>

of a transport and logistics terminal in Grodno region worth about a hundred million dollars was also signed with the Arab company BRIKOIL TRANS-F.Z.E.

The Polish vector of interaction also remains relevant for FEZ. This is evidenced by the fact that "in 2021 trade turnover between FEZ residents and Polish companies totalled more than \$266 million, which is 147% more than in 2020. During the period of FEZ activity since 2002, \$140 million of investments were attracted from Poland"<sup>407</sup>. Companies with Polish capital in the construction materials industry, woodworking, chemical production are successfully operating here. In April 2022, the FEZ administration signed a co-operation agreement with the Polish company i4-Mobile Sp. z o.o., which will contribute to effective co-operation between the parties.

In April 2022, the sector boundaries in **FEZ "Vitebsk" were** optimised, as a result of which its area was reduced by approximately 500 hectares by excluding inefficient and unclaimed areas - floodplains, swamps, badlands, residential development. At the same time, this preferential area included new promising land plots for the implementation of significant investment projects that will create at least 470 jobs. In particular, 14 hectares were added in Vitebsk for the implementation of a project worth more than \$94 million - "Development of production of cable and wire products," where at least 320 jobs will be created. Two more FEZ sites appeared in Orsha and Dokshitsky district. In the first case, a local investor plans to develop there the production of concrete mixtures with the organisation of about 20 jobs. In the second case, "it is planned to locate an enterprise for processing of low-value timber and production of wood-fuel pellets. The cost of the project is estimated at about \$30 million, and the investor has calculated the possibility of creating about 50 jobs."<sup>408</sup>.

Two more sites are included in the FEZ in the Polotsk district. One of them will be used for the production of wood pellets, which will cost about \$30 million. The second one is to accommodate innovative production of cross-glued wooden wall boards and floor slabs for the construction of housing and buildings of various functional purposes, as well as the production of glued laminated timber and fuel pellets with an investment volume of \$60 million. For this purpose, in April 2022, "KimaBel" LLC became a new FEZ resident with a project on

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<sup>407</sup> FEZ "Grodnoinvest" expands cooperation with Polish companies [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-grodnoinvest-rasshirjaet-sotrudnichesvto-s-polskimi-kompanijami-497707-2022/>

<sup>408</sup> Optimisation of FEZ "Vitebsk" sector boundaries will allow to attract more than \$200 million of investments [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/optimizatsija-granits-sektorov-sez-vitebsk-pozvolit-privlech-bolee-200-mln-investitsij-496811-2022/>

modernisation of woodworking production, which provides for renovation of production sites and introduction of new technological solutions to organise the production of innovative export-oriented wood products. The new resident, which has been operating since 2013 in the Polotsk district and specialises in the production of beams and planks, sales of sawdust and wood chips, "the markets of the Middle East, East and South-East Asia are being studied as promising export destinations for its products"<sup>409</sup>.

Speaking about new FEZ residents, it should be recalled that the first one here in 2022 was BRR Arshieh ECO Health LLC - an enterprise with Iranian capital for the production of biodegradable tableware and packaging. "The implementation of the project is aimed at a gradual reduction in the use of polymer packaging and its replacement with environmentally friendly packaging, which is identified as one of the priorities of socio-economic development of Belarus"<sup>410</sup>. It is expected that by the end of 2022, the new resident will have resolved all design issues of the production site in the Zhurzhevo sector on the outskirts of Vitebsk, and in 2023 will already start construction of the facility, where it is expected to organise about 25 new jobs.

As of the end of April, 53 resident enterprises have already been registered in FEZ Vitebsk, which are implementing projects with the participation of investors from 14 countries. And they are doing it very successfully. For example, Polotsk leskhoz managed to triple its output in 2021, while LLC "Production Association "Energokomplekt" - more than one and a half times. Vityaz OJSC increased export deliveries of its products by 2.7 times over the same period. The volume of services exported by "Raw Materials-Bel" Ltd. has grown almost 10 times. In this regard, one cannot but recall UP "Polimerkonstruktsiya" - a well-known manufacturer of water treatment equipment and technologies, which provided almost double growth in production volume, the same amount - in sales revenue, and net profit increased almost six times. "The enterprise actively worked on foreign markets, more than doubling supplies to foreign partners"<sup>411</sup>, and also demonstrated high innovation activity, having shipped to its consumers innovative products worth three million Belarusian rubles, which is 23(!) times

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<sup>409</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will create the production of innovative wood products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-innovatsionnyh-izdelij-iz-drevesiny-498382-2022/>

<sup>410</sup> The first resident with Iranian capital is registered in FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyj-rezident-s-iranskim-kapitalom-zaregistrirovan-v-sez-vitebsk-484100-2022/>

<sup>411</sup> Seven enterprises were recognised as the best residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" according to the results of 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/luchshimi-rezidentami-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2021-goda-priznany-sem-predpriyatij-487020-2022/>

higher than the same indicator of 2020. All these facts indicate that the FEZ is very serious about achieving high performance in 2022. This is confirmed by the results of FEZ residents' activity in the first quarter of this year. Suffice it to say that during these three months here produced almost a quarter more industrial products than in the same period of 2021. In addition, "in January-March residents attracted about 31 million foreign investments, of which more than \$16 million on a net basis"<sup>412</sup>.

Active international activity of FEZs should contribute to the preservation of competitive advantages and favourable conditions for doing business. An important step on this path is the signing in April 2022 by the administrations of FEZ "Vitebsk" and the pilot zone of regional trade and economic cooperation "China-SCO" of a memorandum of co-operation, in which the parties outlined promising areas of interaction. One of them is "promotion of investment opportunities of FEZ "Vitebsk" and pilot zone "China-SCO" as promising platforms for international cooperation within the framework of the initiative "One Belt - One Road"<sup>413</sup>. It should be noted that the pilot zone "China-SCO" in Shandong province, with which Vitebsk region is connected by a cooperation agreement, appeared in 2018. It is located 40 kilometres from the city of Qingdao in the coastal part of the city of Jiaozhou. Thanks to its connection to the land, sea and air communications of this Chinese region, it represents a new platform for the implementation of trade, economic and innovation cooperation projects between the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation states and their partners, including Belarus, which opens up very tempting prospects for the development of cooperation.

In April 2022, the corrections also affected the territory of FEZ "**Minsk**", where "from the borders of this free economic zone are excluded unclaimed in the development of territories with a total area of. 140,01 ha, located in Minsk and Minsk region"<sup>414</sup>. In 2021, seven new enterprises with investments not only from Belarus, but also from Russia, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria appeared here at once. "Foreign direct investment on a net basis amounted to \$58.1 million. In 2021, more than a thousand jobs were created at the enterprises of the free economic

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<sup>412</sup> FEZ "Vitebsk" residents in the first quarter increased by a quarter the production of goods [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-pervom-kvartale-narastili-na-chetvert-proizvodstvo-produktsii-496741-2022/>

<sup>413</sup> FEZ "Vitebsk" and pilot zone "China-SCO" will develop trade and investment cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-i-pilotnaja-zona-kitaj-shos-budut-razvivat-torgovo-investitsionnoe-sotrudnichestvo-499010-2022/>

<sup>414</sup> The borders of FEZ "Minsk" are adjusted [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/granitsy-sez-minsk-skorrektirovany-496357-2022/>

zone "Minsk"<sup>415</sup> . And exports of goods of FEZ residents to 85 countries increased by almost 40 per cent and reached a record two billion dollars. It is characteristic that in 2022 the active work on registration of new residents continues here. Thus, in January, the first resident registered in FEZ "Minsk" in 2022 was 3D Paperko LLC - a company with Chinese investment, which will implement a project for the production of environmentally friendly packaging from cardboard. The new resident will "produce all kinds of disposable cardboard packaging for fast food outlets. The project is oriented both to supply the Belarusian market and to export"<sup>416</sup> .

The first registered resident in the **FEZ Brest** in 2022 is Soyuz Greenhouse Complex, a company with Belarusian-Polish capital, which was allocated a land plot of about 60 hectares near Brest airport in January this year. "Within three years, a high-tech greenhouse complex with a capacity of more than 30,000 tonnes of vegetables per year, including 18,000 tonnes of cucumbers and 13,000 tonnes of tomatoes, is to appear here. The production volume will amount to about 33 million euros per year"<sup>417</sup> . The new resident plans to invest 75 million euros in the implementation of this project and create 450 new jobs. About 80 per cent of the grown vegetable products are expected to be sent to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and other foreign markets. The second resident in this FEZ in 2022 was registered in March - LLC "Dalmio", which will implement an investment project related to the production of technological equipment, lines and components for the food industry. In this regard, "the company has acquired unused production areas in the FEZ territory. Within three years the new resident intends to invest at least Br1.5 million. The project envisages expansion of production, increase in the number of jobs"<sup>418</sup> , as well as increase in export volumes and solution of import substitution tasks.

**FEZ Gomel-Raton** also shows good results in the development of the export component in 2022, with 67 residents registered as of 1 April. In the first three months of this year, they increased their exports by almost 30 per cent. To

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<sup>415</sup> Export of goods of FEZ "Minsk" residents reached a record \$2 billion last year [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-tovarov-rezidentov-sez-minsk-v-proshlom-godu-dostig-rekordnyh-2-mlrd-486329-2022/>

<sup>416</sup> The first resident was registered in FEZ "Minsk" in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervogo-v-2022-godu-rezidenta-zaregistirovali-v-sez-minsk-480078-2022/>

<sup>417</sup> A new resident of FEZ "Brest" will be engaged in the production of vegetables [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-proizvodstvom-ovoschey-480900-2022/>

<sup>418</sup> A new resident was registered in FEZ "Brest" [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novogo-rezidenta-zaregistirovali-v-sez-brest-490538-2022/>

be absolutely precise, here "the share of deliveries outside Belarus amounted to almost 70 per cent of the total sales revenue"<sup>419</sup>.

All these facts once again prove that even in the current difficult conditions FEZs continue to be an effective tool for accelerated development of the regions of Belarus, "where it is possible to build a successful business today"<sup>420</sup> and effectively address the topical issues of the Belarusian economy. The task of each FEZ is to prevent a decrease in the efficiency of its activities. After all, "it is in preferential zones that the investment, innovation, production and export potential of the country gets a concentrated expression in the form of promising business projects"<sup>421</sup>, which, in turn, contribute to the sustainable and dynamic development of the Belarusian state.

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<sup>419</sup> FEZ "Gomel-Raton" residents increased exports by almost a third in the I quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-pochti-na-tret-uvelichili-eksport-v-i-kvartale-495702-2022/>

<sup>420</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Amendments to the law as an incentive for investors / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVIII Międzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 7.

<sup>421</sup> Cherviakov: it is necessary to preserve competitive advantages and favourable business climate in FEZ [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-nuzhno-sohranit-konkurentnye-preimuschestva-i-blagoprijatnyj-biznes-klimat-v-sez-495990-2022/>

## 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"<sup>422</sup>. 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"<sup>423</sup>. 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"<sup>424</sup>.

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 than in 2018"<sup>425</sup>. Another

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<sup>422</sup> 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>

<sup>423</sup> Ideas for import substitution [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: [http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/idei\\_importozames-ru/](http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/idei_importozames-ru/)

<sup>424</sup> 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/>

<sup>425</sup> 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->

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"<sup>426</sup>.

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"<sup>427</sup>.

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"<sup>428</sup>. 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.

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

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[bellesbumproma-v-2019-godu-uvlichili-proizvodstvo-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-379049-2020/](http://bellesbumproma-v-2019-godu-uvlichili-proizvodstvo-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-379049-2020/)

<sup>426</sup> Kapba, E. In the lens - "JSC Rechitsadrev". Successful import substitution / E. Kapba // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://dneprovec.by/companynews/2020/02/14/25898>

<sup>427</sup> Igor Lyashenko directs "Bellesbumprom" to more active production of import-substituting products [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9267>

<sup>428</sup> 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-vnimanija-anfimov-378866-2020/>

traditional Italian cheeses for sale on the national Belarusian market"<sup>429</sup>. 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"<sup>430</sup>.

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"<sup>431</sup>.

Among the measures stimulating enterprises to import substitution, the following were named at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of 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

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<sup>429</sup> 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.

<sup>430</sup> Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - C. 28.

<sup>431</sup> 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>

almost Br13 billion of investments"<sup>432</sup>, 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)"<sup>433</sup>. 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"<sup>434</sup>.

In 2021, interesting import substitution measures were also implemented in Krichevmentossilfer, 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 reduced"<sup>435</sup>. In other words, at the same production rate, the 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

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<sup>432</sup> Cherviakov: import substitution acquires special importance as a tool to counteract sanctions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-importozameschenie-priobretaet-osoboe-znachenie-kak-instrument-protivodejstvija-sanktsijam-473567-2021/>

<sup>433</sup> 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-zatrat-predsedatel-bellesbumproma-o-zadachah-na-god-485290-2022/>

<sup>434</sup> Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2021 increased exports by 48.2% [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-2021-godu-uvlechili-eksport-na-482-485259-2022/>

<sup>435</sup> Yevmenkova, Yu. "Krichevmentnoshifer" exported almost 40% of products for 10 months / Yu. Yevmenkova // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/krichevmentnoshifer-eksportiroval-za-10-mesjatsev-pochti-40-produktsii-470044-2021/>

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"<sup>436</sup>. 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"<sup>437</sup>. 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"<sup>438</sup>. 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, 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

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<sup>436</sup> Production of vacuum tubes for venous blood sampling opened in Gomel [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/proizvodstvo-vakuumnyh-probirok-dlja-zaborav-venoznoj-krovi-otkryli-v-gomele-477229-2021/>

<sup>437</sup> Parkhomchik, P. Belarusian industry under sanctions / P. Parkhomchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/beloruskaja-promyshlennost-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-ministr-o-borbe-s-novymi-vyzovami-planah-po-proizvodstvu-i-8121/>

<sup>438</sup> "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-i-nameren-polnostiju-ujti-ot-importnyh-zakupok-494830-2022/>

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"<sup>439</sup>. 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"<sup>440</sup>. 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. Most of this volume was previously imported. Given the availability of our own raw material base, there are opportunities to replace these imports"<sup>441</sup>.

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

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<sup>439</sup> 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/>

<sup>440</sup> 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-importozamesheniju-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8135>

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

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"<sup>442</sup> .

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"<sup>443</sup> . 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. The work here is being done 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 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"<sup>444</sup> . 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

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<sup>442</sup> 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/shulejko-rasskazal-deputatam-brestskogo-oblssoveta-ob-osnovnyh-napravlenijah-importozameschenija-492478-2022/>

<sup>443</sup> 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-razviti-i-importozameschenija-i-proizvodstvennoj-kooperatsii-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8115/>

<sup>444</sup> 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-razviti-i-importozameschenija-i-proizvodstvennoj-kooperatsii-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-8115/>

rhythmic operation of the plants of the entire Belavtomaz holding and dozens of other enterprises in Belarus"<sup>445</sup> , 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.

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<sup>445</sup> 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-ogranichenija-aktivizirujut-rabotu-po-importozamescheniju-komplektujuschih-492137-2022/>

## Every vector needs 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"<sup>446</sup>. 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 entering 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"<sup>447</sup>. 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 cooperation 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"<sup>448</sup>, not excluding trade through BUTB with companies from other countries through transit deals. In the Belarusian market, the Pakistani company will start by purchasing sawn timber, as wood products are in high demand in this

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<sup>446</sup> Zalesky, B. Goal - trajectory of growth. Chronicle of international co-operation / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 272.

<sup>447</sup> Belarusian sawn timber will be supplied to Japan through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-budut-postavljatsja-v-japoniju-chez-butb-460335-2021/>

<sup>448</sup> BUTB accredits first company from Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-akkreditovala-pervuju-kompaniju-iz-pakistana-477387-2021/>

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"<sup>449</sup>. 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"<sup>450</sup>.

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 for the confectionery industry are also among the promising commodity positions"<sup>451</sup>.

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<sup>449</sup> 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/>

<sup>450</sup> 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-belorusskih-pilomaterialov-i-metalloproduksii-v-izrail-466415-2021/>

<sup>451</sup> 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/>

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"<sup>452</sup>. 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 of 2021, BUTB has seen traders from five new countries - Brazil, Gibraltar, Pakistan, South Korea and Japan. In addition, "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"<sup>453</sup>. 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 promising"<sup>454</sup>, 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

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<sup>452</sup> 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-dogovorilis-0-sotrudnichestve-475901-2021/>

<sup>453</sup> 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>

<sup>454</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Reference point of co-operation - far abroad / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVIII Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Aplikovane vedecke novinky - 2021". Volume 7: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 16.

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"<sup>455</sup> . 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.

In this context, 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. 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"<sup>456</sup> . 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 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

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<sup>455</sup> New BUTB broker in China will focus on imports of Belarusian agricultural products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-broker-butb-v-kitae-sosredotchitsja-na-importe-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-479109-2022/>

<sup>456</sup> 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-besperebojnje-postavki-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-kitaj-481488-2022/>

products to the European Union, Asia and Africa. "As a result of the transaction, softwood sawn timber was sold for a total of 1.8 million Chinese yuan, or \$287 thousand in equivalent"<sup>457</sup>. 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"<sup>458</sup>. 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 for the BUTB, 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 "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"<sup>459</sup>. 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

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<sup>457</sup> 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/>

<sup>458</sup> The first transit transaction between Chinese residents was made on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervaja-tranzitnaja-sdelka-mezhdu-rezidentami-kitaja-sovershena-na-butb-474701-2021/>

<sup>459</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. Exchange trade as a promising integration project of interaction between regions / B.L. Zaleskii // *Materialy XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Wyształcenie i nauka bez granic - 2021"*, Volume 1. Przemysl: Nauka i studia. - C. 10.

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"<sup>460</sup>. 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"<sup>461</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>460</sup> 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/>

<sup>461</sup> 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/>

purchased"<sup>462</sup>. 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".<sup>463</sup>

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 buyers"<sup>464</sup>. 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

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<sup>462</sup> Enterprises of the Leningrad region intend to sell confectionery and furniture on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-leningradskoj-oblasti-namereny-prodat-na-butb-konditerskie-izdelija-i-mebel-472442-2021/>

<sup>463</sup> 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/razvitie-birzhevoj-torgovli-mezhdu-belarusju-i-bashkortostanom-posposobstvuet-rostu-vzaimnogo-473580-2021/>

<sup>464</sup> BUTB plans to trade in lumber products from Udmurtia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-torgovat-piloproduktiej-iz-udmurtii-476203-2021/>

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"<sup>465</sup>. Apparently, these proposals have found their place in the roadmap 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.

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<sup>465</sup> 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-predlagaet-razvivat-birzheviju-torgovlju-selhozproduksiej-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-karachaevu-483814-2022/>

## The potential of the exchange platform in the sphere of foreign trade is huge

The results of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUTB) activity in 2021 showed that the application of the exchange mechanism increasingly contributes both to the creation of equal and competitive conditions for doing business within the country, as well as to the improvement of efficient procurement activities and expansion of markets for Belarusian products. Recall that "by the end of 2021, more than 27.5 thousand business entities from 69 countries were registered on the BUTB. <...> At the same time, the geography of new participants of trading sessions held here continued to expand steadily"<sup>466</sup>. In this regard, one of the main tasks of the exchange in 2022 is to assist domestic enterprises in promoting their goods for export. For this purpose, "special attention should be paid to realising the Exchange's potential in the sphere of foreign trade. First of all, it is the diversification of exports of Belarusian goods with a focus on the People's Republic of China and other Asian countries..."<sup>467</sup>. And, it should be said, BUTB is already taking energetic measures to solve these tasks.

As for China, "in 2021, the Belarusian-Chinese exchange turnover grew three and a half times at once"<sup>468</sup>, and at the end of the first quarter of 2022, for example, this country became one of the three largest buyers of rapeseed oil on the BUTB. "This was fuelled by an expanding pool of Chinese buyers, as well as an increase in the number of transactions made by them. As a result, compared to the same period in 2021, rapeseed oil sales to the PRC increased by 67 per cent in value terms to \$2.2 million."<sup>469</sup>

In the first half of 2022, the Belarusian-Chinese exchange turnover exceeded over \$40 million, which is one and a half times more than in the same period last year. Since the beginning of the year, 20 new residents came to the

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<sup>466</sup> Zaleskii, B.L. From expanding geography - to deepening cooperation / B.L. Zaleskii // Proceedings of the XVIII International Scientific Conference, Present Research and Development - 2022, 17 - 25 January 2022: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 6.

<sup>467</sup> MART outlined the priorities of exchange trade development [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mart-oboznachil-priority-razvitija-birzhevoj-torgovli-488282-2022/>

<sup>468</sup> Zaleskii, B. From trust to co-operation. Collection of articles / B. Zaleskii. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 135.

<sup>469</sup> China has become one of the three largest buyers of rapeseed oil on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitaj-voshel-v-trojku-krupnejshih-pokupatelej-rapsovogo-masla-na-butb-493049-2022/>

exchange. Now there are almost 90 of them. About half regularly participate in trading, three have the status of brokers. "The most demanded by the Chinese were softwood sawn timber and unrefined rapeseed oil. Metal products - rolled sheets and seamless steel pipes - were sent from China to Belarus"<sup>470</sup> .

Another interesting fact: BUTB concluded the first deal to sell skimmed milk powder to China in July 2022. "The volume of the pilot batch was 75 tonnes and the amount was \$250 thousand. The purpose of the trial transaction is to practically work out the issues of mutual settlements and logistics, which will make it possible in the future not only to increase the volume of purchases of Belarusian dried milk, but also to organise deliveries of other types of dairy products, such as butter, cream, cheese and whey, to the Chinese market"<sup>471</sup> . So far, Chinese companies have used the Belarusian exchange platform mainly to purchase lumber, which has prevented them from realising the full potential of exchange trade between the two countries. The expansion of the commodity nomenclature creates additional opportunities for increasing the volume of mutual trade, so the first successful experience of exporting milk powder to China through the exchange can be later extrapolated to other dairy products represented on the exchange platform. On the plus side, Chinese consumers have already become convinced of the high quality of Belarusian dairy products by buying them on the OTC market.

In June 2022, BUTB in China gained another international partner - the Xinjiang Asia-European International Trade Centre (AEEX), which is the operator of the Asia Europe Exchange electronic trading platform. The goal is to unite efforts and jointly promote trade turnover between Belarus and China. The priority areas of cooperation include cooperation in promoting Belarusian-made goods in China, informing Chinese companies about opportunities to find business partners in Belarus through the BUTB platform, and exchanging analytics and statistical data reflecting the current situation in the commodity markets of the two countries. As for the commodity items promising for mutual trade, "the most liquid Belarusian commodity is sawn timber, which is in consistently high demand in China, especially in the construction sector. In this case, delivery of goods purchased at BUTB is possible by railway transport along the New Silk Road. In addition, it is planned to use the AEECH network of

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<sup>470</sup> Markina, T. What Belarusian enterprises enter the Chinese market with / T. Markina // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/s-chem-belorusskie-predpriyatija-vyhodjat-na-rynok-kitaja-513455-2022>

<sup>471</sup> Belarusian dairy products sold to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskaja-molochnaja-produksija-prodana-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-512556-2022/>

business contacts in the Asia-Pacific region to diversify exports of Belarusian forest products"<sup>472</sup>. Special attention is paid to the prospects of participation of suppliers from China in the import substitution exchange. In particular, the entry of Chinese manufacturers of spare parts and technological equipment is expected to increase the concentration of supply of these products and expand their range, which will have a positive impact on the price level for Belarusian consumers.

One more fact. In April 2022, China Merchants CHN-BLR Commerce and Logistics Company (CMCB), a member of China Merchants Group, signed a memorandum with BUTB, which provides for cooperation between the parties in the field of transport and trade logistics. The parties proceed from the premise that an extensive logistics infrastructure and well-established transport links are the basic conditions for the functioning of the Belarusian-Chinese commodity exchange market. Therefore, it is only through the synergy of electronic exchange trading technologies and extensive logistics capabilities that the potential of bilateral cooperation can be fully realised.

Since July 2022, the Chinese side has been providing assistance in attracting suppliers and customers from China to the electronic import substitution platform of the Commodity Exchange. In order to optimise logistics costs, the CMCB and the BUTB will work out alternative routes for the delivery of Belarusian goods purchased on the exchange to China using different modes of transport. The prospects of this direction are also evidenced by the results of the analysis of purchase orders placed on the BUTB import substitution platform. "This is especially characteristic of such categories of goods as electrical equipment, communications equipment, as well as components and materials for industry. So far, only a few suppliers of import-substituting products from the PRC are working on the exchange trading platform, but their number may increase in the near future. This is primarily due to Chinese companies already accredited at BUTB, but participating in bidding in other commodity sections"<sup>473</sup>. As for logistics issues, the delivery of goods from Belarus to China and back is carried out normally.

Speaking about the implementation of plans to diversify exchange exports by reaching end consumers in the Middle East, we note that until recently,

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<sup>472</sup> BUTB and China's AEEX will co-operate in e-commerce [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-kitajskaja-ploschadka-aeex-budut-sotrudnicat-v-sfere-elektronnoj-torgovli-510290-2022/>

<sup>473</sup> Chinese company will help to attract suppliers and customers to the BUTB import substitution site [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskaja-kompanija-pomozhet-privlech-postavschikov-i-zakazchikov-na-ploschadku-importozameshenija-514280-2022>

residents of Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt were the most active on the Belarusian exchange platform. In February 2022, the United Arab Emirates was added to this list, when the first deal was made on the BUTB to sell lumber products to this country of the Persian Gulf. During an export trade session, a company from Abu Dhabi purchased a trial batch of hardwood sawn timber from a Belarusian woodworking company. The goods were delivered to the country of destination by the buyer. Now BUTB sees its primary task in gaining a foothold in the Emirati market by increasing the number of accredited companies and the volume of deliveries. After all, this Middle Eastern country is an international trade and logistics hub. "This means that by supplying their products to Abu Dhabi, Dubai or Sharjah, Belarusian companies automatically get access to potential buyers from Africa, Southeast Asia and other regions"<sup>474</sup> .

In March 2022, participating in the Dubai International Wood & Wood Machinery Show in the UAE, BUTB representatives held a number of productive meetings with companies interested in business partnership. As a result, "Beston Wood Industries LLC, a major importer and distributor of timber products in the UAE, announced its readiness to enter the Belarusian market through the exchange platform, and Good Wood LLC, an Egyptian manufacturer of furniture boards and door panels, intends to be accredited at BUTB for the purchase of softwood edging boards and other products of Belarusian woodworking companies"<sup>475</sup> . BUTB is now focusing its efforts on developing new markets and expanding its presence in countries whose share in imports of wood products was previously insignificant. For this reason, apart from China, where sawn timber supplies have already tripled, such Asian countries as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Lebanon, and Turkey, which are ready to increase imports of Belarusian sawn timber products, are seen as very effective. Thus, "in the first three months of 2022, more than half of last year's total volume has already been sold to Azerbaijan alone"<sup>476</sup> . Recall that in mid-May 2022, more than 28.5 thousand companies from 70 countries were already accredited at BUTB. Currently, "about 5 thousand items of goods are traded here, with more than 400 thousand

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<sup>474</sup> Belarusian sawn timber for the first time sold in the UAE through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-vpervye-prodany-v-oe-cherez-butb-485480-2022/>

<sup>475</sup> BUTB refocuses sawn timber exports to the Middle East and North Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-pereorientiruet-eksport-pilomaterialov-v-strany-blizhnego-vostoka-i-severnoj-afriki-491054-2022/>

<sup>476</sup> BUTB expands the geography of export: the first deals were made by UAE and Switzerland [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirjaet-geografiju-eksporta-pervye-sdelki-proveli-oe-i-shvejtsarija-493578-2022/>

transactions per year<sup>477</sup>. And there is every reason to believe that these figures will only increase in 2022.

Speaking about the promotion of BUTB's interests in Central Asia, it should be noted that in March 2022 the Belarusian exchange platform accredited a new broker in Kazakhstan - First-KO LLP, which became the 16th in the network of BUTB exchange brokers representing 11 countries. It is expected that the arrival of this broker will increase the number of traders from Kazakhstan, of which 85 were accredited as of 1 March 2022, and will also contribute to the growth of Belarusian-Kazakhstani trade turnover. For reference, we note that in 2021, "the exchange turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan amounted to about \$30 million. The Kazakh market was mainly supplied with meat and dairy products, leather goods and sugar, while the most demanded goods for Belarusian buyers were coal and ferrous metal products"<sup>478</sup>. The new broker is going to simplify the work of Kazakh enterprises in the Belarusian market as much as possible and focus on goods for which Belarus is a leader in the post-Soviet space, such as dairy products, potatoes, tyres, and spare parts for special equipment.

Uzbekistan is another partner of BUTB in Central Asia. For reference, we note that as of 1 April 2022, 5,673 foreign companies, including 40 Uzbek companies, were accredited to participate in trading on the Belarusian exchange platform. And in the same April, the first deal was made here to export chemical industry products to this Central Asian country. As part of the trade session, "an Uzbek company purchased 20 tonnes of polyacrylonitrile fibre on terms of shipment from the warehouse of the manufacturing plant. Previously, the Uzbek market through the exchange platform was supplied exclusively with goods of agricultural group - primarily meat and meat by-products"<sup>479</sup>. Given the fact that synthetic fibres are in stable demand among Uzbek textile industry enterprises, there is every reason to believe that the exchange transaction will be the first step of Belarusian exporters to expand the potential of this sector in the Uzbek market. The reasons for such a conclusion can be seen in the rather high level of development of the Uzbek textile, garment and knitwear industry and the ever-growing demand of local enterprises for quality raw materials.

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<sup>477</sup> More than 28.5 thousand companies from 70 countries are accredited on BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovano-bolee-285-tys-kompanij-iz-70-stran-502289-2022/>

<sup>478</sup> BUTB accredited a new broker in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-akkreditovala-novogo-brokera-v-kazahstane-490807-2022>

<sup>479</sup> BUTB expanded the commodity nomenclature of exports to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirila-tovarnuju-nomenklaturu-eksporta-v-uzbekistan-494941-2022/>

BUTB took another interesting step towards expanding the potential of exchange trading with Asia and the Middle East in February 2022, when it registered as a new broker the Belarusian CJSC Meat and Dairy Company, which is an official exporter of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus. This company represents the interests of all Belarusian exporters of meat and dairy products. Joining its efforts with BUTB can certainly ensure more efficient work of domestic agricultural organisations in the markets of non-CIS countries, as well as contribute to the expansion of the geography of sales. In this case it is not only about intensive work in the Chinese market. Apparently, other Asian countries, as well as the Middle East region, will not be neglected. These are areas with great export potential, which <...> together with the exchange will have to be unlocked"<sup>480</sup>. And there is every reason to believe that in the near future, this interaction will be highly effective in terms of increasing Belarusian exports to Asian countries.

And let us consider one more topical topic concerning BUTB in this context. The Belarusian side is now looking for new forms of industrial and business development. Import substitution is one of such solutions in 2022. This process has already involved not only large enterprises, but also private, medium and small businesses. "Import substitution has become the most important task of every import-related enterprise to work ahead of the curve"<sup>481</sup>. And there are already some interesting examples.

In particular, BUTB has been operating an import substitution platform for more than three months, which is gaining momentum, proving its effectiveness and which already has about three hundred companies from Central Asia and the Far East, including from the People's Republic of China and the Commonwealth of Independent States. During this time, "since 27 May 2022, 6387 transactions worth Br46.6 million have been made on the BUTB import substitution platform"<sup>482</sup>. In June-August, the structure of sales of import-substituting goods was dominated by products for construction, components and materials for industry, electrical connections and electrical equipment, heating equipment and

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<sup>480</sup> The official exporter of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food became a broker of BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ofitsialnyj-eksporter-minselhozprodastal-brokerom-butb-482741-2022/>

<sup>481</sup> Zalesky, B.L. The most important task of every enterprise / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Nauka: teoria i praktyka - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 15.

<sup>482</sup> About 300 companies from the countries of Central Asia and the Far East work on the site of import substitution BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-300-kompanij-iz-stran-srednej-azii-i-dalnego-vostoka-rabotajut-na-ploschadke-importozameshenija-521269-2022/>

air conditioning systems, as well as measuring devices and workwear. "In particular, plastic and rubber products, adhesives, LED lighting fixtures, and paint and varnish products are in particular demand from customers. These groups of goods account for more than a quarter of the total amount of transactions made on the exchange floor since its launch"<sup>483</sup>. The vast majority of suppliers are domestic small and medium-sized businesses, which, thanks to the import substitution service, received an additional sales channel and were able to find new business partners, including among large public sector companies. Also, "the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant and Bellesbumprom enterprises are now successfully operating on the site"<sup>484</sup>. In the second half of August, a new company from China was accredited to participate in the bidding at the import substitution site.

BUTB expects to establish exchange trade with Pakistan through the import substitution platform. The plan is to work out the issue of selling sawn timber, which is in high demand in the construction and furniture industries, to the Pakistani market, as well as exporting petrochemical products, which are already actively purchased by companies from India. Pakistan is a new market for BUTB, but it has great potential both in terms of sales of Belarusian goods and imports of Pakistani products. To this end, the first brokerage company from Pakistan, AP Sakafat Forever, was accredited with BUTB in July 2022 and has been participating in the export exchange trading of lumber products as a trade visitor since December 2021. "As a professional bidder, it intends to attract buyers of sawn timber and agricultural group goods to the exchange platform, as well as to assist Pakistani producers of rice, non-ferrous metals and textiles in finding business partners in Belarus"<sup>485</sup>. With the help of the new broker, it is possible to establish supplies of Belarusian synthetic fibre, polyethylene, ammonium sulphate and other chemical and petrochemical products to Pakistan. The brokerage company has planned "a turnover of about \$150 million and will try to use all exchange instruments to achieve it"<sup>486</sup>. A Pakistani company, which produces sports equipment, expressed its desire to enter the Belarusian market by

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<sup>483</sup> In the leaders of sales on the site of import substitution BUTB goods for construction and industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-liderah-prodazh-na-ploschadke-importozameschenija-butb-tovary-dlja-stroitelstva-i-promyshlennosti-520451-2022>

<sup>484</sup> Parkhomchik told what enterprises work on the site of import substitution BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-rasskazal-kakie-predprijatija-rabotajut-na-ploschadke-importozameschenija-butb-521262-2022/>

<sup>485</sup> BUTB plans to establish trade between Belarus and Pakistan through the import substitution platform [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-naladit-torgovlju-belarusi-i-pakistanu-cherez-ploschadku-importozameschenija-515035-2022/>

<sup>486</sup> BUTB accredited first broker from Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovan-pervyj-broker-iz-pakistanu-519087-2022/>

placing its products in the electronic catalogue of import-substituting goods. As for transactions, the option of bidding through a broker is being considered at the initial stage.

The Iraqi company Al Seraj Al Mubeen Co. plans to work out the issue of organising supplies of Belarusian dried milk and beef to Iraq. The firm "specialises in import and wholesale of foodstuffs, the demand for which has grown significantly against the background of continuing instability in the world food market"<sup>487</sup>. As a result, there was a need to expand the geography of purchases, and Belarus is seen as one of the most promising markets.

Another country that is very active in the BUTB in working out commodity directions with Belarusian partners is Switzerland. In particular, in the first half of 2022, agricultural products accounted for 95 per cent of Belarus's exchange trade with Switzerland, "which is a net importer of Belarusian goods, as all 16 Swiss companies accredited at the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange act exclusively as buyers at the auction. In January-June of this year, the sum of transactions made by Swiss companies on the exchange floor totalled about \$6 million, of which exports of Belarusian rapeseed oil and "vet-blue" leather brought more than \$5 million"<sup>488</sup>. This is evidence of the high demand for Belarusian agro-industrial products in the Swiss market and the significant potential for deepening cooperation in this area. Not only rapeseed oil, but also other no less liquid items, such as milk powder and whey, cattle meat, and beet molasses. It remains to add that agricultural products are by no means the only group of Belarusian goods that are in demand in Switzerland. There are other directions as well.

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<sup>487</sup> Iraqi company intends to buy Belarusian dried milk and beef [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/irakskaja-kompanija-namerena-zakupat-belorusskoe-suhoe-moloko-i-govjadinu-515773-2022>

<sup>488</sup> BUTB: agricultural products accounted for 95% of the exchange turnover of Belarus and Switzerland [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-produktsija-selskogo-hozjajstva-sostavila-95-birzhevogo-tovarooborota-belarusi-i-shvejtsarii-515347-2022>

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