

The format of Eurasian integration

The Strategic directions of Eurasian economic integration development up to 2025 include among the main tasks the further formation of contractual and legal framework of the Eurasian Economic Union with third countries and their integration associations on the creation of preferential trade regimes for the development and deepening of trade and economic cooperation. In fact, the intensification of economic cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations over the next five years should become one of the most important areas of the union development, which will allow to carry out coordinated work on the integration processes in the Eurasian space. At the same time its international activity will be focused on solving such pressing problems as the development of exports, transport and energy infrastructure, industrial cooperation, the introduction of new technologies, and the creation of conditions for the joint entry of member states' enterprises into the markets of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific region, North Africa, the Latin American continent. How are these tasks being solved today? The answer is in this study.



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Current issues of regional and media integration

A new international organisation - the Eurasian Economic Union - is due to become a reality on 1 January 2015. The treaty establishing this integration association in the post-Soviet space was signed in Astana on 29 May 2014 by the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. It was stated that this document "has a truly epochal, historical significance, and opens up the broadest prospects for the development of the economies and the improvement of the well-being of the citizens of our countries"¹. The signatory states are moving to a fundamentally new level of interaction, creating a common space with the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, and will pursue a coordinated policy in key sectors of the economy - energy, industry, agriculture and transport.

We recall that the Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration, adopted by the leaders of the three ally countries in November 2011, noted that "further development of integration, based on deep historical and spiritual ties between the peoples of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, meets the national interests of these states, contributes to addressing the common challenges they face in improving the well-being and quality of life of citizens, sustainable socio-economic development, comprehensive modernization and the enhancement of national² development. This document also includes a proposal by

1 Press statement on the results of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/45790>

2 Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/1091

the Belarusian side that the allies strive to further strengthen all-round mutually beneficial and equal cooperation "with other countries and international integration associations, including the European Union, with a view to creating a common economic space.³

It should be noted that shortly before the adoption of the aforementioned declaration, the leaders of the Troika made public their vision of the future Eurasian Economic Union in the media. The Russian president, outlining the prospects and outlines of this integration project, highlighted four main points: "First, it is not about recreating the USSR in one form or another. It would be naive to try to restore or copy something that is already in the past, but close integration on a new axiological, political and economic basis is the imperative of the times. <...> Second, the Eurasian Union will serve as a kind of centre for further integration processes. That is, it will be formed through the gradual merger of existing structures -- the Customs Union and the Single Economic Area. Third, it would be a mistake to oppose the Eurasian Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Each of these structures has its own place and role in the post-Soviet area. Russia intends, together with its partners, to work actively to improve the institutions of the Commonwealth and to saturate its practical agenda. <...> Fourth, the Eurasian Union is an open project. We welcome other partners, and above all the Commonwealth countries, to join it. At the same time we do not intend to rush or push anyone. This should be a sovereign

3 Presidents of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan sign Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/prezidenty-belarusi-rossii-i-kazaxstana-podpisali-deklaratsiju-o-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoy-integratsii-5169/

decision of the state, dictated by its own long-term national interests.⁴

The President of Kazakhstan focused his attention on five points: "First. The Eurasian Union must initially be created as a competitive global economic association. We cannot be satisfied with either the narrow perspective of being an aggregate of countries developing only on the principles of "catch-up modernisation", or the fate of perpetually remaining a large peripheral exporter of natural resources to the rest of the world. <...> Second. The Eurasian Union should be formed as a strong link between the Euro-Atlantic and Asian development areas. In economic terms, we could become a bridge linking the dynamic economies of the European Union, East, South East, and South Asia. <...> Third. The Eurasian Union should be formed as a self-sufficient regional financial union which will be part of the new global monetary and financial system. <...> Fourth. The geo-economic, and in the longer term, geopolitical maturation of Eurasian integration should proceed exclusively by evolutionary and voluntary means. No forms of artificial acceleration and pushing individual countries towards it are inadmissible. Let us not forget that the single European market has been created for almost 40 years. Today, the platform for Eurasian integration is quite broad. It includes interstate associations in various forms, goals and tasks - the CIS, EurAsEC, CSTO, the Customs Union - SES of Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia, and others. <...> Fifth. The creation of the Eurasian Union is possible only on the basis of broad public support. It is entirely natural that our countries already have their own 'eurasoptimists' and

4 Putin, V. New integration project for Eurasia - future that is born today / V. Putin // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761>

'eurasosceptics. The polemics between them only help to see and consistently eliminate the costs of the integration process. <...> It is necessary to start work on the creation of a 24-hour news channel Eurasia-24. This is important from the point of view of objectively and fully informing the citizens of our countries about the benefits and progress of integration"⁵.

For his part, the President of Belarus stressed: "The structure of advanced integration that we are creating must be strong. Otherwise, there is no point in spending so much effort on it. The reliability and durability of the new mechanism are ultimately determined by whether it fully protects the interests of its participants. It must be clearly understood that any infringement of their rights, which may seem minor today, will tomorrow create cracks that will destroy first the trust and then the new structure created by enormous joint efforts. This is the main thing. <...> The integration of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan is not against anyone. We should not see in the creation of the Eurasian Union an attempt at some kind of division of Europe. <...> Our union is destined to become a key regional player which will help to build up relations with the world's leading economic structures. This is where the Troika's proposal for such a relationship with the EU, which would ultimately lead to the creation of a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok, comes from. <...> We propose an 'integration of integrations'.⁶

Indeed, the prospective potential of the Eurasian Economic Union looks very promising. The population of the states that

5 Nazarbayev, N. Eurasian Union: from idea to future history / N. Nazarbayev // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://izvestia.ru/news/504908>

6 Lukashenko, A. On the fate of our integration / A. Lukashenko // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://izvestia.ru/news/504081>

created it is more than 170 million people. This is a significant consumer market. Participating states account for about a quarter of all minerals prospected in the world with a total value of up to \$40 trillion. In addition, this integration union is "the world's largest exporter of energy resources, and in recent years, an exporter of food wheat."⁷ The mutual benefit of integration projects within the "troika" is also reflected in the fact that over the past three years, trade turnover between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan has almost halved, or by \$23 billion, to \$66.2 billion at the end of 2013. As for the outlook for the union, economic activity is expected to grow to \$700 billion by 2030, of which "one-third comes from the common market and two-thirds from the common development strategy. That is, the common market itself gives only one-third of the integration effect. And two-thirds is provided by joint activities for the development of high-tech industries"⁸.

Time will tell how far all these wishes will take shape. But the past three years since the publication of the above-mentioned statements by the leaders of the integration troika have demonstrated how difficult this process of searching for compromises is, even for like-minded people. Back in mid-2013, Prime Minister of Belarus M. Myasnikovich noted: "It is a difficult process to find compromises, even for like-minded people. Miasnikovič noted: "There is a great degree of risk and great doubt that in the allotted period <...> the parties will agree on all fundamental issues, because there are different approaches to the depth of integration and the

7 Press statement on the results of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/45790>

8 Mikhail Myasnikovich meets with Sergey Glazev [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5291>

timing of implementation of certain measures.⁹ In the spring of 2014, the Belarusian head of state also voiced his concern in this regard: "There has been virtually no convergence on the most sensitive positions for either side. This includes the formation of a common energy market, liberalization of the road transport market, access to the gas transportation system, and rules for subsidizing agriculture.¹⁰ And when the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union was adopted, the Belarusian side stated its position that "the signing of today's Treaty is not the end but only the beginning of a serious process. Steps to build the Eurasian Economic Union should be linked to the resolution of issues that have a significant impact on the mutual trade of the member states of this Union."¹¹

It is known that this treaty includes "a large volume of not only the codified documents of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space, about 70 international agreements, but also new norms that were included in the document to develop these agreements and deal with the expansion of the common market to unaffected equal segments, in particular the energy sector and the services market"¹². More specifically, common markets for oil, oil products and gas should start functioning no later than 2025. In 2016

9 Mikhail Myasnikovich spoke at the roundtable "Eurasian Economic Perspective" [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5086>

10 Aliaksandr Lukashenka took part in a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-uchastie-v-zasedanii-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-8212/

11 Aliaksandr Lukashenka took part in a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council at the level of heads of state [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/belarus-ne-trebuuet-nikakix-ustupok-v-protsesse-evrazijskoj-integratsii-8892/

12 Meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-na-urovne-glav-gosudarstv-29-aprelja-sostoitsja-v-8604/

the heads of member states of the Eurasian Economic Union will approve a concept for forming each of these markets, and in 2018 a program for their formation. Other tasks set for the future include the creation of a common financial market, the removal of barriers to capital, improving the quality, accessibility and reliability of financial services, and harmonising foreign exchange policy. In addition, stakeholders are now actively discussing issues related to such thematic areas of integration building as science and technology, transport and logistics, industrial cooperation, tourism and information technology.

Obviously, the topic of integrated cooperation between the regions of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan is no less relevant in this context. After all, "integration is, above all, long-term stable conditions for the development of the regions' economies, which help create new conditions to improve the well-being of citizens. <...> it is the regions of our three countries that are the main reserve that still needs to be put in place in the coming decades in order <...> to achieve the ambitious goals of Eurasian integration.¹³ The question is, how should this essential reserve of integration be put into action? What should be effective structures of inter-regional interaction, which were referred to in the above-mentioned Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration? And what is the position of the regions of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus on these questions? The Belarusian government newspaper Respublika recently tried to answer these questions by publishing a series of articles between April and September 2014 under the general

13 Surikov, A. Regions of our countries - the main reserve of Eurasian integration / A. Surikov // Eurasian Economic Union: Regional Aspect: Informational-Interactive Project / compiled, interviewer: B. Zaleski, M. Valkovsky, A. Mostovoy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2014. - C. 3.

heading "**Eurasian Economic Union: Regional Aspect**", which were based on the reflections of the heads of the regions of the "troika" countries on the above-mentioned topics.

Thus, according to Governor A. Karlin, the problem of Eurasian integration is particularly urgent for the Altai Territory as a border region of Russia, and it should be solved "from below", i.e. as close to local needs as possible. At that, the Interstate Concept of Regional Policy should play a decisive role, as it should envisage amendments to national legislation on extending powers of regions in carrying out international activities within the customs borders of the Union. And as budgetary measures we can enshrine provisions to support inter-regional industrial cooperation, to link together "such projects as the Comprehensive Development of the Altai Ob Region and the Effective Use of Tourist and Recreational Assets of Southern Siberia" with the production of Belarusian agricultural equipment and the proposals of Kazakhstan's partners to develop a common transport and logistics infrastructure in the border regions. We can and should unite the efforts of the regions to develop technoparks"¹⁴.

The Kostanay Region of Kazakhstan agrees that the regional aspects of the development of integration within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union should be reflected in the Interstate Concept of Regional Policy. In the opinion of the akim, N. Saduakasov, the main objective of this document should be measures to equalise the socio-economic potential of the regions in a way that would allow these processes to take place within the borders of one state. Such measures include a unified approach to

¹⁴ Karlin, A. Integration must come from below / A. Karlin // Respublika. - 2014. - 11 June.

issues of technical regulation and technical standards, and the establishment of railway tariffs for the transportation of goods. This concept should also reflect such topical issues of interaction as cooperation and co-operation in economic sectors, introduction of scientific research and innovative developments, development of co-operative links between producers, as well as promotion of joint ventures, financial mechanisms that would help to attract investments, direct supplies of goods and provision of services. They see specific benefits from close cooperation with Belarusian and Russian regions in the areas where all integration participants can successfully complement each other: "It is production cooperation in the organization of repair and maintenance centres, assembly facilities for agricultural equipment, dealer centres for supplies of harvesting equipment of leading Russian and Belarusian manufacturers, cooperation of manufacturing enterprises."¹⁵

In the Mogilev Region of Belarus, the main goal of the Eurasian Economic Union is seen in the fact that this formation will contribute to a fuller realization of the potential of the regions, so that it will fully reveal all its advantages. Among them P. Rudnik, chairman of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee considers "expansion of the sales markets, motivation to increase competitiveness and quality of production, synergy effect for the economy through competitive prices of energy resources, optimal customs duties, implementation of joint projects in the innovation field"¹⁶. But first the members of the union should carry out the approximation and unification of domestic legal systems, eliminate

15 Saduakasov, N. Our cooperation is moving in almost all sectors / N. Saduakasov // Respublika. - 2014. - 20 Aug.

16 Rudnik, P. Regional cooperation - a step towards a common market / P. Rudnik // Respublika. - 2014. - 16 apr.

restrictions in mutual trade, regulate customs procedures and customs tariffs, including with regard to third countries, and create conditions for freedom of investment.

The Vologda Oblast of Russia holds the view that in organizing interregional cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, a comprehensive solution requires the issue of labour migration, which is very sensitive to the economic life of many regions and which to a large extent is in the "shadow" segment. Therefore, migrants often face serious problems in obtaining medical care, housing and other social guarantees. Therefore, a set of social standards provided by the state and employers should become a prerequisite for civilized regulation of the labor market in the countries and regions of the Eurasian Economic Union. In addition, according to the Vologda Oblast Governor O. Kuvshynnikov, "along with migration to the interregional level, training in highly specialized educational institutions of various profiles and levels can be transferred, which will ensure normal funding, create good material and technical resources on a cooperative basis.

The North-Kazakhstan region sees an effective tool for regional development within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union in the legislative consolidation of obligations of national companies of the member states to invest in each other's regions' economies, implement joint projects in priority sectors, employ specialists in the enterprises created in equal proportions. According to the akim of the region, S. Eskendirov, these "joint projects should contribute not only to the development of regional production and technology transfer, but also to the exchange of

experience, employment for the population of the regions and the improvement of their well-being.¹⁷

The Vitebsk Region of Belarus, based on its own experience of cooperation with the regions of the bordering countries Lithuania, Latvia and Russia, considers it expedient to introduce the notion of domestic producer within the new integration association, which should be uniform for the entire Eurasian Economic Union. The deputy head of the Vitebsk Oblast Executive Committee O. Matskevich explains: "Today, there is a problem of joint participation of regional enterprises in the production of a competitive product and organisation of its further promotion in the interests of manufacturers. <...> This scheme of interaction, which would be legalized, has not been worked out yet, and it will not work out by itself"¹⁸.

The Almaty region of Kazakhstan, which is a transport corridor between the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and China, expects to benefit from the new integration association in developing transport infrastructure and transit potential to position the region as an international operator of transport and logistics services. In addition, the role of the region's border territories as important zones of international economic cooperation will inevitably increase. In this regard, says the akim of this Kazakhstani region, A. In order to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with the regions of the EAEU countries, it would be advisable to create a unified information portal, where catalogues of local producers and lists of regional investment projects will be placed. The current

17 Eskendirov, S. Implementation of joint projects should promote welfare / S. Eskendirov // Respublika. - 2014. - 9 July.

18 Matskevich, O. Cooperation is concrete projects and documents / O. Matskevich // Respublika. - 2014. - 21 May.

market mechanisms of cooperation allow enterprises themselves to engage in inter-farm ties, while increasing the competitiveness of their products.¹⁹

As we can see, the creation and consolidation of a common media and information field in the Eurasian space, which with all its potential should contribute to the convergence of the regions of the member states of the new integration association, through timely and full-scale informing the residents of their countries about the most interesting and topical events and joint projects, and facilitate their speedy implementation, became another important topic touched upon on the pages of the Belarusian government newspaper Republic. Therefore, it is necessary to form more positive factual information around specific projects in various areas, rather than just reacting to some loud occasions offered by the public agenda".²⁰

Interesting experience in solving this problem has already been accumulated in the Aktobe oblast of Kazakhstan, where information support of integration processes in the system of regional and international trade and economic relations is considered the most important task. Therefore articles of heads of structural divisions on effective use of economic potential of the region are published in mass media of the region. "National and regional TV channels are broadcasting stories about the participation of enterprises in integration processes", notes A. Mukhambetov, Oblast Akim. - Earlier the issue of functioning of enterprises in the conditions of the Common Economic Space was studied with

19 Musakhanov, A. Cooperation - factor of competitiveness / A. Musakhanov // Respublika. - 2014. - 18 June.

20 Eurasian region needs a lot of positive factual information - expert [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/politics/Evrazijskij-region-nuzhdaetsja-v-bolshem-kolichestve-pozitivnoj-faktologicheskoy-informatsii---ekspert_i_654673

participation of large and medium-sized economic entities of the oblast. Practical leaders from various spheres and sectors confirmed the positive impact of the Common Economic Space on the economy as a whole"²¹.

The Republic of Buryatia also stresses the crucial importance of strengthening information support for the integration processes in the regions of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and demonstrating the positive results of the Eurasian Economic Union. The head of this Russian region, V. Nagovitsyn stresses: "This work should be aimed both at the general public and the national elites of the CIS member states. The prospects of the entire project depend largely on how successful the stage of informational promotion of the ideas of Eurasian integration will be."²²

In June 2014, Minsk hosted the 1st Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, which made a concrete proposal to hold a Forum of Regions of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2016. It is quite possible that by then it will be attended not only by the regions of the "troika" states, but also by Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, other post-Soviet countries and their neighbours. After all, the Eurasian Economic Union is an open economic community, which is organically built into global relations in the form of a reliable and effective bridge between developed Europe and emerging Asia. And it is interregional cooperation within this association that will largely determine whether Eurasian integration will become the key response to those common challenges and threats that currently confront not only the CIS countries, but also other geopolitical

21 Mukhambetov, A. The issue of legal regulation of integration processes is one of the most important / A. Mukhambetov // Respublika. - 2014. - 28 May.

22 Nagovitsyn, V. Integration processes need information support / V. Nagovitsyn // Respublika. - 2014. - 27 Aug.

platforms. The actively developing communication of Eurasian integration, which forms a new global public consciousness united by humanistic mutual interests between friendly peoples and states, should be of invaluable assistance in solving this problem.

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Interaction between regions and the media

Today, the Belarusian regional press is facing large-scale creative tasks to cover all stages of the implementation of the state policy of development of Belarus' regions, "one of the most important components of which is the deepening of cross-border cooperation with foreign partners, which implies the adequate development of the international segment of Belarusian regional journalism, among other things"²³. At the same time, the interaction of Belarusian regions with foreign partners should be organically integrated into the development of international cooperation of the Republic of Belarus as a whole, the main criteria of which are sustainable growth rates of export of goods and services, as well as the achievement of a positive balance of foreign trade in goods and services.

In this regard, the Belarusian regional media have a very broad thematic spectrum, which in the near future should be fully reflected on the pages of city, district and regional newspapers. Let us single out those directions, which emphasize the geography of interregional cooperation and which are mentioned in the National Strategy of Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030²⁴: expansion of comprehensive cooperation with the regions of the European Union and especially within the framework of the Eastern Partnership

23 Zalesky, B. Reflection in media of peculiarities of transboundary cooperation of Belarusian regions / B. Zalesky // Journalism-2018: state, problems and prospects : proceedings of the 20th International Scientific and Practical Conference, Minsk, 15-16 February. 2018 / edited by V.M. Samusevich (editor-in-chief) [iins.] - Minsk : BDU, 2018. - C. 291.

24 National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2030. - Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus. - Minsk, 2017. - C. 137.

initiative, as well as with the regions of the "good neighbourhood belt" - Poland, Lithuania, Latvia; deepening of cooperation with the regions of countries participating in the One Belt, One Road mega project. But perhaps the most real development of large-scale economic integration so far has been observed with the regions of the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan) and especially with the Russian federal entities within the Union State.

As for **the Eurasian Economic Union**, from the very beginning of its existence in terms of the development of integration measures, it was believed that the level of regional cooperation is an indicator of the relevance and effectiveness of supranational regulatory measures, as historically there is an economic basis for implementing integration measures to stimulate regional development and interregional cooperation, as well as the potential to expand cooperation in various fields and areas of the economy at the level of the EAEU member states' regions. As a result, "consideration of regional aspects makes it possible to more effectively implement measures to stimulate new areas of mutual trade, build sectoral production chains, form transport corridors and plan the location of infrastructure facilities, and in the future to ensure social development and improve living standards".²⁵

If we talk about the bilateral format of interregional cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, the undisputed leader and impetus for the development of the entire Eurasian integration here is the interaction between Belarusian and **Russian** regions within the framework of the Union State. Suffice it

25 Main directions of EAEU economic development until 2030. - Eurasian Economic Commission. - M., 2015. - C. 42.

to say that by mid-2018, Belarusian regions maintained "direct trade and economic relations with 80 regions of the Russian Federation, of which 70 were based on long-term cooperation agreements"²⁶, and the top ten major trading partners included Moscow and St. Petersburg, the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Perm Krai, and the Bryansk, Kaluga, Moscow, Smolensk and Tyumen regions.

The growing potential for Belarusian-Russian interregional cooperation was particularly evident in the outcome of the Fifth Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, which was held in Mogilev in October 2018 and covered such key thematic areas as: agricultural policy, unification and harmonization of legislation, digital economy, youth policy, international activities and economic security. It should be noted that today it is largely at the instigation of the Belarusian and Russian media that the Forum of Regions is defined as "a key project for regional cooperation between Belarus and Russia, an effective platform for a partnership dialogue on economic integration and interregional cooperation."²⁷ And this is not an unfounded assertion. Suffice it to say that contracts worth more than half a billion dollars were signed at the aforementioned forum in Mogilev.

It is noteworthy that 76 documents were added to the legal framework of Belarus-Russia interregional cooperation within the framework of the fifth forum. In particular, Mogilev Oblast Rada has signed agreements on cooperation and development of mutual

26 Myasnikovich, M. Work for result / M. Myasnikovich // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of union building: inform.-integration project / co-compiled, interviewed: K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. - C. 5.

27 Myasnikovich, M. The Forum of Regions has become an effective platform for dialogue on integration and interregional cooperation / M. Myasnikovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.sovrep.gov.by/ru/interview-ru/view/forum-regionov-stal-effektivnoj-ploschadkoj-dlja-dialoga-po-voprosam-integratsii-i-mezhregionalnogo-256/>.

relations with legislative assemblies of Kaluga Oblast and Krasnodar Krai. Grodno Oblast Council will cooperate with Kaliningrad Oblast Duma in trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural spheres. Similar spheres of cooperation have been defined by the Gomel Oblast Soviet and the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast Legislative Assembly, as well as by the Mogilev Oblast Executive Committee and the Novosibirsk Oblast Government. But we are also talking not only about the integration of regional or provincial level, but also about the fact that "small towns are also involved in this process, which cooperate quite actively, and not only in the field of humanitarian relations, but also by building economic ties"²⁸. As a result, it turns out that cooperation of Belarusian regions with the absolute majority of subjects of the Russian Federation has been already established at the interregional level. But how much of it is reflected in the regional press of Belarus? The question is topical, with a lot of unrealised potential.

The coverage of cooperation between the regions of Belarus and its partners in **Kazakhstan**, another member country of the Eurasian Economic Union, with which the Treaty on Social and Economic Cooperation until 2026 was signed in November 2017, aimed at implementing a qualitatively new stage in bilateral relations, including at the regional level, should become very diverse in the Belarusian regional press. It is pertinent to recall here that back in 2000, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Press and Information, which was supplemented in 2017 by a provision attaching "particular

28 Matveev, V. More than 70 regional agreements signed at the V Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/bole-70-regionalnyh-soglashenij-podpisano-na-v-forume-regionov-belarusi-i-rossii-321404-2018/>.

importance to the expansion of media cooperation between the two states"²⁹ and which entered into force in October 2018.

The thematic range of publications in the regional press in this regard could be very broad. This includes the operation of joint assembly facilities in Kazakhstan with the participation of the Belarusian side, of which there were eight at the end of 2018, including the production of BelAZ, MTZ, Gomselmash, MAZ, and Bobruiskagromash for the production of mining, mine, special municipal and firefighting equipment, tractors, harvesters, engines, balers, and medical equipment. This includes the implementation of the Kazakhstan-Belarusian Industrial and Technological Park of Agricultural and Municipal Machinery in Kokshetau, Akmola Region, the first phase of which was launched in 2016. This also includes the implementation in Kazakhstan of several dozen joint scientific and technical projects with extensive use of Belarusian technologies, innovations and scientific developments. In this regard, we remind that Belarus and Kazakhstan should reach a volume of trade of at least one billion dollars in 2020. Minsk and Astana believe that "to achieve this goal, it is worth engaging the potential of inter-regional cooperation."³⁰

The topics of Belarus-Kazakhstan interregional cooperation may be particularly relevant to the press of the Gomel, Grodno and Mogilev regions. In particular, the Grodno and Akmola regions adopted a Memorandum of Cooperation in Agriculture in 2014. The

29 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on cooperation in the field of mass media [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=101700071&p1=1>

30 Belarus interested in creating new joint ventures with Kazakhstan - Myasnikovich [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-sozdanii-novyh-sovmestnyh-predpriyatij-s-kazhstanom-mjasnikovich-323707-2018/>

Gomel Oblast Executive Committee signed a cooperation agreement with the Pavlodar Oblast Akimat in November 2016. Mogilev region has signed similar agreements with South Kazakhstan (2003) and East Kazakhstan (2009) regions. Belarusian Mogilev and Kazakh Semey also have a cooperation agreement. The effectiveness of interregional cooperation between the Mogilev region and Kazakh partners is evidenced by the following figures. In the three quarters of 2018, "foreign trade turnover between the region's economic entities and Kazakhstan increased by 57% to \$82.8 million, with exports to Kazakhstan increasing by 52.4%."³¹ To a large extent, such weighty figures were the reason for the opening of the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Mogilev in November 2018, which will help give new impetus to the development of Belarus-Kazakhstan interregional cooperation. But what reflection do all these documents and results have in the regional press? "Far from always they are adequately reflected in the media sphere. And this then has the effect of reducing the interest of the partners and the continuation of cooperation in general".³²

Building up the intensity of interregional interaction is an important component in strengthening bilateral trade, economic and cultural cooperation with another Eurasian Economic Union member state, **Armenia**. Suffice it to say that "today 21 agreements on twinning have been signed between cities and regions of Belarus and

31 Kuliagin, S. Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Kazakhstan opened in Mogilev / S. Kuliagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/politics/view/pochetnoe-konsulstvo-respubliki-kazahstan-otkryli-v-mogileve-325498-2018/>

32 Zalesky, B. International Relations and the Media. Multi-vector foreign policy in a global crisis of confidence / B. Zaleski. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 57.

Armenia.³³ For instance, as early as 2008 Borisov, Nesvizh, Soligorsk, Slutsk and Myadel regions signed twinning agreements on cooperation with such Armenian cities as Kapan, Goris, Agarak, Sisian and Meghri, respectively, within the framework of cooperation between Minsk region and Syunik marz. Moreover, "in May 2011 the list of Belarusian and Armenian regional partners was extended to the Osipovichi District and the town of Sevan, in June 2012 to the Vitebsk Region and the Lori Marz, the towns of Orsha and Spitak, Vitebsk and Vanadzor, and in October 2012 to the Lepel District and the towns of Tashir, Braslav District and Stepanavan.³⁴

Given the fact that Belarusian-Armenian trade has been growing in recent years, that the sides need to reach a higher level of cooperation and create joint productions to maintain this positive trend, and that Belarus is ready to take part in the renovation of Armenia's passenger vehicles fleet and lift renovation programme, parliamentarians of the two countries intend to update the agenda for interregional Belarusian-Armenian cooperation in 2019. In particular, they say that "the work on the agreement on twinning between Minsk and Yerevan will be accelerated. Now it is being considered by the Armenian side"³⁵. Referring to the analysis of the implementation of the existing agreements, the regional press of Belarus and Armenia could proceed from the fact that Belarusian-Armenian interregional cooperation in general promotes the intensification of joint business activities, restoration of lost

33 Trade and Economic Relations [Electronic Resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://armenia.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/.

34 Zalesskii, B.L. Belarusian international journalism: peculiarities, trends, perspectives: textbook / B.L. Zalesskii. - Minsk: Belarusian State University, 2014. - C. 221.

35 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/>

production ties, humanitarian and human contacts, ensures the promotion of bilateral economic projects and creation of joint competitive products that are in demand both in the domestic markets and in third countries.

Finally, in July 2018, Belarus signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of information with another country belonging to the Eurasian Economic Union, **Kyrgyzstan**, to encourage a regular exchange of information materials on the political, economic, social and cultural life of both states and to develop cooperation between editorial offices. At the same time, "the Kyrgyz side also proposed a new direction for cooperation in the field of information. In particular, we talk about cooperation at the level of regional journalism.³⁶ The fact that the thematic portfolio of publications in the regional press of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan can be very diverse in this regard is confirmed by many facts, based on the statement that "Kyrgyz-Belarusian relations are dynamically developing on a wide range of issues, including political and diplomatic, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres"³⁷.

For example, in 2017, Belarusian exports to this Central Asian country exceeded 300 commodity items: from dairy products and trucks to particle boards, furniture, and wallpaper. More than 50 representative offices of entities of the commodity distribution network and distributors of Belarusian companies are operating here.

36 Belarus and Kyrgyzstan sign agreement on cooperation in the field of information [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-kyrgyzstan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-informatsii-309989-2018/>.
37 Matveev, V. Foreign Ministers of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan confirmed their intention to intensify bilateral cooperation / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/glavy-mid-belarusi-i-kyrgyzstana-podtverdili-namerenie-aktivizirovat-dvustoronnee-sotrudnichestvo-324657-2018/>

In November 2016, it opened an assembly facility for MTZ tractors and a service centre for agricultural machinery at the Bishkek-based Avtomash-Radiant. At the same time, Niva-Holding (Soligorsk) registered with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Justice a Belarusian enterprise, Niva-Shakhtospetsstroy LLC, which plans to produce equipment for the mining and hydraulic engineering industry from components manufactured at Niva-Holding.³⁸ Plans include establishment of an assembly facility for Belarusian grain harvesters on Kyrgyz soil, which is mentioned in the signed Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation of Kyrgyzstan, Gomselmash OJSC and Belarusian dealer Avtomash-Radiant LLC.

In addition, at the eighth meeting of the Kyrgyz-Belarusian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, held in Bishkek in October 2018, the Belarusian side offered its Kyrgyz partners to implement a joint project to establish a milk processing plant, in which the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation of the Kyrgyz Republic immediately expressed its interest. The idea is to set up a facility in the territory of the Central Asian country to produce milk, ice cream, cultured milk products (kefir, yoghurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, soft cheeses) using Belarus-made raw materials and technology specifically developed in Belarus. And "in the long term there are plans to introduce the products of this company to the Chinese market."³⁹ In addition, consistently developing regional economic ties

38 Interview by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Kyrgyz Republic A. Strachko to the information and analytical magazine Market Conjunction (No. 1, 2018) [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/bacbab7757176991.html>.

39 Belarus offers Kyrgyzstan a joint project to set up a milk processing plant [Electronic resource]. - 2018. -- URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus->

with partners in Kyrgyzstan, the Belarusian side delivered 15 low-floor trolleybuses manufactured by Belkommunmash OJSC to the Kyrgyz capital in August 2018, where training will also be provided to drivers of the Bishkek trolleybus authority. An interesting detail: this "equipment was purchased under the project "Development of Public Transport in Bishkek", financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.⁴⁰

The agreement on cooperation between the Belarusian National Centre for Marketing and Price Study and the exhibition company BI Expo Ltd. from Bishkek, which aims to encourage Belarusian exporters to actively participate in international exhibitions and fairs held annually in Kyrgyzstan, is aimed at expanding Belarus-Kyrgyzstan cooperation in exhibition and fair activities. In 2018, an exposition of producers from Belarus has already been presented at the FoodExpo Kyrgyzstan, the international food industry exhibition, which is the most important industry event in that country. JV JSC Spartak, JSC Agrokombinat Skidelski, JSC Oshmyanskiy Meat Combine, SE Brestmyasomolprom Concern Holding Management Company, Smorgon Dairy Products - a branch of JSC Lida Dairy and Canning Plant, JSC Pinskiy Meat Combine demonstrated their products in the Kyrgyz capital. Apart from Belarusian exporters, the forum was attended by companies from Bulgaria, France, Indonesia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Sri Lanka. About three and a half thousand people attended this business forum, 95 percent of whom were food industry professionals.

predlagaet-kyrgyzstanu-sovmestnyj-proekt-po-sozdaniyu-molokopererabatyvajuschego-predpriyatija-322349-2018/

40 Bishkek has received 37 trolleybuses made in Belarus and Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-bishkek-postavili-37-trollejbusov-belorusskogo-i-rossijskogo-proizvodstva-313496-2018/>.

Perhaps due to this exhibition as well, "trade turnover between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan in January-October 2018 amounted to \$98.49 million, the bulk of which was accounted for by Belarusian exports (\$90.96 million)⁴¹," because the most important positions in Belarusian supplies to the Kyrgyz market are milk and dried condensed cream, butter, cheese and cottage cheese sugar. It should be noted that in April 2019, the exposition of Belarusian enterprises will again be presented at FoodExpo Kyrgyzstan-2019 within such thematic sections as food products, equipment for the food industry, goods and services for catering equipment, packaging products, halal industry.

In April 2018, Belarusian exporting enterprises also took part in the International Specialised Exhibition MedExpo in Bishkek. They included Belsept ALC, Gomselmash OJSC, the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Neurology and Neurosurgery of the Ministry of Health of Belarus, Exon OJSC, and Arvitmedical LLC. Representatives of the Belarusian medical and pharmaceutical industries were brought to Kyrgyzstan by the fact that in 2017 the state programme on modernisation of the healthcare system was launched in this country, in connection with which it was planned to "purchase modern medical equipment and quality medicines worth \$7 million"⁴² here by the end of 2018. That is why the presentation of medical and pharmaceutical products was very opportune.

To summarize. In this study, we have presented the facts of the rapid development and increase in the volume of interregional

41 Belarus to take part in Food Expo Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-primet-uchastie-v-vystavke-foodexpo-kyrgyzstan-v-bishkeke-333552-2019/>

42 Belarus to take part in MedExpo and FoodExpo in Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-primet-uchastie-v-vystavkah-medexpo-i-foodexpo-v-kyrgyzstane-297380-2018/>

cooperation between Belarus and partners from the Eurasian Economic Union member countries of Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan alone. If we add to them the similar trends observed in the regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the European Union, the "far arc", the Silk Road Economic Belt, they all convincingly demonstrate the obvious: even in the professional media environment, such an unfamiliar concept as "international regional journalism" should gain its real contours in the media practice of information and communication space of Belarus regions as soon as possible, so that its representatives could competently engage in⁴³ the

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43 Zalesky, B. Belarus - Russia: facets of integration. Chronicle of Union Building / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 96.

A focus on international cooperation

A meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council was held in Yerevan in early October 2019, where the leaders of the five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) discussed economic interaction, financial policy, energy, as well as key areas for international activities and development of cooperation with third countries. Noting the serious intensification of the integration association's engagement with such international formats as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations, President Lukashenka pointed out that "to expand the international agenda of the Eurasian Economic Union we need to pay special attention to the 'far arc' countries, where our goods and services are not yet recognizable."⁴⁴

By the time of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Yerevan, the EEU already had a free trade zone with **Vietnam**. The agreement on its creation was signed by the parties back in May 2015, and the document came into force in October 2016. In order to adapt the national economies of the EEU countries to the free trade regime with Vietnam, transition periods of five to ten years were established for certain goods, during which import customs duty rates would be gradually reduced. As of 2017 alone, the Eurasian Economic Union "zeroed out import duty rates for Vietnam in respect of 43% of the total number of tariff lines of the Common Customs Tariff (CCT EEU). Within 10 years, duty-free

⁴⁴ Participation in the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-zasedanii-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-22132/

entry of goods into the common union market for Vietnamese exporters will be expanded to cover 90% of the EEU tariff lines"⁴⁵.

And in June 2019, the two sides began discussing ways to expand trade and economic cooperation, as the free trade area agreement quickly proved its effectiveness. "Already in the first full year of the agreement - 2017 - there was a 36% (USD 5.6 billion) increase in trade turnover. Meanwhile, Union exports to Vietnam increased by 40% (from USD 1.6 billion to USD 2.3 billion) and imports of goods from Vietnam increased by 35% (from USD 2.7 billion to USD 3.7 billion)."⁴⁶ In 2018, the existing trend has continued. Perhaps for this reason, too, the Vietnamese economy grew by more than seven per cent in 2018, the highest since 2008, the trade surplus exceeded seven billion dollars and the amount of foreign investment attracted was 19 billion dollars. At the same time, as Vietnamese researchers point out, "it's not only Russia that takes advantage of the agreement: more and more joint ventures are being launched in Vietnam by Belarus, too."⁴⁷ In particular, a project for the production of trucks by Minsk Automobile Plant is underway in the province of Hung Yen within the framework of the joint venture MAZ Asia. And in the same province, work is underway to set up a joint venture to produce dairy products from Belarusian raw materials. This is why the Vietnamese side said at the June (2019) talks with the Eurasian Economic Commission that it would like to maximise relations with the EEU and consider all opportunities to

45 EAEU Free Trade Zone Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/zst-vietnam-ru/>

46 EEU and Vietnam discuss opportunities for expanding trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/13-06-2019-4.aspx>

47 Nguyen, K.T. Benefits of Vietnam-EEU Free Trade Zone / K.T. Nguyen // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://eurasian-studies.org/archives/11237>

step up cooperation, including in the areas of financial and tourism services.

Apparently, the positive example of the development of relations between the EAEU and Vietnam played no small part in the fact that an agreement was signed in Yerevan on 1 October 2019 within the framework of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council to establish a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union and **Singapore**. This document provides for Singapore to grant duty-free access for all goods from the EAEU countries - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. Similar commitments - on duty-free access for Singapore goods - have been undertaken by this integration association. In addition, the signed agreement fixed obligations of the parties to comply with: international standards for licensing procedures; bans and quantitative restrictions; technical regulation of sanitary and phytosanitary standards; transfers and payments for the supply of products; fees associated with procedures at the border; application of anti-dumping, compensation and special protective measures. It also formulates "a significant reserve for improving the quality and developing cooperation in such areas as e-commerce, ecology, countering anti-competitive practices, transparency in public procurement, protection of intellectual property rights, which is especially relevant when discussing technology transfer issues"⁴⁸. Interestingly, the agreement has been more than two years in the making. In signing it, the Singaporean side emphasised the prospects of the Eurasian market - "it is a large market at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It has huge potential

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

for economic growth, especially in the areas of logistics and digital. All of these are areas of interest to Singapore"⁴⁹, so the creation of a free trade zone "will promote the development of industry in the EAEU member states, investment, establishing contacts between people, business representatives"⁵⁰.

In the second half of October 2019, Moscow hosted a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, at which the heads of government of all five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) focused on developing sectoral areas of interaction, as well as on strengthening the organisation's position in the international arena, emphasising that "international cooperation has a special place in the development of Eurasian integration"⁵¹. Indeed, in October 2019 alone, this Eurasian integration structure took a number of concrete steps to develop interaction with states located both in Europe and Asia.

Specifically, the same meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council saw the signing of the agreement on a free trade zone between the EEU and **Serbia**, which, according to the parties, should give new impetus to the expansion of trade and economic cooperation between its members. Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan had already had bilateral agreements on free trade with Serbia before the document was signed. Nevertheless, the new agreements with the Serbian side, firstly, "open a fundamentally new

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

50 EAEU and Singapore sign free trade area agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/eaes-i-singapur-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sozdanii-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-364131-2019/>

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

market for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan - with immediate duty-free access for the overwhelming majority of their exports - and, secondly, create new export opportunities for Belarusian, Kazakh and Russian producers.⁵² In doing so, the parties to the agreement receive economic benefits not only in the short term in the form of immediate savings on customs duties on existing exports, but also in the medium term in terms of realising export opportunities while expanding the free trade regime. In addition, the document guarantees the stability, predictability and transparency of trade relations, as well as compliance with international standards with regard to licensing procedures, prohibitions and quantitative restrictions, technical regulations, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, application of anti-dumping, compensatory and special protective measures, and protection of intellectual property rights.

Another example of the EAEU's expanding international cooperation concerns **Iran**, with which a temporary agreement leading to the creation of a free trade zone was signed back on 17 May 2018 and entered into force on 27 October 2019. This document "provides for limited product coverage, but includes almost all major products, which account for 55% of total EAEU exports - agricultural and industrial product groups. <...> Preferential import coverage is 49% of Iran's total supplies to the EAEU.⁵³ More specifically, the list of goods for which exporters of EEU countries, including Belarus, have received preferential

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

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

coverage includes meat and oil products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics. Importantly, the parties will now have to secure most-favoured-nation treatment for all goods traded between the EEU and Iran. And all charges related to imports of goods must no longer exceed the cost of customs clearance services. And unjustified tariff, trade-restrictive measures should no longer be applied to goods listed in the agreement. Besides, welcoming any cooperation with the EAEU in the banking, financial and investment spheres, the Iranian side suggested creating a working group for the development of joint economic projects, the potential for which could be very extensive. For example, "Iranian ports in the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, railways and roads in the country and a safe environment enable the transit of goods through Iran to neighboring countries."⁵⁴

Finally, on the day of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council meeting - 25 October 2019 - the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and **China**, signed on 17 May 2018, entered into force. This document is not a free trade agreement, as its provisions do not provide for the reduction or elimination of import duties. The aim of the agreement is different: "to increase the transparency of regulatory systems, to simplify trade procedures, and to develop cooperative links"⁵⁵. In particular, it establishes a much higher level of transparency in the parties'

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

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

systems of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical regulation. In the sphere of customs procedures the agreement includes an agreement on the release of goods without unnecessary delays. There are also significant guarantees for Belarusian, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Armenian exporters with regard to protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. For Belarus, which is currently in the accession process to the World Trade Organization, the document is also important as it establishes "legal guarantees of compliance with key WTO principles"⁵⁶ in its relations with China.

According to the development strategies of the EAEU member states, industry and the agro-industrial complex are priorities for cooperation with China. With this in mind, the parties have identified three most important areas for cooperation: 1) creation of a single digital space; 2) localisation of technologies; and 3) effective cooperation in science, technology and innovation. For all these directions to be successfully implemented, a map of industrialization is now being created in the EAEU, which "will outline the areas in which it will be most appropriate to attract foreign investment and technology."⁵⁷ At the same time, the creation of common digital platforms and solutions will remove barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital and data. And among the key competencies that will form the basis of this industry of the

56 The EAEU-China trade and economic cooperation agreement has entered into force [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/soglashenie-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskom-sotrudnichestve-eaes-i-kitaja-vstupilo-v-silu-367082-2019/>

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

future are electric transport, additive manufacturing, and unmanned technologies.

As for the second area of EAEU's cooperation with China, an important strategic task here is to ensure the transition from localization of production to localization of competencies, where the starting point should be the prediction of EAEU's unique competitive advantages on the world stage, which can be realized through the creation of technology parks, clusters and technology platforms. It should be noted that the first steps in this direction have already been taken. For instance, Belarus, together with China, has already implemented a project to create the Great Stone Industrial Park, which received the status of a territorial special economic zone in 2019, endowing the residents of the industrial park with the maximum customs advantages possible in this integration association in the post-Soviet space and where project investments are already over one billion dollars.

In Russia, the Haier Industrial Park opened in Naberezhnye Chelny in August 2019, with Chinese support, as well as a "smart factory" for washing machine production, where refrigeration, freezing and kitchen equipment and TV sets will also be produced using smart technology. In Kazakhstan, under a contract with China's China National Chemical Engineering Company, Kazakhstan Petrochemical Industries, is building an integrated gas-chemical complex to produce half a million tonnes of polypropylene a year, and will establish a facility to produce polyamide materials from grain using Chinese technology. Speaking of strengthening scientific and technical cooperation, we should emphasise the EAEU's interest in interacting with China in the agricultural sector, in introducing advanced agricultural technologies and innovations,

as well as in energy efficiency and productivity of processing facilities.

Another important aspect of the subject under consideration is that on 1 January 2020, the Republic of Belarus will chair the Eurasian Economic Union, and on 1 February the same year the Belarusian representative will chair the Eurasian Economic Commission. The Belarusian side intends to use these formats of activity "to give a new impetus to the integration processes and the formation of common policies by the member states.⁵⁸ In particular, to ensure that producers from the EEU member states get the most favorable conditions when exporting their products to foreign markets, and that consumers get safe, high-quality and inexpensive goods, the union plans to "speed up the signing of an agreement on the procedure and conditions for removing technical barriers in mutual trade with third countries, which will establish an effective mechanism to ensure barrier-free movement of goods in the EEU and third countries.⁵⁹ In fact, as early as autumn 2019, the EEU began a new cycle of forming a list of priority countries with which the integration association will conclude free trade area agreements. In particular, procedures to this effect are being finalised with Israel, "at the beginning of next [2020] negotiations with India. There is also a list of 12 states with which we would like to work within about 2-3 years. This list may be supplemented by other countries.⁶⁰

58 Grishkevich, A. Belarus as chair in the EAEU will seek to create a full-fledged economic union - MFA / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-kak-predsedatel-v-eaes-budet-dobivatsja-sozdaniya-polnoformatnogo-ekonomicheskogo-sojuza-mid-366038-2019/>

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

60 Belarus counts on export growth thanks to EAEU and FTAs with third countries [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus->

Indonesia, one of the key economies in the Asia-Pacific region, is among the countries with which the EAEU is going to conclude a free trade agreement in the future. In October 2019, the Eurasian Economic Commission signed a memorandum of cooperation with the government of that country. The document is expected to help build an effective infrastructure for developing trade and economic cooperation. On this basis, the parties have already established a working group, whose first meeting will be held in the first quarter of 2020 in Moscow and which will focus "on issues of supranational competence of the EEC, such as trade facilitation, customs and technical regulations, development of financial markets.⁶¹ Note also that the Eurasian Economic Commission already interacts with governments of such countries as Peru, Mongolia, Cambodia, Morocco, Jordan, the Faroe Islands, Cuba Thailand, Bangladesh and Moldova in the form of memoranda, and with the government of Greece in the form of a declaration.

This list also includes such South American country as **Chile**, with which the Eurasian P5 has significantly expanded its cooperation in recent years. In particular, in 2018, trade turnover between the parties grew by almost a third, to \$1.2 billion. "At the same time, EEAS exports to Chile increased by 54.8% and imports by 28.7%."⁶² A free trade agreement between the EAEU and Chile could open up great opportunities for Belarus, because at the

[rasschityvaet-na-rost-eksporta-blagodarja-soglashenijam-eaes-o-zst-s-tretjimi-stranami-365828-2019/](https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/eeek-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-366253-2019/)

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

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

moment Belarus-Chile trade turnover is only about ten million dollars, 90% of which comes from this South American country. The reason for this phenomenon lies in "the existence of some problems with duties, which are still significantly higher for Belarusian goods than for other foreign products entering Chile."⁶³

Another country, with which negotiations on the establishment of a free trade zone have already entered an active phase, is **Egypt**. This African state will be the first to host a joint industrial infrastructure with the EAEU, the creation of which will "become a window for the promotion of our industrial products in Africa and the Middle East"⁶⁴ for the countries of the integration association. Apparently, a memorandum of understanding signed between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union Commission on 24 October 2019, according to which "the parties intend to interact in infrastructure and agriculture, trade, investment and business development, regional economic integration and other areas of mutual interest"⁶⁵, will significantly complement the EAEU's African engagement vector. Under this document, a cooperation plan will be developed with a focus on activities for the business communities of the parties. In the language of numbers, the prospects for this interaction look very impressive. After all, the African Union is an international intergovernmental organisation

63 Grishkevich, A. Chile interested in long-term cooperation with Belarus - Benitez / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/chili-zainteresovana-v-dolgosrochnom-sotrudnichestve-s-belarusiju-benitez-365275-2019/>

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

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

uniting 55 states of the Black Continent with a population of about one billion people. The EAEU's trade with them has grown almost 2.7 times since 2010, reaching \$21.7 billion in 2018. At the same time, just five African countries - Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia - account for more than 80 per cent of the Eurasian Five's exports. So the potential for partnership development here is indeed considerable.

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Focusing on long-term priorities

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

1) Give a new impetus to industrial cooperation in the form of joint ventures in the industrial, agro-industrial and services sectors;

2) To remove the remaining barriers to mutual trade between the countries participating in this integration formation at central, regional and municipal levels;

3) harness the potential of cross-border transport arteries and logistics hubs to build confidence across the Eurasian continent;

4) to make comprehensive digitalisation a driving force for the development of the economies of the Member States of the Union, giving a qualitative boost to digitalisation in industry, agriculture and transport;

5) Expand access to foreign markets, "actively develop trade and economic relations with third countries and integration associations"⁶⁶.

The effective and comprehensive implementation of the Strategic Development Guidelines for Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, adopted by the heads of the EAEU member states at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in December 2020 and published in January 2021, should contribute to the achievement of these objectives. This document contains 330

⁶⁶ Appeal of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev to the heads of member states of the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/18-01-2021-1.aspx>

measures and mechanisms to develop cooperation, grouped into 11 systemic blocks, the implementation of which should lead to the achievement of such results by 2025, as

1) Completion of a common market for goods, services, capital and labour;

(2) Improving the efficiency of regulation of the EAEU common market;

3) Transfer to a qualitatively higher level of customs regulation and administration;

4) ensuring the quality and safety of goods;

5) formation of the EAEU digital space;

6) Establishing mechanisms for targeted promotion of economic development;

7) Building a system for the management of joint cooperation projects and the development of high-performance sectors;

8) Stimulating scientific and technological progress;

9) Increasing the effectiveness of the EAEU institutions;

(10) Launching mechanisms for cooperation in education, health, tourism and sport;

11) the emergence of the EAEU as one of the most significant development centres of the modern world.

In order to implement these strategic directions, "it will be necessary to conclude 13 international treaties, adopt more than 60 normative legal acts, and make about 25 amendments and additions to the EEU Treaty and national legislation"⁶⁷. It is assumed that all these measures will help to increase exports from the EAEU states to

67 Pivovar, E. Published the strategy of development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025 / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/opublikovana-strategija-razvitija-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoi-integratsii-do-2025-goda-423997-2021/>

third countries by a quarter by 2025. This can be achieved if we follow the path of creating joint Eurasian companies to complement each other and produce competitive products. At the moment, "there are 17.5 thousand joint ventures in the EAEU with the union partners, including 2.4 thousand in Belarus. The EAEU is interested in implementing investment projects with a total estimated cost of about \$200 billion.⁶⁸

Another important segment of Eurasian integration is the implementation of digital projects, as the process of digital technology integration into all aspects of activities is now a key condition for progress. The Republic of Belarus is going to play a not insignificant role in this in the EAEU, where a sufficient infrastructure base for digital transformation has already been created and where the largest IT cluster in Eastern Europe - the High Tech Park - has been functioning for quite some time. "In 2020, its exports exceeded \$2.5 billion - that's more than 20% of Belarus' total services exports.⁶⁹

At the February 2021 Digital Almaty Forum 2021, the Belarusian side named the Eurasian Development Bank's "Travel without COVID" project as one of the joint digital projects in the EAEU territory that has actually been implemented for the benefit of the population. At the same time, the forum participants' attention was drawn to the fact that the remaining projects of the EAEU digital agenda are stalled. Few tangible results, including economic

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

69 HTP exports to exceed \$2.5 billion in 2020 - Golovchenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-pvt-v-2020-godu-prevysil-25-mlrd-golovchenko-427222-2021/>

ones, have been achieved in three years. This is why the implementation of the digital agenda in the Union has not yet led to the development of national segments. In this regard, it is now very important to set specific tasks, identify performers, develop clear rules of information architecture, and synchronize the pace of work both in the EAEU member states themselves and at the integration level, so that digitalization will bring the real economy, first and foremost, to a new level. In fact, this is the approach taken by Kazakhstan, which holds the EEU presidency in 2021. Suffice it to say that a project initiated by Kazakhstan to create wholesale distribution centres is now among the priorities of the union, as well as the full-scale launch of the digital transport corridor ecosystem proposed by Belarus together with its union partners. In addition, one of the joint projects could be a smart city, as all major cities in the EEU have the same tasks of managing lighting, traffic flows, power, water and heat supply. According to the Belarusian side, "all these tasks can be solved with the help of multifunctional digital platforms,"⁷⁰ but this will require a lot of coordinated work to produce a powerful synergy effect.

Another important area of the Eurasian Economic Union's development over the next five years should be the intensification of economic cooperation with foreign countries and international organisations, which will allow for coordinated work on the integration processes in the Eurasian space, including economic interaction "within the framework of the idea of the Greater Eurasian

70 Belarus stands for accelerated implementation of digital projects in the EEU - Golovchenko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vystupaet-za-uskorenie-realizatsii-tsifrovyyh-proektov-v-eaes-golovchenko>

Partnership"⁷¹. It should be recalled that the idea proposed by the Russian side in 2015 of forming a Greater Eurasian Partnership is a network of dialogues between key players in Eurasia, not only among major national economies, but also regional economic associations linked together by a flexible system of international legal norms, transport and logistics, energy, telecommunications and financial infrastructures, joint projects and institutions. This ambitious concept, which has already been called the most ambitious integration project of this century, implies the implementation of a number of basic principles that distinguish it from other Eurasian integration plans.

Above all, it does not pretend to compete with other regional integration structures, but only develops them for a future common Eurasian economic mechanism. The Greater Eurasian Partnership 'does not stand for the unification of the Eurasian East against the European West'⁷². The implementation of this project, whose participants are already characterised by different models of social, political and economic development, is not expected to impose a single set of values on anyone, but only to create the most comfortable conditions for all participants, not dividing them into leaders and outsiders, and providing a variety of flexible forms of connecting individual countries to the partnership. The Greater Eurasian Partnership is expected to affect not only the economy, but also other areas of interaction - science, education, culture, humanitarian field, and, in parallel, to contribute to strengthening food, energy and continental security, to address such global

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

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

problems as climate change, the fight against pandemics, and migration. Another distinctive feature of this project should be the principle of implementation from the bottom up, where specific agreements between regional integration associations and individual countries will form the basis for it. In particular, the planned pairing of the Eurasian Economic Union with the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road" fits very harmoniously into this scheme. And it is not the only one.

Thus, as early as the East Asia Summit in November 2020, it was stated that further development of various integration projects in the Asia-Pacific region would only contribute to strengthening economic cooperation. In this regard, such "regional and sub-regional associations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can work together in the interests of the entire region and complement each other harmoniously and effectively"⁷³.

For its part, Kazakhstan, which holds the EEU presidency in 2021, while declaring its approach to consistent expansion of access to foreign markets and active development of trade and economic relations with third countries and integration associations, has focused its attention not only on systematic work to establish an equal, mutually beneficial and pragmatic dialogue of the EEU with the European Union and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also on the fact that "an effective strategy for interaction with new trade⁷⁴ unions is to be developed

73 Asia creates the world's largest free trade zone [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/28129>

74 Appeal of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev to the heads of member states of the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic

Indeed, in mid-November 2020, an agreement was signed at the ASEAN summit to form the world's potentially largest free trade area-like bloc between the association's ten countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and five leading Asian economies - Australia, China, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan. This agreement "brought together countries with a combined gross product approaching \$26 trillion (one-third of the world's GDP). (a third of global GDP), <...> and a population of more than 2.2 billion people"⁷⁵. It is clear that the development of mutually beneficial interaction with such a major partner on the world stage can become a powerful impetus for the EAEU to become one of the most significant development centres of the modern world.

One of the union's most promising partners could also soon be the Central American Economic Integration Sub-System, which was formed in October 1993. Members include Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador. In February 2021, the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Secretariat for Economic Integration in Central America (SIECA), which is the technical and administrative body of the Subsystem, signed a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations, aimed at intensifying trade and economic cooperation between the parties in areas such as mutual trade, technical regulation and standardisation, industry and agro-industry, macroeconomics, to share experiences, develop recommendations and develop a common approach. EAEC believes that "Central American countries

resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/18-01-2021-1.aspx>

75 Erokhin, V.L. Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership: review of the main indicators of the trade alliance / V.L. Erokhin // Marketing and Logistics. - 2020. - №6. - C. 25.

have great potential to increase cooperation. The signing of the Memorandum is a first step to intensify trade and investment cooperation and, in the long term, to integrate into global value chains <...>. Since 2015, mutual trade turnover has grown by 22.6%"⁷⁶. The parties will soon form a joint working group to implement the memorandum's provisions in practice.

Another country in the Americas with which the EAEU will significantly intensify cooperation in 2021 is Cuba, with which a memorandum of understanding was concluded back in 2018 and which was granted observer status with the EAEU in December 2020 at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. Many facts suggest that the level of development of trade and economic cooperation between the parties to the memorandum has serious potential for growth. In particular, "at the end of 2019, trade turnover between the EAEU and Cuba was \$214.7 million, including exports of \$197.1 million and imports of \$17.6 million. In 2018, a record level of trade turnover between the EAEU and Cuba was recorded since 2010 - \$417.5 million."⁷⁷

Continuing the topic of the bilateral format of the EAEU's international cooperation, we should note that, in pursuing the objectives set by the Strategic directions of Eurasian economic integration until 2025, the Eurasian Economic Commission is now carrying out the necessary work to conclude agreements to establish free trade zones with a number of other countries as well. In Asia,

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

77 Pivovar, E. Cuba appointed representative in Eurasian Economic Commission / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kuba-naznachila-predstavitelja-v-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoy-komissii-427078-2021/>

states interested in developing full-fledged cooperation with the EAEU include Iran, with which an interim agreement leading to the establishment of a free trade zone was signed in May 2018 and entered into force in October 2019. In December 2020, the heads of the EAEU member states decided to start negotiations on a free trade area agreement with Iran by October 2022. Already in February 2021, participants in these negotiations focused their attention on transport and logistics projects that could "have a positive impact both on the growth of trade turnover between the EAEU countries and Iran, and on increasing the level of transport connectivity of the entire large Eurasian region."⁷⁸

In 2021, the EAEU intends to establish cooperation between business circles and significantly strengthen trade and economic ties with a South Asian country such as Bangladesh. A memorandum of cooperation with Bangladesh was signed in 2019. The fact that the Bangladeshi economy "has shown substantial growth over the past ten years, with an average GDP growth of 8% a year and even during the pandemic a growth of 5.6%"⁷⁹ testifies to the rather high potential for the development of partnerships. And now it is important to identify where the parties have a mutual interest, where trade diversification can be achieved. Furthermore, studies have already begun on the prospects of forming free trade zones with Indonesia and Mongolia. And in the first half of 2021, the

78 Chairman of the EEC Board Mikhail Myasnikovich held a meeting with Mohammad Beher Galifab, Chairman of the Majlis of the Islamic Council of Iran [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/09-02-2021-01.aspx>

79 Opportunities to intensify trade and economic cooperation between Bangladesh and the EAEU discussed at the EEC [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/29-01-2021-3.aspx>

negotiation process "with Africa's largest economy, Egypt, as well as with India, will resume."⁸⁰

The EAEU is also expected to step up its activities throughout the post-Soviet space, as evidenced by the signing in February 2021 of an action plan for 2021-2022 to implement the memorandum on deepening cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which envisages the implementation of joint projects and joint events, including with the participation of business communities. As a reminder, the memorandum signed in 2018 provides for cooperation between the EAEU and the CIS "in the areas of customs regulation, traceability and marking of goods with identification means, public procurement, consumer protection, digital economy, tax policy and administration, foreign trade, competition policy and antimonopoly regulation, as well as sanitary, veterinary and phytosanitary quarantine measures."⁸¹ On the bilateral level, Uzbekistan's proposal to jointly build the Trans-Afghan railway is of great interest to the EAEU. This is explained by the fact that "in 2020, the volume of railway transit via the Union's states in the direction from Asia to Europe and back has increased by more than 60%, and the efficiency of transportation has noticeably improved. This shows the prospects of this direction and the need for concerted efforts"⁸². In other words, by contributing to

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

81 EEC and CIS Executive Committee sign cooperation plan for 2021-2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/05-02-2021-07.aspx>

82 Pivovar, E. The EAEU will consider Uzbekistan's initiative to build the Trans-Afghan railway / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL:

shaping the concept of transport connectivity in Greater Eurasia, the implementation of this project will allow both the EAEU member states and Uzbekistan to increase both the competitiveness of their enterprises and the efficiency of trade, as well as create new jobs. This is the resulting focus on long-term priorities in the Eurasian Economic Union.

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To build on what is already in place cooperation mechanisms

The Strategic Framework for Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025, approved in December 2020, lists among the main objectives the further formation of the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) contractual and legal framework with third countries and their integration associations to create 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 allow coordinated work on the integration processes in the Eurasian space."⁸³

In December 2021, a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council approved the main directions of the EAEU's international activities for 2022, which deal with the development of already established cooperation mechanisms with third countries, regional integration associations and international organisations, as well as identify potentially promising partners. In particular, "cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union (EU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum... will be a priority for the EAEU in 2022."⁸⁴ At the same time, the international

83 Zalessky, B.L. Eurasian integration in the context of the great partnership on the continent / B.L. Zalessky // Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Naukowa myśl informacyjnej powieki - 2021", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C.24.

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

activities of this association will be focused on solving such urgent tasks of Eurasian economic integration as export development, transport and energy infrastructure, industrial cooperation, introduction of new technologies, as well as creating conditions for joint entry of member states' enterprises into third countries' markets, including South-East Asia, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific region, North Africa, the Latin American continent.

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. An indisputable priority in this regard is international cooperation, which 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..."⁸⁵ so that producers from the countries of this integration formation, including Belarus, "receive the most favorable conditions when exporting their products to foreign markets and consumers receive safe, high-quality and inexpensive goods."⁸⁶

As a reminder, by early 2022, the EAEU had already concluded preferential agreements on free trade zones (FTAs) with Vietnam, Serbia, Singapore, and an interim agreement with Iran. An agreement on trade and economic cooperation with the People's Republic of China has also entered into force. Regarding the search

85 Address by President Sadyr Japarov to the Heads of the EAEU Member States on the occasion of Kyrgyzstan's Presidency of the Union in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/obrashhenie-prezidenta-sadyra-zhparovak-glavam-gosudarstv-%E2%80%93-chlenov-eaes-po-sluchayu-predsedatelstvovaniya-kyrgyzstana-v-organakh-soyuza-v-2022-godu/>

86 Zalessky, B.L. Vectors of Eurasian integration - Indonesia, Chile, Egypt / B.L. Zalessky // Materialy XV Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka konference "Vedecky prumysl evropskeho kontinentu - 2019". Volume 6: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 11.

for potential partners, "negotiations for a FTA with Egypt and Israel are at an active stage, work is underway to prepare the first round of negotiations with India, and negotiations have started to prepare for a full-fledged free trade agreement with Mongolia and Indonesia.⁸⁷ And intensive work continues on identifying and negotiating new partners.

Thus, in December 2021, following the Second Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)-Latin America and the Caribbean (LACB) Forum: 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 confirmed their commitment to developing and strengthening all-round cooperation, highlighting the strategic importance of relations between the two regions. Note that for the EAEU, the Latin America and Caribbean region is strategically important. This is evidenced by the fact that the dynamics of trade between the parties "reached a peak in 2018 of \$17.6 billion. USD 17.6 BILLION. Agricultural products, fruits and nuts, oilseeds and fruits, meat and fish remain the main imports. EAEU countries in turn export fertilisers, ferrous metals, mineral fuels, cereals and other goods to LACB."⁸⁸ Recently there has been an increase in cooperation in areas such as pharmaceuticals, mechanical engineering and information and communication services. Bioengineering, green technology and services, including

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

88 The EAEU and Latin American countries aim to reach pre-crisis trade performance in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/eaes-i-strany-latinskoj-ameriki-namereny-vyjti-na-dokrizisnye-pokazateli-torgovli-po-itogam-2021-goda/>

tourism and education, could be new areas of cooperation. Among the main reasons for the still insufficient level of trade and economic cooperation the joint statement noted the low level of awareness of the subjects of economic relations about the needs and opportunities for business in the EEU and the LEC, <...> lack of modern trade and economic agreements between the countries and the integration associations of the EEU and the LEC.⁸⁹ As a result, an agreement was reached to move from agreeing on general areas of cooperation to substantive negotiations involving interested business representatives. Possible areas of cooperation included post-commodity and green economy, economic methods of combating climate change, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth, and expanding the participation of small and medium-sized businesses in foreign trade.

The EAEU's 2025 Joint Action Plan with Cuba, signed in December 2021, which covers 34 areas of cooperation, appears to be a kind of complement to the development of relations with the LACB. For Cuba, the document is important in the context of implementing the country's National Economic and Social Development Plan 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 has shown a particular interest in strengthening the sectoral dialogue, in

89 The ECE and the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System have announced the move to substantive negotiations on trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/eek-i-postoyannyj-sekretariat-latinoamerikanskoj-ekonomicheskoy-sistemy-zayavili-o-perehode-k-predmetnym-peregovoram-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskom-sotrudnichestve/>.

particular in the areas of technical regulation and the regulation of the circulation of medicines in the EAEU⁹⁰.

Other international organisations with which the EEU plans to intensify mutually beneficial cooperation in the near future include the International Sugar Organisation (ISO), which now brings together 87 states and promotes international cooperation in terms of sugar production, consumption and circulation. In December 2021, the EEC and the ISO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which defines the main areas and activities for cooperation between the two organizations to "explore the horizons of practical cooperation <...> to develop effective measures to develop a common market for sugar and sugar-derived products"⁹¹.

When it comes to the development of EAEU cooperation with partners on different continents, at the end of 2021 its structures were particularly active in interacting with such Asian countries as China, Iran, Mongolia and Bangladesh. Thus, in December 2021, at the 2nd meeting of the Joint Commission for 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 would exceed the pre-pandemic level and reach a record \$165 billion, demonstrating high intensity and mutual complementarity of trade relations. Discussing the progress of the roadmap for the implementation of the EAEU-China agreement, which entered into force in 2019, the parties highlighted the development of digital

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

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

transport corridors as the main section of this document, as "the digitalisation of railway transportation can have a cumulative effect"⁹². The issues of green trade and green investment were not left out, where the Chinese side proposed to strengthen cooperation between the PRC and the EAEU on the global climate agenda, as well as prospects for cooperation in three areas that "relate to smart customs, smart customs borders and smart interconnectivity"⁹³. At the same time, the Chinese side expressed its willingness to share its experience in implementing the "three smart spheres" concept, which is based on modern technological mode with the application of new methods, systems and equipment, for the purpose of intelligent customs control and management.

As for Iran, a temporary free trade agreement with it entered into force in October 2019. Thanks to this document, "the list of goods for which exporters of the EEU countries, including Belarus, received preferences includes meat and oil products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics."⁹⁴ In December 2021, the temporary agreement was extended until 2025. The past two years have shown that cooperation between the parties is developing at an exceptional pace. Thus, in the first half of 2021 "exports of member states of the union increased by almost 47% to \$1.35 billion and imports

92 Andrey Slepnev: "EAEU-China cooperation is gaining momentum; it organically complements the bilateral relations of our states" [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/andrey-slepnev-sotrudnichestvo-eaes-knr-nabiraet-oboroty-ono-organichno-dopolnyaet-dvustoronnie-otnosheniya-nashih-gosudarstv/>

93 Single Window and Smart Customs discussed by EEC and China [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/formirovaniye-C2%ABedinogo-okna-C2%BB-i-intellektualnuyu-tamozhnyu-obsudili-predstaviteli-eek-i-kitaya/>

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

increased by 34% to \$825 million⁹⁵, which shows the great prospects for this cooperation.

Another promising EAEU partner in Asia is Mongolia, with which a memorandum of cooperation was signed back in 2015. In December 2021, the 4th meeting of the joint working group on cooperation 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 was one and a half billion dollars. And "over the nine months of this year [2021] the trade turnover between the EAEU countries and Mongolia increased by 23%, at the same time the potential of mutual trade is clearly not fully exploited"⁹⁶. To maintain this positive trend, it was decided to update the plan of joint activities to implement the aforementioned memorandum until 2025. As a key reserve for the development of trade and economic relations, the sides have identified intensification of contacts between business circles and business associations. To this end, the Mongolian side has proposed that a business forum be held in Ulaanbaatar in 2022.

Also in December 2021, the first meeting of the joint ECE-Bangladesh Government Working Group on the Implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation, signed in May 2019, took place. It was noted that the volume of trade between the two sides has increased sixfold in the last ten years. In 2020, it continued to grow by another 11 per cent to more than two and a half billion dollars.

95 Pivovar, E. Validity of temporary free trade agreement between EEU and Iran extended until 2025 / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/dejstvie-vremennogo-soglashenija-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-mezhdu-eaes-i-iranom-prodleno-do-2025-goda-474217-2021>

96 EEC and the Government of Mongolia discuss plans for cooperation until 2025 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eacunion.org/news/cek-i-pravitelstvo-mongolii-obsuzhdayut-plany-vzaimodejstviya-do-2025-goda/>

And "in January-September this [2021] year, trade turnover between the EAEU and Bangladesh increased one and a half times to \$2.2 billion. USD 2.2 BILLION"⁹⁷. The parties are now looking at increasing this figure to three billion dollars as a realistic goal. There are reserves for this: agricultural products, machinery, equipment, vehicles, pharmaceutical goods, and other types of products with a relatively high share of added value.

Among the international organisations with which the EAEU plans to actively develop cooperation in 2022 - the European Union (EU) should also be mentioned. In particular, we are talking about the development of 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 products, competition, some aspects of trade policy, as well as in other areas of the Union's activity."⁹⁸

The relevance of the European vector of EAEU 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, accounting for 35.5% of EAEU imports.'⁹⁹ EU member states are the main buyers of goods exported from Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. In

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

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

99 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/>

2021, trade between them increased another 40 percent or so, "presumably to the tune of \$330 billion. US"¹⁰⁰. And that's far from the limit, if a number of pressing issues in trade between the parties are resolved. Many of these were discussed in December 2021 during the 8th round of technical dialogue between the EEC and the EC, in which the parties addressed the difficulties businesses face in their operations. In particular, they talked about the registration of medicines and medical devices in the EEU countries, as well as the operation of the technical regulation "On the safety of alcohol products". 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: having been convinced of the usefulness of the technical dialogue, "both sides plan <...> to continue interaction in this format in 2022, as well as to consider the possibility of holding specialised webinars on topical topics"¹⁰¹.

The same December 2021 meeting with the Association of European Businesses discussed in practical terms issues related to free trade agreements, responses to climate change, labelling, e-commerce, rules for the import of certain types of goods, and determination of customs values. A meeting was also held at the EEC with executives and representatives of the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce, the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Italian Industrialists in Russia, the

100 The management of the Eurasian Economic Commission's trade bloc met with the Association of European Businesses [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/sostoyalas-vstrecha-rukovodstva-torgovogo-bloka-evraziyskoy-ekonomicheskoy-komissii-s-associaciy-evropeyskogo-biznesa/>

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

Working Group on the Common Economic Space from Lisbon to Vladivostok to discuss a wide range of issues relevant to European business communities, including "intellectual property, taxation, labour migration, regulation of pharmaceuticals circulation".

Among the individual EU member states with which the EAEU intends to seriously intensify interaction in the near future is Portugal. In November 2021, the 4th Russian-Portuguese Innovation Forum "New Opportunities and Challenges in Innovation" addressed the promotion of high-tech products, as well as the promotion of diversification of trade and economic relations between the EAEU and Portuguese-speaking countries. It was stressed that "the business community of Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries is building its commercial strategies, taking into account the factor of Eurasian economic integration and opportunities associated with it"¹⁰². As a result, the forum participants were able to consider promising cooperation projects in such areas as information and communication technologies, bioenergy, agriculture, healthcare, transport infrastructure, and interregional cooperation. German business, whose representatives attended the seminar held by the EEC in September 2021, is also among the EEU's most promising partners in the European dimension. The exchange of views focused on such areas of cooperation as "the digital agenda, the green economy, and customs cooperation"¹⁰³. One of the outcomes of this event was the participants' consolidated opinion that it is important

102 Gohar Barseghian: "Portuguese business captures new opportunities in the EEU market". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/goar-barseghyan-%C2%ABportugalskij-biznes-fiksiruot-novye-vozmozhnosti-na-rynke-eaes%C2%BB/>

103 The EEC held a seminar for German businesses on the regulation of foreign economic activity in the EEU [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/news/eeek-provela-seminar-dlya-germanskogo-biznesa-po-voprosam-regulirovaniya-vneshneekonomicheskoy-deyatelnosti-v-eaes-/>

to continue the dialogue between the EAEU and German business in various formats in order to promote mutual trade and facilitate the foreign economic activities of business entities, as well as to create a dialogue mechanism for the resolution of disputed issues.

It is clear that all these measures aimed at expanding foreign markets and diversifying exports of the EAEU member countries are extremely important for Belarus, which is taking a very active part in all the systemic work to create free trade zones with third countries and interact with international organizations.

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