

With an eye to the future

In the Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, it is planned to pay great attention to the implementation of the strategy of regional development, so that by the end of the new five-year period the number of lagging behind regions in the country would be reduced by 18. To this end, it is planned to implement investment projects in towns and districts with the population of 80,000 or more to prepare industrial sites and create the infrastructure for setting up two-three new enterprises that have no analogues in the country, as well as to establish one or two medium-size industrial enterprises in each district. The regions lagging behind will be granted a certain set of benefits for the creation of new breakthrough industries, while efficiency will be the cornerstone for the launch of a new investment cycle. In other words, at least one new efficiently operating company is to appear in each region. It should be said that concrete steps are being taken to successfully implement the set plans in the Belarusian regions. How does it happen in practice? This is discussed in the materials of this study.



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Zalesskij



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With an eye to the future

*Peculiarities of multi-vector
partnership in modern
conditions*

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conditions**

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Commonwealth of Independent States: from integration processes to regional cooperation

In December 2020, the Council of Heads of State of the CIS approved a new version of the Concept of further development of the Commonwealth and a plan of main activities for its implementation. The new version fixes the main task of the CIS - "to increase the efficiency of its activities, including by ensuring the implementation of the commitments made by the states and monitoring their implementation. Economic cooperation is defined as a key priority in the document¹. The development of the Commonwealth of Independent States is especially relevant today for the Belarusian side because on January 1, 2021 Belarus assumed presidency in this international organization. And now it largely depends on its approach to the strengthening of integration mechanisms in the post-Soviet space to what extent the CIS will be able to cope with the current problems caused by globalization and new challenges of our time.

At the December 2020 session of the CIS Council of Heads of State, Belarus identified liberalization of trade, reduction of restrictions and exemptions to a minimum, elimination of technical barriers, unification of rules and procedures for state procurement, creation of common markets for goods and services, as well as intensification of investment activities, expansion of industrial cooperation, and the search for common points of economic growth as among the main priorities of its presidency in the CIS. This also includes strengthening humanitarian ties, expanding contacts in science, education, health, culture, sports and tourism, and youth work, as well as improving the image of the Commonwealth in the international

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

arena, with an emphasis on strengthening cooperation between CIS member states in the field of information.

Attention to intensifying information cooperation in this context can be explained by concerns voiced at the Council of CIS Heads of State. Participants of the summit recognized "the insufficient awareness of the people of our countries, their level of awareness of what the Commonwealth does, what its importance is. There is a need to use modern information and communication technologies, which are especially in demand among the younger generation. It would be reasonable to create more active discussion platforms and involve the export community and journalists. We need to think over and adopt a plan for the CIS information promotion². We have to believe that this proposal will be taken into account in the Concept of the Belarusian presidency and the Action Plan for its implementation. The proposal sets serious tasks for the information field of all CIS countries to ensure adequate media articulation of integration processes that will take place in the CIS during the presidency of the Republic of Belarus there. It goes without saying that representatives of the international segment of national journalism of the presiding country must play a special role in resolving this creative task; they must set the tone in the media sphere by their address to the most topical issues of integration building in the post-Soviet space. In doing so, they must take into account a number of important points.

Even before its presidency, the Belarusian side announced at the highest level that in 2021 it intended to focus on the development of the common economic space of the Commonwealth, while "a special emphasis will be placed on bridging the integration processes in the CIS and the

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

EAEU".³ to create the same level of cooperation within the Commonwealth as in the Eurasian Economic Union. This intention actualizes the study of the existing experience of integration building in the EAEU, which could be successfully used in the CIS. Especially since the economic union of Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia has such experience.

Recall that in November 2020, the CIS Council of Heads of Government held a meeting in the format of a videoconference, at which the participants approved an action plan for the implementation of the first phase of the CIS economic development strategy for the period up to 2030. This document "covers the period from 2021 to 2025 and contains 29 sections, including those devoted to trade and economic cooperation, industry, fuel and energy complex, transport, communications and informatization, the agro-industrial complex, monetary and financial policy, and the labor market⁴. The measures contained in the adopted plan, aimed at strengthening and enhancing the competitiveness of the CIS economies, the development of new cooperation and infrastructure projects, the development of the digital economy, the realization of scientific, technological and educational potential, should help to use the integration mechanisms of this international organization to restore the positive dynamics of the scale of interaction. After all, in the seven months of 2020 the value of foreign trade turnover of goods between the CIS countries has decreased by almost 17 percent. In addition, "in January-August the volume of industrial production of the Commonwealth decreased by 4% compared to the same period last year. Freight traffic

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

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

decreased by 4.8 percent, and passenger traffic decreased by more than a quarter, by 28 percent⁵.

Of course, these indicators do not look very convincing against the background of the results of the Eurasian Economic Union, where a number of positive trends in economic activity are observed. For example, "over the past five years, the volume of mutual trade of the Union's countries increased by 35% and amounted to \$62 billion (in 2015 it was \$46 billion). Aggregate GDP has increased by 21% and reached \$2 trillion⁶ industrial production in the manufacturing sector. But the EAEU is well aware that the union should only accelerate the pace of integration of the industrial potential of the member states. For this reason, just a week before the meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of State, the EAEU approved the strategic directions of development of the Eurasian economic integration, which provide for an accelerated pace of this international organization moving forward. "We must increase by 4.5% of GDP every year in order to reach the indicators laid down in the strategy for the development of integration until 2025. The adopted strategy, which includes eleven areas and 332 implementation mechanisms, provides for a fuller use of the industrial potential of the EAEC, its logistics capabilities to fully ensure the complementarity of economies. Particular attention will be paid to education, health care and the movement of citizens. In order to implement this peculiar road map of the integration development, "we will have to conclude 13 international treaties, over 60 normative legal acts, and to make about 25 amendments and additions to the Treaty on the EEU and

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

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

the national legislations⁷⁸. As we can see, there is a lot of work to be done. An important detail: the strategy for the development of Eurasian integration until 2025 was adopted during the presidency of the Republic of Belarus in the EEU, which allows us to hope for an effective presidency of the Belarusian side in the CIS in 2021.

The transition of the CIS from the stage of formation to the stage of project integration, where the emphasis is placed on investment cooperation and complementary specialization in the real sector of the economy, currently observed in this economic union, can also be an interesting experience for the CIS in terms of conjugation of integration processes with the EAEU. The essence of this transition is contained in the maps of industrialization and agroindustry currently being formed in the EAEU. The first of them is designed to identify import-dependent technological areas and import-substituting potential of manufacturers, as well as areas for possible industrial cooperation and specific ongoing and planned major industrial projects in the EAEU. "The current version of the draft map includes 177 major investment and significant for the relevant industries projects worth \$194.5 billion in 21 sectors"⁹. As for the map of agro-industrial development, it will also include the directions, on which the implementation of projects involving the formation of cooperative chains for the development of import-substituting industries is planned. The experience of implementation of these components of project

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

8 EEU Strategy 2025 contains 330 measures and mechanisms to develop integration - Malkina [Electronic resource]. 2020. URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/strategija-eaes-do-2025-goda-soderzhit-330-mer-i-mehanizmov-po-razvitiju-integratsii-malkina-419802-2020/>.

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

integration in the post-Soviet space should certainly be in the focus of attention of Belarusian mass media and all the countries of the Commonwealth today.

The EAEU's experience in expanding scientific, technological and innovative cooperation, including through the formation of Eurasian technological platforms, whose main objective is "to ensure systematic work to accumulate advanced national and global achievements of scientific and technological development, mobilize the scientific potential of member states to solve applied problems in developing innovative products and technologies, and their implementation in industrial production"¹⁰ may also prove very useful for the CIS. The fact is that "the Treaty on EAEU lacks basic provisions on scientific and technological cooperation, which would allow to regulate innovative interaction of the Union's countries"¹¹. For this reason, the Republic of Belarus initiates inclusion of a separate article in the Treaty on EAEU, which would determine the directions of cooperation of the member states of the union in the science, technology and innovation spheres.

It should be recalled that back in April 2016 the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council formed a list of Eurasian technological platforms, which included 14 areas: 1. Medical and medical biotechnology, pharmacy. 2. Information and communication technologies. 3. Photonics. 4. Aerospace technologies. 5. Nuclear and radiation technologies. 6. Power engineering. 7. Transportation technologies. 8. Metallurgy technologies and new materials. 9. Extraction of natural resources and oil and gas processing. 10. Chemistry and Petrochemicals. Electronics and mechanical

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

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

engineering technologies. 12. 12. Environmental development. 13. Industrial technologies. 14. Agriculture, food industry, biotechnologies.

In January 2019, the EAEU formed the 15th Eurasian Platform - "Energy and Electrification," whose founders were nine enterprises and scientific institutions from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, which outlined such main areas of activity as "energy engineering, electrification, and the creation and distribution of smart grids - electrical installations that ensure parallel operation of various energy sources in the grid. In addition, it is planned to develop and use renewable sources to save energy for remote consumers"¹² . In August 2019, the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved already the 16th Eurasian technological platform - "Technologies of maintenance and repair of industrial equipment", which is designed to solve such tasks as "development of industrial partnership and import substitution, reengineering of obsolete units and assemblies on the basis of technical re-equipment and modernization of production facilities, implementation of breakthrough technologies"¹³ . At the same time the Eurasian Machine-Tool Center was created to keep a unified register of machine-tool equipment produced in the EEU countries, which will make it possible to determine what competences and production capacities they have.

For the Republic of Belarus, participation in the implementation of these Eurasian technological platforms is important for the reason that attention here is focused on the implementation of highly innovative projects that have not only economic, but also political and social significance. In particular, it is characteristic for the participation of the

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

13 A new Eurasian technological platform for industrial equipment maintenance and repair technologies has been formed in the EAEU [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/13-08-2019-1.aspx>

Belarusian side in the implementation of the technological platform concerning space and geoinformation technologies. "Work in this direction allowed us to create our own satellite, as well as a whole sector of the economy, which deals with the sphere of space, and to declare itself in the international arena as a space power."¹⁴ . Important addition: in April 2020, the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved a global cooperation project in the provision of space and geoinformation services based on Earth remote sensing data, which is scheduled to be implemented in 2021-2025. "At the first stage the operating and prospective constellations of the EEU countries' satellites are to be united. At the second stage - to create a single information portal"¹⁵ .

Other interesting areas of Belarus' participation in the implementation of Eurasian technological platforms include the EurasiaBio technological platform, which involves the development of joint projects in the field of biotechnology for effective use in the interests of science, education, industries, social sphere and government needs, as well as the project "Organization of production of LED lighting equipment," whose participants are Belarusian, Russian, Armenian, Kazakh and Kyrgyz organizations

Another important direction, which, apparently, will be actualized by the Belarusian side in the CIS in 2021 and on which representatives of the media sphere should focus, is related to the topic of interaction between the regions of the Commonwealth, as Minsk expects "a noticeable effect from the implementation of the Interstate program of innovation cooperation, the

14 Nikitina Y.F. Prospects of technological platforms: Synergetic effects / Y.F. Nikitina // Designing the future. Problems of digital reality: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference (February 7-8, 2019, Moscow). - Moscow: Keldysh Institute of Applied Mechanics, 2019. - - C. 88-89.

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

Concept of interregional and cross-border cooperation and the Priority areas of cooperation in the field of transport¹⁶. It should be noted that during the years of the existence of the Commonwealth, the regions have become an effective tool for interstate dialogue and an integral part of economic interaction. The Concept of Interregional and Border Cooperation approved at the November (2020) meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government should introduce new effective elements into this priority of development of this integration structure. It should be reminded that this direction of interaction between the countries of the Commonwealth includes "a complex of legislative, administrative and economic measures that contribute to the most rational distribution of productive forces and equalization of living standards, covering all the most important sectors of material production, health protection, law enforcement and security, employment, placement of services, stimulation of tourism"¹⁷.

Speaking about interregional cooperation, developing this area of interaction, back in April 2020 the Commonwealth countries adopted the Convention on Interregional Cooperation of the CIS Member States, which clarified the term "interregional cooperation", which now refers to coordinated actions of the parties "aimed at strengthening and developing friendly relations, trade, economic, social, cultural, legal and humanitarian cooperation between the regions of the Parties"¹⁸. And among the priorities of activities contributing to the achievement of the set goals, more than twenty directions were identified, among which we should mention the

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

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

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

creation of free economic zones in the regions, implementation of investment projects, trade and fair activities.

As for cross-border cooperation, the relevant convention of the CIS member states was adopted back in October 2008. This document defines the notion of "cross-border cooperation" as "concerted actions aimed at strengthening and promoting good-neighborly relations between border territories, the conclusion, in accordance with the legislation of the Parties, of agreements necessary to achieve these goals"¹⁹. Among the more than twenty directions of activities that contribute to the development of cross-border cooperation mentioned here we should mention the creation of special or special economic zones in the border areas, cross-border trade, industrial and technical cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus is among those CIS countries that pay special attention to regional cooperation. Thus, at the IX meeting of the Council for Interregional and Cross-border Cooperation of the CIS member states, which was held in September 2020, it was noted that in the Belarusian regions "more than 600 documents on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technological and humanitarian spheres with the regions of the CIS member states are still in force"²⁰. And although more than 430 agreements account for regions of Russia, recently active steps have been taken to expand partnerships between regions and other countries. Thus, only during the preparation and holding of the first Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan in July 2019 26 such documents were signed. Almost 15 agreements were concluded with the regions of Armenia. And a draft of such a document between Minsk and Yerevan is

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

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

ready to be signed. There are 23 cooperation agreements with the regions of Kazakhstan, 18 with Moldova, and 5 with Kyrgyzstan. As for Azerbaijan, partnership relations are established between the cities of Minsk and Baku, Mogilev and Sumgait. Belarusian-Turkmen interregional cooperation is based on the existing agreements between Minsk and Ashgabat, Mogilev region and Mary velayat. Vitebsk, Gomel, Minsk and Mogilev regions and Minsk actively cooperate with the regions of Tajikistan.

As we can see, the potential for partnership is not insignificant. How it is reflected in the domestic media today is not an easy question. In any case, in 2021 this variety of regional ties will have to be fully disclosed by Belarusian regional mass media based on the provisions of the CIS Information Promotion Plan discussed at the December (2020) meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the CIS in order to reflect this direction of integration in the post-Soviet space in their publications, programs and broadcasts as adequately as possible, thus contributing to the successful presidency of the Republic of Belarus in this international body

Eurasian Economic Union: Focusing on Long-Term Priorities

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

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

2) eliminate remaining barriers in mutual trade between the member countries of this integration formation at the central, regional and municipal levels;

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

4) Make comprehensive digitalization the driving force of the development of the economies of the member states of the Union, giving a qualitative acceleration to the introduction of digital technologies in industry, agriculture, transport;

5) expand access to foreign markets, "actively develop trade and economic relations with third countries and integration associations"²¹.

The effective and full implementation of the Strategic directions of development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025, adopted by the heads of the EAEU member states at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in December 2020 and published in January 2021, is to facilitate the implementation of these tasks. This document contains 330 measures and mechanisms for the development of cooperation, grouped

21 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>

into 11 systemic blocks, the implementation of which should lead to the achievement of such results by 2025, such as:

1) completion of the formation of a common market for goods, services, capital and labor;

2) increase the efficiency of regulation of the common market of the EAEU;

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

4) ensuring guarantees of quality and safety of goods;

5) formation of the EAEU digital space;

6) Creation of mechanisms for targeted promotion of economic development;

7) building a system of management of joint cooperative projects, development of high-performance sectors;

8) Stimulation of scientific and technological progress;

9) Increasing the efficiency of the EAEU institutions;

10) deployment of cooperation mechanisms in education, health, tourism and sports;

11) the establishment of the EAEU as one of the most significant centers of development 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 legislation²². It is assumed that all these measures will help to increase exports from the EAEU states to third countries by a quarter by 2025. This can be achieved if we follow the path of creating joint Eurasian

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

companies to complement each other and produce competitive products. For now, "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 implementation of investment projects with the total estimated cost of about \$200 billion"²³.

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 a key condition for progress today. The Republic of Belarus is going to play a not insignificant role in the EAEU, where a sufficient infrastructure reserve 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 a long time. "In 2020, its exports exceeded \$2.5 billion, which is more than 20% of the total exports of services of Belarus"²⁴.

At the Digital Almaty Forum - 2021 held in February 2021, the Belarusian side named the Eurasian Development Bank's "Travel without COVID" project among the joint digital projects on the territory of the EAEU that had been actually implemented for the benefit of the population. At the same time, the forum participants' attention was drawn to the fact that the other projects of the EAEU digital agenda are stalled. Few tangible results, including economic ones, have been achieved in three years. This is why the implementation of the Union's digital agenda 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 for the information architecture, and synchronize the pace of work both in

23 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-eaes-promkooperatsiju-v-vysokotekhnologichnyh-otrasljah-427278-2021>

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

the EAEU member states and at the integration level, so that digitalization will bring the real economy, first and foremost, to a new level. In fact, this approach in this matter is demonstrated by Kazakhstan, which is chairing the EAEU in 2021. Suffice it to say that now among the priorities in the union is the project initiated by Kazakhstan to create wholesale distribution centers, as well as the full-scale launch of the ecosystem of digital transport corridors, proposed by Belarus together with the union partners. In addition, one of the joint projects may become a "smart city," since all major cities in the EAEU have the same tasks to manage 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.²⁵ But this will require a lot of coordinated work to obtain a powerful synergistic 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 organizations, which will allow coordinated work on the integration processes in the Eurasian space, including economic interaction "within the framework of the idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership"²⁶. Recall that the idea proposed by the Russian side in 2015 of forming the Greater Eurasian Partnership is a network of dialogues between key players in Eurasia, not only among the largest national economies, but also regional economic associations connected by a flexible system of international legal norms, transport and logistics, energy, telecommunications and financial infrastructures, joint projects and institutions. This large-scale concept, which has already been called the most ambitious integration project of this

25 Belarus stands for the acceleration of digital projects in the EAEU - Golovchenko [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vystupaet-zajaviv-svoju-podderzku-proektu-sozhdenija-velikoevrazijskogo-partnerstva>

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

century, implies the implementation of a number of basic principles that distinguish it from other Eurasian integration plans.

First of 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 act as a union of the Eurasian East against the European West"²⁷. The implementation of this project, the participants of which are already characterized by differences in the 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. It is expected that the Greater Eurasian Partnership will affect not only the economy, but also other areas of interaction - science, education, culture and humanitarian field, and in parallel will contribute to strengthening food, energy and continental security, and solve global problems such 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 it will be based on specific agreements between regional integration associations and individual countries. In particular, the planned pairing of the Eurasian Economic Union with the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road" fits harmoniously into this scheme. And not only that.

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 will only contribute to strengthening economic cooperation. In this regard, such "regional and sub-regional associations as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai

²⁷ Kortunov A. Eight principles of the Greater Eurasian Partnership / A. Kortunov // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/vosem-prinsipov-bolshogo-evraziyskogo-partnerstva/>

Cooperation Organization can cooperate in the interests of the entire region, harmoniously and effectively complement each other²⁸.

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

Indeed, in mid-November 2020, at the ASEAN summit an agreement was signed on the formation of a potentially the world's largest free trade area type block between the ten countries of this association (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and the five leading economies of Asia - 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). (one-third of world GDP), <...> and the population exceeds 2.2 billion people" . It is clear that the development of mutually beneficial interaction with such a major partner on the world stage can be a powerful impetus for the EAEU to become one of the most significant centers of development in the modern world.

One of the Union's promising partners may also soon become the Sub-System of Economic Integration in Central America, which was formed back in October 1993. Its members include such countries of the region as Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El

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

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 organizations, aimed at intensifying trade and economic cooperation between the parties in areas such as mutual trade, technical regulation and standardization, industry and agro-industry, macroeconomics, to share experiences, develop recommendations, and develop a common approach to the economic cooperation between the parties. The EAEU believes that "Central American countries have great potential for increasing cooperation. The signing of the memorandum is the first step to intensify trade and investment cooperation and, in the long term, to integrate into global value chains <...>. Since 2015 the mutual trade turnover has grown by 22.6%"²⁹. In order to implement the provisions of the memorandum, the parties will soon form a joint working group.

Another country of the Americas, with which the EAEU will considerably 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 indicate 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 - \$197.1 million and imports - \$17.6 million. In 2018, a

29 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/EEK-i-sekretariat-po-ekonomicheskoy-integratsii-v-tsentralnoj-amerike-podpisali-memorandum-430366-2021>

record level of trade turnover between the EAEU and Cuba was recorded since 2010 - \$417.5 million³⁰.

Continuing the topic of the bilateral format of EAEU international cooperation, we should note that in pursuit of the objectives set by the Strategic directions of Eurasian economic integration until 2025, the Eurasian Economic Commission is now conducting the necessary work to conclude agreements to establish free trade zones with a number of other countries as well. In Asia, among the states interested in developing full-scale cooperation with the EAEU is Iran, with which an interim agreement leading to the formation of a free trade zone was signed in May 2018 and entered into force in October 2019. In December 2020, the heads of the EAEU member states decided to start negotiations on a free trade zone 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 EEU countries and Iran, and on increasing the level of transport connectivity of the entire large Eurasian region³¹.

In 2021, the EAEU intends to establish cooperation between business circles and significantly strengthen trade and economic ties with such South Asian country as Bangladesh. A memorandum on cooperation with Bangladesh was signed in 2019. The fact that the Bangladeshi economy "has shown significant growth over the past ten years, the average GDP growth is 8% per year, and even during the pandemic, the growth was 5.6%" shows a sufficiently high potential for the development of

30 Pivovar, E. Cuba appointed a representative in the Eurasian Economic Commission / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kubana-znachila-predstavitelja-v-evrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoj-komissii-427078-2021/>

31 Chairman of the EEC Board Mikhail Myasnikovich held a meeting with Mohammad Beger 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>

partnerships³². And now it is important to determine where the parties have a mutual interest and where trade diversification can be achieved. In addition, studies have already begun on the prospects of forming free trade zones with Indonesia and Mongolia. And in the first half of 2021 the negotiation process "with Africa's largest economy - Egypt, as well as with India" resumes³³.

The EAEU is also expected to step up its activities in the entire post-Soviet space, as evidenced by the signing in February 2021 of the 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 provides for joint projects and joint events, including those involving the business community. Recall that 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, state procurement, consumer protection, digital economy, tax policy and administration, foreign trade, competition policy and antitrust regulation, as well as sanitary, veterinary and phytosanitary quarantine measures"³⁴. As for the bilateral relations, Uzbekistan's proposal to jointly build the Trans-Afghan railroad is of great interest to the EAEU. This is explained by the fact that "in 2020 the volume of railway transit through the states of the Union in the direction from Asia to Europe and back has increased by more than 60%, the efficiency of transportation has increased

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

33 Pivovarov, E. EAEC intends to create free trade zones with Egypt, India, Indonesia and Mongolia / E. Pivovarov // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaec-nameren-sozdat-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-egiptom-indiej-indonezije-i-mongolije-426578-2021/>

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

significantly. This indicates the prospects of this direction and the need for concerted efforts³⁵. In other words, contributing to the formation of 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 businesses and the efficiency of trade, as well as create new jobs. This is the focus on long-term priorities in the Eurasian Economic Union.

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35 Pivovar, E. EEU will consider the initiative of Uzbekistan on the construction of Trans-Afghan railroad / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaes-rassmotrit-initsiativu-uzbekistana-o-stroitelstve-transafganskoj-zheleznoj-dorogi-431104-2021/>

Belarus-Russia: regions expand partnerships

The VII Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, held in September 2020, set a goal to intensify joint activities of the parties in a wide range of areas in politics, economy, social sphere, education, culture, and also actualized "improvement of work in the media space and strengthening economic cooperation on an equal basis"³⁶.

The **Pskov Region**, located in the Northwestern Federal District of the Russian Federation, is among the Russian regions that are currently taking specific measures to achieve the goal in cooperation with their Belarusian partners. This is evidenced by the plan of measures for 2021-2023 signed in early December 2020 by the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the administration of the Pskov region to implement the existing agreement between the parties on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. The adopted joint document aims to return the partnership between the Belarusian regions and the Pskov Oblast to the path of sustainable growth. After all "the goods turnover between Belarus and the Pskov Oblast in January-September 2020 amounted to \$77 million which is 17.3% less compared to the same period last year. The balance for Belarus is positive - \$16.6 million"³⁷.

It should be reminded that the basic agreement between the parties was signed back in October 2000. Later it was supported by more than 20 other agreements between the municipalities of the Pskov region and the Belarusian regions. This contributed to the fact that in 2017 the trade

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

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

turnover between the parties amounted to almost 200 million dollars, and "more than 100 companies with Belarusian capital are registered in the region"³⁸. True, already "in 2019 the trade turnover between Belarus and the Pskov region amounted to \$121 million and increased by 12% compared to 2018"³⁹. Nevertheless, all these facts allow the leadership of the Russian region to assert with good reason that "Belarus is our key foreign economic, foreign trade partner. This partnership accounts for 35% of trade turnover"⁴⁰.

The three-year action plan for the development of cooperation, which was adopted in early December 2020, envisages the realization of a large potential for cooperation in a variety of areas. In particular, this document "includes measures for the participation of Belarusian enterprises in the construction of social facilities and housing construction projects"⁴¹. Here we are talking about the construction of housing blocks, as well as schools, kindergartens and hospitals with the use of credit resources of the Development Bank of Belarus. The fact is that the parties already have a good experience of interaction in this field, as "the largest school in Pskov was built by Belarusian construction organizations. And we are satisfied with this experience, because the quality is very high"⁴².

38 Priority Areas of Regional Cooperation as a Key Factor in Union Building: Informational-Integration Project / coauthored and interviewed by K. Gusev, B. Zalesky. Gusev, B. Zaleskii. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. -- C. 287.

39 Roman Golovchenko suggested the governor of the Pskov region to intensify cooperation in various sectors [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9588>

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

41 In the Pskov region it is planned to build social facilities with the participation of Belarusian companies [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-pskovskoj-oblasti-planirujut-stroit-sotsobjekty-s-uchastiem-belorusskih-kompanij-418082-2020>

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

Another promising area for cooperation is the provision of this Russian region with Belarusian passenger, cargo, road construction and municipal vehicles. In this regard, the Belarusian side proceeds from the understanding that "Pskov Region is facing the issue of radical renewal of its fleet of city buses, primarily in the capital of the region"⁴³. In September 2020 the dealer of the Minsk automobile plant won the tender for the delivery of 11 extra large buses and 6 large buses to Pskov. There was also a successful pilot operation of a gas-powered bus from Belarus.

Investment cooperation between the parties should also receive additional impetus for development in the next three years. This will be facilitated by the agreement on cooperation signed in September 2020 between the Belarusian National Agency for Investment and Privatization and the Agency for Investment Development of the Pskov Region. In this document the parties have agreed, in particular, "to create favorable conditions for mutual investment attraction, development and implementation of joint projects, to exchange information about business conditions, investment opportunities and proposed projects, as well as to take joint participation in thematic seminars, conferences, forums and other events of investment orientation"⁴⁴.

Finally, another new vector of cooperation, which will be developed in the near future, is in the field of education. We are talking about the fact that Belarus is starting to train medical personnel for the Pskov region. In this regard, "an agreement on cooperation and strategic partnership was

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

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

signed between Pskov State University and three Belarusian universities⁴⁵. Relevance of this topic for the Russian region can be expressed by one figure: the shortage of medical personnel in the Pskov region today - almost 50 percent. So assistance of Belarusian partners is more than necessary here and now.

Another interesting example of the development of relations with Belarusian partners in the same Northwestern Federal District is shown by **the Leningrad region**. In March 2021, the ninth meeting of the joint commission for the development of cooperation between the Leningrad Region and the Republic of Belarus was held, during which the parties signed a new agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical and socio-cultural spheres. It should be reminded that the interaction of this Russian region with the Belarusian side began in 1997, when there were signed framework agreements on cooperation with the four regions in Belarus - Minsk, Gomel, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. "A year later, the agreements were signed by the governments of Leningrad Region and the Republic of Belarus. These documents became the basis for the establishment and development of mutually beneficial relations in the following years⁴⁶

For a long time, the key area of cooperation between the region and the republic in terms of the intensity of interaction has remained the sphere of agro-industrial complex, where close ties of agricultural enterprises are traditionally maintained and cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus is established. An interesting fact: "About 20 percent of spring cereal seeds in the Leningrad region are sown with the varieties

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

46 Regions of Russia to the Republic of Belarus: Information and Integration Project. B. Zaleskii, A. Kiselev, E. Korovkin. - Minsk: Theseus, 2009. - - C. 65.

developed by Belarusian breeders <...> Moreover, the cultivated varieties year after year show high performance on all parameters, proving the high level of development of breeding in Belarus" . In this regard, the demand for Belarusian seed material from the agrarians of the Russian region continues to grow.

At the end of 2019, the Leningrad region was 11th among Russian regions in terms of trade turnover with Belarus, which then amounted to about 600 million dollars. However, in 2020, for well-known reasons of epidemiological nature, it decreased slightly: in the first half of the year - about 280 million dollars. That is why in September 2020, at a high level, the parties decided to "update the program of cooperation between Belarus and the Leningrad region and set clear and specific tasks"⁴⁷ . Also in 2020, the Russian side increased its purchases of Belarusian forestry equipment and began purchasing heavy road machinery. Moreover, more than a hundred units of such equipment are planned to be purchased in the region's budget for 2021. "Urban transport is also of interest to the Leningrad region. Piteravto" is planning to make a large purchase - up to 1.5 thousand combined buses. The first hundred buses will be purchased already in the first quarter of 2021"⁴⁸ .

As for the new agreement on cooperation signed in March 2021, it focuses on such an important area as ecology, which includes Belarusian technologies and equipment for water treatment and garbage recycling, taking into account the prospects for cooperation. The fact is that the Russian region is considering the possibility of partnership with the Belarusian side in terms of choosing technologies for the construction of

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

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

enterprises for processing household waste, relying on the experience of Brest region in this matter. Suffice it to say that "under the federal project "Clean Water" in Leningrad region has already installed 13 water treatment plants made in Belarus, and now the installation of another 9 water treatment plants and 4 modular waste treatment facilities (sewage treatment plants). During the period of 2021-2022 it is planned to purchase 108 water treatment plants and 31 sewage treatment plants made in Belarus to the amount of 1.65 and 2.40 billion Russian rubles respectively^{49,50} .

A good addition to the planned expansion of cooperation between the region and the republic in the next three years could be the intensification of interaction between the parties at the municipal level. According to the data of the Committee for External Relations of the Leningrad Region, as of today the partnership or twinning relations have already been established between such districts as: 1. Volosovsky and Logoisky (2010); 2. Volkhovsky and Mozyr (2006); 3. Vyborg and Rechitsa (2011); 4. Gatchinsky and Nesvizh (2010); 5. Kingisepp and Svetlogorsky (2010); 6. Kirovsky and Myadelsky (2013); 7. Lomonosovsky and Baranovichsky (2008); 8. Luzhsky and Bobruisk city (2017); 9. Luzhsky and Gorodoksky (2014); 10. Podporozhsky and Miorsky (2017); 11. Priozersky and Mogilevsky (2006); 12. Slantsevsky and Shklovsky (2018); 13. Tikhvinsky and Dzerzhinsky (2009); 14. Tosnensky and Rogachevsky (2010); 15. Tosno and Polotsk (2010); 16. Shcheglovo Rural Settlement and Vileika District (2012); 17. The towns of Kommunar and Svetlogorsk (2007); 18. Sosnovoborsk Urban District and Ostrovets District (2012, 2016).

As we can see, the potential for cooperation between the Leningrad region and the Republic of Belarus is already used. It is only necessary to

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

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

update it as much as possible in all areas of mutual interest in accordance with the plans adopted by the joint commission. And then the results, which the parties expect, will not take long to achieve.

In the Siberian Federal District, **the Tomsk Region** has seriously intensified cooperation with its Belarusian partners. In December 2020, the first meeting of the working group on cooperation of the Republic of Belarus with this Russian region was held, where the parties agreed to focus on expansion of trade turnover, consider opportunities for production of new products, including innovative ones, as well as opening joint ventures of different forms of ownership. The more so because "there are a lot of growth points for the development of cooperation to meet the needs in raw materials, components, finished products and natural resources⁵¹. In addition, it is planned to strengthen contacts and expand interaction in science, education and culture. This is discussed in the updated plan of joint activities for 2021-2023, which the Tomsk side submitted to the Belarusian partners for approval.

The Republic of Belarus and Tomsk Region signed the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Cooperation in 2016 as part of the plenary session of the Third Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. In this document, which gave new impetus to the bilateral cooperation between the republic and the region, the parties identified the main priorities of joint work in a very wide range of areas, relying on the already existing experience of interaction. And very soon there were concrete results of the implementation of this agreement.

Thus, "the Agrarian Center of Tomsk Region signed a number of agreements on cooperation with the Scientific and Practical Center of the

51 Belarus is ready to cooperate with Tomsk region in economic, humanitarian and scientific spheres - Hudyk [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-k-sotrudnichestvu-s-tomskoj-oblastju-v-ekonomicheskoy-gumanitarnoj-i-nauchnoj-sferah-421752-2020/>

National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on Mechanization of Agriculture, the Grodno State Agrarian University, and the Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University⁵². National Research Tomsk State University, National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics, and Tomsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences became participants in joint projects with Belarusian partners related to fundamental and applied research, as well as the development of academic mobility among undergraduates and faculty members.

In particular, within the framework of the Union State Pramen program, scientists from the Tomsk Institute of Atmospheric Optics SB RAS and specialists from the Institute of Physics of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences jointly developed special complexes for monitoring the atmosphere, which allow not only to determine the distance to an object, but also to scan the atmosphere composition on the way. Thus, there is no need for sampling and analysis, because the data appear immediately on the operator's monitor. Another interesting project is the joint work of scientists from the National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University and the Belarusian State University "to develop nanocomposite coatings that are resistant to radiation, which are intended for use in nuclear reactors. The results of the research can be in demand in other areas where operation in extreme situations is expected: for example, in space, in steam turbines of thermal power plants⁵³

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

53 Technologies and Innovations in Cooperation of the Regions of the Union State as an Impulse for the Development of Eurasian Integration: Informational-Integration Project / coauthors, interviewer: B. Zaleski, M. Valkovski, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2017. - – C. 202.

The partnership of this Russian region with the Belarusian manufacturer "Amkodor" is developing very effectively in line with the signed agreement. In June 2016, the Tomsk region approved a medium-term cooperation plan to expand the supply of its equipment. And today this equipment is used in this Russian region in the municipal sector and the timber industry. In particular, in December 2017, Verkhneketsky leskhov purchased a logging complex, which began to be used in selective and solid sanitary cuttings as part of the execution of state tasks. "This is already the third logging complex that Amkodor has supplied to the region's forestries. By the way, it will be easier to service this equipment now, as in the summer of 2017 the company opened its own branded service center in the region."⁵⁴ .

All these facts show that the basis for cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Tomsk Oblast is not bad, but it should be developed, because so far the mutual trade accounts for a small share in the total volume of their foreign economic activity - just over 10 million dollars for 10 months of 2020. The Tomsk party expects to focus on the development of partner relations in such areas as "crop and livestock breeding, hunting and fishing, industry and consumer market, ecological and rural tourism, additional professional education and advanced training, use of IT systems for state and municipal needs, support for innovative entrepreneurship"⁵⁵. The Belarusian party sees prospects in supplying a wide range of export goods - buses, trucks, municipal, road construction, logging, agricultural equipment, food, light industry and agro-industrial products. In a word, the potential for partnership is quite solid. And it

54 Priority Areas of Regional Cooperation as a Key Factor in Union Building: Informational-Integration Project / coauthored and interviewed by K. Gusev, B. Zalesky. Gusev, B. Zaleskii. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. -- C. 345.

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

inspires optimism that the plans for expansion of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Tomsk Oblast adopted at the first meeting of the working commission will be successfully implemented.

Speaking of the Belarusian partners in the Siberian Federal District, we should remember **Irkutsk Region**, the agreement on trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and humanitarian cooperation with which was signed in December 2016. At the same time, the first meeting of the working group formed by representatives of the parties was held in order to prepare a "road map" - the Action Plan for 2017-2019 - for the implementation of the signed agreement in a short time in order to rapidly increase trade and economic cooperation. The fact is that 2016 marked a serious problem in the development of partnership ties between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region - the trade turnover between the parties decreased by almost half. This is despite the fact that in 2015 the mutual trade figure was the highest in five years - \$115 million. This gave the parties a reason to simply state the main task for the near future: "Belarus and the Irkutsk Region of Russia should find reserves to increase mutual trade"⁵⁶.

It is worth recalling that in the pre-crisis period trade and economic interaction between the parties was carried out in quite a wide range of areas, including the creation of a system of business cooperation using modern information technologies and electronic systems, expanding the range of goods of mutual supplies, organization in Irkutsk region of centers of service and repair of Belarusian-made equipment, organization and holding joint fairs and exhibitions, as well as

In their search for new reserves of trade and economic cooperation, the two sides decided to rely on the existing experience. First, the Belarusian side suggested that Priangarye should more actively use its

⁵⁶ Negotiations with the Governor of the Irkutsk Region Sergey Levchenko [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/peregovory-s-gubernatorom-irkutskoj-oblasti-sergeem-levchenko-15007/

export potential, where there are significant prospects for supplies of quarry, cargo and other special equipment, as well as loaders for coal and other minerals deposits in the Russian region. After all, Belarus is well aware that Irkutsk region is one of Russia's leaders in mining, so the mining equipment of the Belarusian Automobile Plant for the mining companies of the region would be very handy. Besides Minsk Automobile Plant was already "ready to meet the demand of the region for gas-powered passenger vehicles"⁵⁷. The Belarusian side offered such attractive financing schemes for its export supplies as leasing, budget subsidies, and preferential lending, which may also apply to the latest Belarusian innovations in the form of innovative urban electric vehicles - electric buses and trolleybuses with autonomous travel.

Second, an important section of the "roadmap" for cooperation between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region was to become industrial cooperation not only with the defense industry enterprises. In this regard, the attention of Belarusian manufacturers was drawn to the territory of advanced socioeconomic development Usolye-Sibirskoye, which was created in the Russian region and has a special tax regime, where Belarusian tractors could be assembled. Moreover, "in Irkutsk region there are plans to put large areas of unused arable land into agricultural turnover. The Russian region is resuming its leasing and investment programs for this project. This should help to increase the sales of tractor equipment"⁵⁸. The parties also mentioned agriculture, construction, timber and water resources as other reserves for enhancing cooperation. In total in this list there are more than a dozen promising areas of joint activity, which, judging by all appearances, will be supplemented. In particular. we are also talking about the

57 Andrey Kobayakov met with the governor of the Irkutsk region [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6866>

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

interaction of scientific institutions, primarily related to agriculture, as well as in the tourism sphere. All these facts testify to the seriousness of the intentions of the parties to bring partnership relations to a new level. And, it must be said, today these plans are gradually taking real shape.

In March 2021, the Irkutsk region and Minsk Tractor Plant agreed to supply more than 160 Belarusian tractors to this Russian region. They should significantly increase the fleet of BELARUS-branded machines, which here is already close to ten thousand machines that are in demand in the Angara Region in agriculture and public utilities. As part of further expansion of this cooperation, the Belarusian side has also announced the possibility of "transferring forest and special machines for pilot operation in the region's organizations. This type of equipment has never been supplied to the region before. We are considering the possibility of buying equipment for volunteers involved in extinguishing forest fires"⁵⁹. In addition, the leadership of the Russian region and the Belarusian company have already raised the issue of establishing a specialized service and technical center here, which will make it possible to repair tractors from Belarus quickly and cheaply.

Recall that the agreement on cooperation between the Irkutsk region and Minsk Tractor Works was signed in September 2020. At that time, the Russian region proposed "to establish several service stations in the Irkutsk Region, so that it would be possible to repair Belarusian equipment, including overhaul"⁶⁰. All the more so because the region, as noted above, has territories of advanced socio-economic development with benefits, as well as a surplus of labor. In March 2021, representatives of MTZ already

59 Irkutsk region will buy more than 160 BELARUS tractors [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/irkutskaja-oblast-priobretet-bolee-160-tractorov-belarus-433486-2021/>

60 MTZ and the Irkutsk region signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-i-irkutskaja-oblast-zakljuchili-soglashenie-osotrudnichestve-408690-2020/>

visited the site proposed by the Irkutsk side for the organization of overhaul and repair of BELARUS machinery in order to specifically determine all components of the implementation of this joint mutually beneficial project.

Note that back in November 2018, the parties agreed to create and develop joint ventures in various areas. "Especially in those areas that the region is rich in. This is the timber processing complex, mechanical engineering, aircraft construction"⁶¹. In September 2020 the Belarusian party also announced its readiness to participate in tenders along with other manufacturers for the supply of cargo, timber, passenger, municipal, road-building equipment for the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects in Irkutsk region. Among the promising areas of cooperation she mentioned "cooperation in the timber industry, environmental protection and natural resources, recycling of municipal waste and provision of clean drinking water to the population"⁶².

The intensification of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Irkutsk Region five years ago had a positive impact on the bilateral trade. Suffice it to say that in 2016-2019, the volume of trade turnover between the parties has more than quadrupled and showed a record level at the end of 2019 - \$284 million. The basis of Belarusian exports to Priangarye at that time consisted of supplies of wires, fluorides, trucks, tires, car parts, rolling stock, paints, varnishes, elevators, milk, and cream. For the first time in 2019, special-purpose vehicles and X-ray equipment were shipped to Irkutsk region from Belarus. And in 2020, two new stores of Belarusian products, Traditions and Tastes, were also opened there. This is largely due to the fact that a variety of Belarusian goods and products

61 . Matveev, V. Belarus and the Irkutsk region agreed on the creation and development of joint ventures in various fields / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-irkutskaja-oblast-dogovorilis-o-sozdanii-i-razviti-sp-v-raznyh-sferah-325641-2018/>

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

have been represented in the region's retail market in recent years. They include "heavy-duty automobile, passenger, trailed and crane trucks and spare parts of Belarusian producers MAZ and MTZ, women's clothing - Belarusian knitwear, cosmetics, food products - cheese, dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables"⁶³.

But the decline in economic activity caused by the coronavirus epidemic led to the fact that in 2020, "in January-October, trade turnover decreased 2.1 times⁶⁴. That is why in December 2020, at the meeting of the working group on cooperation between Belarus and the Irkutsk Region, the parties decided in 2021 to focus their efforts on restoring the volume of mutual trade. The development of cooperation in the industrial sector and timber industry, as well as agriculture and the agro-industrial complex were named the most promising areas. Besides, "Belarusian mining equipment, <...> quarry equipment, public transport, electric cars, different types of vehicles on gas-motor fuel" may be of interest in this Russian region. As we can see, the parties have opportunities for the successful solution of the task. Let's hope that they will be used in full in the near future.

63 Priority Areas of Regional Cooperation as a Key Factor in Union Building: Informational-Integration Project / coauthored and interviewed by K. Gusev, B. Zalessky. Gusev, B. Zaleskii. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. -- C. 168.

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

Belarus: Toward Export Diversification

One of the priority tasks for the development of the Belarusian economy, set forth in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, is the commodity and country diversification of exports, which should ensure the growth of Belarusian supplies in 2025 to 50 billion dollars, as well as "the promotion of goods and services to new markets"⁶⁵. It is clear that the enterprises that have already created a certain foundation for the development of foreign sales markets can contribute to the fulfillment of this task. Of course, this includes, first of all, the flagships of the Belarusian industry.

For example, despite the coronavirus pandemic, Minsk Tractor Plant exported \$530 million worth of products in 2020. At the same time, it increased deliveries to non-CIS countries by 18.5 percent. And although the main importers of its equipment remained Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, "a total of 45 countries were supplied with products, including nine countries where they were not sold in 2019 (Burundi, Great Britain, Haiti, Guatemala, Guinea, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Spain)"⁶⁶.

Two million tons of steel products were shipped by the Belarusian Steel Works to 52 countries in 2020. The share of the European Union countries in the total volume of exports exceeded 45 percent. The fact that "the volume of shipments to Spain, Slovenia, and France increased twofold or more times speaks for itself. Shipments to Austria, Ireland, Romania,

65 Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. - - C. 46.

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

Poland and Finland increased by more than 30 percent."⁶⁷ The highest demand on the markets of these countries was for wire rod, flatbed bronze and steel wire, as well as structural rolled products intended for the automotive industry.

The Minsk Motor Plant (MMZ), on the other hand, increased its supplies to Russia by more than 12 percent in 2020, exceeding \$40 million. This is largely due to the fact that in the neighboring country MMZ "cooperates with 59 Russian industrial assembly companies and is also working on establishing partnerships with ten more"⁶⁸.

Enterprises of the Belarusian light industry concern Belleprom, which last year sent about 60 percent of all its products to 52 countries of the world, started the new five-year planning period with a rather high export surplus exceeding \$170 million. Exports to Lithuania (128.7%), Germany (104.6%), Estonia (115.3%), Japan (296.2%), Uzbekistan (107.3%), Sweden (102.8%), Bulgaria (158.2%), Slovakia (176.2%), the Czech Republic (115.8%), Israel (129.4%), Denmark (360.3%), Australia (361.2%), Austria (261.4%) have increased⁶⁹.

The Bellesumprom Concern's enterprises also increased their exports by five percent in 2020, which reached almost 610 million dollars to 70 countries, accounting for a record three quarters of the volume of all products manufactured by the Concern. It was largely possible due to an increase in the volume of export sales to non-CIS countries. In particular, supplies to Albania, Ireland, Iceland, Cyprus, Mexico were resumed, but the highest growth rate was noted in the USA, Canada, Austria, Great

67_BMZ increased exports of metal products to 13 EU countries [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bmz-narastil-eksport-metalloproduktov-v-13-stran-evrosojuza-426139-2021/>

68_MMZ in 2020 increased the volume of deliveries to Russia by more than 12% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mmz-v-2020-godu-narastil-objemy-postavok-v-rossiju-bolee-chem-na-12-425977-2021/>

69_Belleprom supplied products to 52 countries in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belleprom-v-2020-godu-postavil-produktsiju-v-52-strany-mira-427383-2021/>

Britain, Switzerland, Finland, Turkey, India, Indonesia. Besides, "export to China grew by almost 1,3 times following the results of the year. Export to Russia grew by 5.2% and to Ukraine - by 7%"⁷⁰.

It is to be assumed that in 2021 these and other Belarusian enterprises will try not to slow down their rates. At least the results of January this year show that business entities in our country have taken the task of exporting quite responsibly, increasing supplies of goods and services to foreign countries by 13.5% - to more than three billion dollars. At the same time "the export of goods increased by 19.4% to \$2.36 billion <...>. The balance was positive at \$100.2 million (in January 2020, it was negative at \$61.2 million"⁷¹.

The companies of the Bellesbumprom Concern should be mentioned among those who have already made a significant contribution to the achievement of this indicator; in January they managed to increase export supplies of their products by another 18 percent, up to 55.5 million dollars. It happened at the expense of growth in exports of wood slabs, furniture, cellulose, plywood, paper and cardboard. All in all, almost 50 commodity positions were exported to the markets of 48 countries. An important detail: more than half of the export volume - almost 30 million dollars - was accounted for by non-CIS countries. In addition, "shipments to the European Union increased by 15.5%, to China - by 35.9%. Deliveries to the CIS markets grew by 10.6%"⁷². Among the countries leaders in this list were Russia, Poland and China. In general, the concern Bellesbumprom

70_Enterprises of Bellesbumprom increased exports by 5% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-2020-godu-uvlichili-eksport-produktsii-na-5-427809-2021/>

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

72_Enterprises of Bellesbumprom in January increased exports by 18% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-janvare-uvlichili-eksport-produktsii-na-18-432143-2021/>

plans "to continue increasing exports by at least 6.5% compared to 2020⁷³. This should be facilitated both by the modernization of existing production facilities and the emergence of new ones. In particular, in this regard, this year it is planned to put into operation a plant for the production of laminated cardboard on the basis of the Dobrush paper factory "Hero of Labor" and a new production facility for the production of wood fuel - pellets - in Vitebsk.

Domestic high-tech products can and must contribute to the achievement of high indicators of export diversification. In 2020, the Republic of Belarus aimed to maintain the volume of its export at the level of 15 billion dollars both through supplies of already existing items and due to the emergence of new priorities. As a reminder, last year such products were supplied abroad in such areas as radioelectronics, instrumentation, mechanical engineering, medicines. "The ICT sector makes a significant contribution to exports. The demand for Belarusian intellectual property is also growing⁷⁴. A very effective tool to promote Belarusian high-tech products in foreign markets was the participation of domestic developers in international exhibitions held in the fall of 2020.

Thus, in November, the exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus was presented at the international exhibition and forum of telecommunications and information technologies Cairo ICT in the capital of Egypt, which was attended by over 400 companies from such countries as Russia, China, USA, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia. The distinguishing feature of the Belarusian exposition was

73_Enterprises of Bellesbumprom plan to increase exports by at least 6.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-2021-godu-planirujut-uvelicit-eksport-ne-menee-chem-na-65-429310-2021/>

74_This year Belarus expects to maintain the volume of exports of high-tech products at \$15 billion [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-v-etom-godu-sohranit-objem-eksporta-vysokotehnologichnoj-produktsii-na-urovne-15-421250-2020/>

the latest developments of the research organizations of the National Academy of Sciences and higher educational institutions of the Ministry of Education, which had a high export potential. In particular, the Belarusian State University demonstrated in Cairo a number of developments for medical purposes: a set of medical programs in the field of cardiology, mathematical models for surgical practice, computer modeling for creating drugs against coronavirus SARS-CoV. The Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics presented the developments in the field of information protection for the enterprises of the banking and customs spheres. The Belarusian-Russian University attracted the attention of the exhibition visitors and forum participants with its information and advertising system "Electronic Guide" designed for public transport. As for the United Institute of Informatics Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, it "demonstrated an intellectual micromodule for onboard recognition of surface and object images, as well as the UIIP-OFFICE cluster personal supercomputer designed for complex scientific calculations, modeling, solution of engineering problems, and teaching parallel programming technologies at universities"⁷⁵.

The national exposition of Belarus within the framework of the Third China International Import Fair in the online format was also a good help for the promotion of Belarusian high-tech exports. Suffice it to say that more than one hundred scientific, technological and innovative developments in the field of information and communication technologies, healthcare, biotechnologies, new materials, and agriculture were presented there by the Belarusian side. Among them we should mention more than actual development of the Republican Scientific and Practical Center of

⁷⁵ Exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus presented at the international exhibition in Cairo [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-made-in-belarus-predstavlena-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-kaire-417549-2020/>

Transfusiology and Medical Biotechnology - "anticovalent immunoglobulin for treatment of patients with severe forms of COVID-19 infection, as well as patients with viral encephalitis and meningoencephalitis"⁷⁶. The Belarusian National Technical University showed here a unique acoustic system for the treatment of skin oncological diseases, which has a higher efficiency compared to traditional methods and at the same time allows a quarter reduction of the patient's radiation dose. The National Academy of Sciences demonstrated at the Imports exhibition an office supercomputer, which has small dimensions and at the same time provides complex scientific calculations and processing of large amounts of data, and the Belarusian State University demonstrated plant protection preparations based on natural components, which can be used in organic farming. Among the innovative developments of Belarusian State Technological University at the China International Import Expo in Shanghai were presented "the technology of applying nickel-diamond coating, self-cleaning antibacterial composite coatings, radioactive glass, thin-numbered sheet glass and flexible glass films for solar batteries".⁷⁷ as well as technology for forming imitation decorative coatings on wood, board, facing and composite materials and dental cements and materials for dental purposes.

Finally, a wide range of Belarusian high-tech scientific and technical developments was presented at the international online industrial exhibition TeMEx, which was held under the auspices of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for three months, starting from mid-October 2020,

76 More than 100 scientific and technical developments will be presented by Belarus at the Chinese import exhibition [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bole-100-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavit-belarus-na-kitajskoj-vystavke-importa-414174-2020/>

77 Innovative developments of BSTU will be presented at the exhibition of goods and services in Shanghai [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/innovatsionnye-razrabotki-bgtu-predstavjat-na-vystavke-tovarov-i-uslug-v-shanhae-414078-2020/>

and which was attended by more than 70 companies from eight countries. The Minsk Automobile Plant demonstrated its absolute novelty - an electric bus. The project "Intelligent Quarry" was demonstrated by the Belarusian Automobile Plant. All these and a number of other facts confirm the conclusion that "the main pivotal factor in the development of the Belarusian industrial complex is the growth of the innovative component of its products".⁷⁸This, in turn, will inevitably contribute to the growth of Belarusian high-tech exports in the near future.

Another priority area for the development of Belarusian exports is agricultural products and foodstuffs. The above-mentioned Program of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025 in the section "Efficient and environmentally safe agriculture" sets out the tasks to improve the competitiveness of agricultural production and increase export potential in order to eventually reach "exports of food products and agricultural raw materials in 2025 - 7 billion U.S. dollars"⁷⁹. The government plans to focus on "all segments: both crop and livestock production," as well as the diversification of agricultural production.⁸⁰And also on the diversification of export supplies.

In addition, the Republic of Belarus has approved the state program "Agrarian Business" for 2021-2025. It provides for such goals as increasing the competitiveness of agricultural products and foods, developing environmentally safe agriculture, providing nutritious food and a healthy

78 Kharitonchik: the main factor of the development of the industrial complex of Belarus is the growth of innovative products [Electronic resource]. 2020. - URL: https://www.belta.by/economics/view/haritonchik-glavnym-faktorom-razvitiya-promkompleksa-belarusi-javljaetsja-rost-innovatsionnoj-410940-2020/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent

79 Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. -- C. 35.

80 Production growth and export diversification - Alexander Subbotin outlined the tasks for the meat industry [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9783>

lifestyle for the population, as well as "increasing export potential"⁸¹. The program contains nine subprograms relating to such areas as: 1) crop farming; 2) seed farming; 3) livestock farming; 4) breeding; 5) fish farming; 6) reclamation; 7) engineering flood control measures to protect agricultural land; 8) ensuring general conditions for the functioning of the agro-industrial complex; 9) support for small farms. Subject to their successful implementation, "it is projected to increase exports of food products and agricultural raw materials in 2025 by 21.3 percent by 2020 (up to \$7 billion)"⁸². This is quite realistic to achieve, provided that the raw material base of agricultural production is strengthened, existing industries are modernized and new competitive industries are developed, the digitalization of industries and subsectors of the agro-industrial complex is increased and the breeding and genetics for the needs of sustainable agriculture are developed. And the immediate task for 2021 is "to increase exports of agricultural products by 4.3 percent compared to 2020. This will amount to a little over \$6 billion"⁸³.

Belarusian exporters intend to move forward in this direction, relying on several basic priorities. First, it is important to maintain the achievements made in traditional markets, which include Russia, as well as Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. Suffice it to say that the Russian market share in the Belarusian exports of agricultural products in 2020 was almost three-quarters of the total volume or 4.3 billion dollars. And this is not only meat and dairy products, but also high-tech products. "These are seeds and planting material, breeding stock, plant protection products, veterinary drugs, feed

81 Food security and increasing exports - identified areas of agrarian business development [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prodbezopasnost-i-naraschivanie-eksporta-opredeleny-napravlenija-razvitiya-agrarnogo-biznesa-427294-2021/>

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

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

additives, and modern agricultural equipment."⁸⁴ . At a joint meeting of the board of agrarian departments of the two countries held in March 2021, the parties outlined further necessary measures to increase mutual trade and the main directions of integration of the Belarusian and Russian agricultural complexes in the Union State, which gives good reason to believe: interaction in agriculture of Belarus and Russia will only grow.

As for Uzbekistan, in 2020, the turnover of agricultural products and food products with this country in Central Asia exceeded \$87 million, increasing at once by 76 percent. An important detail is that "the export of Belarusian food products in 2020 more than doubled and reached \$73 million. The supply of Belarusian beef to Uzbekistan more than doubled, sugar - 3.5 times, dried milk - 2 times, fish and fish products - 1.5 times⁸⁵. The parties also actively cooperated in other areas of the industry. As for cattle breeding, we must recall the delivery of about 400 cattle of Belarusian selection to Uzbekistan in 2020. In order to increase the volume of this cooperation, a joint selection and genetic center has been founded by the Belarusian Belplemzhivodobniya and Uzbek VostokMedGeruda to purchase and supply Belarusian pedigree cattle to Uzbekistan, as well as provide scientific and technological support. In the field of veterinary science, Belarusian OJSC "BelVitunifarm" together with the Samarkand Institute of Veterinary Medicine and the Research Institute of Veterinary Medicine decided to establish a joint venture to produce veterinary drugs and vaccines in the Uzbek territory. In the area of breeding, result of cooperation between Scientific and Research Center of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Research Institute of Vegetables, Melons

⁸⁴ Russia accounted for more than 70% of Belarusian food exports in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-70-beloruskogo-eksporta-prodovolstvija-v-2020-godu-prihodilos-na-rossiju-432008-2021/>.

⁸⁵ Belarusian food exports to Uzbekistan more than doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-beloruskogo-prodovolstvija-v-uzbekistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-431838-2021/>

and Potatoes of Uzbekistan has resulted in obtaining 45 varieties of vegetables and 6 varieties of melons produced in Belarus. There are results in seed breeding, where the partnership actively develops "Belsemena" and the Center of Seed Breeding of Uzbekistan. In 2020, samples of seeds of peas, beans, carrots, onions and tomatoes of Uzbek selection were sent to Belarus for testing, and seeds of tomatoes, onions, beets, radishes, carrots and beans of Belarusian selection were successfully grown in Uzbekistan. Finally, in the field of education, Tashkent State Agrarian University and Grodno State Agrarian University have established joint faculties in Tashkent and Andijan and started to accept students for bachelor's degrees in "Plant protection and quarantine" and "Technology of storage and processing of animal raw materials".

Last year, exports of Belarusian agricultural products to Azerbaijan also increased by more than 10 percent. More precisely, "in 2020, the turnover of agricultural products and food reached \$35 million and increased by 5.3 percent compared to 2019. Exports of goods - \$30.4 million (or 110.7%), imports \$4.6 million"⁸⁶. This was due to deliveries from Belarus of a wide range of dairy and meat products of such Belarusian exporting enterprises as Belovezhskie Cheese, Luninets Dairy Plant, Dairy World, Rogachev Dairy and Canning Plant, Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant, Lida Dairy and Canning Plant and Minsk Dairy Plant No. 1. Enterprises of Belarus will take part in the international food industry exhibition InterFood Azerbaijan in June 2021, thus opening up new opportunities for entering the consumer market of this South Caucasus country. So there are good prospects for increasing exports.

Secondly, special attention will be paid to the diversification of sales markets and the development of exports to other countries of the world as

⁸⁶Exports of Belarusian products to Azerbaijan in 2020 increased by 10.7% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktii-v-azerbajdzhan-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-107-433105-2021/>

well. In particular, it is planned to actively develop food supplies to the Chinese market, which in 2020 alone almost doubled due to the export of beef, poultry meat, powdered milk, dried milk whey, ice cream, cheese, butter, as well as sugar, starch, potato chips and fish products. And this is far from the limit. Note that in 2020 Belarusian agricultural products and food were supplied to 116 countries of the world. At the same time, 20 new markets were opened. "Among them are Kuwait (started to supply flour confectionery and candy), Nepal (protein substrates), Algeria and Madagascar (flour), Congo (corn seeds), Mali (corn grits), Morocco (beet pulp), Namibia (milk powder), Somalia (sugar), Sierra Leone (egg processing products), Equatorial Guinea (poultry), South Sudan (whole milk powder). The list also includes Paraguay, St. Lucia, Djibouti, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Croatia⁸⁷. Overall, the share of the far arc countries in the total volume of Belarusian agricultural exports in 2020 increased to \$796 million and is already almost 14 percent.

All in all, in 2020, food exports from Belarus increased by 4.3 percent and exceeded \$5.8 billion. This allowed our country, for example, to gain a foothold in the top five global exporters of a number of dairy products - butter, cheese, powdered milk, whey. The Belarusian side seeks "not to export raw materials, but to process grain, milk and meat in the country and supply high value added products abroad so that these goods get on the shelves of stores and buyers form a strong loyal opinion about Belarusian goods⁸⁸

A good example of such an approach to the development and consolidation of its position in foreign markets is demonstrated, in

87_Belarus in 2020 begins supplying agricultural products to 20 new markets [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2020-godu-nachala-postavki-selhozproduktii-na-20-novyh-rynkov-427631-2021/>

88_Exports of Belarusian agricultural products in 2020 grew by 4.3% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduktii-v-2020-godu-vyros-na-43-427620-2021>

particular, by Rogachev INC. The main trends of the enterprise's foreign economic development in 2020 were: increase of supplies to the already developed markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Israel, USA, as well as entry to new markets - UAE, Singapore, South Korea and Afghanistan. This also happened because in 2020 "the range of products supplied to the foreign markets was expanded, where consumers appreciated the condensed milk with the addition of cocoa, coffee and chicory".⁸⁹The company's products were sold to foreign markets in 2020, where consumers appreciate condensed milk with cocoa, coffee and chicory.

Another interesting example in this context is the Turovsky Dairy Plant, which "now accounts for 80% of its production for foreign consumers. Deliveries to other countries brought the company almost \$87 million - 20% more than in 2019⁹⁰. In total, dairy products from Turow in 2020 were supplied to 16 countries. Mongolia, Turkmenistan, and Iraq became new markets. In 2021 the plant plans to increase export volumes by more than a quarter. These plans are based on the active re-equipment of the enterprise. In 2020, the plant increased its cream cheese production capacity, installed whey processing and thickening lines. In 2021, the cheese extraction line is planned to be modernized.

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

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

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

Belarus: Priority - Integrated Regional Development

In the Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025, it is planned to pay great attention to the implementation of the regional development strategy in order to reduce the number of backward districts in the country by 18 by the end of the new five-year plan. For this purpose it is planned to implement investment projects in towns and districts with the population of 80 thousand or more to prepare industrial sites and create infrastructure for the organization of two or three new enterprises, which have no analogues in the country, as well as to "create in each area 1-2 medium-sized industrial enterprises"⁹¹. The regions lagging behind will receive a certain set of benefits for the creation of new breakthrough industries, while efficiency will be the cornerstone for the launch of a new investment cycle. In other words, "at least one new effectively operating company should appear in each such area"⁹². And it must be said that concrete steps are already being taken in the Belarusian regions for the successful implementation of the outlined plans.

For example, in the first half of 2021 it is planned to complete an investment project for the production of special electronics for large vehicles in the Braslav District of the Vitebsk Region, which is being implemented by the unitary enterprise Zaryad Special Electronics Plant with Russian capital - a developer and manufacturer of electronic and electromechanical products, including electronic, switching units, key switches and automotive lighting equipment for heavy-duty operation,

91 Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file2635c85fedcb1ca5.PDF>

92 Support for lagging regions will be based on their potential - Chebotar [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/podderzhka-otstajuschih-regionov-budet-bazirovatsja-na-ih-potentsiale-chebotar-421034-2020/>

which already has one production facility. Characteristically, the products of the new "company will be predominantly export-oriented and import-substituting. The main focus is on Russia. We have invested over Br503 thousand into this project⁹³. An important detail: this investment project with foreign capital is not the only one for Braslav District. In 2020 a new enterprise for the production of prefabricated metal structures appeared here, in which an investor from Latvia invested more than 370 thousand dollars, and its products are already sold not only in the Belarusian market, but also in the neighboring countries.

Another new production facility with an investment of about two million Belarusian rubles in the same Vitebsk region opened at the end of 2020 in the town of Begoml, Dokshitsky District. This JSC "Factory "Vetraz" - a subsidiary of "Mogilevliftmash" - has organized here an electrical assembly shop, which already employs over 80 people and which "together with the Italian company will create new products and increase production in 2021 by 150%. It will also contribute to the opening of new production facilities⁹⁴. In particular, in the near future there will also be a plastic molding area, for which two machines have already been purchased.

On the eve of 2021, a new production facility was opened in Zhodino in the Minsk Region. The Minsk Automobile Plant organized the assembly of electric vehicles - trolleybuses of various modifications and the latest electric buses, where they intend to annually assemble at least three hundred vehicles, which will be supplied to Belarusian cities, as well as to neighboring and foreign countries. The project is a result of the public-private partnership between the Minsk Automobile Plant and ETON LLC

93 Pushnyakova A. Plant for production of special electronics in Braslav will start working in 2021 / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetsialnoj-elektroniki-v-braslave-nachnet-rabotu-v-2021-godu-422488-2020>

94_The new workshop of the Vetraz plant in Begoml will increase production [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-tseh-zavoda-vetraz-v-begomle-pozvolit-narastit-objem-proizvodstva-422131-2020/>

and has already created more than 130 jobs. It is also important that only half a year has passed from the idea to creation of assembly lines (assembly of electric transport in Zhodino is carried out on a full cycle, including welding, adjustment and painting works, adjustment of control systems, diagnostics of electronic systems, control and acceptance of production). At the same time, the large-scale prospects of this project are obvious, as "the development of competences in the field of electric transport construction will make it possible to create a full line of passenger transport and allow us to be present in all segments of the market"⁹⁵ .

On the eve of 2021 in Grodno region with an investment project to create wood processing production for the production of wood fuel - pellets - as a resident of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" the State experimental forestry institution "Smorgon experimental forestry" was registered. The idea of the project is to organize pellet production in Smorgon, involving in the economic turnover of low-quality wood and sawing waste. The entire volume of the product produced here is expected to be exported. The volume of investments in the new production will exceed two and a half million euros, and the production output is planned for the second half of 2021. As a result, "implementation of the project will expand the range of products, increase the scale of production and export volumes, increase profitability and efficiency of production, create additional jobs and increase payments to the budget"⁹⁶

It is easy to notice that all these examples show that in the new five-year period Belarusian regions intend to successfully solve the tasks of socio-economic development set for them, relying on the existing

95 MAZ opens assembly production of electric vehicles in Zhodino [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/maz-otkryl-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-elektrotransporta-v-zhodino-422142-2020/>

96 Smorgon Experimental Forestry became a new resident of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/smorgonskij-opytnej-leshoz-stal-novym-rezidentom-sez-grodnoinvest-422374-2020/>

experience of investment activities, including in cooperation with foreign partners. The formats of international cooperation at the regional level, which exist in our country and are still in operation, are also designed to facilitate this.

Thus, with the arrival of 2021, the period of implementation of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020, which is an important tool for the development of interaction between the European Union and partner states in Eastern Europe to ensure integrated and sustainable regional ties, ended. Recall that this program, and the first program period was implemented back in 2004-2006, "for the past 17 years supports the development processes in the border areas of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine through the co-financing of a variety of projects"⁹⁷. All projects are non-profit and contribute to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the eastern provinces of Poland, as well as some western regions of Belarus and Ukraine. More precisely, this program applies to the following areas in the three countries: Poland - Krosno, Przemysl, Rzeszow, Tarnobrzanski, Chelmsko-Zamoyski, Pulawski, Lubelski, Bielski, Ostrolecko-Siedlce, Lomzynski, Bialystok and Suwalski powiets; Belarus - Grodno, Brest, Minsk, Gomel regions and the city of Minsk; Ukraine - Lviv, Volynsk, Zakarpattia, Rovno, Ternopol and Ivano-Frankovsk regions. Under the four thematic objectives of this program - "Heritage", "Accessibility", "Security" and "Borders" - three types of projects were implemented in 2014-2020: large infrastructure, regular and microprojects. In 2020 alone, 139 projects were underway at once, 12 of which were completed.

In particular, 85 kilometers of local roads connecting cities and villages were built or reconstructed under the "Accessibility" thematic objective, and repair work was carried out in the Grodno and Brest regions,

97 Program [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/pages/135>

the Lublin, Mazovia and Podkarpackie voivodeships, as well as in the Lviv and Volyn regions. Just in January 2021, two new traffic circles were opened in the Polish city of Biala Podlaska, built in accordance with the project "Improvement of transport accessibility in Brest and Biala Podlaska". And the Brest Road Maintenance Company under the same project "reconstructed seven intersections in Brest, equipping them with an adaptive traffic control system. Subsequently, an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) was developed, which reduces travel time by regulating the mode of traffic"⁹⁸ . To be absolutely precise, we are talking about the installation of "smart traffic lights" and embedding sensors in the roadway, which transmit information to special controllers, at the intersections in Brest of Moskovskaya Street with Partizanskaya and Respublika avenues, Gavrilova and Pionerskaya streets, as well as Warsaw highway with October Revolution, Krasnoznamenskaya and Makhnovicha streets.

As for the thematic objective "Borders", the main result of the joint work were two additional control lanes and new pavilions for customs and passport control at the border crossing "Kuznica Bialostocka - Bruzgi". "These activities were among other parallel tasks increasing the efficiency of the border. As a result of the completion of these two projects, throughput has increased by almost 76%, which significantly speeds up border control."⁹⁹ . In addition, a number of other projects were implemented by the customs authorities of the countries participating in the program. First, a major infrastructure project called "Construction of an X-ray scanning vehicle control system at the road BCP Berestovitsa", which involved the construction of an inspection and examination complex, "including an X-ray scanning system, a protective building for it and a

98 New traffic circles in Biala Podlaska [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1961>

99 Results of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.pbu2020.eu/by/news/1952>

building for staff, engineering systems, training of experts for work, organization of rapid inspection of vehicles, sharing experiences of using scanners with Polish partners"¹⁰⁰ . And several regular projects, including "Improving Customs Control at the Domachevo Road Checkpoint" and "Strengthening the Capacity of the Canine Service of the Customs Offices of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Poland. The first of them, aimed at increasing the security of the Belarusian-Polish border and improving the quality of customs control operations, involved the installation of weighing equipment, which resulted in reduced time for such operations and accelerated crossing capacity at the border. The second project, aimed at preventing the illegal movement of illegal drugs, psychotropic substances and tobacco products and preventing illegal migration, involved the purchase of six vehicles equipped with cages for the transport of working dogs for the Grodno and Brest customs offices and the Minsk-2 customs office.

All these facts show that the completed Cross-Border Cooperation Program "Poland - Belarus - Ukraine" for 2014-2020 helped its participants to solve a lot of specific issues of interaction between the border regions. Apparently, the same pragmatic approach will be incorporated in the new cross-border program for 2021-2027, which is already being actively discussed by the parties concerned. In particular, Belarusian Brest and Polish Biala Podlaska are working on the possibility of implementing joint projects in three areas at once: the possibility of converting public transport to electric transport, projects on energy conservation, energy and thermal

100 Program of Cross-Border Cooperation Poland - Belarus - Ukraine for 2014-2020. [Electronic resource]. -- 2014. - URL: <https://www.customs.gov.by/ru/2014-2020-ru/>.

rehabilitation of social facilities, as well as "treatment and further use of rainwater"¹⁰¹.

Another important aspect of the topic under consideration is that in the Republic of Belarus today there is a significant increase in work at the local level on sustainable energy development and adaptation to climate change. Suffice it to say that 53 Belarusian cities have already declared their readiness to join the Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy, a major European initiative for cooperation in the field of climate change, which appeared in 2008 and "as of 2020, more than 10,000 cities and communities with a population of about 320 million people have joined it"¹⁰². Recall that by signing this agreement, "local governments make a voluntary commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30% by 2030"¹⁰³. It is clear that each city is approaching the goal in its own way.

For example, in the Belarusian city of Kostyukovich, Mogilev region, in August 2020 they implemented the project "Construction of a photovoltaic system. Decentralized power supply of the gymnasium from the environmental point of view. It was initiated and financed by partners from the German twin city Ditzenbach, with which Kostyukovich cooperate in various fields: education, health, sports, culture, tourism, ecology. As part of the already mentioned project "135 photovoltaic panels with a total capacity of 35.8 kW were installed on the roof of the gymnasium. There is also a monitoring system to track electricity generation, collecting and storing data on the operation of the plant for at

101_Brest and Biala Podlaska are working on joint projects in green economy [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brest-i-bjala-podljaska-prorabatyvajut-sovmestnye-proekty-v-zelenoj-ekonomike-424871-2021>

102 Arikas, D. European cities' initiatives on energy and climate / D. Arikas, M. Gratz, E. Ferrer, A. Chumakova, N. Andreenko. - Baltic Environmental Forum Germany, 2019. - - C. 4.

103_More than 50 Belarusian cities are ready to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolee-50-belorusskih-gorodov-gotovy-vzjat-na-sebja-objazatelstva-po-snizheniju-vybrossov-pamikovyh-424013-2021/>

least a year for each day, month"¹⁰⁴ . A new solar power plant (SPP), which began operation in 2020 near the village of Asmolovichi, Mstislav District, is also located there, in the Mogilev Region. Here, 4,752 solar panels were installed on an area of about four hectares. "The nominal capacity of each of the panels is 335 watts. As a result, the cumulative installed capacity of the new solar power plant was 1.6 MW"¹⁰⁵ . In addition, the highest wind power plant in Belarus with a height of 142 meters was also erected in the area of Asmolovichi in 2020.

Note that the presence of these environmentally-oriented facilities in the Mstislavl district is not a coincidence. The city of Mstislavl itself signed the Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy in 2017. Since then, a wide variety of events have been held here that promote a culture of energy conservation and the responsibility of the younger generation for the state of the environment. In particular, in the summer of 2020, as part of the organized Energy Days, everyone could take part in the online marathon of the Sustainable Development Goals "EcoMy Mstislavl". Its participants posted their materials related to energy saving, ecology, and sustainable development of the region on the global network. In pre-school institutions and recreation camps of the raion there were interactive lessons "How to Live Ecologically on Earth", a competition "Share with Us" was held, and film screenings of "Energy Saving Schools" were organized - about modern ways and methods of saving and conserving energy at home, at school and at work. Environmental campaigns were held at schools in the district: "We Cleaned Up Here! How about you?". Near the gymnasium in Mstislavl, an alley "Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow" was planted with young trees, next to which were signs with information about each of the 17

104 A photovoltaic power plant will be built on the roof of a gymnasium in Kostyukovichi [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

105 A new solar power plant started operating in Belarus [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/664>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Energy Days ended with the Mstislavskoe Ring bicycle ride, which was held for the third time and gathered about a hundred participants of different ages from all over the district. These facts show that by participating in all these events, the inhabitants of the Mstislav region could be convinced by their own example that the main objective of the Covenant of Mayors Climate and Energy initiative is sustainable energy development at the local level and taking concrete measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and that "residents have an important role in the work of the district to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, who can make a valuable contribution to the common cause by their personal behavior"¹⁰⁶.

Another effective tool that is also actively used in Covenant of Mayors cities is the European Mobility Week, an international campaign aimed at greening urban transport systems, changing people's transport behavior, and using public spaces more wisely, which traditionally takes place annually from September 16 to 22, culminating in "Car Free Day". This week's events typically involve more than 50 countries around the world. The 2020 theme, "Emission-Free Movement for All," focused on "reducing greenhouse gas emissions and making emission-free infrastructure and transportation accessible to all categories of citizens"¹⁰⁷. The popularity of this theme in our country is evidenced by the fact that a record number of Belarusian cities - more than 80 - joined this campaign in 2020. Thus, only in Minsk, during this week, organized a bicycle race, offered free travel for motorists on public transport, as well as opened the first eco-route of cyclists in Belarus, which connected the three environmental trails of the Belarusian capital - "Bird City," "Silver Log"

106 Mstislavl for an environmentally friendly way of life! And the Energy Days confirm it [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/news/616>

107__European Mobility Week [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://rosavtotransport.ru/ru/activities/european-mobility-week/>

and "Chizhovka. Its special feature was "the possibility of cycling and bird watching".¹⁰⁸, as well as familiarization along the route with information boards about local birds.

Summarizing these considerations, it should be noted that "the strategic goal of the Belarusian regional policy is the comprehensive development of each region and reducing the existing regional disparities, taking into account the effective use of its resource potential and competitive advantages in order to ensure high standards of living of the population, the conservation of nature and positive contribution of regions to national competitiveness and security"¹⁰⁹. As we can see, within the framework of the second phase of the National Strategy of Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030, currently being implemented in our country, Belarusian regions are already taking many concrete steps aimed at expanding local self-government in addressing socio-economic, environmental and ecological problems, reducing subsidization and ensuring high living standards of the population.

108 A new eco-route, a bike ride and free fare - what the European Mobility Week will be like in Minsk [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-ekomarshrut-veloprobeg-i-besplatnyj-proezd-kakoj-budet-evropejskaja-nedelja-mobilnosti-v-minske-406811-2020/>

109 Zalessky, B. Point of reference - multi-vectorism. Part I / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. -- C. 24–25.

Belarus: Investment and Export Locomotives for Regional Development

The five-year development program and the target forecast for the next three years, currently being drafted in the Republic of Belarus, include free economic zones (FEZ) among the most important segments that should receive new impulses for development in the medium term, with the number of residents exceeding 450 business entities at the beginning of autumn 2020. High potential of free economic zones is also confirmed by the fact that "today free economic zones account for almost 17% of the volume of industrial production, 20% of direct foreign investments and almost 20% of export of the country"¹¹⁰. And there is every reason to believe that in the current difficult conditions of development of the Belarusian economy FEZs can and should become the main investment engine, on the basis of which innovation, production and export potential of the territories in which they are located could develop. The more so because "our neighbors form zones with absolutely different conditions of incentives and functions"¹¹¹. In Belarus, we should continue to actively develop free economic zones not only in terms of improving legislation, land relations and infrastructure development, but also in terms of ways to increase the inflow of investments and economic efficiency. Moreover, Belarusian FEZs have already gained some experience in dealing with these issues. Suffice it to say that in the first half of 2020 alone, the number of residents in Belarus' free economic zones increased by more than 60 economic entities. And in the first quarter of the same year, foreign

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

111. FEZ should become the main investment engine - Nikitina // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sez-dolzhen-stat-osnovnym-investitsionnym-lokomotivom-nikitina-405379-2020/>

investors invested nearly three billion dollars in the real sector of the country's economy. "The main investors in Belarus were entities from Russia (35.7% of all incoming investments), Cyprus (15%) and Austria (8.4%). Foreign direct investments amounted to \$2.1 billion, or 75.1% of all incoming foreign investments"¹¹². These facts clearly show that Belarus has a lot of examples of successful solution of the investment problem, contributing to the socio-economic development of the country as a whole.

In particular, high rates of development in 2020 was demonstrated by **FEZ Minsk**, which by the beginning of September had 118 resident companies, 69 of which - with foreign investment, and which in the first half of the year received more than \$ 118 million from abroad. At the same time "foreign direct investment on a net basis in January-June amounted to almost \$ 70 million, which is 76% more compared to the same period last year. The key investors were the Swiss Confederation, the Republic of Cyprus and the People's Republic of China"¹¹³.

This influx of investment had a very positive effect on the exports of FEZ residents, which in the first half of 2020 came close to \$560 million. The main part of it consisted of electronic products and components, medical equipment, cable products, metal structures, auto and electric vehicles, railway and streetcar cars, parts and equipment for cars, and electrical equipment for passenger cars. We must assume that the range of export items of the metropolitan free economic zone in the near future will only expand, since a number of significant investment projects are now being implemented here. These include the production of control valves for the petrochemical industry, innovative high-tech equipment and air

112_Foreign investors invested \$2.8 billion in the economy of Belarus in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannye-investory-vlozhili-v-i-kvartale-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-28-mlrd-390601-2020/>

113_More than \$118 million of investments were received in FEZ Minsk from abroad in the first half of the year [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/svyshe-118-mln-investitsij-postupilo-v-i-polugodii-v-sez-minsk-iz-za-rubezha-406018-2020/>

filtration systems, special paints for road marking, electrical equipment for passenger cars of locomotive traction, paper packaging, as well as the assembly of structures and products from ferrous and nonferrous metals. Each of these projects already makes it possible to open new jobs in the FEZ. Suffice it to say that in the first six months of 2020, 482 people were hired here.

The facts show that FEZ Minsk was not going to slow down in the second half of 2020. For example, in October, it registered the 14th resident in 2020. (There were 17 in the whole of 2019!). This is the company "BASISPRO-GROUP", which intends to implement an investment project "for the production of aluminum spacer frames for translucent enclosing structures".¹¹⁴ consumers of which will be not only Belarusian construction companies, but also from neighboring countries. After all, fences made with an aluminum frame are now widely used in the construction of modern buildings. And in November 2020 in the FEZ was registered 15th resident this year - the company MKtrade, which specializes in the manufacture of products from galvanized steel with various types of polymer coatings. Its arrival here is due to the fact that it plans to open a new production facility for the production of fence and roofing elements of cottage-type structures, for which it "intends to expand its own facilities and organize a new workshop at the production facilities in Fanipole"¹¹⁵.

The investment project of InCata to create a science and technology park in the capital's FEZ to provide services to technological start-ups also looks very promising. For its successful implementation, fast-mounted airframe buildings will be built near the village of Privolnyi, Minsk Region,

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

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

which "will house a design bureau, a research engineering (R&D) center, and a prototyping center. Offices will be set aside for production consultants, investors and business mentors"¹¹⁶. It will allow actualizing in FEZ "Minsk" the development of innovative entrepreneurship in such areas of science and technology as nanotechnology, microelectronics, aerospace technology, power electronics, robotics, so that due to additional competitive advantages help the residents of this science and technology park to eventually successfully enter the international market.

In terms of investment cooperation, the capital's free economic zone could cooperate with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In June 2020, it became known about the intention of this international financial institution to allocate a loan of almost 15 million euros "for the construction of the Cherkasy substation to supply electricity to the free economic zone "Minsk"¹¹⁷. It is expected that this loan will be attracted in 2020-2022 for a period of 15 years.

As for **FEZ "Brest"**, in 2021, it will be 25 years old. Today it is located on more than ten thousand hectares. Its borders include land plots located not only in Brest and Brest Region, but also in such cities as Baranovichi, Pinsk, Kobrin, and Gantsevichi. As of mid-February 2020, over 70 residents from two dozen countries were registered here, including 47 with foreign capital, where over 21 thousand people are already employed. In 2019, the FEZ attracted \$107 million in investments, and the exports of its residents to 75 countries reached almost \$730 million. These positive trends continued in 2020, in the first quarter of which the FEZ attracted foreign direct investment on a net basis of almost 50 million

116.A science and technology park to help startups will be built on the territory of FEZ Minsk [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/nauchno-tehnologicheskij-park-v-pomosch-startapam-postrojat-na-territorii-sez-minsk-411305-2020/>

117.Belarus wants to attract 14.11 million euros from the EBRD to build a substation for FEZ Minsk [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-hochet-privlech-ot-ebrr-1411-mln-evro-na-stroitelstvo-podstantsii-dlja-sez-minsk-394602-2020/>

dollars, four times the target. The dynamics of FEZ development today are such that all 2019 performance indicators in 2020 could be exceeded. The prerequisites for this were serious. So, if in 2018 721 jobs were created due to the opening of new industries by residents in the FEZ, and in 2019 - 890, then in 2020 it was planned to open at least one thousand of them. With such potential for development, five new residents with Polish and German capital are coming here, whose areas of activity are focused on light industry, woodworking, cosmetology, the production of metal products, units and assemblies for the automotive industry.

It should be noted that at the end of April 2020, two more land plots with a total area of over one hundred hectares located in Ivatsevichi and Ivatsevichi District and intended for investment projects with foreign capital were included in FEZ Brest. Already in June 2020 there was registered a new resident of the FEZ - LLC "Polipol Mebel Bel", which is part of the well-known in the European market holding Polipol Produktions Verwalfund GmbH, which has been producing upholstered furniture for 30 years. Its ten factories employing over seven thousand people are located not only in Germany but also in other European countries. At the industrial site in Ivatsevichi a new resident intends to build a workshop for the production of upholstered furniture and a number of other related facilities. "The project implementation is designed for six years. The company will invest over €25 mln in the furniture production during this period and create over 1 thousand jobs. And 90% of the production will be exported¹¹⁸. An important detail: LLC "Polipol Mebel Bel" is already the seventh company in the FEZ with German capital. And in general, entrepreneurs

118 The new resident of FEZ "Brest" intends to invest more than 25 million euros in furniture production [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-na_meren-investirovat-v-proizvodstvo-mebeli-bolee-25-mln-evro-394124-2020/.

from Germany occupy the first place here by the level of investment, as their share is more than a third in the total investment portfolio of the FEZ.

Other new residents also come here with interesting projects. For example, Savantdrev LLC, an enterprise with Belarusian capital, registered as a FEZ resident in May 2020, plans to invest half a million euro in the organization of production of lumber - boards, beams, various building structures. The production site near Krasnogvardeyskaya Street in Brest is expected to produce fuel pellets or pellets from wood waste, which are very popular in the European Union countries. This is why "Savantdrev expects to supply up to 85% of its production to foreign markets"¹¹⁹. The full-scale production cycle will start here in 2021. At least 15 jobs will be created at the new enterprise.

In the same May 2020, LLC "Lady-x" was registered in the FEZ, which plans to locate its production facilities on the unused premises of Baranovich Automated Line Plant. The Belarusian company plans to "invest about 2 million euros in the project for the production of collectible clothing. <...> When it reaches full capacity in 2024, the company will employ 260 people. In addition, the previously registered residents should start activities in the FEZ. In particular, "BTV-Agro" LLC has built the first complex for growing mushrooms for "Bonshe" LLC, which is engaged in the production of mushrooms. Jobs will also be created there. The issue of organizing the production of car wires and campers on the territory of the FEZ is being worked out"¹²⁰.

The Italian industrial district, the creation of the infrastructure of which is planned to be completed in the near future, should also contribute

119_A new resident of FEZ "Brest" will engage in woodworking [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-derevoobrabotkoj-392514-2020/>

120_FEZ "Brest" plans to create 1 thousand jobs [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-brest-planirujut-sozdat-1-tys-rabochih-mest-380116-2020/>

to solving the problems facing the BMS. There, in the "Airport" industrial area, a transformer substation with a capacity of 5 MW and a sewage pumping station have already been built. In addition, the street and road network, water supply and storm sewer are laid. In 2021 the object must be put into operation. Since a large part of this territory has already been provided with the necessary engineering infrastructure, including power, gas and water supply, sewerage and telephone lines, "this allowed the business entities of the FEZ to locate 10 enterprises here. Two more are under construction"¹²¹.

Let us remind you that the idea of creating such a district in the industrial zone "Airport" sounded about ten years ago, when in June 2011 in Trieste the Memorandum of Understanding on the development of an industrial district in the Brest region was adopted, which provided for "creating the most favorable conditions to attract Italian investors and the implementation of their projects in Belarus"¹²². Today not only Italians, but any investor willing to organize and develop his business here can come to the territory of the region, using the advantages of the free economic zone. That is why two companies with investments from Germany are already working here, as well as companies with Israeli, British, Polish and Russian capital. "In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian enterprise Frieza Industry for the production of energy-saving elements for commercial refrigeration equipment was launched at the site "Airport". Today the joint venture has one of the highest export growth rates among

121. FEZ Brest completes the development of the Italian industrial district [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-brest-zavershaet-obustrojstvo-italjjanskogo-promyshlennogo-okruga-418092-2020/>

122. Zalesky, B. Belarus - Europe: Potential of Partnership. The policy of multi-vectorism in the context of global challenges / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016. - - C. 43.

FEZ enterprises."¹²³ . All these examples, undoubtedly, make us optimistic when assessing the prospects of development of FEZ "Brest".

An interesting example of development is shown by **FEZ "Grodnoinvest"**, whose residents in the first three months of 2020 have attracted a record amount of foreign direct investment on a net basis - \$59.8 million - of the total amount of \$157 million of foreign capital received. "The main investor countries were Russia (over \$45 million), Austria (\$39 million), and the Netherlands (\$34 million). Investments came from 15 countries, including the UAE, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom¹²⁴. In total, during 18 years of its existence FEZ "Grodnoinvest" has attracted over \$ 900 million of foreign investments from 40 countries including Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, Canada and Poland.

The growing investment attractiveness of this production site, of course, could not appear out of nowhere. It is largely due to the FEZ administration's attention to the development of the free economic zone's infrastructure. The following statistics is quite eloquent: since 2015, about nine million Belarusian rubles have been invested in the infrastructure of industrial sites in Grodno and the Grodno Region, Lida and Smorgon to improve the investment attractiveness of these sites from the FEZ Development Fund. For example, a transformer substation was built at the FEZ site near Grodno in the Novaya Gozha area, which provided electricity for new resident industries and created the necessary reserve for potential investors. In Lida, on the industrial site in the "Severny" district, water supply, sewerage, communication, and power supply networks were laid.

123.FEZ "Brest" completes the creation of infrastructure in the Italian industrial district this year [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/sez-brest-zavershaet-v-etom-godu-sozdanie-infrastruktury-v-italjianskom-promyshlennom-okruge-380751-2020/>

124.Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" in the first quarter attracted a record volume of FDI on a net basis [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-i-kvartale-privlekli-rekordnyj-objem-pii-na-chistoj-osnove-389251-2020/>

In Smorgon, a large-scale project to reconstruct Industrial Avenue, which connects the city with the industrial site of the FEZ, where such residents as Kronospan Group, Smorgon Aggregate Plant, Europlastic Invest, and Shinaka Mebel Bel are located, was launched in 2019 at the expense of the same FEZ Development Fund. The project is to result in 4-lane automobile road with stop pavilions and small architectural forms, external illumination, electro- and water supply, rain water drainage and external communication systems. All of this is being done for a single purpose: "The new infrastructure will make the site more attractive to potential investors and participants of the Furniture Cluster in the FEZ Grodnoinvest"¹²⁵.

Here it is necessary to explain that today "an effective furniture cluster has been formed in Grodno region, which includes more than 20 enterprises producing wood products packaging, wood boards, furniture and much more"¹²⁶. It should be noted that the share of woodworking in the FEZ accounts for about half of all investments. So whether we should be surprised by the fact that in 2019 residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest also attracted \$436 million in investments, which amounted to a fourth of the figure for all FEZs in Belarus. And as a result, this one of the youngest Belarusian FEZs became the leader in terms of attracted investments from foreign investors.

In November 2020 there were already 75 companies with capital from 40 countries of the world. At the same time, a number of new residents of the FEZ appeared in 2020. They include the Irish company Skywatt with a project to build a photovoltaic power plant, the Belarusian

125 FEZ "Grodnoinvest" has invested about Br9 million in infrastructure development over five years [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-grodnoinvest-za-pjat-let-investirovala-v-razvitie-infrastruktury-okolo-br9-mln-387801-2020/>

126 Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" attracted \$436 million in investments in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2019-godu-privlekli-436-mln-investitsij-385388-2020/>

company ZOV-MARKET with a project to create a wood processing plant, and the Belarusian-Russian company EUEkoPak with a topical project to create a paper packaging plant. One more company, IBA Investment is implementing a project as a resident of the special tourist and recreational park "Avgustovsky Channel"¹²⁷energy. Its implementation will allow, among other things, "to establish cooperative ties with international concerns that have requirements for the use of energy from renewable sources"¹²⁸.

In the middle of December 2020 the first stone was laid by HSBelakon LLC, a subsidiary of the Austrian HS Timber Group, which is one of Europe's leading woodworking companies, on the construction site №12 of Grodnoinvest FEZ in the Svisloch region. The construction is planned to be completed in 2022. "The amount of investment will be about \$84 million. It is planned to process up to 500 thousand cubic meters of conifers per year. The main focus will be on zero-waste production and creation of pellets"¹²⁹. Plus it will provide jobs for about 230 people, which for such an area as the Svisloch, is not unimportant.

The emergence of new residents in the FEZ "Grodnoinvest" is largely dictated by the obvious advantages of this Belarusian region, among which stands out "the availability of both wide and narrow railway gauge. This allows logistics companies to carry out fast and efficient delivery of goods from Asia to Europe and back"¹³⁰ to participate in the creation of a

127 Since the beginning of the year, residents of SMEZ "Grodnoinvest" have paid more than Br157 million in taxes [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/s-nachala-goda-rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-uplatili-bolee-br157-mln-nalogov-415012-2020/>.

128 FEZ resident "Grodnoinvest" will create a network of photovoltaic stations [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-sozdast-set-fotoelektricheskikh-stantsij-410108-2020/>

129 An Austrian investor will build a woodworking enterprise in the Svisloch district [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/avstrijskij-investor-postroit-derevoobrabatvajuščee-predpriatie-v-svislochskom-rajone-420771-2020/>

130 An investor from Germany considers the possibility of building a container terminal near Grodno [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investor-iz->

multimodal logistics center at the Belarusian-Polish border, which could handle ten pairs of trains a day. We are talking about the implementation of infrastructure subprojects here - the construction of a road, access and exhibition railroad tracks, engineering networks. Let's hope that this proposal will resonate with interested business people. Especially since "since 2018, five companies with investments from Belarus, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, and China have become residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in the field of logistics" ¹³¹.

In 2020, the activities of FEZ residents continued to be characterized by their active investment policy. For 10 months of this year, they have invested in fixed assets almost a hundred and fifty million Belarusian rubles, most of which - over 60 percent - was spent on the purchase of technological machinery and equipment. The trend is especially noticeable at the enterprises located on the industrial sites of the Free Economic Zone in the Smorgon region, where more than 90 million Belarusian rubles have been invested and where companies with foreign capital, such as Kronospan, Szynaka, Sodrugestvo, are successfully operating. Recall that the industrial zone FEZ "Grodnoinvest" in Smorgon district was created in 2015. Now it consists of three sectors. "In just a few years, eight new residents with investments from the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and Cyprus have appeared here. <...> The residents of the FEZ invested \$425 million in the creation of joint production facilities." As a result, today FEZ residents form over 90% of industry in the Smorgon region, where more than two thousand people work, and the export volume is close to \$500 million. As for the residents of FEZ in Grodno and Grodno District, they

[germanii-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-stroitelstva-pod-grodno-kontejnernogo-terminala-417507-2020/](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investoram-predlagajut-proekt-multimodalnogo-tsentra-logistiki-na-belorusko-polskoj-granitse-396558-2020/)

131 Investors are offered a project of a multimodal logistics center at the Belarusian-Polish border [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/investoram-predlagajut-proekt-multimodalnogo-tsentra-logistiki-na-belorusko-polskoj-granitse-396558-2020/>

have invested Br30 million in fixed assets from January to November 2020. At the same time, "the companies Bigan, ZOV, Makey, Gronitex, Belagrofert are actively modernizing and expanding their production facilities¹³².

The active investment policy of residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" allows them to successfully address the export of their products as a result. For 10 months of 2020 they supplied 55 countries for almost \$778 million. At the same time, exports to the U.S. alone increased threefold. In addition, "the supply of products of FEZ residents has grown many times in Canada (4.7 times), the Netherlands (2.4 times), the United Arab Emirates (2.3 times), Estonia (1.9 times), Turkey (1.5 times), as well as Switzerland and Afghanistan¹³³. But Russia, Poland and Ukraine remain the main export destinations. Two-thirds of all deliveries to other countries from the FEZ are food and agricultural products, furniture and wood processing products.

All these facts once again confirm the idea that free economic zones in the Republic of Belarus are becoming a tool for economic development, the potential of which is just beginning to be truly realized and can bring even greater results for the benefit of the country.

132_Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" invested Br144 million in fixed capital [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-vlozhili-br144-mln-investitsij-v-osnovnoj-kapital-417225-2020/>

133_Exports by residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" to the U.S. in January-September tripled [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-ssha-za-janvar-sentjabr-vozros-v-tri-raza-416050-2020/>

Great Stone Industrial Park: The goal is to innovate

The scientific and innovation vector occupies an important place among the main areas of trustful all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China. Three priority components can be singled out in this segment of bilateral interaction. "The first one is in the field of scientific research, where the parties are involved in the implementation of major joint projects. The second one is in the field of innovation activities, where a network of joint innovation centers and research laboratories is being formed and developed. The third one is in education, where specialists, teachers and students undergo mutual education and internships"¹³⁴. The focus on innovations is especially felt today in the development of the Sino-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone", which allows you to create here competitive production, sustainable engineering and transport infrastructure, to conduct digital construction in order to turn the park into a "smart city". At the same time, the pace of innovation has accelerated markedly in 2020. Here are just a few examples that confirm this observation.

In May 2020, the first stone was laid at the site of the future construction of the Science and Technology Cooperation and Development Zone or Fakel project by the Chinese corporation Sinomach. As a reminder, in June 2014, the Belarusian government signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with this corporation, on the basis of which large-scale investment projects are now being implemented in Belarus. As for the Fakel project, this zone will be "aimed at creating conditions to attract

134 Zalessky, B. Vector of partnership - China. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. -- C. 115–116.

Chinese and European technologies, implement and test them in the park and further export to Europe and China¹³⁵. There are plans to build office buildings and premises for scientific research, where "it is planned to implement four projects of research and development work - in the field of optical technologies, mechanics, electronics and new materials. It is also envisaged the erection of laboratories, office-type co-working spaces, the complex construction of educational institutions and high-tech pilot commercial facilities "¹³⁶ . The project will involve not only research institutes and enterprises of Sinomach Corporation, but also enterprises of the Chinese Zhongguancun Technopark and structures of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

The mention of Zhongguancun Technopark in this context speaks to the very serious attitude of the Chinese side to the Torch Project in the Great Stone. The fact is that this technology park, founded in 1988 in the northwestern part of Beijing, is considered the Chinese equivalent of Silicon Valley, is the first in China, one of the largest in the capital and consists of 16 scientific zones. It was here that the first Chinese vacuum cylinder, the first computer, the first commutator, etc. "appeared at one time. In all, more than 5,000 products were developed here, filling a void in the history of Chinese high-tech¹³⁷. The research and development bureaus of many multinational corporations are now concentrated here. China has high expectations for this technology park in terms of "implementing the ambitious Made in China 2025 strategy, which will make the country technologically independent and take it to the forefront in many fields. The

135 On the development of the SINOMACH science and technology cooperation and development zone in the Great Stone Park [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/cf39e9ad1f75824a.html>

136 Sinomach's Torch Park will be built in Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-postrojat-park-sinomach-fakel-390613-2020/>

137 Wei, W. Silicon Valley of China / W. Wei // Models, Systems, Networks in Economics, Technology, Nature and Society. - - 2013. - - C. 19.

Chinese authorities will spend about \$300 billion to implement the program¹³⁸. Speaking of this technology park, we can't help but mention the following figure: between January and November 2019, there was a revenue growth of almost 14 percent. In this case, "revenues of the leading high-tech enterprises in the technology park reached 5.43 trillion yuan (about \$779 billion) during this period¹³⁹

Returning to innovative affairs at Great Stone, we should note that in May 2020, another landmark event took place here, showing that one of the promising facets of the Sino-Belarusian industrial park's development is digitalization. Here, for the first time, an electric-powered unmanned bus, developed using technology from Singaporean scientists, was tested. "The maximum speed that the prototype can reach is 40 km/hour. <...> range is about 180 km. A full charge will take no more than 4 hours."¹⁴⁰ . On the territory of "Great Stone" it is planned to work out the technology of operation of the novelty, after which, apparently, commercial operation of this unmanned transport will be possible in the not-too-distant future.

Also in May 2020, the Sino-Belarusian Industrial Park registered a new resident, the Crownhomes Scientific and Technical Company for Wood Structures LLC, which will create a "production line center for the woodworking industry based on Industry 4.0 principles" in Velikiy

138 Krasilnikova, Y. Beijing launches a program to attract foreign IT-specialists / Y. Krasilnikova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: https://hightech.fm/2018/02/28/beijing_lures_talant

139 In the first 11 months of 2019, Beijing's Zhongguancun Technopark recorded a 13.8 percent revenue growth [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: http://russian.news.cn/2020-01/07/c_138685700.htm?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyandex.by%2Fnews

140 The first unmanned electric bus was tested in the Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervyj-bespilotnyj-elektrobus-protestirovali-v-velikom-kamne-390612-2020>

Kamen¹⁴¹. This production, which is based on innovative technology, is expected to be put into operation in 2022.

In addition, in 2020, the Sino-Belarusian industrial park Great Stone, despite the alarming epidemic situation, continued to demonstrate a fairly high rate of development, remaining a landmark project of the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road" in Eastern Europe. Suffice it to say that "as of the end of October, there were 66 companies from 14 countries among its residents, and the amount of agreed investments was about \$1.2 billion¹⁴². This fact also speaks volumes: in the first nine months of 2020, the revenues of the industrial park residents increased almost three and a half times compared to the same period in 2019. "At the same time, the proceeds from the sale of goods, products, works and services outside of Belarus amounted to Br36.8 million (8.7 times growth) ¹⁴³the number of employees employed in the "Great Stone" came close to one thousand - 970 people. And, apparently, the industrial park is not going to stop there, as evidenced by a number of facts in the second half of 2020, showing that this special economic zone is now actively seeking new ways of development in many areas, including optimization of logistics and introduction of innovations.

So, in September 2020, Eurasian Railway Gateway CJSC was registered as a resident of Great Stone, a company that "will implement an

141 The new resident of Great Stone will produce products for woodworking [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-vypuskat-produktsiju-dlja-derevoobrabotki-390684-2020>

142 Xiaoyun, S. China opposes outside interference in the internal affairs of Belarus / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kitaj-vystupaet-protiv-vmeshatelstva-izvne-vo-vnutrennie-dela-belarusi-7572/>

143 Revenue of the residents of the "Great Stone" in January - September increased 3.4 times to Br126.2 million [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vyruchka-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyrosla-v-34-raza-do-br126-mln-416031-2020/>

investment project to build a bimodal rail terminal in the park¹⁴⁴. The list of participants in this project, construction work on which will begin in 2021, is very solid. They are the world's largest intracontinental port Duisburger Hafen AG from Germany, the leading network operator of intermodal transportations in Europe Hupak Intermodal SA from Switzerland, Brest Department of Belarusian Railways RUE, and the resident of the park China Merchants HCBC Commercial and Logistics Company. It is expected that when the terminal reaches its design capacity, it will bring the Great Stone residents to a qualitatively new level of realization of their logistics capabilities.

Speaking about innovative prospects of the industrial park's development, we should recall that, again in September 2020, the China-Belarus Innovation Center of Industrial Technologies, created by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Academy of Sciences of Guangdong Province, as well as the Foshan Research Institute of Industrial Technologies, became a new resident of Great Stone. The founders of this center see it as a platform for "implementation of scientific and technological achievements between the two countries. The task of this platform is to develop scientific ideas and bring them to industrial implementation¹⁴⁵. It is assumed that research and development in such areas as new materials, modern industrial technologies, digitalization in production, bio- and eco-technologies started here today will grow into specific technologies and production in two or three years. In addition to being a link of scientific and technological cooperation between institutes of Guangdong Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of

144. A new resident of Great Stone will build a railway terminal [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-postroit-zhd-terminal-407959-2020/>

145. The Sino-Belarusian innovation center of industrial technologies appeared in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajsko-belorusskij-innovatsionnyj-tsentr-promyshlennyh-tehnologii-pojavilsja-v-velikom-kamne-408221-2020/>

Sciences of Belarus, the center will provide business consulting and other support services for the selected incubated enterprises, including business plan consulting and training. There are certain hopes for successful development of this structure due to the fact that "a special \$1.5 million Belt and Road Initiative fund is planned to ensure commercialization of research and development results of the industrial technology center.¹⁴⁶This fund will be used to support commercialization of selected research projects and incubated enterprises.

Another innovation center - commercialization of scientific and technological achievements - was planned to open in the Great Stone by the end of 2020. It was in this vein that this issue was discussed in September 2020 at a meeting of the Belarusian part of the commission for scientific and technical cooperation of the Belarusian-Chinese intergovernmental cooperation committee, where the implementation of the program of scientific and technical cooperation between Belarus and China for 2019-2020 was considered. This center should become a comprehensive platform for nurturing startups.

Finally, in November 2020, there was another event that could seriously promote innovation in this special economic zone. We are talking about the agreement signed by the National Intellectual Property Center and the administration of the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Great Stone" on the creation of the Center for Technology and Innovation Support on the territory of the park. This new structure is expected to "make it easier for researchers to find information about existing scientific achievements and intensify scientific work of young scientists and startup organizations¹⁴⁷. In

146 Innovation center in the "Great Stone" plans to open by the end of the year [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/innovatsionnyj-tsentr-v-velikom-kamne-planirujut-otkryt-do-kontsa-goda-408059-2020/>

147 Technology and Innovation Support Center created in the Great Stone [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tsentr-podderzhki-tehnologij-i-innovatsij-sozdali-v-velikom-kamne-415194-2020/>

particular, in this center all employees of park residents will get free access to patent and non-patent databases of the World Intellectual Property Organization. So there are a lot of opportunities for innovation here.

It should be noted that the Great Stone today is also trying to make the most of the experience of other innovative structures operating in different parts of the world. This is evidenced by the fact that the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park joined the Innovation Alliance of Special Economic Free Trade Zones, which was created in the autumn of 2020 in Shenzhen, China. The initiative, which also includes 47 counties and regions of the People's Republic of China's innovative alliance of free trade zones, intends to "actively respond to global and regional plans, such as the UN 2030 sustainable development agenda, the Belt and Road initiative, the EU investment plan, the Africa 2063 agenda"¹⁴⁸. The new alliance, in addition to the Great Stone, includes many other foreign participants, interaction with which in the future may give an interesting result, as each of them is an innovative platform with its own unique creative experience of activity. These include the Lekki Free Trade Zone in Nigeria, the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone in Cambodia, the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone in East Africa, the Hambantota Industrial Park in Sri Lanka, the Ethiopian Eastern Industrial Park, the Thailand-China Industrial Park in Rayong and the Suez Canal Economic Zone. Let's take a closer look at them.

For example, **the Lekki Free Trade Zone**, located in the Nigerian state of Lagos, is one of the most promising in this African country. Its project is a universal complex "divided into separate sectors for oil and gas, industrial production, financial and commercial sphere, tourism, recreation

148 "Great Stone" entered the innovative alliance of special economic zones of free trade [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-voshel-v-innovatsionny-aljjans-osobyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-svobodnoj-torgovli-405052-2020/>.

and private housing¹⁴⁹. The FTZ has five kilometers of coastline. Half a hundred kilometers away is the port of Apapa, the largest in West Africa, and 70 kilometers away is the Murtala Mohammad International Airport.

Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone is a foreign economic and trade cooperation area in Cambodia, which was established by Chinese companies together with the Cambodia International Investment and Development Group to promote favorable market conditions, where a large industrial center was built in 2010 in addition to the port. By early 2019, "153 enterprises from China, Europe, America, Southeast Asia and other countries and regions were registered here. Among them are 139 industrial enterprises, mainly engaged in such industries as textile and garment industry, manufacturing of suitcases, bags and other leather goods, machines and mechanisms, electronics, woodworking"¹⁵⁰. In five years they managed to create more than 22 thousand jobs here.

As for **Djibouti's international free trade zone** in East Africa, it was inaugurated in July 2018 with the active participation of the Chinese company China State Construction. Once all phases of construction are completed, it is expected to "become the largest free trade zone in Africa and <...> a new engine for Djibouti's economic development, helping Djibouti build a financial, shipping and trade center in Northeast Africa. The creators of this FTZ see it as a testing ground for the so-called "Silk Road Station" in order to replicate China's successful experience in developing global enterprises.

To create a transit maritime hub for the entire South Asian region is the goal of a Sino-Lankan project to **renovate the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka, which is** located very close to the main international shipping

149 Rendeavour expands Lekki Free Trade Zone development project [Electronic resource]. -- 2016. - URL: <https://www.prnewswire.com/ru/press-releases/ru-584836431.html>

150 Yifeng, H. A new industrial district is being built in Sihanoukville province / H. Yifeng, S. Mengkhon // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/beltandroad/khm/ruindex.shtml>

routes. "In the past, ships hardly ever came to this small fishing town. But that all changed when the Sino-Lankan joint marina revitalization project was launched."¹⁵¹ Thousands of new jobs have already been created through the implementation of China's "port-industrial park-city" model, which essentially means that once the port is developed, an industrial park will be established to help develop the city. This, in turn, will make the port of Hambantota one of the key elements of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road.

The **Eastern Industrial Park of Ethiopia** is another "Chinese foreign trade and economic cooperation zone of national level, it already hosts more than 80 enterprises, most of them Chinese,"¹⁵² engaged in the pharmaceutical, textile, metallurgical and other industries. Note that this is not the only project implemented by the Chinese side in this African country. "Drawing on the experience of China's economic growth, 15 industrial parks using Chinese technology will be built in Ethiopia in the coming years. ¹⁵³The Chinese are also the only project being implemented in this African country, which, according to Addis Ababa, will allow this country to join the group of middle-income countries in the next ten years.

The **Thailand-China Industrial Park in Rayong province** was built back in 2005. This cluster was the only one in Thailand certified by the Chinese government as an overseas trade and economic cooperation area. By 2017, more than 90 enterprises were already operating here, which "brought more than \$2.5 billion worth of investment to Thailand, solved the employment problem for more than 20,000 locals, and became an industrial center and export base for priority sectors of traditional Chinese

151 The Port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka implements Sino-Lankan cooperation project [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://newsru.cgtm.com/news/3d3d414e6646444d77597a6333566d54/p.html>

152 Ethiopian-Chinese cooperation is a classic example of China's cooperation with Africa - Ethiopian President [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: http://russian.news.cn/2018-08/14/c_137387915.htm

153 Tighter belt of cooperation, shorter way out of the "trap of backwardness" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://finance.rambler.ru/markets/43964485-zhenmin-zhibao-kitay-obedinnye-obschey-tselyu-chast-2/>

industries in Thailand."¹⁵⁴ An interesting detail: based on the experience of the industrial park in Thailand's Rayong province, the Chinese Huali Corporation opened the Beimei Huafushan Industrial Cluster already in Mexico in October 2015 to help other Chinese companies enter and develop the American market.

The Suez Canal Economic Zone in Egypt was established in 2015, when the new 72-kilometer-long canal bed was put into operation to attract foreign investment for an international industrial and logistics hub project. It is expected that "with the development of the Suez Canal, the industries and service enterprises housed there will form up to one-third of the country's total economy"¹⁵⁵. In the spring of 2019, 77 residents were already operating in the Sino-Egyptian part of this seven-square-kilometer zone. In May 2018, an agreement was signed to create a Russian industrial zone in this region. In February 2020, the Belarusian side announced its desire to participate in the creation of the Suez Canal Special Economic Zone.

Undoubtedly, the innovative experience of the development of all these special economic zones of free trade will be very useful for the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone", which, in turn, has something to share with its partners in the new alliance.

154 Huali Corporation: Let's create an "industrial Chinese quarter" on the "One Belt, One Road" [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: http://russian.china.org.cn/exclusive/txt/2017-04/13/content_40612178.htm

155 The President of Egypt issued a decree on the creation of the Suez Canal Special Economic Zone [Electronic resource]. - - 2015. - URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/2181686>

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: To make the most of its potential

The year 2020 marks the 15th anniversary of the first trading on the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE), when Belarusian Unitary Enterprise Bellesexport and Polish company International Paper Kwidzyn S. A. signed the first stock exchange deal to sell the balance wood to the sum of \$189 thousand. All in all, over the past decade and a half, "3.2 million deals amounting to \$21 billion were made here, and the export volume amounted to \$5.8 billion¹⁵⁶. These figures show that the BUTB has already turned into one of the largest commodity exchanges in Eastern Europe, whose main function is to assist Belarusian companies in exporting products and to help foreign companies to enter the Belarusian market.

This fact also speaks for itself. The market-based pricing mechanism and high concentration of supply and demand on this exchange platform allowed Belarusian bidders, starting from 2005, to gain additional revenue and save as much as one and a half billion dollars. It should be reminded that the companies accredited at BUOTB take part in the electronic trading on five commodity positions: 1) metal products; 2) timber products; 3) agricultural products; 4) industrial and consumer goods; 5) prospective exchange goods. At the same time, round timber, ferrous metal products and oilseed meal are especially in demand in the domestic Belarusian market, while in foreign trade transactions their participants give preference to lumber and dairy products. These trends are characteristic of the development of the BUTB in 2020 as well.

At the beginning of December 2020, 24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 companies from 63 countries. Between January and November, trade turnover grew by 12 percent and amounted to

¹⁵⁶Deals worth \$21 billion concluded at BUTB over 15 years [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sdelki-na-21-mlrd-zakljucheny-na-butb-za-15-let-393174-2020>

almost five billion Belarusian rubles. It is estimated that from one and a half to three thousand transactions are concluded here daily. In addition, the export of goods through the exchange demonstrates a positive trend. "With the total amount of export transactions of Br1 billion, last year's result was exceeded by 5%. Lumber, wood chips, and agricultural products were the leaders in sales in the foreign market."¹⁵⁷ . Interestingly, in October 2020, the BUTB recorded a record amount of export transactions this year - for \$46.5 million, more than half of which came from wood products - lumber and wood chips. Companies from Germany, Latvia and Lithuania were the biggest buyers of sawn wood, while companies from Lithuania, Poland and Estonia were the biggest buyers of wood chips. One more characteristic detail is that "in October foreign buyers of cement have also notably activated. The sum of transactions with this commodity grew 4.3 times, up to \$2.6 million. Russia was the main market for this commodity"¹⁵⁸ .

It should be noted that cement is not the only position that attracts Russian business people to the BUTB. In particular, they are very interested in Belarusian dairy products, the export of which through the exchange in the first ten months of 2020 amounted to about thirty million dollars. At the same time, "about 80% of this amount was accounted for by the deals made with companies from Russia. Predominantly milk powder, butter and dry whey were purchased. In the structure of sales prevailed butter, the sales of which amounted to \$14.9 million"¹⁵⁹.

These facts indicate quite eloquently the potential of the Russian vector in the activities of the BUTB, where as of December 1, 2020, 2,482

157 The turnover of the BUTB in January - November increased by 12% [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-butb-v-janvare-nojabrevyros-na-12-420279-2020/>

158 Exports of goods through the BUTB in October increased by 22% [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tovarov-cherez-butb-v-oktjabrevyros-na-22-415863-2020/>

159 About 80% of exports of dairy products through the BUTB account for Russia [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-80-eksportamolochnoj-produksii-cherez-butb-prihoditsja-na-rossiju-414442-2020/>

residents from Russia were accredited. And this figure does not seem to be final, since the BUTB in 2020 took energetic measures to develop new business contacts in the eastern direction of interaction, which are bringing results. Suffice it to say that since the beginning of 2020 183 new Russian companies have been accredited to the exchange, most of which are active bidders, which, of course, has a positive effect on the dynamics of exchange turnover. In particular, "the supply of rolled steel for the Belarusian industrial enterprises for 11 months increased by 68%, and exports of milk powder to Russia - by 53% <...>. Rapeseed oil, flour, and construction materials also displayed positive dynamics¹⁶⁰.

The Russian vector is characterized by the following detail: the interest in the BUTB is growing especially fast among business circles of those regions of Russia, which border with Belarus. Smolensk region is an example. Today about four hundred Smolensk companies are accredited to the exchange - more than from any region of Russia. Many of them regularly participate in the bidding for both imports and exports. But, as it turned out during a pilot webinar held in December 2020 by the BUTB together with the Smolensk Export Support Center, even enterprises of this Russian region have not yet fully realized the potential of the exchange mechanism. While "among the promising areas are sales of Russian wood raw materials, grain crops, feed additives, ferrous rolled metal, as well as the purchase of Belarusian meat and dairy products and construction materials. These commodity positions can become the basis for long-term mutually beneficial cooperation¹⁶¹. The "Digital Contact Exchange", which was also held in December 2020 in the form of an online conference, showed that the BUTB can develop cooperation with more remote regions

160 BUTB expects to expand cooperation with the Omsk region of Russia [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-somskoj-oblastju-rossii-420606-2020/>.

161 . BUTB counts on the development of cooperation with Smolensk region [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-so-smolenskoj-oblastju-421404-2020>

of Russia in the same mutually beneficial way. In particular, with the enterprises of the Omsk region, for which the exchange can become an effective tool for sales and procurement of materials in the short term.

The fact that in the case of BUTB the distance between the seller and the buyer does not play a decisive role is shown by the experience of the exchange's contacts with Egypt. Also in December 2020, BUTB reached an agreement with the Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export on the organization of lumber exports to this North African country through the exchange platform. The intrigue here is that so far "almost all lumber imports to Egypt are organized through intermediaries, and prices are sometimes very high"¹⁶². But the use of the exchange platform will allow the Egyptian companies in almost unlimited quantities and without intermediaries to buy wood products directly from manufacturers in Belarus, and Belarusian exporters can enter a very tempting market in Egypt, where the annual consumption of lumber is about five million cubic meters. The Egyptian side sees this as an optimal solution, because by taking part in the bidding, it gets access to a large number of specialized companies that are ready to supply the goods it needs on acceptable terms. The benefits for the Belarusian side are no less obvious. So the geography of mutually beneficial contacts of the BUTB is developing today in a rather diverse and effective way. And this in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, which did not affect the economy of most countries of the planet in the best way and which requires all market players to look for new forms of work with business partners in order to succeed in the end.

The BUTB is no exception in this regard. Back in May 2020, it hosted the first Belarusian-Canadian-British webinar or online seminar Timber: Doing Business in Belarus, which was attended by over forty representatives of the Canadian and British business community. It should

162 It is planned to organize the supply of lumber to Egypt through the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/cherez-butb-planirujetsja-organizovat-postavki-pilomaterialov-v-egipet-419296-2020/>

be noted that 63 companies from Great Britain and 6 from Canada have already been accredited to the BUTB. The discussion of specificity of exchange trade with forest industry products and key advantages of the Belarusian exchange platform, which was held in the format of a video conference, resulted in the fact that "a number of British and Canadian companies expressed their interest in being accredited to participate in exchange trade with lumber and chips¹⁶³.

It should be noted that BUTB also uses the format of online seminar to train its prospective business partners. For this purpose in May 2020 they held the first training webinar for specialists of the Uzbek Republican Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange, with which BUTB signed an agreement on strategic cooperation back in September 2018. Thanks to this modern format of interaction, the Uzbek partners were able to get better acquainted not only with the structure and specifics of the Belarusian system of public procurement, but also with the opportunities for foreign suppliers of goods, works and services to participate in procurement procedures. We believe that the information obtained by the Uzbek side will not only contribute to the enhancement of cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan in the field of electronic procurement, but also "will serve as a guide to action for Uzbek companies that plan to work in the Belarusian market"¹⁶⁴.

In this context, the development of cooperation between the Belarusian-Turkish Trade Bank and Chinese partners deserves a separate discussion. In December 2020, a meeting of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation was held, which noted

163_British and Canadian businesses are interested in buying Belarusian lumber on the exchange trades [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskij-i-kanadskij-biznes-zainteresovan-v-zakupke-belorusskih-pilomaterialov-na-birzhevyyh-torgah-391809-2020>

164_Belarus and Uzbekistan develop cooperation in electronic procurement [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-razvivajut-vzaimodejstvie-v-oblasti-elektronnyh-zakupok-390898-2020/>

positive changes in the trade cooperation between the two countries, associated with changes in the structure of Belarusian exports. First, the product range of supplies from Belarus to China is expanding. Second, the dependence of the bilateral trade turnover on the export of Belarusian potash fertilizers to Chinese consumers is decreasing. And the main priorities that are planned to intensify joint efforts to expand cooperation are "the inclusion of Belarusian products in the state reserves of China, the creation of joint production facilities in China to process Belarusian raw materials, simplifying trade procedures and eliminating trade barriers and optimizing financial settlements.¹⁶⁵The BUTB has already accredited 28 Chinese companies as of the beginning of December 2020, 13 of which have been accredited here this year.

Suffice it to say that during the three quarters of 2020 the amount of purchase transactions made by companies from China on the exchange increased more than tenfold(!) and amounted to two million dollars. The commodity structure was dominated by timber billets and edged lumber. We should note that until recently, most of the Belarusian lumber products used to go to the Celestial Empire mainly via the Baltic States, which contributed to its rise in price for the end consumer and reduced the currency earnings of Belarusian exporters. "Thanks to the joint project with Bellesexport and Beltamozhservice, dozens of Belarusian timber companies were able to sell their products to the high-margin Chinese market without intermediaries¹⁶⁶.

The BUTB believes that this sharp increase in interest in exchange trading on the part of Chinese business is due not only to the favorable price situation, but also to "convenient logistics that Belarusian exporters

165 Nikolai Snopkov: Belarus considers agricultural products as a new export driver to China [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9682>

166 Belarusian lumber worth \$5.1 million sold to China through BUTB since the beginning of the year [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-na-51-mln-prodali-v-kitaj-chez-butb-s-nachala-goda-400531-2020/>

were able to offer. In particular, starting from this year [2020], it became possible to buy lumber products on different delivery bases (multi-base lots), which allowed Chinese companies to choose the pickup point that suited them best. In addition, the delivery time has been significantly reduced due to the use of rail transport under the Chinese government's One Belt, One Road initiative¹⁶⁷

After receiving such statistics, the BUTB began to consider the possibility of introducing a separate trading session for the sale of timber products to the Chinese market, in which all the lots put up for these auctions would be adapted to Chinese consumers as much as possible, and the necessary level of competition would be provided by the dense concentration of buyers. Especially since the increased activity of companies from China has become especially visible since October 2020, when they purchased more than one million dollars worth of lumber through the exchange. This was also the result of the simplified accreditation procedure at the BUTB, which now takes no more than three days to execute all documents. And "in January-November the timber products to the total sum of over \$9 million were sold through the exchange platform in the Chinese direction¹⁶⁸. A year earlier this figure was only about two hundred thousand dollars. Building on this successful experience, BUTB held its first specialized trading session on sales of lumber to China in mid-December 2020. Let's hope that this new form of work will also open up new horizons of interaction with Chinese partners, because there is every reason to believe that in the near future the export nomenclature here will noticeably expand, especially due to the products of

167. More than 10 times the amount of transactions by companies from China on the BUTB in January-September [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-chem-v-10-raz-vyrosla-summa-sdelok-kompanijami-iz-kitaja-na-butb-v-janvare-sentjabre-413129-2020/>

168. BUTB will hold the first specialized export bidding for the Chinese market on December 15 [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-provedet-pervye-spetsializirovannye-eksportnye-torgi-dlja-kitajskogo-rynka-15-dekabnja-420090-2020>

the agro-industrial complex. After all, "apart from timber products, rapeseed oil, beet pulp, meat, sugar and milk products are among prospective exchange goods demanded in the Chinese market. The number of requests from Chinese companies interested in purchasing these products has increased noticeably recently"¹⁶⁹.

In particular, interesting prospects in this "Chinese" context are opening up for rapeseed oil, the export of which through the BUTB as a whole grew three times in value terms in the first eight months of 2020. This can be explained by the fact that rapeseed products are widely used both in the food industry and for the production of biodiesel. Perhaps for this reason, too, the largest buyer of these products at BUTB is Switzerland, with nearly six million dollars in transactions between January and August 2020. "The top three key markets for Belarusian rapeseed oil sales also include Lithuania with \$3.5 million in deals and Estonia with \$3.3 million."¹⁷⁰.

As for China, where rapeseed oil is also in high demand, its traditional partner for this import position was Canada. "However, due to the protracted trade conflict, the supply of this product noticeably decreased. The resulting shortage has caused record price increases. So now China is actively looking for alternative channels of procurement, and Belarus may become one of them"¹⁷¹. The Chinese trading company "Shandong Liuqing" decided to take advantage of this situation back in

169.Chinese companies in October purchased lumber at the BUTB in the amount of more than \$1 million [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskie-kompanii-v-oktjabre-zakupili-pilomaterialy-cherez-butb-na-summu-bolee-1-mln-417473-2020/>

170_Rapeseed oil export through the BUTB has increased 3 times, the largest buyer is Switzerland [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-vyros-v-3-raza-krupnejshij-pokupatel-shvejtsarija-406915-2020/>

171_. Belarusian pallet board and rapeseed oil will be exported to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskiju-palletnuju-dosku-i-rapsovoe-maslo-budut-eksportirovat-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-408061-2020/>

September 2020. It declared its intention to pass the accreditation procedure and to start working at the BUTB. At the same time, the company expressed its readiness to invest in the Belarusian forestry. It is also interested in the development of the Belarusian transport and logistics infrastructure. This is the multipurpose approach, which was initiated by interaction with the BUTB.

Another important trend in the development of the BUTB in 2020 is the growth of exports of metal products by one third at once - up to Br27 million, where the main volume of transactions came from ferrous and nonferrous metals, as well as their scrap and waste. Suffice it to say that "in the first half of the year, companies from Germany, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine purchased these products for Br24 million, exceeding the figure for 2019 by 20%¹⁷². During the same period, a joint project with the Belarusian Steel Works was actively developed at the BUTB, thanks to which three million Belarusian rubles worth of rebar was sold to the Polish market. In the future the exchange plans to expand the commodity nomenclature of metal products exports at the expense of mastering new perspective markets in order to increase the share of this section in the next five years from five to twenty percent.

In this regard, of great interest are the plans of the BUTB to bring other Belarusian enterprises to foreign markets as well. In particular, the exchange plans to combine its efforts to achieve this goal with the Miorsky metal-rolling plant, an innovative industrial enterprise in the Vitebsk region with a significant amount of foreign investments, which will be able to produce about 240 thousand tons of tinplate per year after it reaches its design capacity. It should be noted that only Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works in Russia and ArcelorMittal Temirtau Joint Stock Company in

172_Exports of metal products through the BUTB in the first half of the year increased by 33% [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-metalloproduktov-iz-belarusii-2020/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-metalloproduktov-iz-belarusii-2020)

Kazakhstan produce similar products in the former Soviet Union. For the Belarusian export-oriented company, "Scandinavia is of most interest <...> as a promising market. This is primarily because of favorable pricing conditions and consistently high demand for tinplate steel¹⁷³. Recall that the white tin is widely used in the manufacture of packaging for food and chemical products. The company plans to produce ultra-thin tinplate starting from 0,1 mm. With the help of the BUTB the company hopes not only to find new buyers and in time to establish regular supplies of tinplate to Europe, but also to find partners for raw materials, since the mechanism of exchange trading is effective in both directions - when exporting finished products and when buying raw materials.

All these facts indicate that the pace of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange development today is such that it can and should become the driver of electronic trade in the Republic of Belarus in the near future, where they believe that to ensure sustainable development and competitiveness of the Belarusian state in the global arena, "it is necessary to create own digital platforms in key economic sectors, so that foreign businesses coming to the Belarusian market would not impose their technological solutions, but integrate into the digital infrastructure of the country¹⁷⁴. In this regard, it is safe to say that the first fifteen years of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange's operation are evidence that the foundation for solving the objectives set here is solid.

173. BUTB and Miorskiy metal-rolling plant plan to jointly develop exports of white tin plate [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-miorskij-metalloprokatnyj-zavod-planirujut-sovmestno-razvivat-eksport-beloj-zhesti-400676-2020/>

174. BUTB should become a driver of e-commerce in the country - Koltovitch [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-dolzha-stat-drajverom-elektronnoj-torgovli-v-strane-koltovich-401009-2020>

Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange: peculiarities of multi-vector partnership

Deeper integration with the Russian Federation in the next five years will remain the most important task of the Belarusian government in terms of the development of foreign economic activities and international cooperation. To this end, it provides for the implementation of plans of joint activities by sectors of the economy, as well as "on trade-economic, scientific-technical and socio-cultural cooperation with the regions of the Russian Federation"¹⁷⁵. And today many market participants in our country take active measures to actualize activity in this direction. Among them is the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE), for which the Russian vector of interaction has a serious potential.

Recall that as of December 1, 2020, 2482 residents of Russia used the services of the BUTB. And this despite the fact that at the same time "24815 companies were accredited here, including 4904 companies from 63 countries"¹⁷⁶. But the experience of interaction with Russian partners in 2020 showed that even in the regions bordering Belarus - Smolensk, Bryansk, and Pskov regions - they do not yet fully understand the opportunities that this e-commerce mechanism offers. When this perception changes for the better, the result is not long in coming. A good example in this context is the record export sales in January 2021 at BUTB Cement, which increased tenfold at once, to \$5.3 million. This growth was "due to the increased attention to the exchange by Russian trading and construction companies <...>. After Ukraine introduced an anti-dumping duty and effectively closed its market to Belarusian cement, Russia became a

175 Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. -- C. 44.

176 Zalessky, B.L. Prospective Mechanism of Electronic Commerce on the Way to Maximum Realization of Potential / B.L. Zalessky // Socio-Humanitarian Studies. -- 2020. -- №5. -- C. 20.

priority¹⁷⁷. And now at least eight Russian companies regularly take part in these cement export auctions at BUTB.

Perhaps for this reason, too, with the arrival of 2021, the BUTB has seriously stepped up its activities in the Russian direction. For example, in February they reached an agreement with the Trade Representation of the Russian Federation in Belarus on joint actions to increase trade turnover between Belarusian and Russian regions. For this purpose it is supposed to use the business contacts of the trade mission to inform the Russian business about the possibilities of the Belarusian-Turkish Trade Mission as an effective platform for trade and purchase activities. Besides, the parties will combine their efforts in organizing and holding events aimed at stepping up cooperation between Belarusian and Russian business entities to make the BUOTB a primary entry point into the Belarusian market for all representatives of the Russian business. After all, registration on this trading floor "automatically opens access to 25 thousand companies from 64 countries, which, by the way, is actively used by foreign participants. A recent example is a company from the Kaliningrad Region, which sold rapeseed oil worth over 1 million euros through our trading platform. The buyer was a Lithuanian company"¹⁷⁸. Indeed, this work on expanding business contacts with Russian regions is already beginning to yield results. During only one week in February 2021 eight companies from Russia were accredited at the BUTB. This proves that strengthening of cooperation with Russian regions has really become one of the priority tasks of the BUTB this year, and a variety of interaction tools are used for its solution.

177_Cement exports through the BUTB in January increased 10-fold [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-tsementa-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-v-10-raz-428027-2021/>

178 BUTB and the Trade Mission of the Russian Federation intend to promote an increase in trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-torgovoe-predstavitelstvo-rf-namereny-sodejstvovat-uvelicheniju-tovarooborota-428409-2021/>

Thus, in the first decade of February 2021, the possibilities to increase mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia were discussed at an online conference with the participation of representatives of the government of this Russian region. It should be noted that in 2020, "the trade turnover between Belarus and Udmurtia amounted to \$184.5 million, or 112.5% of the level of 2019¹⁷⁹. During the discussion the parties agreed that even these relatively good indicators can be significantly improved through the implementation of the exchange trade, which can become an effective tool to increase the volume and expand the range of goods demanded in the Belarusian and Udmurt markets. If we take the part that for the last several years Udmurtia has become one of the most export-oriented regions of Russia and today ranks first in the neighboring country by the growth rate of non-energy export, then we can be sure that in the nearest future representatives of Udmurt business will become permanent participants of trading at BUTB.

In the second decade of February 2021 an online conference dedicated to the expansion of cooperation between the BUTB and the business community of the Volgograd region was held. The participants of this discussion noted the steady trend observed since the end of 2020 to increase the number of exchange trade residents from Russia. It is not only export of Belarusian goods to the Russian market and purchase of Russian products by Belarusian companies, but also more frequent "transit transactions between companies from Russia and third countries. That is, the exchange is used as a tool for insuring foreign trade risks¹⁸⁰. And this,

179. Belarus and Udmurtia intend to increase trade turnover through more active use of exchange trade [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-udmurtija-namereny-uvelichit-tovarooborot-za-schet-bolee-aktivnogo-ispolzovanija-birzhevoj-427781-2021/>

180. BUTB expects to expand cooperation with the business community of the Volgograd region [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasschityvaet-na-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-s-delovymi-krugami-volgogradskoj-oblasti-429055-2021/>

of course, expands its opportunities in terms of attracting business partners, among which, we believe, there will soon appear many more representatives of Volgograd Region's business.

While developing partnership relations with the regions of the Russian Federation, the BUOTB at the same time plans to seriously expand cooperation with the business community of European countries in 2021 due to the huge and unrealized potential in this vector of partnership. This can be judged on the basis of the trading in January 2021, which resulted in the 27% growth of saw-timbers export through the BUUTB, exceeding 30 million dollars. At the same time, "the main markets were Germany, Latvia and Lithuania. Companies from these countries purchased Belarusian lumber products for a total of \$24.4 million¹⁸¹. Representatives of such European countries as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Estonia were also among the largest buyers of this type of products, with which wooden billets for export were in the highest demand. Suffice it to say that during the first exchange trading on the BUTB in 2021 over one and a half million wooden utility poles worth more than one million euros were sold to the United Kingdom alone, which immediately exceeded the amount of exports to this country in 2020. An important detail: previously these products were supplied to the British market in much smaller quantities and mainly through intermediaries in the Baltic States. The results of this January trading session clearly confirmed the high export potential of timber products made in our country, as well as the trend observed last year, when "the amount of exchange transactions for exports

181 In January lumber exports through the BUTB increased by 27% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-janvare-eksport-pilomaterialov-cherez-butb-vyros-na-27-429846-2021/>

of rounded and debarked wood products in 2020 amounted to 4.2 million euros. The main markets were Germany, Latvia Lithuania and Poland¹⁸² .

Planning to expand the geography of sales of the same wood products in the European vector in 2021, the BUTB is already working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian lumber, for example, to France. Thus, in February 2021 they outlined the prospects of using the mechanism of exchange trading with the French importer of timber - Bois Import SA. The fact is that this company has been buying lumber, including Belarusian lumber, from the Baltic countries for a long time. However, the coronavirus pandemic made adjustments to this arrangement, forcing to look for alternative markets. So Belarus came to the attention of French buyers, where about half of all manufactured lumber - about two million cubic meters - is already sold for export through the mechanism of exchange trading. It is clear that this opens up a lot of opportunities for importers from France. Especially since the French company was also invited "not to limit itself to lumber, but to consider buying other wood products as well, including wood pellets. Six new pellet plants were built and put into operation in Belarus in 2020. Six more are planned for construction this year [2021]¹⁸³. As a result, the annual volume of exports from Belarus could reach about 250 thousand tons of pellets.

The fact that the possibility of sales of Belarusian fuel pellets or pellets through BUTB in 2021 to European countries may seriously increase can be judged by the interest of European businessmen in the online conference Nordic Pellets Conference 2021, organized by the Swedish bioenergy association Svebio in late January 2021. The event

182_A British company bought more than 1 million euros worth of wood products through the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/britanskaja-kompanija-kupila-chez-butb-produktsiju-derevoobrabotki-bolee-chem-na-1-mln-evro-424714-2021/>

183 BUTB is working on the possibility of exporting Belarusian lumber to France [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-prorabatvyaet-vozmozhnost-eksporta-belorusskih-pilomaterialov-vo-frantsiju-430040-2021>

brought together leading bioenergy experts and biofuel producers from Denmark, France, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. They were brought to this conference by the fact that today in the European Union there is a steady growth in demand for pellets. This, in turn, contributes not only to the increase of own production capacity of European producers, but also imports of such products from other countries, including Belarus. At the same time, BUTB is confident that "given the low capacity of the domestic market, almost the entire volume of pellets produced in Belarus can be supplied abroad, which will make our country one of the largest exporters in the region¹⁸⁴. After all, the use of the BUTB platform by European companies will allow them to buy any required volume of products directly from Belarusian producers, both under one-time and annual contracts. The demand for this type of e-commerce is evidenced by the statistics of 2020, when only lumber was sold for 260 million dollars, and companies from 30 countries were the buyers.

Vegetable oils and fodder additives are another type of product in demand in European countries, exports of which increased 2.3-fold in 10 months of 2020 and reached \$26 million, accounting for more than 40 percent of agricultural exports through the BUTB. "Increased demand for Belarusian vegetable oils in the Baltic States contributed to the growth of export supplies: oilseeds products worth \$14.7 million were sold there, with Lithuania being the leader in purchases with \$6.2 million in transactions."¹⁸⁵ At the same time in just a month and a half beet pulp and molasses were sold through the BUTB for almost two million dollars, the main buyers of which were again the countries of the European Union.

184 BUTB is ready to promote exports of fuel pellets to Northern Europe [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-gotova-sodejstvovat-eksportu-toplivnyh-granul-v-severnuju-evropu-426052-2021/>.

185 Vegetable oils and feed additives accounted for more than 40% of agricultural exports through the BUTB [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rastitelnye-masla-i-kormovye-dobavki-obespechili-bolee-40-eksporta-selhozproduktsii-cherez-butb-415013-2020/>

Finally, in January 2021, the export of rapeseed oil through the BUOTB grew almost tenfold, "reaching \$8.4 million"¹⁸⁶. And here the leaders in terms of the amount of transactions are Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland. The very dynamics of growth in sales in the European direction suggests that the opportunities to expand Belarusian exports in this foreign track are far from exhausted.

Finally, another priority for the development of the BUTB in 2021 is to increase the share in the exchange turnover of companies from the "far arc" countries - Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America. This can be explained by the significant potential that exists in the interaction with these partners, and the successful implementation of which promises considerable benefits to both Belarusian exporters and foreign importers. First of all, the People's Republic of China should be mentioned among the countries of the "far arc", the development of business contacts with representatives of which is particularly intense at the BUTB today. Suffice it to say that "at the end of the first two months [of 2021], China outperformed almost all of the major markets that Belarus is currently trading with in terms of the volume of exchange transactions"¹⁸⁷.

In this context, it is quite significant that at the beginning of March 2021 the 5,000th foreign company accredited for participation in trading on the BUOTB was the Chinese trading and manufacturing company Wenzhou Ruijun Steel Co. Ltd, which in addition became the 36th company from China on the exchange. The enterprise is going to use this exchange platform to supply Belarus with rolled steel and other ferrous metal products. At the initial stage it will be sales of pipes, and then,

186 Rapeseed oil exports through the BUTB in January increased almost tenfold [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/>

187 The 5,000th non-resident company accredited on the BUTB [Electronic Resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovalas-5-tysjachnaja-kompanija-nerezident-431246-2021/>

depending on the dynamics of sales and market conditions, the range of products will be gradually expanded. Probably, approximately as it happens at the BUTB with woodworking products.

We would like to remind you that special trading sessions on selling lumber for export with delivery in containers to the destination on the Chinese market have been held at BUTB since December 2020. "As a result, the volume of supplies of domestic lumber products to China has increased significantly and in January-February amounted to almost \$5 million in monetary terms. This is largely contributed by the fact that almost every month two or three new Chinese companies are added to the bidding for timber products on the BUTB. This has a positive effect on forming a highly competitive environment here and allows timber processors from Belarus to sell lumber on more favorable terms. In particular, during the first exchange trade of timber products for the Chinese market in January 2021 over 11 thousand cubic meters of sawn timber was sold for about two and a half million dollars. Due to the price increase during the trading session, the exporters from Belarus received additional proceeds of more than \$90 thousand. And "the entire volume of the lumber for sale was purchased with delivery to Qingdao - the largest seaport in Shandong province. This increases the attractiveness of Belarusian goods for¹⁸⁸Chinese buyers, while domestic exporters get an opportunity to expand the geography of sales and increase revenues¹⁸⁹

It is also important in terms of development of the Chinese vector on the BUTB is the fact that in 2021 there started export deals on such perspective for Chinese buyers items as rapeseed oil, milk powder and

188_Belarusian lumber worth \$2.6 million sold to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-na-26-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-cherez-butb-431434-2021/>

189_Belarusian lumber worth \$2.4 million sold to China in exchange trades [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-pilomaterialy-na-24-mln-prodany-v-kitaj-na-birzhevyh-torgah-425850-2021/>

sugar. As for rapeseed oil, immediately after the start of its delivery to the Chinese market through the exchange platform, according to the results of the first two trading sessions, the deals were made to the total amount of about one and a half million dollars. This allowed China to take the second place in terms of the amount of transactions with these products, displacing the leaders of the year 2020 - Latvia, Estonia and Switzerland. At the same time there were prerequisites for a further significant increase in other export indicators. "First of all it is the growth of the number of companies from China accredited at the exchange.¹⁹⁰, which contributes to an increase in the level of competition during the bidding.

In January 2021 the first batch of dried milk was also sold to the Chinese market through the BUTB. "Two lots with the volume of 300 and 100 tons were put up for trading. The total amount of transactions made at the end of the trading session amounted to \$ 940 thousand"¹⁹¹. This happened after world food prices began to rise in the second half of 2020, which greatly increased the attractiveness of Belarusian dairy products not only in China, but also in other countries of the "far arc. This is evidenced, in particular, by the return of one of the world's largest agro-traders, the Singaporean company Olam International, to the BUTB at the end of 2020. And it shows that the prospects for the export of dairy products from Belarus to the Asian continent through the mechanism of exchange trade are very significant today.

Egypt is another "far-abroad" country, whose representatives are beginning to work actively on the BUTB. In early March 2021, Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export made its first deal to

190 Rapeseed oil exports through the BUTB in January increased almost tenfold [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-rapsovogo-masla-cherez-butb-v-janvare-vyros-pochti-v-10-raz-426697-2021/>

191 A shipment of milk powder sold to China for the first time through the exchange [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/partiju-suhogo-moloka-vperve-prodali-v-kitaj-cherez-birzhu-424904-2021/>

export Belarusian products to that North African country by purchasing a trial batch of Belarusian lumber. The company's strategic goal is "to become the largest importer of Belarusian timber products to Egypt and other North African countries in the future. The first step in this direction has already been taken¹⁹². Its next step in cooperation with the BUTB may become the role of a stockbroker on this electronic trading platform. And then the market of almost the entire African continent may give new colors to Belarusian producers-exporters. With the help of such an export mechanism as the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange.

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192_The first deal with a company from Egypt was made on the BUTB [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervuju-sdelku-s-kompaniej-iz-egipta-sovershili-na-butb-431073-2021>

Belarus: Projects for the future are being built today

The Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2025 sets a task to reach the level of innovative development of the leading countries in the region of Eastern Europe in five years. For this purpose, it is planned to create new points of growth of the Belarusian economy, including through the implementation of complex "projects of the future" - "new innovative projects in the areas: electrical industry, electric transport, bioindustry, pharmaceuticals, robotics, instrumentation, production of composite materials".¹⁹³The project is also based on the development of a line of prototypes of fundamentally new equipment for Belarus and the organization of mass production on their basis.

Note that the solution to this problem must and will be based on certain experience from previous years. All the more so, there is something to build upon. Suffice it to say that over the last five years Belarus has increased production of innovative products by one and a half times, up to almost seven and a half billion dollars. The "share of exports of science-intensive and high-tech products increased from 30% in 2015 to 38% in 2020, the share of innovatively active organizations increased from 19.6% to 26%"¹⁹⁴. In addition, the country has already created a network of 17 technoparks, which cover all Belarusian regions and become the centers of attraction of innovative industries and developments.

The residents of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone", where 68 companies from 14 countries were registered at the end of

193 Program of activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025. - Minsk, 2020. -- C. 25.

194 Belarus has increased the production of innovative products in five years by 1.5 times [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-za-pjat-let-uvlechila-proizvodstvo-innovatsionnoj-produksii-v-15-raza-415135-2020/>

2020, have great hopes in this regard. An important detail: 12 residents already belong specifically to the sphere of science, innovation, new, absolutely unique developments. One such business entity is the innovative Chinese-Belarusian enterprise "Aviation Technologies and Complexes," whose products were presented at the Great Stone in December 2020 - unmanned aerial vehicles of multicopter and aircraft type, as well as multipurpose unmanned aerial complexes of hybrid type. It is no secret that the demand for such equipment in the world right now is very high. That is why the manufacturing company has already reached an agreement with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry "to assist in the active promotion of Belarusian equipment and technologies in the field of remote control in foreign markets"¹⁹⁵. Such innovative products, we can be sure, will not have any delays in sales in the near and far abroad. Another promising resident appeared here in December 2020 - the company "Solidpipe System", which will implement a project in the field of new materials related to the production and application of innovative protective coatings on components for equipment used in the mining industry. The point is that "this technology is unique for Belarus and the countries of the Eurasian region. The start of production is scheduled for 2021"¹⁹⁶

The Sino-Belarusian Center for Cooperation in Science and Technology, opened here in December 2020, is intended to facilitate the development of innovative production in the Great Stone Industrial Park, which will house research laboratories, areas for incubation and acceleration of startups, a testing and small-scale production center, and a hall for demonstration of scientific and technological achievements. It is

195 In the "Great Stone" presented the company "Aviation Technologies and Complexes" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-prezentovali-kompaniju-aviatsionnye-tehnologii-i-kompleksy-421952-2020/>

196 The Great Stone resident implements a project in the field of new materials [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezident-velikogo-kamnja-realizuet-proekt-v-sfere-novyh-materialov-420268-2020/>

noteworthy that "among those who will work in the opened center is the Chinese-Belarusian Innovation Center of Industrial Technologies, which was created by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of Guangdong province (PRC). In the first quarter of 2021, the Spark program will start working here, which will help develop research projects of the two countries"¹⁹⁷¹⁹⁸

As a whole, in 2021, the priority areas of work at the Great Stone include support for the implementation of resident investment projects, as well as the development of a high-quality development program for the industrial park and a feasibility study for facilities of its second phase, which provides for "further expansion of production sectors to attract investment, the active promotion of the creation of a regional research cooperation platform"¹⁹⁹. To be more specific, during implementation of the second stage of the development of "Great Stone" and development of the area of almost one thousand hectares it is "planned to create a smart city - eco-friendly, with non-standard solutions, the introduction of advanced innovations in the field of telecommunications, information, mobile, pilotless technologies, artificial intelligence, quantum computing"²⁰⁰. All these facts indicate that the plans associated with the Great Stone Industrial Park, as an innovative "project of the future," are quite real, specific and

197 The Sino-Belarusian center of cooperation in the field of scientific and technological achievements is opened in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajsko-beloruskij-tsentri-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-nauchno-tehnicheskij-dostizhenij-otkryt-v-421475-2020/>

198 Construction of the international exhibition center began in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/stroitelstvo-mezhdunarodnogo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-nachalos-v-velikom-kamne-421518-2020/>

199 Yan, G. Will Chinese business continue to invest in Belarus / G. Yan // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/prodolzhit-li-kitajskij-biznes-investirovat-v-belarus-jan-gan-o-novyh-tsentrakh-prijazhenija-7602/>

200 Declared investments of Great Stone residents are estimated at more than \$1.2 billion [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zajavlennye-investitsii-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-otsenivajutsja-v-bolee-chem-12-mlrd-421491-2020/>

feasible, which is especially important in the current difficult conditions for the development of the Belarusian economy.

Strong regions, defined as "comfortable and safe living and working conditions, quality and accessible social infrastructure, high mobility, investments in new production and productive employment,²⁰¹ also among the main priorities of the socio-economic development program of the Republic of Belarus until 2025. At the same time, the strategy of regional development implies the implementation of investment projects in lagging regions - on the use of local resources and the creation of new industries, and in the territories with preferential treatment - on the creation of high-tech export-oriented industries. It is clear that the more efficient are the jobs in the regions, the higher is the productivity there, the more attractive will be life itself outside of the capital. In this regard, "the first task is to create conditions for the emergence in the regions of enterprises with highly productive jobs, with a certain level of wages²⁰²²⁰³. This is evidenced by concrete facts.

Suffice it to say that as of January 1, 2021 440 economic entities were registered as residents in the FEZ. And now projects involving investments from more than 30 countries totaling about seven billion dollars are being implemented there. Only in 2020, 43 new residents were attracted to Belarus' FEZ, about half of them with foreign capital, with a total volume of declared investments of about two hundred million dollars. And according to other indicators, the dynamics of these territorial complexes can not but please. "Compared with 2019, there has been a 1.5-

201 Main provisions of the draft program of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/osnovnye-polozeniya-proekta-programmy-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-respubliki-belarus-na-202.html>

202 GDP growth and regional development - Minister of Economy about plans for the five-year period [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rost-vvp-i-razvitie-regionov-ministr-ekonomiki-o-planah-na-pyatiletku-428671-2021/>

203 Zalessky, B. With an Emphasis on Cooperation. Chronicle of International Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. - - C. 104.

fold increase in foreign direct investment on a net basis (up to \$307 million), a 10% increase in industrial production and sales revenues <...> and a 2.2% increase in goods exports (up to \$5.9 billion). Depending on the FEZ residents formed up to 85% of investments, up to half of the export of goods and a third of the volume of industrial production of the regions" ²⁰⁴

So, only in **the FEZ "Gomel-Raton"**, where at the beginning of 2021 there were 70 economic entities, including 32 companies with foreign capital from 16 countries of the world, acting as residents, almost 110 million dollars of direct foreign investment was attracted for investment projects in 2020, which was almost half of the total investment volume in the region. And this has given the appropriate result. FEZ residents sold most of their products outside of Belarus. The volume of those supplies exceeded one billion dollars. All in all the goods were delivered to the markets of 63 countries of the world. "The largest share in the export goes to Russia (48.1%), Ukraine (18.6%), Poland (7.8%), China (6.1%), Lithuania (6.6%) <...>. The foreign trade turnover of goods in 2020 was \$1.7 billion"²⁰⁵ with a surplus of more than \$600 million. At the same time in 2020 in the FEZ opened more than 700 new jobs, and the total number of people employed here today is almost thirty thousand people.

Residents of **FEZ "Grodnoinvest"**, which forms about 40 percent of total exports of Grodno Region, have also achieved a trade surplus of \$438 million in 2020. This is due to the supply of wood and paper products, furniture, food, as well as machinery and equipment, computer, electronic and optical equipment, electrical equipment, vehicles, finished metal and textile products, chemical products and fertilizers. In total,

204 Residents of free economic zones in 2020 formed almost 5% of GDP of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-svobodnyh-ekonomicheskikh-zon-v-2020-godu-sformirovali-pochti-5-vvp-belarusi-428975-2021>

205 Residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton increased production by 13.1% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-ration-uvlichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-131-v-2020-godu-429328-2021/>

products of FEZ residents were exported to 65 countries in 2020. Even to such rather exotic countries as Zimbabwe, Peru, and Somalia. But Russia, Poland and Ukraine remained the main markets. Nevertheless, "in 2020, there was a significant increase in supplies of Belarusian products to the United States (growth rate - 337%), the United Arab Emirates (229%), Estonia (210%), Egypt (209%), Canada (194%), and the Netherlands (185%) . It is also characteristic that supplies to the European Union increased to almost \$200 million, accounting for one fifth of all exports of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents.²⁰⁶

In the FEZ "Minsk" residents' exports in 2020 increased by 11% to nearly \$1.5 billion, while the inflow of foreign direct investment on a net basis increased 3.7-fold - to \$68 million. In addition, in 2020, here, "a little more than 1 thousand people were hired for additional jobs.²⁰⁷, and in the future it is planned to implement projects in mechanical engineering, instrumentation and green technology, so that by 2025 to create in the FEZ about four thousand more highly productive jobs.

FEZ "Vitebsk" is also one of the real tools of economic development of the Vitebsk region in an innovative way. Today 56 investment projects are being implemented here in 16 sectors with the participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Great Britain, the United States, Israel, Cyprus and Estonia. In 2020, they exported their products for more than 550 million dollars, which amounted to almost one third of the volume of deliveries to foreign markets of the entire Vitebsk region. This made it possible to obtain a positive balance of foreign trade: goods - more than 177 million dollars, services -

206 Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" exported products to 65 countries in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2020-godu-eksportirovali-produktsiju-v-65-stran-429156-2021>

207 Exports by residents of FEZ Minsk in 2020 amounted to almost \$1.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-minsk-v-2020-godu-sostavil-pochti-15-mlrd-429290-2021/>

more than 13 million dollars. "At the same time FEZ "Vitebsk" is the only free economic zone in the field of services with the excess of exports over imports. The total amount of services rendered to foreign partners was \$24.4 million²⁰⁸.

These high indicators would not have been possible without the reliance on an active investment policy, which is characteristic of this FEZ. Suffice it to say that in 2020, the inflow of foreign direct investment here increased by another 16 percent and exceeded 30 million dollars. Thanks to this, 235 new jobs were created here, more than one and a half times the level declared in the business plans. An important detail: in 2020, six new businesses have registered in the FEZ as residents, with a total volume of declared investments - more than 35 million dollars, which will create here at least another hundred jobs. Five of them are companies with foreign capital. "Businessmen from Russia, Canada, Ireland and Azerbaijan intend to realize projects on organization of production of food cans, protection means and products of special purpose, match straws, to build photovoltaic stations for energy supply of residents' activity, and also to establish production of plastic lubricants of wide operation temperature range"²⁰⁹.

Three more enterprises received the status of FEZ resident in two incomplete months of 2021. The first of them in the beginning of January was LLC "STS-Beton" with an investment project on development of building materials production. The new resident specializing in the production of cement and concrete, plans to expand the range and master the production of new products for the construction industry after

208 Residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" in 2020 increased production by 17% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-2020-godu-uvelichili-objem-proizvodstva-produktsii-na-17-429730-2021>

209_Vityaz JSC is recognized as the best resident of FEZ Vitebsk by the results of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/oaovityaz-priznано-luchshim-rezidentom-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2020-goda-429541-2021/>

purchasing new equipment. "This will allow to increase volume indicators, as well as to enter new markets, including exporting products."²¹⁰.

In the middle of January the FEZ registered Gidropress LLC with a project to develop production of special hydraulic presses. The company operating in Polotsk and specializing in the development and production of special hydraulic presses for enterprises of general engineering, railroad, military-industrial complex, plans to update the machine park, replenish it with new machines, which will give the opportunity to master the production of new types of products of its own design. "Among the novelties will be the equipment for the production of pipeline fittings for oil and gas industry, as well as a large hydroforming press, which is in demand for the production of shells for the rocket and space industry. Besides, production of the equipment for utilization of 200-liter barrels from fuel and lubricants in field conditions will develop further²¹¹. It is commonly known that the environmental problem related to the 200-liter barrels is typical of the Arctic zone. That is why its solution will allow the new FEZ resident to almost completely export its products.

In mid-February, a private enterprise "New Century Spring" appeared in the FEZ with a project to modernize import-substituting production of components for agricultural machinery. The new resident is an associate member of the Russian association Rosspetsmash, which unites manufacturers of agricultural, construction and road machinery, trailers and semi-trailers. The investment project to be implemented in the free economic zone will make it possible to increase the total output 1.5 times, expand the assortment of manufactured teeth springs, tensile and

210_The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of construction materials [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-422919-2021/>

211_The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-spetsialnogo-gidropressovogo-oborudovanija-424231-2021/>

compression springs for machine-building enterprises, and create additional opportunities for diversifying exports and increasing supplies to foreign markets. And this despite the fact that today this company already exports more than half of its production to partners from Russia.

In addition, "as promising for registration in the FEZ "Vitebsk" are considered two more investment projects to create a wood processing park and organization of the enterprise for the production of bio-coal, which investors from China and Sweden are interested in implementing"²¹². For these and other promising projects to be successful, the FEZ is taking active steps to develop additional energy facilities, a water supply facility and the construction of railroad access roads on the territory of the Zhurzhevo sector on the outskirts of Vitebsk, where "the development of the engineering and transport infrastructure of the site will allow to attract at least \$165 million in foreign investment and organize around 1,000 jobs for projects already implemented or in preparation for registration in the current [2021] year"²¹³. It should be assumed that the implementation of all these plans will mean that FEZ "Vitebsk" will reach a qualitatively new level of innovative development.

Another important mechanism for implementation of the innovation development strategy in Belarus should be the implementation of investment projects on creation of 13 clusters and technoparks on unused and inefficiently used production areas of state enterprises. As a reminder, a technopark is understood today as a form of territorial integration of science, education and production in the form of an association of scientific organizations, design and engineering offices, educational institutions,

212 The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will develop the production of components for agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-budet-razvivat-proizvodstvo-komplektujuschih-dlja-selhozmashin-429288-2021/>

213 About Br40 mln is planned to be invested in the construction of infrastructure facilities of FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-br40-mln-planiruetsja-investirovat-v-stroitelstvo-objektov-infrastruktury-sez-vitebsk-429858-2021>

production enterprises or their subdivisions. In other words, "the purpose of creating a technopark is to concentrate specialists of common activity profile on one territory. Scientists can conduct research there, teach in educational institutions and participate in the process of implementation of the results of their research into life"²¹⁴. Organizations acquiring the status of a technopark resident receive additional opportunities for development in the form of tax and rent privileges, use of special equipment and production facilities of technoparks, legal and business consulting services.

In Belarus, the first project "to create a scientific and technological park was implemented in Mogilev. The founders of CJSC "Mogilev Technology Park" are the city and regional executive committees, as well as universities of the city"²¹⁵. Its registration took place in March 2011. Today the network of innovation infrastructure already covers all regional centers, as well as Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Gorki, Borisov and Lyakhovichi districts, and includes 17 technology parks, 7 technology transfer centers and the Belarusian Innovation Fund. An important detail: residents of Belarusian technology parks over the past five years has increased production in six times - up to nearly 200 million Belarusian rubles in 2020. At the same time, "the number of residents of technoparks during this period has increased 2.2 times, and the total number of their employees - 2.7 times. In 2016-2020, 2566 jobs were created in technoparks, with a plan of 1536"²¹⁶. The main areas of activity of residents of Belarusian technoparks today are such as instrumentation and mechanical engineering, electronics, information technology and software development, medicine, pharmaceuticals and production of medical equipment, as well as "optics,

214 Xiaojuan, L. Formation of Belarusian model of technopark development / L. Xiaojuan // Economics and Banking. -- 2018. -- №2. -- C. 54.

215 Pinyagin, Y. Technoparks as an Element of the Country's Innovation Infrastructure / Y. Pinyagin, L. Xiaojuan // Bankauskii Vestnik. -- 2016. -- №12. -- C. 52.

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laser technology, energy, energy conservation, bio- and nanotechnology²¹⁷. And good results have already been achieved in a number of these areas.

Thus, at the beginning of 2021 there were 61 residents registered in the technoparks of Belarusian universities. The volume of products produced in them in 2020 exceeded 17 million Belarusian rubles, including innovative products - more than 10 million rubles. The peculiarity of these technoparks is that each of them is included in the educational process and each has its own specialization, depending on the region of location and scientific focus. "In particular, the technopark "Unitehprom BSU" specializes in the production of veterinary drugs and pharmaceuticals, the scientific-technical park BNTU "Polytechnic" on the creation and manufacture of medical devices²¹⁸. And the activity of the technopark of Vitebsk State Technological University is aimed at creating innovative production in the light industry. In addition, in the Vitebsk region "a medical-pharmaceutical cluster on the basis of 10 organizations, including two universities and a technopark, was formed. The core of the cluster is Vitebsk Medical University, where specialists in pharmaceuticals are trained. And this is a model for the future²¹⁹.

Another interesting example is the science and technology park of the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, the total profit of its residents "in 2020 has increased 2.5 times - to more than Br 800 thousand²²⁰. And it was only in 2018 that an unused building of one of Grodno's enterprises on Gospodarča Street was reconstructed for this

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technopark. Soon 14 companies became its residents, half of which were founded by university students and professors. Now the construction works on its second phase are being completed in the technopark. For this purpose the former industrial enterprise workshop building of over six thousand square meters has been rearranged and office and production premises with all the infrastructure necessary for the work of the innovative enterprise have been placed there. It is noteworthy that part of this space has already been reserved by companies working in the field of electric transport, bioengineering and energy efficiency. And this indicates good prospects for the development of not only the technopark, but also the region where it is located.

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