

## The boundaries of sustainable partnership. Part VI

The global digitalization that we are all witnessing today is rapidly changing the world around us, invading also the media and information sphere. At the same time, new technologies not only influence the nature of creative work of modern journalists, but also actualize a number of challenges and threats, to which the journalistic community should respond. With this in mind, the Concept of Information Security was approved in the Republic of Belarus in 2019, which refers to information sovereignty as a new approach to ensuring information security, and information neutrality as a form of state and responsible behavior. In international relations, the information sovereignty of the Belarusian state should be ensured based on the principle of information neutrality. Its essence is that, defending its own national interests in the information sphere, the Belarusian side aims at conducting a peaceful foreign information policy and expanding international information exchange. How is this principle implemented in practice? That's what the proposed study is about.



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978-620-2-59936-8



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Cover image: [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)

This book is a translation from the original published under ISBN 978-620-0-56812-0.

Publisher:

Scientia Scripts

is a trademark of

International Book Market Service Ltd., member of OmniScriptum Publishing Group

17 Meldrum Street, Beau Bassin 71504, Mauritius

Printed at: see last page

**ISBN: 978-620-2-59936-8**

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## Belarus: Sustainable development goals and media

In August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus established a working group to promote global sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Belarus, which included specialists of the agency in the field of interaction with the mass media and representatives of television and print media. The aim of this group is to raise awareness of the implementation of the SDG in our country among the Belarusian society.

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Transforming our world: an agenda for sustainable development until 2030", which sets out 17 sustainable development goals aimed, inter alia, at eradicating poverty and hunger, combating inequality and injustice and addressing climate change. This event required all states of the planet, including the Republic of Belarus, to take up the task of creating mechanisms to achieve the SDG.

One and a half years later - in May 2017 - the institutional framework for managing the implementation of the plans was established in our country: firstly, the post of national coordinator for achieving the sustainable development goals was established; secondly, a national architecture for managing the implementation of the SDG was built, which includes the Sustainable Development Council, parliamentary, regional and partner groups for sustainable development, ensuring effective interaction between the public sector and public organizations. After the Council began its work, the Council for Sustainable Development assigned each of the 17 SDGs to the state authorities of Belarus, whose competence includes addressing relevant issues. As a result, "all involved government agencies are part of four sectoral blocks: economy, environment, social sphere and monitoring"<sup>1</sup>.

Following the recommendation of the United Nations to conduct a three-level global, regional and national analysis of progress in achieving sustainable development goals, Belarus already in 2017 presented its voluntary report at the international level on progress in implementing Agenda 2030, then participated in the presentation of the Eurasian Economic Union report on sustainable development at the United Nations headquarters, and in 2018 it itself organized a

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<sup>1</sup> Shchetkina, M. Sustainable development depends on each of us / M. Shchetkina // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/ustojchivoje-razvitiye-zavisit-ot-kazhdogo-iz-nas-6646/>.

regional forum of national focal points on building partnerships between countries and organizations in the framework of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. As a result, Belarus was ranked 23rd in the index of global sustainable development goals for 2018, which was calculated for 156 countries on the basis of a hundred indicators related to the implementation of the CSD, with "an assessment above the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region"<sup>2</sup>.

One of the conditions for successful implementation of sustainable development goals in Belarus is national legislation. In 2018, the Belarusian parliament adopted a number of laws aimed at achieving the SDG. These include specially protected natural areas and the production and circulation of organic products. In 2019, draft laws related to health care and the rights of the disabled were considered. It is also assumed that it is the Goals of sustainable development will become an integral part of the country's social and economic development in order to reach the gross domestic product of one hundred billion dollars by 2025 and "to join the group of countries with average per capita income at purchasing power parity above the world average"<sup>3</sup>.

Another important condition for successful achievement of the SDGs is to synchronize the work of regional groups, as "sustainable development of a country as a whole is possible only if all its regions are sustainable"<sup>4</sup>. That is why territorial development plans should be proposed not only by republican government bodies, but first and foremost by representatives of local government bodies, taking into account the needs and interests of citizens. That is why a comprehensive plan for the development of more than 30 Belarusian regions lagging behind in terms of social and economic development, developed in August 2019 by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus jointly with regional executive committees, is extremely important in this context. The implementation of this plan would make it possible to raise these territories to the national average. Suffice it to say that "today a package of 280 projects has been formed. Approximately 54 projects will be created from scratch, about 80 are investments in existing industries and 140 projects are in the sphere of

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<sup>2</sup> Belarus ranked 23rd among 156 countries in achieving the CSD in 2018 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/belarus-zanjala-23-e-mesto-sredi-156-stran-v-dostizhenii-tsur-za-2018-god-333890-2019/>.

<sup>3</sup> Belarus sees Agenda-2030 as a basis for a new global policy - Myasnikovich [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-povestku-2030-kak-osnovu-dlja-novoj-globalnoj-politiki-mjasnikovich-333892-2019/>.

<sup>4</sup> Meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8943>.

infrastructure (about 30% - industrial infrastructure, the rest - social facilities)"<sup>5</sup>. In addition to these 280 projects, there are 224 other investment proposals. It is also important that part of the projects from this comprehensive plan will be financed by "foreign investors, as well as international financial organizations, which direct funds primarily to infrastructure development, such as construction of water deferrization plants or conversion of boiler houses to local fuels, development of alternative energy sources. World Bank funds will be used to repair schools and hospitals"<sup>6</sup>.

In January 2019, Minsk hosted the first National Forum on Sustainable Development, where over four hundred participants reviewed the national experience of Belarus in achieving the CSD, the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the country until 2030, as well as the specifics of preparing the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period until 2035. It highlighted the positive experience of Brest and Mogilev regions in this regard. And today it is a question of overcoming the diversity of the movement to organize this work in other regions of Belarus.

At the same first National Sustainable Development Forum, it was noted that the country's media have an important role to play in implementing the main provisions of Agenda 2030 into national policy documents, sectoral and regional programmes, and that "much remains to be done to ensure a broad public understanding of the SDGs and the role of each individual in achieving them". That is why, in August 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus established a working group in the national architecture for managing the SSD, composed of journalists deeply immersed in the topic, to carry out information work on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. But already today it is obvious that the efforts of one working group in implementing such a large-scale media project will not be enough. That is why in the same August 2019 the Ministry of Information of the country with the support of the national coordinator of the project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) "Supporting the Functioning of the Architecture of Management of the Process of Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals of the Republic of Belarus" announced a national contest "From Global Goals to Local Actions" in

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<sup>5</sup> It is proposed to include 280 projects [Electronic resource] in the development plan of the lagging regions of Belarus. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-plan-razvitija-otstajuschih-regionov-belarusi-predlagaetsja-vkljuchit-280-proektov-359816-2019/>.

<sup>6</sup> Shchetkina: the work of regional groups to achieve the CSD in Belarus should be synchronized [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/schetkina-rabotu-regionalnyh-grupp-po-dostizheniju-tsur-v-belarusi-nuzhno-sinhronizirovat-333887-2019/>.

order to involve the Belarusian society in the process of achieving the CSD and to intensify the work of journalists.<sup>7</sup>

Until December 1, 2019, the contest accepted essays, interviews, articles, TV and radio programs, publication and broadcast cycles in seven categories, including such areas as: 1) environmental; 2) social topics, including gender equality and youth issues; 3) economic; 4) topics related to vulnerable segments of the population, including people with disabilities, and implementation of the principle of "Leaving no one behind"; 5) interagency cooperation to achieve the CSD; 6) projects aimed at achieving the CSD and implemented by businesses, including impact investment projects; 7) public initiatives aimed at achieving the sustainable development goals.

The results of the contest showed that it became a good check of the level of competence, first of all, of Belarusian journalists and one more opportunity for them to reveal their creative potential. Thanks to this format of creative rivalry, the Belarusian press has had a very comprehensive discussion of the main directions and goals of sustainable development, the possibilities of their implementation and realization. It was not only the leading journalists who took part in the discussion. The competition also attracted a wide audience of readers, TV and radio listeners, confirming once again the conclusion that "the mass media is not just one of the main channels in informing the public about the SSD. In this context, they play a crucial role - educating citizens about the possibilities to make balanced and responsible decisions about themselves, their families, as well as to influence the authorities' decisions on the implementation of the SSD"<sup>8</sup>.

An important detail: in 2020 the Republic of Belarus should significantly strengthen its efforts to achieve sustainable development goals, primarily at the regional level. At the same time, the regional mass media should again have a strong say in addressing this issue, since, according to M. Shchetkina, National Coordinator for the Implementation of the SDG, "without informing the population and involving them in the work of achieving the SDG, practically nothing can be done"<sup>9</sup>. This means that the range of publications on this topic in

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<sup>7</sup> The national contest for mass media "From Global Goals to Local Action" [Electronic Resource] was announced. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/objjavlen-respublikanskij-konkurs-dlja-smi-ot-globalnyh-tselej-k-lokalnym-dejstvijam-359398-2019/>.

<sup>8</sup> Teams of "7 Days" and "Belaruskaya Dumki" editors won the competition for the coverage of the CSD [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/kollektivny-redaktsij-7-dnej-i-belaruskaj-dumki-pobedili-v-konkurse-po-osvescheniju-tsur-373180-2019/>.

<sup>9</sup> In 2020, Belarus will strengthen its efforts to achieve the CSD at the regional level [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-usiljat-rabotu-podostizheniju-tsur-na-regionalnom-urovne-373167-2019/>.

regional media should be very broad, covering almost all 17 sustainable development goals and taking into account the country's socio-economic development priorities until 2030. It is worth recalling here that the work of the mass media is very closely related to Goal 16, which implies the promotion of a peaceful, open society and partnership.

As for other SDGs, in the present-day conditions the Republic of Belarus acquires the Goal No. 5: "Decent Work and Economic Growth", which sets the task to develop the economy of the Belarusian regions at an accelerated pace. A characteristic detail in this regard is that "the traditional economy has almost exhausted its growth reserves, and further development is only possible with the creation of new industries, including the attraction of foreign investors"<sup>10</sup>. In other words, as First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus D. Krutoy said, "one of the most important tasks will be to attract investments, improve the relevant legislation and review the entire investment agenda"<sup>11</sup>. In this case, the focus will be on regional policy. In particular, the Belarusian government is already actively engaged in three large pilot projects: Orsha district of Vitebsk region, working with territories lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development, as well as 11 major cities.

In addition to the fact that in 2019 the country implemented the most important investment projects in such areas as automotive, metallurgical and construction industries, pulp and paper, woodworking and light industry, oil refining, petrochemical and energy complexes. In total, as of mid-December 2019, "out of 34 particularly important investment projects, 22 have already been put into operation".<sup>12</sup> 12 of which have reached their design capacity. But it is not only these big projects that should be in the sphere of special attention of regional mass media.

Thus, at the regional level, the Vitebsk Oblast demonstrates positive dynamics in attracting foreign investments, particularly Latvian ones. For three quarters of 2019 their volume from the Latvian investors has grown here at once in three and a half times, having exceeded two million dollars. On the territory of Vitebsk region there are already 90 organizations registered in the sphere of trade, woodworking, rendering of motor transport services, clothing services,

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<sup>10</sup> Sergei Rumas: Belarus is developing an action plan to create conditions for economic development [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9175>.

<sup>11</sup> Sergei Rumas introduced the team of the First Deputy Prime Minister [Electronic Resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9155>.

<sup>12</sup> Sergey Rumas: 22 out of 34 particularly important investment objects were put into operation. [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9174>.

production of plastic products. The fact that "33 cooperation agreements have been concluded between the districts and cities of Vitebsk region and Latvian municipalities" certainly plays a significant role in strengthening these positive trends<sup>13</sup>.

Even stronger indicators are characteristic in this context for the Brest region, whose economy is planned to attract at least \$90 million of foreign direct investment on a net basis in 2020. Half of them is planned to be directed to the free economic zone "Brest". As for the specific cities of the region, the "task for Brest - about \$ 15 million of foreign direct investment, Baranovichi and Pinsk - over \$6 million<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, a little less than half of these funds will be spent on the purchase of machinery, equipment, vehicles, so that at the expense of modernization and technical re-equipment of existing enterprises, creation of new production facilities to open about six and a half thousand new jobs.

At the level of specific business entities, an interesting experience of work with foreign investment is demonstrated by an enterprise with almost 60-year history - OJSC "Gorynsky Agrokombinat", located in the working settlement Rechitsa of Stolinsky district, Brest region, which only in August 2019 left the sanitation procedure by concluding a settlement agreement with creditors. Having actively worked with foreign investors, the staff of the joint stock company received from the Polish partner about 800 thousand dollars to complete the production of green peas. Modernization of existing production facilities allowed to expand the range of products. In particular, here "started the production of a new type of products - boiled sterilized vegetables in vacuum packaging. This is an absolutely natural product without the addition of preservatives, even such harmless as sugar and salt. The shelf life of such ready vegetables is six months, and the color, quality and taste of the product are preserved<sup>15</sup>. If we take into account that the work on the introduction of new technology in production at the agro-industrial complex is almost completed and even allowed to conclude a contract with a Russian company for the supply of a new product line to the trading network, then this experience of attracting foreign investment can be considered doubly successful.

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<sup>13</sup> Shcherbitsky, A. The volume of Latvian investments in Vitebsk region for 9 months has grown in 3.5 times / A. Shcherbitsky // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/objem-latvijskih-investitsij-v-vitebskuju-oblast-za-9-mesjatsev-vyros-v-35-raza-371103-2019/>.

<sup>14</sup> Foreign direct investment in the Brest region's economy in 2020 will amount to at least \$90 million [-Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/prjamyje-inostrannye-investitsii-v-ekonomiku-brestskoj-oblasti-v-2020-godu-sostavjat-ne-menee-90-mln-374236-2019/>.

<sup>15</sup> . Polish investor has invested Br1.6 million [Electronic resource] in production of Goryna Agrokombinat. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/polskij-investor-vlozhit-v-proizvodstvo-gorynskogo-agrokombinata-br16-mln-373083-2019/>.

And it can be the subject of a detailed study not only in the Brest regional press, but also in the media of other Belarusian regions.

All of the above facts eloquently illustrate the conclusion that the implementation of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including CSD No. 5, related to the topic of attracting foreign investment and its effective use in Belarusian regions, should be firmly anchored in the front pages of regional, district and city newspapers and should reflect to the fullest extent possible the experience already accumulated in this regard by specific business entities. It is also important to intensify the work of mass media in this direction because "the media not only fix our idea of reality, but also actually model the reality itself, the scenario and the dynamics of events<sup>16</sup>..." . At the same time, the task of media is to reflect reality, with all its problems, complexities and contradictions, "in the future to influence the situation for the better"<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Kuntsevich, A. Responsibility to society distinguishes a journalist from other subjects of information creation (in Russian) / A. Kuntsevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/opinions/view/otvetstvennost-pered-obschestvom-otlichaet-zhurnalista-ot-drugih-subjektov-sozdaniya-informatsii-7110/>.

<sup>17</sup> Karliukevich, A. The main task of mass media is to reflect reality with all problems and difficulties (in Russian) / A. Karliukevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/12/11/1940593.html>.



## Eurasian Economic Union: a reference point for international cooperation

In early October 2019, a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council was held in Yerevan, where the leaders of five member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) discussed issues of economic cooperation, financial policy, energy, as well as the main directions of international activities and development of cooperation with third countries. Noting the serious intensification of interaction of this integration association with such international formats as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, A. Lukashenko pointed out that "to expand the international agenda of the Eurasian Economic Union, special attention should be paid to the countries of the "far arc" where our goods and services are still little recognizable"<sup>18</sup>.

Let us remind that by the time of the session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Yerevan the EAEC already had a free trade zone with **Vietnam**. The agreement on its creation was signed by the parties back in May 2015, and in October 2016 the document came into force. In order to adapt the national economies of the EAEC countries to the free trade regime with Vietnam, transitional periods of five to ten years have been established for certain goods, during which there will be a gradual reduction of import customs duties. And only as of 2017 did the Eurasian Economic Union "zero import customs duty rates for Vietnam in respect of 43% of the total number of tariff lines of the Common Customs Tariff (CCT EAE). Within 10 years, the duty-free import of goods into the common union market for Vietnamese exporters will be expanded to cover 90% of the CCT EAES tariff lines"<sup>19</sup>.

And in June 2019, the parties began to discuss the possibility of expanding trade and economic cooperation, as the agreement on free trade zone has quickly proved its effectiveness. "Already in the first full year of the agreement - 2017 - the growth of trade turnover was 36% (5.6 billion dollars). At the same time, exports of the Union countries to Vietnam increased by 40% (from 1.6 to 2.3 billion USD), and imports of goods from Vietnam - by 35% (from 2.7 to 3.7 billion

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<sup>18</sup> Participation in the session of the Higher Eurasian Economic Council [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/uchastie-v-zasedanii-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-22132/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-zasedanii-vysshego-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soveta-22132/).

<sup>19</sup> EAEC Free Trade Area Vietnam [Electron resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/zst-vietnam-ru/>.

USD)<sup>20</sup>. In 2018, the current trend continued. Perhaps for this reason as well, the Vietnamese economy grew by more than seven per cent in 2018, a record level since 2008, with trade surpluses exceeding seven billion dollars and attracted foreign investment of 19 billion dollars. At the same time, as noted by Vietnamese researchers, "not only Russia benefits from the agreement: more and more joint ventures in Vietnam are launched by Belarus"<sup>21</sup>. In particular, a project to produce trucks of the Minsk Automobile Plant is being implemented in the province of Heungyeon within the joint venture "MAZ Asia. And in the same province, work is underway to create a joint venture to produce dairy products from Belarusian raw materials. That's why at the June (2019) negotiations with the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Vietnamese side stated that it would like to achieve maximum improvement of relations with the EEA and consider all opportunities for increasing cooperation, including in the areas of financial and tourism services.

Apparently, a positive example of the development of relations between the EAEC and Vietnam was not the least in the fact that on October 1, 2019 in Yerevan in the framework of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council an agreement on the establishment of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union and **Singapore** was signed. This document provides for duty-free access of Singapore to all goods from the EAEC countries - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. This integration association has also undertaken similar commitments on duty-free access for Singaporean goods. In addition, the signed agreement fixed the obligations of the parties to comply with: international standards in licensing procedures; prohibitions and quantitative restrictions; technical regulation of sanitary and phytosanitary norms; transfers and payments for the supply of products; fees associated with border procedures; application of anti-dumping, compensation and special protective measures. It also formulates "a significant contribution to improving quality and promoting cooperation in areas such as e-commerce, ecology, anticompetitive practices, transparency in public procurement, and protection of intellectual property rights, which is particularly relevant in discussions on technology transfer"<sup>22</sup>. Interestingly, the work on the agreement lasted more than two years. In signing

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<sup>20</sup> EAEC and Vietnam discussed the possibilities of expanding trade and economic cooperation [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/13-06-2019-4.aspx>.

<sup>21</sup> Nguyen, K.T. Benefits from Vietnam free trade zone and EAEC / K.T. Nguyen // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://eurasian-studies.org/archives/11237>.

<sup>22</sup> Brewery, E. In EEC gave details of agreement on free trade zone with Singapore / E. Brewery // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-cek-rasskazali-podrobnosti-soglashenija-o-zone-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-singapurom-364247-2019/>.

the agreement, the Singaporean side emphasized the prospects of the Eurasian market - "it is a large market at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It has great potential for economic growth, especially in logistics and digital areas. All these are Singapore's areas of interest"<sup>23</sup>, so the creation of a free trade zone "will contribute to the development of industry in the EAEC member countries, investment, networking between people, business representatives"<sup>24</sup>.

In the second half of October 2019, a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council was held in Moscow, where government leaders of all five member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) focused their attention on the development of sectoral areas of cooperation, as well as on strengthening the position of the organization in the international arena, emphasizing that "a special place in the development of Eurasian integration is occupied by international cooperation"<sup>25</sup>. And, indeed, it was only in October 2019 that this Eurasian integration structure took a number of concrete steps to develop interaction with states located both in Europe and Asia.

In particular, at the same meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council the Agreement on Free Trade Zone between the EAEC and **Serbia was** signed, which, in the opinion of the parties, should give new impulses to the expansion of trade and economic cooperation between its participants. It should be recalled that before this document Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan already had bilateral agreements on free trade with Serbia. Nevertheless, the new agreements with the Serbian side, firstly, "open a fundamentally new market for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan - with immediate duty-free access to the overwhelming volume of goods of export profile, and, secondly, create new export opportunities for manufacturers of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia"<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, the parties to the agreement receive economic benefits not only in the short term in the form of immediate savings in customs duties on existing exports, but also in the medium term in terms of realizing export opportunities with the expansion of the free trade regime. In addition, the document guarantees stability, predictability

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<sup>23</sup> Singapore's Prime Minister notes great growth potential in the Eurasian Economic Union [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/premier-ministr-singapura-otmechaet-bolshoj-potentsial-rosta-v-evrazijskom-ekonomicheskom-sojuze-364128-2019/>.

<sup>24</sup> The EAEC and Singapore signed an agreement on the establishment of a free trade area [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/eaes-i-singapur-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sozdanii-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-364131-2019/>.

<sup>25</sup> Meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9076>.

<sup>26</sup> EAEC and Serbia signed a free trade agreement [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eaes-i-serbija-podpisali-soglashenie-o-svobodnoj-torgovle-367118-2019/>.

and transparency of trade relations, as well as fulfillment of obligations to comply with international standards in terms of licensing procedures, bans and quantitative restrictions, technical regulation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the application of anti-dumping, compensation and special protective measures, protection of intellectual property rights.

Another example of growing international cooperation of the EAEC concerns **Iran**, with which a temporary agreement leading to the establishment of a free trade zone was signed as early as 17 May 2018 and entered into force on 27 October 2019. This document "provides for a limited commodity coverage, but includes virtually all of the main products that account for 55% of total EAEC exports - agricultural and industrial product groups. <...> Preferential import coverage accounts for 49% of Iran's total exports to the EEEEC" . More specifically, the list of goods for which EAEC exporters, including Belarus, received preferences includes meat and fat and oil products, certain types of confectionery products and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics. It is also important that the parties will now have to ensure the most-favoured-nation treatment and national treatment for all goods traded between the EAEC and Iran. And all charges related to the import of goods should no longer exceed the cost of services rendered for customs clearance. And unjustified tariff restrictions on trade should no longer apply to goods listed in the agreement. In addition, while welcoming any cooperation with the EAEC in the banking, financial and investment fields, the Iranian side has proposed to establish a working group for the development of joint economic projects, the potential of which could be very extensive. For example, "Iranian ports in the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, railways and roads in the country's territory and a secure environment make it possible for neighbouring countries to transit goods through Iran"<sup>27</sup>.

Finally, on the day of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council meeting - October 25, 2019 - the Agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the EAEC and **China** signed on May 17, 2018 came into force. It should be noted immediately that this document is not a free trade agreement, as its provisions do not provide for the reduction or elimination of import customs duties. The purpose of the agreement is different: "to increase the transparency of regulatory systems,

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<sup>27</sup> Tehran proposes to establish a working group on economic projects in Iran and the EAEC [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/tegeran-predlagaet-sozdat-rabochuju-gruppu-po-ekonomicheskim-proektam-irana-i-eaes-364137-2019/>.

to simplify trade procedures, and to develop cooperative ties"<sup>28</sup>. In particular, the instrument establishes a much higher level of transparency in the systems of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical regulation of parties. In the area of customs procedures, the agreement includes an agreement to release goods without undue delay, with the designation of fast-track clearance of perishable goods. It also sets out significant guarantees for Belarusian, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Armenian exporters regarding the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. For Belarus, which is currently at the stage of accession to the World Trade Organization, this document is also important from the point of view of the fact that it establishes in its relations with China "legal guarantees of the key principles of the WTO"<sup>29</sup>.

According to the development strategies of the EAEC Member States, the priorities of cooperation with China are industry and agro-industrial complex. With this in mind, the parties have identified three most important areas of cooperation: 1) creation of a single digital space; 2) localization of technologies; 3) effective interaction in science, technology and innovation. In order for all these directions to be successfully implemented, the EAEC is now creating an industrialization map, which "will indicate those areas in which it will be most expedient to attract foreign investment and technology"<sup>30</sup>. At the same time, the creation of common digital platforms and solutions will make it possible to eliminate barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital and data. And among the key competencies on the basis of which this industry of the future will be formed are electric transport, additive manufacturing and unmanned technologies.

As for the second area of cooperation between the EAEC and China, an important strategic task is to ensure the transition from the localization of production to the localization of competencies, at which the starting point should be the forecasting of the unique competitive advantages of the EAEC in the world arena, which can be realized by creating technology parks, clusters and technological platforms. It should be noted that the first steps in this direction have already been taken. For instance, Belarus and China have already implemented a project to create the

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<sup>28</sup> The heads of government of the EAEC countries adopted a joint statement with China on the occasion of the entry into force of the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEC and China [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9074>.

<sup>29</sup> Agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the EAEC and China entered into force [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/soglashenie-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskome-sotrudnichestve-eaec-i-kitaja-vstupilo-v-silu-367082-2019/>.

<sup>30</sup> Brewery, E. EEC has defined three main directions of EEEC industrial cooperation with China / E. Brewery // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eek-opredelilatri-osnovnyh-napravlenija-promyshlennogo-sotrudnichestva-eaec-s-kitaem-365900-2019/>.

Great Stone Industrial Park, which in 2019 received the status of a territorial special economic zone, which gave the residents of the industrial park the maximum possible customs advantages in this integration association in the post-Soviet space and where the volume of investments under the projects exceeds one billion dollars.

In Russia, in August 2019 in Naberezhnye Chelny, at the service of the Chinese side, an industrial park "Hayer" was opened, as well as a "smart factory" for the production of washing machines, which will also produce refrigeration, freezing and kitchen equipment, TV sets using "smart" technology. In Kazakhstan, under a contract with China's China National Chemical Engineering Company, Kazakhstan Petrochemical Industries is building an integrated gas chemical complex to produce half a million tons of polypropylene per year, and will also establish production of polyamide materials from grain using Chinese technology. Speaking about strengthening of scientific and technical cooperation, it is necessary to underline the interest of EAES in cooperation with China in agricultural sector, in the field of introduction of advanced agrarian technologies and innovations, as well as in energy efficiency and productivity of processing industries.

Another important aspect of the topic under consideration is that from January 1, 2020, the Republic of Belarus will take over the presidency of the Eurasian Economic Union, while from February 1, the same year the Belarusian representative will head the Eurasian Economic Commission. The Belarusian side intends to use these formats of activity "to give a new impetus to the integration processes and the formation of common policies by the participating countries"<sup>31</sup>. In particular, in order to ensure that producers from the EAEC countries receive the most favorable conditions for exporting their products to foreign markets, while consumers - safe, quality and inexpensive goods, it is planned within the Union "to accelerate the signing of an agreement on the procedure and conditions for removal of technical barriers to mutual trade with third countries, which will establish an effective mechanism to ensure barrier-free movement of goods in the EAEC and third countries"<sup>32</sup>. In fact, a new cycle of forming a list of priority

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<sup>31</sup> Grishkevich, A. Belarus as a chairman in the EAEC will seek to create a full-scale economic union - the Foreign Ministry / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-kak-predsedatel-v-eaes-budet-dobivatsja-sozdaniya-polnoformatnogo-ekonomicheskogo-sojuza-mid-366038-2019/>.

<sup>32</sup> Brewer, E. EEC proposes to speed up the signing of an agreement on the procedure of eliminating technical barriers with third countries / E. Brewer // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/EEK-predlagaet-uskorit-podpisanie-soglashenija-o-porjadke-ustraneniya-tehbarjerov-s-tretjimi-stranami-364105-2019/>.

countries with which this integration association will conclude agreements on free trade zone has already started in autumn 2019. In particular, procedures in this regard are being finalized with Israel, "early next [2020] negotiations with India. There is also a list of 12 states with which we would like to work in a 2-3 year interval. This list may be supplemented by other countries"<sup>33</sup>.

**Indonesia**, one of the key economies in the Asia-Pacific region, is also among the countries with which the EAEC is going to conclude a free trade agreement. In October 2019, the Eurasian Economic Commission signed a memorandum of cooperation with the government of this country. It is expected that this document will contribute to the construction of an effective infrastructure for the development of trade and economic cooperation. On its basis, the parties have already established a working group, the first meeting of which will be held in the first quarter of 2020 in Moscow, focusing on "issues of supranational competence of ECE, such as trade facilitation, customs and technical regulation, development of financial markets"<sup>34</sup>. It should also be noted that in the form of memorandums, the Eurasian Economic Commission is already working with the governments of such countries as Peru, Mongolia, Cambodia, Morocco, Jordan, Faroe Islands, Cuba, Thailand, Bangladesh and Moldova, and with the Greek government in the form of a declaration.

The same list also includes a South American country such as **Chile**, with which the Eurasian Five has significantly expanded its engagement in recent years. In particular, in 2018, trade turnover between the parties increased by almost a third - to 1.2 billion dollars. "At the same time, exports of the EEAS countries to Chile increased by 54.8%, while imports - by 28.7%"<sup>35</sup>. A free trade agreement between the EEA and Chile could open up a lot of opportunities for Belarus, as currently the Belarusian-Chilean trade turnover is only about \$10 million, 90% of which comes from this South American country. The reason for this phenomenon lies in

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<sup>33</sup> Belarus counts on export growth thanks to the agreements of the EAEC and FTA with third countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-na-rost-eksporta-blagodarja-soglashenijam-eaes-o-zst-s-tretjimi-stranam-365828-2019/>.

<sup>34</sup> Brewery, E. ECE and Indonesia signed a memorandum of cooperation / E. Brewery // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/eeek-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-366253-2019/>.

<sup>35</sup> Brewery, E. Chili is interested in creation of a free trade zone with EEU / E. Brewery // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chili-projavljaet-interes-k-sozdaniju-zony-svobodnoj-torgovli-s-eaes-365298-2019/>.

"some problems with the duties, which are still much higher for Belarusian goods than for other foreign products entering Chile<sup>36</sup>.

Another country with which negotiations for a free trade area have already entered an active phase is **Egypt**. This African state will be the first one to have a joint industrial infrastructure with the EEA, the creation of which for the countries of the integration association "will be a window for promoting our industrial products in Africa and the Middle East<sup>37</sup>. To all appearances, the African vector of cooperation between the EAEC will be significantly complemented by the memorandum of understanding signed on 24 October 2019 between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union Commission, according to which "the parties intend to cooperate in infrastructure and agriculture, trade, investment and business development, regional economic integration and other areas of mutual interest<sup>38</sup>. In accordance with this document, a cooperation plan will be developed focusing on activities for the business community of the parties. In the language of figures, the prospects for this cooperation look very impressive. After all, the African Union is an international intergovernmental organization that unites 55 states of the "black" continent with a population of about one billion people. Since 2010, the turnover of the EAEC with them has increased almost 2.7 times, reaching 21.7 billion dollars by 2018. At the same time, only five African countries - Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia - account for more than 80 percent of exports of the Eurasian "five". So the reserves for the development of partnerships are indeed considerable.

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<sup>36</sup> Grishkevich, A. Chili is interested in long-term cooperation with Belarus - Benites / A. Grishkevich // [Electron resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/chili-zainteresovana-v-dolgosrochnom-sotrudnichestve-s-belarusiju-benites-365275-2019/>.

<sup>37</sup> Brewer, E. East-European Union countries intend to establish joint industrial infrastructure in Egypt (in Russian) / E. Brewery // [Electron resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/strany-eaes-namereny-sozdat-sovmestnuju-promyshlennuju-infrastrukturu-v-egipte-364924-2019/>.

<sup>38</sup> ECE and the African Union Commission have signed a Memorandum of Understanding [Electronic Resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/24-10-2019-5.aspx>.



## Belarus - European Union: regional component of cooperation

In January 2020, Brussels hosted the signing of the agreements between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union on simplified visa issuance and on readmission of persons staying without a permit. These documents were an important step forward in strengthening relations between the parties. Besides, Belarus and the European Union continue discussing joint priorities of the partnership, where considerable attention is paid to regional issues as well.

We would like to remind you that local and regional development is an important part of the whole complex of interaction of the Republic of Belarus with the European Union, which is being implemented today in a number of areas, including: firstly, the project of economic development at the local level with the budget of about eight million Euros, which is being implemented within the framework of the larger program "Stimulating the development of private initiative in Belarus" (SPRING); secondly, the initiative "Tool for efficient use of resources" to support energy and resource efficient modes in regions. Together, these regional projects cover almost the entire territory of Belarus.

In particular, the **project of economic development at the local level in the** next few years will be implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Economy of Belarus in 12 regions of the country. At the first meeting of the coordination council of the international technical assistance project "Support of local economic development in the Republic of Belarus" in March 2019, "12 districts participating in the project - Berezovsky, Kobrinsky, Braslavsky, Orshansky, Braginsky, Zhlobinsky, Khoyniki, Lidsky, Borisov, Molodechno, Bykhovsky, Khotimsky - were named<sup>39</sup>.

**The "Resource Efficiency Instrument"** initiative in Brest and Grodno regions, with EU funding of 15 million euros, should contribute to the development, implementation and implementation of more efficient resource and energy policies by all relevant parties. The **Regional Investment and Competitiveness Programme** (BRIC), which is being developed jointly with the Ministry of Economy of Belarus, will receive €18 million in funding. Its implementation is

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<sup>39</sup> Zalesskiy, B.L. For the local economic development / B.L. Zalesskiy // Materialy XV Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka konference "Dny vedy - 2019". Volume 7: Praha. Publishing House "Education and Science". -- C. 30.

scheduled to start in 2020. "It is important in this work to involve local expertise"<sup>40</sup> in Gomel, Mogilev and Vitebsk regions.

The Programme "**Poland - Belarus - Ukraine**" for 2014-2020 on the part of Belarus covers Grodno and Brest regions as main territories, as well as Minsk, Minsk and Gomel regions as adjacent regions with population exceeding seven million people. Important detail: in the implementation of this programme, a prerequisite is to inform "the general public on a regular basis about the state of implementation of the programme, namely the results of support and best practices in the implementation of joint projects"<sup>41</sup>. The programme "**Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus**" for 2014-2020, in which Grodno and Vitebsk Oblasts, as the main regions, and Minsk, Minsk and Vitebsk Oblasts, as adjacent regions, are involved from the Belarusian side, focuses on three strategic objectives - "to support economic and social development in the regions on both sides of the common border; to solve common problems of ecology, health, safety and reliability; to create better conditions and mechanisms for the mobility of people, goods and capital"<sup>42</sup>.

The **Mayors for Economic Growth** Program for 2017-2020 supports cities in the Eastern Partnership countries, promoting economic growth and job creation by improving the local business environment, stimulating entrepreneurship and attracting investment for sustainable economic growth. At the end of 2017, it already included "205 cities and districts, including 17 in Belarus".<sup>43</sup> that have voluntarily made commitments to promote economic development and employment in the local market. Finally, the **Covenant of Mayors** programme, under which local authorities make "voluntary commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30% by 2030 in their territories", has been implemented.<sup>44</sup> Today, there are more than seven thousand cities and districts in

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<sup>40</sup> In Vitebsk region they discussed the prospects of cooperation between the region and the European Union [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://vitebsk-region.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/v-vitebske-obsudili-perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-regiona-s-evrosojuzom-18865-2019/>.

<sup>41</sup> Cross-border Cooperation Financing Agreement (CBFA) [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: [http://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/I01600084\\_1509656400.pdf](http://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/I01600084_1509656400.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> European Neighbourhood Instrument. Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2014. - URL: [http://www.eni-cbc.eu/llb/data/public/uploads/2016/03/llb\\_programme\\_2014\\_2020\\_ru\\_20160325.pdf](http://www.eni-cbc.eu/llb/data/public/uploads/2016/03/llb_programme_2014_2020_ru_20160325.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Mayors for Economic Growth (EU Eastern Partnership Initiative) [E-Resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <https://euprojects.by/ru/projects/Green-Economy-Environment-and-Sustainable-development/mayors-for-economic-growth-eu-initiative-for-eastern-partnership-region/>.

<sup>44</sup> Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy [Electronic Resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://climate.ecopartnerstvo.by/ru/covenant>.

different countries that have signed this document, including 49 - in Belarus: from Baranovichi and Birch to Chausov and Sharkivshchyna.

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## **Belarus - Shanghai Cooperation Organization: cooperation with focus on economic projects**

In early November 2019, Tashkent hosted a meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in which the Republic of Belarus has observer status, but traditionally takes an active part in discussing topical issues of this international structure. It should be recalled that the SCO was established in 2001. Today it has eight member states: China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Another four countries have observer status here - Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia and Belarus, which received it in 2015. In addition, six other countries are dialogue partners - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey. The composition of the SCO members clearly shows that this transcontinental organization now "unites almost 40% of the world's population and generates about 22.5% of world GDP"<sup>45</sup>.

In other words, SCO is a large geopolitical, economic and humanitarian space within which the Belarusian side is interested in developing interaction in a number of areas. That is why at the meeting in Tashkent, Belarus proposed "a number of initiatives to further enhance the work of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization".<sup>46</sup> considering the development of trade and economic relations as the most important priority. The fact here is that during the 18 years of SCO activity about one and a half thousand documents have been adopted. However, only seven percent of the total number of documents concern trade and economic interaction. Nevertheless, taking into account the rapidly growing interest to this vector, the Belarusian side is building a policy of its participation in the activities of this international organization.

As for specific initiatives, first of all, Tashkent voiced a proposal of official Minsk to develop and implement under the auspices of the organization "measures to promote mutually beneficial trade in food and agricultural products, including the harmonization of rules and requirements for the import and export of food

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<sup>45</sup> The SCO is interested in developing trade and economic cooperation with Belarus [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/shos-zainteresovana-v-razvitii-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusju-367873-2019/>

<sup>46</sup> Belarus is interested in discussing practical economic issues at the SCO platform - Dapkunas [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-obsuzhdenii-na-ploschadke-shos-prakticheskikh-ekonomicheskikh-voprosov-dapkunas-367903-2019/>

products<sup>47</sup>. The relevance of this proposal is that ensuring food security in the face of climate change is one of the most important tasks in today's world. And the SCO member states are no exception in this sense, as their territory is already home to nearly three billion people. Belarus, with its considerable industrial and agricultural potential, developing high technologies and being interested in solving practical economic issues, could make a great contribution to solving this problem within the SCO.

Secondly, transnational transport is becoming increasingly important to the space of this international organization. This topic is extremely topical for Belarus as well, since its transit potential "enables SCO member states to go directly to Europe"<sup>48</sup>. However, so far only one agreement has been signed within the framework of the organization on the transport theme - on creation of favorable conditions for road transportation. This took place in September 2014. Belarus, although not a full member of the SCO, four years later joined the document of the first of the SCO observers and dialogue partners - in November 2018, based on the understanding that the agreement "creates additional positive conditions for increasing the volume of work of Belarusian carriers in the direction of the SCO region and, consequently, in the direction of neighboring states, which will contribute to an increase in exports of road transport services"<sup>49</sup>. At the meeting in Tashkent, the Belarusian side drew attention to the existing and emerging opportunities for the implementation of new international transport and logistics projects, as the expansion of cooperation in this area will make it possible to take full advantage of the opportunities of global trade, to create new objects of socio-economic infrastructure.

Third, the initiative of the Belarusian side to create a common SCO IT-ecosystem, which would unite everything connected with the digital economy, artificial intelligence and the Internet of things, was supported in Tashkent. In this regard, the international organization assumes that "Belarus already has a concrete result in the IT sector, and export success, so the country could initiate joint thematic

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<sup>47</sup> Belarus proposes to develop under the auspices of the SCO mechanisms for mutually beneficial trade in agricultural products [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mehanizmy-dlja-vzaimovыgodnoj-torgovli-selhozproduktsej-belarus-predlagaet-razrabotat-pod-egidoj-shos-367906-2019/>.

<sup>48</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is interested in developing trade and economic cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9097>

<sup>49</sup> On accession of the Republic of Belarus to the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Creating Favourable Conditions for International Road Transport [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [http://bamap.org/information/news/2018\\_11\\_01\\_95712/](http://bamap.org/information/news/2018_11_01_95712/).

events, conferences and roundtables<sup>50</sup>. Recall that this initiative at the SCO summit, which was held in June 2018 in the Chinese city of Qingdao, the head of the Belarusian state made a proposal to combine in the "SCO IT-ecosystem" "possibilities of electronic media, social networks, electronic commerce and much more. This will strengthen cooperation and improve the competitiveness of national economies in a global world<sup>51</sup>. The next step in this direction will be the development of a specific concept by Belarus, which may become a basic document for cooperation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries in the IT sphere.

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<sup>50</sup> The SCO Secretary General supports Belarus' initiative to create a common IT ecosystem [Electronic Resource]. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/gensek-shos-podderzhivaet-realizatsiju-initsiativy-belarusi-po-sozdaniyu-obschej-it-ekosistemy-367870-2019/>.

<sup>51</sup> Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [Electronic Resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/search\\_ru/getExtendedResults/?query=&search\\_type=type\\_all\\_words&group=0&from\\_day=10&from\\_month=6&from\\_year=2018&to\\_day=10&to\\_month=6&to\\_year=2018&search\\_type=desc&search\\_ok.x=31&search\\_ok.y=5&search\\_mode=&search\\_node=news&search\\_node\\_id=374&search\\_title.name=events](http://president.gov.by/ru/search_ru/getExtendedResults/?query=&search_type=type_all_words&group=0&from_day=10&from_month=6&from_year=2018&to_day=10&to_month=6&to_year=2018&search_type=desc&search_ok.x=31&search_ok.y=5&search_mode=&search_node=news&search_node_id=374&search_title.name=events).

## Belarus - Italy: reserve - scientific and technological cooperation

Italy is among Belarus' important trade partners in the European Union. The volume of mutual trade between the countries increased by another 15 per cent in 2018, coming close to one billion dollars. Although Belarusian exports to Italy were 188 commodity items, "potash fertilizers, metal products, furniture and timber took the largest share in Belarusian exports"<sup>52</sup>. The task that the parties are now addressing in terms of developing bilateral relations is to expand the vectors of cooperation in implementing joint projects as much as possible. This was discussed, in particular, at the second session of the Belarusian-Italian intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation, held in June 2019 in Rome, where the parties "agreed on the implementation of a number of concrete steps to give an additional impetus to the development of bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest."<sup>53</sup>including in science and technology.

In December 2019, the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research of Italy agreed to hold the first meeting of the joint Belarusian-Italian commission on cooperation in science and technology. Within the framework of the meeting the executive program of the bilateral cooperation will be signed and the schedule of the first contest of joint Belarusian-Italian scientific and technical projects for 2020-2021 will be approved. The intensification of the scientific and technical cooperation between Belarus and Italy is primarily due to the fact that "the law on ratification of the agreement between the governments of Belarus and Italy on cooperation in science and technology was published in the official journal of Italian regulatory legal acts Gazzetta Ufficiale on 21 October 2019."<sup>54</sup>This means that the Italian party has completed domestic procedures for the entry into force of this instrument.

We would like to remind you that scientific cooperation between Belarus and Italy began with the Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science, Technology,

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<sup>52</sup> Results of the working visit to Italy [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.024.by/2019/02/itogi-rabochego-vizita-v-italiyu/>

<sup>53</sup> On participation of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus E. Shestakov at the session of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Italian Commission on Economic Cooperation [Electronic Resource]. - - 20129. - URL: [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b053842964a85150.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b053842964a85150.html).

<sup>54</sup> Belarus and Italy will hold a contest of joint scientific and technical projects [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-italija-provedut-konkurs-sovmestnyh-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-proektov-368825-2019/>.

Education, Youth Policy, Media, Human Rights, Sports and Tourism signed back in 1994, which provided for the establishment of a Joint Commission to form and coordinate the implementation of cooperation programmes. In June 2011, the parties adopted an updated intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in science and technology, which created a "framework conditions for the development of long-term contacts between scientific, research and production organizations and enterprises of the two countries, including opportunities and conditions for the exchange of scientific and technical information"<sup>55</sup>. Since then, many documents have been signed by the parties at the level of scientific institutes and universities.

In particular, in 2009 the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and a large Italian company 56"Finmeccanica" adopted a Protocol of Intentions on cooperation in the field of high technologies, which secured the creation of seven working groups on: 1) tools for processing multispectral and radar images, as well as digital maps of terrain for operational monitoring of territories and allocation of specified classes of objects; 2) development of new methods and software for solving various tasks of machine vision and processing of biomedical images; 3) development of new methods and software for processing biomedical images.

In December 2019, the Belarusian and Italian sides agreed to significantly enhance scientific, technological and innovative cooperation in the field of information and communication technologies, medicine, energy, new materials, including the European Union's Horizon 2020 program. Meanwhile, "Belarusian scientists and experts together with partners from Italy are involved in 11 projects of the European Union program on science and innovation "Horizon 2020"<sup>57</sup> with a total budget of more than €1 million 160 thousand. But there is every reason to believe that in close cooperation with the Italian side in Belarus will be able to significantly expand the topic of joint fundamental and applied projects in relevant areas, including those discussed at the Third Italian-Belarusian Forum on Green

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<sup>55</sup> Belarus and Italy signed an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in science and technology [Electronic resource]. - - 2011. - URL: <http://belisa.org.by/ru/news/stnews/international/aa92ba2301d108c5.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Italy [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://www.philosophy.by/belarus-eu/a\\_102\\_r.html](http://www.philosophy.by/belarus-eu/a_102_r.html)

<sup>57</sup> Belarus and Italy are intensifying their cooperation within the framework of the EU program "Horizon 2020" [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2019/belarus\\_i\\_italiya\\_aktiviziruyut\\_sotrudnichestvo\\_v\\_ramkakh\\_programmy\\_evrosoyuza\\_gorizont\\_2020/](http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2019/belarus_i_italiya_aktiviziruyut_sotrudnichestvo_v_ramkakh_programmy_evrosoyuza_gorizont_2020/).



Economy, held in October 2019 in Minsk - "building smart cities, the introduction of energy-efficient technologies in civil and industrial construction, agriculture<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Belarus and Italy intend to significantly increase mutual trade turnover [Electronic resource]. -- 2019.  
- URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-italija-namereny-znachitelno-uvelichit-vzaimnyj-tovarooborot-364968-2019>.

## Belarus - Czech Republic: industrial cooperation and regional cooperation

The Czech Republic is among those European countries with which the Republic of Belarus is seriously interested in expanding ties, as the residents of the two countries have longstanding friendly relations, common values and interests, and "more intensive trade and business relations, joint scientific and educational projects, cooperation of organizations and institutions will contribute to strengthening constructive relations"<sup>59</sup>. Minsk and Prague see considerable potential for intensive development of the whole complex of bilateral relations. Positive trends in the trade and economic sphere are particularly noticeable, as evidenced by the figures: "The trade turnover for this year is \$500 million. <...> Over the last year, trade turnover grew by 48%" .

The Belarusian-Czech business forum, held in October 2019 in Minsk, once again confirmed that the bilateral cooperation between Belarus and the Czech Republic is not limited only to trade today. It is already about the implementation of mutually beneficial projects in a number of areas, including the machine-building industry and construction. The diverse areas of mutual interest are also evidenced by the composition of the participants in the above-mentioned business forum, where almost a dozen Czech and about forty Belarusian companies interested in establishing and developing cooperation in the energy, construction and banking sectors were represented.

The parties see an important reserve in the annual growth of trade turnover in the development of industrial cooperation through the creation of joint ventures and expansion of business ties between the regions of the two countries. In particular, interesting experience of cooperation with Czech partners has already been accumulated in Minsk Oblast. In 2018, its trade turnover with the Czech Republic increased by 66 percent to 87 million dollars. And by the autumn of 2019 the volume of export deliveries of Minshchina companies to the Czech market approached 18 million dollars. At the same time, "the growth of exports almost doubled compared to the growth of imports"<sup>60</sup>. So far, Belaruskali fertilizers have

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<sup>59</sup> Congratulations to President of the Czech Republic Milos Zeman [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/pozdravlenie-prezidentu-cheshskoj-respubliki-miloshu-zemanu-22273/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/pozdravlenie-prezidentu-cheshskoj-respubliki-miloshu-zemanu-22273/).

<sup>60</sup> Minsk Oblast and the Czech Republic plan to increase the supply of goods and establish a JV [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-i-chehija-planirujut-narastit-postavki-tovarov-i-sozdat-sp-367359-2019/>.

been supplied to the Czech Republic from the Belarusian capital region. Aluminum products from the company AluminTekhno - resident of the free economic zone "Minsk," while Czech cardboard, paper and air conditioning systems were exported. But the parties intend to find new points of contact in the near future, both in terms of creating joint ventures and supplying products.

The Minsk region is particularly well developing partnership relations with the Czech province of Vysočina, a memorandum of cooperation with which was signed in 2014. In May 2019, the parties adopted a road map for cooperation for 2019-2020. At the same time, Minsk voblast offered its Czech partners specific projects of investment cooperation "in the food industry, agriculture, transport, logistics, wood processing."<sup>61</sup> and the cities of Soligorsk and Pelgrzhimov agreed to sign a cooperation agreement in the near future.

Among other Belarusian regions actively developing mutually beneficial ties with the Czech Republic is Vitebsk Oblast. The Czech partners see areas of mutual interest with it as "production of water treatment systems, projects related to agriculture and innovative technologies"<sup>62</sup>. It should be noted that today two investment projects with Czech capital are being implemented in the free economic "Vitebsk" territory. First, back in 2004, it was registered here as a resident of JLLC Fortex - Water Technologies. Secondly, in December 2017, Tsilinders-Bel, LLC specialized in the production of such import-substituting products as steel seamless gas cylinders for industrial and medical gases, fire-fighting systems and food industry with a pressure of up to 300 atmospheres, started operating here - on the premises of the plant Legmash in Orsha. The company is scheduled to reach full capacity utilization by 2023. "Implementation of the project will create 45 new jobs and provide the domestic market with import-substituting products. At the same time, more than 90% of the manufactured products will be exported"<sup>63</sup>. By November 2019, the company had already invested about nine million euros in this production.

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<sup>61</sup> Minsk Oblast and Czech territory Vysočina signed a road map for cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-i-cheshskij-kraj-vysochina-podpisali-dorozhnyu-kartu-razvitija-sotrudnichestva-347606-2019/>.

<sup>62</sup> Bogacheva, O. Vitebsk branch of BelCCI and Czech Chamber of Commerce and Industry will cooperate / O. Bogacheva // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskoe-otdelenie-beltp-i-cheshskaja-torgovo-promyshlennaja-palata-budut-sotrudnicat-367554-2019/>.

<sup>63</sup> Bogachyov, O. Bogachyov, O. The enterprise with Czech capital will produce gas cylinders in Orsha // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predprijatje-s-cheshskim-kapitalom-budet-vypuskat-gazovyje-ballony-v-orshe-367588-2019/>.

To ensure that such examples of successful industrial cooperation in Vitebsk region in the near future will become much more, at the end of October 2019 Vitebsk branch of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Czech Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the CIS countries signed a cooperation agreement, in the development of which representatives of a number of Czech companies, including JSC Mavel, JSC Metrostav, INTERMOS Praha s.r.o., ERC-TECH s.r.o., Smart Heating Technology s.r.o., Czechoslovak Trade Bank s.r.o., Export Guarantee and Insurance Company s.r.o., immediately discussed with Vitebsk partners the issues of construction in industry and power engineering, technology of construction waste processing, supply of pipeline, cleaning and heating systems, possible prospects and directions of cooperation in the financial sector. Apparently, the results of these talks will soon find their real implementation in new concrete projects of Belarusian-Czech cooperation.

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## **Belarus-Poland: city twinning as a powerful factor in the development of international cooperation between regions**

In November 2019, the city of Molodechno, Minsk region, hosted the fifth meeting of twin cities of Belarus and Poland, attended by representatives of 20 Belarusian and 19 Polish cities and districts. The relevance of this event was explained by the fact that in 2019, trade and economic cooperation between Belarus and Poland continued to develop steadily, as evidenced by the figures. Thus, over the three quarters of this year, the volume of mutual trade in goods has increased by another four percent to nearly \$2 billion. Plus, almost \$330 million more is the turnover of services. And this is far from the limit. At the same time, the twinning between the regions of the two countries plays an important role in achieving these indicators.

According to Belarusian Foreign Minister V Makei, "development of good neighborly relations between our countries is impossible without fruitful cooperation at the regional and local levels".<sup>64</sup> which implements specific mutually beneficial projects in the economic, investment, cultural, sports and educational fields. And according to the chairman of the Belarusian NGO "Twin Cities" B. Batura, the twinning of cities is the most effective instrument of cooperation in various areas, "an important component in the implementation of programs. The interest in more successful development of their city and district inevitably leads far-sighted leaders to mutually beneficial contacts. This is how the consolidated interaction of business, state and educational institutions is born"<sup>65</sup>.

The very fact that the fifth meeting of twin cities was held, and the first four were held in Brest, Bialystok, Grodno and Baranovichi, indicates that Belarus and Poland are now looking for new resources to develop cooperation. One of such resources is seen in the expansion of cooperation at the interregional level, taking into account competitiveness of products, complementarity of production, promotion of mutual investments. For reference, it should be noted that "over 80

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<sup>64</sup> Grishkevich, A. Makey noted the great role of the brotherhood movement in strengthening cooperation between Belarus and Poland / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/makej-otmetil-bolshuju-rol-pobratimskogo-dvizhenija-v-ukreplenii-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-polshi-371088-2019/>.

<sup>65</sup> Batur, B. Twinning of cities - the most effective instrument of cooperation / B. Batur // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.mlyn.by/2019/11/boris-batura-pobratimstvo-gorodov-naibolee-effektivnyj-instrument-sotrudnichestva/>.

agreements in different spheres have been signed between the cities and regions of Belarus and Poland<sup>66</sup>. And a number of sister cities of Belarus and Poland show interesting results of cooperation. Among them one can refer: Brest - Biala Podlaska, Brest - Lublin, Brest - Terespol, Grodno - Bialystok, Grodno - Sokulka, Vitebsk - Zelena Gura, Nesvizh - Odolyanuv, Pinsk - Czestochow. In November 2019 the list of twin cities of the two countries was supplemented by the Belarusian Volkovysk and Polish Lobež. They signed an agreement on twinning in Molodechno "provides for the development of contacts in all areas, including the economy, trade, investment, culture and education"<sup>67</sup>. And agreements on cooperation between the two countries are still in the process of elaboration: Smorgon district and Hainuva district, Smorgon and Minsk Mazovian district, Skidel and Sokolka, Oshmiany and Minsk Mazovian, Zavodsk district of Minsk and Wrocław.

Grodno Region is one of the Belarusian regions where interaction with Polish partners is actively developing in a number of areas. This is largely due to the fact that "practically all regions of the region have agreements on cooperation with the administrative units of the neighboring state"<sup>68</sup>. Over 30 joint Belarusian-Polish projects in the fields of culture, history, tourism, health care, security, as well as ecology are being implemented here under cross-border cooperation programmes alone. In particular, the Volkovyskiy district of Grodno region sees great prospects in developing partnerships with the Polish side. In November 2019, the third Belarusian-Polish economic forum "Steps Towards" was held here in the village of Krasnoselsky. Among the participants were the Association of Polish Business in the Republic of Belarus, the Podlasie Business Club and the Podlasie Association "Business Women's Club". The facts show that Polish business in the Belarusian regions is interested in such areas of cooperation as woodworking, logistics and food production to work in the market of the Eurasian Economic Union. In particular, "the port of Gdansk is interested in logistics

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<sup>66</sup> Grishkevich, A. Twin cities of Belarus and Poland strengthen cooperation in economic and investment spheres / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/goroda-pobratimiy-belarusi-i-polshi-ukrepjat-sotrudnichestvo-v-ekonomicheskoy-i-investitsionnoj-sferah-371106-2019/>.

<sup>67</sup> . Grishkevich, A. Volkovysk and Polish city Lobež signed agreement about twinned connections (in Russian) / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/volkovysk-i-polskij-gorod-lobez-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskih-svjazjah-371170-2019/>.

<sup>68</sup> Poland may take part in the reconstruction of the Old Castle in Grodno [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/polsha-mozhet-prinjat-uchastie-v-rekonstruktsii-starogo-zamka-v-grodno-367496-2019/>.

projects.<sup>69</sup> considering the Belarusian regions for cooperation in the framework of the Chinese project "Belt and Way".

Another important reserve in the development of the Belarusian-Polish brotherhood movement is seen today in stimulating the interest of citizens of the cities of the two countries to consciously participate in joint projects aimed at improving the quality of life. After all, international ties of the cities are a special kind of public diplomacy, which has a whole range of economic and civil opportunities. In this regard, the call made at the fifth meeting of the sister cities in Molodechno is noteworthy - "to publicize more widely the very idea of twinning, forming a positive perception of this format of cooperation, ensuring systematic monitoring of partner couples, publicity of its results"<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Polish business in Belarus is interested in wood processing, logistics and food production [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/polskomu-biznesu-v-belarusi-interesny-derevoobrabotka-logistika-i-proizvodstvo-produktov-pitanija-369771-2019/>.

<sup>70</sup> Grishkevich, A. It is important for Belarus and Poland to expand cooperation at the interregional level - Batura / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dlja-belarusi-i-polshi-vazhno-rasshirenie-kooperatsii-na-mezhregionalnom-urovne-batura-371114-2019/>.

## Belarus - Serbia: priority - science and innovation

The heads of Belarus and Serbia agreed in December 2019 to significantly intensify efforts to increase the volume of bilateral trade, implement initiatives to establish joint production facilities and launch mutual investment projects in the framework of A. Lukashenko's official visit to Belgrade. As a result of the talks with President of Serbia A. Lukashenko. Vucic has signed a package of eight documents on the development of bilateral cooperation in various sectors. Characteristic detail: half of them concern the scientific sphere. Among them - "Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of innovation and development of digital technologies, agreements on scientific and technical cooperation of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus with the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development of Serbia"<sup>71</sup>. The intergovernmental programme for cooperation in the field of education for 2020, which was signed at the same time, organically supplements them.

In general, interaction between the two countries in science, technology and innovation has been developing since the signing of the intergovernmental agreement in 1996 between Belarus and then Yugoslavia. In the last five years alone, "23 joint scientific and technical projects have been implemented, including in the field of agrarian and biological, physical and mathematical, chemical sciences and information technologies"<sup>72</sup>. According to the Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus, A. Shumilin, "Belarusian national priorities in science, technology and innovation coincide with those in Serbia. These are, first of all, energy, medicine and pharmacy, information and communication technologies, bio- and nanotechnologies"<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> . M. Matievsky, M. Belarus and Serbia signed a package of documents after the meeting of the presidents, half of them - in science / M. Matievsky // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-serbija-podpisali-posle-vstrechi-prezidentov-paket-dokumentov-polovina-v-sfere-nauki-371489-2019/>.

<sup>72</sup> Belarus and Serbia will sign the programme of scientific and technical cooperation for 2020-2021 in autumn [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-serbija-osenju-podpishut-programmu-nauchno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-na-2020-2021-gody-359969-2019/>.

<sup>73</sup> Belarus and Serbia discussed the prospects for scientific, technological and innovation cooperation [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2019/belarus\\_i\\_serbiya\\_obsudili\\_perspektivy\\_nauchno\\_tekhnicheskogo\\_i\\_innovatsionnogo\\_sotrudnichestva/](http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2019/belarus_i_serbiya_obsudili_perspektivy_nauchno_tekhnicheskogo_i_innovatsionnogo_sotrudnichestva/).



A powerful impetus to the development of Belarusian-Serbian partnerships in science is to be provided by the executive programme for scientific, technological and innovation cooperation for 2020-2021, signed in December 2019 by the Belarusian State Committee on Science and Technology and the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development. Ten joint scientific and technical projects in such areas as agriculture and food, biotechnology, nanomaterials, laser and chemical technologies are expected to be implemented under this programme.

At a meeting of the Belarusian-Serbian commission on scientific and technical cooperation, held in December 2019, the parties also agreed on a joint movement towards new strategic goals in high technology, pharmacy, optics, bioorganic chemistry. Last year, Belarusian and Serbian scientists also implemented ten scientific and technical projects, five of them - in physical and mathematical sciences, three - in agricultural and biological sciences, two - in chemical sciences and earth sciences. "On the Belarusian side, seven projects are implemented by organizations of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, while three projects are implemented by organizations of the Ministry of Education"<sup>74</sup>.

It should be noted that such a coordinating structure of the Belarusian-Serbian cooperation as the working group on development of cooperation in the field of agriculture and food, the fifth meeting of which was held in Belgrade in December 2019, focuses on the development of scientific and innovation relations. Discussing issues of veterinary and phytosanitary, crop and seed production, interaction between agrarian universities, the parties agreed to work out possible options and prospects for cooperation of research organizations of the two countries, including in the field of breeding and seed production of alfalfa and sugar beet. Attention to these topics is explained by the fact that recently the cooperation in this field has been developing very intensively. Suffice it to say that in the three quarters of 2019 "the turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs between the two countries increased by more than 30% compared to the same period of 2018. Exports tripled and amounted to \$3.597 million. Belarus supplies Serbia with potatoes, seeds, butter, onions, shallots, leeks, garlic"<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Belarus and Serbia will implement 10 joint scientific and technical projects [Electronic Resource] in 2020-2021. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-serbija-v-2020-2021-godah-vypolnjat-10-sovmestnyh-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-proektov-371346-2019/>.

<sup>75</sup> Serbia is interested in supplying Belarusian milk [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/serbija-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-belorusskogo-moloka-371388-2019/>.

In the field of education, the parties see priorities for cooperation in expanding partnerships between specific educational institutions of the two countries, active information exchange on basic and supplementary adult education, supplementary education for children and youth, and inclusive and vocational education and training. In particular, the Belarusian side is interested in the Serbian experience "on introducing international educational programmes into the national education system"<sup>76</sup>. In particular, the cooperation agreement between the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno and the University of Belgrade, signed in December 2019 in the Serbian capital, is likely to contribute to this task. The document envisages "cooperation of universities in the field of educational and scientific activities, as well as in the field of the use of best practices and introduction of scientific developments into the educational process"<sup>77</sup>. It should be noted that Belgrade ranks first in the national ranking of universities in Serbia.

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<sup>76</sup> Belarus - Serbia: cooperation priorities [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://edu.gov.by/news/belarus--serbiya-priority-sotrudnichestva/>.

<sup>77</sup> The Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno has concluded a cooperation agreement with the Belgrade University [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.grsu.by/component/k2/item/31876-grgu-imeni-yanki-kupaly-zaklyuchen-dogovor-osotrudnichestve-s-belgradskim-universitetom.html>.

## Belarus - China: the engine of development - regional cooperation

In 2019, the Belarusian-Chinese relations of trust-based all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation continued to develop intensively, demonstrating impressive dynamics. Suffice it to say that "in January-June this year [2019] the volume of trade between China and Belarus reached \$2.053 billion, having increased by 22.3% compared to the same period last year, while Belarusian exports to China increased by 81.9%"<sup>78</sup>.

Among the Belarusian regions, which have made a significant contribution to the achievement of such indicators, we should mention **Minsk region**, whose exports "to China in the first 9 months of this year [2019] have more than doubled - from \$178 million to \$367 million (growth rate - 206%)<sup>79</sup>. The basis of these supplies were potash fertilizers, as well as meat and dairy products of such enterprises of the capital region, as JSC "Agrokombinat Dzerzhinsky", LLC "Veles-Mit", JSC "Smolevichi Broiler", KUP "Minoblmyasomolprom", JSC "Minsk Dairy Plant № 1", JSC "Slutsk Cheese Plant". Such positive export dynamics is largely explained by the fact that almost all milk processing and a number of meat processing enterprises of the Minsk Region already have permission to supply their products to the Chinese market. Therefore, in the first eight months of 2019 meat and dairy products were shipped to China for more than 17 million dollars. And, to all appearances, the scale of these supplies will only increase.

The volume of Chinese direct investments into the economy of the Minsk region also continues to grow in 2019. Their growth for the first nine months of this year has already amounted to almost ten percent, reaching the value of \$ 115 million. Most of them - more than \$90 million - have been raised through the development of production for the assembly of cars NWO 'BELGI'. But there are other interesting examples. In particular, the first phase of the Belkali-Migao plant was opened in Salihorsk district, Minsk voblast, in November 2019. This is not only the first joint project of Belaruskali and the Chinese company Migao Corporation Limited, but also the first plant on Belarusian soil to produce potassium nitrate,

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<sup>78</sup> Grishkevich, A. Development of China cannot do without support and help of Belarus - Cui Tsimin // A. Grishkevich [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/razvitie-kitajane-mozhet-obojsis-bez-podderzhki-i-pomoschi-belarusi-tsuj-tsimin-367736-2019/>.

<sup>79</sup> Minsk Oblast more than doubled its exports to China in January-September [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-uvlechila-eksport-produktsii-kitaj-za-janvar-sentjabr-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-369062-2019/>.

the products of which are to be sold in the European Union, Turkey, Russia and China, as well as to enter the markets of North Africa and Latin America. Today this enterprise with a total staff of 150 people is already operating 24 hours a day. It is also important that "30 graduates of Soligorsk Mining and Chemical College, among others, have been employed in the new jobs. The annual capacity of the first stage of the new plant is 80 thousand tons of potassium nitrate and 62 thousand tons of granulated nitrogen-potassium fertilizers"<sup>80</sup>. The second stage of the Belkali-Migao plant is to be completed and put into operation within the next year. This will make it possible to increase the annual capacity of the plant up to 160 thousand tons of potassium nitrate, which in addition to agriculture is also successfully used in the metallurgical industry, in the production of glass, pyrotechnics and explosives.

An important event for the development of the Chinese vector of international cooperation of the Minsk region was the participation of five enterprises of the Belarusian capital region in the second international exhibition of imported goods and services China International Import Expo in **Shanghai**, held in November 2019. One of the exhibitors, Slutskiy Cheese Factory OJSC, even managed to conclude a "\$2 million product supply contract with the Greenland Group Corporation". Another document was signed with Shanhai Pujia Food Technology Co<sup>81</sup>. And the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone", located in the Minsk region, in the same exhibition in Shanghai, registered two new residents - "Satellite Communications Eurasia" LLC (PRC), which will create a research center in the park to develop satellite communication and control systems, as well as "Flex-n-roll Pro" LLC (Belarus, USA) with a project in the field of industrial printing<sup>82</sup>.

Another important factor that contributes to the successful promotion of Minsk Oblast enterprises in the Chinese market is the development of effective interregional cooperation with partners in China, including, first of all, **83Guangdong** Province, with which in November 2019 the Belarusian capital

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<sup>80</sup> "Belaruskali and Chinese Migao have launched an enterprise to produce potassium nitrate [Electronic Resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaruskalij-i-kitajskij-migao-zapustili-predprijatje-po-proizvodstvu-nitrata-kalija-368329-2019/>.

<sup>81</sup> Minsk Region and Guangdong Province of China signed a road map for cooperation [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-guandun-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-sotrudnichestva-368717-2019/>.

<sup>82</sup> The Research and Development Centre for Satellite Communication Systems will be established in the Great Stone [Electronic Resource]. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nauchno-issledovatel'skij-tsentr-sputnikovyh-sistem-kommunikatsii-sozdatud-v-velikom-kamne-368325-2019/>.

<sup>83</sup> Minsk Oblast more than doubled its exports to China in January-September [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskaja-oblast-uvelichila-eksport-produktsii-v-kitaj-za-janvar-sentjabr-bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-369062-2019/>.

region signed a road map of cooperation for 2020-2021. According to the parties, this document will make it possible to form a common market on the principles of transparency and mutual benefit, as well as strengthen trade and economic ties. Direct cooperation between the regions is among the main objectives. In particular, we are already talking about creating a joint milk processing enterprise in the Chinese province. And the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" may implement a project related to medical equipment. The point is that a Chinese enterprise from Guangdong Province, which is interested in this project, "has already been certified on the European market and is interested in placing production in the Great Stone. <...> This will be a large-scale and significant project not only for the Minsk region, but also for the country" .

Among other Chinese regions, which have significantly increased their interaction with Belarusian partners recently, we should also mention **Sichuan** province. In November 2019, the Belarusian National E-Commerce Pavilion was registered at the international railway port of its administrative center - a city with 20 million residents of Chengdu - and its construction and installation works are scheduled to be completed in early 2020. Here, in seven zones on the area of almost one and a half thousand square meters, Belarusian companies of various directions will be able to present their export potential, including food and beverages, agricultural products and products of auxiliary crafts, for which premises for negotiations and business forums will also be equipped. The placement of this pavilion in a free trade zone with good logistics is very promising, as there is a railway port and two large wholesale markets, each of which employs more than seven thousand Chinese wholesale operators. It is also interesting that the pavilion will be presented in the form of the Mir Castle and decorated with the Belarusian national symbols. It is also important that "on the basis of the Belarusian National Pavilion, China and Belarus are ready to create an integrated bilateral platform of relations, which will include such areas as economy, culture, education, tourism, investment and services<sup>84</sup>.

Exporters from the **Gomel region** are going to actively use the potential of the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu. They will mainly be producers of food products - "meat and dairy <...>, alcoholic, as well as confectionery, which has already established itself in foreign markets" . There are several reasons for this. Thus, back in May 2015, Gomel Province and Sichuan Province signed a cooperation agreement, which provided for the organization of cooperation on the

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<sup>84</sup> The ceremony of awarding the plate of the Belarusian National Pavilion [Electronic resource] took place in Chengdu, China. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-kitajskom-chenduo-sostojalas-tseremonija-vruchenija-tablichki-belorusskogo-natsionalnogo-paviljona-368575-2019/>.

principles of partnership, equality, trust and mutual benefit in areas such as the economy, agriculture, health and culture, education, sports and tourism. In addition, "direct contacts and twinning between the cities of the two regions will be established to promote cooperation in the above areas"<sup>85</sup>.

Indeed, three years later - in August 2018 - the twinning agreement was signed by the administrative centers of the region and province - Gomel and Chengdu, stating their intention to develop cooperation in trade, education, culture, tourism, with special emphasis on the great prospects for fruitful cooperation in the economic sphere. The fact is that Chengdu is called the window that opens the way for international cooperation between the Western part of China and European countries. A kind of business card of this Chinese city has already become a "freight train of international importance "Chengdu - Europe", connecting China, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus<sup>86</sup>. In addition to the economy, the parties see education and healthcare among the promising areas of partnership development, as evidenced by the documents signed in August 2018 - Memorandum on Strategic Partnership between Chengdu Health Investment Corporation and Gomel Regional Clinical Hospital for People with Disabilities of the Patriotic War and the Agreement on Establishment of Cooperation between Wuhu High School and Gomel Gymnasium No. 71.

Among the Gomel enterprises, whose products will be presented in the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu, we should first of all mention Milkavita, which has shipped to the Chinese market its products seven times (!) more than in the same period in 2018. "Every month the enterprise delivers to China about 500 tons of products - dried dairy products and liquid products with long shelf life. The main volume of exports to China is dry whey - about 80%"<sup>87</sup>. By exhibiting their products in the Belarusian National Pavilion in Chengdu, Gomel exporters hope to significantly expand their presence in Sichuan Province. This would also allow Milkavita to increase its supplies to China by 2019 to the planned three million dollars.

It should be noted that Gomel region is also developing partnership and twinning relations with other Chinese regions. Thus, in June 2019 "the Gomel region and

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<sup>85</sup> Sidorchik, V. Gomel region and Chinese Sichuan province will cooperate (in Russian) / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - - 2015. - URL: <https://news.tut.by/society/447548.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Gomel and Chinese Chengdu became twin cities [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-i-kitajskij-chendu-stali-gorodami-pobratimami-315608-2018/>.

<sup>87</sup> Gomel enterprise "Milkavita" has increased its exports to China 7 times [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskoe-predpriyatje-milkavita-narastilo-eksport-v-kitaj-v-7-raz-358197-2019/>.

the Chinese Autonomous Region of **Inner Mongolia** signed a cooperation program for 2020<sup>88</sup>. Partnerships and twinning arrangements have also been established with several Chinese cities in Gomel. In particular, in 2015 the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation was signed with Harbin - the administrative center of **Heilongjiang** Province. At the same time, the parties agreed that "establishment of joint ventures in such spheres as mechanical engineering, electronics, processing of agricultural products <...> in due course should become a priority of economic cooperation between Gomel and Harbin" . But the longest relationship between Gomel and the city of Huayan, in **Jiangsu** Province, has been since 1997. Thanks to these ties, the already mentioned above Mlekovita took part in the International Food Industry Exhibition in this Chinese city in May 2019, and in June 2019 at a meeting between the leadership of Gomel and Huayan it was stated that the parties have "great potential for further development of cooperation in various areas, <...> that special interest is caused by food produced in Gomel. All this diversity of ties with Chinese partners allowed Gomel to exceed the volume of mutual trade with China in 2018 at the level of forty million dollars, and for the four months of 2019 to come close to the turnover of 17 million dollars.

Quite a powerful development of the Chinese vector of foreign economic activity in 2019 also received in the **Vitebsk region**, as evidenced by the figures. Suffice it to say that over the first eight months of this year, the trade turnover of this Belarusian region "with the provinces of China amounted to \$69.6 million, exports - \$13.5 million, which is 2.1 times higher than in the same period in 2018<sup>89</sup>. One of the effective partners of Vitebsk region in China is **Shandong** province, which is one of the three leading Chinese regions. It should be reminded that the first Memorandum of Cooperation was signed by the parties back in 2006. The cities of Vitebsk and Jinan, Novopolotsk and Weihai, Orsha and Qingdao began to cooperate under the agreements reached then.

In particular, Vitebsk and Jinan established twinning relations in April 2009. Heavy and light industry, machine tools, logistics, information technologies, as well as the production of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals were then named as promising areas of cooperation between the two cities. The fact is that

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<sup>88</sup> Grishkevich, A. Gomel region and Chinese Autonomous Region Inner Mongolia signed the cooperation program / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-kitajskij-avtonomnyj-rajon-vnutrennjaja-mongolija-podpisali-programmu-sotrudnichestva-4-2019/>.

<sup>89</sup> Bogacheva, O.V. In Vitebsk region together with China will produce peat products / O.Bogacheva // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-vitebskoj-oblasti-sovmestno-s-kitaem-budut-vypuskat-torfoproduktsiju-366630-2019/>.

more than seven million people live in this Chinese city. And there is a steady demand for quality goods, which certainly opens interesting opportunities for Vitebsk manufacturers. In September 2017, the parties specified their cooperation intentions in the protocol for the implementation of the agreement on the development of brotherly cooperation for 2017-2020. In particular, in the field of education, the Chinese side proposed two projects: "scholarships for students annually allocated to the twin cities of Jinan, as well as summer schools for secondary school students, where children learn about Chinese culture and lifestyle"<sup>90</sup>. And in terms of making better use of the tourism potential of the two cities, it was proposed to create a joint tourism product that would be in demand and popular among Chinese citizens in particular.

As for the cities of Novopolotsk and Weihai, the twinning relationship between them was established in 2006, "but so far they have not had much activity"<sup>91</sup>. However, already in October 2019, on the margins of the Twin Regions Forum held in Shandong Province, China, representatives of the two cities were able to note for themselves those areas in which the twinning relationship could be successfully developed. First of all, they spoke about ecology and logistics in the framework of the "One belt, one path" project. Secondly, given the fact that the city of Weihai is famous for its production of the most modern medical equipment, Novopolotsk sees great prospects for cooperation in this area as well. In turn, Weihai is very interested in cooperation with the Belarusian city in higher and secondary special education. Therefore, one can hope that the appearance of specific twinning projects here is not far off.

Finally, the Chinese city of Qingdao and the Orsha district of Vitebsk region signed an agreement on establishing friendly relations in September 2018. At the same time, "representatives of Chinese business expressed interest in opening a trading facility in Qingdao for Belarusian meat, dairy and bakery products. as<sup>92</sup>well as to cooperation in the construction of the Bremino-Orsha multimodal

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<sup>90</sup> Antonov, S. Vitebsk and Jinan have defined the main directions of cooperation for the period up to 2020 (in Russian) / S. Antonov // [Electron Resmurs]. -- 2017. - URL: <http://vitvesti.by/politics/vitebski-tczinan.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Demidov, D. Shandun - Novopolotsk: the horizons of cooperation. What mutual interests were defined by forum of twin regions in China? / D. Demidov // [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <http://www.novaya.by/2019/10/22/shandun-novopolock-gorizonty-sotrudnichestva-kakie-vzaimnye-interesy-opredelil-forum-regionov-pobratimov-v-kitae/>.

<sup>92</sup> Visit of Qingdao delegation (PRC) to Orsha district, Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. -- 2018. - URL: <https://cci-vitebsk.by/ru/content/%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%82-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BE-%D0%BA%D0%BD%D1%80-%D0%B2-%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9->



industrial and logistics complex. In addition, in July 2019, it became known about the intention of the Qingdao Municipal Department of Education to take part in the construction of a school in Orsha for 1020 pupils. "Such a school may become an experimental site for testing jointly developed programs of optional classes in Chinese language, literature, theater and art in general"<sup>93</sup>.

Returning to interregional cooperation between Vitebsk Oblast and Shandong Province in general, it should be noted that in October 2019 these regions have already signed an Agreement on Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation, which identified as priorities for the development of partnerships "development of an effective mechanism of cooperation in trade and investment, the development of cooperation in industry, transport logistics, the establishment of joint companies in petrochemistry, water treatment, electronics"<sup>94</sup>. All these areas will be concretely translated into a road map for cooperation, which will be developed in the near future. One of the real projects to be included in this program of cooperation between the Belarusian and Chinese regions will be a joint venture to produce peat products to be established in Vitebsk Oblast. Its participants will be "a Chinese company of agricultural orientation, interested in supplying peat products in large volumes, and UE "Vitebskoblgaz," which includes a branch on peat extraction and processing in Dokshitsy district"<sup>95</sup>.

Summing up, it should be noted that "the Year of Belarus' regions in China is planned to be held in 2020"<sup>96</sup>. These plans mean that in the near future the two countries intend to further develop interregional cooperation and strengthen trade and economic, scientific and technological, production and operational, cultural and tourist ties, expanding the number of participants in this interaction.

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<sup>93</sup> They're planning to build a new school in Orsha. Not a simple one, but with Chinese investment [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://gorod216.by/new/2723>.

<sup>94</sup> Bogacheva, O. Vitebsk region and Shandong province signed an agreement on friendship and cooperation / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vitebskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-shandun-podpisali-soglashenie-odruzhbe-i-sotrudnichestve-366479-2019/>.

<sup>95</sup> Bogacheva, O.V. In Vitebsk region together with China will produce peat products / O.Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-vitebskoj-oblasti-sovmestno-s-kitaem-budut-vypuskat-torfoproduktsiju-366630-2019/>.

<sup>96</sup> Belarus and China are interested in promoting interregional cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-zainteresovany-v-aktivizatsii-mezhregionalnogo-sotrudnichestva-369121-2019/>.

## Belarus-Kenya: promising growth points outlined

In August 2019, the Belarusian-Kenyan business forum was held in Nairobi, where the participants outlined promising growth points for bilateral trade and economic cooperation. At the same time, the parties focused on the prospects for joint projects that would contribute to the implementation of the strategic "Big Four Program" of the Government of Kenya, which includes "food security and nutrition, universal health care, affordable housing and production"<sup>97</sup>. As a result, agreements were signed at the forum for the construction of a reinforced concrete plant on Kenyan soil and the establishment of a fish farm worth more than a hundred million dollars. The parties also reached agreements on the supply of almost twenty million dollars worth of auto-tractor machinery and equipment from Belarus to Kenya, with the subsequent establishment of an assembly factory in this African country for Belarusian tractors with the capacity of up to five thousand units a year.

These facts show that the business forum was an important concrete step towards establishing bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Kenya, diplomatic relations between which were established 26 years ago. It is true that the legal framework of the Belarusian-Kenyan interaction is still in the process of formation. However, it is encouraging that now the parties are preparing to sign a number of joint documents regulating the bilateral relations in various fields, including agriculture, higher education, science and technology.

A positive trend in recent years in the development of partnership between the two countries is the rapid growth - by more than forty percent - of mutual trade turnover in 2018, which came close to \$50 million. "Traditional articles of Belarusian exports to Kenya are: potash and mineral mixed fertilizers, newsprint, printing products. The basis of Kenyan imports to Belarus is formed by supplies of flowers and buds, nuts, vegetables and fruits, coffee and tea"<sup>98</sup>. And this gives grounds for the Belarusian side at the highest level to predict that "Kenya will soon become one of the key partners of Belarus in Africa"<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> About the Belarusian-Kenyan business forum [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/e02ca9530a8dcc63.html>.

<sup>98</sup> Belarus - Kenya [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral\\_relations/](http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/).

<sup>99</sup> Lukashenko hopes that Kenya will become one of Belarus' key partners in Africa [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasschityvaet-cto-kenija-stanet-odnim-iz-kljuчевyh-partnerov-belarusi-v-afrike-328984-2018/>.

The seriousness of the intentions of the Belarusian side to get thoroughly involved in the Kenyan market is confirmed by the fact of organizing the first national exposition of Belarus at the International Exhibition of Food, Hotel Business and Agriculture FoodAgro, held in Nairobi in early August 2019. Minsk is confident that participation in this exhibition, which is an integral part of the largest exhibition event in East Africa - Kenya International Trade Exhibition, "will contribute to the promotion of Belarusian agricultural machinery and equipment, fertilizers, food, agricultural products in the Kenyan market, as well as become a launching pad for Belarusian enterprises to enter the countries of KOMECA (Integration Association of Eastern and Southern Africa)<sup>100</sup>.

In the Kenyan capital its products were presented by the enterprises of the concern "Belgospisheprom", JSC "Managing Company of the holding "Lidselmash", open joint-stock companies "Gomselmash", "MTZ", "MAZ", "Bobruiskagromash", "Lidakhleproduct", as well as a unitary enterprise "Smorgonsky Kombinat Hleboproduct". The participation of these Belarusian exporters in the exhibition is explained by the fact that Kenya is an agricultural country, where "more than 35% of GDP falls on the agricultural sector.<sup>101</sup> A new programme for the country's planned economic development until 2022 was launched in December 2017, focusing on national production, food security and affordable housing. In this regard, Belarusian producers, with a competent approach, can realistically claim to increase the supply of their agricultural equipment, fertilizers and chemical plant protection products. The development of meat and dairy production is also promising in this African country, as "the range of such products in Kenya is not wide, so here with interest respond to proposals for the creation of meat and dairy complexes, poultry complexes, lines for processing meat, cheese production<sup>102</sup>. This is also an interesting fact. In Kenya today there are many manufacturers who assemble tractors, tractors and cars. There is a company that assembles on its premises three models of Volkswagen cars. It is the company that would like to expand the range of vehicles assembled here at the expense of Belarusian tractors.

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<sup>100</sup> National exposition of Belarus opened at FoodAgro exhibition in Kenya [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belarusi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-foodagro-v-kenii-356957-2019/>.

<sup>101</sup> The FoodAgro exhibition will allow Belarus to expand its presence in the Kenyan market - Sadoho [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vystavka-foodagro-pozvolit-belarusi-rasshirit-svoe-prisutstvie-na-rynke-kenii-sadoho-349941-2019/>.

<sup>102</sup> Demand for Belarusian agricultural machinery in Kenya is constantly growing [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/spros-na-beloruskskiju-selhoztehniku-v-kenii-postojanno-rastet-349964-2019/>.

It should be noted that the exhibition in Nairobi was a continuation of the policy of the Belarusian side to actively participate in various business events held on the African continent in 2019. Thus, in March this year for the first time the national exposition of Belarus was organized at the International Exhibition of Agriculture and Livestock, Food, Drinks and Packaging Technologies Agrofood, which was held in the Nigerian city of Lagos. And in April the exposition Made in Belarus was presented at the 60th multi-industry international exhibition Zimbabwe International Trade Fair 2019 in the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo - one of the largest in the South African region.

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## **Belarus: from international technical assistance project to specific renewable energy facilities**

"Removing Barriers to Wind Energy Development in the Republic of Belarus" - an international technical assistance project under this title is being implemented in our country by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility. The Belarusian Government approved it back in December 2014. One of its components is to increase the confidence of potential investors in the profitability of wind energy projects on Belarusian soil, reduce the risks of investment in wind energy development and prepare pre-investment assets for the construction of wind power facilities in Belarus. For this purpose, "a large-scale information campaign on renewable energy" should be conducted in our country<sup>103</sup>. And the final goal is seen in the successful development of at least five objects on wind power installations. At the same time, the project includes: 1) selection of potential sites for wind power plants, 2) obtaining necessary permits, 3) development of required technical specifications and qualification criteria, 4) conducting feasibility study and wind measurements.

The emergence of this international technical assistance project in Belarus is due to several factors. Firstly, forecasts at the global level suggest that energy consumption in the world will increase by about a third over the next two decades. At the same time, the total share of renewable sources in the global energy sector will increase to 44 percent by 2050, mainly due to solar, wind and hydro power. Secondly, against this background, the current pace of renewable energy development in Belarus, to put it mildly, leaves much to be desired. It is understandable. After all, so far over 90 percent of electricity in our country has been generated by thermal power plants. And the Belarusian side has to import over 80% of the consumed fuel and energy resources, mainly from Russia. If we take into account that the demand for energy grows every year, we can understand why the issue of using renewable energy sources, including wind, is becoming especially urgent today. Third, the fact that the Republic of Belarus has great opportunities for the development of wind energy, as many regions of the country are characterized by favorable wind speed, emphasizes even the UN Development Programme. At the same time, a report of this international organization, published in April 2017, notes that "over the past decades, wind energy costs have

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<sup>103</sup> About the project [Electronic resource]. - - 2014. - URL: <https://www.windpower.by/project/>.

fallen significantly and often represent an economically competitive alternative to fossil fuels. Thus, wind energy offers Belarus the opportunity to reduce energy imports while meeting its obligations to minimize the impact of climate change<sup>104</sup>. And the Belarusian side is ready to make serious efforts to address this problem.

The National Action Plan for the development of "green" economy of the Republic of Belarus until 2020, adopted by the Belarusian government in December 2016, notes that the country "identified 1840 sites for the location of wind turbines with a theoretical energy potential of 1,600 MW. The largest generation of electricity can be produced in Vitsebsk, Minsk and Hrodna voblasts. Some districts of Mogilev region also have significant wind energy potential"<sup>105</sup>. It should be reminded that by the middle of 2016 there were only 65 wind power plants in Belarus. In other words, the creation of wind parks for the Belarusian side is still a relatively new area of energy. Thus, in 2018 the country "commissioned 12 wind power plants with a total capacity of 16.8 MW (all plants were commissioned in Grodno region)<sup>106</sup>. And "at the beginning of 2019, the share of such sources in the country's energy market was 6.2%. Currently, 96 wind turbines with a total capacity of 100.95 MW operate throughout the country"<sup>107</sup>. The largest wind park in Belarus at the moment is located in Novogrudok district of Hrodna voblast and combines six wind turbines with a capacity of 9.0 MW. The international technical assistance project mentioned above is intended to contribute to the improvement of the situation.

One of the landmark steps in the implementation of this project should be the construction of the largest in Belarus wind park of seven wind turbines near the village of Veleshkovichi, located in Liozna district, Vitsebsk region. August 30, 2019, an agreement on the sale of pre-investment asset was signed, which will attract about forty million dollars of foreign investment for the construction of the wind farm "Veleshkovichi. A well-known developer of environmentally friendly engineering solutions - Turkish construction company Gurish Construction & Engineering Co. Inc. - will take up this case. It is expected that work on the

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<sup>104</sup> Henrik, K. Republic of Belarus: reducing risks of investing in renewable energy sources. Report / K. Henrik, O. Weisbein. - UNDP, 2017. - - C. 7.

<sup>105</sup> National Action Plan for the development of the "green" economy of the Republic of Belarus until 2020. - Minsk, 2016. - - C. 27–28.

<sup>106</sup> Investment proposal for construction of a wind park in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.windpower.by/files/files/Investment%2025.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> About \$40 million of foreign investments were attracted for the construction of the largest wind park in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-40-mln-inostrannyh-investitsij-privlecheno-dlja-stroitelstva-krupnejshego-v-belarusi-vetroparka-361459-2019/>.

creation of this wind farm will begin in 2020, and after their completion the wind farm will supply clean energy to more than twenty thousand households in the Liozna district. As a result, "it is expected that the operation of the wind park in the next 20 years will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 500 thousand tons"<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> It's the same place.

## Belarus: exports to distant arc countries as an important factor for development

Cooperation with the countries of the so-called far arc - Asia, Africa and Latin America - is one of the priorities of the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus. At the same time, one of the urgent tasks facing the Belarusian economy today is to increase exports to the distant arc countries and bring their volume to 30 percent of the total supply to foreign markets. It is rather difficult to solve it, since "85% of our exports are determined by 12-13 of our partners and there are almost no far-arc countries"<sup>109</sup>. Nevertheless, this task can be solved by using all the opportunities available to Belarusian exporters to promote their goods and services both in terms of securing their positions in the already developed markets of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and in terms of opening new ones. Belarusian economic entities seeking to diversify their supplies to non-CIS countries have examples of such a competent approach to achieving this goal.

Take the producers of Belarusian agricultural products. In three quarters of 2019, they delivered their goods for almost \$4 billion to 94 countries. They "discovered 11 new markets, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Thailand, Angola, Benin, Kenya, Cuba, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina"<sup>110</sup>. And we do not intend to rest on our laurels in this direction, continuing to persistently expand markets for a wide variety of product groups. In particular, "work on certification of Belarusian beef for the Turkish market is being actively carried out (there is a possibility that by the end of this year [2019] the first deliveries will be made, and a trial batch of similar goods to Iran, where there have been no deliveries for almost 7 years)"<sup>111</sup>.

As for the meat and dairy products, by the end of 2019 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus plans to increase export supplies by at least five percent. The industry intends to reach such an indicator "not only by increasing the number of countries, but also by expanding the range of products: in addition to the traditional positions, we are focused on the taste preferences of

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<sup>109</sup> The National Marketing Centre sees difficulties in increasing exports to the far arc countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-tsentr-marketinga-vidit-slozhnosti-s-uvelicheniem-eksporta-v-strany-dalnej-dugi-369792-2019/>.

<sup>110</sup> Exports of Belarusian agricultural products rose by 4.1% in January-September [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyros-na-41-368669-2019/>.

<sup>111</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture expects to bring cheese exports closer to \$1 billion in 2020 [Electron Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minselhozprod-rasschityvaet-priblizit-eksport-syrov-k-1-mlrd-v-2020-godu-364726-2019/>.



consumers in other countries, in accordance with this and build a line of its products<sup>112</sup>. In addition, by the end of 2019 it is planned to start deliveries of beet press from Belarus to China under direct contracts. "Among the Belarusian sugar beet pulp producers accredited for deliveries to China are open joint stock companies Zhabinkovsky sugar plant, Skidelsky sugar mill, Gorodeysky sugar mill and Slutsk sugar refinery<sup>113</sup>.

The enterprises of the Bellesbumprom concern also purposefully develop new markets in 2019. During the nine months of this year, the geography of their exports has covered 69 countries, 15 of which are new. Among them are Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Supplies to the Asian market are also developing. Products are exported to China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Bahrain, Bangladesh, UAE<sup>114</sup>. At the same time, we should separately mention the furniture enterprises that are part of the concern. Almost all of them are exporters. Taking into account adverse external factors, many of them take prompt measures to find new markets. In particular, JLLC ZOV-LenEuromebel has started supplying furniture to the United Arab Emirates. Exports for this enterprise increased by 10.5%<sup>115</sup>.

In 2019, enterprises of the Belarusian Ministry of Industry shipped their products to more than a hundred countries. However, supplies to non-CIS countries accounted for almost a third of total exports. Supplies to African countries have increased almost in one and a half times. As for the development of new markets, "trial shipments were sent to nine countries where exports were absent in January-July 2018. These include Chile, Lebanon, Benin, Togo and Uganda<sup>116</sup>.

Among Belarusian cities, positive trends in the development of new markets are demonstrated by Brest companies, which have shipped their goods to 85 countries

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<sup>112</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture and Food plans to increase exports of meat and dairy products by at least 5% in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minselhozprod-planiruet-uvulichit-eksport-mjaso-molochnoj-produktsii-v-2019-godu-ne-menee-chem-na-5-369203-2019/>.

<sup>113</sup> Belarus plans to begin deliveries of beet pulp to China by the end of the year under direct contracts [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-dokontsa-goda-nachat-postavki-v-kitaj-sveklovichnogo-zhoma-po-prjamym-dogovoram-368796-2019/>.

<sup>114</sup> Exports of Bellesbumprom enterprises rose by 4.9% in January-September [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-predpriyatij-bellesbumproma-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyros-na-49-368267-2019/>.

<sup>115</sup> Enterprises of Bellesbumprom intend to increase the supply of furniture to the EU countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-namereny-naraschivat-postavki-mebeli-v-strany-es-365937-2019/>.

<sup>116</sup> Enterprises of the Belarusian Ministry of Industry export to more than 100 countries [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-minproma-belarusi-eksportirujut-produktsiju-v-100-stran-363335-2019/>.

for more than \$780 million in three quarters of 2019. 13 countries have become newcomers to this list. "In particular, JSC "Savushkin Product" delivered the first batch of products to Egypt and Indonesia, "Brest Meat Processing Plant" - Cote d'Ivoire, JV "Santa-Bremor" LLC - to Montenegro. Besides, the producers of the regional center are taking the first steps in developing the markets of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guinea, Dominican Republic, Cape Verde, Malta, Saudi Arabia, Croatia, Iraq, Panama"<sup>117</sup>. And these facts cannot but be encouraging.

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<sup>117</sup> Brest enterprises opened 13 markets in January-September [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-bresta-v-janvare-sentjabre-otkryli-13-rynkov-sbyta-368956-2019/>.

## Belarus: global information security and regional press

The global digitalization that we are all witnessing today is rapidly changing the world around us, invading also the media and information sphere. At the same time, new technologies not only influence the nature of creative work of modern journalists, but also actualize a number of challenges and threats to which the journalistic community should respond. At the international scientific-practical conference "Security and Sustainable Development: Theory and Practice in Digital Transformation" held in Minsk in December 2019, it was noted that "the leading players of the information field are now hurriedly building defense lines. At the same time, while a few years ago the information field was dominated by the themes of freedom of trade and human rights, now the issue of security is dominant"<sup>118</sup>. The obvious militarization of the information space in a number of countries, which has a destructive impact on other participants in the media and information sphere, cannot but be alarming.

Taking into account all these challenges and threats, a number of initiatives were put forward in the Republic of Belarus in 2019 aimed at resolving issues of global information security. In particular, in March the Concept of Information Security of the country was approved, which refers to information sovereignty as a new approach to ensuring information security and information neutrality as a form of State and responsible behaviour and self-limitation of the use of destructive technologies to the detriment of other States. More precisely, information sovereignty in Belarus will be achieved by establishing a system of legal regulation of relations in the information sphere, ensuring safe sustainable development, social justice and consent. Within the framework of this approach, the development of national mass media and telecommunications should be ensured, which bring up and stimulate in society "a critical attitude towards manifestations of disrespect for national foundations, traditions and violations of morals and law in the information sphere, intolerance to disinformation, information manipulation and other implicit information and psychological influences"<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> The offensive potential in the information sphere is already formed in some states - Makarov [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nastupatelnyj-potentsial-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-uzhe-sformirovan-v-nekotoryh-gosudarstvah-makarov-371838-2019/>.

<sup>119</sup> Information security concept of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf>.

In international relations, the information sovereignty of the Belarusian state should be ensured based on the principle of information neutrality. The essence of it is that defending its own national interests in the information sphere with the use of all available forces and means, the Belarusian side aims at conducting a peaceful foreign information policy, respect for universally recognized and generally accepted rights of any state in this sphere, exclusion of the initiative "to interfere in the information sphere of other countries, aimed at discrediting or challenging their political, economic, social and spiritual standards and priorities, as well as at harming the information sphere. 120In this context, the provision contained in the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus, that in order to ensure the policy of information neutrality, it is necessary to increase the degree of Belarus' presence in the world information space and expand international information exchange, seems important for representatives of the journalistic community.

In other words, existing security threats point to the need to expand interstate cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere. Proceeding from the urgency of this problem, in September 2019 at the high-level international conference in Minsk "Combating terrorism with the help of innovative approaches and the use of new emerging technologies" the Belarusian side proposed to form a "digital neighborhood belt" aimed at defusing tension in the information sphere. According to the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko believes that "the key elements of such agreements could be the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, which would primarily guarantee non-interference of countries in each other's information resources<sup>121</sup>. The Belarusian side sees the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements on ensuring information security as a mechanism to implement this initiative.

Speaking in September 2019 from the high rostrum of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly about the need to expand interstate digital cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere, the Belarusian side once again drew the attention of the entire international community to the need to implement the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, as well as non-interference of countries in each other's information resources. It was particularly emphasized: "Digital sovereignty should guarantee the ability of a state to control its information field, prevent and block cyberattacks, provide reliable protection

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<sup>120</sup> It's the same place.

<sup>121</sup> Participation in the international conference on combating terrorism [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnoj-konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terrorizmom-21910/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnoj-konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terrorizmom-21910/).

of critical infrastructure. Digital neutrality implies that countries will not take actions in cyberspace that harm the security of other states. Ultimately, such agreements can lay the foundation for international rules for responsible behaviour in virtual space"<sup>122</sup>.

The launch of such a "wave of digital security" could undoubtedly increase the effectiveness of joint countermeasures against terrorist threats in virtual space. In this context, Belarus is ready to cooperate and strengthen ties with all countries of the world and, especially, with its neighbors, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, where there is an active search for a unifying agenda, new ideas shared by a wide range of states and organizations, and where, first of all, "it is necessary to agree that we in the media do not roll at least on each other and do not wage this information warfare against each other"<sup>123</sup>. It should be noted that the Belarusian initiative to create a "digital neighborhood belt" in the post-Soviet space was supported primarily by Russia, as reported by the Foreign Minister of that country S. Lavrov in November 2019. According to him, this initiative "fully meets Russia's focus on the formation of as many digital neighborhoods as possible"<sup>124</sup>. The Belarusian side also stated the need to expand international cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere at the summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in November 2019 in Bishkek, emphasizing that "information security should be firmly established among the priorities of the CSTO"<sup>125</sup>. In addition, in December 2019, at the 26th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, official Minsk drew the attention of members of this international structure to the need to conclude international agreements in the field of cybersecurity, "similar to those on additional confidence- and security-building measures in the military and political sphere."<sup>126</sup> In order to better adapt to changing security conditions and thus enhance joint responses to contemporary challenges and threats, and to play an increasingly prominent role in global security. An important aspect of the implementation of this initiative is also the consistent

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<sup>122</sup> Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei at the general discussion at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (26 September 2019, New York) [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b698116bea64ee66.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b698116bea64ee66.html).

<sup>123</sup> Participation in the session of the Council of CIS Heads of State [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistan-22184/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistan-22184/).

<sup>124</sup> Lavrov: Moscow welcomes Minsk's proposal to ensure digital security [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/7145127>.

<sup>125</sup> Summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-22481/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-22481/).

<sup>126</sup> Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei at the 26th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council (Bratislava, December 5, 2019) [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/statements/e8f7cc1b86026dad.html/>

development of partnership between the Republic of Belarus and the bilateral relations both at the level of individual states and their regions.

At the same time, "one of the security reserves not yet fully exploited is the resource of the analytical and expert communities, which have unique research potential"<sup>127</sup>. It should be assumed that representatives of the international segment of Belarusian journalism could also contribute to the development of certain areas of analysis of security reserves in the information sphere. Especially as regards the fight against counterfeit information, methodology of responsible behaviour in the information-media sphere, ways of verification of information on the Internet.

We would like to remind you that the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus, already mentioned above, highlights "manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, blurring of national sovereignty, instability of information infrastructure"<sup>128</sup> among modern challenges and threats, forming in the information sphere and posing danger for constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state. Proceeding from the fact that the information sphere has already acquired key importance for any state and every person, the task in Belarus is to expand the sphere of influence of domestic mass media and take "measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting, as well as the trust of the population to official mass media"<sup>129</sup>.

The fact is that back in the course of the "Big Talk with the President," which took place in early March 2019, the Belarusian head of state drew attention to the fact that "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a shortage of content that would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience, one of the reasons is the so-called fake news. They instantly spread, capture the audience, excite thoughts"<sup>130</sup>. In this regard, the role of a deterrent in the fight against fairy news should be taken on today:

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<sup>127</sup> Building a reliable security system only by state forces is impossible - Vakulchik [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/postroenie-nadezhnoj-sistemy-bezopasnosti-tolko-silami-gosudarstva-nevozmozhno-vakulchik-371768-2019/>.

<sup>128</sup> Matveev, V. Information security concept of Belarus is planned to be approved soon / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/kontseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belarusi-planiruetsja-utverdit-v-blizhajshee-vremja-339646-2019/>.

<sup>129</sup> Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/).

<sup>130</sup> Meeting with representatives of public and expert community, Belarusian and foreign mass media "Big talk with the President" [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/).

1) authoritative **mass media**;

2) professional **journalists** who consistently comply with the laws of ethics and moral norms in the media space and strive for maximum accuracy and objectivity in their work;

3) **representatives of the expert community**, who by virtue of their competence have yet to occupy a special place in the media.

The fact that traditional media should become a powerful unifying factor in the fight against fake information and unprofessional approaches to the coverage of current external and internal issues was stated in resolution XIII of the Belarusian International Media Forum "Partnership for the Future: a digital agenda for the media space", which was held in Minsk in September 2018. The resolution of the forum emphasized that preserving the authority and position of traditional media - print and electronic - is extremely important, since it is these subjects of the information field that are able to fully "bear responsibility to society for the quality, completeness and reliability of the information provided, have the capacity to ensure a professional approach to the creation and dissemination of information products"<sup>131</sup>.

The real practice shows that trust to the media by a wide audience arises when the media competently analyze the events taking place in the society and promptly give comprehensive answers to the questions that appear in the readers, viewers and listeners. In other words, it is possible and necessary to minimize the threats of negative information impact in the form of fairy news by creating your own interesting, relevant and true content, so that "any fairy can be confidently answered and destroyed to the root"<sup>132</sup>. It is clear that without close and constant interaction with representatives of the expert community media structures will hardly be able to fully solve such a large-scale problem.

To strengthen coordination between the media and expert communities in this area, it seems that it is time to start forming professional **media expert** pools in the most important areas of Belarusian foreign and domestic policy. Professionalism in the information sphere in this case should be understood as qualitative and interesting presentation of materials, skilful technical organization

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<sup>131</sup> The media need to unite against fake information and unprofessionalism - media forum resolution [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-nuzhno-objedinitjsja-v-borbe-s-fejkovoj-informatsiej-i-neprofessionalizmom-rezoljutsija-mediaforuma-317622-2018/>.

<sup>132</sup> Pavel Legky: the main tool in the fight against inaccurate information on the Internet is people's trust [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/pavel-legkij-glavnyj-instrument-v-borbe-s-nedostovernoj-informatsiej-v-internete-doverie-ljudej-317648-2018/>.

of the creative process, availability of expert opinions and analytics based on reliable data. We see something similar, for example, already in the course of implementation of global sustainable development goals in Belarus, where among the partner groups, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, in the national architecture of management of the CSD achievement, a media expert group has been created to conduct informational work in the media space on all 17 sustainable development goals.

Another interesting example in this direction is the Plan of Joint Action for 2019 on the coverage of the export potential of Belarus in the mass media, signed in March this year by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote "the dissemination of objective information on the development of national exports, strengthening international contacts of Belarusian enterprises and the entry of their products into new markets"<sup>133</sup>. The basic component of this media-expert interaction should be a series of seminars for journalists working on foreign economic issues in order not only to highlight the key problems of Belarusian export development, but also to promote the presence of relevant economic topics in the Belarusian mass media at all levels - from central to regional. It should be recalled that the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 includes among its eight main tasks the requirement to **promote the export culture in the** form of consolidation in the mass consciousness of the importance of exports for the development of the country and society and raising its priority. In this regard, the adoption by the Ministry of Information and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of a plan of joint action to highlight the export potential of Belarus in the media sphere is a very important and necessary step.

In this context, the topic of interaction between media and expert communities at the regional level, including the implementation of the policy of international cooperation of the Belarusian regions, deserves a separate discussion. The point is that "regional media occupy their unique niche in which neither national nor international media can compete"<sup>134</sup>. But at the same time, "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is still a lack of content that would enjoy

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<sup>133</sup> The Ministry of Information and the BelCCI signed a plan of joint actions for media coverage of Belarusian exports [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/mininform-i-belppp-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvuj-pomosvescheniju-v-smi-belorusskogo-eksporta-339703-2019/>.

<sup>134</sup> Digitalization contributes to raising the level of regional media - Easy [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsifrovizatsija-sposobstvuet-povysheniju-urovnja-regionalnyh-smi-legkij-317725-2018/>.



the absolute trust of the audience"<sup>135</sup>. And this is in the conditions when the thematic spectrum, in which the Belarusian regional press is to be built, has been expanding with exceptional speed in recent years. These are only the areas that emphasize the geography of international cooperation of the regions of Belarus that have emerged over the past years and that should be adequately reflected in the regional media in order to contribute to the effective solution of the problems arising here:

- 1) development of large-scale economic integration with the regions of the Eurasian Economic Union countries and especially with the Russian Federation constituent entities within the Union State, as well as with the regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States;
- 2) expansion of comprehensive cooperation with the regions of the European Union and especially within the Eastern Partnership initiative, as well as with the regions of the Neighbourhood Belt countries - Poland, Lithuania, Latvia;
- (3) Deepening cooperation with regions of countries participating in the One Belt, One Way mega-project, and especially with provinces, autonomous regions and cities of the People's Republic of China;
- 4) further intensification of trade and economic relations with the regions of the "far arc" countries - South-East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America - and especially with those regions where there is considerable potential for mutually beneficial interregional cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus assumes that the role of traditional regional mass media will be increasingly important, since "successful development of any region depends on the information space as a whole, on the ability to quickly adapt to the rapidly growing market of communication technologies"<sup>136</sup>. That is why here too, information strategies specific to international regional issues are already needed that can significantly expand the sphere of influence of a particular media outlet through the high quality of its media product.

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<sup>135</sup> The trust of the audience can be maintained by the district editions of Melnikov [Electronic Resource] with exceptional truthfulness. -- 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/doverie-auditorii-rajonnye-izdaniya-mogut-podderzivat-iskljuchitelnoj-pravdivostju-melnikova-338797-2019/>.

<sup>136</sup> The role of local media in the socio-economic development of the regions will be discussed at the national meeting [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. -URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/rol-mestnyh-smi-v-sotsialno-ekonomicheskom-razvitanii-regionov-obsudjat-na-respublikanskom-soveshanii-337842-2019/>.

## "The Great Stone": The investment prospects are huge.

In November 2019, the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (FEMOSA) held a summit in Monaco, the main theme of which was to strengthen cooperation and transform the successful experience of free economic zones (FEZs) into working tools. More than 400 representatives of BEZs from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Asia and Africa, as well as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, public authorities and potential foreign investors took part in this large-scale event. FEMOSA is a non-governmental and non-profit organization supported by the United Nations, which was founded in 1999 in Geneva to support and promote free and special economic zones around the world, and especially - in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assist BMS residents in entering the international market and attract foreign investment. The functions of FEMOSA include developing norms, rules and guidelines for the development of FEZs, providing them with technical, legal and economic assistance, and training specialists. The statistics says that "today there are 3500 free zones in 130 countries, which account for more than 70 million jobs"<sup>137</sup>. But, "despite the benefits and preferences offered to them in all countries, only 300-400 are effective. All this is due to technological backwardness, which prevents the BMS from becoming part of the global economy"<sup>138</sup>.

The Republic of Belarus has been taking a very active part in the activities of FEMOSA for many years. Thus, back in September 2014 at the Congress of Free and Special Economic Zones of Southern and Eastern Europe, held in Serbia, the cooperation agreement with FEMOSA was signed by FEZ "Gomel-Raton". And already in March 2015 at the Congress of Free and Special Economic Zones of Northern and Eastern Europe on the theme "Globalization of business and foreign direct investment. The New Investment Corridor" was held in Gomel under the auspices of FEMOSA. More than two hundred specialists from 25 countries took part in it. "BEZs of the Northern and Eastern European countries, including the

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<sup>137</sup> Barcelona will be the Free Zone Capital in 2019 [Electronic Resource]. - – 2017. - URL: [https://ru.wikinews.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0\\_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82\\_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%B9\\_%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85\\_%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BD\\_%D0%B2\\_2019\\_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%83](https://ru.wikinews.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%B9_%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85_%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BD_%D0%B2_2019_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%83).

<sup>138</sup> Grigoryeva, V. President of the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (Femoza) Juan Torrents Tolosa visited Gomel [Electronic Resource]. - – 2015. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/vse-sezy-v-gosti-k-nam.html>

UK, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Latvia, as well as Italy, Spain, Greece, Asia and Africa, were almost fully represented<sup>139</sup>. And in May 2018 in the same Gomel with the participation of FEMOSA the second Congress of Free Economic Zones of Eastern and Northern Europe was held, which was attended by heads of administrations, management companies and residents of FEZs of Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Georgia, Russia and a number of other countries. Finally, in October 2018 during the World Investment Forum of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva, a memorandum of cooperation with FEMOSA was signed by the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" and FEZ "Minsk", which should contribute to "creating within their borders even more favorable investment climate for foreign companies"<sup>140</sup>.

As for the summit in Monaco, participation in this large-scale event has become a landmark for Belarus, as it was there that the Sino-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" was awarded the FEMOZA Awards 2019, winning the nomination "The fastest growing industrial park". The peculiarity of this category is that "the key in determining the winner was the Great Stone's prospects for global investment and its rapid pace of development"<sup>141</sup>. Indeed, today in the "Great Stone," the Belarusian side has created solid benefits for residents - both in terms of tax and land acquisition, as well as a favorable regime in which the registration of enterprises takes place as soon as possible on a "one-stop shop" principle. As a result, "today this park shows amazing growth, with investors from all over the world coming to us"<sup>142</sup>.

The facts show that the "Great Stone" has already become an international platform for the creation of high-tech enterprises. At the beginning of November 2019, 57 residents were registered here. And there are all grounds to believe that their number "by the end of 2020 can grow to 80"<sup>143</sup>. The project on creation of

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<sup>139</sup> Sidorchik, V. Free Economic Zones of Belarus in 2014 accounted for 12% of the country's export / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - - 2015. - URL: <http://invest.gomel-region.by/ru/news/?id=2963>.

<sup>140</sup> On the participation of the Great Stone Industrial Park and FEZ "Minsk" in the World Investment Forum of UNCTAD [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://geneva.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b9570573ea1b392a.html>.

<sup>141</sup> "The Great Stone is recognized as the fastest growing industrial park in the world [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-priznan-samym-bystrorastuschim-industrialnym-parkom-v-mire-369159-2019/>.

<sup>142</sup> Megaloths in the "Great Stone" and IT records - Rumas told about the opportunities to invest in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/megaloty-v-velikom-kamne-i-rekordy-it-rumas-rasskazal-o-vozmozhnostjah-investirovat-v-belarus-370269-2019/>.

<sup>143</sup> The number of Great Stone residents may increase to 80 by the end of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kolichestvo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-k-kontsu-2020-goda-mozhet-uvelichitsja-do-80-365696-2019/>.

manufacture of solar batteries is already realized here. In July 2019, the construction of the Belarusian-Chinese plant for the production of mechanical transmissions with an investment of \$17 million began in the industrial park. In October 2019, a plant for the production of engines, LLC "MAZ-Veichai," where they produce "small-knot assembly of engines of Euro-5 and Euro-6 standards for trucks, special vehicles and buses. The production capacity at single-shift operation will be 10 thousand engines per year"<sup>144</sup>. Attraction of new residents to the "Great Stone" will also be facilitated by a memorandum on cooperation with the Inchuan technical and economic zone signed in early November 2019. And this is just the beginning, in fact.

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<sup>144</sup> Opening of the engine plant "Maz-Veichai" in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" [Electron resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9051>.

## **"The Great Stone": the development perspective is sub-parks.**

At the end of October 2019, the 12th meeting of the Working Group on the issues of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" was held in Beijing, where the participants focused their attention on such areas of development of this special economic zone as: improvement of the legal environment of the park; establishment of additional comfortable conditions for attracting investments in the creation of competitive industries; creation of a sustainable engineering and transport infrastructure; digital construction; development of the park as a smart city. Among the tasks for the development of the industrial park in 2020 were highlighted "the priority of export orientation, attraction of anchor investors with high-tech projects, expansion of international activities".<sup>145</sup>

One of the very effective tools for expanding the international activities of the Great Stone may be a form of attracting new residents, such as creating sub-parks in it, which means "the arrival of not one investor, but a pool of landmark companies under the leadership of a separate management company. This opens up wide prospects for large corporations"<sup>146</sup>. It should be added that this proposal is addressed by the park's administration not only to Chinese provinces, "but also to investors from Europe, in particular Switzerland, and Japan"<sup>147</sup>. The main condition for future residents, which must be met, is the creation of high-tech enterprises in the industrial park. And the space and opportunities for building technological clusters and sub-parks on a national basis will be enough for everyone here.

It should be noted that the subpark format is already used in practice in the Great Stone. Back in May 2017, the first phase of the trade and logistics subpark was opened here, located on 29 hectares. This is a hundred thousand square meters of real estate, half of which was occupied by warehouses, and almost a quarter - by

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<sup>145</sup> The Great Stone Industrial Park will be presented at the Chinese International Import Exhibition [Electronic Resource] in November. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-v-nojabre-predstavjat-na-kitajskoj-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-importa-367476-2019/>.

<sup>146</sup> Konoga, P. Alexander Yaroshenko told about new residents of "Great stone" industrial park, satellite city and plans for 2019 / P. Konoga // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/vyseh-pribyl-iz-kamnya.html>.

<sup>147</sup> The "Great Stone" offers foreign partners to create sub-parks [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-predlagaet-zarubezhnym-partneram-sozdavat-subparki-365694-2019/>.

the exhibition center. "About \$120 million was invested in the construction of the sub-park. In the near future it is planned to start the construction of the second stage. In total the territory of the sub-park will occupy the area of more than 90 hectares, the volume of investments - \$500 million"<sup>148</sup>.

At the 11th meeting of the Working Group on the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, held in November 2018 in Beijing, it was noted that in the near future the necessary support would be provided for the practical implementation in the "Great Stone" of sub-parks in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, and Guangdong Province. It was also planned "to work on the establishment of sub-parks in an industrial park with Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces and Hangzhou City by the end of 2019"<sup>149</sup>. As far as Guangdong Province is concerned, as early as January 2017, in its administrative center - Guangzhou City - "a ceremony of signing an agreement on the establishment of the Chinese (Guangdong) LED sub-park in the Great Stone Industrial Park" was held.<sup>150</sup> as well as five other documents of intent to join this subpark of specific companies.

Another landmark document in the context of this topic was signed in November 2018 at the first Chinese exhibition of imported goods and services in Shanghai. This is an agreement on the establishment of the Chengdu-European Industrial Sub-Park in the Great Stone. The fact is that Chengdu - the administrative center of Sichuan Province - has a significant industrial potential, including developed automotive and aerospace industries, which corresponds to the priorities of the Sino-Belarusian industrial park. In addition, "Chengdu is the most economically close city of China to Europe"<sup>151</sup>.

Let us note an important detail: a number of important meetings and negotiations have taken place recently, where the issues of creating national sub-parks of European countries in the "Great Stone" have been discussed. In particular, in August 2019 this topic was discussed in the government of the Republic of Belarus with representatives of the Swiss business community, including the

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<sup>148</sup> Anatoli Kalinin took part in the opening of the first stage of the trade and logistics sub-park in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7228>.

<sup>149</sup> Protocol of the 11th session of the Working Group on the issues of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [http://belaruschina.by/data/fck/file/minekonomiki/protocol\\_11.pdf](http://belaruschina.by/data/fck/file/minekonomiki/protocol_11.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> A subpark of LED products [Electronic Resource] will be established in the Veliky Kamen Industrial Park. - - 2017. - URL: <https://industrialpark.by/novosti/2017/v-industrialnom-parke-velikij-kamen-budet-sozdan-subpark-svetodiodnoj-produkcii.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Chinese Chengdu is considering the possibility of creating high-tech industries in the "Great Stone" [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [https://interfax.by/news/policy/ekonomicheskaya\\_politika/1251824/](https://interfax.by/news/policy/ekonomicheskaya_politika/1251824/).

management of Ceres Group Holding AG and the Swiss industrial park BUSS, who positively assessed the Belarusian proposal not only to create a Swiss sub-park in the "Great Stone," but also to "act as a developer and attract Swiss business to cooperation with Belarus"<sup>152</sup>. It is noteworthy that as early as in December 2019 the 60th resident - "Swiss company Hess Great Stone for the production of electric passenger transport"<sup>153</sup> was registered in the industrial park. And in January 2020 the issue of "possible future creation of the Italian-Belarusian sub-park in the "Great Stone"<sup>154</sup> was considered in practical terms at the meeting in Rome with owners and heads of Italian companies interested in investing in the projects of the industrial park.

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<sup>152</sup> Krizhevich, I. In territory of "Great stone" the Swiss subpark can be created / I.Krizhevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/na-territorii-velikogo-kamnya-mogut-sozdat-shveytsarskiy-subpark-.html>.

<sup>153</sup> The Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" has the 60th resident [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://interfax.by/news/biznes/businesses/1268182/>.

<sup>154</sup> Belarus and Italy will consider creating a joint sub-park in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-italija-rassmotrjat-vopros-sozdaniya-sovmestnogo-subparka-v-velikom-kamne-376060-2020/>.

## Minsk - Shanghai: a vector of twin ties

In November 2019, Minsk and Shanghai signed an agreement on the establishment of twinning relations. It is interesting that before the appearance of this document the Belarusian capital had already "signed 22 agreements on cooperation with the cities of China, including 3 - on twinning (Beijing, Changchun, Shenzhen)<sup>155</sup>. Perhaps, for this reason, Chinese companies have already invested about \$30 million in Minsk. By signing a new document on twinning, the parties "have identified priority areas of cooperation - the increase in mutual trade, infrastructure construction, tourism<sup>156</sup>. Minskians are interested in the experience of Shanghai in a number of areas. In particular, on the organization of the working process in educational institutions, medical infrastructure facilities, social services and rehabilitation centers for people with disabilities. The attention of Minsk's administrative and business circles is also drawn to the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, which is used in the People's Republic of China for economic and social reforms.

The annual business forum of the business circles of Belarusian and Chinese cities has already become one of the most effective forms of coordinating trade and economic interaction between Minsk and Shanghai. Thus, such a forum, organized in September 2018 in Minsk, brought together "more than 130 domestic and Chinese companies interested in cooperation in mechanical engineering, construction, information technology, chemical industry, food, jewelry production<sup>157</sup>. At the same time the Belarusian capital was visited by Chinese manufacturers of electronics and household appliances, clothing and fabrics, packaging for medical equipment, cosmetics, toys, jewelry, as well as importers of cars, electrical and welding equipment, computer equipment, interested in finding business partners in Minsk.

The business forum "Shanghai - Minsk", which took place in November 2019 and brought together over a hundred Chinese and more than thirty Belarusian enterprises and companies, became equally wide. The program of the forum included discussion of topical issues of cooperation "in specialized three sections:

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<sup>155</sup> Days of Minsk in Shanghai will be held on November 7-9 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dni-minska-v-shanhae-projdu-7-9-nojabrja-368252-2019/>

<sup>156</sup> Grishkevich, A. Minsk and Shanghai have established the twin links / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-shanhaj-ustanovili-pobratimskie-svjazi-368815-2019/>

<sup>157</sup> Zalessky, B. Vector of partnership - China. Collection of articles / B. Zalesskiy. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - - C. 149.



1) Food products, food industry; 2) Tourism and hospitality of Minsk and Shanghai; 3) Industry"<sup>158</sup>. The high practical impact of this event is evidenced by the documents adopted at its conclusion. In particular, the Minsk City Executive Committee has signed a Memorandum of Intent to establish cooperation with the Lotusland Shanghai Corporation to introduce heat pump technologies and equipment in the construction of industrial and civil facilities in the Belarusian capital. The fact is that "the use of heat pump units for the satellite towns of Minsk would make it possible to abandon the laying of multi-kilometer heat networks"<sup>159</sup>.

Memorandum of strategic partnership in the sphere of tourist exchanges became the result of negotiations between representatives of Belarusian RUE "Tsentrukort" and Chinese group tourist company "Shanghai Airlines Tours International (Group) Co., Ltd. An agreement on cooperation in holding international exhibitions was signed by ZAO "Minsk Expo" and "Shanghai industry and commerce exhibition Co.". In addition, the free economic zone "Minsk" and the company "Shanghai Allynav Technology Co., Ltd.", as well as JSC "Confectionery Factory "Slodych" and the company "Shanghai Teemo Foods" have fixed their intentions to cooperate actively in the near future. Kommunarika Ltd., which has signed a relevant memorandum with the Chinese Misier Trade and Economic Company LLC, is also planning to increase the supply of its confectionery products to the Shanghai market in 2020.

The fact that the market of this Chinese city attracts serious attention of manufacturers of the Belarusian capital is also evidenced by the fact that nine Minsk enterprises took part in the Second China International Exhibition of Imported Goods and Services, held in Shanghai in November 2019. Among them were SOAO "Kommunarika," CJSC "Minsk Grape Wine Plant," JSC "Krinitisa," JSC "Slodych," JSC "Kristall," JSC "Minsk combine of bread products," KUP "Minskhhlebprom," TPKUP "Minsk Khladokombinat № 2.

And one more thing. The memorandum signed in November 2019 on the establishment of friendly relations between the Moscow district of the Belarusian capital and the Jiadin district of Shanghai also opens interesting prospects for interregional cooperation. Just a month later - in December - a delegation of the Jiadin district visited Minsk, where they discussed with the leadership of the

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<sup>158</sup> Shanghai-Minsk Business Forum, 8 November 2019. [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [https://www.tppm.by/announcement/index.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=23213](https://www.tppm.by/announcement/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=23213).

<sup>159</sup> Beluga, V. Forum of business cooperation "Minsk - Shanghai" was held in China / V. Beluga // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://minsknews.by/forum-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-minsk-shanhaj-prohodit-v-kitae/>.

Moskovsky district of the Belarusian capital the ways of implementing the memorandum in the context of "enhancing bilateral trade and economic cooperation, as well as cooperation in the exchange of students of the two districts<sup>160</sup>. One of the concrete results of this visit was an invitation from the Chinese side to the students of Moscow district of Minsk to visit a summer camp in Shanghai in 2020. Apparently, in the near future, friendly ties between the Soviet District of Minsk and another Shanghai district - Channin will also be activated.

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<sup>160</sup> About the visit of a delegation from the Jiadin district of Shanghai to Minsk [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://shanghai.mfa.gov.by/ru/o\\_generalnom\\_consulstv/news/b8beff0b9304c615.html](http://shanghai.mfa.gov.by/ru/o_generalnom_consulstv/news/b8beff0b9304c615.html).

## Vitebsk region: growth points - local raw materials and clustering

Vitebsk region is among those Belarusian regions where, according to the head of state, "it is necessary to take technological and organizational measures to cope with the problems that exist there".<sup>161</sup> and direct the development of the region in an innovative direction. One of the real instruments used in the region to solve this problem is the free economic zone "Vitebsk", established twenty years ago - in 1999, which is now located on an area of about three thousand hectares and consists of 16 sectors, seven of which are in Vitebsk, five - in Orsha, as well as one each in Vitebsk, Polotsk, Postavsk and Novopolotsk districts. On their territory there are already 48 enterprises with participation of investors from 14 countries, including Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, UK, USA, Israel, Cyprus and Estonia.

In November 2019 they were joined by a new resident - Rubovsky Dolomite Quarry Ltd. with the participation of a Lithuanian investor and a project to establish a dolomite-based building materials production. In this case we are talking about organizing the production of hypercompressed bricks like "Lego" and other decorative building materials from environmentally friendly raw materials. The production will be located on the territory of the former airfield on the outskirts of Vitebsk. Apparently, the project is designed for the long term, as the total reserves of dolomites in Vitebsk region "are estimated at more than 5 billion tons at a depth of 2.5 to 38 m, of which the volume of approved reserves is 878 million tons. The "Ruba" dolomite deposit is among the largest among the explored deposits in Belarus"<sup>162</sup>. As a matter of fact, and for this reason, production of construction materials based on natural raw materials is one of the priorities of the Vitebsk Oblast economy development.

Another very promising direction of FEZ "Vitebsk" development is woodworking production. Today there are already five resident enterprises specializing in this industry. In particular, LLC "VMG Wood Art" is creating a vertically integrated woodworking complex. Another LLC, Akitama, is building a plant for processing

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<sup>161</sup> Meeting on the development of agroindustrial complex in Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/soveschanie-po-voprosam-razvitiya-agropromyshlennogo-kompleksa-vitebskoj-oblasti-22434/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveschanie-po-voprosam-razvitiya-agropromyshlennogo-kompleksa-vitebskoj-oblasti-22434/).

<sup>162</sup> The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will create manufacture of building materials from dolomite [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-iz-dolomita-371163-2019/>.

low-value wood and producing wood-fuel pellets. And Karelia Venirs is organising veneer production. In addition, two other projects are under registration in the FEZ, including the organization of production of machinery and equipment for the woodworking industry.

Taking into account the obvious growing interest of investors in wood processing projects, FEZ "Vitebsk" came up with an initiative - to create a wood processing cluster in the region, which implies the union of manufacturers, research centers and educational institutions, which is expected to provide favorable conditions for innovation. After all, "this form of cooperation will stimulate scientific developments and their practical application. As a result, it will increase the depth of wood processing and create higher value-added products"<sup>163</sup>. The participants of this cluster can become enterprises, institutions of additional education, educational institutions where specialists for this industry are trained, including Vitebsk State Technical College. The agreement on the creation of the woodworking cluster is planned to be signed in spring 2020 in the framework of the International Economic Forum in Vitebsk. Let's hope that this form of coordination, which implies a synergistic effect on the output, will really help introduce innovations not only in the free economic zone, but also outside it.

It is important to underline that the emergence of this cluster in Vitebsk Oblast may continue and complement the innovative development of the northern Belarusian region. We would like to remind you that in October 2017 the Novopolotsk innovation and industrial petrochemical cluster was already established here, which included the Novopolotsk City Executive Committee, Polotsk State University, Naftan, Construction and Installation Centre No. 16, Novopolotsk, InterService LLC and the Novopolotsk Centre for Entrepreneurship and Real Estate. Already in 2020 the number of its participants is expected to increase almost twice, including at the expense of foreign participants. In particular, it could be the Chinese partners from Weihai, which is a twin city of Novopolotsk in Shandong province, who are interested in innovative developments of Polotsk scientists to create new types of petrochemical products and improve the characteristics of the fuel produced. Among the potential partners of the cluster, it seems, is the company from the Czech Republic, which is interested in entering the Belarusian market.

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<sup>163</sup> FEZ "Vitebsk" suggests creating a woodworking cluster [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-predlagaet-sozdat-derevoobrabatvyvajuschij-klaster-371147-2019/>.

The growing interest of foreign partners in the petrochemical cluster is pushing its organizers to optimize the mechanisms of interaction of its participants. For this reason, it is planned to create an association here in 2020, which will act as a coordinating center and will form proposals to improve the regulatory requirements governing the activities of the subjects of this innovative infrastructure. In addition, "the association will also take over the organization of events to develop effective interaction between participants, the formation of a portfolio of joint orders, promotion of the image of the cluster and improvement of personnel support of its activities<sup>164</sup>. There is every reason to believe that this format of cooperation can also have the most beneficial effect on the innovative development of the Vitebsk Oblast economy.

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<sup>164</sup> The number of participants in the Novopolotsk petrochemical cluster is planned to almost double [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chislo-uchastnikov-novopolotskogo-neftehimicheskogo-klastera-planiruetsja-uvlichit-pochti-v-dva-raza-371161-2019/>.

## Special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha": large-scale prospects defined

In June 2019 the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) regime for the multimodal logistics complex "Bremino-Orsha", located in the village of Bolbasovo, Orsha district, Vitebsk region, came into effect in the Republic of Belarus. This means that a second economic complex has appeared in our country, functioning in such a regime. The Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen (Great Stone) was the first in this list of SEZs back in 2015. It should be noted that the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) strictly restricts the possibility of creating such territorial units in the member states of the integration association. In particular, only "three such zones can be established in Russia, two in Belarus, and one each in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan"<sup>165</sup>. It should be reminded that the term "special economic zone" refers to a territory that has "a special legal status in relation to the rest of the country and preferential economic conditions for entrepreneurs"<sup>166</sup>. SEZs are created in order to attract direct foreign investments, create new jobs for highly qualified personnel, develop the export base, minimize costs due to the absence of export and import duties, bring production closer to the consumer, use cheaper labor and develop the territories.

The SEZ "Bremino-Orsha" intends to attract investors with a number of privileges and tax advantages. In particular, zero rates of taxes on profit (for 9 years), on real estate (for 20 years), on dividends (until January 1, 2033), as well as zero rates of offshore collection, export value added tax (VAT) in case of export of produced goods outside the EAEC, VAT on sales, renting or leasing by residents of real estate (until January 1, 2033), Finally, a special legal regime for 50 years to deal with industrial processing, wholesale trade, e-commerce, logistics and warehousing services, postal services, information and administrative services, research and development. To this end, two sectors - industrial and logistics - will be created in the SEZ. The first sector will house production of household appliances and electronics, pharmaceutical products and preparations, foodstuffs - coffee, tea, rice, as well as auto parts, perfumes and cosmetics, household

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<sup>165</sup> The special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" started to work in Bolbasovo. [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/06/27/1827049.html>.

<sup>166</sup> Special Economic Zone (SEZ) [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya\\_ekonomicheskaya\\_zona.html](https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya_ekonomicheskaya_zona.html).

chemicals, jewelry. Finished goods shops, showrooms, warehouses, a business centre and a parking lot will also appear here.

As for the logistics sector, it "will include road, rail and air terminals. The territory of the Special Economic Zone will have a departmental customs clearance point operating 24 hours a day, phytosanitary and veterinary services, a bank branch, an insurance agent and a customs brokerage office"<sup>167</sup>. By December 2023 - the project completion date - investments in this multimodal industrial and logistics complex will amount to 200 million dollars. A total of 17 thousand square metres of office space is planned to be built here, 190 thousand square metres of warehouse space and 280 thousand square metres of production space. Plus 1.7 thousand parking spaces for trucks. On the railway terminal will be processed cargo flows between the countries of Europe and Asia, which allow to plan already today that "for 2018-2022 years the total transit flow through "Bremino-Orsha" will be 10 million tons, the output at full capacity - 12 million tons of cargoes per year is planned for 2026"<sup>168</sup>.

It is important to note that the first steps in the implementation of this project have already been taken. Thus, back in February 2019, the first export train with Belarusian goods - over forty containers - departed from here to the Chinese city of Nanchang. Its journey time is ten days, "It would take 40 days to transport it by sea. The train would go once a month"<sup>169</sup>. In the same February 2019, LLC "Bremino Group" opened in Bolbasovo the first phase of the complex "Bremino-Orsha," in the implementation of which was invested about \$ 20 million. Here the automobile logistics terminal with a parking lot for 212 trucks, which already provides transshipment of almost two million tons of cargoes per year, started to work. The administrative and household premises house customs, veterinary, and phytosanitary control services that work 24 hours a day, 24 hours a day. The established infrastructure already makes it possible to complete and process cargoes and receive the necessary services to ensure the process of logistics activities.

And in early December 2019, the Bremino Group Company signed with its Chinese partner Shaanxi Zhongqiao Silk Road Technology Development Co.

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<sup>167</sup> The special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" started to work in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/osobaja-ekonomicheskaja-zona-bremino-orsha-nachala-rabotat-v-bolbasovo-352502-2019/>.

<sup>168</sup> In Belarus, a second special economic zone with preferential tax treatment [Electronic resource] started functioning. - - 2019. - URL: [https://interfax.by/news/biznes/novosti\\_kompaniy/1260614/](https://interfax.by/news/biznes/novosti_kompaniy/1260614/).

<sup>169</sup> Zakrzhevskiy, G. "Bremino-Orsha": at the crossroads / G. Zakrzhevskiy // Transport bulletin. - - 2019. - 14 February. P. 9.

Ltd., an agreement providing for the appearance of an international Silk Road Trade Camp in the SEZ, which, located on 62 hectares, will be a large-scale trade and exhibition complex. It is expected that "there will be wholesale and small wholesale of consumer goods, delivery of goods and warehousing, trading operations from electronic platforms, as well as exhibitions of products from various Asian countries"<sup>170</sup>. The amount of investment in this project, which is implemented under the Chinese initiative "Belt and Way", will exceed 128 million Belarusian rubles.

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<sup>170</sup> International trade town will appear in the special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha". [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mezhdunarodnyj-torgovyj-gorodok-pojavitsja-v-osoboj-ekonomicheskoj-zone-bremino-orsha-371406-2019/>.



## Free Economic Zone "Brest": investments, cooperation, export

Free Economic Zone "Brest" was the first to be established in the Republic of Belarus. It took place in 1996. And today it is a multi-profile economic area, where industrial, technological and logistic activities can develop. Besides, a part of it is adjacent to automobile and railway checkpoints across the state border and can be used as a logistics component. Since the creation of the FEZ, the total volume of investments here has exceeded one and a half billion dollars. These investments are definitely paying off. During the three quarters of 2019, residents of FEZ "Brest" almost doubled their contributions to the budget - from Br20.9 million in 2018 to Br41 million now. Today, 73 enterprises from 20 countries are already operating on its territory. It is noteworthy that in 2018 they "exported goods worth \$700 million, the geography of exports includes 70 countries"<sup>171</sup>. A year later - at the beginning of 2020 - "FEZ economic entities exported goods worth \$718 million, and the geography of exports includes 75 countries"<sup>172</sup>.

Germany is the leader among foreign countries by the volume of investments in FEZ. German investors account for one third of all foreign investments made here. And companies with German capital show high economic efficiency. Among them are "Santa-Bremor", "Discom", "Salamander window and door systems", the products of which are well known both in Belarus and abroad. In particular, in April 2019 in the LEZ opened a new production of paint materials "Discom", in the construction of which was invested about two million euros. This company is part of the German DAW SE group, which was founded in Germany back in 1895. "Today, Discom employs over 250 specialists. Opening of the new factory has allowed to create about 20 additional workplaces for inhabitants of Brest"<sup>173</sup>.

Italian entrepreneurs, who "have already invested 3 million euros in new projects and created 150 jobs, are very active in the Brest FEZ". In 2018, a new production facility of the Italian-Belarusian company Friesa Industrie was opened at the Airport site. It manufactures energy-saving devices for refrigeration

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<sup>171</sup> Residents of FEZ "Brest" have doubled their deductions to the budget [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-brest-vdvoe-velichili-otchislenija-v-bjudzhet-367876-2019/3>.

<sup>172</sup> History [Electronic resource]. --2020. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/history>

<sup>173</sup> Opening of new production "Disk" [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/otkryitie-novogo-proizvodstva-%C2%ABdiskom%C2%BB>.

equipment"<sup>174</sup> and shows one of the highest export growth rates among BEZ enterprises. It should be reminded that back in 2010 the Ministry of Economic Development of Italy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Brest Oblast Executive Committee signed a declaration on the establishment of an Italian industrial district on the territory of the FEZ with the total area of 26 hectares. A year later in Trieste a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of this industrial district was adopted, which provided for the creation of the most favorable conditions for attracting Italian investors and planned "the development of the Italian industrial zone in Brest as a transport and logistics center that provides transshipment and transit of goods between the European Union, the Customs Union, and in the future - and China"<sup>175</sup>. So the prospects for Italian business in FEZ Brest are simply huge.

Polish businessmen also show great interest in the LEZ. Today there are 11 enterprises with Polish capital, including Stomil Sanok BR. Investors from this European country "take the third place after Germany and Russia. The share of Polish investments in the total volume is 17 percent"<sup>176</sup>. In particular, in March 2019 "English Windows" Ltd. was registered here with Polish investments. "It is planned to create at least 20 jobs in the new company"<sup>177</sup>. It is quite possible that in 2020 the Agreement on cooperation between the administration of FEZ "Brest" and the Lower Silesian Agency for Economic Development signed in April 2017 will receive its further development in the form of concrete projects.

Interest in cooperation with FEZ "Brest" is also shown by Israeli entrepreneurs. In addition, they have a good example to follow: the current resident of the Free Economic Zone is "a company with Israeli capital Fa-UN, which has established the production of feed additives for agricultural production in FEZs"<sup>178</sup>. In September 2019, a delegation from the Israeli city of Ashdod, whose port is the largest in Israel, studied the experience of FEZ "Brest", as 60 percent of all goods entering this Middle East country, including those from Santa Bremor, a FEZ resident, pass through it. We must believe that the dialogue that has begun

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<sup>174</sup> The discussion of the Belarusian-Italian business forum continued in Brest [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/obsuzhdenie-voprosov-belorussko-italyanskogo-biznes-foruma-prodolzhilos-v-breste>.

<sup>175</sup> Zalessky, B. International Relations and Media. View from Belarus / B. Zalesskiy. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. -- C. 147.

<sup>176</sup> Strengthening partnerships [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/2-ukreplyaya-partnerskie-svyazi>.

<sup>177</sup> New resident of FEZ "Brest" [Electronic resource] was registered. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/zaregistririvan-novyij-rezident-sez-%C2%ABbrest%C2%BB>.

<sup>178</sup> In FEZ "Brest" administration there was a meeting with delegation from Israel [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABbrest%C2%BB-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegaciej-iz-izrailya>.

between the parties on establishing cooperative ties between Brest and Ashdod enterprises will develop in the near future.

Swiss entrepreneurs have an interest in the LEZ. They are primarily attracted by the favorable location of Brest airport, which allows it to be used for private aviation flights. And further, it may be a question of locating here "production facilities with Swiss capital, related to mechanical engineering and food production"<sup>179</sup>.

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<sup>179</sup> The administration of FEZ "Brest" discussed the proposals of the Swiss business community [Electronic resource]. - - 2018 . - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABbrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyix-krugov-shvejczarii> .

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