

The key objective is to develop

Commodity and country export diversification is one of the most important objectives for the development of the Belarusian economy for the next five years - until 2025. Figures show how it is being implemented in 2021. In the first quarter of this year, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services of the Republic of Belarus increased by more than 17 percent, approaching \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million. The successfully developing trade and economic relations of the Republic of Belarus with such countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States as the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, in Asia - China, in Europe - Hungary, in Africa - Egypt make a considerable contribution to achieving the set target. The free economic zones operating in Belarus, as well as a number of industrial enterprises - the Minsk Engine Plant, the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant, the Minsk Tractor Plant, and the Belarusian Automobile Plant - continue developing along a sustainable export growth path. The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange is building up export relations with partners on various continents. All of this is discussed in the proposed study.



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Belarus - Russia:
Orientation towards mutually beneficial cooperation

The results of the first two months of 2021 show that trade and economic ties between Belarus and Russia continue to develop on a steady growth trajectory. Thus, "the turnover of Belarus-Russia foreign trade in goods and services in January-February 2021 was \$5.3 billion, having increased by 11.9% against the same period in 2020. Exports of goods and services to Russia amounted to \$2.3 billion (up 2%)¹

Among the Belarusian companies that feel confident in the Russian market is Minsk Motor Works (MMZ), which doubled its export deliveries to Russia in the first quarter of 2021. The main consumers of its products in the neighboring country are enterprises in Kursk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Yaroslavl regions, the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Republic of Mordovia. "During 2021 Minsk Motor Works will continue developing the distribution network in Russia in two areas: engines and spare parts, as well as special machinery, to keep up the momentum of exports. Export of the products is planned to increase by 11%"². The company also sees one more reserve for increasing its supplies to the Russian market in 2021 in organizing a constant exhibition of a broader range of engines and special machinery at the trading and exhibition grounds of LLC "Trading House "Minsk Motor Plant" in Noginsk and its partners in every Federal District of Russia. Cooperating today with 59 Russian companies, Minsk motor builders are now working on establishing cooperation ties with ten more partners.

1 Roman Golovchenko: A package of proposals to deepen the integration of Belarus and Russia is in high gear [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9807>

2 Minsk Motor Works doubled its deliveries to Russia in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-motornyj-zavod-v-i-kvartale-v-dva-raza-uvlichil-postavki-vrossiju-437469-2021/>.

Belarus's Gomselmash, which has a distribution network of 60 entities in Russia, including 34 dealerships, two joint ventures and one trading house in Siberia, has also announced ambitious plans to increase supplies of its equipment to Russia in 2021 and has sold more than 3,200 units of self-propelled grain and forage harvesters in the Russian market in the 13 years of its existence. In 2020, sales of Gomselmash equipment in Russia increased by 163 per cent. Together with Bryanskselmash alone, more than one thousand combines were sold to Russian regions. In addition, "in 2020, the company expanded the borders of supply and opened a new dealership in the Primorsky region - AgroSupport Ltd." ³. All these facts give good reason for the Belarusian company to set a truly ambitious goal for itself in 2021 - to triple its deliveries to Russia.

The Belarusian Steel Works (BSW) is also actively cooperating with Russian companies; its partners in Russia are both suppliers of key raw materials and major consumers of metal products. Suffice it to say that "in January-February 2021, BMZ's exports to Russia exceeded 58 thousand tons, up 8% from the same period in 2020. In monetary terms, exports to the Russian Federation exceeded \$43 million, which is a third higher than over the same period last year⁴. This was due to an increase in sales of rebar, structural rolled steel, steel wire and steel cord.

The Belarusian Automobile Plant (BELAZ) is another good example of such a plan. In March 2021 alone it supplied more than 93% of the total volume of machinery and spare parts to foreign markets with an export growth rate of 142%. An important detail: "In this regard, the share of the Russian market, the largest among the traditional markets of the company, in the total March shipment was 89.1% (growth rate

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

4 BMZ increases export deliveries [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-velichivaet-eksportnye-postavki-433237-2021/>

308.1%)⁵ . In particular, under the long-term agreement on strategic partnership with the mining company Kuzbassrazrezugol JSC, BELAZ is to supply 29 mine dump trucks by the end of April 2021. Three of them, with a capacity of 220 tons, were shipped to one of Kuzbassrazrezugol's production branch - the Kedrovsky coal mine - at the end of January of this year. It is noteworthy that the arrival of the other vehicles will substantially enlarge the technological fleet of more than half a thousand vehicles, which is dominated by the Belarusian equipment at the coal mines. "BELAZ machines are also used at the enterprises of Kemerovo Oblast's flagship coal mining company for mining and transportation operations, special machinery of the Belarusian manufacturer is also used (irrigation trucks, tow-tractors, loaders, bulldozers)⁶. The presence of BELAZ on the Russian market is also secured by the cooperation agreement signed with the St. Petersburg Mining University in April 2021, the implementation of which will ensure that "in September [2021] modern and specialised classrooms with exclusive equipment will start working in one of Russia's largest mining universities"⁷. In this case, we are referring to the opening of the named university's innovative BELAZ Centre of Competence, which will be modelled on the best technological solutions in mechanical engineering, digital and information technology in the mining industry. Its main feature will be the use of virtual reality technologies, which will bring to a new level not only the training of university students, but also advanced training of specialists and

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

6 BELAZ will deliver 29 dump trucks for one of Russia's largest coal companies [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavit-29-karjernih-samosvalov-dlja-odnoj-iz-krupnejshih-ugolnyh-kompanij-rossii-427978-2021/>

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

managers of companies that operate machinery of the Belarusian manufacturer.

The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) is also actively building ties with its partners in Russia. The dynamics of growing interest from Russian businesses in its electronic trading indicate that in 2021 Russia may become a leader on BUCE not only in the number of accredited companies, but also in the volume of exchange commodity turnover. Let us recall that "as of 1 December 2020, 2,482 residents of Russia were using the services of BUCE"⁸. And the amount of exchange transactions carried out by them in January and February 2021, "was almost three times higher than during the same period in 2020 and amounted to \$12 million"⁹. Lithuania (\$32 million) and Latvia (\$18 million) retained the first two places. And at the end of the first quarter of 2021, the sum of all transactions made by Russian exchange traders was close to \$38 million. Such growth in exports of Belarusian goods to the Russian market resulted from comprehensive measures taken by the BUCE to attract business entities from Russia to the exchange trade floor in Belarus. Among the main of them are: 1) simplification of the accreditation procedure at the BUTB; 2) regular webinars and online presentations for representatives of the Russian business community; 3) spot visits to leading industrial, woodworking and agrarian enterprises in various Russian regions. As a result, 30 new Russian companies interested in buying Belarusian meat and dairy products, rapeseed oil, and building materials, as well as in making transit deals for selling their goods to third countries, were accredited at the BUTB during the first two months of 2021. It should be noted that so far the determining factor in

8 Zalesky, B. With an eye to the future. Peculiarities of multi-vector partnership in modern conditions / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - -- C. 97.

9 Russia is one of the top three export markets for BUtB [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rossija-voshla-v-trojku-krupnejshih-eksportnyh-rynkov-butb-432830-2021/>

the increase in the exchange turnover is the close cooperation of the BUTB with the Russian border regions of Smolensk, Bryansk, and Pskov.

In particular, the reference to the Bryansk Region in the list is explained by the fact that Belarus accounts for about half of the foreign trade turnover of this Russian region, which by itself is evidence of a sufficiently high level of trade and economic cooperation. Nevertheless, at the working meeting with the Bryansk region Chamber of Commerce and Industry in March 2021, the parties noted the considerable potential for further expansion of cooperation specifically in the field of exchange trade. In this connection, this year the accent "is to be made on agrarian sector and realization of industrial goods as the most perspective spheres for development of cooperation"¹⁰. For this purpose, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Bryansk Region will use its entire network of business contacts to inform the Bryansk Region business community about the advantages of the electronic trading mechanism at the BUTB.

The planned cooperation between the Belarusian Steel Exchange and the Chelyabinsk Region looks very promising. At the webinar on exchange trade with Belarus held in the middle of March 2021, several major producers and traders from the Russian region announced their plans to increase sales of metal products on the BUTB auctions. "Interest in a more active application of the exchange mechanism, in particular, was expressed by representatives of Chelyabinsk Forge-and-Press Plant PJSC, Liteiny Zavod LLC and Trade House MKK LLC. First of all, we are talking about an increase in supplies of ferrous rolled metal products, which are in high demand among Belarusian industrial enterprises¹¹. By

10 BUTB and the Bryansk Oblast Chamber of Commerce and Industry have agreed to cooperate [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-tpp-brjanskoj-oblasti-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnicestve-431815-2021/>

11 Chelyabinsk Region enterprises are interested in selling metal products at BUTB [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-cheljabinskoj-oblasti-zainteresovany-v-realizatsii-metalloproduktii-na-butb-433059-2021/>

the way, we should mention that about 800 companies trade in ferrous metals and their products at the BUTB almost every day and the number of deals at a single trading session can reach two million euros. It is clear that the arrival here of the largest Russian metal producers from the Chelyabinsk Region - the undisputed leader in ferrous metallurgy among other Russian regions - will only open up new opportunities and prospects for all participants in these trading sessions.

At the end of March 2021, with the help of the Volgograd Region Export Support Centre, a meeting with business representatives from this Russian region was held at the BUTB. As a result, several enterprises of the Volgograd region "expressed an interest in selling their products within the industrial and consumer goods section of the BUTB. In particular, there are plans to explore the issue of bidding for products for the construction industry, packaging materials and foodstuffs¹². At the beginning of April 2021 the prospect of increasing Belarusian stock exchange trade was discussed with representatives of **Kursk** Oblast business circles during an online conference. Following the discussion, a number of enterprises of the Russian region expressed their readiness to exhibit their products on the BUTB's industrial and consumer goods platform. For instance, "the question of selling equipment for the food industry, hi-tech rubber products, packaging materials made of paper and corrugated cardboard is being considered"¹³. BUOTB also expects real results from reaching an agreement on intensification of cooperation with Saint Petersburg international commodity exchange in March 2021. The exchange was set up in 2008 and is now the largest commodity exchange

12. BUTB plans to establish closer cooperation with Volgograd Oblast [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-naladit-bolee-tesnoe-sotrudnichestvo-s-volgogradskoj-oblastiju-434981-2021/>.

13. Enterprises of Kursk region plan to work in the Belarusian market through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-kurskoj-oblasti-planirujut-rabotat-na-belorusskom-rynke-cherez-butb-435331-2021/>

in Russia "specializing in trade in oil, oil products, gas, timber and mineral fertilizers"¹⁴. We must assume that the actualisation of cooperation with such a serious partner can also yield equally serious results.

It appears that Russia's role for Belarusian construction services exports in 2021 will also increase markedly. But first, let us note that the growth of services exports in general is an important area for minimizing the dependence of the Belarusian economy on key factors of the foreign economic environment. In 2021, Belarus continued to strengthen its efforts to increase its exports. Specifically, in the first quarter, "exports of services rose by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion <...>. The surplus of the foreign trade in services amounted to \$1.041 billion (in January-March 2020, the surplus was \$1.014 billion).¹⁵. The export of construction services, which exceeded half a billion dollars in 2020, is not the least of these figures. Today, it is one of the promising directions of development of the Belarusian construction industry, where comprehensive measures are being taken to further increase and expand its geographic reach, and where the Russian market, which has a considerable potential, is beginning to play an increasingly important role. This is largely due to the fact that "there is currently a shortage of construction workers in Russia. The issue of attracting them to key construction projects, such as theatres and cultural centres in Vladivostok and Kaliningrad, and the Vostochny launch site, is relevant¹⁶.

14. BUTB and the St Petersburg Mercantile Exchange agree to step up cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-sankt-peterburgskaja-tovarno-syrjevoja-birzha-dogovorilis-aktivizirovat-vzaimodejstvie-434334-2021/>

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

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

Given the growth in construction in the neighboring country, the Belarusian side is already taking concrete steps to promote its export interests there. For example, coordination subgroups for cooperation in construction have already been set up in seven Russian regions, and "a portfolio has been created in Russia for the near future totaling over 3 billion Russian rubles. This includes schools in Kaluga, Voronezh and Leningrad Oblasts and St. Petersburg, and residential buildings in Kaluga, Kursk and Kaliningrad Oblast¹⁷ Belarusian builders are planning to build more than ten social facilities in Russia by the end of 2025. In particular, Belstroycentr Holding "is now simultaneously building about five social infrastructure facilities in the Leningrad and Kaluga Regions¹⁸

As for Voronezh Oblast, which is seriously interested in expanding cooperation with Belarusian partners in construction, we are talking, first of all, about implementation of a joint pilot project in the urban type settlement Strelitsa in Semiluki District to build a 520-seat school, participation of Belarusian companies BelinzhiniringstroyInvest LLC and Stroitelny Trust №12 OJSC in building pre-school and general educational institutions in Semiluki District, and also about using "Belarusian prefabricated houses in implementation of the project. The theatre and cultural centre in Vladivostok, already mentioned above, is set to become one of the largest construction projects in 2021 in cooperation between Belarus and Primorsky Krai. The centre will also house the Mariinsky Theatre's maritime stage and exhibitions of famous Russian museums. And in general, according to the governor of this Russian

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

18 More than 10 social facilities in Russia are to be built by the end of 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: http://mas.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/do-kontsa-2025-goda-planiruetsja-postroit-bolee-10-sotsialnyx-objektov-v-rossii-1313/

region, O. Kozhemyako, this centre "will become a real jewel of the entire Asia-Pacific region and can be compared, for example, to the theatre in Sydney, Australia¹⁹.

Another Russian region, where the possibility for participation of Belarusian builders in the construction of housing and social facilities is being carefully considered, is Novgorod Region. There are 15 organizations with Belarusian capital already registered here, but until recently, cooperation with partners from Belarus was mainly in the agro-industrial sector in the form of supplies of agricultural machinery, food products and processing. This contributed to the fact that in 2020 the trade turnover between the parties reached \$57.5 million. In this case, supplies of Belarusian goods - dairy products, eggs, plastics, sugar, timber, fertilizers, electrical machinery and equipment - increased by almost 20 percent. By all appearances, it is the construction industry that will soon be contributing to these figures. The fact is that "the region needs at least two new schools and several kindergartens. The quality of work of builders from Belarus is always quite high <...>. We have already had the experience of interaction: Belarus built the so-called medical house for us. We are interested in the construction capacity of our Belarusian colleagues²⁰also been discussing the idea of building a new runway "near Veliky Novgorod, in the place where Krechevitsy military airfield used to be"²¹. The Bryansk and Gomel regions also have

19 Belarusian specialists to build turnkey theatre building in Primorje [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/beloruskie-stroiteli-budut-stroit-pod-kljuch-zdanie-teatra-v-primorje-434288-2021/>

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

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

great opportunities for cooperation in the construction field. In particular, in April 2021 the parties discussed the prospects of Belarusian companies' participation in the projects such as "Construction of the Bryansk 1 - Bryansk 2 (1st stage) motorway protection levee", the national secondary school No 71 and the Wrestling Palace in the Sovetsky district of Bryansk²². As we can see, the Russian vector of Belarusian exports of construction services is already quite broad and diverse. And it continues to expand. Let us hope that this trend will only contribute to the successful implementation of the tasks set for the builders of the allied countries.

Many Russian regions are actively developing ties with their Belarusian partners in 2021. Among them is the Republic of Tatarstan, which is among those with which trade turnover in January-February 2021 grew considerably - by more than 80 percent to nearly \$175 million. At the same time, Belarusian exports increased by nearly a quarter, reaching nearly \$55 million. This happened due to the growth in supplies from Belarus of tractors and tractor trucks, oil gases, ferrous metal twisted wire without electric insulation, parts and accessories for automobiles and tractors, tyres, seamless pipes, tubes and sections of ferrous metals, waste derived from the extraction of soybean oil, fresh or chilled beef, unalloyed steel wire, cheese and curd, tyre cord material, non-aqueous synthetic polymer-based paints and varnishes, furniture and parts thereof. In April 2021 the parties signed a memorandum of understanding, which "provides for further mutual interest in developing trade and economic, scientific and technical, and humanitarian

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

cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan. ²³In April 2021, the two countries signed a protocol of agreements that "envisages further mutual interest in the development of trade, economic, scientific and technical and humanitarian cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan.

It should be recalled that the interaction between the parties is currently developing within the framework of the intergovernmental agreement on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation of 23 June 2004, which created the prerequisites for the formation of a common scientific, technological and innovation space. Last year saw the completion of the Action Plan for 2017-2020 to implement the basic agreement. Due to the fact that Tatarstan today pays special attention to the development of high-tech production and the establishment of joint ventures, in this Russian region Belarusian partners are given the opportunity to work at the "investment sites of the Republic. It is important to deepen cooperation of commodity producers, first of all, in the field of mechanical engineering and high technology"²⁴.

It should be noted that back in 2017, the two sides set a goal to restore the record level of trade turnover of two billion dollars, which was achieved in 2012. The 7th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between Belarus and Tatarstan, held in October 2019, identified specific areas for joint work in the coming years to achieve the goal, "including supplies of passenger buses, Amkodor machinery, a wide range of agricultural equipment; implementation of joint projects in the gas vehicle sector, in particular - production of passenger vehicles, tractors,

23 Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Tatarstan actively develop cooperation [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9816>

24 Minnikhanov, R. It is important to deepen cooperation of commodity producers, first of all, in the sphere of mechanical engineering and high technologies / R. Minnikhanov // Technologies and innovations in cooperation of the Union State regions as an impulse of Eurasian integration development: inform.-integration project / coauthors, interviewer: B. Zaleski, M. Valkovski, A. Greshnikov. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2017. -- C. 30.

municipal and agricultural equipment, engines; expansion of the volume and range of supplies of autos". The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan as well as the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and Kazan Federal University signed cooperation agreements at the same time.

As a result of implementing the provisions of the 4-year plan, by February 2020, Tatarstan had already: two assembly factories - Belarusian tractors and Mogilevliftmash - were in operation; four companies with Belarusian capital were in operation: OOO TIC MTZ-Tatarstan, OOO Amkodor-Bel, OOO Molodechnomebel Trading House and a representative office of Pinskiy Holding dealer network of such Belarusian enterprises as Gomselmash, Minsk Tractor Works, Mogilevliftmash, Minsk Automobile Plant, Amkodor, Borisov Plant of Tractor Electrical Equipment; TPC MTZ-Tatarstan LLC became the official distributor of MTZ OJSC in Russia, having its own production facilities, transport and logistics division, being engaged in service maintenance. Successful development of cooperation in machine building has led to the fact that "almost 60% of Tatarstan's fleet of agricultural machinery is equipped with MTZ tractors, over 60% of forage harvesters and 40% of grain harvesters - with Gomselmash equipment". More than 50% of Kazan's fleet of passenger vehicles consists of MAZ buses and Belkommunmash trams"²⁵. And there are good prospects for cooperation in the NGV sector, where there are joint projects implemented by RariTEK together with Minsk plants - automobile, tractor and motor works.

25_Pivovar, E. Petrochemistry, industrial cooperation, transport projects - Semashko visited Tatarstan / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/neftehimija-promkooperatsija-transportnye-proekty-semashko-posetil-tatarstan-378550-2020/>

At the 8th meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation, which was held via videoconference in November 2020, the parties noted the active development of economic ties between enterprises in the engineering and petrochemical industries, as well as in agriculture, passenger transport, ecology, healthcare science, while emphasizing that "the key area remains cooperation in the petrochemical sector, which accounts for half of Belarus' trade with Tatarstan"²⁶. As a result, the Action Plan for 2021-2023 was approved, which envisages many new interesting joint projects. Already in January 2021 in Kichketan rural settlement of Agryz municipal district of Tatarstan the Belarusian UE "Polymerconstruction" "successfully implemented a pilot project in the field of ecology on water treatment"²⁷. And now the question of participation of this UE in the implementation of projects at other sites in Tatarstan is being solved.

Another Russian region that I would like to mention in this context is the Sakhalin Region, which in May 2021 signed an action plan for 2021-2023 to implement the agreement between the governments on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. This took place during a meeting of the working group for the development of bilateral cooperation which focused on prospects of "increasing supplies of foodstuffs, agricultural, quarry, passenger, road-building machinery, lift equipment and other products"²⁸. It should be recalled that the cooperation agreement between the parties was signed in September 2015 at the venue of the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The

26 Belarus and Tatarstan approve Cooperation Plan for 2021-2023 [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/53efd46968aa.html>

27 The Belarusian company UP "Polimerkonstruktsiya" has successfully implemented a pilot project in the field of ecology in the Republic of Tatarstan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.embassybel.ru/departments/kazan/news/29939dd56309.html>

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

main objectives set out therein were to increase mutual commodity turnover, intensify business contacts, and cooperate in the social sphere - health care, education, and social protection.

Note that this Russian region is characterised by active foreign economic activity, which it conducts primarily with countries of the Asia-Pacific region - South Korea, Japan, and China. Overall, "Sakhalin Region's foreign trade turnover in 2020 was \$12.2 million. THE REGION'S FOREIGN TRADE TURNOVER IS ESTIMATED AT USD 12.2 MILLION IN 2020²⁹. Nevertheless, the Republic of Belarus has developed its niche in these international partnerships since the signing of the cooperation agreement, as evidenced by concrete facts.

Thus, in 2017, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Sakhalin amounted to almost five million dollars. The Russian consumer market saw a sharp increase in the number of Belarusian meat, sausage, dairy products, textiles and knitwear, footwear and leather haberdashery. Suffice it to say that in August 2020 in the administrative centre of the Russian region - Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk - the fourteenth (!) shop of the retail network Belorusskiy Firm was opened, where products from Belarus are represented by a wide range of sausages and meat delicacies from Brest and Grodno meat processing plants, dairy products from Minsk Dairy Plant, confectionery products from Kommunarika, Spartak, Red food producer factories, canned products from ABC Group of Companies. "In addition to the traditional assortment, Belarusian ice cream of 10-12 titles has appeared in the product line of the shop³⁰

Machinery of various classes from Belarus is widely used here for agriculture, housing and communal services, road construction, and

29 Sakhalin Oblast Foreign Trade Results for 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://sakhalin.gov.ru/index.php?id=152>

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

forestry. "Due to the large number of Belarusian-made machines in operation in Sakhalin Oblast, the need for a unified service centre to service them was raised. Thanks to joint efforts, in April 2017, BelMashService LLC opened a service centre to service equipment manufactured in the Republic of Belarus in the regional capital³¹.

Over the past five years, the partnership between the republic and the Russian region in the field of agriculture has developed strongly. Already "in 2016, the Belarusian side resumed potato cultivation on Sakhalin after a 30-year break, planting its seeds on the island on the first 40 hectares³². Later, a dairy farm for one thousand head of cattle was built at Sovkhoz Korsakovsky JSC using Belarusian technologies. Interestingly, this construction was divided into two stages. First there were eight hay and silage trenches with a capacity of two thousand tonnes each. In the second stage buildings and constructions of the main production, biomass processing, engineering and transport infrastructure were built. Three cowsheds and three heifer houses were erected to house animals. "When the enterprise reaches its designed capacity, it will give 7 thousand tons of milk and 200 tons of meat annually to the inhabitants of the island region. <...> The agricultural project, which has been implemented in the south of Sakhalin, has been included in the sectoral state agricultural development programme. An agro-town with 50 one-storey three-bedroom houses of the Belarusian type was also built here. In February 2018, the first nine families of state farm workers received the

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

32 Zalessky, B. The formula for multi-vectorism. Opportunities for international cooperation in the context of globalization / B. Zalesski. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2017. - - C. 60.

keys to flats in the new buildings on Belorusskaya Street. "This is now the largest modern rural housing development in Sakhalin Oblast"³³ .

As for other areas of cooperation, back in December 2017, the Belarusian side proposed to improve coal mining and transportation methods in Sakhalin, as these proposals "can significantly improve the infrastructure of the island's coal company and give a powerful boost to the development of the coal mining industry in the region as a whole. This is a whole new level of interaction between our parties."³⁴ And already in 2020 14 new Belorussian mine dump trucks with carrying capacity of 220 tonnes started working in the island's Solntsevo coal mine³⁵. The parties see serious potential for further development of interaction in active cooperation through the chambers of commerce and industry - in organizing online negotiations, holding joint exhibitions, seminars, as well as establishing direct links between business circles and economic entities of the republic and the region. They have an eye for results.

At the April 2021 meeting of the leaders of the governments of Belarus and Russia, it was noted that "the topic of integration in the economic sphere is a priority issue on the bilateral agenda"³⁶. The trend towards the restoration of the bilateral Belarusian-Russian trade turnover, which has been observed since the beginning of 2021, shows that the

33 Pivovar, E. An agro-town based on a Belarusian project erected on Sakhalin [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/agrogorodok-pobelorusskomu-proektu-vozveli-na-sahaline-289289-2018/>

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

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

36 Roman Golovchenko: A package of proposals to deepen the integration of Belarus and Russia is in high gear [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9807>

sides are successfully developing integration cooperation in many areas, despite the known objective difficulties. This gives new positive impetus to the fuller realization of the Union State's potential.

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Belarus - Vladimir region: new points of growth in cooperation identified

In May 2021, a meeting of the working group on cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Vladimir Region of Russia was held, at which the parties reviewed the entire range of trade and economic cooperation - in industry, agriculture, construction, housing and utilities services, exhibitions and fairs, as well as at the district and city levels. The tone for the discussion was set by the fact that in 2020 the trade turnover between the republic and the region "amounted to \$244 million and fell by 6.7% compared to 2019³⁷the situation in mutual trade. To this end, new points of growth in the development of partnerships with this region of Russia were identified. These include cooperation in light industry, mechanical engineering, construction, and the agro-industrial complex.

The two countries signed an agreement on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and socio-cultural cooperation in September 2015 as part of the Second Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia in Sochi. This document contained agreements "to create the necessary organizational, financial, economic and legal conditions for the operation of joint ventures, development and implementation of joint projects and programmes of mutual interest³⁸an action plan for the implementation of this agreement for 2018-2020, which played a positive role in boosting cooperation between the parties. In particular, it was already noted at that time that "products from Belarusian companies are of great interest to the Vladimir Region. Among the imported products are binders for the production of foundry molds and cores, fiberglass and fiberglass

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

38 Zalessky, B. Belarus-Russia: formula for integration. Chronicle of union building. / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - - C. 45.

products, cheeses and cottage cheese, tableware and kitchenware."³⁹ At that time, there were already 34 companies, in which Belarusian investors fully or partially participated in the founding capital. And the search for new areas of cooperation continued all the time.

In May 2018, the Belarusian side offered its partners from the Vladimir Region to implement joint cooperation projects in mechanical engineering, energy, construction of social facilities and apartment buildings. Specifically, they talked about the possible construction of the "Belarusian Quarter" in Vladimir, as well as "the possibility and readiness of Belarusian companies to meet the region's needs for lift equipment for new buildings and housing under reconstruction, to increase supplies of construction products, materials, equipment and machinery, as well as to participate in the construction and repair of the region's highways, to organize supplies of road construction and utility equipment required for that."⁴⁰ In June 2019, a Belarusian proposal was made to expand mutual trade to include industrial cooperation in food production, as well as to "supply the region with modern domestic electric vehicles⁴¹, based on the principle of integrated development with the construction of social facilities, construction and repair of public roads, supply of necessary road construction and municipal equipment.

The two sides had a thorough discussion on ways to expand cooperation in October 2020, when a representative Belarusian delegation

39 Konyshov, A. Belarusian goods are sold in a significant part of the regional trade facilities / A. Konyshov // Priority directions of regional cooperation as a key factor of the Union construction: inform-integration project / compiled, interviewed by: K. Gusev, B. Zaleski. Gusev, B. Zaleskiy. - Minsk: Biznesofset, 2018. -- C. 118.

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

41 Valagin, A. Belarus proposed to build up the Vladimir region / A. Valagin // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://rg.ru/2019/06/06/reg-cfo/belarus-predlozila-zastroit-vladimirskuiu-oblast.html>

visited Vladimir. A number of joint projects in terms of cooperation between industrial enterprises of the republic and the region were outlined then. "We are talking about Kovrov Electromechanical Plant and Minsk Engine Plant regarding the production of forklifts using the internal combustion engine that will be manufactured in Belarus. We are currently testing the samples"⁴². In addition, other business entities from both sides suggested interesting projects. Among them are the Betal company from Vladimir, which makes water tanks, as well as Minsk Tractor Works, Mogilevliftmash, and Novy Resource from Kovrov.

In December 2020, at the Vladimirskiy Investment Congress, a new action plan was approved to implement the cooperation agreement for 2021-2023 "to expand direct links between business entities of both sides"⁴³ and aim to increase commodity turnover between Belarus and Vladimirskiy region. It is expected that the agreement will reflect the theme of further development and expansion of the movement of twinning between the cities and regions of the parties, which has already had its considerable history. The treaty on twinning between the cities of Vladimir and Bobruisk was signed back in 1998. For the passed time "they have developed mutually beneficial partnership relations in economy and business, science, culture, education, sports .."⁴⁴". Since 2006, Kovrov and Brest have been twinned. And in 2016 an agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural spheres was signed between the Vladimir Region Administration and the Gomel Regional Executive Committee.

42_Vladimir region / Belarus - expanding cooperation [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <http://export33.ru/news/vladimirskaya-oblast-belarus-rasshiraem-sotrudnichestvo/>

43_Belarus and the Vladimir region have approved an action plan to implement the cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vladimirskaja-oblast-utverdili-plan-meropriyatij-po-realizatsii-soglashenija-o-420545-2020>

44_Vladimir region takes part in the forum of Russian and Belarusian regions [Electronic resource]. - -- 2017. - URL: <https://www.zsvo.ru/press/view/3058/>

All these facts show that the parties have a good foundation for further movement forward in terms of implementation of the set objectives to increase mutual trade turnover.

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**Belarus v. Hungary:
turnover is showing resilience,
and the business community's interest in partnership**

In April 2021, a Hungarian-Belarusian business forum was held online at the initiative of the Hungarian business community, attended by more than 80 companies from both countries. This took place in the context of still very active trade relations between Budapest and Minsk. Suffice it to say that "trade turnover between Belarus and Hungary during the pandemic has generally demonstrated resilience to external shocks. In 2020, it reached \$245.5 million, with Belarusian exports amounting to \$121.8 million"⁴⁵. Railroad cars, potash and mineral fertilizers, plywood, parts and accessories for cars and tractors, and furniture made up the bulk of supplies from Belarus to the Hungarian market. Furthermore, 412 Belarusian tractors worth over seven million dollars were exported to Hungary via Poland in 2020. All of these facts show that there is serious potential both to further increase the volume and expand the range of mutual trade, and to attract mutual investments.

Based on their understanding of the prospects of bilateral trade and economic cooperation, the business forum participants concluded that it is necessary to establish a joint Belarusian-Hungarian business council on the basis of the chambers of commerce of the two countries. It has been decided to formalize its structure at the next session of the intergovernmental trade and economic commission scheduled for the second half of 2021. The sides hope not only for new business contacts, revival of the export-import and investment component of the bilateral cooperation. "This platform could become a discussion platform where problematic issues are discussed and new ideas and recommendations for

⁴⁵ Belarus and Hungary will establish a joint business council [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-sozhdadut-sovmestnyj-delovoj-sovet-439230-2021/>

the governments of the two countries on the development of bilateral trade are elaborated⁴⁶

It should be noted that trade and economic collaboration has traditionally been one of the main priorities for the development of the partnership between Belarus and Hungary. At the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian Commission for Economic Cooperation, which was held in May 2020, discussions focused primarily on pressing issues of trade cooperation, as well as the status of partnerships in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, energy, transport, science, education, and tourism. A month later, in June 2020, economic engagement was the focus of the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister V. Orban to Belarus. A month later, in June 2020, economic cooperation was the focus of the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Orban to Belarus, where he voiced the goal to increase trade between the two countries to EUR 500 million in the next two to three years. This can be achieved through implementation of various projects "that include both involvement and use of Belarusian technologies in Hungary in such spheres as mechanical engineering, construction and also Hungarian technologies in Belarus - agriculture and pharmaceuticals"⁴⁷. In this regard, cooperation in the field of electric transport may become particularly effective, because "taking into account Hungary's plans to switch to green technologies, cooperation in the production of buses and electric buses is especially promising."⁴⁸ .

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

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

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

Another promising area of economic partnership between the two countries, which can focus the attention of the business council to be formed, is the electricity sector. As a reminder, in June 2020, the Ministry of Energy of Belarus and the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office signed a memorandum on cooperation, which secured the mutual interest of the parties in cooperation in the nuclear power sector in order to develop contacts between business entities whose activities are related to the construction of nuclear power facilities and infrastructure. "Besides, exchange of experience in operating nuclear power plants, storage and disposal of radioactive waste is planned. The memorandum provides for various forms of cooperation, including the establishment of joint ventures for participation in investment projects in the electricity sector."⁴⁹ This interest in cooperation is explained by the fact that Hungary, like Belarus, "has decided to cooperate with Russia in the development of nuclear energy; a model identical to the Belarusian nuclear units will be used for the expansion of the Paks NPP. This opens up additional opportunities to find common ground⁵⁰.

It should also be recalled that back in January 2019, Belarus and Hungary signed a number of important documents outlining promising areas for the development of bilateral relations. Two of them are the intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian agreement on the promotion and mutual protection of investments, as well as the memorandum of the foreign ministries of the two countries on the promotion of interregional cooperation. Minsk and Budapest see special importance in the agreement

49_Belarus and Hungary sign a memorandum on electricity cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-v-oblasti-elektroenergetiki-393689-2020/>

50_Hajnowski, A. Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation is pragmatic and effective / A. Hajnowski // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/interview/view/belorusko-vengerskoe-sotrudnichestvo-javljaetsja-pragmatichnym-i-effektivnym-6383/>

on mutual protection of investments, because "it is of paramount importance for investors of any country. <...> it is an excellent impetus for the implementation of investment projects". The document, which has been in the making for almost ten years, sends an important message to the business communities in the two countries to step up cooperation. Especially since "Hungary and Belarus are already developing cooperation in many areas, there are joint projects in mechanical engineering, pharmaceuticals, construction and the financial sector"⁵¹. In particular, in 2017, a joint venture in the construction sector emerged in Hungary with Belarusian partners. A company set up with the participation of Belstrojcenter participates in construction projects here, and also supplies Belarusian construction materials here. And the pharmaceutical company Gedeon Richter has been operating in Belarus for many years. All in all, "eight companies with Hungarian capital are operating here"⁵².

Nevertheless, according to the parties, "joint new investment projects and in-depth industrial cooperation with the prospect of access not only to national markets, but also to the large markets of the European Union for Belarus and the Eurasian Economic Union for Hungary are necessary"⁵³. And such plans should get their real shape in the foreseeable future. In particular, "the first Belarusian-Hungarian agricultural enterprise using Hungarian corn processing technology will be set up in

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

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

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

the Mogilev region as early as 2019"⁵⁴ . And in the same year, the two countries planned to open a joint line for the production of double-decker railcars for railway trains. "A total of 19 double-decker trains are to be manufactured. This will be the first time in the history of Hungarian railways. They will be used on the most popular routes"⁵⁵ .

We should suppose that the future business council will also focus on intensifying interregional cooperation, the potential of which the parties have yet to really tap into. The free economic zone (FEZ) Grodnoinvest, the administration of which was among the participants of the April Hungarian-Belarusian business forum, is ready to become one of the active participants in this partnership. The interest of Grodno residents is based on the existing foundation of cooperation with partners from this European country. In particular, "the trade turnover of the residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest with Hungary in 2020 amounted to USD 2.1 million, including USD 575 million of exports. The trade turnover of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" residents was USD 2.1 mln, including USD 575 thousand of exports. EXPORTS AMOUNTED TO USD 575,000. The main exports are particleboards, furniture and plastic products"⁵⁶

The Memorandum on Promoting Interregional Cooperation should also play an important role in this context, giving the parties an opportunity to expand cooperation between the regions not only between the two capitals - Minsk and Budapest - but also between the two

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

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

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

countries. It should be recalled that the agreement on cooperation between the Minsk City Executive Committee and Budapest Municipality was signed in 2016. The Belarusian capital was then seriously interested in the experience of its Hungarian partners in the use of major sports facilities, public transport management, waste recycling, and water treatment. In April 2018, Budapest hosted Days of Minsk, which once again showed what serious partnership potential the two sides can still tap into in practice. Suffice it to say that Minsk enterprises sold "over \$26 million worth of goods on the Hungarian market in 2017, increasing exports by 37.2% compared to 2016"⁵⁷. At the same time, in April 2018, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Partizan district of Minsk and the Csepel district of Budapest, which opened up new opportunities, above all, for economic interaction. After all, both districts are industrial, so businesses located in their territory will be able to cooperate mutually beneficially. And they are already doing so. For example, "the Kozlov plant is working with Siemens. <...> The search for points of contact is continuing". In June 2020, representatives of the Gomel region and Győr-Ménfőcsanak-Sopron, one of the leading Hungarian regions in terms of economic performance, also discussed opportunities for establishing interregional partnerships. Above all, they talked about the implementation of the "memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of poultry breeding" signed in 2020.⁵⁸ The discussion focused on the implementation of the "Memorandum of

57_Parukova, E. Minsk Days in Budapest: what connects the two capitals and how their cooperation will develop / E. Parukova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://minsknews.by/dni-minska-v-budapeshte-cto-svyazyivaet-dve-stolitsyi-i-kak-budet-razvivatsya-ih-sotrudnichestvo/>

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

Understanding on cooperation in the field of poultry breeding" signed in 2020.

In May 2020, as noted above, the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian Commission for Economic Cooperation - the leading bilateral platform that brings together positions and develops solutions on a wide range of topical issues on the economic and humanitarian agenda - took place. For the first time in the practice of the bilateral relations this event, for obvious reasons of epidemiological nature, was held in a videoconference format, but it did not lose its relevance in terms of the prospects of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation, which can be divided into several main trends.

One of the drivers of growth back in 2020 was agriculture, as evidenced by the following facts. In 2019, the trade turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs between Belarus and Hungary increased by almost 15 percent and exceeded 17 million dollars. An important detail: "Exports of Belarusian agro-industrial products increased more than threefold during this period. Among the main export items are seeds and fruits of various oilseeds and shellfish"⁵⁹. In the first quarter of 2020, a similar picture was observed: the turnover of agricultural products and foodstuffs increased by almost ten percent and Belarusian exports by twenty percent. At the same time, the two sides continued to actively step up efforts to implement new joint projects in this area. In March 2020, during the visit of Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations P. Szijjártó to Belarus,

59 Markovich, E. Belarus in 2019 increased the export of agricultural products to Hungary by more than three times / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2019-godu-uvelichila-eksport-produktsii-apk-v-vengriju-bolee-chem-v-tri-raza-393476-2020/>

the parties "identified the main areas for further cooperation in food supplies, investments, and poultry"⁶⁰.

And already in June 2020, the 1st Minsk Poultry Farm and the Hungarian company Babolna Tetra signed a framework cooperation agreement worth around three and a half million euros. The three-year agreement provides for breeding poultry and selective breeding of young laying hens. Thanks to this project, the Belarusian side "will be practically exempt from importing laying hens' breeding flocks from 2020, and from 2023 will be able to fully provide the domestic market with its own egg breed"⁶¹.

Belarus is also interested in commodity supplies from Hungary in those areas of the agricultural sector that are very well developed in this country, such as corn, cattle and poultry. Specifically, there is a talk about a joint project with Hungarian partners on goose breeding in Gomel Oblast "to help restore regions affected by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster"⁶². At least during the talks that took place in June 2020, the financing of this project has already been discussed, as well as where this production will be set up and who from the Belarusian side will take part in it. Furthermore, in June 2020, Belarus and Hungary "agreed to develop an agreement on cooperation in the training of personnel for the agricultural sector, to establish cooperation between agricultural

60. Belarus and Hungary plan to expand agribusiness cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-planirujut-rasshirjat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-apk-381906-2020/>

61 Markovich, E. Belarus and Hungary to cooperate in poultry farming / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-budut-sotrudnicat-v-sfere-ptitsevodstva-393454-2020/>

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

universities, and to establish a working group for cooperation in the field of agriculture⁶³

Other promising areas of cooperation include medicine. For example, back in July 2020, the Belarusian JLLC Nativita and the Hungarian company Pharma Gap Kft signed in Budapest an agreement of intent to cooperate in order to speed up the registration and distribution "in Hungary and other countries of vital medicines produced in Belarus. The list of products includes medicinal products used in the treatment of oncological diseases and cytokine storm in COVID-19 infections"⁶⁴. And already in December 2020, the parties, discussing cooperation in the pharmaceutical field and topical approaches for the treatment of complications caused by coronavirus infection, cancer and other serious illnesses, reached an agreement on "terms and conditions for access of Belarusian medicinal products to the Hungarian market"⁶⁵. The agreements reached between the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of Belarus and the Hungarian Competition Authority in 2020 should also play a positive role in the development of the trade and economic relations between the two countries. In particular, the parties agreed on the "final version of the memorandum on cooperation in the field of competition policy"⁶⁶.

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

64 Grishkevich, A. Belarusian medicines enter the pharmaceutical market of Hungary / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-lekarstva-vyhodjat-na-farmatsevticheskij-rynok-vengrii-399319-2020/>

65 Belarus and Hungary discuss cooperation in the pharmaceutical industry [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-vengrija-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-v-farmatsevticheskij-otrasli-420817-2020/>

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

It only remains to add to the above mentioned that the contractual and legal framework of Belarusian-Hungarian bilateral cooperation today "includes about 20 international treaties, the subject matter of which are trade, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation; cooperation on legal and tax issues, in the sphere of agriculture, sports, tourism, education, defense, motor traffic"⁶⁷. This provides a solid basis for the successful operation of the joint business council to be formed, which, as noted above, is scheduled to appear in the second half of 2021.

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⁶⁷ Bilateral relations [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: https://hungary.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/HUN/pol/

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**Belarus - Uzbekistan:
priorities for cooperation are outlined by the commission**

The eighth meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission for bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan was held in early March 2021 in Tashkent. The meeting focused on the development of trade and economic, investment and cooperation ties, strengthening of relations in the scientific, educational, social and humanitarian spheres, interregional cooperation, information technologies, and tourism.

It should be recalled that diplomatic relations between the two former Soviet republics were established in January 1993. In 2020, the Belarus-Uzbekistan trade turnover grew by another 17 percent and exceeded 280 million dollars, with the share of supplies from Belarus exceeding 237 million dollars. "The main items of Belarusian exports last year [2020] were trucks, tractors and truck tractors, meat and meat products, sugar and dairy products, medicines, vaccines and blood serums"⁶⁸. While noting these positive trends, the parties at the meeting of the intergovernmental commission nevertheless focused their attention on those issues that would help bring the bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level. One of the urgent priorities is to expand the legal framework of Belarusian-Uzbek interaction that totaled more than 70 agreements by March 2021. The eighth meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission contributed to its further expansion.

In particular, the National Metrology Institutes of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed a cooperation agreement in Tashkent, which defines the main areas of cooperation for the next five years. The document deals with the close partnership of the parties in the development and implementation of programmes to create national and working

⁶⁸ Belarus aims to further develop bilateral relations with Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9736>

measurement standards. "Another direction is participation in the development of interstate documents on the uniformity of measurements in order to harmonize national legislation and work out unified principles in this area⁶⁹the Agency Uzstandart have adopted a cooperation program for 2021-2023 that envisages comparisons of state measurement standards, calibration of measurement standards and working instruments, as well as participation of laboratories in proficiency testing programs. All this, together with the planned establishment of a permanent group, should help to resolve issues related to technical barriers to trade between the two countries. Another important prospective aspect of cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan in this area is that the Eurasian Economic Union now has a draft agreement on the procedure and conditions for removing technical barriers to mutual trade with third countries, which is in a high degree of readiness. In this regard, the Belarusian Gosstandart is "working on the possibility and making a proactive proposal that the first pilot project under this agreement, once it enters into force, be implemented with Uzbekistan⁷⁰

Ten more cooperation documents were signed at the beginning of March 2021 by the higher education institutions of the two countries. They added to the already very extensive legal framework for cooperation between educational institutions and scientific organizations, which already numbered around two hundred direct agreements. Thanks to them, joint faculties are successfully operating today, and Belarus-Uzbekistan educational programs, including those involving the issuance

69. Institutes of Metrology of Belarus and Uzbekistan sign cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/instituty-metrologii-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-431178-2021/>

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

of two diplomas, are being implemented. A joint Belarus-Uzbekistan inter-industry institute of applied technical qualifications was opened in Tashkent. The creation of an Uzbek-Belarusian university of materials science is under consideration. The following figures are quite eloquent: "In the academic year 2020-2021, educational institutions in Belarus will admit about 2,000 Uzbek students. Exports of educational services to Uzbekistan last year [2020] amounted to \$1.7 million, an increase of almost 14% compared to the previous year⁷¹ cooperation in the educational sphere.

It should be noted that a number of national universities have shown considerable interest in developing cooperation with their Uzbek partners. These include the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, the Belarusian National Technical University, the Belarusian State Technological University, the P.M. Masherov State University of Vitebsk, the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, and the Francysk Skaryna State University of Gomel. The Belarusian State University (BSU) also has major plans to expand its presence in the Uzbek education market and is planning to seriously expand its line of joint educational programmes here.

In particular, the agreement signed in April 2021 on cultural and scientific cooperation between BSU and the Mirzo Ulugbek National University of Uzbekistan, the first and leading institution of higher education in Central Asia, offers great opportunities in this regard. Established in 1918, it now has 12 departments: Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Social Sciences, History, Geology and Geoinformation Systems, Geography and Natural Resources, Foreign Philology, Journalism and Taekwondo and Sports Activities. Until

71_Universities of Belarus and Uzbekistan signed 10 documents on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/vuzy-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-podpisali-10-dokumentov-o-sotrudnichestve-431140-2021>

recently, cooperation between the two universities involved joint training of Uzbek students in biomedical sciences and medical ecology at BSU's Sakharov International State Ecological Institute. The document, signed in April, covers not only cooperation in student and teacher exchange, preparation of theses, dissertations and publications, joint scientific research and events, exchange of literature, periodicals, but also expands the subject area of inter-university relations in new directions, including "the parties have outlined increase of joint educational programs in humanitarian and natural sciences, organization of joint summer schools, interaction of students and teachers". In addition, the Uzbek side was interested in the BSU experience in organizing a system of continuous legal education, which is implemented through the law college and faculty, as well as the Institute for the retraining and professional development of judges, prosecutors, court personnel and judicial institutions. It is also quite possible that Belarusian scientists with relevant experience will participate in the development of a satellite for the Uzbek university.

The topic of expanding the range of educational programmes is also relevant in the interaction between the BSU and the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, where joint training of Uzbek students in Oriental (Chinese) philology has been underway since 2019. New areas under discussion include the use of BSU's experience in training specialists for the IT industry, as well as the development of interdisciplinary specialisations. In particular, in April 2021, "an initiative to jointly train students in computational linguistics" was supported ⁷²and the implementation of youth start-up projects.

72_BSU plans to expand joint educational programmes with Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-planiruet-rasshirit-s-uzbekistanom-sovmestnye-obrazovatelnye-programmy-435893-2021/>

The road map signed in April 2021 between the Belarusian State University and the Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi will result in the opening of an Uzbek language and literature classroom in Minsk in December 2021, whose activities "will be aimed at strengthening educational and cultural ties between the two countries and creating conditions for the study of language, history and ethnic features of Uzbekistan"⁷³.

An agreement on cooperation between the Belarusian State University and the Tashkent State Law University has been in place since 2020. This year, this cooperation will be expanded through the joint training of Uzbek students at the College of Law of the Belarusian university with the prospect of subsequent enrollment at the BSU Faculty of Law, as well as the opening of joint programs with the Faculty of International Relations of the BSU. Here it is worth noting that the Uzbek partners are "very interested in the BSU's experience of participation in international rankings, according to which the Belarusian university is close to the top 1% of universities in the world"⁷⁴. In April 2021, the parties agreed to create a working group to rapidly develop documents on the implementation of the proposed initiatives, as well as to organise a joint educational programme for legal personnel training in September. Finally, in cooperation with the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, discussions are underway on the possibility for Uzbek teachers to take internships at the Belarusian State University, study there for professional development programmes and

73. The Uzbek language and culture cabinet will open at BSU [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/kabinet-uzbekskogo-jazyka-i-kultury-otkrojut-v-bgu-435914-2021/>

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

invite employees of the Belarusian university to give lectures in Tashkent.

Another important result of the work of the intergovernmental commission was the first meeting of the Belarusian-Uzbek Business Council in Tashkent, which brought together over 170 representatives of business circles of the two countries, who were able to discuss "specific cooperation projects in agriculture, mechanical engineering, logistics, food industry, chemical and pharmaceutical production, science and education and information technologies"⁷⁵demonstrated by the example of Minsk Motor Plant, whose representatives brought over four million dollars worth of contracts to the Uzbek capital. This is largely due to the fact that "MMZ's commodity distribution network in Tashkent is represented by BURAN-SAVDO, SIGMA, INDUSTRIAL MARKETING, FUTURE GENERATION MARKETING. In 2019-2020, MMZ sold more than 1,000 engines to Uzbekistan's primary and secondary markets"⁷⁶.

A logical continuation of the first meeting of the business council was the participation of 23 Belarusian companies in the international exhibition INNOPROM in April 2021. The Great Industrial Week in Uzbekistan", where Belarusian exporters presented products from mechanical engineering, metallurgy, chemical industry, pharmaceutical industry, medical equipment, as well as scientific developments and consumer goods. One of the concrete results of the participation of Belarusian manufacturers in the exhibition event was the signature of an

75_More than 170 representatives of Belarusian and Uzbek businesses took part in a business council meeting [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-170-predstavitelej-biznesa-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-prinjali-uchastie-v-zasedanii-delovogo-soveta-431374-2021>

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

agreement of intent by a subsidiary of the Minsk automobile plant in Uzbekistan - MAZ-Tashkent LLC - "to supply chassis and vehicle components for assembling machines in the Uzbek market for \$10 million. 50 MAZ machines were also contracted to a private Uzbek company for the total amount of \$3 million⁷⁷there are good prospects for the development of economic relations between the two countries.

As a reminder, the roadmap for cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan, adopted in November 2018, is the basic document for trade and economic interaction between the two countries, which contains 158 measures. Already by May 2020, more than a third of them had been implemented. This had an immediate impact on the state of the Belarus-Uzbekistan partnership: "At the end of 2019, the volume of trade turnover between the countries reached \$239 million and increased 1.5 times over 2018 ⁷⁸. This means that the parties intend to achieve the goal, which the two heads of state had outlined in 2018, of increasing bilateral trade turnover to one billion dollars as quickly as possible. "The goal is expected to be achieved in three to four years by mainstreaming all possible areas of cooperation," he said. ⁷⁹One of the most promising areas is agriculture.

The fact is that the main trend in the development of Uzbekistan's agro-industrial complex today is the formation of a cluster production system. In other words, clusters should unite producers of agricultural raw materials and its processors into industrial enterprises. The

77_More than 20 Belarusian enterprises took part in a major industrial exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-20-belorusskih-predpriyatij-prinjali-uchastie-v-krupnoj-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-436286-2021/>

78 Vladimir Dvornik held talks with Sardor Umurzakov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9423>

79 Zalesky, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. A view from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - - C. 223.

Belarusian experience in this regard is viewed by Uzbek partners as very positive, so they demonstrate their high interest in establishing direct business contacts and partnerships with Belarusian producers and processors, the effectiveness of which is evidenced by the figures.

In 2019, agricultural products and foodstuffs worth 35 million dollars were supplied to the Uzbek market from Belarus, which more than doubled the level of 2018. The positive dynamics of mutual trade in this area continued next year, despite restrictions caused by the spread of the coronavirus. "Belarusian food exports more than doubled in 2020 and reached \$73 million. Supplies of Belarusian beef to Uzbekistan more than doubled, sugar 3.5 times, milk powder doubled, fish and fish products 1.5 times." ⁸⁰

The cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan is certainly not limited to the mutual supply of food products, but also includes a wide range of interaction, including in the development of joint scientific approaches and modern technologies. In particular, "promising areas of cooperation in the agricultural sector include the Belarusian side's participation in the construction of dairy complexes, organization of milk processing, establishment of JVs to produce veterinary drugs, cooperation in breeding, organization of training and retraining of Uzbek specialists on the basis of Belarusian agricultural educational institutions"⁸¹

The first Belarus-Uzbekistan Agrarian Forum held in 2020, which brought together more than 700 participants, demonstrated this diversity of effective partnerships. The business part of the Belarusian delegation alone included about 150 representatives of exporters of agricultural and food products, research and educational institutions. In particular, an

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

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

active participant of the forum was Gomselmash OJSC, which signed an agreement with the Tashkent Agricultural Machinery Plant in autumn 2019. "The document envisages the establishment of an assembly plant for combines in the capital of Uzbekistan." ⁸². Delegations from all regions of the country, as well as from relevant ministries and organisations of the agro-industrial complex were represented on the Uzbek side. As a result, "Belarusian exporters have signed over 30 agreements and contracts with their Uzbek partners"⁸³. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan adopted a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation.

At the same time as the agrarian forum in Tashkent, an exhibition was organised at which the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus alone presented more than 60 innovative developments and technologies for agriculture in Uzbekistan. Among the novelties of the Belarusian scientists from the Scientific and Practical Centre for Food of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, vegetable marmalade aroused great interest. "The range includes marmalade made of sweet corn, red carrot, ripe pumpkin, juicy tomato and spicy celery. The marmalade contains prebiotics and no artificial colourings"⁸⁴. The Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry demonstrated a range of complex mineral fertilizers with a balanced ratio of nutrition elements for cultivated crops.

82_ "Gomselmash will present its potential at an agricultural forum in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-predstaviti-svoj-potentsial-na-agrarnom-forume-v-uzbekistane-380486-2020>

83_ More than 30 agreements and contracts signed as a result of the Belarus-Uzbekistan Agrarian Forum [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-30-soglashenij-i-kontraktov-podpisano-po-itogam-belorussko-uzbekskogo-agrarnogo-foruma-381350-2020/>

84 The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus presented more than 60 innovative developments for agriculture in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nan-belarusi-predstavila-v-uzbekistane-bolee-60-innovatsionnyh-razrabotok-dlja-selskogo-hozjajstva-381057-2020/>

The S.N. Vysheslesky Institute of Experimental Veterinary Medicine showed vaccines for the prevention and treatment of viral and bacterial diseases in farm animals. Scientists from the Centre for Identification Systems and Electronic Business Operations have proposed technologies for digital identification and traceability of animals and animal products. The Scientific and Practical Centre for Potato Growing interested visitors in new potato varieties - Manifest, Uladar, Palac - resistant to a range of diseases. As we can see, even this brief list of novelties presented in Tashkent clearly shows what tempting prospects are opening up for the development of Belarusian-Uzbek agricultural partnerships in the near future.

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Gomel region: The Uzbek vector of cooperation

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

Gomel residents are also developing interaction with other Uzbek partners, cooperation agreements with which were signed at the First Forum of Regions of the two countries. For example, in July 2020, an online forum of representatives of business circles of the Gomel and **Fergana regions** was held, which included business entities from the Belarusian side, such as JSC Gomel Meat and Milk Holding Management Company, SE Gomeloblprom, and JSC Sozh Trading House. The participants of the forum constructively considered "the issues of bilateral cooperation in terms of trade of fruits and vegetables, textile, meat and dairy products, construction materials, agricultural machinery and equipment. The sides also discussed the possibility of opening a Ferghana Region trade house in Gomel⁸⁵Uz-Segang JV LLC, one of the major exporters of fruit and vegetable products in Ferghana Region, suggested cooperating with partners in Gomel Oblast by setting up a single distribution centre for Uzbek vitamin products. Gomeloblprom applied to

85_Uzbek companies are interested in cooperation with partners from the Gomel region [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/uzbekskie-kompanii-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-s-partnerami-iz-gomelskoj-oblasti-398194-2020/>

textile company A. Akbarali Ltd. Akbarali to establish supplies of cotton yarn to the Belarusian region.

Khorezm Region is Gomel Region's third Uzbek partner. The cooperation agreement signed by the parties in July 2019 named "trade and economic, scientific and cultural spheres, tourism, and healthcare"⁸⁶ among promising areas for cooperation. At the same time, Gomselmash signed a cooperation agreement with Urgenchkormmash, a joint-stock company from Khorezm Region, a forage harvester plant. All in all, in preparation for the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, Gomel Oblast companies signed contracts with their Uzbek partners worth nearly 1.5 million dollars.

All of these facts suggest that the Uzbek market is very promising for enterprises in the Gomel region. In 2020, the trade turnover of the Belarusian region with this Central Asian country grew by almost 65 percent and exceeded 17 million dollars. "Polymers, dairy products, wallpaper, screws, hardware, timber are exported to Uzbekistan. Among the exporters are KolorMaster (polyvinyl chloride), Svetlogorsk Welding Electrode Plant LLC (mechanical devices, machine tools), Milkavita OJSC, Kalinkovich Dairy Plant UE (milk powder), Svetlogorsk Khimvolokno OJSC (chemical yarns)⁸⁷

Obviously, the first Belarus-Uzbekistan Regions Forum, which was held in Minsk in July 2019 and opened "new horizons of cooperation in such areas as industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, food industry, as well as in the cultural, humanitarian, information and

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

87. Gomel Region and Navoi Region of Uzbekistan intend to develop cooperation in IT-industry [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-navoijskij-region-uzbekistana-amereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-it-otrasli-440395-2021/>

communication, and scientific fields,"⁸⁸ contributed significantly to boosting cooperation between specific regions of the two countries. Participants on the Uzbek side alone included over two hundred representatives from Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzax, Namangan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana and Tashkent provinces. The effectiveness of the Forum is borne out by the fact that 26 direct agreements between the regions were adopted at the Forum. In addition to the three documents of Gomel Oblast, agreements on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian spheres were signed by the regions of Grodno with Samarkand and Andijan, Vitebsk with Namangan, Brest with Bukhara and Syrdarya. Similar documents have been signed between the Mogilev, Andijan, and Dzhizak regions. Minsk Oblast Executive Committee has agreed on cooperation in the social sphere with Tashkent Oblast. An action plan for 2019-2020 has been signed to implement the agreement between the Tashkent Khokimiyat and the Minsk City Executive Committee on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation⁸⁹

The growing importance of Uzbek partners for the Belarusian regions as a whole is evidenced by these figures already for 2021. According to the results of the first quarter, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Uzbekistan increased by another quarter to \$67.5 million. An important detail: "The export of Belarusian goods during this period rose by 37.4% to \$58.7 million <...>. The balance of Belarus'

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

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

foreign trade in goods was positive and totaled \$49.8 million⁹⁰. This happened due to the increased supplies of chilled and frozen beef, medicines and polymers, tractors and trucks to the Uzbek market. Without the most committed involvement of Belarusian regions, it would have been extremely difficult to achieve such results.

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⁹⁰ Belarus-Uzbekistan trade turnover in the first quarter increased by 25.3% to 67.5 million [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-mezhdu-belarusju-i-uzbekistanom-za-i-kvartal-velichilsja-na-253-do-675-mln-440482-2021/>

**Belarus v China:
to build on the existing
interaction potential**

In 2021, the People's Republic of China launched the 14th Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plan to 2025, which will take new steps in reform policies and shape a new architectonics of mutually beneficial international cooperation to "comprehensively enhance the country's opening up to the outside world, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, promote innovation and trade development, promote high-quality development of the One Belt One Road Joint Construction Project". In doing so, the Chinese side will aim to create new advantages in international cooperation and competition as it believes "international economic cooperation and exchanges are still an objective requirement for global economic development. Openness to the outside world is the basic state policy of the country"⁹¹. As far as Belarus is concerned, the Chinese side expresses confidence that the two countries should continue to mutually use the advantages of their economies, which complement each other to a great extent, develop the existing potential for interaction, including within the framework of the One Belt, One Road project and the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone, and expand cooperation "in such areas as epidemic control, trade and economy, education, science and technology, culture, interregional relations"⁹².

It should be recalled that the Republic of Belarus has by now built quite strong and open relations with the People's Republic of China,

91 Qimin, C. China in 2021-2025 intends to implement new development plan / C. Qimin // [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/kitaj-v-2021-2025-godah-nameren-realizovat-novyj-plan-razvitija-7479/>

92 Xiaoyun, S. Taking the Bull by the Horns / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/vzjat-byka-za-roga-sovety-posla-knr-kak-pravilno-vstretit-kitajskij-novyj-god-7657//>

which are characteristic of only three countries now - Russia, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. This is confirmed by the following figures. "The PRC is Belarus' second foreign trade partner after Russia, with an annual turnover of \$5 billion. <...> About 500 Belarusian exporters have already gained a foothold in this competitive market. More than 100 agricultural enterprises have been accredited. Twenty-four projects worth nearly \$4.5 billion have been implemented in Belarus using China's resources⁹³.

The flagship project in this context is undoubtedly the Sino-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park, which in its incomplete six years of existence has already seen \$650 million in investments, with 68 residents from 14 countries already registered with a reported investment of \$1.2 billion, of which about half have commenced operations. As a result, "supercapacitors, truck cranes, laser equipment, drones, Euro 6 engines and heavy duty gearboxes, a 5G pilot communication zone and a multimodal container terminal are just a few examples of projects currently underway in the park⁹⁴. In 2021 there are plans to attract a further 17 new residents. High hopes in this regard are pinned on a multimodal rail terminal project involving Germany, China and Switzerland, which will begin construction in the near future, and also on the arrival here of the American company Ivy Global, which is considering opening a "pharmaceutical plant to produce a wide range of medicines, including for fighting COVID-19"⁹⁵ in Velikiy Kamen. In the

93 Yaroshenko: Belarus has built strong and open relations with China [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/jaroshenko-belarus-vystroila-prochnye-i-otkrytye-otnoshenija-s-kitaem-428410-2021>

94 Investments in Velikiy Kamen during the project implementation amounted to \$650 million - Yaroshenko [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/investitsii-v-velikij-kamen-za-vremja-realizatsii-proekta-sostavili-650-mln-jaroshenko-428432-2021/>

95 US company Ivy Global is considering opening a pharmaceutical plant in Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amerikanskaja->

same year, "when the second phase of development of the park begins, there are also plans to build a second residential complex with 173 flats and a second substation"⁹⁶.

Continuing the construction theme, it should be noted that in 2021 the construction of a national football stadium and an international standard swimming pool in Belarus with Chinese grant aid will also come to the fore, with completion of these projects in 2023, and the beginning of the third phase of social housing construction on Belarusian soil using again Chinese grant aid in the first half of 2021. Let us remind you that the first two phases of the project saw the construction of 38 houses with 3,286 flats in six regions and Minsk, which helped improve the living conditions of over ten thousand people. During the third stage "it is planned to build 1166 social housing flats in 20 houses. The total built-up area will be around 66,000 square metres. The flats will be provided to citizens who are registered as being in need of better housing conditions and are entitled to social housing"⁹⁷.

Finally, with regard to the coronavirus pandemic, the two countries joined forces from the outset to combat it, providing each other with aid and support. As a result, "40 tonnes of humanitarian medical supplies were sent from Belarus to China. From China, two shipments of medical emergency supplies worth about 32.6 million yuan, provided by the Chinese government, and 110 tonnes from twin regions and partner companies"⁹⁸. Given the current situation with the re-emerging outbreaks

[kompanija-ivy-global-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-otkrytija-v-velikom-kamne-farmzavoda-426540-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kompanija-ivy-global-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-otkrytija-v-velikom-kamne-farmzavoda-426540-2021/)

96. Great Stone Industrial Park expects to attract around 17 residents in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-rasschityvaet-v-2021-godu-privlech-okolo-17-rezidentov-423412-2021/>

97. China is going to build 20 more social houses in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitaj-sobiraetsja-postroit-v-belarusi-esche-20-sotsialnyh-domov-426882-2021/>

98. Qiuyan, C. Covid not a hindrance - trade between Belarus and China turned out to be stress-resistant / C. Qiuyan // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL:

of the epidemic, the parties intend to continue working together actively to confront this global challenge, confirming with concrete actions the existing level of trustful all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation.

As far as the cooperation between regions of the two countries is concerned, back in January 2021 the parties proposed "to declare the Year of Belarus and China Regions and make it last for three years, from 2021 to 2023, in order to develop interregional cooperation"⁹⁹. A number of Belarusian and Chinese regions are already taking active steps to update these partnerships. Back in 2020, the Belarusian region of **Grodno** and the Chinese province of **Hainan** signed an agreement on twinning, which provides for a significant increase in cooperation between the regions in the economic, trade and cultural spheres. This is not the first partner for Grodno Region in the Celestial Empire.

Back in 2007, Grodno residents established twinning relations with **Gansu** province. In 2014, "the parties signed a memorandum of cooperation to strengthen economic and trade cooperation and developed the Programme for cooperation of the Grodno region and Gansu province for 2014-2020, which systematically tried to address the most important aspects of bilateral partnership and twinning relations"¹⁰⁰.

The Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, which has established multifaceted cooperation with 10 Chinese universities, has become an active participant in this interregional cooperation. Today, Chinese students study in Grodno "at all levels - from the preparatory

<https://www.belta.by/comments/view/kovid-ne-pomeha-torgovlja-belarusi-i-kr-okazalas-stressoustojchivoj-7641/>.

99 Telephone conversation with President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/telefonnyy-razgovor-s-predsdatelem-kitayskoy-narodnoy-respubliki-si-czinpinom>

100 Zalesky, B. Vector of partnership - China. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - - C. 105.

department to postgraduate studies. Several joint research projects in biochemistry are also being developed. Earlier, a project in the field of mechanical engineering was implemented, now we are also counting on a project in the field of logistics"¹⁰¹. In August 2018, the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno opened an internship centre for Gansu province employees. Already in 2019, four investment projects based on Chinese investments were implemented in Grodno. In particular, the former Grodno Hotel was being reconstructed. A Chinese resident registered in the free economic zone Grodnoinvest, who was planning to implement a logistics project there. In addition, "Grodno also opened a traditional Chinese medicine centre and a trade and exhibition centre, which displays goods of the region's partners from China"¹⁰²

In 2018, Grodno Region signed a Protocol of Intent to establish friendly relations with **Fujian** Province. In official language, "the document outlines important areas of interregional complementary cooperation - trade, investment, logistics and culture"¹⁰³. It can be added that the rapprochement of the regions was brought about by the fact that the Chinese province has a well developed industrial sector - electronics and mechanical engineering, and the Belarusian region - agriculture. And this is "only one of the avenues for mutually reinforcing cooperation that can be developed in the trade and economic area"¹⁰⁴. Besides, Belarusian

101 Yanka Kupala State University develops joint research projects with Chinese universities [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grgu-im-janki-kupaly-razvivaet-s-kitajskimi-vuzami-sovmestnye-nauchnye-proekty-344391-2019/>

102 Four investment projects with Chinese capital are being implemented in the Grodno Region [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-grodnenskoj-oblasti-realizujutsja-4-investproekta-s-kitajskim-kapitalom-344505-2019/>

103 On the establishment of regional ties of the Grodno Region with the Chinese province of Fujian [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: http://shanghai.mfa.gov.by/ru/o_generalnom_consulstv/news/b1e61ad9861a3f9c.html

104 The Grodno Region and the Fujian Province of the People's Republic of China will develop cooperation more actively [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-knr-futszjan-budut-aktivnee-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-313085-2018/>

flax and woodworking products are in demand in the Chinese market, and the Chinese side has declared its readiness to increase investment in Grodno Region in a wide range of areas: from nuclear power plants to high technologies. And now the parties are working on the implementation of the agreements reached.

In short, the People's Republic of China has become a strategic partner for the Belarusian western region, as evidenced by the figures. Grodno Region companies exported more than \$160 million worth of goods to the Chinese market in the first 10 months of 2020. These are mainly food and oil products. The appearance of new Chinese partners, namely Hainan Province, means that Grodno Region will actualize cooperation in other areas as well - in high technology, electrical engineering production, and implementation of more global and ambitious projects. Among them are the construction of a logistics centre at Grodno Airport and the opening of direct flights between Grodno and Hainan Province. That will allow, firstly, more actively developing tourism and humanitarian cooperation and, secondly, promoting the mutual supply of goods¹⁰⁵ promote Chinese goods not only to Belarus, but also to the nearest European countries. In addition, it is safe to say that the establishment of twinning arrangements between the Grodno Region and Hainan Province will help develop cooperation between the cities of the Belarusian and Chinese regions. Thus, agreements between such cities as **Lida** and **Sanya**, **Ostrovets** and **Tsyunhai** are already at the draft stage. The administrative centres of **Grodno** and **Haikou** will not be spared from this process.

¹⁰⁵ Grodno Region and the Chinese province of Hainan signed an agreement on twinning [Electronic resource]. - – 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-i-kitajskaja-provintsija-hajnan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskih-svjazjah-421086-2020/>

Another interesting example is the **Gomel Region**, which signed a twinning agreement with China's **Sichuan** Province in April 2021 to expand cooperation in the economic, social and cultural spheres. As a reminder, the Belarusian and Chinese regions established friendly relations six years ago, when they signed a cooperation agreement in May 2015, which envisaged "organisation of cooperation on the principles of partnership, equality, trust and mutual benefit in such areas as economy, agriculture, healthcare and culture, education, sports and tourism".¹⁰⁶ They also agreed to establish direct contacts and twinning between the cities of the region and the province. And three years later, in August 2018, the administrative centres of the regions - the cities of **Gomel** and **Chengdu** - adopted an agreement on the establishment of twinning relations.

By that time, the interregional cooperation of the Gomel region on the Chinese vector was developing in three more directions - with the **Inner Mongolia** (2011) and **Xinjiang Uygur** (2016) autonomous regions, as well as **Jiangsu** province (2016). This enabled the region's businesses to increase exports to China almost three and a half times, from \$3.9 million to \$13.5 million, at the end of 2018. The main export items then were dairy products, flax, wool and lumber. And the list of accredited enterprises to supply dairy products to the Chinese market already included "five Gomel producers: Milkavita, Rogachev Dairy Canning Plant, Turov and Kalinkovich Dairy Plants, Mozyr Dairy Products"¹⁰⁷.

106 Zalessky, B. The potential for multi-vectorism. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020. - - C. 63.

107 Enterprises of Gomel region increased exports of goods to China by almost 3.5 times in 2018 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-v-2018-godu-uvlechili-eksport-tovarov-v-kitaj-pochti-v-35-raza-338253-2019/>

The next two years showed an even more impressive growth in exports from the Gomel region to China, convincingly demonstrating how much demand for these products is in the Chinese market. In particular, "in 2020, with an increase of 32%, \$91 million worth of goods were sent to that country"¹⁰⁸. Wood pulp, timber, meat and dairy products and confectionery have already made up the bulk of these shipments. And it should be assumed that the current level of interaction with Chinese regions is far from exhausting its potential, as "Gomel producers are ready to meet the needs of the Chinese side in flax, confectionery products, chocolate, alcoholic beverages, carbon fibres, non-woven carbon fiber, lumber and furniture"¹⁰⁹. In addition, there is considerable interest in expanding supplies of Gomselmash's corncob harvesters and forage harvesters to China.

It should be noted that there are great development reserves for the Homiel Region in interaction with virtually every Chinese partner or twin region, agreements reached earlier with which need to be updated today. For instance, in Sichuan province, which is home to more than 90 million people, in its administrative centre Chengdu, the Belarusian National Pavilion was opened back in November 2019, divided into seven zones, where Belarusian goods, including food and drinks, agricultural products and handicrafts began to be sold. At the same time, the Belarusian and Chinese sides said they were ready to base the pavilion on "a comprehensive two-way communication platform that will encompass

108. Enterprises of the Gomel region increased their exports to the PRC by a third [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-na-tret-uelichili-eksport-produktsii-v-knr-434841-2021/>

109. Gomel region and the Chinese province of Sichuan signed agreements on twinning [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblasti-kitajskaja-provintsija-sychuan-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskih-svjazjah-436511-2021/>

such areas as economy, culture, education, tourism, investment and services¹¹⁰the task.

Interesting opportunities may open up in 2021 in cooperation between the Gomel Region and China's **Inner Mongolia** Autonomous Region. After all, the regions already adopted a cooperation programme for 2020 in 2019. And backed up this document at the same time with an Agreement of Intent regarding the establishment of twinning relations between the administrative centres of the region and the autonomous region - the cities of **Gomel** and **Hohhot**, which envisaged the development of cooperation in economy, trade, science, technology, environment, culture, education, sports, tourism and healthcare. The fact that Inner Mongolia is an area rich in "natural resources: forests in the east, iron ore in the west, cattle breeding in the north and grain growing in the south"¹¹¹ provides additional opportunities for expanding this cooperation. On the Hohhot side, "mechanical engineering, in particular the production of agricultural machinery" was also listed as a priority area for cooperation, as well as food processing and construction.¹¹²The country's economic development, as well as food processing and construction, were also mentioned as priority areas for cooperation with Hohhot. The seriousness of Gomel enterprises' intentions to enter the Inner Mongolian market with their products is evidenced by their participation in the Belarusian-Chinese regional forum held in Hohhot in June 2019, where "investment potential of the Gomel region, <...> Gomel

110 Mozgov, E. The Belarusian National Pavilion was opened in Chengdu, China / E. Mozgov // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-kitayskom-chendu-otkrylsya-belorusskiy-natsionalnyy-pavilon.html>

111_An agreement of intent has been signed [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: http://gomel.gov.by/ru/news/podpisano-soglashenie-omamereniyakh/?NEWS_FILTER_TYPE=sotrudnichestvo

112_The authorities of the Chinese city of Hohhot intend to develop industrial relations with Gomel [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vlasti-kitajskogo-goroda-huh-hoto-namereny-razvivat-otnosheniya-s-gomelem-v-promyshlennosti-366222-2019/>

meat and milk company, JSC Spartak were presented with separate presentations". It should be assumed that all these intentions of the parties to cooperate today are already entering the phase of implementation of specific joint projects.

As a result, we emphasize that all these facts once again confirm the correctness of the chosen course in Belarus to establish and develop various twinning and partnership relations of Belarusian regions with their colleagues from other countries, the experience of implementation of which already shows that this is "an important and effective sector of international cooperation, characterized by openness, mutual trust, tolerance and kind-heartedness". The experience of these projects already shows that it is "an important and effective sector of international cooperation, characterised by openness, mutual trust, tolerance and good-heartedness,¹¹³ which, if developed consistently and steadily, encourage mutual investment and expand production cooperation to create high-impact production facilities.

113 Batura, B. Twinning - small links of big friendship / B. Batura // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/pobratimskoe-dvizhenie-malenkie-zvenjia-bolshoj-druzhyby-7603>

**Belarus-Africa:
the second economic forum as a platform to discuss new forms and
methods of cooperation**

Minsk hosted the second Belarusian-African Economic Forum in spring and summer 2021, which was attended by representatives of government agencies, business and financial circles from 14 African states - Angola, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia. More than 175 companies and industrial enterprises interested in establishing contacts with African partners and implementing joint mutually beneficial projects took part in the event on the Belarusian part. Minsk sees the forum as an important platform for dialogue aimed at further strengthening and development of bilateral and multilateral relations of Belarus with Africa, expansion of trade, economic and cooperation relations, increase of trade turnover. Suffice it to say that "in the three years following the first Belarus-Africa Forum, mutual trade between Belarus and African countries totaled more than USD 1.8 billion. Belarus and its African partners have gone from annual trade of \$158 million in the early 2000s to \$553 million in 2020¹¹⁴. This dynamic largely explains why the continent is viewed as one of the important elements of Belarus's multi-vector foreign policy, where Belarus has a lot of opportunities for joint and mutually beneficial movement towards the creation of new footholds and strengthening cooperation in a wide range of areas.

It is a fact that Belarus has long exported to many African countries. Moreover, "nearly half of the countries of the southern continent know Belarusian products: from food to mechanical

114 About the Second Belarus-Africa Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html.

engineering¹¹⁵side has traditionally emphasized and continues focusing on the three main areas for cooperation with African partners. "First, everything related to mechanical engineering and the development of the respective infrastructure. Secondly, everything that has to do with food production, agricultural technologies, and agricultural machinery. Thirdly, everything that involves the services sector, and especially education, medicine and IT technology¹¹⁶examples of implemented projects for each of them. For example, there is an assembly facility for Belarusian tractors and trucks in Egypt, and similar projects are already underway in Sudan and Algeria. Potash fertilizers and tyres are exported to South Africa. "Major projects are underway and contracts are being negotiated to supply Belarusian machinery and equipment to Zimbabwe and Angola¹¹⁷

But the very fact that the second Belarusian-African Economic Forum was held shows that the indicators of engagement with African partners achieved today can and should be much higher. The current level of cooperation is only a starting point for the introduction of new forms and methods of trade and economic cooperation and diversification of mutual trade. In fact, this is why at this economic forum Belarus suggested that African countries, as far as food security assistance is concerned, should use a comprehensive systemic approach in developing partnerships, from evaluating local farming conditions to supplying a full

115 Experts link the development of the global economy with Africa. How can Belarus take advantage of it? [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/experts-svjazyvajut-razvitie-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikoj-kak-etim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/>.

116 Zalesky, B.L. New benchmarks for joint projects / B.L. Zalesky // Proceedings of XVI International Scientific and Practical Conference, B'deshcheto vzdavosi v naukatami - 2020, 17 - 25 December 2020. : Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - - C. 16.

117 Grishkevich, A. Belarusian dump trucks and agricultural machinery took a strong position in the markets of many African countries / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-samosvaly-i-selhoztehnika-zanjali-prochnye-pozitsii-na-rynkah-mnogih-afrikanskih-stran-443820-2021/>.

range of machinery and equipment. The implementation of this approach can substantially increase supplies of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components to Africa under various forms of industrial cooperation with the possible use of various instruments to finance Belarusian exports" and speed up the establishment of joint ventures in Africa. This approach could substantially increase the supply of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components to Africa in the framework of various forms of industrial cooperation, with possible use of various instruments of financing of Belarusian exports"¹¹⁸.

It should be noted that Belarusian proposals at the economic forum were met with considerable interest by the African participants. For example, the Egyptian side, which was represented by some 35 companies in Minsk and expressed its interest in industrial cooperation with partners from Belarus, suggested promoting trilateral cooperation in the framework of which Belarusian tractors assembled in Egypt could be delivered to other countries of the continent, making use of free trade zones there, which would remove a number of tariff barriers. Among other vectors of cooperation, according to Egyptian business, there are several more that look promising today. "The first one is a coronavirus vaccine produced in Belarus, and the second one is an electric bus produced in Belarus"¹¹⁹

As for other African countries, for example, Uganda, which is rich in minerals and is engaged in oil and gas extraction, "intends to seriously engage in residential infrastructure and hotel construction to develop

118 On the meeting of Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej with the participants of the Second Belarus-Africa Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc66b6a8ee1bbd02.html

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

tourism. Belarusian partners could help the country in that¹²⁰. Other promising areas of mutual interest between Belarus and Uganda include oil refining, information and communication technologies and education. Congo would like to develop relations with Belarusian partners in order to modernize its agricultural policy. Namibia sees prospects for such cooperation in mining, energy, industry, agriculture, and even fisheries.

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120 "We can start working right now" - African countries have voiced promising areas for cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mozhem-nachinat-rabotat-prjamo-sejchas-strany-afriki-ozvuchili-perspektivnye-sfery-sotrudnichestva-s-443755-2021/>.

Belarus: paving the way to the future comprehensive programme

Belarus has prepared a draft State Programme of Innovative Development for 2021-2025 that envisages the implementation of some 80 innovation projects to create high-tech industries. Among the priorities should be the development of six "projects of the future", which focus on new production, technology and products that are in line with global trends and take into account the development of markets. One of the most prominent of these is national electric transport. The implementation of the prepared comprehensive programme for the development of this sector in 2021-2025 will not only create a new machine-building sector in Belarus - electric vehicles - but will also have a large-scale multiplier effect on the innovative development of other sectors, such as metallurgy, electrical engineering, robotics and information technology. In addition, "there are plans to develop prototypes of new vehicles and set up 14 production facilities for cargo, passenger and special electric vehicles, including the assembly facility for electric cars at BELJI, as well as basic components for them"¹²¹.

It should be recalled that back in March 2020, the Republic of Belarus adopted a decree "On Encouraging the Use of Electric Vehicles", which envisaged measures to stimulate demand for these environmentally friendly vehicles in the country, as well as the creation of the relevant charging and service infrastructure in the regions. The emergence of this document was prompted by a number of circumstances. First, recall that "at the 24th United Nations World Conference on Climate Change, held in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, the Belarusian side stated that it

121 Shumilin, A. How Belarus plans to develop high-tech sector / A. Shumilin // [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-belarus-planiruet-razvivat-vysokotekhnologichnyj-sektor-7711/>

considers the green economy and low-carbon sustainable development as a strategic vector"¹²² .

Secondly, existing expert forecasts show that "by 2030, one in five cars in the world will be electric. This process is being spurred on by government policies in a number of countries, where restrictions are about to be imposed on cars with internal combustion engines"¹²³ . Thirdly, the growth of electric cars will help to reduce air pollution in Belarus. Fourthly, "the use of electric vehicles is one of the ways to intelligently increase electricity consumption".¹²⁴, which becomes especially relevant in connection with the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Fifthly, the transition to electric cars is an appeal for the general public to new technologies in line with global best practices, so that by 2025, about 40 per cent of existing cars with internal combustion engines in Belarus could be replaced by electric vehicles.

Turning to the decree, we note some of the measures it contained. For instance, this document exempted owners of electric cars from paying a fee for a permit to participate in road traffic. Individuals will not have to pay value-added tax when bringing electric cars into our country for personal use. In addition, "owners of electric vehicles will be exempt from paying parking fees in designated spaces in communal car parks until 1 April 2026"¹²⁵.

122 Zalessky, B. Points of growth. Peculiarities of sustainable development in the context of global challenges / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2020. -- C. 57.

123 Measures to be taken will contribute to the creation of electric car production in Belarus - Ministry of Economy [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prinimaemye-mery-budut-sposobstvovat-sozdaniyu-v-belarusi-proizvodstva-elektromobilej-minekonomiki-383056-2020/>

124 Ecology and smart electricity consumption - what benefits the growth of electric cars in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekologija-i-gramotnoe-potreblenie-elektroenergii-chem-vygoden-rost-chisla-elektromobilej-v-belarusi-383046-2020>

125 Lukashenka signed a decree on incentives for purchases of electric cars [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-podpisal-ukaz-o-stimulirovanii-zakupok-elektromobilej-383041-2020>

The decree also contained measures for producers of electric cars and electric charging stations, as well as for organizations operating them. In particular, the charging stations were exempted from value added tax when used in Belarus. And land plots for construction and maintenance of electric charging stations have been leased to Production Association Belarusneft without an auction. This may be the reason why PA Belarusneft was planning to open 180 quick-charging stations at once in 2020.

At that time, the situation of electric charging stations (EPS) in Belarus was as follows. Since the beginning of 2020, "the EPS network has expanded to 251 such stations (plus 13 facilities)"¹²⁶. And it could already serve up to nine thousand electric cars. The EFS network in Belarus includes two types of stations: Mode 3, where it takes six to eight hours to charge an electric car; and Mode 4, where the battery can be recharged in less than an hour. An important detail: at the beginning of 2020, Belarusneft launched a new brand - Malanka - under which 639 charging stations should be operating by 2022. And by 2030, there should be enough of them to serve up to 300,000 electric vehicles.

Speaking about the production of our country's own electric cars, it should be recalled that the first Belarusian sample of such vehicles based on Geely was unveiled back in August 2017. At that time, it was also said that "after testing the first electric car, scientists will start developing an improved prototype. It could be ready as early as next year [2018]"¹²⁷. Nevertheless, as noted already at the March 2020 meeting of the

126_"Belorusneft plans to open 180 electric charging stations this year [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusneft-planiruet-otkryt-180-elektrozarjadnyh-stantsij-v-etom-godu-383042-2020>

127_Gavrilova, V. Ecological, modern and maneuverable: scientists presented the first Belarusian electric car / V. Gavrilova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/reportazh-ekologichnyj-sovremennyy-i-manevrennyj-uchenye-prezentovali-pervyj-belorusskij-elektromobil-262688-2017>

President of Belarus with the leadership of the Council of Ministers, so far the topic of producing its own electric car has not received the proper impetus, although electric transport has enormous potential. "It is an urgent need today. <...> Many states are already developing this promising direction. Countries like us, which are export-oriented and don't have huge reserves underground, have long focused on electric vehicles"¹²⁸ .

When the decree "On promotion of electric cars" appeared, it became clear that BELJI CJSC was going to take care of this matter and was "ready to consider the production of electric cars in Belarus on condition of sales of 5-10 thousand cars per year"¹²⁹. At the same time the company received four Chinese electric Geely Geometry A models, which were to be tested: one - at the plant and three - at dealerships. This version of the electric car attracted because it had a range of 500 kilometres, adaptive cruise control and pedestrian and cyclist response systems, as well as an intelligent automatic parking system. At the same time, there were hopes that with the adoption of the presidential decree, production of the Geely Geometry A model at BELJI SAO would go much faster.

In January 2021, the draft Comprehensive Programme of electric transport development for 2021-2025 elaborated by the National Academy of Sciences together with other stakeholders and envisaging increase of public electric transport share in Belarus up to 30 per cent by 2025, was considered at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of

128 Meeting with the leadership of the Council of Ministers [Electronic resource]. -- 2020. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveschaniye-s-rukovodstvom-soveta-ministrov-23197/

129 "BELJI is ready to consider production of electric cars with sales of 5-10 thousand cars per year [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-gotov-rassmatrivat-vypusk-elektromobilej-pri-prodazhe-5-10-tys-avto-v-god-382660-2020/>

Ministers, where the main requirements of the government for the document content were announced: "The programme should be really comprehensive - from scientific research and development to stimulating That is it should be "cross-cutting" and touch upon virtually all spheres that are somehow or other connected with electric transport"¹³⁰. Perhaps, this is the reason why other topical high-level documents also talk about the development of electric transport in Belarus. In particular, the State Programme "Energy Saving" for 2021-2025 envisages the development of production of electric vehicles, components and charging infrastructure for them in the industrial sector, while the transport sector envisages "development of electric vehicles, hybrid cars and charging network, electrification of urban passenger transport to replace the use of hydrocarbon fuels"¹³¹ in order to achieve the set goals.

As far as the research component of this topic is concerned, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus outlined its plans to create an experimental production of Belarusian electric cars as early as January 2021. The fact is that domestic scientists are working on middle class models designed for a wide range of consumers. We are talking about production of several models at once: cargo, passenger car, minivan, even a sports car. Characteristically, "it is not Geely, it is a fundamentally different electric car with all-Belarusian stuffing. <...> Several battery models - lithium-ion, graphene and graphene-lead - are being developed for the Belarusian electric car"¹³², " so as to have a range of 500 kilometres.

130 The share of public electric transport in Belarus wants to increase to 30% by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9713>

131 State Programme "Engergo-Saving" for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - - C. 15.

132_The National Academy of Sciences expects to set up experimental production of Belarusian electric cars [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nan-rasschityvaet-sozdat-eksperimentalnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-elektromobilej-425463-2021/>

In this regard, it should be noted that at the exhibition of achievements and the most significant results of scientific, technical and innovation activities "Days of Belarusian Science - 2021" held in Minsk in January 2021, it was already possible to see a mock sample of an electric car Academic Electro of the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering, designed for transportation in closed areas, that is, without access to public roads, and designed for two passengers on the open area. "The maximum speed of the electric car is 50 km/h. The frame-and-panel type of the body enables production in small batches according to customer requirements."¹³³ . Another peculiarity of this novelty is that the power part of its cabin does not contain metal elements: it is made of fiberglass plastic. In addition, the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences is already implementing a number of joint projects with several Belarusian enterprises. Thus, "an electric truck, which will be equipped with an electric propulsion system developed at the institute, is being developed together with MAZ¹³⁴. And the result of the work with Minsk Tractor Plant will be an electric ice-pouring machine, the first production run of which is scheduled for 2021. As for the production of electric cars based on BELJI, in 2021 five hundred to one thousand electric cars were planned to be delivered to Belarus "to study the demand, understand the possibilities and then make all the necessary preparations for the production. We should expect the electric cars closer to the second half of

133 New drone and electric vehicle - the National Academy of Sciences will present about 200 developments at the Science Day exhibition [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/novyj-bespilotnik-i-elektromobil-nan-predstavit-okolo-200-razrobotok-na-vystavke-ko-dnju-nauki-425608-2021/>

134 Electric trucks, electric combines and electric cars - what Belarusian scientists are working on [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/elektrogruzoviki-elektrokombajny-i-legkovye-elektromobili-nad-chem-rabotajut-belorusskie-uchenye-426333-2021/>

the year"¹³⁵ . In short, the measures being taken in Belarus to build its own electric cars promised to yield results as soon as possible.

Finally, in April 2021, the Republic of Belarus already finally approved the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport for 2021-2025, which aims to achieve key objectives such as

- 1) the creation of a new branch of engineering - the production of electric vehicles;
- 2) ensuring that the number of electrically-powered vehicles in use is increased;
- 3) expansion of electric transport infrastructure; 4) minimisation of negative impacts on the environment.

To this end, the integrated programme has seven objectives:

- 1) Establishment of a system of scientific support, including that which ensures the scientific and technological security of the country in the field of mechanical engineering;
- 2) organising the production of electric vehicles, their basic components and infrastructure elements and their maximum localisation;
- 3) creating a set of institutional conditions for the development of electric transport based on a systematic provision for its standardisation, conformity assessment and regulatory support;
- 4) Creation of electric transport infrastructure, including EHS, with its optimal spatial layout and taking into account the specificity of consumers (public passenger and freight transport, personal electric transport);
- 5) coordinating government action for the development of electric transport and its infrastructure on a national and regional scale;

135_"BELJI will study demand for electric cars and prepare for production - Parkhomchik [Electronic resource]. - – 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beldzhi-izuchit-spros-na-elektromobili-i-budet-gotovitsja-k-proizvodstvu-parhomchik-423890-2021/>

optimising investment in the creation of production and acquisition of electric vehicles;

6) developing and implementing measures to stimulate the development of electric transport, from research, acquisition and operation to recycling and reuse, including to attract investment for the accelerated development of electric transport;

7) minimising economic, environmental, social and other risks.

Two subprogrammes - "Production and technological base for electric vehicles" and "Creation of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles" - provide for the creation of scientific groundwork and a production base to increase the number of electric-powered vehicles in use, as well as a developed network of electric filling stations that will ensure the smooth movement of electric vehicles throughout Belarus. Among the activities planned by the complex programme we would like to mention the creation of an experimental production of electric vehicles, as well as "the exemption of road users with electric cars from the fee for the use of car parks, which are in public ownership"¹³⁶. In addition, this type of transport is exempt from transport tax in the Republic of Belarus. More precisely, "owners of vehicles of category M1, M1G (electric cars and SUVs) driven solely by electric motor will not have to pay transport tax. This exemption is granted until 31 December 2025"¹³⁷.

Of course, all these measures create good conditions for the growth in the number of electric cars, which by mid-March 2021 already numbered more than two and a half thousand in our country. At the same time, "the volume of electricity consumption by charging stations for electric vehicles in Belarus almost doubled in 2020 compared to 2019, to

136 On the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Electric Transport up to 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://government.by/ru/content/9804>

137 Tax Ministry: electric cars exempt from transport tax until the end of 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mns-elektromobili-osvobozhdeny-ot-transportnogo-naloga-do-kontsa-2025-goda-434965-2021/>

7.7 million kWh¹³⁸ up to two hundred new users are now registered on the EHS network. And "there are an average of 250 charging sessions every day at the stations, and in the last two months [January and February] the total number has exceeded 15,000"¹³⁹. The comprehensive programme contains serious measures to develop the EPS network. If now the network consists of 288 FFSs, by the end of 2021 there should be already 471 of them. In the second phase (2022-2025), 466 will be added, and in the third (2026-2030) another 407.

Another important issue on this topic is that low-cost Chinese electric cars continue to be particularly popular with Belarusian consumers today, due to the fact that domestic models simply do not exist yet. The comprehensive programme to this end states that "we plan to master mass production of electric cars at BELJI and produce 1,000 electric cars based on the "Geometry C" model in 2021". It is also planned¹⁴⁰ to set up experimental assembly production of single units and small batches of electric cars of various modifications at the "United Institute of Machine Building of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus" on the basis of the maximum use of components and assemblies of Belarusian production.

As for other types of electric-powered transport vehicles, a very extensive development programme has been outlined. In particular, production of electric buses for passenger transportation at airports with Belarusian-made power plant components is to be mastered by the end of

138 Electricity consumption by electric vehicle charging stations in Belarus almost doubled in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: https://atom.belta.by/ru/news_ru/view/elektropotreblenie-zarjadnymi-stantsijami-dlja-eklektrotransporta-v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-vyroslo-pochti-vdvoe-11190/

139 The number of electric cars in Belarus exceeded 2.5 thousand [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-eklektromobilej-v-belarusi-prevysilo-25-tys-431822-2021/>.

140 Comprehensive programme of electric transport development for 2021-2025. - Minsk, 2021. - - C. 20.

2023. The Unified Institute of Mechanical Engineering together with the Minsk Automobile Plant will create a sample electric truck with a payload capacity of about four and a half tons, and with Belkommunmash - up to ten tons. The fleet of the Belarusian electric transport is also expected to include a domestic electric rubbish truck. Finally, the Belarusian Automobile Plant "within the frames of the program intends to create a sample of battery-operated dump truck. The gross weight of such a vehicle will be 176 tonnes and its payload will be 90 tonnes¹⁴¹

As we can see, the increased use of electric vehicles in Belarus should become one of the most promising development areas already in the coming years, which will not only help to reduce the use of imported energy, but will also improve the environmental situation and ensure the use of the capacity of the Belarusian energy system.

141 Electric dump truck, electric garbage truck and electric vehicle of Belarusian production are planned to be created by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <http://doingbusiness.by/elektrosamosval-elektromusorovoz-i-elektromobil-belorusskogo-proizvodstva-planiruetsya-sozdat-do-2025-goda>

Belarus: building on development new export markets

The Republic of Belarus is taking active steps to tackle one of the country's economic development priorities, stipulated in the government's 2025 activity programme - "commodity and country diversification of exports, which should secure increase of Belarus' supplies up to \$50 billion in 2025, as well as promotion of goods and services to new markets"¹⁴². This is evidenced by the statistics for the first quarter of 2021. Particularly, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services increased by more than 17% over the period, coming close to \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million. At the same time, "exports of goods increased by 24.9% to \$8.023 billion <...>. Services exports increased by 3.8% to \$2.287 billion"¹⁴³.

Gomel Region is among the regions that have significantly expanded the geography of supplies and increased exports since the beginning of 2021. In January-February 2021, the region shipped goods to foreign markets for USD 745 million, or USD 200 million more than a year earlier. In this, "enterprises of the region exported 39% of the goods to the European Union, 33% to the EEU and 21% of all exports <...>. Exports to China in the first two months amounted to \$20 million, which is more than in the previous year"¹⁴⁴ exported more than \$25 million worth of seamless pipes in the first quarter of 2021, mostly to Russia and European countries. In particular, more than \$10 million worth of pipes

142 Zalesky, B. The goal is a trajectory of growth. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. -- C. 113.

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

144 In January-February, the Gomel region shipped \$745 million worth of products for export [Electronic resource]. - - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-v-janvare-fevrale-otguzila-na-eksport-produktsii-na-745-mln-439081-2021/>

was supplied to the market of the European Union alone. "This is almost twice as much as during the same period last year. The products were shipped to 10 countries in the European region. Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Finland showed the highest growth in consumption in the reporting period"¹⁴⁵ .

Another enterprise in the Gomel region, the Rogachev Dairy Factory, is expanding the geography of its supplies in 2021. In particular, the first batch of its products was shipped to Libya. "Several containers of concentrated milk were shipped at the enterprise in April"¹⁴⁶ further deliveries to that market is being resolved, as the company's own production in that North African country does not fully meet the needs of the domestic market. In April 2021, for the first time, Rogachev Dairy products were also shipped to Jordan, in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. It turned out that "dairy products are quite widely used in Jordanian cuisine. The country has its own production of condensed milk, but to meet the need for this product in all spheres, it is also imported from abroad"¹⁴⁷ . Belarusian producers have tried to take advantage of this interest.

By the way, many other Belarusian agricultural and food producers did a good job in the first quarter of 2021 in terms of expanding the geography of supplies, increasing exports by more than five percent to USD 1.5 billion. "Belarusian food products were supplied to 88 countries

145_BMZ increases pipe exports by a third in January-March [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-na-tret-uvulichil-eksport-trub-v-janvare-marte-438662-2021/>

146 Rogachev ICC shipped the first batch of products to Libya [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rogachevskij-mkk-otguzil-pervuju-partiju-produktsii-v-liviju-440966-2021/>

147_Dairy canned products from Rogachev MCC shipped to Jordan for the first time [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/molochnye-konservy-rogachevskogo-mkk-vpervye-otguzili-v-iordaniju-441150-2021/>

in January-March (83 countries in the same period in 2020)¹⁴⁸. Overall, exports to non-CIS countries - Asia and Oceania, America and the Caribbean, Africa and China - increased by almost half.

Another interesting example in this context is the Grodno Region. The volume of deliveries of the region's enterprises to foreign markets grew by 16 percent in three months and amounted to 679 million dollars, resulting in a foreign trade surplus of more than 260 million dollars. In addition, "in the first quarter of 2021 goods from Grodno Region were exported to 84 countries worldwide. In the same period last year they were exported to 60 countries¹⁴⁹. Residents of the free economic zone "Grodnoinvest" that exports production of the chemical, wood processing, textile, machine building and agricultural industries have made a considerable contribution to achieving such figures. In January-March this year they increased their foreign shipments by 23 percent to \$280 million on account of the increase in shipments of polycarbonate acids, fertilizers, wood boards, plywood, furniture, rapeseed oil. In the post-Soviet space, their main recipients were the Russian and Ukrainian markets, and in the European Union, not only Poland, but also Germany, France, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania and the Netherlands. As for the "far arc" countries, exports there "amounted to \$6.4 million, which is 3.8 times more than in the first quarter of 2020. Supplies of Belarusian products to Vietnam, Egypt, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and Turkey increased significantly¹⁵⁰. All of these facts show

148_Belarusian agricultural exports grew by 5.3% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-i-kvartale-vyros-na-53-440045-2021/>

149_Grodno region has expanded its supply geography and increased exports by 16% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-rasshirila-geografiju-postavok-i-uvelicila-eksport-na-16-441068-2021>

150_Exports by residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest increased by 23% [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-vozros-na-23-439997-2021/>

that Belarusian manufacturers are laying a good foundation for the successful fulfillment of the five-year objective to develop the export component of the national economy, which is not easy to do in the current environment.

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Belarus: free economic zones as a tool to increase exports

Commodity and country export diversification is one of the most important objectives for the development of the Belarusian economy in the next five years - until 2025. Figures show how it is being implemented in 2021. In the first quarter of this year, the foreign trade turnover of goods and services of the Republic of Belarus "grew by more than 17 percent, approaching \$20 billion. And the surplus for the Belarusian side amounted to \$828 million¹⁵¹. The free economic zones (FEZs) operating in Belarus make a major contribution to achieving this objective.

For example, **FEZ Grodnoinvest** was able to earn a net profit exceeding one hundred million Belarusian rubles in January-March 2021 due to the increase in supplies of residents' products to foreign markets, which is the best indicator among FEZs in all six regions of Belarus. At the same time, "in the first quarter, exports increased by 23% and reached \$280 million. All in all, over 70% of the output is exported"¹⁵². It should be noted that today the residents of this FEZ include 75 companies with investments from 40 countries, which are successfully implementing investment projects in wood processing and furniture production, machine engineering and metalworking, food, chemical and light industries, and agriculture.

In the first quarter of 2021 the residents of **FEZ "Vitebsk"** increased their deliveries to foreign markets by almost 30%, sending

¹⁵¹ \Zallessky, B.L. With reliance on the development of new export markets / B.L. Zallessky // Materials of the XVII International scientific and practical conference "Trends of modern science - 2021", May 30 - June 7, 2021: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. -- C. 17.

¹⁵² Net profit of residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in the first quarter exceeded Br100 mln [Electronic resource]. -- 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chistaja-pribyl-rezidentov-sez-grodnoinvest-v-i-kvartale-prevysila-br100-mln-442835-2021>

exported goods worth almost 165 million dollars, which amounted to one third of export index of the entire Vitebsk region. The recipients of this production are business partners and consumers of the FEZ in 62 countries, including 22 countries of the European Union. For example, "sales to Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and France have doubled, while sales to another 9 EU member states have increased by 10% or more. In addition, exports by residents to some far-abroad countries, in particular to southern African states, have risen by almost 20%, to India by 5 times and to Israel by more than 6 times¹⁵³. As for promoting the products of FEZ residents to new markets, we can see countries located on different continents. In Asia it is Afghanistan, where fiber-optic cables were shipped to for the first time, and China, where fur skins were shipped to. In Europe, it was France, where Vitebsk-made electric cables were shipped. In the Americas, Mexico (fiberglass products) and Chile (linen) became the recipients of goods of BMS Vitebsk residents.

It is worth mentioning that currently 56 investment projects are being implemented in this FEZ in 16 sectors with participation of investors from 15 countries, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the UK, Israel, Cyprus and Spain. In the first quarter of 2021, three new residents registered here with projects to develop the production of special hydraulic press equipment, construction materials and modernization of facilities for the production of import-substituting components for agricultural machinery and cars. "The projects attracted \$12.2 million of direct foreign investment on a net basis, which amounted to more than 40% of the total investment in

153 Residents of the Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk" increased exports by almost 30% in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-narastili-eksport-pochti-na-30-za-pervyj-kvartal-442145-2021/>

Vitebsk Oblast"¹⁵⁴. And business plans for several more projects are under development, which are expected to be registered in the first half of 2021.

The **FEZ Gomel-Raton** is also actively developing its export component, where "the share of deliveries outside Belarus amounted to 70% of total sales revenues. <...> Goods of FEZ residents are supplied to the markets of 64 countries. Russia, Ukraine, Poland, China, Lithuania have the largest share in exports"¹⁵⁵ capital participation from 16 countries of the world. Thanks to their activities, the foreign trade turnover of the free economic zone increased by 19 percent in the first quarter of 2021, providing a positive balance for Gomel. The active attraction of investments - almost 160 million Belarusian rubles - in the implementation of projects, which is two and a half times higher than in the first quarter of 2020, played no small part in this.

By the end of this year, the FEZ expects to increase production volumes by 18.5 percent through modernization of existing facilities and registration of new residents with promising investment projects. For instance, "the Alkopak company is building a new building in which it plans to produce new medical products. "Polikap is working on a project to produce disposable tableware made of cellulose"¹⁵⁶. Residents such as Veza-G and Multipak will also expand their production. MIRTEK-Engineering LLC, which produces energy metering devices, has already been supplying more than half of its output to foreign markets - Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and European countries. Recently, it has started

154 Ibid.

155_The residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton increased production of industrial products by almost a third in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-pochti-na-tret-uvlichili-proizvodstvo-promproduktcii-v-i-kvartale-441862-2021/>

156_The residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton intend to increase output by 18.5% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-namereny-uvlichit-objem-proizvodstva-na-185-v-2021-godu-434576-2021/>

outsourcing manufacturing of SMD and DIP components - a promising direction, which is relevant to all companies involved in the production of electronic modules and assemblies. It should be noted that "in 2020 \$230 million will be invested in FEZ Gomel-Raton" ¹⁵⁷. FEZ plans for 2021 are no less ambitious. Their successful implementation will allow both this and other Belarusian regions to continue increasing their export component, using the FEZ as an effective tool for accelerated development of the territories.

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157 FEZs are a driver of territorial development - Asluk [Electronic resource]. - - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-javlajutsja-drajverom-razvitija-territorij-asljuk-434551-2021/>

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