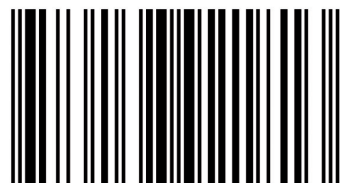


## The boundaries of sustainable partnership. Part IV

The Concept of information security of the country has been developed in the Republic of Belarus. The Concept reflects modern challenges and threats forming in the information sphere and posing danger to the constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state, including manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, blurring of national sovereignty, instability of information infrastructure. Proceeding from the fact that the information sphere has already acquired a key importance for any state and every person, the task in Belarus is to expand the sphere of influence of domestic mass media and take measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting, as well as public trust in mass media. However, despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a lack of content that would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience, one of the reasons is the so-called fake news. The role of a deterrent in the fight against them should be taken by the authoritative media and professional journalists, based on their competence. This book has been translated with Artificial Intelligence.



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partnership. Part IV**

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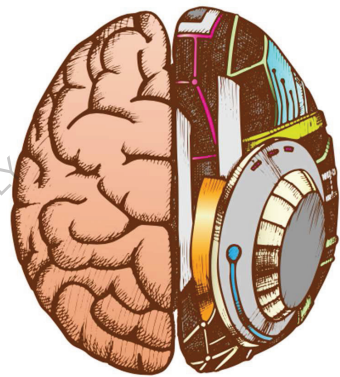
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**The boundaries of sustainable partnership. Part IV**

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## **Belarus: from the Sustainable Development Goals - for the betterment of human wellbeing**

In January 2019, Minsk hosted the first National Forum on Sustainable Development, where over four hundred participants reviewed the national experience of Belarus in achieving sustainable development goals, the progress of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the country until 2030, as well as the specifics of the preparation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period until 2035.

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

Six months later, in May 2017, the institutional framework for managing the implementation of the plans was established: firstly, the post of national coordinator for achieving the sustainable development goals was established; secondly, a national architecture for managing the implementation of the SDG was built, which includes the Council for Sustainable Development, parliamentary, regional and partner groups for sustainable development that ensure effective interaction between the public sector and public organizations, and scientific and technical experts. Once the Council for Sustainable Development has begun its work, the Council for Sustainable Development has assigned each of the 17 CSDs to the state authorities of Belarus, whose competence includes solving the relevant issues. As a result, "all involved government agencies are part of four sectoral blocks: economy, ecology, social sphere and monitoring"<sup>1</sup>.

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

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

on building partnerships between countries and organizations in the framework of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. As a result, in the index of global sustainable development goals for 2018, which is calculated for 156 countries on the basis of a hundred indicators related to the implementation of the LSD, Belarus ranked 23rd, receiving "an assessment above the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region"<sup>2</sup>. The first national forum, held in January 2019 in Minsk, organically complemented the comprehensive work being done in the country to achieve the CSD.

One of the conditions for successful implementation of sustainable development goals in Belarus is national legislation. In 2018, the Belarusian parliament adopted a number of laws aimed at achieving the CSD. These include specially protected natural areas, production and circulation of organic products. In 2019, draft laws relating to health and the rights of persons with disabilities will be considered. It is also expected that the Sustainable Development Goals will become an integral part of a country's economic and social development, with a view to achieving \$100 billion in gross domestic product by 2025 and "joining the group of countries with average per capita incomes at purchasing power parity above the world average"<sup>3</sup>.

Another important condition for successful achievement of the SDGs is to synchronize the work of regional groups, as "sustainable development of a country as a whole is possible only if all its regions are sustainable"<sup>4</sup>. That is why territorial development plans should be proposed, first of all, by representatives of local government bodies taking into account the needs and interests of citizens. The first National Sustainable Development Forum noted the positive experience of Brest and Mogilev regions in this regard. And today we are talking about overcoming the diversity of the movement to organize this work in other regions of Belarus.

Finally, the country's media have an important role to play in translating the main provisions of Agenda 2030 into national policy documents, sectorial and regional programmes, and "there is still much to be done to ensure a broad public understanding of the SDGs and the role of each individual in achieving them"<sup>5</sup>. It should be noted that the Ministry of Information of Belarus has already taken the initiative to create an

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Shchetkina: the work of regional groups to achieve the CSD in Belarus should be synchronized [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/schetkina-rabotu-regionalnyh-grupp-po-dostizheniju-tsuv-v-belarusi-nuzhno-sinhronizirovat-333887-2019/>

<sup>5</sup> The media will form a separate group in work on achieving the CSD in Belarus - Shchetkina [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-sostavjat-otdelnuju-gruppu-v-rabote-nad-dostizheniem-tsuv-v-belarusi-schetkina-333874-2019/>

additional group consisting of journalists deeply immersed in this topic to conduct informational work on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the national architecture of management of the CSD achievement.

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## Belarus: in the fight against the fake news competence and professionalism will prevail

In the Republic of Belarus the Concept of information security of the country has been developed, which reflects modern challenges and threats, forming in the information sphere and posing a threat to the constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state, among which "manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, blurring of national sovereignty, instability of information infrastructure" are highlighted<sup>6</sup>. Proceeding from the fact that the information sphere has already acquired key importance for any state and any individual, Belarus aims to expand the sphere of influence of the national mass media and take "measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting, as well as public trust in the official media"<sup>7</sup>.

The fact is that in the course of the recent "Big Talk with the President," which took place in early March 2019, the head of the Belarusian state drew attention to the fact that "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a shortage of content that would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience, one of the reasons is the so-called fake news. They instantly spread, capture the audience, excite the thoughts"<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, the role of a deterrent in the fight against fake news should be taken up today:

- 1) authoritative **mass media**;
- 2) professional **journalists** who unconditionally observe the laws of ethics and moral norms in the media space and strive for maximum accuracy and objectivity in their work;
- 3) **representatives of the expert community**, who by virtue of their competence have yet to occupy a special place in the media.

The fact that traditional media should become a powerful unifying factor in the fight against fake information and unprofessional approaches to the coverage of current

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<sup>6</sup> Matveev, V. Information security concept of Belarus is planned to be approved soon / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/kontseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belarusi-planiruet-sja-utverdit-v-blizhajshee-vremja-339646-2019/>

<sup>7</sup> Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/)

<sup>8</sup> Meeting with representatives of public and expert community, Belarusian and foreign mass media "Big talk with the President" [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/)



external and internal issues was stated in resolution XIII of the Belarusian International Media Forum "Partnership for the Future: a digital agenda for the media space", which was held in Minsk in September 2018. The resolution of the forum then stressed that preserving the authority and position of traditional media - print and electronic - is extremely important, since it is these subjects of the information field are able to fully "bear responsibility to society for the quality, completeness and reliability of information provided, have the ability to provide a professional approach to the creation and dissemination of information products"<sup>9</sup>.

The real practice shows that trust to the media by a wide audience arises when the media competently analyze the events taking place in the society and promptly give comprehensive answers to urgent questions that appear in the readers, viewers and listeners. In other words, it is possible and necessary to minimize the threats of negative information impact in the form of fairy news by creating your own interesting, relevant and true content, so that "any fairy can be confidently answered and destroyed to the root"<sup>10</sup>. It is clear that without close and constant interaction with representatives of the expert community, media structures are unlikely to be able to fully solve such a large-scale task.

To strengthen coordination between the media and expert communities in this area, it seems that it is time to start forming professional **media expert** pools in the most important areas of Belarusian foreign and domestic policy. Professionalism in information sphere in this case should be understood as qualitative and interesting presentation of materials, skilful technical organization of creative process, availability of expert opinions and analytics on the basis of reliable data. We see something similar, for example, already in the course of implementation of global sustainable development goals in Belarus, where, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, a media expert group is being created in the national architecture for managing the achievement of the CSD to conduct informational work in the media space on all 17 sustainable development goals.

Another interesting example in this direction is the Plan of Joint Action for 2019 on the coverage of the export potential of Belarus in the mass media, signed in March this year by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote "the dissemination of objective

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<sup>9</sup> The media need to unite against fake information and unprofessionalism - media forum resolution [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/smi-nuzhno-objedinitjsja-v-borbe-s-fejkovoj-informatsiej-i-neprofessionalizmom-rezoljutsija-mediaforuma-317622-2018/>

<sup>10</sup> Pavel Legky: the main tool in the fight against inaccurate information on the Internet is people's trust [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/pavel-legkij-glavnyj-instrument-v-borbe-s-nedostovernoj-informatsiej-v-internete-doverie-ljudej-317648-2018/>

information on the development of national exports, strengthening international contacts of Belarusian enterprises and the entry of their products into new markets<sup>11</sup>. The basic component of this media-expert interaction should be a series of seminars for journalists working on foreign economic issues in order not only to identify the key problems of Belarusian export development, but also generally to promote the presence of current economic issues in the Belarusian mass media at all levels - from central to regional. Recall that the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 includes among its eight main tasks the requirement to **promote export culture** in the form of strengthening the importance of exports for the development of the country and society in the mass consciousness and increasing its priority. In this regard, the adoption by the Ministry of Information and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of a plan of joint action to highlight Belarus' export potential in the media sector is an extremely important and necessary step.

In this context, the topic of interaction between media and expert communities at the regional level, including the implementation of the policy of international cooperation of the Belarusian regions, deserves a separate discussion. The fact is that "regional media occupy their unique niche in which neither national nor international media can compete"<sup>12</sup>. But at the same time, "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is still a lack of content that would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience"<sup>13</sup>. And this is at a time when the thematic spectrum, in which the Belarusian regional press is to be built, has been expanding with exceptional speed in recent years. These are only the areas that underline the geography of international cooperation of the regions of Belarus, which have emerged in recent years and which should be adequately reflected in the regional media in order to contribute to the effective solution of the problems arising here:

1) development of large-scale economic integration with the regions of the Eurasian Economic Union countries and especially with the Russian Federation constituent entities within the Union State, as well as with the regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States;

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<sup>11</sup> The Ministry of Information and the BelCCI signed a plan of joint actions for media coverage of Belarusian exports [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/mininform-i-beltp-podpisali-plan-sovmestnyh-dejstvij-po-osvescheniju-v-smi-belorusskogo-eksporta-339703-2019/>

<sup>12</sup> Digitalization contributes to raising the level of regional media - Easy [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsifrovizatsija-sposobstvuet-povysheniju-urovnja-regionalnyh-smi-legkij-317725-2018/>

<sup>13</sup> The trust of the audience can be maintained by the district editions of Melnikov [Electronic Resource] with exceptional truthfulness. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/doverie-auditorii-rajonnye-izdanija-mogut-podderzivat-iskljuchitelnoj-pravdivostiju-melnikova-338797-2019/>

2) expansion of comprehensive cooperation with the regions of the European Union and especially within the Eastern Partnership initiative, as well as with the regions of the Neighbourhood Belt countries - Poland, Lithuania, Latvia;

(3) Deepening cooperation with regions of countries participating in the One Belt, One Way mega-project, and especially with provinces, autonomous regions and cities of the People's Republic of China;

4) further intensification of trade and economic relations with the regions of the "far arc" countries - South-East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America - and especially with those regions where there is considerable potential for mutually beneficial interregional cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus assumes that the role of regional mass media will be increasingly important, since "successful development of any region depends on the information space as a whole, on the ability to quickly adapt to the rapidly growing market for communication technologies<sup>14</sup>. That is why here too, today, information strategies specific to international regional issues are required that can significantly expand their scope of influence through the high quality of the media product created in them.

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<sup>14</sup> The role of local media in the socio-economic development of the regions will be discussed at a national meeting [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/rol-mestnyh-smi-v-sotsialno-ekonomicheskoy-razvitiy-regionov-obsudjat-na-respublikanskom-soveschaniy-337842-2019/>

## **Belarus: prospects for attracting foreign direct investment will define the strategy**

Back in 2018 the Republic of Belarus, together with international experts, government agencies, scientific and business community, began work on a draft Strategy to attract foreign direct investment until 2035. At the preliminary stage of preparation of the document the analysis of national legislation, law enforcement practice, institutional factors, experience of foreign countries in the field of investment has already been conducted. According to the intention of the developers, the strategy should define long-term goals, objectives, principles, directions and expected results of attracting foreign investment, taking into account the priorities of socio-economic development of Belarus. Thus, it defines as long-term goals the improvement of the investment climate, increase in inflow of direct foreign investments into the country's economy, development of infrastructure, including with the use of the mechanism of public-private partnership, increase in efficiency of investment activity. The implementation of the strategy is envisaged in four phases: 1) 2019-2020; 2) 2021-2025; 3) 2025-2030; 4) 2031-2035. Thus "under each stage the road map of actions in which responsible state bodies, terms of realization of actions and their results will be defined" will be developed<sup>15</sup>.

The implementation of this strategy should result in Belarus becoming one of the first thirty countries in the world with the best business climate in the World Bank's Doing Business rating, as well as in being included in: 1) the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Rating; 2) the World Competitiveness Rating of the International Institute for Management Development; 3) the Ernst & Young International Index of Country Attractiveness for Venture and Direct Investment Funds.

High-tech and knowledge-intensive industries, logistics, transport and digital infrastructure, the financial sector, the social sphere - through public-private partnership projects - and the tourism industry are considered as promising areas for attracting foreign direct investment in the Belarusian economy. In addition, it is planned "to form a package of additional preferences for the establishment of industrial

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<sup>15</sup> NAIP proposes to discuss a draft strategy to attract foreign direct investment in Belarus [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/naip-predlagaet-obsudit-proekt-strategii-privlechenija-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-belarus-337734-2019/>

micro, small and medium enterprises by domestic businesses and foreign investors in areas with difficult economic situation<sup>16</sup>.

The first "swallow" in this regard can be considered a presidential decree "On the development of Orsha district of Vitsebsk voblast," which has seriously spurred investors' interest in the region. In particular, after the decree was issued, "four investors immediately appealed to the district executive committee with proposals for the implementation of various projects at the production site of the former plant of reinforced concrete products. <...> Nonwovens, pellet and furniture production is in progress. Orsha forestry enterprise is implementing a plan to organize new production with deep processing of wood, including the construction of a workshop for the production of pellets<sup>17</sup>. In addition, negotiations have already been held here with representatives of a Chinese logistics company to establish a joint venture in the area.

Using the planned tools for strategy implementation, Belarus intends to double the volume of foreign direct investment on a net basis by 2025. In the language of figures, this means that in the first phase of the strategy - in 2019-2020 - their volume should be at least one and a half billion dollars annually, and in the second phase - by 2025 - three billion dollars. It should be reminded that in 2018, foreign investors invested \$10.8 billion in the real sector of the Belarusian economy, except for banks, the bulk of which went to business entities of Russia, Britain and Cyprus. At the same time, "inflow of direct foreign investments amounted to \$8.5 billion, or 78.7% of all foreign investments"<sup>18</sup>. And there has been a rapid growth of costs for the purchase of machinery and equipment, including such major investment projects as modernization of oil refineries, construction of a nuclear power plant, projects "Belaruskali" and "Slavkali".

During the hearings in the Belarusian parliament on the legal and practical aspects of improving the investment climate in Belarus, held in November 2018, it was noted that so far the structure of foreign direct investment demonstrates the desire of foreign capital to continue "to prevail in the rapidly recouped sectors of the economy. First of all, it is trade and service sector. Our task is to gradually reorient ourselves towards the

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<sup>16</sup> Belarus intends to double the attraction of foreign direct investment by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-namerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/>

<sup>17</sup> Bogacheva, O. Decree on development of Orsha district increased interest of investors to the region - Isachenko / O. Bogacheva // [Electron resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/regions/view/ukaz-o-razviti-orsanskogo-rajona-povysil-interes-investorov-k-regionu-isachenko-336516-2019/>

<sup>18</sup> In 2018, foreign investors invested \$10.8 billion in the economy of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/inostrannye-investory-v-2018-godu-vlozhili-v-ekonomiku-belarusi-108-mlrd-336490-2019/>

industrial sector as well"<sup>19</sup>. For this purpose it is planned to reformat the work of the National Agency of Investment and Privatization to make it a full-fledged "one window" for investors, as well as to pay much more attention to investment policy at the level of regions, where it is necessary to prepare investment sites with ready transport and engineering infrastructure.

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<sup>19</sup> Belarus expects to double its investments by 2025 [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-udvoit-objem-investitsij-k-2025-godu-325426-2018/>

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## **Belarus: for economic development**

### **locally**

Back in 2015, the Republic of Belarus signed with the agencies of the United Nations system the United Nations Development Assistance Framework of Belarus for 2016-2020, which provides for activities in four strategic areas: 1. Inclusive, operational and accountable public administration. 2. Sustainable economic development. 3. Conservation of an enabling environment and sustainable use of natural potential based on green economic principles. 4. Sustainable human capital development: health, education, social inclusion and protection, integrated post-Chernobyl development. As a follow-up to this Framework, the UNDP Country Programme 2016-2020, endorsed by the Government of Belarus, was designed to contribute to: "(1) strengthening effective public administration systems based on the principles of sustainability, accountability and inclusiveness; (2) developing "green growth" taking into account the interests of all stakeholders; and (3) ensuring universal access to basic services for vulnerable groups<sup>20</sup>.

One of the concrete steps aimed at implementing these policy documents is the project "Support to local development in Belarus", which began in February 2014 and ended in October 2018 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme, aimed at uniting efforts and establishing a partnership of authorities and civic initiatives for the development of regions in accordance with their specificities. Within the framework of this project, which worked in three main directions - assessment of local needs and problems, capacity building of the local community to solve them, financing of local initiatives - a large-scale sociological study "My district" was carried out in all 118 districts of Belarus, the results of which were used as a basis for developing the concept of development of Belarusian regions.

At that time, as a result of the contest, 30 pilot districts were selected to adapt a territorially oriented approach to the development of territories. Representatives of local governments, NGOs and communities have gained new knowledge in strategic planning of local development, management of initiatives and building effective partnerships. Together, they developed territorial development passports for their districts to identify growth points and necessary actions for local development. As a result, some 250 local initiatives from all over Belarus have received financial support

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<sup>20</sup> General information on interaction with international financial organizations [Electronic resource]. - - 2015. - URL: [http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/obschaja\\_info\\_mfo-ru/#7z](http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/obschaja_info_mfo-ru/#7z)



from the European Union "in the areas of improving social services, infrastructure development, health care, complementary education, economic development, ecology, tourism and cultural heritage preservation"<sup>21</sup>. In total, support for these local initiatives exceeded three million Euros, and passports for territorially oriented development of 30 pilot districts were included in the state socio-economic development strategies at the regional level.

In November 2018, as part of the World Entrepreneurship Week held in Minsk, the Ministry of Economy and the United Nations Development Programme adopted a new project to support economic development in our country at the local level. This project is one of two components of the large-scale program "Stimulating the development of private initiative in Belarus", which is financed by the European Union under the European Neighbourhood Instrument. It aims to support economic initiative, competitiveness and innovation for inclusive local development. At the national level, within the framework of this project, which has a budget of \$9.5 million, it is planned to carry out activities aimed at stimulating dialogue on the issues of forming and supporting regional development, as well as those aimed at solving socially significant problems.

The peculiarity of the project is that in each oblast it was planned to identify two most problematic areas, where the level of deviation in key economic indicators from the national average is 40 percent and above. It is planned to form or expand the existing district public advisory councils, which will work out plans for the development of small and medium enterprises in the districts on the basis of the principle of joint participation. The inflow of entrepreneurs into production and farming will be given priority. Moreover, "if the project is successfully launched, the number of areas to receive financial assistance will be increased in two to three years"<sup>22</sup>.

In March 2019, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus held the first meeting of the coordination council of the international technical assistance project "Support to local economic development in the Republic of Belarus", at which 12 districts-participants - Berezovsky, Kobrinsky, Braslavsky, Orshansky, Braginsky, Zhlobinsky, Khoyniksky, Lidsky, Borisov, Molodechno, Bykhovsky, Khotima - were named<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Promotion of local development in the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL:

<https://euprojects.by/ru/projects/regional-development/sodeystvie-razvitiyu-na-mestnom-urovne-v-respublike-belarus/>  
<sup>22</sup> The project to support economic development of 12 districts will be implemented in Belarus in the next three years [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proekt-po-podderzhke-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-12-rajo>

<sup>23</sup> Twelve regions of Belarus will receive international technical assistance for economic development [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/dvenadtsat-rajonov-belarusi-poluchat-mezhdunarodnuju-tehpomosch-dlja-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-338801-2019/>

## Belarus - Commonwealth of Independent States: regional cooperation will be expanding

In February 2019, Moscow hosted a meeting of the Working Group on the preparation of a draft Strategy for Economic Development of the Commonwealth of Independent States for the period up to 2030, which "approved the content of the first four sections of the draft Strategy"<sup>24</sup>. The fifth section is scheduled for discussion in April 2019. This fact shows that concrete work has begun in the CIS to update the Concept of Further Development of the CIS, adopted back in 2007, which should help identify common points of economic growth of the countries participating in this international association and implement plans to develop joint development priorities. It should be noted that the need to update the concept was discussed back in September 2018 at the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Dushanbe, where it was stated that "the potential of the CIS to develop regional cooperation has not been exhausted, and it is necessary to take appropriate steps for its implementation. This will contribute to the competitiveness of national economies, the welfare of citizens and the development of humanitarian ties"<sup>25</sup>.

In this regard, the Republic of Belarus has consistently advocated strengthening the economic potential of this association of post-Soviet countries, expanding their trade and production ties to consolidate the positive dynamics observed in the CIS: "Mutual trade within the CIS continues to grow. Last year [2017], the volume of trade turnover was 164 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 25%"<sup>26</sup>. In the first seven months of 2018 "the value of mutual trade increased by 15% (\$102 billion) compared to the previous year"<sup>27</sup>. And at the end of the year there was a 20% growth of mutual trade turnover of the CIS member states.

One of the effective levers for solving the tasks set in the community is the further intensification of inter-regional cooperation of its member states, which during the existence of this international organization has become an effective tool for interstate dialogue and an integral part of economic cooperation, because "it allows to strengthen

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<sup>24</sup> The meeting of the Working group on preparation of the draft Strategy of economic development of the Commonwealth of Independent States for the period until 2030 was held in Moscow [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.e-cis.info/news.php?id=21302>

<sup>25</sup> On results of the meeting of the Council of Heads of States of the Commonwealth of Independent States [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.e-cis.info/page.php?id=26493>

<sup>26</sup> Results of the meeting of the CIS Heads of Government Council and the list of adopted documents (November 2, 2018, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan) [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.e-cis.info/page.php?id=26548>

<sup>27</sup> Participation in the session of the Council of CIS Heads of Government [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8365>

the economic ties of the regions, optimize the placement of infrastructure facilities, joint efforts to start solving large-scale investment projects, increase efficiency.<sup>28</sup>

We would like to remind you that back in 2004 the Concept of Interregional and Border Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States was adopted. In October 2008, the legal framework for interregional cooperation in the post-Soviet space was supplemented by the Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In the same year 2008, the Council for Interregional and Border Cooperation of the CIS Member States was established to address the issues of "sustainable economic development of the regions and border areas, ensuring the security of citizens, strengthening friendship and good-neighbourliness"<sup>29</sup>. In May 2015, another important document appears in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States - the Concept of Interregional and Border Cooperation of the CIS Member States for the Period until 2020, which concludes that "interregional and cross-border cooperation has become an effective instrument of interstate dialogue"<sup>30</sup>. Finally, in September 2016, at the level of heads of state, the Convention on Interregional Cooperation of Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States was adopted, which contains a detailed list of possible areas of interaction between regions in the post-Soviet space.

The practical implementation of the provisions of all these documents led to the fact that by early 2018 the Register of signed international documents on interregional and cross-border cooperation within the CIS already had "about 5000 documents in trade and economic, scientific and technical and humanitarian spheres of interregional and cross-border cooperation, characterizing the current level of development of relations between the CIS member states"<sup>31</sup>. Among the most effective formats for realizing the potential of cooperation between regions of different countries in the post-Soviet space were such bilateral events as: Russian-Armenian and Russian-Azerbaijani interregional forums; Russian-Kyrgyz interregional conference; conference on interregional cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan; forums for interregional cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus. It should be added that in 2018 the Belarusian side also participated in the Fifth Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, as well as the first Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine.

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<sup>28</sup> The development of interregional and cross-border cooperation is the most important factor in the consolidation of the Commonwealth [Electronic Resource]. -- 2015. - URL: <http://www.cis.minsk.by/news.php?id=5355>

<sup>29</sup> Regulation on the Council for Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States Member States [Electronic Resource]. - - 2008. - URL: <http://cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=2520>

<sup>30</sup> The Concept of Interregional and Border Cooperation of the CIS Member States for the Period until 2020 [Electronic Resource]. -- 2015. - URL: <http://www.cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=5135>

<sup>31</sup> Development and activities of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2017 (collection of information and analytical materials, issue No 6). - Minsk, 2018. - - C. 75.

## **Belarus - Commonwealth of Independent States: from concept to program**

In October 2019, Ashgabat will host a meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, at which it is planned to present a new version of the concept of development of this international organization in the post-Soviet space. It is expected that this document will reflect the goals and objectives of the promising areas of cooperation between the CIS member states, first of all, economic cooperation. "It is planned to accentuate further deepening of interaction between the Commonwealth states, between the CIS and integration associations in the post-Soviet space. These are the main directions.<sup>32</sup>" It should be recalled that the Concept of Further Development of the CIS appeared back in October 2007 to help increase the practical benefits of this integration cooperation, preserve its multi-disciplinary nature, harmoniously develop all existing and new areas of cooperation of the post-Soviet countries. In April 2018, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CIS in Minsk, it was decided to begin work on updating the concept, not so much to radically change it, as to adapt it to modern realities and needs in the development of partnerships.

Apparently, one of such promising areas of cooperation in the post-Soviet space may become cooperation in the innovation sphere. Back in October 2018, the International Fund for Innovation Development of the Commonwealth of Independent States was established in Minsk for the practical implementation of the decisions of the highest authorities of the CIS on the development of the interstate innovation space, which should ensure the formation of a new technological platform of the full cycle interstate innovation cooperation for large-scale implementation of innovative developments. Combining a number of relatively heterogeneous, but interconnected in the context of prospective activities of the functions of several interstate institutions - financial, expert, consulting, implementation - the new formation will allow to create "the necessary foundations for structural growth and collectives of future independent institutions in the main areas of activity, as well as to build the foundations for systemic interaction between them<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> The new version of the CIS development concept will be presented at the summit in Ashgabat [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/novuju-redaktsiju-konseptsii-razvitiya-sng-predstavjat-na-sammite-v-ashhabade-345096-2019/>

<sup>33</sup> Minsk has established the International Fund for Innovative Development of the CIS [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. URL:

In April 2019, St. Petersburg hosted a meeting of the Interstate Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation. This council was established in November 2009 to coordinate the science, technology and innovation policy as a whole and its individual components in the CIS, as well as to create financial and economic mechanisms in the CIS to support joint programmes and projects in this area. The meeting in St. Petersburg summarized the main results of the Interstate Program of Innovation Cooperation of the CIS member states for the period up to 2020, designed to unite the intellectual, scientific and technological, production and financial potential of the CIS countries. And these results show a considerable potential for interaction in the innovation sphere in the post-Soviet space. Suffice it to say that "more than 300 scientists from Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are involved in the implementation of the projects of the current program<sup>34</sup>. And one of the main results of the mentioned program can be considered the fact that during the years of its implementation the normative and methodological base of innovative cooperation of the CIS countries was formed, which allowed to achieve certain results.

In particular, only Belarusian organizations have already fully implemented four out of nine pilot projects: 1) on the development and creation of pilot industrial technologies and pilot replicable technological lines for the production of particularly wear-resistant cutting and drilling tools based on nanodiamonds; 2) on the development of an expert system for the rehabilitation of geological environment contaminated with oil products based on self-organization principles for the territories of the CIS countries; 3) on magnetoelectric interactions in the structures of ferromagnetic and piezoelectric materials.

Belarus is also actively involved in the development of the draft Interstate Program of Innovation Cooperation of the CIS countries for the period until 2030. In particular, at the meeting in St. Petersburg, she presented proposals in this document "on the expediency of preserving the implementation of interstate projects related to the commercialization of scientific developments and mastering the production of new high-tech products as the main practical component of innovative cooperation of the CIS states<sup>35</sup>. In addition, Belarus supports the inclusion in the draft of a new programme of measures aimed at organizing the digital transformation of the economy,

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[http://gknt.gov.by/news/2018/v\\_minske\\_sozdali\\_mezhdunarodnyy\\_fond\\_innovatsionnogo\\_razvitiya\\_sng/?special\\_verse=N](http://gknt.gov.by/news/2018/v_minske_sozdali_mezhdunarodnyy_fond_innovatsionnogo_razvitiya_sng/?special_verse=N)

<sup>34</sup> The draft interstate program of innovation cooperation in the CIS until 2030 will be discussed in St. Petersburg [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/proekt-mezhgosprogrammy-innovatsionnogosotrudnichestva-v-sng-do-2030-goda-obsudjat-v-sankt-peterburge-345290-2019/>

<sup>35</sup> The draft interstate program of innovation cooperation in the CIS until 2030 will be discussed in Turkmenistan in May [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/proekt-mezhgosprogrammy-innovatsionnogosotrudnichestva-v-sng-do-2030-goda-obsudjat-v-mae-v-345804-2019/>

the formation and development of cross-border innovation and industrial clusters in high-tech sectors.

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## Belarus - Georgia: complementarity is resulting

It is known that Belarusian-Georgian bilateral relations have become stable over the past years. The dynamic development of cooperation between the two countries is largely due to the complementarity of their economies, as "in Belarus there is demand for Georgian fruit and vegetable products, Georgia is interested in supplying Belarusian products of mechanical engineering, pharmaceuticals, woodworking, mineral fertilizers and food products<sup>36</sup>. This led the parties to declare a few years ago their desire to reach a turnover of \$200 million by 2020. And I must say that a number of concrete steps have been taken recently in this direction. Thus, the volume of Belarusian-Georgian foreign trade in goods and services amounted to \$112 million in 2017. At the same time, the product range of goods supplied from Belarus to Georgia has expanded significantly. And today it is represented in almost all sectors of the Georgian economy. "In particular, agricultural products - from seed potatoes to food products, agricultural machinery and trucks. Medicines are well represented, they have good rates of entry and registration on the Georgian market. There are also petrochemical products - tires, synthetic threads, cables. Belarusian furniture is supplied"<sup>37</sup>. A separate discussion is about Belarusian food products, which are sold in dozens of shops of two Georgian retail chains in a very wide range, from bread to liqueur and vodka products. As a result, "the share of Belarusian products in Georgia's total imports is 15%, butter - 12%, cheese - about 9%, sausages and meat products - 20%<sup>38</sup>.

In March 2019, Tbilisi hosted the fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Georgian Commission on Economic Cooperation, which discussed ways to implement specific projects in such areas as industrial cooperation, transport and logistics, science and technology, development of interregional ties.

The focus on **industrial cooperation** in this case is quite understandable, as "Belarus is interested in launching in Georgia a joint Georgian-Belarusian production to collect tractors, and the Georgian side - in opening a store of Georgian agricultural products

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<sup>36</sup> Belarus and Georgia: prospective cooperation [Electronic resource]. -- 2018. - URL: <https://export.by/news/belarus-i-gruziya-perspektivnoe-sotrudnichestvo>

<sup>37</sup> Interview with M. Myatlikov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Georgia, BelTA news agency (March 21, 2018) [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/aaeb2c722e229f16.html>

<sup>38</sup> It's the same place.



in Belarus<sup>39</sup>. These plans gained quite concrete shape during the fifth session of the intergovernmental commission, as a result of which "agreements were reached on further development of assembly production of elevators of JSC "Mogilevliftmash" in Georgia, opening of assembly production of Belarusian tractors of small capacity in Batumi, continuation of cooperation in the field of breeding livestock, mutual supply of agricultural products<sup>40</sup>.

We would like to remind you that a project on creation of an assembly production of elevators is already being implemented in Georgia. The fact is that in this country, "about 25 thousand elevators require complete replacement, of which at least 50% of the Belarusian production ("Mogilevliftmash"), supplied back in the Soviet period. This is why this project is first of all aimed at the Georgian market, such cities as Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi. <...> This is the project that allows you to make a JV with the necessary level of localization". Plans to develop production and cooperation links in the field of pharmaceuticals also look attractive. For this reason, it is planned to "open a Belarusian pharmaceutical company in Georgia in 2020. Today, the exports of this group of goods make a significant contribution to the total turnover of the two countries"<sup>41</sup>. Suffice it to say that during the Belarusian-Georgian Business Council, held in Tbilisi in March 2019, eight out of 15 signed agreements related to the supply of pharmaceutical products.

The parties also have interesting plans for cooperation in **transport and logistics**, where today there is a positive trend of growth in freight traffic between Belarus and Georgia. In particular, "in 2018 the total volume of transportation amounted to 94 thousand tons, which is 10.6% more than in 2017. The volume of foreign trade in transport services also increased as compared to the previous year - by 27.6% to \$16.4 million"<sup>42</sup>. And this despite the fact that the only way to deliver products to Georgia today is the Georgian Military Road, the pass through the Caucasus Range. The fifth meeting of the intergovernmental commission considered several other promising projects in this area. First of all, it was decided to work out the formation of a one-time ship batch from Belarus for delivery to Georgia by water transport in direct communication. We mean the development of ferry service and transit of Belarusian goods to Georgia via Ukraine. Secondly, we talked about the possibility to organize

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<sup>39</sup> Belarus and Georgia are planning to launch a joint production to collect tractors [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-gruzija-i-planirujut-zapustit-sovmestnoe-proizvodstvo-po-sboru-tractorov-340718-2019/>

<sup>40</sup> Mikhail Rusyi has paid a visit to Georgia [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8695>

<sup>41</sup> Belarus and Georgia are expanding areas of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belarus24.by/news/economics/belarus-i-gruzija-rasshiryayut-sfery-sotrudnichestva/>

<sup>42</sup> Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan will discuss the possibility of container transportation by rail between their capitals [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/special/economics/view/belarus-gruzija-i-azerbajdzhan-obsudjat-vozmozhnost-kontejnernih-perevozok-po-zhd-mezhdu-ih-stolitsami-341087-2019/>

rail container transportation on the route Tbilisi-Baku-Minsk, taking into account the already existing experience of such transportation in communication Tbilisi-Baku-Tbilisi.

Finally, interaction between Belarus and Georgia in the field of **science and technology** can be very effective. This is evidenced, in particular, by the results of the first meeting of the Belarusian-Georgian Commission on Scientific and Technical Cooperation, held in March 2019 in Tbilisi. As part of this new format of partnership coordination, the parties agreed to hold a contest of joint scientific and technical projects in relevant areas of bilateral cooperation, including in agriculture, medicine and pharmaceuticals, nano and biotechnology.

Recall that the parties signed an agreement on cooperation in science and technology in Minsk in 2016. "Georgian and Belarusian scientists are currently involved in six European Union projects, in particular graphene, new genetic tools for biological assessment of aquatic ecosystems in Europe, improving indoor living space: Smart Living"<sup>43</sup>. In addition, one of the priorities of scientific and technical cooperation with Georgian partners, in addition to the implementation of bilateral projects, is the joint submission of applications to European Union programmes, including "Horizon 2020". In addition, Belarus and Georgia participate in the Eastern Partnership Program Initiative, which implements the EaP Connect project aimed at supporting links between researchers and students.

The great potential for cooperation in science and technology is also demonstrated by the following fact: at the exhibition Made in Belarus, held in Tbilisi in March 2019, the Belarusian side presented 125 scientific, technical and innovation developments of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the National Academy of Belarus. As part of the exhibition itself, the Central Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus signed two new agreements on scientific cooperation - with the Institute of Phytopathology and Biodiversity of Batumi State University and the Botanical Institute of Ilya State University. In general, the exhibition offered an opportunity to learn about the most innovative and promising projects in a wide range of areas - from new materials and biotechnologies to potatoes and innovative technologies in the field of roasting coffee.

As for the development of **interregional relations**, as early as March 2018, at the highest level, the Treaty on the Fundamentals of Cooperation between Belarus and Georgia was signed, in which the parties expressed their intention to promote the

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<sup>43</sup> Belarus and Georgia will hold a competition for joint scientific and technical projects [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-gruzija-provedut-konkurs-sovmestnyh-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-proektov-340739-2019/>

expansion of interregional cooperation. Specific facts suggest that the capitals of the two states - Minsk and Tbilisi - are a very eloquent illustration of the implementation of this commitment in practice.

Minsk and Tbilisi became sister cities in September 2015, agreeing then to promote investment and innovation activities, cooperation in health care and education, sports, culture, exchange of experience in organizing local self-government. These twinning relations have become a good impetus to intensify Belarusian-Georgian cooperation in various areas in the years to come. Suffice it to say that "the trade turnover between the enterprises of Minsk and Georgia at the end of 2017 increased by 13.5% to \$18.8 million, exports of goods by \$7.9 million and imports by \$10.9 million. Deliveries were made on 161 commodity positions. In Minsk, 14 enterprises with Georgian capital are registered (of which 5 joint ventures, 9 foreign ones)<sup>44</sup>.

In March 2018, the Georgian capital hosted the Days of Minsk, during which the parties tried to make the best use of such tools as the Belarusian-Georgian business forum and the exhibition of goods of Minsk manufacturers to strengthen partnerships and twinning relationships. The format of these events allowed the citizens of Minsk to generously share with their Tbilisi colleagues their experience in implementing the "Smart City" system, to show the possibilities and conveniences of travel with a guest map of the Belarusian capital, to demonstrate the peculiarities of designing and construction of the underground, innovations in passenger transport, new technologies in the food industry. Georgian businessmen had a chance to get acquainted with the products of such Belarusian exporters as Kommunarka OJSC, Slodych Confectionery Factory OJSC, Minsk Kristall OJSC, Minskhhlebprom, Belita JV, Modum - Our Cosmetics OJSC, Minsk Automobile Plant OJSC, Amkodor OJSC, Minsk Tractor Plant OJSC.

The official part of the Days of Minsk in Tbilisi was also saturated. First of all, the parties signed the Program of Trade and Economic Cooperation for 2018-2020, in which they defined the areas of partnership in the economy, tourism, culture, education, transport and housing. In particular, "the cities intend to exchange experience in the sphere of rendering services to the population, maintenance and capital repair of housing stock, energy saving, high technologies and innovations, and also investment offers, advertising and information materials"<sup>45</sup>. Secondly, a number of documents on

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<sup>44</sup> Belarusian-Georgian business forum will be held during the Days of Minsk in Tbilisi [Electronic resource]. -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/regions/view/belorusko-gruzinskij-biznes-forum-projdet-vo-vremja-dnej-minska-v-tbilisi-293959-2018/>

<sup>45</sup> Minsk and Tbilisi will determine the cooperation program for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/minsk-i-tbilisi-opredeljat-programmu-sotrudnichestva-na-2018-2020-gody-293935-2018/>

interaction of Minsk enterprises with Georgian partners were agreed upon at the business forum already called above. Thus, "as part of the section "Modern Minsk and Tbilisi" a memorandum was signed between SOAO "Kommunarka" and LLC "Bel Trade" and an agreement between the information-tourist center "Minsk" and LLC "Resistorgeo".<sup>46</sup>as well as the agreement between LLC "Minsk City Technopark" and the Technopark of Tbilisi. In addition, the Minsk Automobile Plant, under an accepted contract with the Georgian LLC "Profauto", gave the company exclusive rights to sell automotive equipment on Georgian soil and will deliver 20 dump trucks to Georgia for more than one million dollars, as well as worked out possible contracts for the supply of fire-fighting equipment for the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Georgia and discussed "the possibility of supplying passenger buses to Tbilisi"<sup>47</sup>. Minsk Tractor Plant has signed a contract with the Georgian supplier of agricultural machinery Hermes LLC for the supply of 50 sets and is opening an assembly plant of Belarusian tractors in Batumi. At the same time, the management of the Belarusian company is confident that "2018-2020 will be the most successful years for the tractor plant in the Georgian market"<sup>48</sup>. It is assumed that at least two hundred or three hundred cars will be assembled here per year, as there is a need for various tractor equipment in Georgia - from low-power to energy-saturated.

Finally, interesting prospects are opening up in the Georgian market, where not only Tbilisi has a need for renewal of the public transport fleet and interest in using electric buses, for Minsk enterprise Belkommunmash. Similar interest was also expressed by the three other major Georgian cities. That is why the creators of the Belarusian electric buses have already thought about the possible localization of production of their environmentally friendly cars on Georgian soil. In particular, "production of Belarusian electric buses can be established in Tbilisi"<sup>49</sup>. In the meantime, in the next few months, Minsk residents will put one electric bus to the Georgian capital for trial operation, and a little later - a detailed concept and business plan of the project of industrial cooperation.

The tendency to expand the Belarusian-Georgian interregional cooperation was supported by the Agreement on cooperation in socio-economic, scientific-technical,

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<sup>46</sup> Matveev, V. About 30 documents were signed at Georgian-Belarusian forum in Tbilisi (in Russian) / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-30-dokumentov-podpisano-nagruzinsko-belorusskom-biznes-forume-v-tbilisi-295186-2018/>

<sup>47</sup> . Matveev, V. MAZ will deliver to Georgia dump trucks for \$ 1 million / V. Matveev // [Electron resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-postavit-v-gruziju-samosvaly-na-1-mln-295227-2018/>

<sup>48</sup> Matveev, V. Assembly manufacture of the Belarusian tractors is opened in Batumi (in Russian) / V. Matveev // [Electron resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-tractorov-otkryvaetsja-v-batumi-295203-2018/>

<sup>49</sup> Matveev, V. Production of the Belarusian electric buses can be created in Tbilisi (in Russian) / V. Matveev // [Electron resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-belorusskih-elektrobusov-mozhet-byt-sozdano-v-tbilisi-295211-2018/>

cultural and humanitarian fields signed in July 2018 between the Glubokoe District Executive Committee of Vitebsk Region and the Telava municipality. In practice, the parties have been cooperating since 2014, but until recently - mainly in the field of culture. By signing the agreement, Deep and Telavi announced real plans to expand the areas of partnership. In particular, the Georgian side expressed readiness to cooperate "in the field of medicine, agriculture and sports"<sup>50</sup>.

Another very effective direction of expanding trade and economic relations between Belarus and Georgia is the intensification of **exhibition and fair** interaction. The experience of the last few years shows that "annual holding of Belarusian exhibitions in Georgia has become a good tradition and reflects the active development of cooperation between the two countries: the range of supplied products is expanding, stores with national goods are opened in Tbilisi and Minsk"<sup>51</sup>. Recall that the national exhibition of Belarus was held in the Georgian capital back in 2016. In 2017 and 2018, large-scale Belarusian expositions were demonstrated in Tbilisi as part of the international exhibition AgroFood. And in March 2019 in the central pavilion of the Expo Georgia exhibition center an exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus was held, where more than 70 companies from almost all regions of Belarus demonstrated their best products. As a result of which 13 contracts for the supply of Belarusian products to Georgia were signed.

Thus, Minsk Tractor Plant showed "agricultural machinery in Georgian assembly: tractors for mountainous areas, orchards and vineyards "Belarus 322.1", "Belarus 321", "Belarus 311", "Belarus 311", "Belarus 320.4" and "Belarus 622"<sup>52</sup>. Another metropolitan company - Belkommunmash - has demonstrated an innovative mode of transport - an electric bus, which after 6-minute charging at special charging stations can provide movement along the route up to 25 kilometers long. And the largest manufacturer of finishing materials and tiles in Belarus - "Keramin" - brought to the Georgian capital for demonstration at once more than twenty modern collections. Minsk is also home to the Republican Scientific and Practical Center of Cardiology, which has shown in Tbilisi innovative developments in heart transplantation, a unique operation that has been conducted by Belarusian surgeons since 2009. For 10 years the center has performed over 300 operations for patients of all age categories.

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<sup>50</sup> Shcherbitskiy, A. Glubokoe will cooperate with Georgian city of Telavi / A. Shcherbitskiy // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/glubokoe-budet-sotrudnichat-s-gruzinskim-gorodom-telavi-311294-2018/>

<sup>51</sup> The Prime Minister of Georgia got acquainted with Belarusian products at the exhibition in Tbilisi [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/premjer-ministr-gruziji-oznakomilsja-s-beloruskoj-produktsiej-na-vystavke-v-tbilisi-340835-2019/>

<sup>52</sup> The best brands of Belarus will be presented at a large-scale exhibition in Tbilisi [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/luchshie-brendy-belarusi-budut-predstavleny-na-masshtabnoj-vystavke-v-tbilisi-340191-2019/>

Among the forage and grain harvesters and tillage equipment under the brand name "Palesse", presented by "Gomselmash", attention was drawn to a small potato digger-loader KMP-1,5, which in September 2018 successfully passed the tests on the Georgian fields. Other enterprises of the Gomel region that took part in the exhibition include the Gomel Chemical Plant and Mozyr Oil Refinery. Innovative complex solutions for automation of railway tracks, allowing to make a trip by train comfortable and safe, formed the basis of the exposition of Brest Electrotechnical Plant. The Mogilev region was represented at the exhibition by the plant "Strommashina" and Mogilev Metallurgical Plant, Vitebsk - "Polotsk-Fiberglass" and "Naftan", and Minsk - Plant of Mountain Wax from Svisloch.

In order to participate in the global infrastructure development program "Georgia 2020", Belneftekhim Concern, which unites the largest Belarusian petrochemical enterprises, demonstrated in Tbilisi rubber tires, fast drying paint for any surfaces, as well as paint for road markings. Traditionally, Belarusian food products, high quality and natural ingredients of which are already well known in Georgia, were widely represented at the exhibition. It should be assumed that the samples of meat and dairy products and confectionery, as well as alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages from such manufacturers as "Kommunarka", "Krinitsa", "Minsk Crystal", "Spartak", "Zdravushka Milk", Pinsk and Oshmyansk meat processing plants, shown in the exhibition, will soon be available in much larger quantities in Georgian stores.

Finally, this exhibition Made in Belarus is also interesting because for the first time in the practice of such events the Belarusian side used a new logo, which is a "linen flower, painted in the colors of the national flag and inscribed in a pentagonal figure, reminiscent of the state mark of quality. The flower petals are shown as people who have taken up arms, which reflects the idea of national unity and common labor to strengthen the Belarusian independence, identity and prosperity<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> The Prime Minister of Georgia got acquainted with Belarusian products at the exhibition in Tbilisi [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/premjer-ministr-gruzii-oznakomilsja-s-belorusskoj-produktsiej-na-vystavke-v-tbilisi-340835-2019/>

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## **Belarus - Turkey:**

### **science, technology, education**

In April 2019, the President of the Republic of Belarus paid an official visit to Turkey. Lukashenko, within the framework of which the priority directions of the Belarusian-Turkish cooperation in the field of trade and investment, the implementation of joint projects in engineering, agriculture, construction, finance, the chemical and light industry, were identified, as well as concrete steps to build contacts in the fields of technology and innovation were outlined, education, intensification of interaction "in the field of joint scientific research, academic"<sup>54</sup>The seriousness of the parties' intentions to actively develop cooperation in the scientific, technical and humanitarian areas is evidenced by the fact that following April (2019) negotiations between the leaders of Belarus and Turkey, a number of documents were signed - an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in education, a road map for cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Research Council of Turkey for 2019-2021, and a memorandum on scientific and technical cooperation in the Antarctic between the NAS of Belarus and the Ministry of Industry.

In particular, the intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the field of education aims to establish and develop direct contacts between institutions of higher education and scientific organizations of the two countries so that students and specialists from Belarus and Turkey can participate in activities aimed at demonstrating the educational, scientific, technological and innovation potential of their countries. Parties intend to provide a place for higher and postgraduate education in the relevant institutions, inform each other about mutual recognition of documents on training, education and academic degrees, and create all necessary conditions "for the expansion and deepening of contacts between countries across the full range of educational activities, attracting Turkish citizens to study in Belarus"<sup>55</sup>.

If we talk about cooperation between scientific circles of the two countries, its basis was laid by the agreements on cooperation signed by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus: in 2002 - with the Turkish Research Council on Science and Technology, in 2009 - with the Turkish Academy of Sciences. In 2016, the

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<sup>54</sup> Official visit to Turkey [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-v-turtsiju-20884/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-v-turtsiju-20884/)

<sup>55</sup> Belarus and Turkey are interested in developing contacts between universities and scientific organizations [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-turtsija-zainteresovany-v-razviti-kontaktov-mezhdu-vuzami-i-nauchnymi-organizatsijami-344261-2019/>



governments of Belarus and Turkey signed an agreement on cooperation in science and technology. A year later, there were memorandums of understanding between the National Intellectual Property Centre of Belarus and the Turkish Patent and Trademark Agency, and on cooperation between the Belarusian Innovation Fund and the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey. And in November 2018, the first meeting of the joint Belarusian-Turkish commission on cooperation in the field of science and technology was held, in the framework of which the parties agreed to "intensify bilateral cooperation through the subjects of the innovation structure, in particular, between technology parks of Belarus and Turkish science parks"<sup>56</sup>. At the same meeting of the Commission it was stated that "scientists of Belarus and Turkey intend to develop cooperation in polar research"<sup>57</sup>.

The Roadmap for Cooperation Development for 2019-2021, adopted in April 2019, is designed to intensify joint activities of Belarusian and Turkish scientists in the most promising areas of scientific and technical cooperation. "These include optics for space-based observation of the Earth's surface, unmanned aerial vehicles, batteries for electric vehicles and other vehicles, composite organo-mineral materials, mineral processing, and the use of information technology to predict natural hazards"<sup>58</sup>.

In addition, the adopted road map provides for the organization of a joint competition for projects in priority areas of science and technology development in areas that were identified during the joint workshops: in 2018 - in Gebze, in 2019 - in Minsk. B In particular, in March 2019, the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus, with the support of the Belarusian Innovation Fund and the Council for Scientific and Technological Research of Turkey, announced the holding of a competition of joint innovative scientific and technical projects for 2019-2020 with the aim of providing them with "direct financial support for early stages of development" in such priority areas of the Belarusian-Turkish cooperation as information and communication technologies, optoelectronics, nanomaterials, unmanned aerial vehicles full up.

As for the road map, this document also contains measures to develop, improve the organization and increase the effectiveness of joint scientific and technical activities and joint work of the Belarusian Republican Foundation for Fundamental Research and the Research Council of Turkey.

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<sup>56</sup> Belarus and Turkey will hold a competition for joint innovation projects [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2018/belarus\\_i\\_turtsiya\\_provedut\\_konkurs\\_sovmestnykh\\_innovatsionnykh\\_proektov/](http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2018/belarus_i_turtsiya_provedut_konkurs_sovmestnykh_innovatsionnykh_proektov/)

<sup>57</sup> Belarus and Turkey intend to develop cooperation in polar research [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-turtsiya-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-poljarnyh-issledovanij-324445-2018/>

<sup>58</sup> Belarus and Turkey signed a road map for scientific cooperation until 2021 [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-turtsija-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-nauchnogo-sotrudnichestva-do-2021-goda-344282-2019/>

## **Belarus-Hungary: cooperation will increase investments and regions**

In January 2019, Belarus and Hungary signed a number of important documents outlining promising directions for the development of bilateral relations. Among them there are two - the intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian agreement on promotion and mutual protection of investments, as well as the memorandum of foreign policy ministries of the two countries on promotion of interregional cooperation.

Minsk and Budapest see special importance in the agreement on mutual protection of investments, as "it is extremely important for investors in any country. <...> It's a great incentive for investment projects" . The document, which has been being worked on for almost a decade, sends an important signal to the business community of the two countries to increase interaction. Especially since "Hungary and Belarus are already developing cooperation in many areas, there are joint projects in mechanical engineering, pharmaceuticals, construction, financial sector"<sup>59</sup>. In particular, in 2017, a joint venture with Belarusian partners in the construction field appeared in Hungary. The company, established with the participation of Belstroycentre, is involved in construction projects here, as well as supplying Belarusian construction materials. And the pharmaceutical company "Gedeon Richter" has been operating in Belarus for many years. In total there are "eight companies with Hungarian capital"<sup>60</sup>. Perhaps, for this reason, the Belarusian-Hungarian trade turnover for the first 11 months of 2018 grew by another eight percent, approaching \$180 million. Bilateral trade in services grew even more dynamically - by more than 20 percent - between January and October 2018, exceeding \$16 million, based on transport, computer and tourism services.

Nevertheless, today, according to the parties, "there is a need for joint new investment projects, deep industrial cooperation with the prospect of entering not only national markets, but also the capacious markets of the European Union for Belarus and the Eurasian Economic Union for Hungary"<sup>61</sup>. And such plans should get their real shape very soon. Thus, in 2019 "the first Belarusian-Hungarian agricultural enterprise, where Hungarian technologies for corn processing will be used, will be established in

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<sup>59</sup> Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary Peter Sijarto [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-i-vneshej-torgovli-yengrii-peterom-sijarto-20273/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-i-vneshej-torgovli-yengrii-peterom-sijarto-20273/)

<sup>60</sup> Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary Peter Sijarto [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8529>

<sup>61</sup> Transcript of the approach to the press by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei following the results of the talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary (January 14, 2019) [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/c74a125b79ae2a47.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c74a125b79ae2a47.html)

Mogilev region<sup>62</sup>. And in the same year the two countries plan to open a joint line for the production of double-deck cars for railway trains. "A total of 19 double-decker trains are to be built. This will be the first time in the history of the Hungarian railways, it will be used on the most popular routes"<sup>63</sup>.

Other topical areas of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation include cooperation in the nuclear power sector. The fact is that "Hungary, as well as Belarus, has decided to cooperate with Russia on the development of nuclear energy. The model, identical to the Belarusian power units, will be used in the expansion of NPP Paksz. This opens up additional possibilities for finding touch points"<sup>64</sup>.

As for the memorandum on promoting interregional cooperation, it gives the parties an opportunity to expand interaction between the regions not only through the two capitals, Minsk and Budapest, but also on the scale of their countries. It should be reminded that the Agreement on Cooperation between the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Municipality of Budapest was signed in 2016. The Belarusian capital was then seriously interested in the experience of Hungarian partners in the use of large sports facilities, public transport management, waste processing, water purification. In April 2018, Budapest hosted the Days of Minsk, which once again showed what serious potential of the partnership the parties can still use in practice. Suffice it to say that in 2017 Minsk enterprises sold on the Hungarian market of goods "for more than \$26 million, having increased export volume by 37.2% compared to 2016"<sup>65</sup>.

At the same time, in April 2018, an agreement on cooperation between the Partisan district of Minsk and the district of Chepel Budapest was signed, which opens new opportunities, primarily for economic cooperation. After all, both districts are industrial, so the enterprises located on their territory will be able to cooperate mutually

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<sup>62</sup> Grishkevich, A. The first Belarusian-Hungarian agricultural enterprise will be created in Mogilev region / A. Grishkevich // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervoe-belorussko-vengerskoe-selhozpredpriyatie-sozdatut-v-mogilevskoj-oblasti-332570-2019/>

<sup>63</sup> Belarus and Hungary will produce double-deck cars for trains [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-budut-proizvodit-dvuhetazhnyie-vagony-dlja-poezdov-332532-2019/>

<sup>64</sup> Khainovsky, A. Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation is pragmatic and effective / A. Khainovsky // [Electron resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/interview/view/belorussko-vengerskoe-sotrudnichestvo-javljaetsja-pragmaticnym-i-effektivnym-6383/>

<sup>65</sup> Parukova, E. Days of Minsk in Budapest: what connects two capitals and how their cooperation will develop / E. Parukova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://minsknews.by/dni-minska-v-budapeshte-cto-svyazyvato-dve-stolitsyi-i-kak-budet-razvivatsya-ih-sotrudnichestvo/>

beneficially. And they're already doing it. For example, "the Kozlov factory works with 66Siemens. <...> The search for touch points continues" .

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<sup>66</sup> The leaders of Partisanski district of Minsk and Chepel Budapest district signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://part.gov.by/3744-rukovoditeli-partizanskogo-rajona-minska-i-rajona-chepel-budapeshta-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve>

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## Belarus - China: from science to practice

One of the main directions of trust-based all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus is the intensive development of partnerships in science, where it is obvious "the need to deepen further scientific cooperation, implementation of new forms of interaction and expansion of the list of joint projects"<sup>67</sup>. Recall that in 2018, China hosted a meeting of the Commission on Scientific and Technical Cooperation of the Chinese-Belarusian Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation, in which the parties noted the strengthening of cooperation in recent years, identified potentially important scientific projects and came to the unequivocal conclusion: "Joint research work has gradually become a new model of cooperation between the two countries"<sup>68</sup>.

The fifth Belarusian-Chinese Youth Innovation Forum "New Horizons", which took place in Minsk in November 2018 and brought together more than two hundred participants, demonstrated an important trend for this topic: "In cooperation between scientists from Belarus and China, the focus is on youth"<sup>69</sup>. Such a detail also speaks for itself: if earlier the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China traditionally announced one contest of Belarusian-Chinese projects every two years, then only in 2018 - twice.

As a result, 47 applications have been submitted for the contest of joint Belarusian-Chinese scientific and technical projects for 2019-2020 in priority areas of bilateral cooperation: information and communication technologies, energy efficiency and energy conservation, biotechnology, chemistry and agro-industrial complex. Among them is the implementation of the project to establish the Chinese-Belarusian Centre for Cooperation in Transformation of Scientific and Technological Achievements, which will help create new high-tech industries both in Belarus and China. It should be noted that this project is included in the program of Belarusian-Chinese scientific and technical cooperation until 2020, which also includes other promising strategic joint projects - "creation of an enterprise for the production of equipment for use in solar energy training test center on the basis of a joint institute of BSU and Dalian

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<sup>67</sup> . Belarus and China are interested in developing scientific cooperation [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-kitaj-zainteresovany-v-razviti-inauchnogo-sotrudnichestva-285359-2018/>

<sup>68</sup> Cimin, C. Friendship between Belarus and China became all-weather / C. Cimin // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/druzhiba-belarusi-i-kitaja-stala-vsepogodnoj-tsuj-tsimin-331056-2018/>

<sup>69</sup> In cooperation of scientists of Belarus and China the stake is made on youth - Shumilin [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/v-sotrudnichestve-uchenyh-belarusi-i-kitaja-stavka-delaetsja-na-molodezh-shumilin-325711-2018/>

Polytechnic University, the Chinese-Belarusian Center for Incubation of Innovation Projects<sup>70</sup>.

The Belarusian State University, which plans to establish its second joint institute with Dalian Polytechnic University in 2019, is one of the domestic higher education institutions actively developing ties with Chinese partners. Let's remind that the first one, where now on two courses of three faculties - applied physics, engineering mechanics, mathematics and applied mathematics, 159 Chinese students study, was formed in 2017 and works in Dalian. It is taught in English. The second joint university is expected to open in Belarus. It is expected that "specialists trained at the institute will be in demand in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone"<sup>71</sup>.

The Belarusian State University of Informatics and Electronics, which in mid-March this year opened a joint research and educational center with the East China Institute of Computer Technology in Minsk, is going to develop ties with Chinese partners in 2019. In addition, BSUIR has signed an agreement on cooperation in science with the University of Science and Technology of Hong Kong. And with the South China University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, an agreement was reached "on the implementation of educational programs at the first level of higher education based on the model of two-diploma education "2+2"<sup>72</sup>.

Units of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus are also active participants in this bilateral cooperation. In particular, back in September 2018, the Institute of Physics of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Institute of Laser Research of the Academy of Sciences of the Chinese province of Shandong came to an agreement on the establishment of a joint scientific laboratory to implement a number of contracts in the field of laser physics. At the same time, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Academy of Sciences of Shandong Province and the Municipal Government of Jinan City signed a trilateral memorandum of cooperation to identify priority areas of scientific research and a list of specific projects of mutual

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<sup>70</sup> For the Belarusian-Chinese scientific and technical projects competition 47 applications were submitted [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/na-konkurs-belorussko-kitajskih-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-proektov-podano-47-zajavok-329805-2018/>

<sup>71</sup> BSU plans to establish a second joint institute with Dalian Polytechnic University [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-planiruet-sozdat-vtoroj-sovmestnyj-institut-s-daljanskim-politehnicheskim-universitetom-337473-2019/>

<sup>72</sup> BSUIR and the East China Research Institute of Computer Technology will open a joint educational centre [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/tech/view/bguir-i-vostochno-kitajskij-nii-kompjutersnyh-tehnologij-otkrojut-sovmestnyj-obrazovatelnyj-tsentr-338475-2019/>

interest for the development of relevant technical and industrial areas, as well as the possibility of "creating new joint laboratories"<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> The Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Chinese Shandong Province will establish a joint laboratory [Electronic Resource]. - – 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/akademii-nauk-belarusi-i-kitajskoj-provintsii-shandun-sozdatut-sovmestnuju-laboratoriju-319153-2018/>



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## **Belarus - Afghanistan: a joint committee**

In April 2019, the Ministry of Information of Belarus and the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of information. The appearance of this document means that the topic of the Belarusian-Afghan cooperation in the topical areas of the bilateral interaction will soon find adequate media coverage in the mass media of Belarus. At the same time, international journalists of direct relevance to this thematic cluster will have to take into account in their work a number of peculiarities of the development of partnership between the two countries.

In this regard, we recall that back in July 2015, official Minsk drew attention to the fact that "Afghanistan is not so far away for us, and we can soon intensify our cooperation"<sup>74</sup>. There were several prerequisites for that already then. Firstly, in recent years there has been an intensive process of stabilization and normalization of relations between different political and ethno-religious groups in this country. Secondly, the role of Afghan territory in terms of transit cannot be denied, especially between the north and the south, which are home to large States with vast and diverse raw material reserves.

Over the past almost four years, Belarus and Afghanistan have done much to bring their positions closer in terms of organizing bilateral cooperation across the entire spectrum of interstate relations. As a result, it led to the first meeting of the joint Afghan-Belarusian committee on trade and economic cooperation in April 2019 in Kabul, which the parties described as "historically significant.

It should be noted that the appearance of this new format of coordination of Belarusian-Afghan interaction took place against the background of very positive trends in the development of bilateral ties. Thus, while in 2017 the volume of mutual trade between the two countries increased by 12% and amounted to almost \$30 million with the share of Belarusian exports - \$28.7 million, "trade turnover between Belarus and Afghanistan in 2018 compared to the previous year increased by 31% to \$38.7 million. The positive

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<sup>74</sup> Meeting with President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai [Electronic Resource]. - - 2015. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-prezidentom-islamskoj-respubliki-afganistan-ashrafom-gani-axmadzaem-11749/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-prezidentom-islamskoj-respubliki-afganistan-ashrafom-gani-axmadzaem-11749/)

balance reached \$38.1 million. The basis of Belarusian exports were oil products, tractors and tractors, bars and aluminum profiles<sup>75</sup>.

These indicators very eloquently illustrate the fact that Belarus is a promising trade partner of Afghanistan, having a good potential in the field of industrial cooperation. And now the moment has come when Minsk and Kabul must already define more concretely the most important areas of further interaction in order to eventually reach the adoption of an effective road map for cooperation. To this end, the parties agreed at the first session of the joint committee to form joint working groups on specific areas of cooperation, and also took concrete steps to expand the legal framework of the Belarusian-Afghanian cooperation.

In particular, in Kabul in April 2019, in addition to the already mentioned agreement on cooperation in the field of information, two other agreements were also signed: "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on military-technical cooperation; Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on cooperation in the field of culture"<sup>76</sup>. These documents added to the list of previously adopted bilateral agreements, including an agreement on cooperation in the field of health care, which entered into force in May 2014 and in which the parties intend to cooperate in such areas as modernization and promotion of investment projects in the field of health care; medical education and training of medical personnel; circulation of medicines, medical devices and medical equipment; exchange of experience in the development of management information systems; exchange of experience in the field of health care information systems; exchange of experience in the field of health care products and services; and exchange of experience in the field of health care information systems.<sup>77</sup>

In August 2017, the Belarusian and Afghan Chambers of Commerce and Industry signed an Agreement on Cooperation to effectively assist "organizations and entrepreneurs in developing and deepening all forms of foreign economic activity, <...> to assist in the opening of joint ventures. It should be reminded that today "4 subjects

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<sup>75</sup> Belarus and Afghanistan signed an agreement in the sphere of military-technical cooperation, information and culture [Electronic Resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-afganistan-podpisali-soglashenie-v-sfere-voenno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-informatsii-i-342905-2019/>

<sup>76</sup> On the results of the 1st meeting of the Belarusian-Afghan Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <http://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c3a35780b1447cdf.html>

<sup>77</sup> Agreement between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on cooperation in the field of health care, education, medical science and provision of medical assistance to citizens of the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan [Electronic resource]. -- 2014. - URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=125510=1014000531=1>

of MTW OJSC commodity distribution network work in Afghanistan - "Jawad Afghan Limited", "Herat Keshawarz co.ltd", "Sayed Jamal Co. Ltd. ", Silk Road International LLC/Barakat Company Ltd<sup>78</sup>."

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<sup>78</sup> Afghanistan [Electronic Resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://export.by/afghanistan>

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## **Belarus - Bangladesh: joint commission charts a way forward**

In April 2019, Minsk hosted the first meeting of the Belarusian-Belarusian joint commission on trade and economic cooperation, where the participants reviewed the current state of mutual trade and discussed the priority steps to enhance it. The very fact that such an event has been held shows that "Belarus views Bangladesh as an important and promising partner in the South Asian region".<sup>79</sup> As the complementary nature of the Belarusian and Bangladeshi economies opens up significant opportunities for growth in mutual supplies of industrial goods and agricultural products. This is also evidenced by the dynamics of bilateral trade turnover in recent years. In particular, "the volume of mutual trade for the last [2018] year increased by 18%, but this is not the limit"<sup>80</sup>. The first meeting of the joint commission allowed the parties to clearly define "the most promising joint projects in mechanical engineering and <...> opportunities to attract Belarusian specialists and technologies to create infrastructure facilities in Bangladesh".<sup>81</sup> as well as in general to outline their intentions and expectations of bilateral cooperation.

In particular, Bangladesh is interested in obtaining Belarusian technologies and training specialists in: 1) agricultural mechanization, including potato growing and processing of agrarian products; 2) medical education and research; 3) nuclear safety; 4) high-tech production. The Belarusian side, in turn, is ready: 1) to significantly increase the supply of road-building, agricultural and cargo vehicles to this South Asian state with the organization of an appropriate maintenance base; 2) to actualize cooperation in the energy sector, including in the field of construction of power lines and transformer substations within the framework of the infrastructure projects program being implemented in this country; 3) to assist in the training of specialists in the field of nuclear safety and physical protection. A The coincidence of the stated interests of the parties led to the fact that already at the first meeting of the joint commission in Minsk there were two contracts - in the amount of \$100 and \$17 million - for the supply of Belarusian road-building, agricultural and truck equipment under various financing schemes, including through the financial operator Promagroleasing

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<sup>79</sup> Alexander Turchin met with Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh Tipu Munshi [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8761>

<sup>80</sup> Belarus is negotiating the supply of \$100 million worth of equipment to Bangladesh [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vedet-peregovory-o-postavke-v-bangladesh-tehniki-na-100-mln-345058-2019/>

<sup>81</sup> On the first session of the Belarusian-Bulgarian joint commission [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/fa91ae00727e926d.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fa91ae00727e926d.html)

and export financing of the Development Bank of Belarus. It should be noted in this regard that earlier "Belarus has already implemented a \$50 million contract for the supply of Amkodor equipment to Bangladesh. Smaller-scale equipment has also been supplied to this country"<sup>82</sup>.

The Belarusian-Bulgarian cooperation also has interesting prospects in science, technology and education. We recall that back in 2012 the governments of the two countries signed agreements on cooperation in education, as well as in science and technology. At the same time, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences adopted the Memorandum of Cooperation. In April 2015, Dhaka hosted the first meeting of the Belarusian-Bangladesh Commission on Science and Technology, where the parties agreed to "develop mutually beneficial cooperation in science, technology and innovation, including through the establishment of joint high-tech industries"<sup>83</sup>. At the same time, the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Science and Technology of Bangladesh identified priority areas for joint projects: biotechnology and genetics in agriculture - crop and livestock production, nanotechnology and materials, water treatment technology, fertilizer production and "green" construction, biological methods of plant protection, bioreactors and biogas production. In March 2017, within the framework of the second meeting of this joint commission on cooperation in the field of science and technology, we already spoke about concrete cooperation "in the field of mutual transfer of technologies, creation of joint production facilities for the production of science-intensive and high-tech products"<sup>84</sup>.

As for education, in 2015, in order to increase the number of Bangladeshi students to study in Belarusian universities, including technical and technological specialties, the Republican Institute of Higher Education "pilot project" to attract citizens of Bangladesh to the Republic of Belarus through the capabilities of the Bangladeshi recruitment agency "Raduga International"<sup>85</sup>. And at the same time the idea of creating a Belarusian-Bulgarian university of technical orientation in Dhaka was voiced. It was assumed that "Bangladesh will provide the necessary infrastructure and funding, while

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<sup>82</sup> Belarus is negotiating the supply of \$100 million worth of equipment to Bangladesh [Electronic Resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/belarus-vedet-peregovory-o-postavke-v-bangladesh-tehniki-na-100-mln-345058-2019/>

<sup>83</sup> Belarus and Bangladesh will develop cooperation in priority areas of science and technology [Electronic resource]. -- 2015. - URL: <https://www.interfax.by/news/belarus/1181817>

<sup>84</sup> Minsk hosts a meeting of the Belarusian-Bangladesh Commission on Cooperation in Science and Technology [Electronic Resource]. -- 2017. - URL: [http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2017/v\\_minske\\_prokhodit\\_zasedanie\\_belorusko\\_bangladeshskoy\\_komissii\\_po\\_sotrudnichestvu\\_v\\_oblasti\\_nauki\\_i/](http://www.gknt.gov.by/news/2017/v_minske_prokhodit_zasedanie_belorusko_bangladeshskoy_komissii_po_sotrudnichestvu_v_oblasti_nauki_i/)

<sup>85</sup> Bangladesh [Electronic resource]. -- 2015. - URL: <https://export.by/bangladesh>

Belarus will provide modern educational programs and technologies, as well as teaching staff<sup>86</sup>. We must assume that this project will find its specific shape.

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<sup>86</sup> The Belarusian-Bulgarian University is planned to be established in Dhaka [Electronic Resource]. - – 2015. - URL: [https://www.belarus.by/ru/press-center/press-release/belorusko-bangladeshskij-universitet-planiruetsja-sozdat-v-dakke\\_i\\_0000023707.html](https://www.belarus.by/ru/press-center/press-release/belorusko-bangladeshskij-universitet-planiruetsja-sozdat-v-dakke_i_0000023707.html)



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## **Belarus - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: sustainability and prosperity project**

In April 2019, Minsk hosted the Second International Parliamentary Conference of the Silk Road Support Group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe "One Belt and One Road: Deepening Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Prosperity". It was attended by parliamentarians and representatives of business circles from Austria, Azerbaijan, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and Belarus.

Recall that the Silk Road Support Group was established in 2017 at the 26th annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in the Belarusian capital, to expand areas of cooperation and strengthen political, economic and cultural ties between the participating States of this international organization. In essence, the group serves as a platform to promote mutually beneficial economic and trade links through the development of transport corridors, transport facilitation measures and trade procedures, facilitating the free and safe movement of persons, goods, services and investments. The first conference of the Silk Road Support Group of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was held in 2018 in Azerbaijan. The very fact of holding the second conference in Minsk suggests that "the Silk Road Support Group has become another peaceful platform for dialogue and avoidance of confrontation in different planes"<sup>87</sup>.

It is no secret that there are many problems in the region of influence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including "the absence of a friendly business atmosphere makes it difficult to attract foreign private investment. Meanwhile, they are necessary for economic development and for promoting political stability in the OSCE region"<sup>88</sup>. That is why the April forum in Minsk can be called a promising opportunity to create closer economic integration on the Eurasian continent. All the more so because for the Republic of Belarus the holding of this conference was an important step in terms of trade facilitation between the member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, reduction of administrative barriers, development of customs cooperation, and mutually beneficial solutions to

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<sup>87</sup> Meeting with George Tsereteli, Chairman of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predsedatelem-parlamentskoj-assamblei-obse-georgiem-tsereteli-20978/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predsedatelem-parlamentskoj-assamblei-obse-georgiem-tsereteli-20978/)

<sup>88</sup> Tsereteli: OSCE PA countries are set up for an open dialogue at the Minsk site [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/tsereteli-strany-pa-obse-nastroeny-na-otkrytyj-dialog-na-minskoj-ploschadke-345762-2019/>

problems arising in the course of such work. After all, Minsk sees special importance in promoting "mutual integration of infrastructure facilities. We are talking about railways, highways, air and water routes, oil and gas pipelines, airports and ports"<sup>89</sup>.

In this regard, it is the Economic Belt of the Silk Road, initiated back in 2013 by the Chinese side and envisaging the creation of three trans-European economic corridors - the northern (from China through Central Asia, Russia and Belarus to Europe), the central (from China to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea) and the southern (from China through South and Southeast Asia to the Indian Ocean) - that opens "not just a trade route, but a powerful channel for exchanging new ideas, knowledge and technologies. It also serves as a space for dialogue among civilizations and a fundamentally new way for countries with different levels of economic development to interact"<sup>90</sup>. Even today, one and a half hundred countries and various international organizations and associations are already involved in the implementation of infrastructure and investment projects under this initiative. "The geographical scope and the undisputed financial and economic scale of the projects implemented and planned under the initiative give reason to rightfully consider it one of the largest in the history of humankind"<sup>91</sup>.

It should also be reminded that Belarus was among the first countries in the world to support this Chinese mega-project, as it has unique advantages for the development of the Economic Zone of the Silk Road, being simultaneously located in the central part of the European continent and on the Silk Road itself. And now it is taking concrete steps to strengthen integration of its own transport infrastructure into the world network, involving foreign investors in the construction of roads, bridges, electrification and reconstruction of railway sections. Such figures speak a lot in this regard. Today, goods from Asia to Europe, from the Scandinavian countries to the Balkans through Belarus are already being transported by about twenty specialized fast-trains. "In 2018, they transported about 325 thousand containers to the OSCE states in a message China - Europe. Their number is expected to increase to 1 million per year by 2025"<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> Belarus welcomes the facilitation of trade between OSCE countries - Andreichenko [Electronic Resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-privetstvuet-uproschenie-torgovli-mezhdu-stranami-obse-andrejchenko-345773-2019/>

<sup>90</sup> It's the same place.

<sup>91</sup> Dapkunas, A. Belarus intends to strengthen its role in the development of Trans-European Economic Connectivity / A. Dapkunas // [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/belarus-namerena-usilit-svoju-rol-v-razviti-i-transjevrazijskoj-ekonomicheskoy-soprjazhennosti-6823/>

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Transport: Belarus supports China in creating a digital Silk Road [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/mintrans-belarus-podderzhivaet-kitaj-v-sozdanii-tsifrovogo-shepkovogo-puti-345882-2019/>

Synchronizing the activities of the countries through which these land routes run is becoming a major challenge in order to increase the opportunities for cargo delivery and accelerate the movement of goods and passengers in the direction of Asia-Europe. That is why the Second International Parliamentary Conference of the Support Group for the Silk Roads of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe "One Belt and One Road: Deepening Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Prosperity", held in Minsk, drew attention to the need to adopt common standards for electronic documents and methodology for information exchange for the countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

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