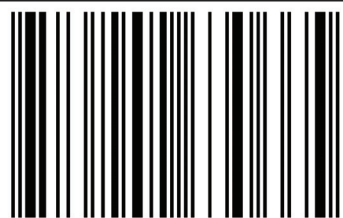


Growth points

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Transforming our world: the sustainable development agenda to 2030", which sets out 17 sustainable development goals aimed, inter alia, at eradicating poverty and hunger, combating inequality and injustice, and addressing climate change, industrialization and innovation. This event required all states of the planet, including the Republic of Belarus, to undertake the creation of mechanisms to achieve the SDG. In 2020, the Republic of Belarus must significantly strengthen its efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals, first and foremost, at the regional level. At the same time, the mass media must have a strong say in addressing this issue. This means that the range of publications on this topic in the media should be very broad, relating to virtually all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and taking into account the priorities of socio-economic development of the country until 2030: from export and import substitution development to the green economy. How is this objective being addressed in practice? This is the subject of the proposed study.



Professional experience in journalism - over forty five years. Now he is an associate professor of the International Journalism Department of the Journalism Department of the Belarusian State University. Areas of research: modern international relations; international journalism, international economics.



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Features of sustainable development in the face of global challenges

Boris Zalessky

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Sustainable development goals and media

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

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

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

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

¹ 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/>.

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

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

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"⁴. That is why territorial development plans should be proposed not only by republican government bodies, but first and foremost by representatives of local government bodies, taking into account the needs and interests of citizens. That is why a comprehensive plan for the development of more than 30 Belarusian regions lagging behind in terms of social and economic development, developed in August 2019 by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus jointly with regional executive committees, is extremely important in this context. The implementation of this plan would make it possible to raise these territories to the national average. Suffice it to say that "today a package of 280 projects has been formed. Approximately 54 projects will be created from scratch, about 80 projects

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

³ 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/>.

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

are investments in existing industries and 140 projects are related to infrastructure (about 30% - industrial infrastructure, the rest - social facilities)"⁵. In addition to these 280 projects, there are 224 other investment proposals. It is also important that part of the projects from this comprehensive plan will be financed by "foreign investors, as well as international financial organizations, which direct funds primarily to infrastructure development, such as construction of water deferrization plants or conversion of boilers to local fuels, development of alternative energy sources. World Bank funds will be used to repair schools and hospitals"⁶.

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

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

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

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

of Belarus" announced a national contest "From Global Goals to Local Actions" in order to involve the Belarusian society in the process of achieving the CSD and to activate the work of journalists.

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

The results of the contest showed that it became a good check of the level of competence, first of all, of Belarusian journalists and one more opportunity for them to reveal their creative potential. Thanks to this format of creative rivalry, the Belarusian press has had a very comprehensive discussion of the main directions and goals of sustainable development, the possibilities of their implementation and realization. It was not only the leading journalists who took part in the discussion. The competition also attracted a wide audience of readers, TV and radio listeners, confirming once again the conclusion that "the mass media is not just one of the main channels in informing the public about the SSD. In this context, they play a crucial role - educating citizens about the possibilities to make balanced and responsible decisions about themselves, their families, as well as to influence the authorities' decisions on the implementation of the SSD"⁷.

An important detail: in 2020 the Republic of Belarus should significantly strengthen its efforts to achieve sustainable development goals, primarily at the regional level. At the same time, the regional mass media should again have a strong say in addressing this issue, since, according to M. Shchetkina, National Coordinator for the Implementation of the SDG, "without informing the population and involving them in the work of achieving the SDG, practically nothing can be done"⁸. This means that the range of publications on this topic in regional media should be very broad, covering almost all 17 sustainable

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

⁸ In 2020, Belarus will strengthen its efforts to achieve the CSD at the regional level [Electronic Resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belarusi-v-2020-godu-usiljat-rabotu-po-dostizheniju-tsur-na-regionalnom-urovne-373167-2019/>.

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

As for other SDGs, in the present-day conditions the Republic of Belarus acquires the Goal No. 5: "Decent work and economic growth", which sets the task to develop the economy of the Belarusian regions at an accelerated pace. A characteristic detail in this regard is that "the traditional economy has almost exhausted its growth reserves, and further development is possible only with the creation of new industries, including the attraction of foreign investors"⁹. In other words, as First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus D. Krutoy said, "one of the most important tasks will be to attract investments, improve the relevant legislation and review the entire investment agenda"¹⁰. In this case, the focus will be on regional policy. In particular, the Belarusian government is already actively engaged in three large pilot projects: Orsha district of Vitebsk region, working with territories lagging behind in terms of socio-economic development, as well as 11 major cities.

In addition to the fact that in 2019 the country implemented the most important investment projects in such areas as automotive, metallurgical and construction industries, pulp and paper, woodworking and light industry, oil refining, petrochemical and energy complexes. In total, as of mid-December 2019, "out of 34 particularly important investment projects, 22 have already been put into operation".¹¹ 12 of which have reached their design capacity. But it is not only these big projects that should be in the sphere of special attention of regional mass media.

Thus, at the regional level, the Vitebsk Oblast demonstrates positive dynamics in attracting foreign investments, particularly Latvian ones. For three quarters of 2019 their volume from the Latvian investors has grown here at once in three and a half times, having exceeded two million dollars. On the territory of Vitebsk region there are already 90 organizations registered in the sphere of trade, woodworking, rendering of motor transport services, clothing services, production of plastic products. The fact that "33 cooperation agreements have

⁹ Sergei Rumas: Belarus is developing an action plan to create conditions for economic development [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9175>.

¹⁰ Sergei Rumas introduced the team of the First Deputy Prime Minister [Electronic Resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9155>.

¹¹ Sergey Rumas: 22 out of 34 particularly important investment objects were put into operation. [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9174>.

been concluded between the districts and cities of the Vitebsk region and Latvian municipalities" plays an undoubted role in strengthening these positive trends¹².

Even stronger indicators are characteristic in this context for the Brest region, whose economy is planned to attract at least \$90 million of foreign direct investment on a net basis in 2020. Half of them is planned to be directed to the free economic zone "Brest". As for the specific cities of the region, the "task for Brest - about \$ 15 million of foreign direct investment, Baranovich and Pinsk - over \$6 million¹³. At the same time, a little less than half of these funds will be spent on the purchase of machinery, equipment, vehicles, so that at the expense of modernization and technical re-equipment of existing enterprises, creation of new production facilities to open about six and a half thousand new jobs.

At the level of specific business entities, an interesting experience of work with foreign investments is demonstrated by an enterprise with almost 60-year history - OJSC "Gorynsky Agrokombinat", located in the working settlement of Rechitsa, Stolinsky district, Brest region, which only in August 2019 left the sanitation procedure by concluding a settlement agreement with creditors. Having actively worked with foreign investors, the staff of the joint stock company received from the Polish partner about 800 thousand dollars to complete the production of green peas. Modernization of existing production facilities allowed to expand the range of products. In particular, here "started the production of a new type of products - boiled sterilized vegetables in vacuum packaging. This is an absolutely natural product without the addition of preservatives, even such harmless as sugar and salt. The shelf life of such ready vegetables is six months, and the color, quality and taste of the product are preserved¹⁴. If we take into account that the work on the introduction of new technology in production at the agro-industrial complex is almost completed and even allowed to conclude a contract with a Russian company for the supply of a new product line to the trading network, then this experience of attracting foreign investment can be

¹² Shcherbitsky, A. The volume of Latvian investments in Vitebsk region for 9 months has grown in 3.5 times / A. Shcherbitsky // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/objem-latvijskih-investitsij-v-vitebskuju-oblast-za-9-mesjatsev-vyros-v-35-raza-371103-2019/>.

¹³ Foreign direct investment in the Brest region's economy in 2020 will amount to at least \$90 million [- Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/prjamye-inostrannye-investitsii-v-ekonomiku-breŭstskoj-oblasti-v-2020-godu-sostavjat-ne-menee-90-mln-374236-2019/>.

¹⁴ . Polish investor has invested Br1.6 million [Electronic resource] in production of Goryna Agrokombinat. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/polskij-investor-vlozhl-v-proizvodstvo-gorynskogo-agrokombinata-br16-mln-373083-2019/>.

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

All of the above facts eloquently illustrate the conclusion that the implementation of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including CSD No. 5, related to the topic of attracting foreign investment and its effective use in Belarusian regions, should be firmly anchored in the front pages of regional, district and city newspapers and should reflect to the fullest extent possible the experience already accumulated in this regard by specific business entities. It is also important to intensify the work of mass media in this direction because "the media not only fix our idea of reality, but also actually model the reality itself, the scenario and the dynamics of events¹⁵..." . At the same time, the task of media is to reflect reality, with all its problems, complexities and contradictions, "in the future to influence the situation for the better"¹⁶.

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¹⁵ Kuntsevich, A. Responsibility to society distinguishes a journalist from other subjects of information creation (in Russian) / A. Kuntsevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/opinions/view/otvetstvennost-pered-obschestvom-otlichayet-zhurnalista-ot-drugih-subjektov-sozdaniya-informatsii-7110/>.

¹⁶ Karliukevich, A. The main task of mass media is to reflect reality with all problems and difficulties (in Russian) / A. Karliukevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/12/11/1940593.html>.

Global information security and regional press

The global digitalization that we are all witnessing today is rapidly changing the world around us, invading also the media and information sphere. At the same time, new technologies not only influence the nature of creative work of modern journalists, but also actualize a number of challenges and threats to which the journalistic community should respond. At the international scientific-practical conference "Security and Sustainable Development: Theory and Practice in Digital Transformation" held in Minsk in December 2019, it was noted that "the leading players of the information field are now hurryingly building defense lines. At the same time, while a few years ago the information field was dominated by the themes of freedom of trade and human rights, now the issue of security is dominant"¹⁷. The obvious militarization of the information space in a number of countries, which has a destructive impact on other participants in the media and information sphere, cannot but be alarming.

Taking into account all these challenges and threats, a number of initiatives were put forward in the Republic of Belarus in 2019 aimed at resolving issues of global information security. In particular, in March, the country's Information Security Concept was approved, which refers to information sovereignty as a new approach to ensuring information security and information neutrality as a form of State and responsible behaviour and self-limitation of the use of destructive technologies to the detriment of other States. More precisely, information sovereignty in Belarus will be achieved by establishing a system of legal regulation of relations in the information sphere, ensuring safe sustainable development, social justice and consent. Within the framework of this approach, the development of national mass media and telecommunications should be ensured, which bring up and stimulate in society "a critical attitude towards manifestations of disrespect for national foundations, traditions and violations of morals and law in the information sphere, intolerance to disinformation, information manipulation and other implicit information and psychological influences"¹⁸.

¹⁷ The offensive potential in the information sphere is already formed in some states - Makarov [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/nastupatelnyj-potentsial-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-uzhe-sformirovan-v-nekotoryh-gosudarstvah-makarov-371838-2019/>.

¹⁸ Information security concept of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2019/1post.pdf>.

In international relations, the information sovereignty of the Belarusian state should be ensured based on the principle of information neutrality. The essence of it is that defending its own national interests in the information sphere with the use of all available forces and means, the Belarusian side aims at conducting a peaceful foreign information policy, respect for universally recognized and generally accepted rights of any state in this sphere, exclusion of the initiative "to interfere in the information sphere of other countries, aimed at discrediting or challenging their political, economic, social and spiritual standards and priorities, as well as at harming the information sphere.¹⁹ In this context, the provision contained in the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus, that in order to ensure the policy of information neutrality, it is necessary to increase the degree of Belarus' presence in the world information space and expand international information exchange, seems important for representatives of the journalistic community.

In other words, existing security threats point to the need to expand interstate cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere. Proceeding from the urgency of this problem, in September 2019 at the high-level international conference in Minsk "Combating terrorism with the help of innovative approaches and the use of new emerging technologies" the Belarusian side proposed to form a "digital neighborhood belt" aimed at defusing tension in the information sphere. According to the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko believes that "the key elements of such agreements could be the ideas of digital sovereignty and neutrality, which would primarily guarantee non-interference of countries in each other's information resources"²⁰. The Belarusian side sees the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements on ensuring information security as a mechanism to implement this initiative.

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

¹⁹ It's the same place.

²⁰ Participation in the international conference on combating terrorism [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/uchastie-v-mezhdunarodnoj-konferentsii-po-borbe-s-terrorizmom-21910/.

of critical infrastructure. Digital neutrality implies that countries will not take actions in cyberspace that harm the security of other states. Ultimately, such agreements can lay the foundation for international rules for responsible behaviour in virtual space"²¹.

The launch of such a "wave of digital security" could undoubtedly increase the effectiveness of joint countermeasures against terrorist threats in virtual space. In this context, Belarus is ready to cooperate and strengthen ties with all countries of the world and, especially, with its neighbors, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, where there is an active search for a unifying agenda, new ideas shared by a wide range of states and organizations, and where, first of all, "it is necessary to agree that we in the media do not roll at least on each other and do not wage this information warfare against each other"²². It should be noted that the Belarusian initiative to create a "digital neighborhood belt" in the post-Soviet space was supported primarily by Russia, as reported by the Foreign Minister of that country S. Lavrov in November 2019. According to him, this initiative "fully meets Russia's focus on the formation of as many digital neighborhoods as possible"²³. The Belarusian side also stated the need to expand international cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere at the summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in November 2019 in Bishkek, emphasizing that "information security should be firmly established among the priorities of the CSTO"²⁴. In addition, in December 2019, at the 26th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, official Minsk drew the attention of members of this international structure to the need to conclude international agreements in the field of cybersecurity, "similar to those on additional confidence- and security-building measures in the military and political sphere."²⁵In order to better adapt to changing security conditions and thus enhance joint responses to contemporary challenges and threats, and to play an increasingly prominent role in global security. An important aspect of the implementation of this initiative is also the consistent

²¹ Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei at the general discussion at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (26 September 2019, New York) [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b698116bea64ee66.html.

²² Participation in the session of the Council of CIS Heads of State [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/rabochij-vizit-v-turkmenistan-22184/.

²³ Lavrov: Moscow welcomes Minsk's proposal to ensure digital security [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/7145127>.

²⁴ Summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/sammit-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-22481/.

²⁵ Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei at the 26th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council (Bratislava, December 5, 2019) [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/statements/e8f7cc1b86026dad.html>

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

At the same time, "one of the security reserves not yet fully exploited is the resource of the analytical and expert communities, which have unique research potential"²⁶. It should be assumed that representatives of the international segment of Belarusian journalism could also contribute to the development of certain areas of analysis of security reserves in the information sphere. Especially as regards the fight against counterfeit information, methodology of responsible behaviour in the information-media sphere, ways of verification of information on the Internet.

We would like to remind you that the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Belarus, already mentioned above, highlights "manipulation of mass consciousness, discrediting of ideals and values, blurring of national sovereignty, instability of information infrastructure"²⁷ among modern challenges and threats, forming in the information sphere and posing danger for constitutional foundations and vital activity of the state. Proceeding from the fact that the information sphere has already acquired key importance for any state and every person, the task in Belarus is to expand the sphere of influence of domestic mass media and take "measures to increase the volume, diversity and quality of national broadcasting, as well as the trust of the population to official mass media"²⁸.

The fact is that back in the course of the "Big Talk with the President," which took place in early March 2019, the Belarusian head of state drew attention to the fact that "despite the powerful development of the media space, there is a shortage of content that would enjoy the absolute trust of the audience, one of the reasons is the so-called fake news. They instantly spread, capture the audience, excite thoughts"²⁹. In this regard, the role of a deterrent in the fight against fairy news should be taken on today:

²⁶ Building a reliable security system only by state forces is impossible - Vakulchik [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/postroenie-nadezhnoj-sistemy-bezopasnosti-tolko-silami-gosudarstva-nevozmozhno-vakulchik-371768-2019/>.

²⁷ Matveev, V. Information security concept of Belarus is planned to be approved soon / V. Matveev // [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/society/view/kontseptsiju-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-belarusi-planiruetsja-utverdit-v-blizhajshee-vremja-339646-2019/>.

²⁸ Meeting of the Security Council of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/zasedanie-soveta-bezopasnosti-belarusi-20668/.

²⁹ Meeting with representatives of public and expert community, Belarusian and foreign mass media "Big talk with the President" [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL:

1) authoritative **mass media**;

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

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

The fact that traditional media should become a powerful unifying factor in the fight against fake information and unprofessional approaches to the coverage of current external and internal issues was stated in resolution XIII of the Belarusian International Media Forum "Partnership for the Future: a digital agenda for the media space", which was held in Minsk in September 2018. The resolution of the forum emphasized that preserving the authority and position of traditional media - print and electronic - is extremely important, since it is these subjects of the information field that are able to fully "bear responsibility to society for the quality, completeness and reliability of the information provided, have the capacity to ensure a professional approach to the creation and dissemination of information products"³⁰.

The real practice shows that trust to the media by a wide audience arises when the media competently analyze the events taking place in the society and promptly give comprehensive answers to the questions that appear in the readers, viewers and listeners. In other words, it is possible and necessary to minimize the threats of negative information impact in the form of fairy news by creating your own interesting, relevant and true content, so that "any fairy can be confidently answered and destroyed at the root"³¹. It is clear that without close and constant interaction with representatives of the expert community media structures will hardly be able to fully solve such a large-scale problem.

To strengthen coordination between the media and expert communities in this area, it seems that it is time to start forming professional **media expert** pools in the most important areas of Belarusian foreign and domestic policy.

http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstaviteljami-obschestvennosti-i-ekspertnogo-soobschestva-belorusskix-i-zarubezhnyx-smi-20590/.

³⁰ 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/>.

³¹ 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/>.

Professionalism in the information sphere in this case should be understood as qualitative and interesting presentation of materials, skilful technical organization of the creative process, availability of expert opinions and analytics based on reliable data. We see something similar, for example, already in the course of implementation of global sustainable development goals in Belarus, where among the partner groups, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, in the national architecture of management of the CSD achievement, a media expert group has been created to conduct informational work in the media space on all 17 sustainable development goals.

Another interesting example in this direction is the Plan of Joint Action for 2019 on the coverage of the export potential of Belarus in the mass media, signed in March this year by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote "the dissemination of objective information on the development of national exports, strengthening international contacts of Belarusian enterprises and the entry of their products into new markets"³². The basic component of this media-expert interaction should be a series of seminars for journalists working on foreign economic issues in order not only to highlight the key problems of Belarusian export development, but also to promote the presence of relevant economic topics in the Belarusian mass media at all levels - from central to regional. It should be recalled that the National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 includes among its eight main tasks the requirement to **promote the export culture in the** form of consolidation in the mass consciousness of the importance of exports for the development of the country and society and raising its priority. In this regard, the adoption by the Ministry of Information and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of a plan of joint action to highlight the export potential of Belarus in the media sector is a very important and necessary step.

In this context, the topic of interaction between media and expert communities at the regional level, including the implementation of the policy of international cooperation of the Belarusian regions, deserves a separate discussion. The point is that "regional media occupy their unique niche in which

³² 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/>.

neither national nor international media can compete"³³. 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"³⁴. And this is in the conditions when the thematic spectrum, in which the Belarusian regional press is to be built, has been expanding with exceptional speed in recent years. These are only the areas that emphasize the geography of international cooperation of the regions of Belarus that have emerged over the past years and that should be adequately reflected in the regional media in order to contribute to the effective solution of the problems arising here:

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

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

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

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

The Republic of Belarus assumes that the role of traditional regional mass media will be increasingly important, since "successful development of any region depends on the information space as a whole, on the ability to quickly adapt to the rapidly growing market of communication technologies"³⁵. That is why here

³³ 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/>.

³⁴ The trust of the audience can be maintained by the district editions of Melnikov [Electronic Resource] with exceptional truthfulness. - – 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/doverie-auditorii-rajonnye-izdaniya-mogut-podderzivat-iskljuchitelnoj-pravdivostju-melnikova-338797-2019/>.

³⁵ 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-soveshchani-337842-2019/>.

too, information strategies specific to international regional issues are already needed that can significantly expand the sphere of influence of a particular media outlet through the high quality of its media product.

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From strategy to attract foreign investment to international cooperation

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 was conducted. According to the intention of the developers, the strategy should define long-term goals, objectives, principles, directions and expected results of attracting foreign investments, taking into account the priorities of socio-economic development of Belarus. Thus, it defines the long-term goals as improvement of the investment climate, increase in the inflow of direct foreign investments into the country's economy, development of infrastructure, including through the mechanism of public-private partnership, and increase in the efficiency of investment activity. This strategy is to be implemented in four stages: 1) 2019-2020; 2) 2021-2025; 3) 2025-2030; 4) 2031-2035. At the same time, "for each stage, a road map of measures will be developed, which will define the responsible state bodies, the terms of implementation of measures and their results"³⁶.

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 among the top thirty countries:

- 1) World Economic Forum global competitiveness rating;
- 2) world competitiveness rating of the international institute of management development;
- 3) International index of country attractiveness for venture and direct investment funds Ernst & Young.

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

³⁶ 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/>.

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 micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises by domestic businesses and foreign investors in areas with difficult economic conditions"³⁷.

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 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. <...> Work is under way to establish production facilities for nonwovens, pellets and furniture. The Orsha forestry enterprise realizes the plan on the organization of new manufacture with deep processing of wood, including building of shop on manufacture of pellets"³⁸. In addition, negotiations have already been held with representatives of a Chinese logistics company to establish a joint venture in the area.

Using the planned toolkit of the strategy implementation, which is the work on improvement of the investment legislation, simplification of administrative procedures for business, further digitalization of all processes in order to exclude subjective approach to solving problems as much as possible in the future, Belarus intends to double the volume of foreign direct investment attraction on a net basis by 2025. "It is also planned to actively work to attract foreign investment and promote the investment potential of Belarus abroad, including through such events as economic days in Belarus, investment forums, conferences, meetings with business".³⁹ as well as expanding cooperation with leading international financial organizations.

In the language of figures it means that in the first stage of the strategy implementation - in 2019-2020 - the volume of foreign direct investment should be at least one and a half billion dollars annually, and in the second stage - by

³⁷ Belarus intends to double the attraction of foreign direct investment [Electronic resource] by 2025. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-namerena-k-2025-godu-udvoit-privlechenie-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-338382-2019/>.

³⁸ 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-razvitii-orshanskogo-rajona-povysil-interes-investorov-k-regionu-isachenko-336516-2019/>.

³⁹ In 2019, Belarus plans to attract at least \$1.6 billion of FDI on a net basis [Electron Resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-v-2019-godu-privlech-ne-menee-16-mlrd-pii-na-chistoj-osnove-350482-2019/>.

2025 - three billion dollars. Recall that in 2018, foreign investors have 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, "the inflow of foreign direct investment amounted to \$8.5 billion, or 78.7% of all foreign investments"⁴⁰. And the outrunning growth of expenses for the purchase of machinery and equipment was noted, including such large investment projects as modernization of oil refineries, construction of a nuclear power plant, Belaruskali and Slavkali projects.

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 services. Our task is to gradually reorient to the industrial sector as well"⁴¹. 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. As for expanding cooperation with leading international financial organizations, interesting prospects are opening up, in particular, in cooperation with their representatives, such as the **Eurasian Development Bank** and the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**.

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) is an international financial institution founded by Russia and Kazakhstan in January 2006 to promote the development of market economies in member states, their sustainable economic growth and the expansion of mutual trade and economic ties. Along with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, the Republic of Belarus is also a member. It should be noted that in recent years, the bank has been developing very successfully, as evidenced by the following figures: "According to the results of 2018, the volume of investments increased by 2.5 times compared to 2017 and reached \$1.6 billion. This figure reached the highest level in the history of the bank <...>. The loan portfolio grew by 48% to \$3.6 billion and

⁴⁰ 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/>.

⁴¹ 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/>.

reached its five-year high"⁴². Interestingly, the bank considers the year 2018 successful also because "loan provisions for the group of companies Alutech in Belarus were restored. As a result, the bank received \$10 million of additional income"⁴³. And in 2019, the EDB planned to increase its loan portfolio to \$2.9 billion. "As of July 1 [2019], the current investment portfolio amounted to \$3.7 billion <...>. As of June 30, 2019, the EDB's assets grew by \$458 million, or 12.3% to \$4.2 billion"⁴⁴.

As for the Republic of Belarus, over the period of cooperation with the Eurasian Development Bank it has already implemented 30 projects worth about one billion dollars. As for today, "at present the Bank is considering investment projects of Belarusian industrial enterprises aimed at modernizing the existing ones and creating new production facilities, including with the use of technologies V and VI of the technological mode"⁴⁵. This direction of the Eurasian Development Bank is confirmed by the loan agreement signed in May 2019 to allocate \$100 million to the Belarusian side to finance working capital and investment program of Belaruskali on mutually beneficial terms. And today, a total of "more than six projects for different amounts in different sectors are in operation" in cooperation between the EDB and the Republic of Belarus"⁴⁶. Syndicated loan agreements have been concluded with such Belarusian banks as JSC Belgazprombank and JSC JSSB Belarusbank, credit lines have been opened for trade financing and support of small and medium businesses.

And active negotiations on the EDB's participation in Belinvestbank are currently underway. In this regard, it should be reminded that in October 2018 Belinvestbank with the help of EDB attracted a syndicated loan for one year in the amount of \$20 million, the funds of which "are provided to finance trade contracts of Belinvestbank's clients related to the supply of goods, equipment and

⁴² Belyaninov: It is extremely important for EDB to finance projects using the national currencies of the EAEC countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beljjaninov-eabr-krajne-vazhno-finansirovat-proekty-s-ispolzovaniem-natsvaljut-stran-eaes-345396-2019/>.

⁴³ EDB plans to grow its loan portfolio in 2019 to \$2.9 billion [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-planiruet-rost-kreditnogo-portfelja-v-2019-godu-do-29-mlrd-345498-2019/>.

⁴⁴ The volume of EDB's investment portfolio as of July 1 exceeded \$8 billion [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/objem-investitsionnogo-portfelja-eabr-na-1-ijulja-prevysil-8-mlrd-354493-2019/>.

⁴⁵ Meeting with Andrey Belyaninov [Electronic Resource], Chairman of the EDB Board. - - 2019. - URL: <http://government.by/ru/content/8785>.

⁴⁶ The EDB will allocate \$100 million to finance working capital and investment program Belaruskali [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-vydelit-100-mln-na-finansirovanie-oborotnogo-kapitala-i-investprogrammy-belaruskalija-347439-2019/>.

services from the Russian Federation to Belarus.⁴⁷ which promotes the development of small and medium-sized businesses in our country, a segment that should become one of the drivers of economic growth in the foreseeable future.

In general, the EDB is considering several projects in relation to Belarus - in the road sector, housing and communal services, as well as in the energy sector. Thus, the bank is interested in the upcoming reconstruction of roads in Belarus: the border with Russia - Gomel - Kobrin; Minsk - Vitsebsk. "The price of the road reconstruction may range from €150 to €450 million⁴⁸. The EDB may also participate in the contract for the purchase of ten 5-car Stadler electric trains for international business class lines by the Belarusian Railway. Delivery of the first electric train is scheduled for late 2020. And since the parties planned to attract credit resources of leading foreign banks for this case, the Eurasian Development Bank announced a high degree of readiness for its participation in this investment project back in February 2019. In the energy sector, it's about the construction of gas turbine generators for the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Belarus. In addition, the EDB is interested in cooperation with the Belarusian High Technology Park to be present with its partners. In particular, "we are talking about a Russian company that may become a HTP resident⁴⁹.

Returning to the loan agreement on Belaruskali, it will undoubtedly help the Belarusian company to implement a large-scale project to build the Petrikovsky mining and processing plant, which will help to increase potash production capacity in Belarus. Another interesting aspect of the EDB's activities in Belarus concerns the bank's cooperation with the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone. In February 2019, the parties signed a memorandum of cooperation, which opens wide prospects for cooperation and provides for close partnership in attracting strategic investors to the park, as well as financing individual projects. In particular, the "bank is interested in investing in the construction of the park's infrastructure"⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Belinvestbank attracted a syndicated loan from the Eurasian Development Bank [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belinvestbank.by/about-bank/article/n-Belinvestbank-privlek-sindiczirovannyj-kredit-ot-Evrazijskogo-banka-razvitiya>.

⁴⁸ EDB considers participation in financing the reconstruction of M10 and M3 roads in Belarus [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-rassmatrivaet-uchastie-v-finansirovanii-rekonstruktsii-dorog-m10-i-m3-v-belarusi-335452-2019/>.

⁴⁹ The EDB is interested in the presence of the Belarusian HTP [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eabr-rassmatrivaet-uchastie-v-finansirovanii-rekonstruktsii-dorog-m10-i-m3-v-belarusi-335452-2019/>.

⁵⁰ "The Great Stone and EDB will work together to attract investors to the park [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-i-eabr-budut-vzaimodejstvovat-v-privlechenii-v-park-investorov-335625-2019/>.

As for the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** (ABII), the Republic of Belarus became a member in January 2019 and was the first country in the European region to cooperate with this financial institution in the field of infrastructure financing. Recall that the ABII was founded at the initiative of the People's Republic of China with a charter capital of \$100 billion in October 2014 to overcome infrastructure constraints of economic development not only in Asia but also beyond, to strengthen and complement the financing of international development institutions such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Eurasian Development Bank. The largest shareholders of the bank today are China, India and Russia. And in just a few years, "membership in ABII has expanded from 57 to 93 countries"⁵¹. In particular, it recently admitted six new sovereign participants: Serbia, Libya, Algeria, Ghana, Morocco and Togo.

As such "regional financial arrangements shape a new world financial architecture and contribute to global financial stability by taking over the function of a lending facility to States participating in these financial arrangements when they require assistance". The⁵²very emergence of this Western-independent multilateral regional bank has received strong support from an overwhelming number of Asian countries. In addition, the establishment of the new bank "marked a major change in the current structure of multilateral development institutions in Asia and the Pacific"⁵³. The fact is that one of the most important tasks of the ABII should be the construction of a new "Silk Road" within the transport corridor West China - Central Asia - Europe. This means that in order to achieve its stated objectives related to the development of integration and infrastructure that meets the requirements of the Asian region, the Bank needs to rapidly expand its areas and scale of operations.

In other words, the ABII should be the instrument to take the process of regional economic integration in Asia to the multilateral level and beyond, in order to improve the connectivity of trade, economic and financial relations there and deepen cooperation with partners involved in the new Silk Road project. And

⁵¹ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has been expanded with 6 new members [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://ekd.me/2018/12/aziatskij-bank-infrastrukturnyx-investicij-popolnitsya-6-novymi-chlenami/>.

⁵² Valkova, A.V. Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments: new financial initiatives in Asia-Pacific / A.V. Valkova // International finance. Banking system. - - 2016. - - №1. - - C. 27.

⁵³ Klishin, V.V. Establishment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a tool for improvement of the investment strategy of the developing countries in Asia-Pacific / V.V. Klishin // Business in law. Economical-legal journal. - - 2015. - - №1. - - C. 215.

the first steps in this direction have already been taken by the new bank. In just a few years of its existence, ABII has funded 24 projects worth four and a half billion dollars. And "in the next few years the bank plans to increase the average annual volume of lending to \$4-6 billion, and then - up to \$10-15 billion"⁵⁴. In particular, in February 2019, the head of ABII, D. D., was appointed the head of the bank. Likun said that "the bank plans to increase project financing from \$3.3 bln in 2018 to \$4 bln in 2019"⁵⁵. At the same time, the main criterion for allocation of funds remains the quality of projects. And while the bank intends to focus on financing projects in Asia, particularly in Pakistan, its next steps will be aimed at other countries of the world.

That is why Minsk believes that Belarus' accession to the ABII opens up new opportunities for the country, as the resources of the bank may be directed to the development of the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Way," in which our country is also a member. And these resources can be used "to create and upgrade the existing transport corridors, energy and urban infrastructure, production and logistics."⁵⁶in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" as well as for co-financing projects with other international financial institutions. Moreover, interaction with the ABII may become another important step for the Republic of Belarus in strengthening the relations of trust-based all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation with the People's Republic of China.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is ready to start programming investment projects for Belarus given its mandate to finance infrastructure development in the fields of transport, energy, housing and municipal services and urbanization was announced in May 2019 during the first official visit of an ABII delegation to our country. The Belarusian side suggested the bank to focus on projects in the transport sector as a priority area for financing in the short term, as "transport projects increase the connection between different regions of Belarus, provide a land bridge between West and East, which fully corresponds to one of the key principles of the bank to develop and maintain ties with the Asian

⁵⁴ Belarus expects to attract the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to co-finance projects [Electronic Resource]. - – 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-privlechi-aziatskij-bank-infrastrukturyh-investitsij-k-sofinansirovaniju-proektov-322842-2018/>.

⁵⁵ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will increase lending to projects by 20% in 2019 [Electronic Resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/114547>

⁵⁶ Belarus has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank [Electronic Resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/special/economics/view/belarus-vstupila-v-aziatskij-bank-infrastrukturyh-investitsij-333276-2019/>.

region⁵⁷. In particular, we are talking about financing the construction and reconstruction of the M3 (Minsk-Vitebsk) and M1 (Brest-Minsk-Russia border) roads, where today "the highest priority is investment in road infrastructure. Also ABII is considering joining the M10 [Gomel-Kobrin] public-private partnership project for reconstruction, on which the Ministry of Transport and Communications is now actively working"⁵⁸. The amount of financing from the bank will be determined by the cost of the project and the capacity of the Belarusian side to absorb these resources. But it is already clear that this is a significant amount of financing.

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⁵⁷ Belarus invited the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to consider projects in the transport sector [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlozhila-aziatskomu-banku-infrastrukturnyh-investitsij-rassmotret-proekty-v-transportnom-347465-2019>.

⁵⁸ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank may start financing projects in Belarus by the end of the year [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/aziatskij-bank-infrastrukturnyh-investitsij-mozhet-nachat-finansirovanie-proektov-v-belarusi-do-kontsa-350838-2019/>.

Honorary Consuls Institute: project-specific orientation

In October 2017 the first Conference of Honorary Consuls of the Republic of Belarus was held in Minsk. Statistics says that currently 80 Honorary Consuls in 56 countries represent and defend the rights and interests of Belarusian citizens abroad. Their professional interests also include such duties as promoting friendly relations, expanding political, trade and economic, investment, cultural and scientific relations with foreign countries. This is why the consular districts of Honorary Consuls of Belarus usually include industrial and financial centres, while Honorary Consuls themselves enjoy well-deserved authority in political and business circles of their countries.

The first conference brought together in the Belarusian capital about 60 honorary consuls from 45 countries of the world, in close communication with whom at the highest level were discussed "promising areas of their work, primarily in the field of foreign trade and foreign investment attraction"⁵⁹. In Belarus, the role of honorary consuls in promoting the national Belarusian interests in the international arena is considered unique for a number of reasons. On the one hand, their immediate task is to protect the rights and interests of Belarusian citizens abroad, provide assistance to those in trouble, represent the interests of Belarusians in foreign countries. On the other hand, their role in the development of bilateral contacts in science, education, culture and sports, activation of contacts between regional authorities, as well as in the establishment of twinning relations is seriously growing. From the rostrum of the conference the institute of honorary consuls was described as a serious "help for our diplomatic missions abroad, our ministries, agencies, Belarusian companies, chambers of commerce and industry, scientific and cultural institutions"⁶⁰.

The Belarusian government considers the existing institution of honorary consuls as an important mechanism to expand the presence of the Republic of Belarus abroad, to find new opportunities for economic growth, new partners to implement a new strategy to ensure systematic diversification of foreign trade,

⁵⁹ On the results of the First Conference of Honorary Consuls of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. -- 2017. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c12a5a4e0e51ecd5.html.

⁶⁰ Opening address of the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus A. Evdochenko at the First Conference of Honorary Consuls of the Republic of Belarus (October 5, 2017, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. -- 2017. -- URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/statements/b2e6f26f574a482e.html>.

while emphasizing its special role in "new markets, countries of the "far arc"⁶¹. It should be recalled that an important feature of the Honorary Consuls' activities in the host countries is that, being representatives of the Belarusian side, they perform this mission free of charge. Perhaps, this factor has some impact on the fact that, as noted at the conference in Minsk, "the deficit of large individual projects with tangible results persists"⁶². The way out of this situation could be activation of the economic component of honorary consuls to achieve their self-sustainability. In this connection, the conference in Minsk voiced a proposal of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry to each Honorary Consul in the near future, tentatively within a month or two, to define for itself in cooperation with the overseeing foreign institution one personal project with a specific trade and economic effect.

It should be noted that Honorary Consul of Belarus has already had such a practice in a number of countries. Thus, on the American continent Honorary Consuls in the United States of America, Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay are quite successfully expanding the supply of Belarusian quarry equipment, tractors, tires, linen fabrics to these countries, working out the possibilities of creating joint assembly plants. In particular, Honorary Consul of Belarus in Brazilian Sao Paulo G. Goldshleger, speaking about the interest of the Brazilian side in cooperation with PA Belorusneft in terms of providing services to the Belarusian enterprise in seismic exploration and radial drilling, said about the preparation for signing an agreement that "will help make prices for services competitive, and the Belarusian company to get a significant profit"⁶³.

The Belarusian side has a lot of hopes in this regard with the revitalization of its honorary consuls in Asia, where they operate in almost all countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, South Korea and Japan. For example, in Nepal, which is looking for platforms for cooperation with Belarusian partners in the field of agriculture, "there is interest in creating in Belarus a joint production of organic products, which could be exported to European countries. Some raw materials will be

⁶¹ Meeting with honorary consuls of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7548>.

⁶² Final speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei at the first conference of honorary consuls of the Republic of Belarus (October 5, 2017, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/statements/bcc1cb0e38f84b03.html>.

⁶³ Dylenok, Yu. Brazil is interested in "Belorusneft" services import / Yu. - - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/braziliya-zainteresovana-v-importe-uslug-belorusnefti-269669-2017/>.

supplied from Nepal, while others will be produced in Belarus⁶⁴. The implementation of such a joint project is likely to make a concrete contribution to strengthening the Belarusian-Nepali trade and economic cooperation with Honorary Consul of Belarus in Kathmandu A.R.S. Parajuli.

Another interesting example in this vein is the activity of Honorary Consul of Belarus to the Philippines A.M. Ablan, who is at the same time the representative of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in this country and the host of the TV program on social justice and protection of citizens' interests on the "Global News Network" channel, which broadcasts its programs to the countries of South-East Asia. The harmonious combination of such professional interests helped her, firstly, to contribute directly to the victory of the Belarusian manufacturer in the tender for the supply of tire products to the Philippine market and, secondly, to contribute to the formation of a positive image of Belarus in the entire region.

This example is a good illustration to the conclusion that the Honorary Consul is a person who opens new cooperation opportunities, who knows business in the country where he lives, knows niches where Belarusian exporters can come with their products. That's why the institute of honorary consuls of Belarus should, apparently, only increase in the near future. This is confirmed by the opening of the Honorary Consulate of Belarus in French Bordeaux in late September 2017, the main task of which "will be to promote economic cooperation through contacts between business circles of the two countries, implementation of joint projects in the field of culture and education, consular and legal assistance to citizens of Belarus"⁶⁵ in the region of New Aquitaine.

⁶⁴ Sergeeva, V. Nepal is interested in creation of joint production of organic products in Belarus / V. Sergeeva // [Electron resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/nepal-zainteresovan-v-sozdanii-v-belarusi-sovmestnogo-proizvodstva-organicheskikh-produktov-269734-2017>.

⁶⁵ On opening of the Honorary Consulate of Belarus in Bordeaux [Electronic resource]. - - 2017. - Access mode: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ecccbe4e74b16259.html. - Access date: 08.10.2017.

Export culture and mass consciousness

The National Programme of Support and Development of Exports of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 includes among its eight main tasks, along with diversification of trade and economic relations with various countries and regions, optimization of legislation in the field of export support, encouragement of exporters of goods and services to expand the product range and types of services provided, improvement of approaches to work with small and medium enterprises in the field of export, creation of conditions for stimulation of non-raw materials and high technologies.⁶⁶

The appearance of such a task among the most strategically important in a government document of the highest level, we must assume, is not an accident. As you know, exports are the basis of the open Belarusian economy, as they provide the country with foreign currency, profit to enterprises and taxes to the budget of Belarus. In his Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly in April 2016, it was noted that "the most important priority, the priority among the priorities, was and remains export, its growth and necessarily diversification"⁶⁷. But the results of the past five years (2011-2015) have revealed a number of factors constraining the growth and optimization of the Belarusian export structure. These include the slow development of new markets, the low competitiveness of domestic products, the lagging behind the advanced countries in terms of productivity, the insufficient use of competitive advantages, the orientation of Belarusian industrial production towards external resources, the lack of a wide range of export innovative products, the unpreparedness of the sectoral and territorial management structures to react quickly to changes in market conditions and to actively promote products in new markets. This is happening against the backdrop of an increase in global sales of goods and services using information and communication technologies, which has led to a partial displacement of Belarusian export goods sold by traditional means.

That is why the program documents of social and economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 state that in the coming five years

⁶⁶ National Export Support and Development Program of the Republic of Belarus for 2016 - 2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/fileaff83a3fc04eb9c0.PDF>.

⁶⁷ Address with the annual Message to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-21-aprelja-obratitsja-s-ezhegodnym-poslaniem-k-belorusskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-13517/.

foreign economic activity, which implies implementation of a multi-vector foreign policy and achievement of sustainable growth of the export potential of the Belarusian economy, "will be aimed at ensuring the balance of foreign trade on the basis of outpacing export growth rates, use of the country's competitive advantages, effective participation in the international division of labor and intelligence". In order to eventually increase the volume of Belarusian exports of goods and services by 1.21-1.25 times, as well as to bring the scale of exports of industrial products manufactured in Belarus up to 65%.

Solving the problems of such complexity is possible only if all domestic producers of goods and services are involved in foreign economic and export activities, regardless of the scale of production and ownership. But here is what the figures say: "In our country there are more than twenty-two thousand economic entities, but only eight thousand eight hundred are involved in export activities"⁶⁸. In other words, two thirds of Belarusian enterprises, companies and firms remain outside the sphere of international business cooperation. In other words, two thirds of Belarusian companies remain outside of international business cooperation, while two thirds of Belarusian firms remain outside the scope of international business cooperation. The export capacity of the country also depends on "the success of the transition to an innovation-type economy, the creation of a favourable institutional environment, the investment and business climate, the reduction of import intensity of production, and the growth of human capital"⁶⁹. All these problems need to be addressed in an environment of increasing globalization, international integration and internationalization of production and consumption. Only carriers of a high export culture can cope with them, which can be introduced into the mass consciousness only with the active participation of media structures.

It is planned to solve this problem in several directions. Thus, under Priority 1 "Optimization of the national system of export support and development" in order to strengthen the position of Belarus in promising world markets, it is planned to form a comprehensive national system of export support using not only financial, organizational, marketing, trade and political, diplomatic, but also information tools. In accordance with this priority, not only will such measures as

⁶⁸ Transcript of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei within the framework of participation in the Assembly of business circles of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. -- 2016. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/e19c618d70541f42.html>.

⁶⁹ Address by Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, at the XVII Assembly of the Business Community of the Republic of Belarus "Challenge to the Crisis" (March 2, 2016, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/e19c618d70541f42.html>.

the systematization of the regulatory and legal framework, the introduction of new approaches to the training and placement of personnel in the export sector, changes in the format of organizational support for exports of goods and services, the modernization of financial mechanisms for export support, the development of non-financial instruments to support exports, and the use of the potential of exhibition, fair and congress activities be implemented, but information and communication technologies will also be significantly strengthened.

Within the framework of Priority 6 "Development of innovative export by increasing the export of knowledge-intensive products and technologies", the implementation of the measures of which will contribute to the intensification of the commodity structure of export, increase in the volume of export of deep processing products, modern materials and finished products with improved properties, the development of export of technically and technologically complex products, in order to consolidate the innovative specialization of Belarusian export, the development of national information and communication technologies is envisaged.

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Exports to distant arc countries as an important factor for development

Cooperation with the countries of the so-called far arc - Asia, Africa and Latin America - is one of the priorities of the multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus. At the same time, one of the urgent tasks facing the Belarusian economy today is to increase exports to the distant arc countries and bring their volume to 30 percent of the total supply to foreign markets. It is rather difficult to solve it, since "85% of our exports are determined by 12-13 of our partners and there are almost no far-arc countries"⁷⁰. Nevertheless, this task can be solved by using all the opportunities available to Belarusian exporters to promote their goods and services both in terms of securing their positions in the already developed markets of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and in terms of opening new ones. Belarusian economic entities seeking to diversify their supplies to non-CIS countries have examples of such a competent approach to achieving this goal.

Take the producers of Belarusian agricultural products. In three quarters of 2019, they delivered their goods for almost \$4 billion to 94 countries. They "discovered 11 new markets, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Thailand, Angola, Benin, Kenya, Cuba, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina"⁷¹. And we do not intend to rest on our laurels in this direction, continuing to persistently expand markets for a wide variety of product groups. In particular, "work on certification of Belarusian beef for the Turkish market is being actively carried out (there is a possibility that by the end of this year [2019] the first deliveries will be made, and a trial batch of similar goods to Iran, where there have been no deliveries for almost 7 years)"⁷².

As for the meat and dairy products, by the end of 2019 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus plans to increase export supplies by at least five percent. The industry intends to reach such an indicator "not only

⁷⁰ The National Marketing Centre sees difficulties in increasing exports to the far arc countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-tsentr-marketinga-vidit-slozhnosti-s-uvelicheniem-eksporta-v-strany-dalnej-dugi-369792-2019/>.

⁷¹ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products rose by 4.1% in January-September [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyros-na-41-368669-2019/>.

⁷² The Ministry of Agriculture expects to bring cheese exports closer to \$1 billion in 2020 [Electron Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minselhozprod-rasschityvaet-priblizit-eksport-syrov-k-1-mlrd-v-2020-godu-364726-2019/>.

by increasing the number of countries, but also by expanding the range of products: in addition to the traditional positions, we are focused on the taste preferences of consumers in other countries, in accordance with this and build a line of its products⁷³. In addition, by the end of 2019 it is planned to start deliveries of beet press from Belarus to China under direct contracts. "Among the Belarusian sugar beet pulp producers, accredited for deliveries to China, are open joint stock companies Zhabinkovsky sugar plant, Skidelsky sugar mill, Gorodeysky sugar mill and Slutsk sugar refinery⁷⁴.

The enterprises of the Bellesbumprom concern also purposefully develop new markets in 2019. During the nine months of this year, the geography of their exports has covered 69 countries, 15 of which are new. Among them are Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Supplies to the Asian market are also developing. Products are exported to China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Bahrain, Bangladesh, UAE⁷⁵. At the same time, we should separately mention the furniture enterprises that are part of the concern. Almost all of them are exporters. Taking into account adverse external factors, many of them take prompt measures to find new markets. In particular, JLLC ZOV-LenEuromebel has started supplying furniture to the United Arab Emirates. Exports for this enterprise increased by 10.5%⁷⁶.

In 2019, enterprises of the Belarusian Ministry of Industry shipped their products to more than a hundred countries. However, supplies to non-CIS countries accounted for almost a third of total exports. Supplies to African countries have increased almost in one and a half times. As for the development of new markets, "trial shipments were sent to nine countries where exports were

⁷³ The Ministry of Agriculture and Food plans to increase exports of meat and dairy products by at least 5% in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minselhozprod-planiruet-uvulichit-eksport-mjaso-molochnoj-produktsii-v-2019-godu-ne-menee-chem-na-5-369203-2019/>.

⁷⁴ Belarus plans to begin deliveries of beet pulp to China by the end of the year under direct contracts [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-dokontsa-goda-nachat-postavki-v-kitaj-sveklovichnogo-zhoma-po-prjamym-dogovoram-368796-2019/>.

⁷⁵ Exports of Bellesbumprom enterprises rose by 4.9% in January-September [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-predpriyatij-bellesbumproma-v-janvare-sentjabre-vyros-na-49-368267-2019/>.

⁷⁶ Enterprises of Bellesbumprom intend to increase the supply of furniture to the EU countries [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-namereny-naraschivat-postavki-mebeli-v-strany-es-365937-2019/>.

absent in January-July 2018. These include Chile, Lebanon, Benin, Togo and Uganda⁷⁷.

Among Belarusian cities, positive trends in the development of new markets are demonstrated by Brest companies, which have shipped their goods to 85 countries for more than \$780 million in three quarters of 2019. 13 countries have become newcomers to this list. "In particular, JSC "Savushkin Product" delivered the first batch of products to Egypt and Indonesia, "Brest Meat Processing Plant" - Cote d'Ivoire, JV "Santa-Bremor" LLC - to Montenegro. Besides, the producers of the regional center are taking the first steps in developing the markets of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guinea, Dominican Republic, Cape Verde, Malta, Saudi Arabia, Croatia, Iraq, Panama"⁷⁸. And these facts cannot but be encouraging.

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⁷⁷ Enterprises of the Belarusian Ministry of Industry export to more than 100 countries [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-minproma-belarusi-eksportirujut-produktsiju-v-100-stran-363335-2019/>.

⁷⁸ Brest enterprises opened 13 markets in January-September [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-bresta-v-janvare-sentjabre-otkryli-13-rynkov-sbyta-368956-2019/>.

Food exports: growth trends

In 2019, almost one sixth of Belarus' merchandise exports consisted of agricultural products and foodstuffs supplied to 104 countries, exceeding in monetary terms the figure of five and a half billion dollars. A number of positive trends have contributed to the achievement of this level. Firstly, "supplies of milk and dairy products, rapeseed butter, ready-made or canned fish, canned fruits and vegetables, soybean oil, poultry meat, eggs, chocolate and other ready-made products containing cocoa and potatoes have increased⁷⁹. Secondly, the geographical diversification of Belarusian exports has expanded. New markets included countries on almost all continents: in Asia - Afghanistan; in Africa - Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Sudan, Uganda; in the Americas and the Caribbean - Belize, Cuba, Uruguay; in Europe - Luxembourg, Finland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The diversity of supply from Belarus to these new countries can be seen in the following examples. For example, shipments of whey and skimmed milk powder to Afghanistan, malt to Angola and Burkina Faso, skimmed milk powder to Benin, Mozambique and Niger, canned milk and milk powder to Cuba, alcoholic beverages to Uruguay, fur and fur raw materials to Finland, sugar and potatoes to Albania, and potatoes to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thirdly, Belarusian exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs to the market of Belarus' strategic partners - Russia and China - increased in 2019. In particular, its volume grew by three percent to \$4.3 billion to Russia. It should be noted that "the main driver of growth in supplies to Russia has become dairy products. Revenues from its exports have increased by 23%. Supplies of eggs, flax fiber, gelatin, seeds and rapeseed oil have also increased⁸⁰.

As for China, supplies there from Belarus have increased by almost 60% and amounted to \$131.5 million. This made it possible to increase the share of Belarusian exports to the Chinese market to 68 per cent in the structure of all exports to Asia and Oceania. At the same time, "the volume of shipments of processed meat products with high added value (beef and poultry) increased by

⁷⁹ Exports of Belarusian agricultural products in 2019 exceeded \$5.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-2019-godu-prevysil-55-mlrd-378531-2020>.

⁸⁰ Nemankova, Yu. Belarus plans to supply over 3 million tons of dairy and 316 thousand tons of meat to Russia in 2020 / Yu. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-postavit-bolee-3-mln-t-molochki-i-316-tys-t-mjasa-v-rossiju-v-2020-godu-378543-2020>.

\$53.3 million and reached 44.1% in the total structure of food exports to China"⁸¹. And this, along with the increased supplies of rapeseed oil, flax fiber, chocolate, alcoholic beverages, mineral water, skimmed milk powder and whey powder to the Celestial Empire.

Even more strenuous plans to develop exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs have been adopted in Belarus for 2020 - "to increase supplies by 4.2% compared to 2019 and reach an amount exceeding \$5.7 billion"⁸². At the same time, hopes are placed not only on dairy products, but also on plant and meat products. In particular, 3.6 million tons of dairy and 316 thousand tons of meat products will be shipped to Russia alone. Interesting prospects are also opening up for China, where in January 2020 another 14 new producers of meat products from Belarus were accredited. Among them there are 11 new beef producers - Pinsk, Brest, Zhlobin, Gomel, Grodno, Vitebsk, Slonim, Volkovyssk, meat-packing plants, enterprises "Brest Traditions", "Vakhavyak Plus", "Miron", as well as three producers of chicken meat - "Belorusneft-Osobino" and two sites of poultry factory "Dawn". The range of products available for export to the Chinese market, "including chicken legs, wing tips and by-products," has been expanded for another five companies⁸³.

One of the effective tools to promote the interests of Belarusian agricultural and food producers in foreign markets in 2020 should also be their participation in international specialized exhibitions. Thus, already in the second half of February 2020 the National Pavilion of Belarus will be presented at the world's largest annual food exhibition "Gulfood-2020" in the United Arab Emirates. The exposition of Belarusian exporters, including Bellact OJSC, Verkhnedvinsk Butter and Cheese Plant, Lida Dairy and Canned Food Processing Plant, Primeilk Company, Slonim Meat Processing Plant, Slutsk Cheese Processing Plant, and Turov Dairy Plant, will be organized at Gulfood for the fifth consecutive year. In 2019, participants in the Belarusian pavilion signed contracts for \$13 million here. And "as a result of 11 months of work, the export of agricultural goods to the

⁸¹ The first container train with meat products is planned to be sent to China this year [Electronic Resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervyj-kontejnernyj-poezd-s-mjasnoj-produktsiej-planirujut-otpravit-v-kitaj-v-etom-godu-378553-2020>.

⁸² Belarus plans to increase food exports by 4.2% in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-planiruet-uvelichit-eksport-prodovolstvija-na-42-v-2020-godu-378535-2020>.

⁸³ Another 14 producers are accredited to supply Belarusian meat products to China [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/dlja-postavok-belorusskoj-mjasnoj-produktsii-v-kitaj-akkreditovany-esche-14-proizvoditelej-375197-2020/>.

UAE has increased almost three times and amounted to \$1.8 million⁸⁴. That is why there is every reason to believe that this time participation in this specialized business forum will fully justify itself, as more than five thousand companies from 120 countries will participate in it. The expected number of visitors is about one hundred thousand people. In total, expositions of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus in 2020 will be organized in more than forty countries, including Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Oman, Syria, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, South Africa, as well as in Georgia, Moldova, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, United States of America.

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⁸⁴ The National Pavilion of Belarus will be presented at the world's largest food exhibition in Dubai [Electronic Resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-paviljon-belarusi-budet-predstavlen-na-krupnejshej-v-mire-pischevoj-vystavke-v-dubae-375478-2020/>.

Export of services: among priorities - tourism

One of the most important directions for minimizing the dependence of the Belarusian economy on the influence of key factors of the foreign economic situation is the outpacing growth of services exports. At the same time, the main priorities and conceptual directions of export support and development in the Republic of Belarus include "expanding the range of exported services in transport, tourism, medicine, communications, finance and consulting"⁸⁵. The experience of recent years shows that the measures taken in the country to address this challenge are bearing fruit. Thus, according to the results of 2019, "foreign trade turnover of services increased by 8.8% and reached \$ 15.468 billion. Export of services showed an increase of 9.3% to \$ 9.65 billion <...>. The balance of foreign trade in services was positive amounting to \$3.833 bln"⁸⁶.

Exports of tourist services are developing very successfully in this regard, the volume of which in 2019 increased by almost 15 percent and exceeded \$250 million, while "the number of foreign citizens who visited Belarus in 2019 amounted to more than 4 million 924 thousand"⁸⁷. To a large extent, this positive trend is due to the intensification of work on liberalization of visa-free regime and development of inbound tourism. In particular, since the beginning of the visa-free regime by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus of January 9, 2017, more than 350 thousand people from 70 countries have been able to use the visa-free regime, and in 2019 their number increased by more than 40% compared to 2018. The unification of the two visa-free zones into a single "Brest-Grodno" has also had a positive effect.

Thus, in 2019, about 32 thousand foreigners entered the Brest region, taking advantage of the visa-free regime. In January 2020, their number increased immediately by 70 percent compared to the same period in 2019 and amounted to almost 2200 people from 29 countries. Interestingly, "of the total number of visa-free tourists, 80% are Polish citizens. Brest region is increasingly visited by

⁸⁵ National Export Support and Development Programme of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2016. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/fileaff83a3fc04eb9c0.PDF>.

⁸⁶ In 2019, Belarus reduced exports of goods and services by 0.7% to almost \$42 billion [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-2019-godu-snizila-eksport-tovarov-i-uslug-na-07-pochti-do-42-mlrd-379111-2020>.

⁸⁷ Exports of tourist services in Belarus exceeded \$250 million in 2019 [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/eksport-turisticheskikh-uslug-belarusi-v-2019-godu-prevysil-250-mln-379317-2020>.

representatives of Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Great Britain and Belgium"⁸⁸. At the same time, in 2020, the duration of stay of foreign tourists in the Brest region has also increased - from three to four days. In this south-western Belarusian region, they are determined to continue the trend of increasing tourist flow. To this end, they are actively working on the integration of tourist products together with Grodno region to combine their routes with European ones. Suffice it to say that the calendar of tourist events in Brest in 2020 includes more than a hundred events of various scales, including a gastronomic festival in the national park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha," at least four bicycle festivals, as well as an international tourism forum in Brest.

An important detail: more than 40 events in the calendar are somehow connected with the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, which in 2019 was visited by about 575 thousand tourists, including more than 85 thousand foreigners. In 2020 it is planned to pay special attention to marketing Belovezhskaya Pushcha for tourists from third countries - Western Europe, Asia and North America. Actually, and for this purpose at the meeting of the working group on development of transboundary tourism between Belarus and Poland in February 2020 in Brest, an agreement was reached on creation of a single trans-border information center in the National Park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" and the Bialowieza National Park, the activity of which will be "aimed at strengthening interaction between employees of protected areas and raising awareness of tourists about the events from the Belarusian and Polish sides"⁸⁹. In this regard, the road map of the tourist area of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, currently being developed by Belarusian and Polish specialists, will cover part of Kamenets, Pruzhany and Svisloch districts, as well as Podlasie voivodeship. This document envisages the continuation of the AugustWelo project. The second part of the project was named "BelovezhaVelo". And the route of its length of about 70 kilometers will run between the border crossing "Pererov" and Svisloch.

Let us recall that more than forty years ago - in October 1979 - the Bialowieza National Park, located in Poland, was included in the List of World Heritage Sites of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1992, the Belarusian part of Belovezhskaya Pushcha added to this list, which made it possible to create Europe's first natural cross-

⁸⁸ The number of visa-free tourists who entered the Brest region in January increased by 70% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chislo-vjehavshih-v-brestskuju-oblast-bezvizovyh-turistov-v-janvare-uvlechilos-na-70-379154-2020>.

⁸⁹ Belarus and Poland are developing a road map of the cross-border tourism area [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/belarus-i-polsha-razrabatyvajut-dorozhnyu-kartu-transgranichnoj-turisticheskoy-territorii-378867-2020/>.

border World Heritage site. In 2014 "it was extended to 140 thousand hectares on the whole historical territory of Belovezhskaya Pushcha under the general name of the Bialowieza Forest. It includes 60 thousand ha of old-age forest on the Polish side and 80 thousand ha on the Belarusian side"⁹⁰. Recently, the World Heritage Committee has issued recommendations to the Belarusian and Polish sides to intensify their efforts to prepare a single cross-border plan for the joint management of this World Heritage Site. The project now has much work to do to adapt its legislation to the joint plan and to conceptualize approaches to the management of the site according to the criteria of its outstanding universal value. It should be assumed that the tourist attractiveness of Belovezhskaya Pushcha in this regard will only increase in the eyes of foreigners visiting it.

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⁹⁰ Belarus and Poland will develop a plan for joint management of Belovezhskaya Pushcha [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/belarus-i-polsha-razrabotajut-plan-sovmestnogo-upravlenija-belovezhskoj-pushej-367608-2019/>.

Import substitution: growth reserves - in modernization

As early as in the Program of Activity of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2020 the task was outlined to create conditions for the implementation of a policy of rational import substitution and development of import-substituting industries, including using the potential of small and medium-sized companies to improve the trade balance of the country in order to eventually achieve "annual growth in production of import-substituting products in the amount of at least USD 600 million"⁹¹. In February 2020, while visiting the Dobrush paper mill "Hero of Labor," President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko visited the Dobrush paper mill. Lukashenko drew even more attention to this issue: "We need to earn currency, so it is desirable not to export it. <...> We will take import substitution seriously" .

It should be noted that in Belarus the main task of import substitution, which is understood as the state policy aimed at rationalizing the import of goods and services by stimulating domestic producers, including with the participation of foreign capital, to organize the production of products that were previously imported, is formulated as "not mechanical substitution of imported goods, but the development of competitive national production"⁹². According to the estimates of the Belarusian Ministry of Economy, the share of import substitution products in the country has already approached 40% or \$20 billion in monetary terms. At the same time, "the share of sales of import-substituting products for export has increased to 50%. This shows that it is not only competitive in the domestic market, but also in demand abroad"⁹³.

Among the economic entities of Belarus, quite successfully solving the issues of import substitution, one can name the enterprises of the concern Bellesbumprom. In 2019, they increased the output of such products by almost 10% and produced them by more than \$530 million. To be more precise, the import-substituting products were produced by 26 enterprises in 38 commodity

⁹¹ Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/file253cf6b5b538838e.PDF>.

⁹² Ideas for import substitution [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/idei_importozames-ru/.

⁹³ The share of import-substituting products in Belarusian industry is approaching 40% [Electron resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/dolja-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-v-promyshlennosti-belarusi-priblizhaetsja-k-40-379006-2020/>.

items, including cellulose, wood-fiber and chipboard, plywood, uncoated paper and cardboard, corrugated and non-fluted cardboard, paper bags, newsprint and sanitary paper. In particular, "in 2019 JSC Svetlogorsk PPK produced 145 thousand tons of cellulose, which is 5.6 times more than in 2018"⁹⁴. Another interesting example in this context is Rechitsadrev. Three years ago, the Synthetic Resins Plant started operating in Rechitsa. One of the directions for using this resin is the production of decorative film from ordinary paper used in the production of laminated wood boards. The result: if previously furniture makers had to buy synthetic resin abroad, now they began to export the surplus resin themselves. And in 2019 alone, this gave the company around three million euros. All in all, "the production of its own resin saved around 10 million Euros over the entire period"⁹⁵.

The secret of success of the concern's enterprises is in the carried out modernization of basic woodworking enterprises that has allowed to expand considerably the assortment of let out production and to provide its high quality. Bottom line: over the last five years, when new plants started operating, the volume of production of import-substituting products has more than doubled. Continuing to develop this actual priority of activity, Bellesbumprom sees such perspective directions as expansion of assortment and growth of volumes of production of various kinds of paper packaging as an alternative to polyethylene, and also manufacture of high-quality coated cardboard which in considerable quantities is used in polygraphic, food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic industries. As a result, "in 2020 the concern's enterprises plan to increase production of import substitution products by 30 million dollars to 560 million"⁹⁶.

Interesting experience in the development of import substitution has also been accumulated in the production association "Energokomplekt" in Vitebsk, where in 2019 exports were "86% of the total volume of \$112 million. At the same time, the Vitebsk enterprise accounts for 70% of all cable products manufactured in Belarus"⁹⁷. It is worth adding that this association, founded in 1992 and now a

⁹⁴ Enterprises of "Bellesbumprom" in 2019 increased the production of import-substituting products by 9.3% [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-2019-godu-uvlechili-proizvodstvo-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-379049-2020/>.

⁹⁵ Kapba, E. In the lens - "Rechitsadrev". Successful import substitution / E. Kapba // [Electron resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://dneprovec.by/companynews/2020/02/14/25898>.

⁹⁶ Igor Lyashenko orients "Bellesbumprom" towards more active production of import substitution products [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9267>.

⁹⁷ Bogacheva, O. The questions of import substitution should be paid more attention - Anfimov / O. Bogacheva // [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/voprosam-importozameschenija-neobhodimo-udeljat-bolshe-vnimaniya-anfimov-378866-2020/>.

resident of the free economic zone "Vitsebsk," employs 650 people, providing innovative products to both domestic and foreign consumers. A number of examples of successful implementation of import substitution policy can be seen in the Gomel region as well. In particular, "one of them is the Turov Dairy Plant, which produces traditional Italian cheese for sale on the national Belarusian market"⁹⁸. All these examples suggest that the import substitution policy in Belarus, although developing, still has a huge potential that many market players have to learn from the best practices already available in the country.

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⁹⁸ Shumel, K.V. Development of the import-substituting industries in the context of the innovation development concept of the Republic of Belarus / K.V. Shumel // Women scientists of Belarus and Kazakhstan : a collection of materials of the International scientific-practical conference, Minsk, 1-2 March 2018 / edited by A.V. Shumel. I.V. Kazakova [et al.]. - Minsk : RIVSh, 2018. -- C. 553.

From green economy to green cities

At the 24th United Nations World Conference on Climate Change, held in December 2018 in the Polish city of Katowice, the Belarusian side stated that it views the green economy and low-carbon sustainable development as a strategic vector. Due to the fact that over 60 per cent of emissions in the Republic of Belarus come from the energy sector, special attention is paid to improving energy efficiency of the economy, development of renewable and other low-carbon energy sources. Having pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 28 per cent by 2030 to the 1990 level, Belarus, at a forum in Katowice, expressed its readiness to "increase its ambitions" to "do more in such areas as energy, transport, industry, construction and waste management"⁹⁹. However, fair and inclusive criteria for access to international climate funds should be established for middle-income countries or countries with economies in transition.

The projects implemented with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are a very effective tool for achieving the strategic objective in Belarus. One of them – "Belarus: Support to Green Urban Development in Small and Medium Cities of Belarus" ("Green Cities"), for which the Global Environment Facility has allocated three million dollars – in December 2018 moved to the stage of practical implementation of three pilot initiatives to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in three Belarusian cities – Polotsk, Novopolotsk and Novogrudok – by 2022 by more than 90 thousand tons.

Recall that sustainable development of cities and human settlements was included in 2015 by the United Nations as a separate goal in the global sustainable development agenda to "make cities and human settlements open, safe, resilient and sustainable"¹⁰⁰. This implies not only access to safe and affordable housing, but also the necessary investment in improved public transport, green public spaces and improved urban planning and development in a participatory and inclusive manner. In Belarus, this issue is also based on the understanding that "a green city must sustainably meet the needs of several generations, make a significant contribution to the economy while reducing greenhouse gas

⁹⁹ Belarus views the green economy as a strategic vector – Khudyk [Electronic resource]. – – 2018. – URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-zelenuju-ekonomiku-kak-strategicheskij-vektor-hudyk-329111-2018/>.

¹⁰⁰ Goal 11: Sustainable cities and human settlements [Electronic resource]. – – 2015. – URL: <http://www.by.undp.org/content/belarus/ru/home/post-2015/sdg-overview/goal-11.html>.

emissions"¹⁰¹. This is why the country has adopted an integrated approach aimed at increasing the sustainability of cities through energy conservation, transport and urban mobility, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and other measures that are beneficial to the environment, beneficial to the urban economy and improve the quality of life of people.

Speaking about the implementation of the "Green Cities" project in Polotsk and Novopolotsk, it should be noted that one of the main elements there will be the implementation of pilot initiatives on sustainable urban transport, where it is planned to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 77.8 thousand tons by 2022 through the mobile component - improvement of urban transport and development of bicycle driving. And in Novogrudok, the task will be achieved through energy efficiency measures. In this regard, green urban development plans have already been developed for all three cities - step-by-step strategies to achieve the desired state of the city.

Thus, a tender will be held in Polotsk and Novopolotsk for the creation of design and estimate documentation for the construction of a cycle track, which will connect the two cities. At the same time, when considering various route options, the optimal one was chosen there, which runs through the village of Ekiman. It is also important that the cycling infrastructure of Polotsk and Novopolotsk will be developed in a comprehensive way: from bicycle lanes, bicycle parking lots, bicycle cafes to repair shops and rental shops. It also provides for "replacement of public transport stops, installation of information boards, implementation of an adaptive control system to synchronize traffic light signals"¹⁰². In addition, for the two cities in Vitsebsk voblast, a single plan of sustainable urban mobility is being developed for the first time in Belarus. It will allow the city authorities to jointly address regional problems of public transport demand, congestion of roads due to excessive use of private cars.

As for Novogrudok, in accordance with the "Green Cities" project, it is planned to implement measures to improve energy efficiency: from replacement of inefficient street lighting systems with "smart" LED lamps to the use of intelligent energy accounting system at residential facilities. At the same time, street lighting control systems will take into account the presence or absence of

¹⁰¹ The UNDP project "Green Cities" in Belarus will help to reduce CO2 emissions by more than 90,000 tonnes [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/proekt-proon-zelenye-goroda-v-belarusi-pomozhet-sokratit-vybrosoy-so-2-bolee-chem-na-90-tys-t-328928-2018/>.

¹⁰² The UNDP Green Cities Project in Belarus is moving to the implementation stage [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/proekt-proon-zelenye-goroda-v-belarusi-perehodit-k-stadii-prakticheskoy-realizatsii-328934-2018/>.

people, transport, lighting and time of day, thus saving energy and money. Referring to the second area of the pilot initiative in Novogrudok, we would like to note that a house has already been defined there, where "smart" meters will be installed.

It remains to be added that the lessons learned from the three pilot initiatives of the UNDP Green Cities Project will then be used in at least another ten communities of the Republic of Belarus.

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From international technical assistance project to specific renewable energy facilities

"Removing Barriers to Wind Energy Development in the Republic of Belarus" - an international technical assistance project under this title is being implemented in our country by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility. The Belarusian Government approved it back in December 2014. One of its components is to increase the confidence of potential investors in the profitability of wind energy projects on Belarusian soil, reduce the risks of investment in wind energy development and prepare pre-investment assets for the construction of wind power facilities in Belarus. For this purpose, "a large-scale information campaign on renewable energy" should be conducted in our country¹⁰³. And the final goal is seen in the successful development of at least five objects on wind power installations. At the same time, the project includes: 1) selection of potential sites for wind power plants, 2) obtaining necessary permits, 3) development of required technical specifications and qualification criteria, 4) conducting feasibility study and wind measurements.

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

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

published in April 2017, notes that "over the past decades, wind energy costs have fallen significantly and often represent an economically competitive alternative to fossil fuels. Thus, wind energy offers Belarus the opportunity to reduce energy imports while meeting its obligations to minimize the impact of climate change"¹⁰⁴. And the Belarusian side is ready to make serious efforts to address this problem.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Engineering Co. Inc. - will take up this case. It is expected that work on the creation of this wind farm will begin in 2020, and after their completion the wind farm will supply clean energy to more than twenty thousand households in the Lioznensky district. As a result, it is expected that the operation of the wind park in the next 20 years will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 500 thousand tons.

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For economic development at the local level

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. Preservation of a favorable 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 Belarusian Government, was designed to contribute to: "(1) strengthening effective systems of public administration based on the principles of sustainability, accountability and inclusiveness; (2) developing green growth that takes into account the interests of all stakeholders; and (3) ensuring universal access to basic services for vulnerable groups"¹⁰⁸.

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 between authorities and civil initiatives for the development of regions in accordance with their specificities. The project, which worked in three main areas - assessing local needs and problems, building the capacity of the local community to address them, and financing local initiatives - conducted a large-scale sociological study "My District" 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 authorities, NGOs and local communities received new knowledge in strategic planning of local development, management of initiatives and creation of effective partnerships. Together, they developed area-based development passports for their districts to identify growth points and necessary actions for local development. As a result, some 250 local initiatives from across

¹⁰⁸ General information on interaction with international financial organizations [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/obschaja_info_mfo-ru/#7z.

Belarus have received financial support from the European Union "in the areas of social services improvement, infrastructure development, health care, complementary education, economic development, environment, tourism and cultural heritage preservation"¹⁰⁹. In total, support for these local initiatives exceeded three million Euros, and passports for territorially oriented development of 30 pilot districts were included in 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 programme "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 development at the local level. At the national level, the project, which has a budget of \$9.5 million, will carry out activities aimed at promoting dialogue on the issues of forming and supporting regional development, as well as addressing socially significant issues.

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. There, it is planned to form or expand the existing district public advisory councils, which will develop 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 districts for receiving financial assistance will be increased in two or three years"¹¹⁰.

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 participating in the project were named -

¹⁰⁹ 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/>.

¹¹⁰ 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-razvitija-12-rajo>.

Berezovsky, Kobrinsky, Braslavsky, Orshansky, Braginsky, Zhlobinsky, Khoiinsky, Lidsky, Borisov, Molodechno, Bykhovsky, Khotimsky¹¹¹.

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¹¹¹ Twelve regions of Belarus will receive international technical assistance for economic development [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/dvenadsat-rajonov-belarusi-poluchat-mezhdunarodnuju-tehpomosch-dlja-ekonomicheskogo-razvitija-338801-2019/>.

Brest region: goal - attracting foreign investments

It is known that foreign direct investment is an important factor for sustainable economic development and international competitiveness for most countries of the world. Attraction of foreign investments in the Republic of Belarus is the most important direction of the country's foreign economic activity "due to the fact that the increased volume of international relations, the tasks of integration of the Belarusian economy into the system of modern world economic relations and effective use of the existing domestic scientific and technical potential urgently require renovation of the main production assets, introduction of the newest foreign technologies"¹¹².

The inflow of investments into the country's economy contributes to the development of enterprises, improving the quality of human capital, creating new jobs, attracting advanced technologies and stimulating their dissemination in related industries. More specifically, foreign direct investment performs such functions in the country's economy, where it is attracted, as "activate the investment process as a whole; contribute to the development of the material base of the economy; provide an opportunity to exchange the latest achievements of production, management and marketing technologies necessary for reaching the world level; stimulate the development of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial forms; accelerate the development of sectors of the economy as a whole and of individual regions of the country; help to stimulate the development of the economy."¹¹³

In this regard, there is a clear need to strengthen the innovative orientation of foreign direct investment in the regions of Belarus, where it should contribute to sustainable, high-quality and balanced development of small towns and cities of the country, and to organize production of goods attractive for the international market. This issue is very relevant today for Brest Oblast, a region of Belarus with great opportunities for attracting foreign investments. Due to its advantageous geographical location, the region can and should become a springboard for its export-oriented products to reach the markets of both the Eurasian Economic and European Union countries.

¹¹² Zalesky, B. International Relations and Media. View from Belarus / B. Zaleskiy. - Palmarium Academic Publishing : Saarbrücken, Deutschland, 2014. - - C. 637.

¹¹³ Treitakova, E.V. Foreign direct investments: estimation of attraction to the Republic of Belarus / E.V. Treitakova // Vestnik of P.O. Sukhoi State Technical University. - - 2017. - - №3. - - C. 77.

We remind that in 2016 foreign investments - about 134 million dollars - came to Brest region from 42 countries. A year later, the main investors in the region's economy were business entities from Lithuania, Russia, Poland and Germany. "Receipt of direct foreign investments amounted to \$199.7 million, or 86.8% of all incoming foreign investments"¹¹⁴. In 2017, 38 projects were implemented in the region under the concluded investment agreements, including those with attraction of foreign investments. In particular, the following projects were discussed: organization of mycelium production by "BTV-Agro" Ltd. in Kobrin district with the volume of investments - four and a half million dollars; cultivation of berry crops - blueberries and blackberries - by German company "Landberg Group" with organization of drip irrigation in Luninets district and the volume of investments of one million dollars; creation of production of absorbent substances by Estonian "Terra Sorb" Ltd. on the basis of peat in Stolin district with the volume of financing - 400 thousand dollars. In addition, LLC "Stolin Solar" was registered in Stolin district in 2017, the British investor of which came out with a proposal "to enter into an investment agreement for a total amount of more than \$34 million for the creation of solar energy plant"¹¹⁵. At first, the project envisaged the creation of ten new jobs, and during the season it was planned to attract up to 20 additional employees⁶.

In 2019, it is planned to attract at least 50 million dollars of foreign direct investment into the economy of Brest region, which will be used to modernize and further develop existing enterprises and industries, as well as to create new organizations in the field of small and medium-sized businesses. As for the continuation of the implementation of the already launched major projects, we should mention the foreign unitary enterprise for furniture production "Stanles" in Pinsk, in the development of which in 2019 will be invested half a million dollars. In the same Pinsk, the American corporation "Silicon Materials" will allocate almost two million dollars for the construction of a plant to produce ingots of single-crystal silicon. In Kobrin, the joint venture PP "Polesie" plans to invest about one and a half million dollars in the construction of industrial and warehouse complex for the production of plastic products. In addition, "the German company has started implementation of a large investment project to

¹¹⁴ Brest region enterprises have invested more abroad than foreigners in the Brest region [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: [https://1reg.by/2018/02/15/predpriyatiya-brestskoy-oblasti-bolshe-investirovali-za-rubezh-chem-inostrancyi-v-brestskiy-region/...](https://1reg.by/2018/02/15/predpriyatiya-brestskoy-oblasti-bolshe-investirovali-za-rubezh-chem-inostrancyi-v-brestskiy-region/)

¹¹⁵ The British investor intends to create a solar plant in Stolin district [Electron Resource]. - - 2017. - URL: [https://www.belta.by/regions/view/britanskij-investor-nameren-sozdat-solnechnuju-ustanovku-v-stolinskom-rajone-242581-2017/.](https://www.belta.by/regions/view/britanskij-investor-nameren-sozdat-solnechnuju-ustanovku-v-stolinskom-rajone-242581-2017/)

create furniture production in Ivatsevichi district¹¹⁶. And in total at the end of 2018 the investment portfolio of the Brest region included 26 proposals for potential investors for 167 million dollars. To attract foreign investors, a list of 109 land plots with different purposes was compiled here.

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¹¹⁶ The inflow of direct foreign investments into the Brest region in 2019 will amount to at least \$50 million [Electronic resource]. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pritok-prjamyh-inostrannyh-investitsij-v-brestskuju-oblast-v-2019-godu-sostavit-ne-menee-50-mln-330506-2018/>

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

Free Economic Zone "Brest" was the first to be established in the Republic of Belarus. It took place in 1996. And today it is a multi-profile economic area, where industrial, technological and logistic activities can develop. Besides, a part of it is adjacent to automobile and railway checkpoints across the state border and can be used as a logistics component. Since the creation of the FEZ, the total volume of investments here has exceeded one and a half billion dollars. These investments are definitely paying off. During the three quarters of 2019, residents of FEZ "Brest" almost doubled their contributions to the budget - from Br20.9 million in 2018 to Br41 million now. Today, 73 enterprises from 20 countries are already operating on its territory. It is noteworthy that in 2018 they "exported goods worth \$700 million, the geography of exports includes 70 countries"¹¹⁷. A year later - at the beginning of 2020 - "FEZ economic entities exported goods worth \$718 million, and the geography of exports includes 75 countries"¹¹⁸.

Germany is the leader among foreign countries by the volume of investments in FEZ. German investors account for one third of all foreign investments made here. And companies with German capital show high economic efficiency. Among them are "Santa-Bremor", "Discom", "Salamander Window and Door Systems", whose products are well known both in Belarus and abroad. In particular, in April 2019 in the LEZ opened a new production of paint materials "Discom", in the construction of which was invested about two million euros. This company is part of the German DAW SE group, which was founded in Germany back in 1895. "Today, Discom employs over 250 specialists. Opening of the new factory has allowed to create about 20 additional workplaces for inhabitants of Brest"¹¹⁹.

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

¹¹⁷ Residents of FEZ "Brest" have doubled their deductions to the budget [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-brest-vidvoe-uvelichili-otchisleniya-bjudzhet-367876-2019/3>.

¹¹⁸ History [Electronic resource]. --2020. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/history>

¹¹⁹ Opening of new production "Discom" [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/otkryitie-novogo-proizvodstva-%C2%ABdiskom%C2%BB>.

equipment"¹²⁰ and shows one of the highest export growth rates among BEZ enterprises. It should be reminded that back in 2010 the Ministry of Economic Development of Italy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Brest Oblast Executive Committee signed a declaration on the establishment of an Italian industrial district on the territory of the FEZ with the total area of 26 hectares. A year later in Trieste a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of this industrial district was adopted, which provided for the creation of the most favorable conditions for attracting Italian investors and planned "the development of the Italian industrial zone in Brest as a transport and logistics center that provides transshipment and transit of goods between the European Union, the Customs Union, and in the future - and China"¹²¹. So the prospects for Italian business in FEZ Brest are simply huge.

Polish businessmen also show great interest in the LEZ. Today there are 11 enterprises with Polish capital, including Stomil Sanok BR. Investors from this European country "take the third place after Germany and Russia. The share of Polish investments in the total volume is 17 percent"¹²². In particular, in March 2019 "English Windows" Ltd. was registered here with Polish investments. "It is planned to create at least 20 jobs in the new company"¹²³. It is quite possible that in 2020 the Agreement on cooperation between the administration of FEZ "Brest" and the Lower Silesian Agency for Economic Development signed in April 2017 will receive its further development in the form of concrete projects.

Interest in cooperation with FEZ "Brest" is also shown by Israeli entrepreneurs. In addition, they have a good example to follow: the current resident of the Free Economic Zone is "a company with Israeli capital Fa-UN, which has established the production of feed additives for agricultural production in FEZs"¹²⁴. In September 2019, a delegation from the Israeli city of Ashdod, whose port is the largest in Israel, studied the experience of FEZ "Brest", as 60 percent of all goods entering this Middle East country, including those from Santa Bremor, a FEZ resident, pass through it. We must believe that the dialogue that

¹²⁰ The discussion of the Belarusian-Italian business forum continued in Brest [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/obsuzhdenie-voprosov-belorussko-italyanskogo-biznes-foruma-prodolzhilos-v-breeste>.

¹²¹ Zalesky, B. International Relations and Media. View from Belarus / B. Zaleskiy. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. -- C. 147.

¹²² Strengthening partnerships [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/2-ukreplyaya-partnerskie-svyazi>.

¹²³ New resident of FEZ "Brest" [Electronic resource] was registered. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/zaregistrirovan-novyj-rezident-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB>.

¹²⁴ In FEZ "Brest" administration there was a meeting with delegation from Israel [Electronic resource]. -- 2019. - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczi-sez-%C2%ABrest%C2%BB-proshla-vstrecha-s-delegaczij-iz-izrailya>.

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

Swiss entrepreneurs have an interest in the LEZ. They are primarily attracted by the favorable location of Brest airport, which allows it to be used for private aviation flights. And further, it may be a question of locating here "production facilities with Swiss capital, related to mechanical engineering and food production"¹²⁵.

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¹²⁵ The administration of FEZ "Brest" discussed the proposals of the Swiss business community [Electronic resource]. - - 2018 . - URL: <https://fezbrest.com/v-administraczii-sez-%C2%ABbrest%C2%BB-obsudili-predlozheniya-delovyix-krugov-shvejczarii> .

Vitebsk region: growth points - local raw materials and clustering

Vitebsk region is among those Belarusian regions where, according to the head of state, "it is necessary to take technological and organizational measures to cope with the problems that exist there".¹²⁶ and direct the development of the region in an innovative direction. One of the real instruments used in the region to solve this problem is the free economic zone "Vitebsk", established twenty years ago - in 1999, which is now located on an area of about three thousand hectares and consists of 16 sectors, seven of which are in Vitebsk, five - in Orsha, as well as one each in Vitebsk, Polotsk, Postavsk and Novopolotsk. On their territory there are already 48 enterprises with participation of investors from 14 countries, including Germany, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, UK, USA, Israel, Cyprus and Estonia.

In November 2019 they were joined by a new resident - Rubovsky Dolomite Quarry Ltd. with the participation of a Lithuanian investor and a project to establish a dolomite-based building materials production. In this case we are talking about organizing the production of hypercompressed bricks like "Lego" and other decorative building materials from environmentally friendly raw materials. The production will be located on the territory of the former airfield on the outskirts of Vitebsk. Apparently, the project is designed for the long term, as the total reserves of dolomites in Vitebsk region "are estimated at more than 5 billion tons at a depth of 2.5 to 38 m, of which the volume of approved reserves is 878 million tons. The "Ruba" dolomite deposit is among the largest among the explored deposits in Belarus"¹²⁷. As a matter of fact, and for this reason, production of construction materials based on natural raw materials is one of the priorities of the Vitebsk Oblast economy development.

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

¹²⁶ Meeting on the development of agroindustrial complex in Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveschanie-po-voprosam-razvitiya-agropromyshlennogo-kompleksa-vitebskoj-oblasti-22434/.

¹²⁷ The new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will create manufacture of building materials from dolomite [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-stroitelnyh-materialov-iz-dolomita-371163-2019/>.

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

Taking into account the obvious growing interest of investors in wood processing projects, FEZ "Vitebsk" came up with an initiative - to create a wood processing cluster in the region, which implies the union of manufacturers, research centers and educational institutions, which is expected to provide favorable conditions for innovation. After all, "this form of cooperation will stimulate scientific developments and their practical application. As a result, it will increase the depth of wood processing and create higher value-added products"¹²⁸. The participants of this cluster can become enterprises, institutions of additional education, educational institutions where specialists for this industry are trained, including Vitebsk State Technical College. The agreement on the creation of the woodworking cluster is planned to be signed in spring 2020 in the framework of the International Economic Forum in Vitebsk. Let's hope that this form of coordination, which implies a synergistic effect on the output, will really help introduce innovations not only in the free economic zone, but also outside it.

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

¹²⁸ FEZ "Vitebsk" suggests creating a woodworking cluster [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-predlagaet-sozdat-derevoobrabatvyvajuschij-klastern-371147-2019/>.

The growing interest of foreign partners in the petrochemical cluster is pushing its organizers to optimize the mechanisms of interaction of its participants. For this reason, it is planned to create an association here in 2020, which will act as a coordinating center and will form proposals to improve the regulatory requirements governing the activities of the subjects of this innovative infrastructure. In addition, "the association will also take over the organization of events to develop effective interaction between participants, the formation of a portfolio of joint orders, promotion of the image of the cluster and improvement of personnel support of its activities¹²⁹. There is every reason to believe that this format of cooperation can also have the most beneficial effect on the innovative development of the Vitebsk Oblast economy.

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¹²⁹ The number of participants in the Novopolotsk petrochemical cluster is planned to almost double [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/chislo-uchastnikov-novopolotskogo-neftehimicheskogo-klastera-planiruetsja-uvlechit-pochti-v-dva-raza-371161-2019/>.

Free Economic Zone "Vitebsk": course - international cooperation

In August 2018 the Republic of Belarus adopted Decree No. 346 for further development of free economic zones and intensification of attraction of national and foreign investments, which stated the need to expand the territory and optimize the existing FEZs in the country - "Minsk", "Vitsebsk", "Grodnoinvest", "Mogilev", "Gomel-Raton". It is assumed that the measures taken in the decree "will make it possible to accommodate residents, taking into account the prospects for their further growth, to organize jobs, to make optimal use of vacant land plots with the existing engineering and transport infrastructure, as well as to attract investment in the creation of export-oriented and import-substituting industries"¹³⁰.

It should be noted that only in FEZ "Vitebsk" this decree defines 16 sectors, located not only in the area of Vitebsk, but also in other cities and urban settlements of the region - Postavy, Orsha, Baran, Bolbasovo, Novopolotsk, Polotsk district, as well as near the villages of Kosachi and Kopti of Vitebsk district, each of which in the near future can and should receive powerful impulses for development. And these plans are already beginning to be implemented in practice.

In particular, in December 2018 in FEZ "Vitebsk" appeared the first resident with Lithuanian capital - LLC "VMG WoodArt", the production site of which will be located in the first sector of the free economic zone on the territory of the former military airfield on the outskirts of Vitebsk, which is named "Zhurzhevo". The new resident is a part of one of the largest manufacturers and exporters of furniture and wood chipboards in the Baltic States - the international holding "VMG", headquartered in Klaipeda, which unites a number of companies in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus.

Proposed for FEZ "Vitebsk" project involves the creation of sawmill production and factories for the production of wood chipboards and furniture. Its implementation will take place in two stages. "Initially, in the period until 2023 it is planned to invest more than 50 million euros in the development of production activities, to create about 200 jobs. The total volume of wood processing at the

¹³⁰ Belarus will consider the possibility of taking a loan to build energy infrastructure in a FEZ [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-privlechenija-zajma-dlja-stroitelstva-energeticheskoy-infrastruktury-330424-2018/>.

holding companies will be about 700 thousand cubic meters per year. In total, at least 500 workplaces will be created"¹³¹.

Among the states with which the residents of the Vitebsk Free Economic Zone are successfully developing cooperation today is Latvia. During three quarters of 2018 their trade turnover with Latvian economic entities came close to 25 million dollars, which is more than a third of the mutual trade of the whole Vitebsk region with this Baltic country. "The following companies are involved in export-import transactions with Latvia: LLC "BelGigaSint", LLC "PO "Energokomplekt", OJSC "Vityaz", LLC "Modern-Expo", LLC "Allianceplast", RUPTP "Orsha flax mill"¹³².

Even more significant results are typical for the interaction of FEZ "Vitebsk" resident enterprises with Russian partners, especially from Moscow and Moscow region. Thus, only in the first half of 2018 the turnover with them exceeded 60 million dollars, and in the leaders of business cooperation with Muscovites can be called not only OAO "Vitebsk Carpets", but also "foreign enterprise" VIC-animal health ", LLC" Prodexim ", LLC" TransExpedition ", CJSC" Pozhtekhnika"¹³³ " and a number of others.

Other specific plans of FEZ "Vitebsk" to expand the geography of international cooperation are also of interest. Thus, the Chinese company "Blue Lotus" has planned to launch a project here in 2019 with the volume of investments of at least three hundred million dollars. It is a question of creation by the Chinese investor on the territory of FEZ "up to ten production enterprises for production of wood products - from fuel biomaterials to furniture"¹³⁴. AL Maya Group from the United Arab Emirates, whose representatives visited Vitebsk in July 2018, sees one of the promising areas of investment cooperation in pharmaceuticals, "as the Middle Eastern partners have a wealth of experience in this area"¹³⁵. Finally, in September 2018, the administration of FEZ "Vitebsk" signed a cooperation agreement with Indian company India Advisory, which,

¹³¹ A resident with Lithuanian capital is registered in FEZ "Vitebsk" [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezident-s-litovskim-kapitalom-zaregistririvan-v-sez-vitebsk-330553-2018/>.

¹³² Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in Belarusian-Latvian business forum [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>.

¹³³ Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in complex presentation of Vitebsk region in Moscow [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>.

¹³⁴ Agreement of intent was signed between FEZ "Vitebsk" administration and Chinese company [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>.

¹³⁵ FEZ "Vitebsk" administration was visited by businessmen from UAE [Electronic resource]. - -- 2018. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>.

according to the parties, "will serve as an impetus for further fruitful cooperation and attraction of Indian investments in Vitebsk region"¹³⁶.

We would like to remind you that the free economic zone "Vitebsk" was established in 1999. Prior to the Decree № 346, it consisted of 13 sectors, including 7 - in Vitsebsk, 4 - in Orsha, as well as one each in Vitsebsk and Postavsk districts. At the end of 2018 there were 44 companies registered here with the participation of investors from more than 10 countries, including German "Vitella", Polish "Décora East", British "LINPAC Peking East", Estonian "Suz-Cable", American "CESS-Bel" and a number of others, which operate in 25 production areas, including mechanical engineering, electronics, veterinary, chemical, fuel, food, light industry. And the total number of employees at resident enterprises is about 11 thousand people.

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¹³⁶ Participation of FEZ "Vitebsk" administration in Belarusian-Indian business forum [Electronic resource]. - URL: <http://www.fez-vitebsk.com/ru/news>

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

In June 2019 the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) regime for the multimodal logistics complex "Bremino-Orsha", located in the village of Bolbasovo, Orsha district, Vitebsk region, came into effect in the Republic of Belarus. This means that a second economic complex has appeared in our country, functioning in such a regime. The Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Velikiy Kamen (Great Stone) was the first in this list of SEZs back in 2015. It should be noted that the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) strictly restricts the possibility of creating such territorial units in the member states of the integration association. In particular, only "three such zones can be established in Russia, two in Belarus, and one each in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan"¹³⁷. It should be reminded that the term "special economic zone" refers to a territory that has "a special legal status in relation to the rest of the country and preferential economic conditions for entrepreneurs"¹³⁸. SEZs are created in order to attract direct foreign investments, create new jobs for highly qualified personnel, develop the export base, minimize costs due to the absence of export and import duties, bring production closer to the consumer, use cheaper labor and develop the territories.

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

¹³⁷ The special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" started to work in Bolbasovo. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://news.21.by/other-news/2019/06/27/1827049.html>.

¹³⁸ Special Economic Zone (SEZ) [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: https://www.audit-it.ru/terms/taxation/osobaya_ekonomicheskaya_zona.html.

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

As for the logistics sector, it "will include road, rail and air terminals. The territory of the Special Economic Zone will have a departmental customs clearance point operating 24 hours a day, phytosanitary and veterinary services, a bank branch, an insurance agent and a customs brokerage office"¹³⁹. By December 2023 - the project completion date - investments in this multimodal industrial and logistics complex will amount to 200 million dollars. A total of 17 thousand square metres of office space is planned to be built here, 190 thousand square metres of warehouse space and 280 thousand square metres of production space. Plus 1.7 thousand parking spaces for trucks. On the railway terminal will be processed cargo flows between the countries of Europe and Asia, which allow to plan already today that "for 2018-2022 years the total transit flow through "Bremino-Orsha" will be 10 million tons, the output at full capacity - 12 million tons of cargoes per year is planned for 2026"¹⁴⁰.

It is important to note that the first steps in the implementation of this project have already been taken. Thus, back in February 2019, the first export train with Belarusian goods - over forty containers - departed from here to the Chinese city of Nanchang. Its journey time is ten days. "It would take 40 days to transport it by sea. The train would go once a month"¹⁴¹. In the same February 2019, LLC "Bremino Group" opened in Bolbasovo the first phase of the complex "Bremino-Orsha," in the implementation of which was invested about \$ 20 million. Here the automobile logistics terminal with a parking lot for 212 trucks, which already provides transshipment of almost two million tons of cargoes per year, started to work. The administrative and household premises house customs, veterinary, and phytosanitary control services that work 24 hours a day, 24 hours a day. The established infrastructure already makes it possible to complete and process cargoes and receive the necessary services to ensure the process of logistics activities.

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

¹³⁹ The special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha" started to work in Bolbasovo [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/osobaja-ekonomicheskaja-zona-bremino-orsha-nachala-rabotat-v-bolbasovo-352502-2019/>.

¹⁴⁰ In Belarus, a second special economic zone with preferential tax treatment [Electronic resource] started functioning. - - 2019. - URL: https://interfax.by/news/biznes/novosti_kompaniy/1260614/.

¹⁴¹ Zakrzhevskiy, G. "Bremino-Orsha": at the crossroads / G. Zakrzhevskiy // Transport bulletin. - - 2019. - 14 February. P. 9.

Ltd., an agreement providing for the appearance of an international Silk Road Trade Camp in the SEZ, which, located on 62 hectares, will be a large-scale trade and exhibition complex. It is expected that "there will be wholesale and small wholesale of consumer goods, delivery of goods and warehousing, trading operations from electronic platforms, as well as exhibitions of products from various Asian countries¹⁴². The amount of investment in this project, which is implemented under the Chinese initiative "Belt and Way", will exceed 128 million Belarusian rubles.

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¹⁴² International trade town will appear in the special economic zone "Bremino-Orsha". [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mezhdunarodnyj-torgovyj-gorodok-pojavitsja-v-osoboj-ekonomicheskoy-zone-bremino-orsha-371406-2019/>.

Gomel region: economic forum as a tool for the development of international relations in the region

The XVI Gomel Economic Forum was held in May 2019 and brought together participants from 28 countries, including Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, China, Italy, Uzbekistan, Romania, Belgium, Qatar, Pakistan and India. Experience shows that over the past 15 years, and the first such event was held in the south-eastern region of Belarus in 2004, the economic forum proved to be a new format of work with foreign investors at the regional level and an effective tool for the development of international inter-regional ties, as evidenced by the figures. In particular, during the years of the Forum the investment portfolio of the Gomel region "was supplemented by 97 signed documents worth almost \$2.5 billion. More than 50% of the documents have already been implemented or are in the process of implementation. Almost 3 thousand jobs" have been created¹⁴³ in such cities as Gomel, Zhlobin, Mozyr, Rechitsa, Svetlogorsk, as well as in the districts - Lelchitsy, Zhitkovichi, Vetkovsk, Buda-Koshelevsk.

And this time nine documents worth \$130 million were signed as part of the plenary part of the XVI Gomel Economic Forum alone. Among them are protocols of intent, which provide for the reconstruction of the workshop of Gomelstroyaterialy, OJSC, construction of plants for processing of metallurgical waste and woodworking waste, organization of production of knitted fabrics, hydraulic equipment and equipment for it, recycling of polymer materials, construction of a mining and processing plant for kaolin extraction and processing, as well as an authorized service center. In particular, the Estonian company Kaamos Group, which is already implementing one of its projects in the Vitebsk region, has announced its intention to invest up to 30 million euros in the establishment of a wood processing plant. "A high-tech production plant with 100 export-oriented jobs is planned to be established in the Gomel-Raton FEZ. Its design capacity will exceed 160 thousand cubic meters of lumber per year"¹⁴⁴. Besides, more than 150 projects in the sphere of woodworking industry, processing of secondary material resources, foodstuffs production, construction and building materials, chemical production, power engineering, agriculture,

¹⁴³ Belarus is actively implementing initiatives to simplify the conditions for investment - Nightingale [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-belarusi-aktivno-vnedrjajutsja-initsiativy-po-uproscheniju-uslovij-dlja-investirovanija-solovej-348564-2019/>.

¹⁴⁴ From workshop reconstruction to plant construction: 9 investment documents were signed at the forum in Gomel [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/regions/view/ot-rekonstruktsii-tseha-do-stroitelstva-zavodov-9-investdokumentov-podpisali-na-forume-v-gomele-348594-2019/>.

tourism, trade, service sphere were offered to potential investors at the forum, plus "120 real estate objects, about 200 land plots, and also a number of scientific developments and OJSC for sale"¹⁴⁵.

Another area of international cooperation that helps to develop the format of the economic forum is twinning and partnership of regions at the level of regions, districts and cities. It should be noted that by mid-May 2019, over 220 international treaties and protocols on cooperation had already been concluded in the Gomel region. At different times, the Gomel Economic Forum was the birthplace of new twinning relations: between Zhitkovici district and Moldovan Taraclia; between Gomel region and the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia in Moldova. During the last two years the twinned and trade-economic relations of Gomel region were also established with the regions of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Serbia, Vietnam, Georgia, Italy and China, which later started to give a tangible economic effect. "Thus, the growth rate of foreign trade turnover between the region and Armenia in 2018 increased by 2.5 times. With the participation of Polish capital 5 large industrial and agricultural projects are being implemented in Gomel region"¹⁴⁶. And at the XVI Gomel Economic Forum the documents on establishing friendly and brotherly relations were signed by Mozyr and Vulcanesti district of Gagauzia, as well as Gomel and Fergana regions of Uzbekistan.

As for the Memorandum on Interregional Cooperation of Gomel and Ferghana regions, it recorded an obvious growing interest of the Belarusian region to its partners in this Central Asian country. Suffice it to say that in 2018, Uzbek direct investment in the economy of Gomel region increased 114 (!) times. In addition, "an agreement on the implementation of a joint project with the Khorezm region on the production of forage harvesting equipment" has become¹⁴⁷ important for the flagship of the country's combine construction - "Gomselmash". Interaction with Fergana region, which is home to more than three and a half million people, has developed petrochemical and chemical production and is the largest supplier of fruit and vegetable products, should seriously expand

¹⁴⁵ The Gomel Economic Forum is opening in the regional center [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskij-ekonomicheskij-forum-otkryvaetsja-v-oblastnom-tsentre-348536-2019/>.

¹⁴⁶ Nightingale: Interregional cooperation should bring maximum benefit to local people [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/solovej-mezhregionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo-dolzno-prinosit-maksimalnuju-vygodu-dlja-mestnyh-zhitelej-348673-2019/>.

¹⁴⁷ Memorandum on cooperation between the Gomel and Fergana regions was signed at the economic forum [Electronic resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-gomelskoj-i-ferganskoj-oblastej-podpisan-na-ekonomicheskom-forume-348655-2019/>.

Belarusian-Uzbek relations at the level of specific territories on the eve of the First Forum of the regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, which will be held in August 2019 in Minsk. All these facts testify to the fact that the annual international economic forum in Gomel has become for the south-eastern region of Belarus an important element of the policy of strengthening mutually beneficial contacts and friendly relations with foreign partners, from which the implementation of mutually beneficial projects for the benefit of residents of these regions begins.

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Free Economic Zone "Minsk": new residents - new opportunities

The Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Free Economic Zones", adopted on December 7, 1998, defines the attraction of "investments into the creation and development of export-oriented and import-substituting industries based on new and high technologies" as one of the main objectives of creating a FEZ¹⁴⁸. The FEZ "Minsk", established in Belarus in 1998, is moving quite successfully towards this goal. At the beginning of February 2020, it had already united 116 resident enterprises on its territory, 57 of them with foreign investments. During its more than 20-year history, the capital's FEZ has attracted more than two billion dollars in investments, including from investors from more than twenty countries. Occupying an area of about three thousand hectares, it now includes 23 plots in Minsk and the capital region, including such cities as Molodechno, Zhodino, Fanipol, Borisov, where enterprises of mechanical engineering and metalworking, chemical and petrochemical, forestry and construction industries are successfully operating. A kind of business card of FEZ "Minsk" are such well-known manufacturers not only in Belarus, but also abroad: "Stadler-Minsk" - trains and trams; "Alutech" group of companies - components for protective shutters, gate systems; "Adaani" - X-ray equipment; "BELGIUM" - cars and light vehicles; "SN AE Europe Industries Bisov" - bimetallic band and end saws.

The facts show that this industrial center on the business map of Belarus continues to develop very actively. Suffice it to say that in 2019 the administration of FEZ "Minsk" registered 17 new resident companies. One of them in December 2019 was Belagromash, which intends to create the production of specialized steel railway containers in the territory of Molodechno Steel Works. Innovative properties of these containers will increase the speed of loading and unloading of goods due to the fact that new containers can be lifted from one mode of transport to another - from a railway platform to a road one and vice versa. This project is also attracted by the fact that "the main customer of containers is a foreign company, so the new production will be as export-oriented as possible. At least 130 jobs will be created"¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁸ Law of the Republic of Belarus On Free Economic Zones [Electronic resource]. - - 1998. - URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=H19800213>

¹⁴⁹ Production of freight containers will be set up in Molodechno [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-gruzovyh-kontejnerov-naladjat-v-molodechno-372673-2019/>.

On the eve of 2020, BelMetr Limited Liability Company became a FEZ resident. Its plans include the implementation in Zhodino of an investment project for the production of vandal-proof water meters with improved characteristics. Among them are: antimagnetic protection; an antifraud device against external influence on the lid; high sensitivity of the meter; elimination of misting of the upper part of the case. And let "production at the initial stage will be carried out on leased areas, in the future it is planned to build a new production building"¹⁵⁰.

The number of residents of FEZ "Minsk" began to grow quite intensively in 2020. In mid-January, the company JLLC "Techno-Express" - one of the leading Belarusian manufacturers in the field of life support systems for passenger cars - was registered here. In FEZ, the company plans to implement an investment project to produce electrical equipment for passenger cars of locomotive traction. In particular, it concerns the production of air conditioner converters - "devices designed to power asynchronous motors of air conditioning installation on railway passenger coaches as part of electrical equipment and life support systems"¹⁵¹. This project has both import-substituting and export-oriented potential, as the main consumer of the above products will be not only the Belarusian Railway, but also interested companies in the CIS countries.

A152 week later, the second resident of Bel-Dozer LLC appeared in the FEZ in 2020. His plans include the construction of a plant in Fanipol to produce a wide range of special equipment for earth-moving, construction and transportation works. Here they intend to "produce excavator loaders - multifunctional machines for construction and repair work, as well as graders - productive special equipment, which is actively used in the construction and maintenance of roads and airfields. <...> The volume of investments in the project implementation will exceed 1 million Euro" .

Another new resident of FEZ "Minsk" - LLC "Emfil Air," registered here in early February 2020, will be accommodated in the same Fanipole. The distinctive feature of his investment project will be a pronounced export orientation of products. The fact is that "the company plans to establish production

¹⁵⁰ An investment project for the production of water meters will be implemented in Zhodino [Electron Resource]. - -- 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/investitsionnyj-proekt-po-proizvodstvu-schetchikov-vody-budet-realizovan-v-zhodino-374581-2019/>.

¹⁵¹ The first resident in 2020 was registered in FEZ "Minsk". [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyj-v-2020-godu-rezident-zaregistrirovan-v-sez-minsk-376013-2020/>.

¹⁵² The new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will build a plant in Fanipol to produce special equipment [Electronic resource]. - -- 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-postroit-v-fanipole-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-spetstehniki-376899-2020/>.

of dedusting, as well as chemically active filter elements for air purification, on the basis of which production of innovative high-tech equipment will be organized.¹⁵³ which will be designed, developed and manufactured exclusively to order.

As we can see, with the arrival of 2020 in FEZ "Minsk" does not slow down the growth rate, contributing to the socio-economic development of not only the capital region, but the country as a whole.

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¹⁵³ The new resident of FEZ "Minsk" will produce non-standard equipment for air purification [Electron resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-minsk-budet-vypuskat-nestandartnoe-oborudovanie-dlja-ochistki-vozduha-378734-2020>.

Great Stone Industrial Park: prospects for investment are huge

In November 2019, the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (FEMOSA) held a summit in Monaco, the main theme of which was to strengthen cooperation and transform the successful experience of free economic zones (FEZs) into working tools. More than 400 representatives of BEZs from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Asia and Africa, as well as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, public authorities and potential foreign investors took part in this large-scale event. It should be reminded that FEMOSA is a non-governmental and non-profit organization supported by the United Nations, which was founded in 1999 in Geneva to support and promote free and special economic zones around the world and especially - in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assist in the entry of BMS residents projects into the international market and attract foreign investment. The functions of FEMOSA include developing norms, rules and guidelines for the development of FEZs, providing them with technical, legal and economic assistance, and training specialists. The statistics says that "today there are 3500 free zones in 130 countries, which account for more than 70 million jobs"¹⁵⁴. But, "despite the benefits and preferences offered to them in all countries, only 300-400 are effective. All this is due to technological backwardness, which prevents the BMS from becoming part of the global economy"¹⁵⁵.

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

¹⁵⁴ Barcelona will be the Free Zone Capital in 2019 [Electronic Resource]. - - 2017. - URL: https://ru.wikinews.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82_%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%B9_%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85_%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BD_%D0%B2_2019_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%83.

¹⁵⁵ Grigoryeva, V. President of the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (Femoza) Juan Torrents Tolosa visited Gomel [Electronic Resource]. - - 2015. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/vse-sezy-v-gosti-k-nam.html>.

under the auspices of FEMOSA. More than two hundred specialists from 25 countries took part in it. "BEZs of the Northern and Eastern European countries, including the UK, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Latvia, as well as Italy, Spain, Greece, Asia and Africa, were almost fully represented¹⁵⁶. And in May 2018 in the same Gomel with the participation of FEMOSA the second Congress of Free Economic Zones of Eastern and Northern Europe was held, which was attended by heads of administrations, management companies and residents of FEZs of Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Georgia, Russia and a number of other countries. At last, in October 2018 during the World Investment Forum of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva the memorandum of cooperation with FEMOSA was signed by the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great stone" and FEZ "Minsk" that should promote "creation in their borders even more favorable investment climate for foreign companies"¹⁵⁷.

As for the summit in Monaco, participation in this large-scale event has become a landmark for Belarus, as it was there that the Sino-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" was awarded the FEMOZA Awards 2019, winning the nomination "The fastest growing industrial park". The peculiarity of this category is that "the key in determining the winner was the Great Stone's prospects for global investment and its rapid pace of development"¹⁵⁸. Indeed, today in the "Great Stone," the Belarusian side has created solid benefits for residents - both in terms of tax and land acquisition, as well as a favorable regime in which the registration of enterprises takes place as soon as possible on a "one-stop shop" principle. As a result, "today this park shows amazing growth, with investors from all over the world coming to us"¹⁵⁹.

The facts show that the "Great Stone" has already become an international platform for the creation of high-tech enterprises. At the beginning of November 2019, 57 residents were registered here. And there are all grounds to believe that

¹⁵⁶ Sidorchik, V. Free Economic Zones of Belarus in 2014 accounted for 12% of the country's export / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - - 2015. - URL: <http://invest.gomel-region.by/ru/news/?id=2963>.

¹⁵⁷ On the participation of the Great Stone Industrial Park and FEZ "Minsk" in the World Investment Forum of UNCTAD [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <http://geneva.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b9570573ea1b392a.html>.

¹⁵⁸ "The Great Stone is recognized as the fastest growing industrial park in the world [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-priznan-samym-bystrorastuschim-industrialnym-parkom-v-mire-369159-2019/>.

¹⁵⁹ Megaloths in the "Great Stone" and IT records - Rumas told about the opportunities to invest in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/megaloty-v-velikom-kamne-i-rekordy-it-rumas-rasskazal-o-vozmozhnostjakh-investirovat-v-belarus-370269-2019/>.

their number "by the end of 2020 can grow to 80"¹⁶⁰. The project on creation of manufacture of solar batteries is already realized here. In July 2019, the construction of the Belarusian-Chinese plant for the production of mechanical transmissions with an investment of \$17 million began in the industrial park. In October 2019, a plant for the production of engines, LLC "MAZ-Veichai," where they produce "small-knot assembly of engines of Euro-5 and Euro-6 standards for trucks, special vehicles and buses. The production capacity at single-shift operation will be 10 thousand engines per year"¹⁶¹. Attraction of new residents to the "Great Stone" will also be facilitated by a memorandum on cooperation with the Inchuan technical and economic zone signed in early November 2019. And this is just the beginning, in fact.

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¹⁶⁰ The number of Great Stone residents may increase to 80 by the end of 2020 [Electronic resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kolichestvo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-k-kontsu-2020-goda-mozhet-uvelichitsja-do-80-365696-2019/>.

¹⁶¹ Opening of the engine plant "Maz-Veichai" in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" [Electron resource]. - – 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9051>.

Great Stone Industrial Park: huge investment prospects

In November 2019, the World Federation of Free and Special Economic Zones (FEMOSA) held a summit in Monaco, which focused on strengthening cooperation and transforming the successful experience of free economic zones (FEZs) into working tools. More than 400 representatives of BEZs from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Asia and Africa, as well as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, public authorities and potential foreign investors took part in this large-scale event. FEMOSA is a non-governmental and non-profit organization supported by the United Nations, which was founded in 1999 in Geneva to support and promote free and special economic zones around the world, and especially - in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assist BMS residents in entering the international market and attract foreign investment. The functions of FEMOSA include developing norms, rules and guidelines for the development of FEZs, providing them with technical, legal and economic assistance, and training specialists. The statistics says that "today there are 3500 free zones in 130 countries, which account for more than 70 million jobs". But, "despite the benefits and preferences granted to them in all countries, only 300-400 are effective <...>. All this is due to technological backwardness, which prevents the BMS from becoming part of the global economy".¹⁶².

One of the very effective tools for expanding the international activities of the Great Stone may be a form of attracting new residents, such as creating sub-parks in it, which means "the arrival of not one investor, but a pool of landmark companies under the leadership of a separate management company. This opens up wide prospects for large corporations"¹⁶³. It should be added that this proposal is addressed by the park's administration not only to Chinese provinces, "but also to investors from Europe, in particular Switzerland, and Japan"¹⁶⁴. The main condition for future residents, which must be met, is the creation of high-tech enterprises in the industrial park. And the space and opportunities for building

¹⁶² The Great Stone Industrial Park will be presented at the Chinese International Import Exhibition [Electronic Resource] in November. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/industrialnyj-park-velikij-kamen-v-nojabre-predstavjat-na-kitajskoj-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-importa-367476-2019/>.

¹⁶³ Konoga, P. Alexander Yaroshenko told about new residents of "Great stone" industrial park, satellite city and plans for 2019 / P. Konoga // [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/vysech-pribyl-iz-kamnya.html>.

¹⁶⁴ The "Great Stone" offers foreign partners to create sub-parks [Electronic Resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-predlagaet-zarubezhnym-partneram-sozdavat-subparki-365694-2019/>.

technological clusters and sub-parks on a national basis will be enough for everyone here.

It should be noted that the subpark format is already used in practice in the Great Stone. Back in May 2017, the first phase of the trade and logistics subpark was opened here, located on 29 hectares. This is a hundred thousand square meters of real estate, half of which was occupied by warehouses, and almost a quarter - by the exhibition center. "About \$120 million was invested in the construction of the sub-park. In the near future it is planned to start the construction of the second stage. In total the territory of the sub-park will occupy the area of more than 90 hectares, the volume of investments - \$500 million"¹⁶⁵.

At the 11th meeting of the Working Group on the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, held in November 2018 in Beijing, it was noted that in the near future the necessary support would be provided for the practical implementation in the "Great Stone" of sub-parks in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, and Guangdong Province. It was also planned "to work on the establishment of sub-parks in the industrial park with Sichuan and Shaanxi Provinces and Hangzhou City by the end of 2019"¹⁶⁶. As far as Guangdong Province is concerned, as early as January 2017, in its administrative center - Guangzhou City - "a ceremony of signing an agreement on the establishment of the Chinese (Guangdong) LED sub-park in the Great Stone Industrial Park" was held.¹⁶⁷ as well as five other documents of intent to join this subpark of specific companies.

Another landmark document in the context of this topic was signed in November 2018 at the first Chinese exhibition of imported goods and services in Shanghai. This is an agreement on the establishment of the Chengdu-European Industrial Sub-Park in the Great Stone. The fact is that Chengdu - the administrative center of Sichuan Province - has a significant industrial potential, including developed automotive and aerospace industries, which corresponds to

¹⁶⁵ Anatoli Kalinin took part in the opening of the first stage of the trade and logistics sub-park in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" [Electron resource]. - - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7228>.

¹⁶⁶ Protocol of the 11th session of the Working Group on the issues of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park [Electronic resource]. - - 2018. - URL: http://belaruschina.by/data/fck/file/minekonomiki/protocol_11.pdf.

¹⁶⁷ A subpark of LED products [Electronic Resource] will be established in the Veliky Kamen Industrial Park. - - 2017. - URL: <https://industrialpark.by/novosti/2017/v-industrialnom-parke-velikij-kamen-budet-sozdan-subpark-svetodiodnoj-produkcii.html>.

the priorities of the Sino-Belarusian industrial park. In addition, "Chengdu is the most economically close city of China to Europe"¹⁶⁸.

Let us note an important detail: a number of important meetings and negotiations have taken place recently, where the issues of creating national sub-parks of European countries in the "Great Stone" have been discussed. In particular, in August 2019 this topic was discussed in the government of the Republic of Belarus with representatives of the Swiss business community, including the management of Ceres Group Holding AG and the Swiss industrial park BUSS, who positively assessed the Belarusian proposal not only to create a Swiss sub-park in the "Great Stone," but also to "act as a developer and attract Swiss business to cooperation with Belarus"¹⁶⁹. It is noteworthy that as early as in December 2019 the 60th resident - "Swiss company Hess Great Stone for the production of electric passenger transport"¹⁷⁰ was registered in the industrial park. And in January 2020 the issue of "possible future creation of the Italian-Belarusian sub-park in the "Great Stone"¹⁷¹ was considered in practical terms at the meeting in Rome with owners and heads of Italian companies interested in investing in the projects of the industrial park.

¹⁶⁸ Chinese Chengdu is considering the possibility of creating high-tech industries in the "Great Stone" [Electronic Resource]. - - 2018. - URL: https://interfax.by/news/policy/ekonomicheskaya_politika/1251824/.

¹⁶⁹ Krizhevich, I. In territory of "Great stone" the Swiss subpark can be created / I.Krizhevich // [Electronic resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/na-territorii-velikogo-kamnya-mogut-sozdat-shveytsarskiy-subpark-.html>.

¹⁷⁰ The Chinese-Belarusian industrial park "Great Stone" has the 60th resident [Electron resource]. - - 2019. - URL: <https://interfax.by/news/biznes/businesses/1268182/>.

¹⁷¹ Belarus and Italy will consider creating a joint sub-park in the "Great Stone" [Electronic resource]. - - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-italija-rassmotrjat-vopros-sozdaniya-sovmestnogo-subparka-v-velikom-kamne-376060-2020/>.

On the way to 3+ educational standards

One of the main tasks in organizing the educational process in higher education institutions of the Republic of Belarus in the academic year 2018/2019 is to update the content of education and transition to a new generation of educational standards that provide training of specialists for all types of professional activities, as well as "providing flexibility and variability of educational programs in accordance with the changing needs of the labor market, innovative development of sectors of the economy and social sphere; <..172.> providing practical orientation This question is dictated by the fact that such trends in the development of higher education today are highlighted as one of the global trends: 1) transition to mass higher education, which is explained by the development of the world economy and the growing demand for qualified specialists; 2) introduction of information and communication technologies in higher education, which brings to the fore the formation of competencies needed by specialists; 3) organization of lifelong learning, which requires fundamental knowledge in primary education and entails a reduction in special and practice-oriented training at the initial stage. In this regard, in the Republic of Belarus among the priorities for the development of higher education are such areas as: ensuring the quality of education in the conditions of mass higher education; relationship with the labor market; "integration of educational research and innovation-entrepreneurial activities <...>; further integration into the international educational space; increasing international competitiveness" .

It is characteristic of the Republic of Belarus that the core basis of higher education standards, on the basis of which the educational process at its first and second levels is carried out today, is a **competency-based approach**. Widely used in the world practice, it allows formulating requirements to young graduated specialists, their professional and personal competences in a more targeted way. It is with this approach that competence and qualification characteristics of a specialist's professional activity are most fully focused on spheres, objects, types and tasks of professional activity, as well as on the composition of competences. In other words, the introduction of the competence approach into the system of higher education is aimed at improving the quality of this education, training highly qualified specialists who are competitive on the labor market, fluent in their

¹⁷² On organization of educational process in higher education institutions in 2018/2019 academic year.
- Letter from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 24.08.2018. -- C. 2,3.

profession and orientated in related fields of activity, ready for continuous professional growth, social and professional mobility.

It should also be noted that the current educational standards for higher education in the Republic of Belarus introduced a **modular principle** of social and humanitarian cycle organization. And it has been widely implemented in Belarusian universities in recent years in the study of social and humanitarian disciplines, which allowed "to move in practice to the integration of educational content and interdisciplinarity, as well as to organize the variability in mastering the content of educational programs in connection with the future professional activity of the graduate"¹⁷³. Further development and improvement of this principle presupposes a wide spread of **practice-oriented** education, which is realized by integrating the potentials of education, science and effective production practice. That is why the introduction of the modular principle of building educational programmes of higher education is recommended by the Republican Council of Rectors of higher education institutions of the Republic of Belarus as a tool for reviewing and updating the content.

Third-generation educational standards were introduced at the Belarusian higher school back in 2012-2013. Their implementation¹⁷⁴ required a balanced systemic approach to the issues of quality assurance, application of innovative educational technologies in the educational process, strengthening the practical orientation of the knowledge obtained, and development of lifelong learning. Nevertheless, in June 2016, the Republican Council of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions adopted a decision "On the development of standard educational planning documentation of a new generation (educational standards and model curricula)", which indicated the purpose of developing a new generation of standards in the 3+ format based on existing standards of the third generation. The key principles should be "implementation of the competence approach, modular design of curricula and standards, profiling <...> , close relationship between bachelor and master training models" . The developed standards in 3+ format should be based on the experience of implementation of national educational standards of previous generations and the best international

¹⁷³ On directions of development of higher education in the Republic of Belarus (improving the quality of training and competitiveness) [Electronic resource]. - – 2014. - URL: http://srrb.niks.by/info/post_09_14_14.htm

¹⁷⁴ Makarov, A.V. Realization of the competence approach at designing the standards of the higher education generation 3+ / A.V. Makarov // Higher technical education. - – 2017. - – №1. - Volume 1. - – C. 14.

practices of creating educational programs, as well as contribute to the development and demand for master's programs.

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