

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES AND BELARUSIAN MEDIA

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For all the variety of newsbreaks around special economic zones in Belarus, their media support remains poorly studied. Thus, the relevance of the topic lies in the need to explore the coverage of a specific form of investment interaction in the Republic of Belarus in the local media.

Key words: special economic zones; SEZ; residents; local media; management of newsbreaks; information relevancy; mentioning.

Special economic zones (SEZs) have been developing in the Republic of Belarus since 1996. In the conditions of the economic shock of the 90s, they became a new form of investment interaction, which authorities had high hopes for. The goal of the SEZs was formulated as stimulating production using the latest technology while reducing costs. The latter became possible due to the creation of a preferential tax regime for residents of these zones.

Over the course of decades, six free economic zones have been established in the country – one in each regional center. New investors appeared on the territories, which caused the growth of economic activity in the regions. However, this phenomenon has not been adequately reflected in the local media.

The economic development of the state is the result of the joint efforts of a whole pleiad of specialists: diplomats, lawyers, economists and many others. Their special theoretical knowledge and professional skills are inaccessible to the journalist, but this does not detract from his significance in that process. Moreover, media has a rather special role to play in it. It is media that is responsible for compiling the current economic scene, presenting it to citizens in a readable form. By exploring the informational landscape of the state in general and the coverage of its economic initiatives in particular, you can get a comprehensive impression of the image, successes and prospects of this state in the domestic and world economic proscenium. This is especially relevant in the context of attracting foreign capital and developing the export base, which basically makes up the practice of special economic zones. By categorizing informational issues and setting priorities, journalists will be able to align the country's economic activity and its reflection in media.

Due to the specifics of the placement of special economic zones in the Republic of Belarus, the largest load of the informational support of this topic should handle regional media. The pools of their journalists have the opportunity to work «in the field». It is easier for them to reach decision-makers or follow

up on contractual initiatives in real time, reporting to readers about them. There comes another obvious need – to regularly update the agenda, replenish it with new informational occasions, creating a sense of «involvement» for citizens in the economic process of their region.

However, in reality, the situation does not meet our expectations. Newsbreaks around SEZs appear more often in republican media, such as «SB. Belarus Today» and websites like «TUT.BY». The regional media we've gone through – one for each region – write about SEZs with regularity on average once every 2 months.

The leader amongst local media is an informational website «Vitebskiy Kuryer». There were published 4 short news stories during February, 2020. Such a remarkable interest can be easily explained as we pay attention to the leading topic of all these articles, which is a visit of Swedish Embassy to SEZ «Vitebsk».

For the most part, these publications are ascertaining in nature. It's impossible to trace the appearance of new residents by just reading local media. Naturally, there is no analysis in the articles: infrastructural changes of the SEZs are ignored by journalists, which means there is nobody to decode those for regular readers.

Now, how can this situation be corrected?

Firstly, SEZs themselves don't have a proper algorithm of informing regional media about changes and events held at their residences. While issuing news materials on their own portals, they do not delegate information to the actual media. The subscriber of regional newspapers, this way, loses the opportunity to observe the progress of a special economic zone in his city. It is proposed to introduce the practice of media partnerships or image-making events, press conferences and issuing press releases to popularize SEZs' topic, as well as posting interval reports on the activity of residents throughout the republic on structures' websites.

Secondly, when the mentioning of SEZs in media is increased, it is advised to move on to improving the quality of publications. This can be achieved by attracting experts (primarily economists) and, most importantly, by diversifying the genre field.

Thirdly, regional media can create special rubrics or columns like «Chronicles of SEZs». It should also help in increasing their mentioning, improving credibility and attracting citizens' attention. At the end of each article, any author can leave the contacts of the press center of a specific SEZ or post brief bulletins «News of the SEZ ... (name of the SEZ) of the week / month». Whenever possible, editors are encouraged to invite residents of the SEZ themselves to create publications.

These basic recommendations can become in handy for management of special economic zones since it is easy enough to implement them in an already existing practice. People work in SEZ's residences not for informing citizenship but for improving national economy. We, on the other hand, are the ones to delegate our not yet professional, but practical advice, which, to our mind, equals a contribution to the common cause.