



Republic of Belarus



COUNTRY INFORMATION

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Introduction

1. Factsheet and trade statistics

Map of Belarus

The Republic of Belarus is located in the Eastern part of Europe. The country is divided into six regions (oblasts): Brest, Homiel, Hrodna, Mahiliou, Minsk and Viciebsk. It borders Lithuania in the northwest, Latvia and the Russian Federation in the north, the Russian Federation in the northeast and east, Ukraine in the south, Poland in the west. The country stretches 560km from north to south and 650km from west to east. The length of the border is 3617 km, including 1250 km with the European Union.



Factsheet and Economic Indicators

Government type	Presidential republic with a bicameral parliament
Head of State	President Alexander Lukashenko
Capital city	Minsk
Area	207.6 thousand km ²
Population	9.4 million
Official language	Belarusian, Russian
Currency	Belarusian ruble
GDP (current prices)	US\$ 62.6 billion (est. 2019)
GDP (purchasing power parity)	US\$ 195.6 billion (est. 2019)
GDP (growth rate y-o-y)	1.2 % (est. 2019)
GDP (per capita (PPP))	US\$ 20 644 (est. 2019)
Unemployment rate	4.6% (est. 2019)
Inflation rate	5.6 % (est. 2019)

Source: World bank, National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

Leading industries

Belarus's GDP structure has undergone a number of changes over the last few years, reflecting wider developments in the country's economy. In 2015 the service sector became the chief component of GDP for the first time. This may be partly attributed to determined efforts on the part of the government and the rapid growth of sectors such as IT, telecommunications, wholesale and retail. However, Belarus's dependence on its main trading partner for commodities, the fall in energy prices on global markets and the contraction in industrial output caused by economic problems in Belarus itself and in Russia were also key contributory factors.

Industrial output in nominal terms amounted to BYN 113 .5 billion (around USD 46 billion) in 2019. The industrial production index for 2019 was 101% relative to 2018. Manufacturing represented an important part of Belarusian industry in 2019, accounting for 88 .6% of output. In 2019 the most significant increases in manufacturing in the industrial sector were in the production of vehicles and equipment (up by 35%) and the production of food, beverages and tobacco products (up by 9 .9%). Other industrial sectors had little impact on overall performance for 2019. The dynamic development of Belarus's IT industry is aided by targeted incentives and legislative initiatives that are responsive to the latest technological trends. The issue of Presidential Decree No. 8 of 21 December 2017 "On the Development of the Digital Economy" boosted the number of HTP resident companies from 161 in 2016 to 454 in 2018, rising to 751 by the end of 2019 . The total number of companies operating in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector has risen by 26% since 2016.

External Trade of Belarus in 2019

Exports:	US\$ 32.9 Billion
Imports:	US\$ 39.3 Billion
Total Trade:	US\$ 72.2 Billion
Balance :	US\$ -6.4 Billion

Source: National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

Pakistan-Belarus Bilateral Trade for 2019

Pakistan's exports to Belarus	US\$ 15.1 million
Pakistan's imports from Belarus	US\$ 35.06 million
Bilateral Trade	US\$ 50.16 million
Trade balance (In favor of Belarus)	US\$ 20 million

Source: National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

Top 15 Exports to Belarus in 2019

Unit: USD thousand

N	HS	All products	2018	2019	Change
			13,486	15,096	11,93%
1	10	Cereals(rice)	2808	3599	28,18%
2	62	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	1782	2194	23,13%
3	8	Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons (mandarin mainly)	637	1829	186,97%
4	63	Other made-up textile articles; sets; worn clothing and worn textile articles	728	1052	44,49%
5	61	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted	898	814	-9,36%
6	55	Man-made staple fibres	748	704	-5,96%
7	21	Miscellaneous edible preparations	873	685	-21,53%
8	95	Toys, games and sports requisites; parts and accessories thereof (inflatable balls)	751	639	-15,01%
9	90	Optical, photographic, measuring, checking, medical or surgical instruments	259	543	109,38%
10	64	Footwear, gaiters and the like; parts of such articles	929	515	-44,35%
11	52	Cotton	577	509	-11,70%
12	54	Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials	944	412	-56,42%
13	42	Articles of leather	405	403	-0,47%
14	82	Tools, implements, cutlery, spoons and forks, of base metal	352	211	-40,26%
15	60	Knitted or crocheted fabrics	0	133	-

Source: National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

Top 15 Imports from Belarus in 2019

Unit: USD thousand

N	HS	Product category	2018	2019	Change
		All exports	39422	35065	-11.05%
1	87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof (mainly tractors)	23011	18764	-18.46%
2	31	Fertilizers	7106	8297	16.77%
3	55	Man-made staple fibres	2480	2664	7.40%
4	40	Rubber and articles thereof	3190	2461	-22.85%
5	19	Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastrycooks' products	722	913	26.43%
6	84	Machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers; parts thereof	935	417	-55.36%
7	54	Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials	0	295	-
8	29	Organic chemicals	196	281	43.40%
9	04	Dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey	176	236	33.96%
10	30	Pharmaceutical products	7	219	3034.29%

Source: National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

2. International agreements

Belarus is a member of the following treaties and has signed the agreements listed below:

- Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
- Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)
- World Customs Organization (WCO)
- World Trade Organization (WTO) - observer status.

As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, Belarus has signed:

— Memoranda of Cooperation/Understanding with Korea, Cambodia, Mongolia, Jordan, Morocco, Faroe Islands, Cuba, Greece, Andean com., Chile, Peru, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, Indonesia, African Union and Bangladesh.

- In May 2015, the EAEU entered into the first full-fledged Agreement on Free Trade with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The FTA comprises all directions of trade and economic cooperation. Besides reduction of import customs duty rates, it enshrines parties' obligations in the sphere of SPV measures, technical regulation, the protection of rights to intellectual property, establishes unified principles for protecting competition, and determines the directions of cooperation in the field of sustainable development, e-commerce as well as the sphere of public procurement. The document also includes obligations related to mutual liberalization of trade in services, making investments and movement of individuals. The Vietnam-EAEU FTA covers more than 90% of all traded goods and has significantly benefited the EAEU's exports of agricultural and industrial products. In turn, it has also increased Vietnamese exports of garments, textile products, farm products, and electrical devices.
- In May 2018, an Interim Agreement that will eventually lead to the formation of a Free Trade Area was signed between the EAEU member-states and Iran. The agreement entered into force in October 2019 and is valid for three years. One year after its entry into force, the parties will enter into talks on a full-fledged FTA. The agreement is limited due to a low level of liberalization. Reduced customs duties cover half of the total volume of trade between the two countries.
- In May 2018, China and the EAEU signed the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation regulating the entire structure of relations and creating the base for subsequent progress in the field of facilitating trade and eliminating non-tariff barriers that restrict mutual access to the markets. The agreement is not preferential as trade duties remained unchanged.
- In October 2019, the EAEU and Singapore signed the EAEU-Singapore Free Trade agreement with which EAEU Member States will reduce or eliminate tariffs on 90% of products that Singapore currently exports to the EAEU. The two parties have signed a non-Services and Investment Agreement covering market access for trade in

goods via reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as other areas that facilitate trade such as competition, customs cooperation, e-commerce, environment, government procurement and intellectual property. Services and Investment Agreements with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia are being negotiated.

- In October 2019, a Free Trade Agreement was signed between the EAEU and Serbia. The FTA entails economic benefits for both parties in the near and medium terms. In the near term, the parties will have instant savings of customs payments from existing exports. In the longer term, it will provide new export opportunities. Serbian goods will be able to enter the EAEU market on lower import duties, among other favorable trade terms.
- Egypt, Israel and India have entered into FTA negotiations with the EAEU as well. Other countries planning to launch negotiations regarding an FTA with the EAEU include Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, South Korea, Peru and others.
- Belarus has also entered into talks regarding a trade in services agreement with Turkey. The terms of reference were signed by Belarusian Economy Minister Aleksandr Chervyakov and Turkish Ambassador to Belarus Mustafa Ozcan in Minsk in June 2020.

Additionally, Belarus is a part of the Union State, which is an international organization that consists of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. Citizens of both parties are guaranteed the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the other party. The Treaty on the Creation of a Union State between Russia and Belarus was signed in 1999. The agreement calls for cooperation on foreign policy, defense, social and economic policies with an aim of setting up a unified parliament and a single currency in the future.

3. Overview of Import Regulations

Belarus is a member of the World Customs Organization, the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, the Convention on Temporary Import and the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures. Belarus is expected to join the World Trade Organization and is also a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Import regulations of Belarus are mainly defined within the framework of EAEU. EAEU import regulations are conducted in accordance with the [Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union](#), regulatory customs international treaties and acts constituting the right of the EAEU, as well as in accordance with the provisions of the EAEU treaty.

4. Non Tariff Barriers

Import licenses

The EEC Board has stipulated a list of goods, the import of which is prohibited or restricted in the territory of the EAEU.

[Single list of goods subject to prohibitions or restrictions on import or export by the Customs Union member states](#)

The goods, import of which is restricted, are subject to import licensing. Import licenses for Belarus are issued by the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of Belarus. Usually, importers choose between applying for a general import license or for a single license. A single license is issued for goods stipulated in a commercial contract. A general license, on the other hand, permits the import of the good in the amount specified by the license and is issued if any international obligations of Belarus are to be fulfilled, if the licensed goods will be used for domestic manufacture or if the goods are subjected to quota regulations. In addition, EAEU members have agreed on joint control

measures for dual-use goods. The State Military Industrial Committee of Belarus issues the licensing procedures regulating imports of dual-use goods, weapons and ammunition for military purposes and other goods subject to foreign trade controls. Moreover, Belarus retains the exclusive right to regulate imports of a range of goods such as tobacco, alcohol, articles of plaster and further items on a national basis. In addition, meat and meat products are subject to import licensing in the amount of quotas, which are also stipulated by the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade.

Sanitary, Phytosanitary and Veterinary Measures

Particular types of goods are subject to an additional supervision process involving the process of determining their compliance to the unified sanitary, veterinary and phytosanitary rules of the EAEU. To determine whether a product has to undergo sanitary and epidemiological supervision, exporters should check the [Joint list of products subject to sanitary and epidemiological supervision \(control\) at the customs border and in the customs territory of the Customs Union](#). The same list in English can be accessed in the [unofficial translation](#) of the document.

The [Uniform Sanitary Epidemiological and Hygienic Requirements for the Goods Subject to Sanitary and Epidemiological Supervision](#) are also available on the official website of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

All the products in need of sanitary supervision require a Certificate of State registration. State registration of products to obtain this certificate is an obligatory condition and the only way to officially register the manufactured goods for sale on the territory of the EAEU. Registration of the certificate requires comprehensive and detailed verification of the conformity of products to the declared requirements of the legislation of the countries of the EAEU on hygiene and sanitary standards. Therefore, the issue of obtaining a certificate of state registration of products requires time and special attention.

The list of products subject to quarantine phytosanitary control can be accessed in the [Official List of regulated products subject to quarantine and phytosanitary control \(surveillance\) at the customs boundary of the EAEU](#) along with its [unofficial English translation](#).

Finally, for veterinary control, the EEC has published [Unified list of goods subject to veterinary control \(supervision\)](#) as well as [Uniform veterinary \(veterinary and sanitary\) requirements imposed on the goods subject to veterinary control \(supervision\)](#). The English versions of the mentioned documents are available on the [official website of the World Trade Organization](#)

Special requirements for imports of food products and medical products

According to the EAEU rules, medical products and appliances have to undergo state registration process based on the Decision of the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission on the [Rules for the Registration and Examination of the Safety, Quality, and Efficiency of Medical Products](#).

Some food products are included in the joint list of products subject to sanitary and epidemiological supervision as well as phytosanitary control at the customs border and in the customs territory of the EAEU. The union has published Uniform Sanitary Epidemiological and Hygienic Requirements for all products on the official website of the Eurasian Commission.

Management of quotas

Goods that might be a subject of quantitative restrictions on exports are included in the [list of goods that are essential for the domestic market of the EAEU](#). In exceptional cases EEC may impose temporary prohibitions or quantitative restrictions on export. While imposing prohibition or quantitative restrictions on the export of agricultural

products, the Commission takes into account the impact of those restrictions on food supply security of the third countries (those with import share of over 5%) and notifies in advance the World Trade Organization Commission on Agriculture on the nature and duration of the prohibition or quantitative restrictions. The Commission distributes volumes of export and (or) import quotas between member States and determines the way of distribution of shares of export and (or) import quotas among the participants of foreign trade activity of the member States, as well as the volumes of import quotas between third countries. Distribution of import quotas between third countries is executed by the Commission on the basis of consultations with all significant suppliers from third countries (suppliers with over 5% import share). If the distribution of import quotas cannot be executed based on consultations with all significant suppliers from third countries, the decision is taken by the Commission based on the volume of deliveries of goods from these countries during the preceding period (mainly 3-year period).

Preferential treatment to partner countries

As mentioned above, the EAEU has entered into FTAs and other agreements with third countries. Apart from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, the CIS members have signed a plurilateral FTA. As of now, the FTA has entered into force for Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The FTA will become effective as well for the other signatory parties as soon as their parliaments will have ratified it. So, Belarus has concluded bilateral FTAs with the CIS member states, as well as with the Republic of Serbia. Therefore, goods which are originating products in the sense of these agreements may benefit from preferential treatment in Belarus.

Rules of origin

The origin of goods imported into the customs territory of the Union has to be proved by a declaration of origin or under the decision of a declarant by a certificate of origin. Information regarding the origin criteria, correct documentary proof of origin and requirements for the certificates of origin is available in the official EEC document containing the [Non-preferential rules of origin of goods imported into the EAEU](#).

Further information on the non-tariff regulations of EAEU can be found on the official website of the [Eurasian Economic Commission](#).

5. Import procedures and tariffs

Taxes and duties on imports

Import duty

The current common customs tariff of the Eurasian Union is based on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System of the World Customs Organization. The Official Unified Customs Tariff is available in on the official website of the Eurasian Economic Union.

[Foreign Economic Activity Commodity Nomenclature and Common Customs Tariff of the Eurasian Economic Union](#)

The unofficial English translation of the Common Customs Tariff is available on the official website of the EAEU.

[Unofficial translation of the Common Customs Tariff of the Eurasian Economic Union](#)

Additionally, the EAEU has published a [list of goods and rates to which Belarus and Kazakhstan apply different customs duties](#).

According to the Union's Generalized System of Preferences, goods originating from developing and least developed countries may be eligible for certain tariff preferences

granted from the member-states. Least developed countries are given the opportunity to fully eliminate the customs duties for specific sets of products. The list of developing beneficiary countries, which encompasses Pakistan, states a possible tariff reduction of 25% from the applied MFN duties. The EEC has issued the list of goods originating in developing or least developed countries eligible for tariff preferences during their importation to the customs territory of the EAEU.

[List of goods originating in developing or least developed countries eligible for tariff preferences during their importation to the customs territory of the EAEU](#)

The rules of origin that are applied for the purpose of acquiring the above mentioned tariff preferences are also accessible on the official website of the EEC.

[Rules of origin for developing and least developed countries regarding eligibility to obtain tariff preferences](#)

VAT

VAT is levied on the supply of most goods and services in Belarus, and on most imports into the country. The standard VAT rate is 20% (25% for telecommunication services).

Excise duty is also levied monthly on a range of goods manufactured in Belarus or imported into the country. This mainly includes alcohol derived goods, tobacco, engine oil, petrol, diesel fuel, and vehicles. Failure to fulfil or improper fulfillment the obligation for payment of the customs duties and taxes within the time limit is subject to payment of penalties.

Defer or delay import charges

The time limits for payment of import customs duties and taxes are changed by way of a deferral or an instalment. A deferral or an instalment is granted in respect of the total amount payable or a part thereof. When a deferral is granted at the release of the goods,

the amount of the import customs duties has to be paid no later than on the last day of the period for which the deferral is granted. When an instalment is granted at the release of the goods, the amount of the import customs duties for which the instalment is granted has to be paid in accordance with the approved instalment schedule for payment of import customs duties. In this case, each of the amounts established for payment in instalments have to be paid no later than on the last day of the time limit established for such payment in the relevant period. Interest will be payable per each day of operation of the deferral or instalment for the payment of import customs starting from the day following the day when goods are released and until the day when the obligation for the payment of import customs duties desists. The interest for a deferral or an instalment has to be paid no later than on the day following the day when the import customs duties are paid or recovered.

Reliefs on imports for export or re-export

The obligation for payment of import customs duties, taxes, safeguard, anti-dumping, countervailing duties in respect of foreign goods placed under re-exportation commences from the moment of registration of the declaration for goods by the customs authority. The obligation for payment desists with the declarant upon occurrence of several circumstances listed in under Article 241 of the Customs code including actual export of goods from EAEU, confirmed by the customs authority. In case of actual exportation of foreign goods from the EAEU, upon fulfilment of the obligation for payment of import customs duties and taxes, the same will be refunded in accordance with Chapter 10 and Article 76 of the Customs Code. The obligation for payment of export customs duties on re-exportation do not commence with the declarant.

Temporary admissions

Temporary importation (admission) is a customs procedure whereby goods may be temporarily used in the customs territory of the EAEU either partially or fully exempt from customs duty and VAT.

The period of temporary importation may not exceed two years (or 34 months in the case of leased fixed assets). Full exemption from customs duty and taxes is granted in limited cases for goods not intended for commercial sale. Typical examples of temporary importation with full exemption are when goods are imported for display in an exhibition or for testing in the customs territory of the EAEU. Partial exemption is granted in other cases where goods are expected to remain in the customs territory of the EAEU for a limited period of time before being re-exported. In this case the importer must make monthly customs payments equal to 3% of the total amount that would have been payable if the goods had been released for domestic consumption. Once the temporary importation period has expired, goods are either re-exported out of the EAEU or released for domestic consumption in the customs territory of the EAEU. If the goods are released for domestic consumption, accrued customs duty and penalty interest must be paid. This customs procedure is widely used in practice, particularly when importing equipment under lease arrangements and in connection with construction projects.

Processing and Re-exportation

There are three processing procedures:

- Inward processing. This procedure is used by companies that process goods in the customs territory of the EAEU. Subject to certain conditions, goods may be imported into the customs territory of the EAEU for processing without customs duty or VAT being paid. Finished products obtained as a result of processing the goods must be exported. If the finished products are released for domestic consumption in the customs

territory of the EAEU, customs duty and VAT are charged based on the value of the original materials, and penalty interest is payable .

In accordance with the EAEU re-exportation procedure, foreign goods are reexported from the EAEU without paying import customs duties, taxes, safeguard, anti-dumping, countervailing duties and/or with the refund (offset) of the amounts of such duties and taxes.

The conditions of placement of the goods under the customs procedure for re-exportation are

- 1) Compliance with prohibitions and restrictions to the Customs code of the EAEU
- 2) submission to the customs authority of data on the circumstances of importation of goods in the EAEU, exportation of the goods from the EAEU, which are confirmed through submission of customs and/or other documents or data on such documents.

For the transfer (transportation) within the EAEU, the goods placed under the customs procedure for re-exportation have to be placed under the customs procedure for transit. Goods placed under the customs procedure for re-exportation have to be exported within 4 months from the day following the day of placing them under re-exportation. In case of failing to reexport within the time frame, the customs procedure for re-exportation is terminated and the goods are detained by the customs authorities.

All details regarding the re-exportation procedure are available in Chapter 32 of the [Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union](#).

Packaging, Marking and Labelling Requirements

Belarusian Customs require specific product information including name, trademark, manufacturer, country of origin, composition in accordance with the EAEU Customs declaration form. Additional labeling, marking and packaging requirements have generally been harmonized across the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states, according to [Technical Regulations](#) for each product category. The Technical

Regulation (TR) on Safety of Packaging (TR CU 005/2011) is a key provision which governs standards and requirements for packaging, including that of food products, produced both as a finished product and as part of the product's manufacturing process. Where required, the official certification mark logo "EAC" should be applied to each production unit, packaging, or instructions for use. The "EAC" mark indicates conformity with TR's established by the EAEU and should only be used for products which have been formally tested and approved by officially recognized certification authorities. In July 2011, the Eurasian conformity logo was introduced as a sign for freely marketable goods. It confirms that the marked goods have undergone the mandatory conformity assessment procedures and correspond to the stipulated technical requirements.

Council of the EAEU has also approved the labelling of footwear by digital identification means including the use of so-called data matrix codes, i.e. 2D identifying barcodes directly printed on the items and/or the packaging. This kind of code must provide information on, e.g., the country of origin or manufacture, serial number of the product unit, product characteristics, including colour and type of footwear and sole material used, information on the company and the indication of the taxpayer identification number (UNP) of the responsible company registered in Belarus. For these commodities, the managing governmental enterprise in Belarus is the "Publishing house" ("BELBLANKAVYD"), which establishes the digital labelling system and cooperates with designated state bodies in the framework of its application.

The TR on the safety of the packaging for foodstuffs provides appropriate requirements for the packaging of goods and was adopted in the whole EAEU. In accordance with said TR, symbols of the packaging material and closures/covers must be drawn in Latin letters. During the customs clearance, manufacturers and/or importers must provide a self-declaration on the identification of the packaging to the responsible customs

officials. In addition, the TR classifies certain types of appropriate packaging material, e.g. paper and cardboard, wooden and ceramic material, and composite materials, if their consistency. The labelling of imports is to be done in Belarusian, English, German or Russian. Since July 2013, the TR on food products labelling applies within the whole territory of the EAEU. Among other issues, the TR establishes the requirements for the labels of packaged foodstuffs and the labels of transportation packages containing foodstuffs.

Technical Standards

Standard is the main instrument for implementing technical regulations. The Eurasian Economic Commission has issued the [Approved Lists of Standards for Technical Regulations of the Customs Union](#). The standards and requirements for imports vary by each product category, but also frequently evolve and change as the Union gradually agrees on and imposes the import requirements. Therefore, Trade wing advises to remain constantly updated on the latest decisions of the EAEU regarding the standards and requirements of imports into the territory of the EAEU. This is carried out by the [Department for Technical Regulation and Accreditation](#) as well as the [Department for Sanitary, Phytosanitary and Veterinary Measures](#) of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Conformity assessment

In accordance with the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, conformity assessment of subjects of technical regulation is carried out in the form of registration (state registration), testing, conformity assessments, examinations and/or in any other form. Mandatory assurance of conformity is carried out in the forms of declaration of conformity and certification only when set out by respective technical regulations of the

Union and only to assess compliance with the requirements of technical regulations of the Union.

EAEU certifications obtained in any member country are applicable in all member countries of the EAEU and the goods can be transferred/ reexported to other member states. The certificates are valid for five years. Only EAEU accredited testing and certification organizations can perform the necessary tests and issue Certificates or Declarations. If the product is not included on the unified list of products subject to mandatory conformity, then it should go through the conformity process according to the national standards of the five EAEU countries, depending on the final destination of the product.

Pakistan's positions vs major competitors

Country	Share in Belarusian total imports (2019)	Rank in the largest suppliers (2019)
Sri Lanka	0.0188%	77 th
Pakistan	0.0382%	66 th
Egypt	0.0656%	59 th
Bangladesh	0.0918%	49 th
India	0.4408%	21 st
China	9.6452%	2 nd

Source: National statistical committee of The Republic of Belarus

Market entry strategies

Working from Pakistan directly with potential clients

In case the company wants to simply test the waters by sending presentation/commercial offer to Belarusian companies, it should be mentioned that hiring a Russian speaking,

experienced salesman could be a good option, as nowadays, only sending offers by email is not effective if it's not followed up by cold calling. Secondly Russian speaking salesman will be helpful for selling not only to Belarus but also the whole former Soviet Union region.

Working with an importer/distributor

Cooperation with an importer/distributor is a very widespread scheme for foreign companies entering the EAEU market. When choosing a distributor it is of utmost importance to make sure that the company is both personally and economically involved in the industry and the region where one intends to sell your products or services. An ideal distributor should have many years of market experience and have developed reliable business relations with the clientele one is targeting. Distributors play a key role in the mediation process. They negotiate with retail outlets, the local authorities as well as individuals, depending on products and industries. Many Belarusian importers create competitive and cost advantages in sales for the whole EAEU. Unlike Russia, Belarus importers offer more often to handle the logistics and the product certification, usually in exchange of territorial exclusivity or commercial benefits (discounts, promotions, etc.). As a product certified in Belarus also offers the opportunity to export to Russia and Kazakhstan, starting an expansion strategy in the three markets through Belarus could be an affordable way.

Working with an agent /country representative

Working with an agent is not a common practice for foreign companies in Belarus. First of all the foreign company with an agent still has to face the challenge on how to import the goods. Secondly, it is very difficult to check the reliability of agents and last but not least for high professionals this seems not to be the best working option nowadays.

Participation in exhibitions and B2B meetings

Participation in international exhibitions/B2B meetings remains one the best effective tools of getting familiarized and entering other markets. Belarusian business people appreciate the visit of direct representatives of the foreign enterprises that address them with commercial purposes. Sitting face to face in order to negotiate with your future clients will bring added. Belarusian companies can be targeted at not only Belarusian, but also Russian exhibitions. This allows the participants to market effectively, and sell products, meet with potential partners and competitors, collect valuable information about the market and adjust their own marketing strategy to the needs of a new market.

Establishing legal presence

Foreign companies can operate in Belarus as a separate legal entity or as a representative office of a foreign company. Most common forms of legal entities in Belarus are limited liability companies, closed joint-stock companies and unitary enterprises.

LLC

An LLC is the most common corporate form in Belarus, and most foreign companies opt for this option when entering the Belarusian market. The charter capital of an LLC is formed from its participants' (up to 50) contributions. There is no minimum charter capital requirement, and it can be founded by one person or have one participant. The governing bodies of an LLC are the general meeting of participants, the supervisory board (optional) and the executive body. The supervisory board is established by decision of, and is accountable to, the general meeting of participants and deals with

matters relating to the general administration of the LLC's activities. The individual executive body (director) or collective executive body (managing board) is responsible for the day-to-day running of the LLC. The participants in an LLC are not liable for the LLC's obligations and bear the risk of losses associated with its activities only within the limits of their capital contributions.

Unitary enterprise

The main difference between a unitary enterprise and an LLC is that a unitary enterprise's founder remains the direct owner of its assets. Nevertheless, in 2016 Belarus allowed the registration of an LLC with a single founder. Hence, the option of opening a unitary enterprise has become less popular. The assets of a unitary enterprise are indivisible and cannot be divided into contributions (equity interests or units), although they can be owned by an individual (or spouses) or a legal entity and be possessed by the unitary enterprise under a right of economic management. Shared ownership of the assets is not allowed. There is no minimum charter capital requirement for a unitary enterprise. The governing body of a unitary enterprise is the director, who must be appointed by the owner of the enterprise's assets. A unitary enterprise is liable for its obligations to the extent of all the assets that it holds under economic management.

Joint-stock company

In the case of an open JSC, shares may be freely sold to third parties, while in a closed JSC, share transfers are subject to the pre-emptive rights of other shareholders. The minimum charter capital requirement for incorporation is currently 100 base units (approximately USD 1,300) for a closed 400 base units (approximately USD 5,200) for an open JSC. A JSC's shares may be held by one person. The number of shareholders is limited to 50 for a closed JSC but is unlimited for an open JSC. Joint-stock companies can issue two types of shares: ordinary (voting) and preference shares. The owner of a preference share is entitled to fixed dividends and a portion of the company's assets

upon its liquidation but may not vote on management matters. The nominal value of preference shares must not exceed 25% of the company's charter capital. A JSC is obliged to comply with various disclosure requirements.

Representative offices

Foreign companies may also operate in Belarus without creating a legal entity by establishing a representative office. A representative office is regarded as an autonomous subdivision of a foreign company that represents its interests in Belarus, and not as a separate legal entity. Representative offices of foreign companies are not permitted to engage in business activity. A foreign company may open a representative office in Belarus only to carry out preparatory and auxiliary activities on behalf of the foreign company, including activities such as researching Belarusian markets, studying investment opportunities, establishing business entities in Belarus in partnership with foreign investors.

Comparison of a limited liability company, a unitary enterprise and a closed joint-stock company in Belarus

Limited liability company	Limited liability company	Unitary enterprise
Standard registration procedures	Standard registration procedures plus registration of shares with the Securities Department of the Finance Ministry	Standard registration procedures
Profit may be distributed either proportionately or disproportionately to equity interest, if directly	Profit may be distributed only in proportion to equity interests, excluding preference shares	Profit is distributed by the owner in the owner's favour

permitted by the charter		
Transfer of equity interest to a third party may be restricted/prohibited by the charter	Transfer of shares in a closed joint-stock company to third parties is only permitted with the consent of the other shareholders	Since the enterprise is wholly owned by one person, transfer takes place by means of alienation of the asset portfolio
The registration procedure is not very complicated and usually takes about two week	The registration procedure is more complicated than for an LLC because of the requirement to issue shares and register the issue	The registration procedure is the same as for LLC

Registration of companies in Belarus

Companies must be registered with the state registration authority, which arranges subsequent registration with the tax authorities, the Social Security Fund, statistical agencies, Belgosstrakh (the Belarusian National Unitary Insurance Enterprise), etc. During the registration process, the state authority may also send information to a bank to enable the opening of a current (settlement) account. Representative offices must register themselves with the tax authorities, the Social Security Fund, statistical agencies and Belgosstrakh after receiving the requisite permit from the relevant regional (or Minsk city) executive committee . If any documents submitted for registration purposes do not meet the official requirements, they may have to be resubmitted. A newly established company or representative office must take additional steps to become fully operational, such as opening bank accounts, making a corporate seal (optional) or registering a share issue with the securities authorities (only applies to JSCs) . For a legal entity, the registration time takes around 2-3 weeks, for a representative office-

around 1-2 months. State duty for a legal entity is 1 base unit (approx. USD 13), for a representative office its 195 base units (approx. USD 2,535) for every three years of activity for which the permit to open the representative office is issued.

Licensing

A special permit (license) is required for certain business activities. Currently, there are 34 such activities (comprising around 200 types of services/work). The most important are banking operations, the gambling industry, the manufacture and wholesale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, retail of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, wholesale and retail of petroleum products, and health care services. Licensing authorities issue licenses within 15 working days of receiving all the required documents.

Anti-monopoly control

Under competition law, certain transactions (including M&A, the creation of new entities and the purchase and sale of shares and/or assets) are subject to anti-monopoly scrutiny. In this case the approval of the anti-monopoly authorities must be obtained before a transaction is concluded or a new entity is registered.

Restrictions applicable to strategic companies

Investments in legal entities holding a dominant position on Belarusian goods markets require the approval of the anti-monopoly authorities in cases stipulated by anti-monopoly law. The same is true for investments in activities prohibited by Belarusian legislation. Investments may also be legislatively restricted in the interests of national security (including protection of the environment and heritage assets), public order, morality, public health and the rights and liberties of individuals.

Shareholders' agreements

Under Belarusian legislation, shareholders of a company may conclude shareholders' agreements or, if it is a limited liability company, participants' agreements. Through such agreements, shareholders/participants may agree to exercise their rights in a certain

manner and/or refrain from exercising their rights, including by voting in a certain manner at the general meeting of shareholders/ participants, coordinating voting choices or coordinating other actions relating to the management of the company or the establishment, business, re-organization or liquidation of the company. There are, however, restrictions to the effect that not all participants/ shareholders of a company may be parties to a shareholders' agreement at the same time.

List of important Ministries of Republic of Belarus

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Address: 15 Kirova St., Minsk 220030

Tel.: (8-017) 327-37-51

www.mshp.gov.by

Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade

Address: 8/1 Kirova St., Minsk 220030

Tel.: (8-017) 327-61-21

www.mart.gov.by

Ministry of Architecture and Construction

Address: 39 Myasnikova St., Minsk 220048

Tel.: (8-017) 327-26-42

www.mas.gov.by

Ministry of Communication and Informatization

Address: 10 Nezavisimosti Ave., Minsk 220050

Tel.: (8-017) 327-38-61

www.mpt.gov.by

Ministry of Culture

Address: 11 Pobeditelei Ave., Minsk 220004

Tel.: (8-017) 203-75-74

www.kultura.by

Ministry of Defence

Address: 1 Kommunisticheskaya St., Minsk 220034
Tel.: (8-017) 297-12-12
www.mil.by

Ministry of Economy
Address: 14 Bersona St., Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 222-60-48
www.economy.gov.by

Ministry of Education
Address: 9 Sovetskaya St., Minsk 220010
Tel.: (8-017) 327-47-36
edu.gov.by

Ministry of Emergency Situations
Address: 5 Revoliutsionnaya St., Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 203-65-50
www.mchs.gov.by

Ministry of Energy
Address: 14 K. Marksa St., Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 218-21-02
www.minenergo.gov.by

Ministry of Finance
Address: 7 Sovetskaya St., Minsk 220010
Tel.: (8-017) 222-61-37
www.minfin.gov.by

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
Address: 19 Lenina St., Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 327-29-22
www.mfa.gov.by

Ministry of Forestry
Address: 39 Myasnikova St., Minsk 220048
Tel.: (8-017) 200-46-01
www.mlh.by

Ministry of Public Health
Address: 39 Myasnikova St., Minsk 220048

Tel.: (8-017) 222-60-33
www.minzdrav.gov.by

Ministry of Housing and Communal Services

Address: 16 Bersona St., Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 200-15-45
www.mjks.gov.by

Ministry of Industry

Address: 2/4 Partizansky Ave., Minsk 220033
Tel.: (8-017) 224-95-95
www.minprom.gov.by

Ministry of Information

Address: 11 Pobeditelei Ave., Minsk 220004
Tel.: (8-017) 203-92-31
www.mininform.gov.by

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

Address: 4 Gorodskoi Val, Minsk 220030
Tel.: (8-017) 218-78-08
www.mvd.gov.by

Ministry of Justice

Address: 10 Kollektornaya St., Minsk 220004
Tel.: (8-017) 306-37-30
www.minjust.gov.by

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Address: 23/2 Pobeditelei Ave., Minsk 220004
Tel.: (8-017) 306-38-84
www.mintrud.gov.by

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

Address: 10 Kollektornaya St., Minsk 220004
Tel.: (8-017) 200-66-91
www.minpriroda.gov.by

Ministry of Tax Collection

Address: 9 Sovetskaya St., Minsk 220010
Tel.: (8-017) 222-64-50

www.nalog.gov.by

Ministry of Transport and Communications

Address: 21 Chicherina St., Minsk 220029

Tel.: (8-017) 334-11-52

www.mintrans.gov.by

Ministry of Sports and Tourism

Address: 8/2 Kirova St., Minsk 220030

Tel.: (8-017) 327-72-37

www.mst.by

Useful links

President of the Republic of Belarus www.president.gov.by
Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus www.government.gov.by
Council of the Republic www.sovrep.gov.by
House of Representatives www.house.gov.by
National Agency of Investment and Privatization www.investinbelarus.by
National Center of Legal Information www.ncpi.gov.by
National Tourism Agency www.belarustourism.by
Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange www.butb.by
Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry www.cci.by
Official website of the Republic of Belarus www.belarus.by
Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus www.edu.gov.by
Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Belarus www.minpriroda.gov.by
Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus www.minzdrav.gov.by
Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus www.economy.gov.by

Sources

- [EY Doing Business in Belarus report](#)
- [Official website of the Eurasian Economic Commission](#)
- [National Statistics Committee](#)
- [Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union](#)