

Doors to the country of beneficial projects

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Germany, H.E. Mr. Andrei Giro, calls upon German partners to utilise Belarus' openness

Mr. Ambassador, Germany long ago successfully mastered the Belarusian market. It clearly understands our potential. What are the aims of the Belarusian Investment Forum in Frankfurt-am-Main?

Belarus is no longer a 'white spot' on the map of Europe for the German political and economic elite. Moreover, the intensive development of dialogue at various levels shows that we don't occupy last place in Germany's 'Eastern policy'. This year alone, Belarusian and German foreign ministers met twice officially.

Over 350 companies with German capital are successfully operating in our country, while almost a hundred German firms are represented, alongside the German-Belarusian Economic Club and the German Economy Office in Belarus. However, we have no desire to stop there. Naturally, competition doesn't stand still, so we need to keep up. Accordingly, we decided to organise our Investment Forum in Germany this time, since it's the country with the most powerful economy in the EU.

Our practical tasks are evident: we want potential investors to learn more about our country, asking questions of the heads of the Belarusian Government and communicating with Belarusian businessmen. They can establish useful contacts, while outlining promising areas for co-operation and liaisons with Belarus. We also aim to sign concrete agreements and contracts in future.

Germany is viewed by Belarusians as a key partner regarding economic modernisation. Is it justifying its title as an exporter of advanced technologies to Belarusian industry? What's your perception of the contribution of Germans to the technical re-equipment of Belarusian enterprises?

Our data unambiguously testifies to Germany's leading role in the modernisation and technical re-equipment of Belarusian enterprises. Over the last decade or so, we've been purchasing tools, high-tech equipment and the latest technologies from Germany each year — worth \$1bn. German partners have helped us modernise and master the production of new manufactures — such as at the Belarusian Steel Works, Integral, Minsk Tractor Works, Grodnohimvolokno and others.

Alternative energy is among the most promising directions for our interaction. With the help of German firms, Belarus has been constructing its first wind park and bio-gas facilities. Our country has been building enterprises to process household industrial waste and to produce modern construction materials — using advanced technologies developed in Germany.

German technologies are present in every production sector of our economy, boasting high exploitation possibilities, reliability, on-time delivery and high quality after sales service. This is highly appreciated by Belarusian customers.

Which proposals have Belarusians taken to Frankfurt-am-Main?

The Belarusian Investment Forum is organised according to thematic sec-

tions, with plenary sessions. The former allow Belarusian participants to present their proposals on investment co-operation — such as infrastructure development within the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, looking at transport, logistics, construction and tourism. Other sections are devoted to promising investment areas involving industry and agriculture, energy efficiency and ecology, and renewable energy sources. We believe this format will allow participants to discuss proposals from Belarus in a business-like manner, with potential investors able to share their expertise on how these ventures might be realised.

We are hopeful of success, since the largest public organisations are our partners; these are flagships of German industry. The Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations is our major partner — an influential or-

changed regarding the production and dissemination of goods being manufactured within the Customs Union.

To fully inform businessmen about the Customs Union, conferences and round table discussions have been organised in Germany, with specialists from Belarus' State Customs Committee attending to answer the most complicated questions. The development of modern logistical infrastructure is also vital. German partners have been delighted to hear about the construction of several dozen large logistics centres in Belarus. Giants such as German Railways and Lufthansa Airline are keen to help realise these projects.

No doubt, the simplification and speediness of customs clearance of cargo should enhance interest from western businessmen, inspiring greater co-operation with our country. E-declaration and unification with European



Liaisons extend in practice

By Anna Kotova

Belarus-EU trade up over 4 times since 2003

The EU countries now account for 43 percent of Belarus' exports. Around 30 percent of oil supplies and 20 percent of gas supplies from Russia to the EU pass through Belarus. Over the past five years, the EU's share of investments in Belarus amounts to about 44 percent (over 21 percent of foreign direct investments).

Speaking at the 3rd Belarusian Conference for Finance and Investment in Minsk, Belarus' Deputy Economy Minister Dmitry Golukhov said that Belarus participates in the Eastern Partnership initiative and is involved in the work of its four platforms. The country has been actively developing sectoral dialogues with the EU and the European Commission in the areas of energy, transport, environment, customs, agriculture and others. A number of technical assistance agreements have come into force. "We are expanding the dialogue with the EU in all aspects of co-operation," Mr. Golukhov noted.

Avoiding excessive competition

By Yelena Prusova

Austria's Kronospan Holdings Ltd. is ready to implement a woodworking project in Grodno region — as discussed during a meeting between Belarus' Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky and the company's representatives

The Austrian company was offered vacant production premises in the Grodno region. Now, with all formalities observed, the parties are ready to sign an agreement to set up a woodworking facility, using the Austrian company's investments.

"We've fallen in love with the Grodno region after we had been offered a number of sites from which we could choose the most suitable," said Peter Kaindl, the Executive Director and owner of Kronospan Holdings Ltd. He expressed confidence that the proposed site is ideal from all points of view. One of the main reasons in favour of it is the availability of necessary resources. "Here, we can use our experience in the field of sustainable timber management," said Mr. Kaindl.

The Austrian businessman stressed that Belarus has vast woodlands which are located far away from the major markets, which makes it feasible to set up a woodworking plant there. "We'll do our best not to cause excessive competition to local producers. We are ready to share the technology," added Mr. Kaindl. The project will be export-based.

The investment deal is likely to be signed at the Belarusian Investment Forum in Frankfurt-am-Main.



Business partners from Germany remain frequent guests in Belarus

organisation boasting wonderful contacts among the political and economic elite of Germany, with experience of working in our region. In addition, we're liaising with the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the German Economy Office in Belarus. The Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology is our official partner from the German Government. In Frankfurt-am-Main, organisational issues are being managed by Maleki Conferences GmbH, which has been organising Euro Finance Week for the past twenty years, gaining a perfect reputation on the market.

The Belarusian Investment Forum in Germany is taking place for the first time since the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan has come into existence. How has this new Union influenced the business plans of our German partners?

The Belarusian Investment Forum will answer this question. No doubt, the formation of the Customs Union has aroused true interest among German businessmen. Our Embassy has received dozens of inquiries regarding terms of delivery for ready-made products, parts and components. Businesses also want to know how terms have

documents, as well as construction and modernisation of customs terminals on the Belarus-EU border and clear and professional work by customs officers, should also positively influence business activity with Customs Union states.

Participants of the Belarusian Investment Forum will be able to receive answers to all their questions regarding the Customs Union. The Forum's organisational committee has invited the Executive Secretary of the Customs Commission of the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, Sergei Glaziev, to participate in the event.

Germany is a constant source of ideas in the key area of European policy dealing with the provision of energy security. Which aspects of this field are under focus at the Forum?

The Bilateral Energy Forum plays an important role in Belarusian-German dialogue. Its second sitting took place on April 22nd, 2010, in Hanover. The major focus of energy-related dialogue is the enhancement of energy efficiency. Another important aspect of our interaction is finding sources of renewable energy. Simultaneously, we are relying on the wider use of local fuels. This doesn't contradict our desire to reduce dependence on oil and gas. Our strategic

goals are obvious: we wish to avoid being reliant on a single provider, while reducing consumption of oil and gas and pursuing sources of renewable energy. With this in mind, one of the sections of the Belarusian Investment Forum is dedicated to innovations in this field. We expect to see a keen exchange of opinions regarding major trends in alternative energy development. Possibilities for experience exchange and implementation of new developments in this field will be receiving our attention.

A law on alternative energy in Belarus, inspired by decades of German experience, is in the final stage of its adoption. It is hoped that it will be approved by the House of Representatives' deputies during the autumn session.

What kind of results are you expecting from the Forum in Frankfurt-am-Main?

The Forum's major task is to present

Belarus during Euro Finance Week as a unique place for foreign investments. We'd like to again show our production potential, our reliability and stability to the global business community, alongside our professional business attitude and guaranteed protection of foreign investments.

At the same time, we'll be openly and honestly explaining how our country has created the necessary framework for investment activity. We'll report on the recently established National Investment and Privatisation Agency, showing how it will become a reliable partner for new investors as they enter the Belarusian market. It aims to help solve all the issues facing someone setting up a new business.

New possibilities are opening up to investors wishing to work in Belarus and within the Customs Union and we want to make these known. Meanwhile, we want to hear the opinion of our partners — present and potential — regarding Belarus' investment climate. We're expecting a detailed exchange of opinions, substantial discussion and the establishment of new contacts, as well as the development of existing ties.

Welcome to the Belarusian Investment Forum in Frankfurt-am-Main!

By Nina Romanova