

Main course remains unchanged

By Anna Belugina

Belarus confirms its readiness to join WTO as part of single customs territory, jointly with Russia and Kazakhstan

Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Yevdochenko, recently told a press conference that the heads of our three countries' governments have signed all relevant documents. "We'll join the WTO as a single customs territory. There is no other option," he noted, adding that the success of negotiations on WTO entry rely on its key players: WTO member states. He stressed, "The USA and the European Union have given Belarus 'a green light' regarding entry to the WTO."

The Deputy Minister underscored that Belarus and its Customs Union partners are busy with WTO entry negotiations. Mr. Yevdochenko noted that a new chairperson was recently appointed to the working group for Belarus' accession to the WTO, explaining, "He visited Belarus, together with representatives of the WTO Secretariat, for thematic consultations. Afterwards, a consolidated document detailing economic changes in Belarus was sent to the WTO headquarters." The document has already been distributed among WTO member states and Belarus' proposals are being studied. "We've agreed that a session of the working group will be held in November, as confirmed by the WTO Secretariat," added Mr. Yevdochenko.

Fast food Australian style

By Yelena Ivanchenko

Minsk visited by Executive Chairman of Muzz Buzz Franchising, Warren Reynolds

Mr. Reynolds plans to open at least 200 fast food spots in Belarus in the coming five years, using local resources — construction materials, technological equipment and food. The official shared his plans to join the Belarusian market in his talk to the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vasily Romanov. The Australian businessman plans to visit our country in January 2011 next, while, in March-April, he is to bring a group of Australian businessmen (headed by Perth Mayor Lisa Scaffidi).

Another important aspect is the possibility for bilateral training of company heads as part of Australia's state programme on specialists' exchange. This was also discussed during Mr. Reynolds' meeting with Belarus' Economy Minister, Nikolai Snopkov. The businessman stressed that this exchange would be beneficial from economic and cultural points of view alike, since 'cultural values in our countries are extremely similar'.

Changes possible on pharmaceutical market

According to the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan is expanding opportunities for Belarusian pharmaceutical product sales to the EU

By Irina Yakovleva

Speaking of the possibility of setting up production of European-branded medicines in Belarus, Mr. Dalli notes that it could be arranged. "I'm not yet in a position to comment, as we need to study the environment in which such projects are carried out in Belarus, looking at the economic landscape and approval practices. However, the establishment of the Customs Union could give Belarus an advantage," he stresses.

The Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Mikhail Myasnikov, adds that the European pharmaceutical market is estimated to be worth 400bn euros, so is of great interest to Belarus. "People are increasingly health-conscious, spending more money on their health," he explains. He believes that a systematic approach to Belarus' integration with the European Union is vital, including in the pharmaceutical sphere. "We're building a single economic space for Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, so it's important that our work with the European Union is



European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, visits Minsk's Academpharm

systematic. We must harmonise our approaches with those of Europe, instead of altering them," Mr. Myasnikov notes.

According to Mr. Myasnikov, the European Commission delegation visit, led by the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, should kick start a systematic approach to bilateral trade and economic links, alongside sci-tech co-operation. "As everything is strictly regulated in Europe, a joint approach to harmonising standards, trade terms and research is extreme-

ly important for us," he concludes. Meanwhile, Mr. Dalli notes that the EU would like to learn more about the production processes and existing standards in pharmaceuticals in Belarus. "We want to study them in comparison with the systems operating in Europe, to ensure the safety of such products," he emphasises. The Commissioner notes that European drugs have their own characteristics depending on their type and the market for which they are intended.

Mr. Dalli sees cross-border partnerships, including projects to

develop collaboration between clinics and hospitals in Belarus and the EU, as another promising area of co-operation. He explains that video consultations could be used between specialists from medical institutions, as a priority of European policy. "We support the e-system of knowledge exchange and experience in health-care," he stresses. Mr. Dalli tells us that the EU is now considering a directive to aid the movement of patients across borders. The European Union has also shown interest in co-operation on this issue.

Relying on employers

2011 Draft State Programme for Employment focusing on employers

By Lyudmila Svetova

According to preliminary forecasts, next year, the Belarusian labour market should face an excess of personnel in some organisations and a lack of suitable employees in regions. Additionally, companies will be restructuring. The Labour and Social Protection Ministry notes that, at present, employment rates remain stable and under control, with unemployment standing at just 0.8 percent of the economically active population. Moreover, problematic districts (where unemployment reached 1.5-2 percent) have been abated. Last year, eight districts found themselves in this situation. Now, only one remains: Gantsevichi. However, even here, the figure remains within that forecast. Moreover, the number of vacancies in Belarus is now 1.6-fold more than the number of those seeking employment; in Minsk, this difference is even greater — almost 5-fold.

"We'll face a new situation soon," explains the Head of the Main Department of Employment and Population Policy at the Labour and Social Protection Ministry, Nikolay Kokhonov. "The country is modern-



Minsk's centre helps youngsters find employment

ising its economy, so many specialists won't be in demand any longer. We must shift our employment policy from the artificial preservation of jobs to raising the competitiveness of our labour market. Much depends on employers in this respect."

With this in mind, the 2011 State Programme for Employment aims to support employers seeking to modernise, with help given in finding suitably qualified staff. The distribution of the labour force is being analysed, to foresee its shortcomings and make provision for

training and retraining to redirect employees. Employers will receive compensation to cover the cost of professional training for workers.

Small business development is to receive funding, alongside entrepreneurial activity, crafts and agroecotourism. Three thousand unemployed Belarusians are expected to receive financial aid next year, to set up their own businesses.

Small towns remain high on the agenda, with the list of those needing special attention being extended to include 28 districts.

Useful meetings in Sardinia

Belarus' construction companies study Italian builders' modern technologies

Belarusian experts recently took part in a seminar entitled *Management and Financing of a Building Company. Modern Italian Technologies for Maintenance and Renovation of Tourist Facilities*. It was held as part of the Belarus-Sardinia co-operation programme, attended by the heads of our construction companies. Attendees were able to enhance their professional understanding of such issues as finance and personnel management while gaining familiarity with the latest Italian rural tourism facilities and hotel complexes.

During their stay in Sardinia, the Belarusians met the Chairman of Cagliari Province Council, Roberto Pili. Sardinian officials have confirmed their interest in co-operating with Belarus within the *Sardinia Global* project (envisaging professional training of Belarusian young people). The Sardinia Global Centre was established in 2004, financed by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia. In its six years of existence, over 3,000 people have received professional training in the construction sphere.