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# **Belarus in the region of the Eastern Partnership countries (1992-2012)**

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**Interstate relations strategy.  
Political and economic role in the region.**

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***Political Sphere*  
Institute of Political Studies**

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ІНСТЫТУТ ПАЛІТЫЧНЫХ ДАСЛЕДАВАННЯЎ



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## Editorial note

In 2008, within the framework of the Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy, the European Union initiated the launch of a program of rapprochement and profound cooperation with six post-Soviet countries — “new eastern neighbors” — Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In May 2009, these countries accepted the EU proposal to become participants of an initiative which received the name Eastern Partnership. In addition to the development of mutual relations between the EU and each partner country, this initiative also presupposed the development of multilateral relations between all participants of the Eastern Partnership. In order to determine the place and role of Belarus in mutual relations (first of all, at political and economic levels) with the countries which now are part of the Eastern Partnership region, to describe the way these mutual relations have been developing during two decades (1992-2012), and to reveal the potential of further regional cooperation, in 2013 the **Political Sphere Institute of Political Studies** carried out a research with results are presented here.

Research collective: **Andrei Kazakevich** (the head of the research; methodology, integration and final data processing, basic interpretations); **Andrei Valodzkin** (gathering and analysis of data on Belarus’ relations with Azerbaijan and Moldova); **Aliaksandr Filipau** (gathering and analysis of data on Belarus’ relations with Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine).

The research was carried out with the support of the **Center for European Transformation**.

## Introduction

There have always been many discussions concerning the character of Belarusian foreign policy and Belarus' place in the region. Opinions of various experts and researchers are considerably different — from the cultivation of the official ideologue of “multiple-vector-ness” to the statement that Belarus is a “protectorate” of Russia, which does not have its own foreign policy. Some analysts describe Belarus as an industrial and technological center of the region with a well-coordinated state system — unlike its corrupted neighbors with their destroyed economies that depend on raw materials export. Some others describe Belarus as a subsidized country, which depends on raw materials, with an inefficient industrial sector.

These discussions have received a new meaning in the context of the EU regional initiative called the Eastern Partnership because its effective implementation requires an exact answer to the question of the character of Belarusian foreign policy, as well as the understanding of Belarus' real place in the region. Separate attention is to be paid to the description of the motives and factors which define the Belarusian state's activity on the external arena, the ups and downs in Belarus' relations with separate countries of the Eastern Partnership region within the latest two decades, Russia's influence on the dynamics of external relations during this time, as well as the cases of Belarus' entry into regional and global politics.

Thus, this research is aimed at defining the actual system of foreign policy connections which are being built by the Belarusian state within the pale of the Eastern Partnership region, i.e. what strategies Belarus chooses in its relations with separate countries of this region; how much its policy is stable and whether it is extensive; what steady tendencies can be observed for the latest twenty years. In a word, it is necessary to describe the creation of the system and format of Belarus' foreign policy connections in the region covered by the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative since 2009.

Of course, the received picture will have to be explained — the basic political and economic factors and motives of the foreign policy dynamics should be determined. To seek presumable interpretations is another task of this research. We believe that such interpretations will allow us to understand Belarus' actual policy and will make it possible to forecast its further development.

We shall pay special attention to the definition of Belarus' present political and economic place in today's Eastern Partnership region on the basis of the gathered empirical material — how much Belarus is isolated; how much it is independent when it determines its foreign policy course; what model of the political game is incident to Belarus. Also, it will be important to examine Belarus' economic role — in relations with what countries of the region it acts as an industrial and technological center and for what countries it is just a source of raw materials and energy carriers.

**Description of sources.** The sources used during this research can be split in two groups. The first group includes information materials on the official web-sites of the diplomatic departments and other state structures of the Eastern Partnership countries (ministries of foreign affairs, parliaments, etc.). In its turn, this group can be split in: a) materials of a retrospective character dedicated to the history of the general development of bilateral contacts; b) messages from news archives devoted to concrete meetings or visits.

The sources from the first of these subgroups present a list of bilateral meetings and visits since 1992 and separate mentions of the character and subjects of some of them. These sources do not have a lot of information on the subjects of these meetings; sometimes, there are only formal and official formulations, e.g. “The important

(most topical) questions of bilateral cooperation development have been discussed". The sources from the second subgroup help partially compensate this lack of information. Being dedicated to separate events of bilateral contacts, they supply more exact information about them, although they also have many empty, formal phrases.

The second group of sources has much more information on the question of political contacts. This group includes reports of news agencies. The majority of them is Belarusian sources, both state-run (BelTA) and non-state (TUT.BY, Naviny.By) mass media. Among foreign sources, there is the Russian information-analytical edition of the CIS Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as some media sources of the countries-participants of the Eastern Partnership. We have also used scientific articles and monographs as additional sources, such as monographs on the history of foreign policy, materials of scientific-practical conferences, etc.

**Methods.** Studies of interstate contacts in the form of **official and working meetings** of representatives of state structures of various levels have become a basis of the analysis of political contacts. It is during such meetings that important agreements about cooperation are signed, current positions and directions of further development are coordinated, as well as informal contacts are built. The organization of such meetings usually requires efforts of corresponding bodies, as well as time, reputation, and finances; therefore, as a rule, parties are not interested in organizing purely formal meetings. The history of Belarus' foreign policy shows that meetings really have big importance for the development of mutual relations, and their analysis is quite a reliable basis when considering political cooperation — more frequent and at a higher level contacts demonstrate the presence of mutual interest, as well as vital issues of mutual relations. Naturally, not all meetings are strategically thought over and successful; not all of them influence positively mutual relations; nonetheless, most of them are effective. Our research is focused on a statistical analysis of a rather huge number of contacts.

In order to add an analysis of the quality of meetings in our research, we use the calculation of their rating. The rating is to measure the quality of contacts as follows: 3 points — for top-level contacts (heads of states); 2 points — at the average level (governments); and 1 point — for other contacts. The rating should introduce a qualitative indicator into the analysis because the level of contacts and their influence on the development of relations can differ essentially. The obtained data demonstrates a considerable correlation between the number and quality of contacts.

The analysis of a **format** of meetings is used as an additional parameter. The format means the way a meeting is carried out — whether in the form of a special visit, or with the use of other platforms (e.g. the CIS, the Eastern Partnership, multilateral meetings, etc.). The received data cannot be interpreted unequivocally as the format of meetings may not affect their essence directly. Nevertheless, we think it can be an indicator of the consistency of cooperation, as well as third countries' influence on mutual relations (when meetings have a multilateral character) or participation in the work of supranational structures.

During the analysis of economic relations, we have used, first of all, the data of mutual trade — the rates of increase and the volumes of goods turnover, export and import during 2000-2012, as well as the export and import structure for five years (2007-2011). The first group of parameters is standard and needs no explanations; therefore, we shall describe the second one. While considering the structure of export and import, the primary objective is to define the general "profile" of economic interaction of a country: what countries act as industrial and technological centers and which ones as sources of raw materials, energy carriers, or agricultural products. For this purpose, all production has been split into the following categories: a) industrial production of Category A

(which manufacture requires a rather difficult technological process (mechanical engineering, home appliances, medicines, chemical production, etc.)<sup>1</sup>; b) industrial production of Category B (building materials, woodworking, paper, textile products, etc.); c) processing of oil raw materials, metals, wood; d) products of agriculture and food-processing industry. While considering separate countries, additional groups of goods have been analyzed, too.

While analyzing the structure of goods turnover, the basic problem was the absence of complete statistical data. Open statistics displays not all goods, but only the most important categories; therefore, there is no statistical information on a considerable number of small items in open sources. Depending on a year and a country, it is from 5% to 30% of goods, which considerably complicates the possibility of exact generalizations (among these goods, there can be the production of Category A, raw materials, etc.). As a result, the “profiles” of trade that we have received cannot be considered absolutely accurate; certain borders of the importance of separate kinds of production are flexible. Thus, the carried out analysis and the character of statistics allow us to say that the lack of data changes details, but not the general structure of certain profiles. Divergences between categories should not be more than 5% from those defined in the analysis.

**Analysis structure.** The proposed analysis includes two parts. The first one reveals the basic tendencies of political and economic cooperation in all Eastern Partnership region; the second one is dedicated to more detailed consideration of separate countries.

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<sup>1</sup> The available statistical information makes this division conditional and cannot be absolutely exact (e.g. the manufacture of a concrete type of medicines can be both technologically difficult and technologically simple), but within the bounds of this analysis our task is only to outline a general structure. The basic idea is to distinguish between the manufacture connected with the use of high technologies, a scientific infrastructure, and qualified personnel, and the production which does not need it. Thus, considering the character of mutual trade between the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, the bar of “manufacturability” has not been raised high.



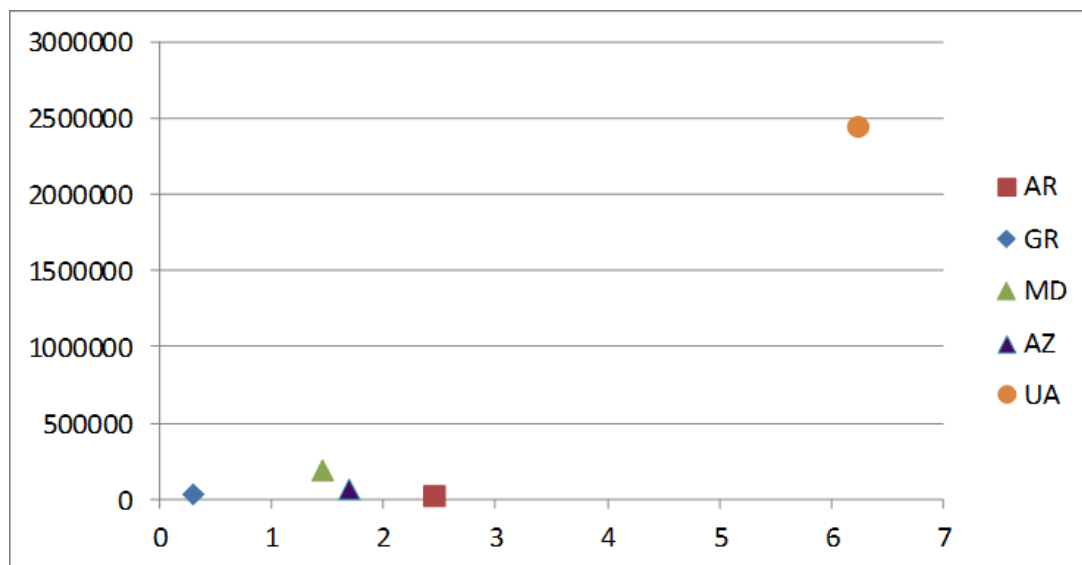
## Part I.

### General characteristic of the countries of the Eastern Partnership region

Before analyzing Belarus' relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, it is necessary to highlight the artificiality and substantially bureaucratic character of this region<sup>2</sup>. The definition of this region is largely based on the administrative logic of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative and the EU new eastern policy — to cover the Eastern European and Southern Caucasian post-Soviet countries, but without Russia (as this country is too big and demands special programs and policy). It leads to a number of features of the Eastern Partnership region and in particular — the distance between the “European” and “Caucasian” countries.

**Heterogeneity.** This group of countries is very non-uniform; therefore, it is only natural that in economic and political relations between them there are considerable asymmetries. It is necessary to say that this research demonstrates very expressively such asymmetries in the Belarusian case. The heterogeneity of relations can be observed while comparing the countries on the basis of different parameters (e.g. goods turnover and the average intensity of contacts during a year, starting from 2000). Diagram 1 shows how much Ukraine differs from the other countries of the Eastern Partnership region; the economic importance of this country for Belarus cannot be compared with the others.

**Diagram 1.** Non-uniform importance of the Eastern Partnership countries for Belarus (X — average number of contacts in 2000-2012; Y — average goods turnover in 2007-2012; thousand USD)\*

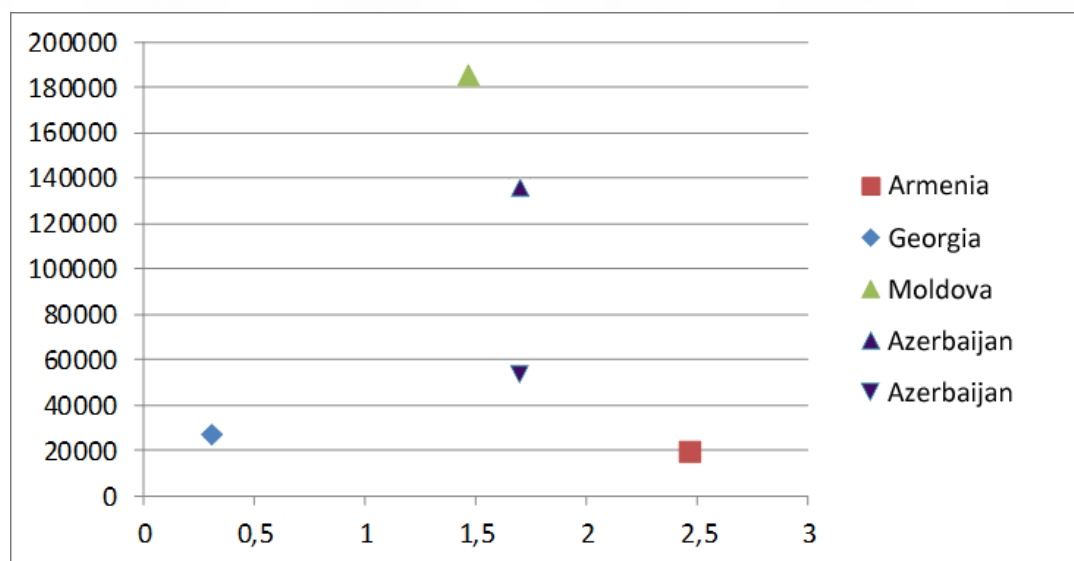


\* Here and below: AR — Armenia; GR — Georgia; MD — Moldova; AZ — Azerbaijan; UA — Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Still, the bureaucratic principle has its rational bases because while defining its foreign policy and considering the position of Russia, the EU has neither lots of space for maneuvers, nor sufficient flexibility and attentiveness to have programs for separate countries.

Still, even if we do not consider Ukraine, the considerable heterogeneity remains. The diagram shows that there are actually no countries which are close to Belarus as for their economic and political importance. Rather “close” to Belarus are only Moldova and Azerbaijan (if to consider the oil purchase in 2011) or Azerbaijan and Armenia (if not to consider this purchase) (See Diagram 2).

**Diagram 2.** Heterogeneity of the Eastern Partnership countries (without Ukraine) for Belarus (X — average number of contacts in 2000-2012; Y — average goods turnover in 2007-2012; thousand USD)



**System of relations.** Considering the character of the Eastern Partnership region, as well as big differences in the structures of economies, foreign policy orientations, internal political systems, and geographical remoteness, it is difficult enough to expect any uniformity of Belarus’ political relations in this region. Nevertheless, there are also some unobvious tendencies it is necessary to pay attention to. This region is quite important for Belarus, especially in the conditions of the foreign policy isolation on the part of Europe and the USA, which makes it necessary to build alternative directions of foreign policy. This region is also important to search for at least a partial counterbalance to the Russian influence.

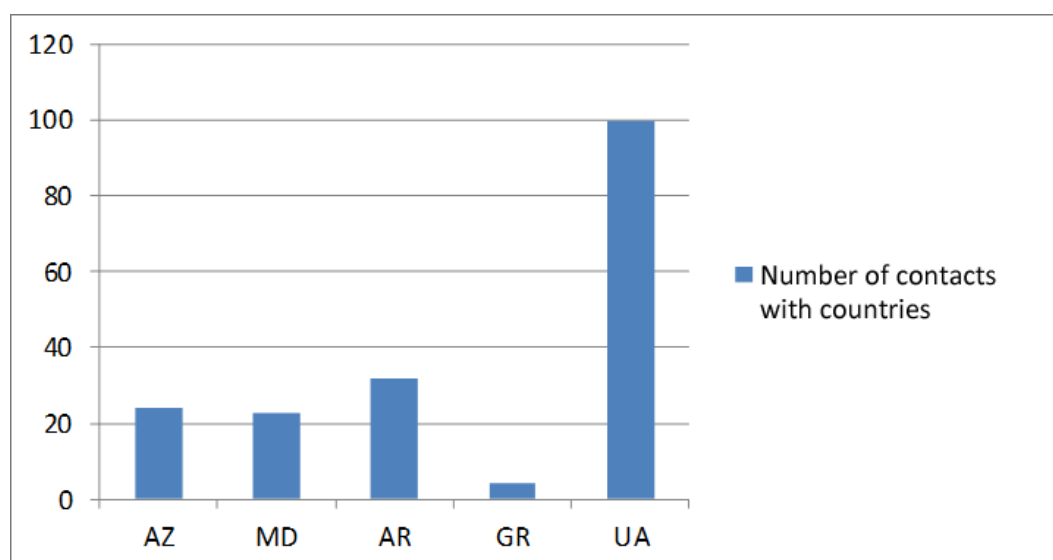
**Development of mutual relations.** In total, from 1992 to 2012, there have been about 200 official contacts of Belarus with the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, which is a large share of the country’s foreign policy activity. One way or another, the overwhelming majority of visits have had to do with organizational efforts of corresponding state structures and included discussions or solutions of practical problems of mutual relations of different degrees of complexity. It is only possible to consider an insignificant part of visits situational (e.g. a visit to a conference).

The bulk of visits are certainly with Ukraine; therefore, we will consider it mainly separately. Except close economic connections and cultural affinity, it is necessary to remember, at least, the geographical factor — Ukraine is the only country among the other participants of the EU’s Eastern Partnership Initiative which Belarus borders on. It is obvious that the Ukrainian vector dominates practically during all period that we consider, with two exceptions in 2006-2008 (the period of a considerable cooling of relations after the presidential election in Belarus in 2006) and after 2010 (Viktor Yanukovich’s victory and the presidential election in Belarus in 2010).

The number of contacts with Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are almost comparable (accordingly: 23, 24, and 32 meetings, which is 3-4 times less than with Ukraine); it is unexpected enough that Armenia is in the lead among them. The obvious outsider is Georgia (only 4 meetings). It is necessary to notice that despite their economic relevancy the political contacts with Ukraine have been developing in a very unstable way; there have been fast increases and sharp reductions under the influence of a political conjuncture. This instability reveals the general changeability of Belarus' foreign policy, as well as a considerable withdrawal from the principle of economic rationality.

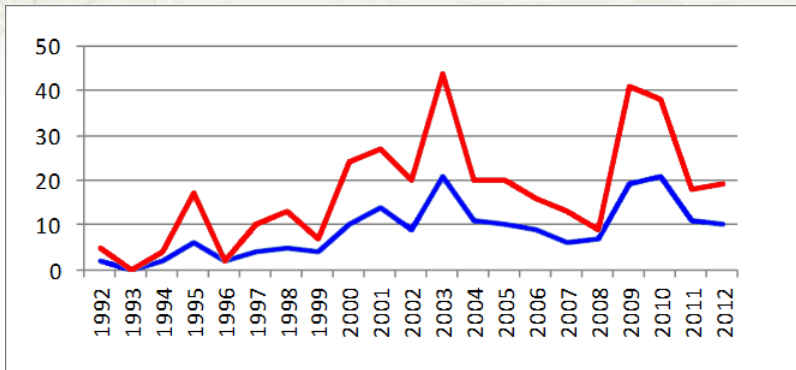
Relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia dynamically develop almost exclusively on a bilateral basis, while in relations with Moldova the post-Soviet platforms are used. At last, it is possible to underline the total absence of political contacts with Georgia, which can be explained by the Russian factor and, to a lesser degree, by the political situation in this country and its course on close cooperation with the West. Diagram 3 presents the total number of Belarus' contacts with separate countries of the Eastern Partnership region during 1992-2012.

**Diagram 3.** Total number of Belarus' official contacts with separate countries of the Eastern Partnership, 1992-2012



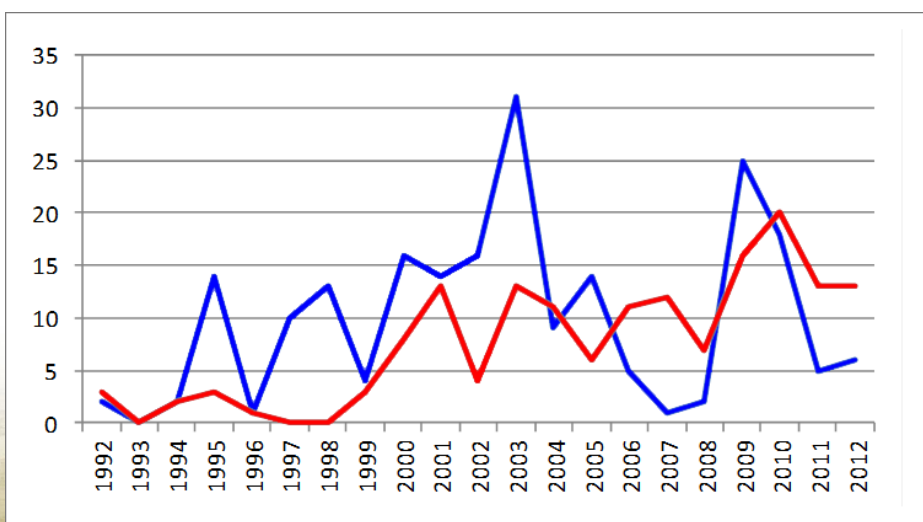
If we consider the dynamics, the overall picture shows an obvious growth of Belarus' foreign policy activity in the region after 2000, as well as two bursts (which are also reflected in the dynamics of relations with separate countries): 2003-2004 and 2009-2010. It is possible to explain the changes in the policy after 2000 by the failure of the integration project with Russia and the necessity to look for new foreign policy directions (prior to that, a considerable number of contacts was with Russia's regions). The activity increase in 2003-2004 can be connected with the first serious energy war with Russia and, partially, with the attempts to activate integration processes on the post-Soviet territory in the form of the Common Economic Space (CES). The activation in 2008-2010 is of especial importance as it had to do with Belarus' most essential since 2000 attempt to normalize its relations with the West, to reorient its foreign policy, to reduce its dependence on Russia, as well as, actually, with the beginning of the implementation of the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative (See Diagram 4). It is possible to see the similarity of dynamics of relations if to consider contacts separately with Ukraine and the other countries of the Eastern Partnership region (See Diagram 5).

**Diagram 4.** Total number of contacts (blue line) and the rating of contacts (red line) between Belarus and the other countries of the Eastern Partnership in 1992-2012



The distribution of visits in time from 1992 to 2012 is rather uneven; it is obviously connected with wider political and economic events in the region and in particular with the condition of Belarusian-Russian relations. Changes of the internal political situation in separate countries, which resulted in changes of the foreign policy orientation, were important as well. For instance, mutual relations were affected by Leonid Kuchma's victory in the 1994 presidential election in Ukraine, the fact that communists came to power in Moldova in 2001, the "revolution" in Georgia in 2003, Ukrainian democratic forces' victory in the elections in 2004 and then Viktor Yanukovych's returning to power (more details are in the review of separate countries and regions). The personal factor played its role, too: e.g. Heydar Aliyev's death in 2003 and his son Ilham's coming to power in Azerbaijan. It is necessary to mark that the influence of internal political changes was sometimes short (as in the case with communists' victory in Moldova) or it could change its importance and nature essentially. A good example here can be the relations of official Minsk with Viktor Yushchenko's administration when at first there was a sharp decrease of contacts in 2005, but then there was a new peak of cooperation in 2008-2010. Meanwhile, Viktor Yanukovych's coming to power in Ukraine in 2010, who was ideologically closer to the Belarusian authorities than his predecessor, did not lead to an increase of cooperation. Approximately the same logic is in relations with Georgia.

**Diagram 5.** Total number of Belarus' contacts with Ukraine (blue line) and the other countries of the Eastern Partnership (red line) in 1992-2012

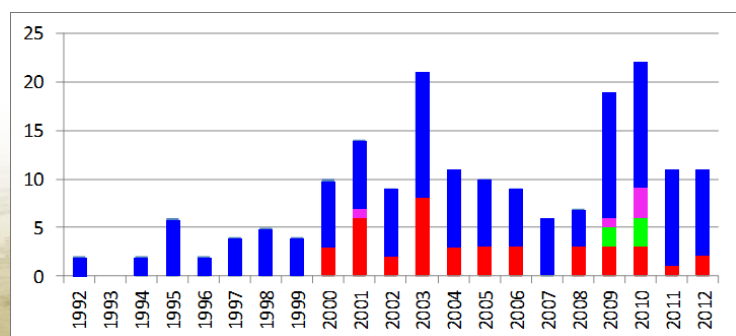


It is necessary to specify that political events in Belarus have also had their influence on mutual relations — in particularly the referendum in 1996, which results were not recognized legitimate by European countries and the USA, and which was critically or cautiously received by democratic and semi-democratic governments on the post-Soviet territory (e.g. Ukraine recognized the legitimacy of Belarus' parliament only in 1999). Also, the repressions against participants of the mass protest actions after the presidential elections in 2006 and 2010 had their consequences. During various periods, representatives of such countries as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia occupied a critical position or supported critical resolutions regarding Belarus in different regional and international structures (in particularly, the OSCE and the Council of Europe).

In general, the results of studying Belarus' foreign policy activity in the Eastern Partnership region demonstrate that in the 1990s it was considerably smaller than in the 2000s. There were more or less regular contacts only with Ukraine and, to a lesser degree, with Moldova. The Caucasian direction of Belarus' foreign policy appeared only after 2000. It is substantially connected with the difficulties faced by Belarus' new state institutions and the absence of foreign policy experience, as well as the absolute domination of the Russian integration vector in 1993-2000. The first initiatives (e.g. the introduction of the Russian ruble in Belarus) were voiced back in 1993 by Vyacheslav Kebich's government, i.e. prior to Alexander Lukashenko's election as president. Only after 2000 (when Vladimir Putin came to power and the Belarusian president lost his possibility to play on the political field of Russia), the situation considerably changes, which leads to the necessity of paying more attention to the development of relations with the countries of the future Eastern Partnership region, especially in the conditions the lasting isolation from the West. Besides, to a certain degree, the considerable asymmetry between the 1990s and the 2000s can be a result of the incompleteness of the gathered research base as for the first period as in the 1990s interstate cooperation was covered much less in the mass media.

**Format of meetings.** The review of the general dynamics of relations between Belarus and the other countries, which now are in the Eastern Partnership region, should be complemented with a review of their character. The research has showed that the strategies of relations between various countries have been different; sometimes, they developed almost exclusively on the basis of bilateral visits and sometimes supranational platforms were actively used to develop relations and to solve the necessary questions. The leading role was assigned to the CIS. A secondary role was played by other associations created on the post-Soviet territory (e.g. the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)), but such cases were singular. In 2009, after the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative was launched, alternative platforms received some importance in the development of mutual relations (e.g. in the format of consultations of ministers of foreign affairs of Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus in 2008-2010), but the prospect of such a format is not defined yet.

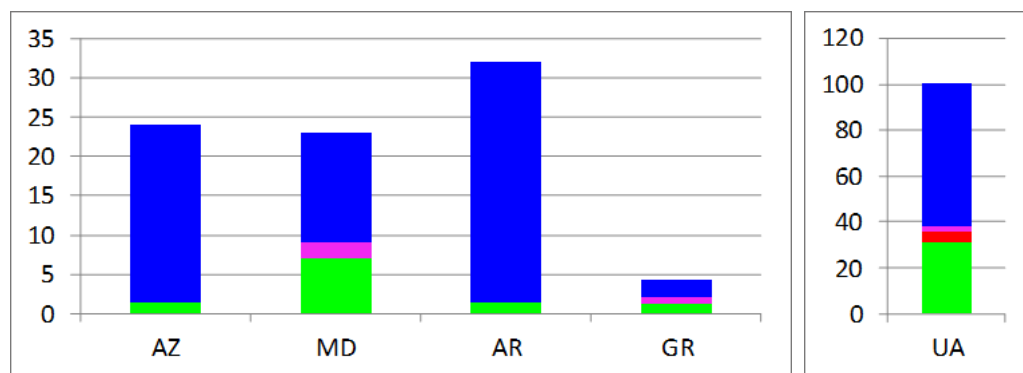
**Diagram 6.** Dynamics of relations between Belarus and the Eastern Partnership countries in the format of meetings (blue — special visits; red — meetings within the framework of post-Soviet supranational structures; green — meetings as part of European initiatives and institutions; lilac — others) in 1992-2012



For the sake of convenience, all meetings with the use of post-Soviet integration platforms and formats are united in one category (See Diagram 6). The overwhelming majority of these meetings have passed within the scope of the work of CIS different institutions; this category also includes meetings within the frame of the CSTO (e.g. with Armenia in 2003), as well as multilateral meetings to discuss various projects of economic integration on the post-Soviet territory (e.g. the meeting of the presidents of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine during the Slavic Bazaar Festival in Viciebsk in 2001 and their meeting joined by the president of Kazakhstan in 2003 in Moscow; the meeting of the heads of the states-participants of the Agreement to form the CES in Yalta in May 2004). It is necessary to mark that the platforms of post-Soviet integration projects outside the limits of the CIS were used actually only in the early 2000s; later, they ceased to be actual.

Also, one category unites the meetings within the “European” frameworks, i.e. the OSCE and advisory meetings of the heads of the ministries of foreign affairs of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Four meetings do not belong to the above mentioned categories and are marked as “others”. These are two meetings with participation of representatives of Moldova in 2010 (during Viktor Yanukovich’s inauguration and the World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments in Geneva), participation of Belarus’ vice-premier Andrei Kobayakov in the energy conference in Batumi (Georgia), as well as a meeting of the ministers of defense of Ukraine and Belarus to discuss questions of cooperation and creation of a joint battalion (with participation of representatives of Azerbaijan and Russia). Diagram 7 demonstrates the general distribution of meetings, taking into account the format.

**Diagram 7.** Share of different formats of meetings in the total number of Belarus’ contacts with the other countries of the Eastern Partnership (blue — special visits; green — meetings within the framework of post-Soviet supranational structures; red — meetings as part of European initiatives and institutions; lilac — others)



It is obvious that the “post-Soviet” format has kept its importance during the whole period that we review. The absence of corresponding contacts in the 1990s reflects the fact that separate meetings of representatives of the countries-participants of the future EU’s Eastern Partnership Initiative on the CIS platform in the 1990s were less formalized and were not displayed as separate events in reports and mass media. It is also necessary to underline the big importance of the CIS as a platform of negotiations in the early 2000s. As it was mentioned above, it was the period when there were several attempts to start new post-Soviet integration initiatives with participation of Ukraine and Moldova. After 2006, the importance of the CIS as a place of bilateral communication decreases to a certain extent and moves to other formats. If not to consider additional post-Soviet integration platforms, the share of meetings within the limits of the CIS drops from 45,5% (2000-2006) to 22,6% (2007-2012). Among other tendencies in the development of Belarus’ cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, it is

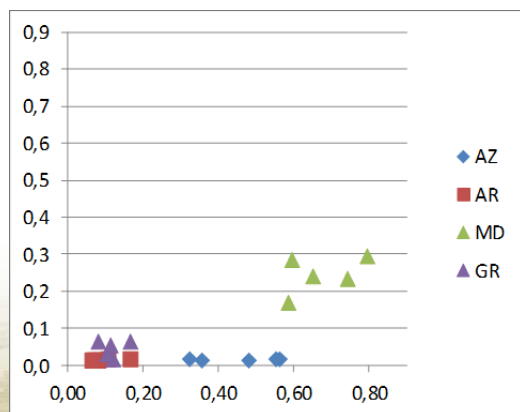
necessary to note a considerable growth of the general weight of bilateral meetings within the pale of special visits. If in 2000-2006 their share was 65,5%, then in 2007-2012 — 71,6%.

Since 2009, there started to appear new alternative platforms of Belarus' communication with the other countries of the Eastern Partnership, which is actually an entirely new phenomenon that can be considered a result of the increasing influence of European integration projects in the region even for Belarus, as well as the influence of the Eastern Partnership itself. During the studied period, this format took place in Belarus' foreign policy only in 2009-2010 — there were four tripartite meetings of the heads of the ministries of foreign affairs of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine and a meeting of Viktor Yanukovych and Alexander Lukashenko at the OSCE summit in Astana in 2010. With the expansion of the EU's new policy in the region, the importance of such platforms can increase. It is indicative that "other" formats that are difficult to assign to a certain category also happen mainly in 2009-2010 when there were attempts to essentially reformat Belarus' foreign policy, but the events of December 2010 in Belarus actually minimized these tendencies.

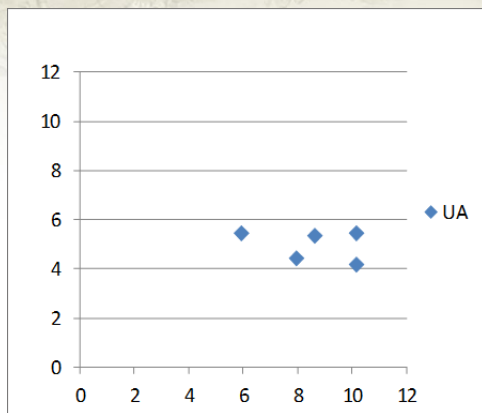
**Economic importance.** The economic importance of the countries of the Eastern Partnership region for Belarus and vice versa, as well as in the case with other indicators, is not homogeneous. Without striking into the details of these processes, we shall try to analyze it on the basis of the place of separate countries in Belarus' goods turnover in 2007-2011 (export and import), as well as the place of Belarus in the export and import of the countries-participants of the Eastern Partnership.

For Belarus, as it was already marked above, Ukraine is considerably much more important than the other countries. Its importance in Belarus' import is 4-6% and is considerably higher than all the other countries of the region all together. The share of Ukraine in export is even bigger — 6-10% that is also a very high indicator. The importance of all the other countries of the Eastern Partnership is considerably smaller; none of them is more than 0,8% in any indicator. The highest indicators belongs to Moldova — the trade with this country is 0,17-0,3% of import and 0,6-0,8% of export. The importance of the Caucasian countries is even more modest — in export the first position among them is occupied by Azerbaijan (0,3-0,6%), the share of Armenia and Georgia is 0,06-0,17%. As for import, the first place belongs to Georgia — 0,02-0,06%, while Azerbaijan and Armenia are only 0,01-0,02% (the only exception is 2011 when at the expense of delivering oil from Azerbaijan it was 1,8% of import). Recognizing the generally low importance of trade with all countries of the Eastern Partnership region, except Ukraine, it is necessary to mention one indicative fact — practically during the whole period that we study, the countries of this region have been more important for Belarus as for export, rather than import (See Diagrams 8 and 9).

**Diagram 8.** Share of the Eastern Partnership countries, except Ukraine, in Belarus' export (horizontal) and import (vertical), 2007-2011, %



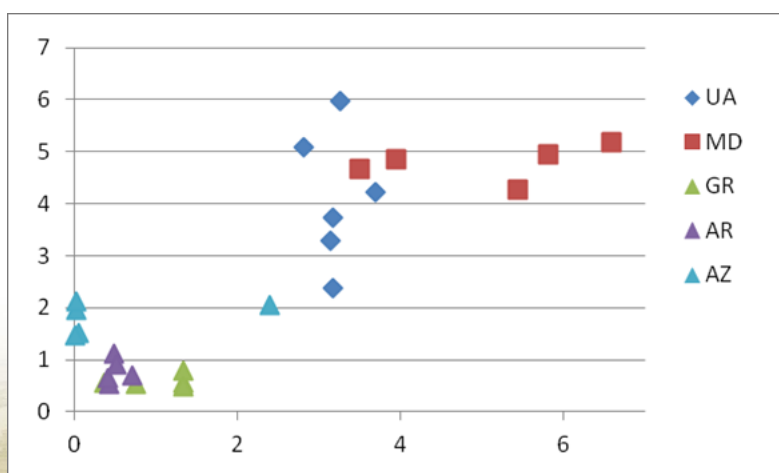
**Diagram 9. Ukraine's share in Belarus' export (horizontal) and import (vertical), 2007-2011, %**



If to look at the situation from the other side and to analyze the economic importance of Belarus for the other countries of the Eastern Partnership, the situation looks a little bit different. First, it is necessary to mark that Belarus is rather important for Moldova's export — 3,5%-6,5% (depending on a year). The importance in import is also quite high — 3,9-5,1%. The following place, which is entirely predictable, is occupied by Ukraine, thus confirming the status of an important partner. It is necessary to say that in this case Belarus is more important in import (2,4-5,9%) than in export (2,8-3,7%). The situation with Ukraine is to a certain extent opposite to that with Moldova — the importance of Ukraine for Belarus is considerably higher than that of Belarus for Ukraine.

As for the countries of Caucasia, Belarus is of no especial importance for them. The situation is a tad better in the case of Azerbaijan — Belarus' share in this country's import is 1,5-2,1% and this indicator remains steady enough. Thanks to the oil purchase in 2011, trade with Belarus was 2,4% of Azerbaijan's export; however, during other years, it was absolutely low — 0,01-0,05%. Belarus' importance in Armenia's export is 0,3-0,7%, in import — 0,5-1,1% (it exceeded 1% only in 2010). Georgia's trade with Belarus is 0,4-1,3% of export and 0,48-0,8% of import. Nonetheless, it is necessary to notice that Belarus' importance practically for all Caucasian countries is higher than the importance of these countries for Belarus (See Diagram 10).

**Diagram 10. Belarus' share in the Eastern Partnership countries' export (horizontal) and import (vertical), 2007-2011, %**





## Part II.

### Relations with separate countries of the Eastern Partnership region

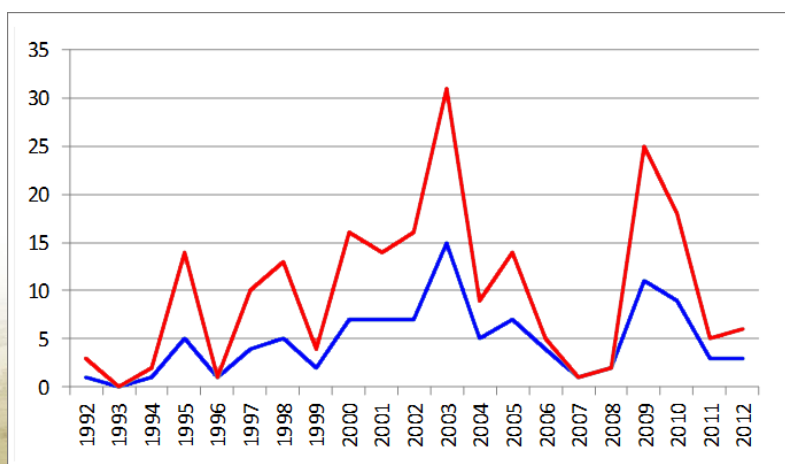
#### Ukraine

Ukraine is a neighbor and an important political and economic partner of Belarus. After the two countries received their independence in the early 1990s, a new format of relations started to develop between them. Their mutual relations were considerably influenced by a political conjuncture, which made their development rather unstable. In general, there have been 100 Belarusian-Ukrainian meetings since 1992. The average intensity of contacts since 2000 is the highest among the countries of the Eastern Partnership region — on the average, 6,2 meetings per year. The rating of meetings since 2000 is also the highest — 12,5 points per year.

**Political contacts.** The first summit between representatives of the independent countries was in 1992 (with participation of the president of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk and the prime minister of Belarus Vyacheslav Kebich). Nevertheless, the real burst of bilateral contacts was in 1995 — it was caused by foreign policy circumstances, rather than the logic of mutual relations. In 1994 in Ukraine and Belarus the “pro-Russian” candidates Leonid Kuchma and Alexander Lukashenko won. Belarus demonstrated a considerable initiative in the creation of the union of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, as well as tried to preserve its important role in this process. In total, there were four meetings with participation of Alexander Lukashenko and/or Leonid Kuchma; the initiative here belonged to the Belarusian party, but these integration deepening projects received no practical continuation. At the same time, there started a process of solving basic bilateral problems (in particular, demarcation of the common border), but they were not solved.

Already in 1996, the intensity of contacts considerably decreased and the relations were even questioned after the constitutional crisis of November 1996 in Belarus. Nonetheless, Ukraine did not support the policy of isolation of Belarus and the bilateral contacts were restored; in 1999, Ukraine officially recognized the newly-created Belarusian parliament. In the late 1990s, the problem of the border, the crisis of the CIS, and economic cooperation were actively discussed and Ukraine acted as one of important partners with whom Belarus continued to develop relations.

**Diagram 11.** Distribution of the number of Belarusian-Ukrainian meetings (blue line) and their rating (red line) in years, 1992-2012



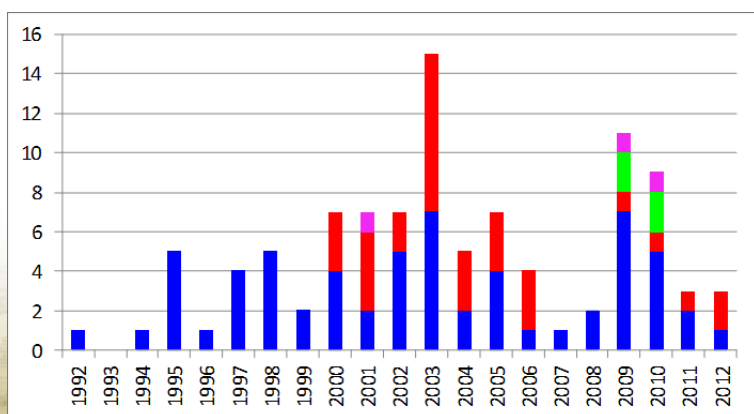
Since 2000, the Belarusian-Ukrainian relations were activated again in an attempt to diversify Belarusian foreign policy after Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia. Still, a real burst of contacts was connected with the new integration initiative — the Common Economic Space, as well as with the aggravation of disputes between Belarus and Russia concerning the deliveries of energy carriers (2003). At this stage, negotiations concerning the question of frontier and bilateral cooperation (in particular, antidumping procedures against some Belarusian goods) became more active again. Nevertheless, this activation of contacts brought no results and, after Viktor Yushchenko came to power in Ukraine, many initiatives lost their meaning. The change of power in Kyiv considerably changed the atmosphere of political cooperation, although the year 2005 looked not so bad (there even were two meetings of Viktor Yushchenko and Alexander Lukashenko; however, both took place on the territory of Russia and passed on the CIS platform). Since 2006 (and in particular after the presidential election in Belarus, during which the Ukrainian authorities supported the Belarusian opposition and criticized the Belarusian authorities), there was the deepest crisis of mutual relations that lasted actually for three years (2006-2008), which can be seen on Diagram 11.

A new peak of the activation of contacts was in 2009-2010; it had to do again not so much with the logic of mutual relations, but rather with the foreign policy circumstances — in the conditions of considerable deterioration of relations with Russia, Belarus attempted to reorient its foreign policy in the western direction and Ukraine acted as intermediary. Still, after December 2010 (when there were repressions against the Belarusian opposition after the presidential election), many initiatives lost their meaning and the intensity of contacts decreased again.

Thus, the political relations of Belarus and Ukraine can be considered important, but unstable and very dependent on political and foreign policy circumstances. Practically all cases of the activation of contacts were caused not so much by the logic of bilateral interests, but rather by the influence of the relations of Belarus and Russia. In 1995 and 2003, those were the attempts to activate integration processes on the post-Soviet space, in 2009-2010 — Belarus' attempt to reduce Russia's influence, and the crisis of relations in 2006-2008 was caused by the political conflict between the governments of the countries concerning democratization.

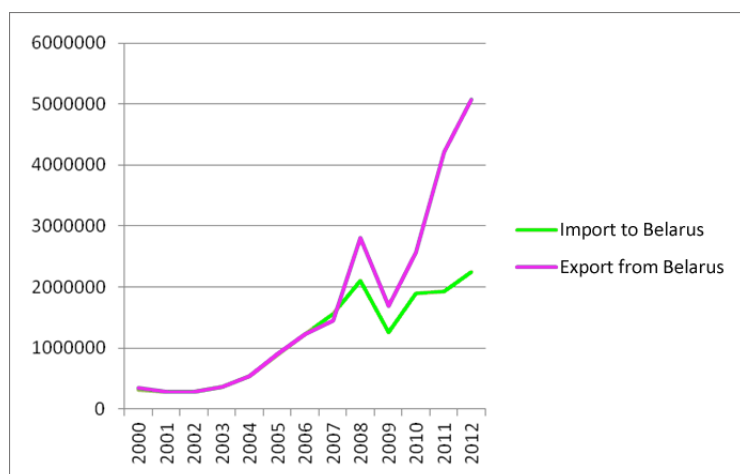
**Format of relations.** The format of relations was already partially reviewed on Diagram 7, which shows rather high importance of supranational platforms in the development of bilateral contacts. A more detailed scheme as for years is below (See Diagram 12). Obviously, the bilateral format has never lost its importance, but it is necessary to see a considerable role of the CIS platform for the development of bilateral connections; it was especially important in 2000-2006, but then the importance of this format dropped considerably. As for the “European” format of contacts, it took place only in 2009-2010 and meanwhile it has uncertain prospects.

**Diagram 12.** Format of Belarusian-Ukrainian meetings in years (blue — special visits; red — meetings within the framework of post-Soviet supranational structures; green — meetings as part of European initiatives and institutions; lilac — others), 1992-2012

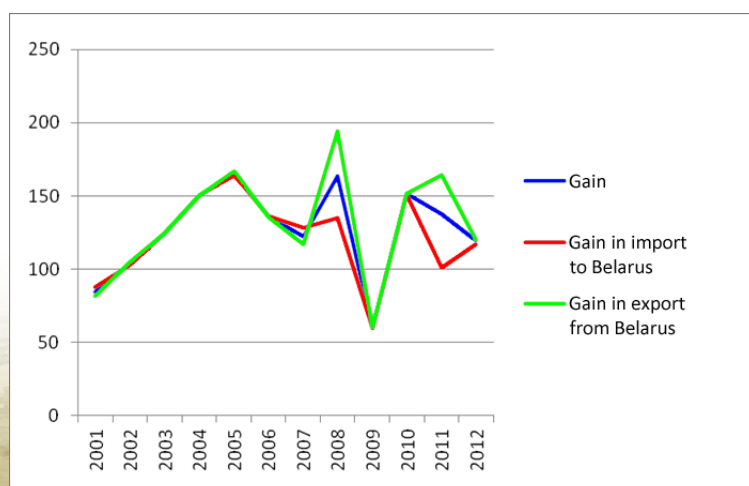


**Goods turnover.** The economic relations of Belarus and Ukraine are highly important; therefore, the growth of mutual goods turnover since 2000 looks natural enough. From 2000 to 2012, the general goods turnover between the countries has grown 11 times. It is a bit lower than in the case with the Caucasian region, but it is considerably higher than that with Moldova. During practically the whole specified period, the dynamics was positive; the goods turnover decrease was observed only in 2001 and particularly in 2009, which can be considered the most recessionary year in the bilateral economic relations. In 2002, the growth was insignificant (about 4%), but during all other years it was from 19% to 65%. If to analyze the dynamics in more details, it is possible to notice some synchronism which is not characteristic of the other analyzed countries — before 2007 the export and import growth was practically identical (See Diagram 13); the divergence began only since 2008 (and in particular in 2010-2011) when the growth of Belarusan export began to outstrip import considerably. These divergences can also be observed on Diagram 14, which demonstrates considerable divergences in the rates of the increase of import and export in 2008 and 2010, which was the result of augmenting oil products export to Ukraine. During the majority of years, the balance of trade was positive for Belarus; Belarus had an insignificant trade balance deficit in 2001-2004, but it reached considerable sizes (about 100 million USD) during 2007 only; after that the balance became positive (mainly at the expense of oil products export).

**Diagram 13.** Ukraine's import to Belarus and Belarus' export to Ukraine, 2000-2012, thousand USD



**Diagram 14.** Rates of the increase of goods turnover, export, and import between Belarus and Ukraine (in comparison with a previous year which is thought to be 100%) (in comparison with a previous year which is thought to be 100%), 2001-2012, %



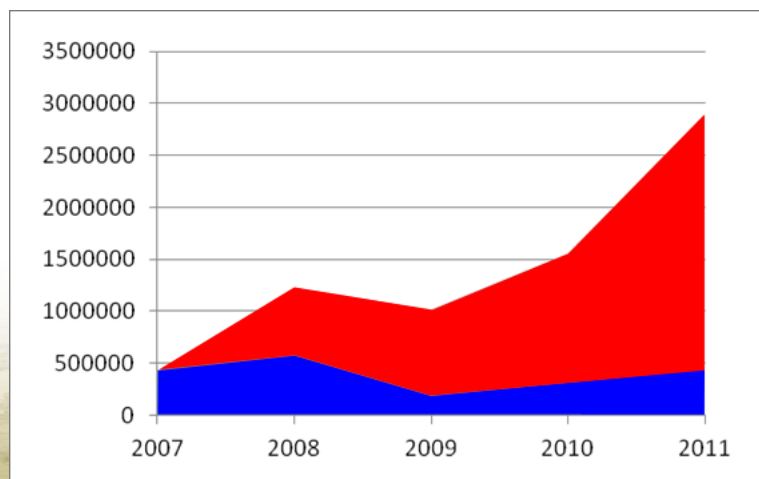
**Export structure.** Ukraine is an important market for Belarusian goods, which importance remains high, although tendencies for separate kinds of production were different during the latest years. As it was marked above, since the early 2000s, there has been a considerable growth of export, which has highly increased since 2009. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the competitiveness of Belarus' economy has not grown; it is the sales of processed oil that have increased.

Recently, there has been a gradual fall of the importance of the Category A production in trade, which can display the general tendency of the de-industrialization of Belarus, which was vividly revealed in the conditions of the current economic crisis. If in 2007 the share of machines was 29,7% of the price of export to Ukraine, then in 2011 this indicator was only 10,34%. In total, nowadays, the production, which can be considered "technological", does not exceed 15% in the structures of export. If to analyze absolute figures, the situation does not seem to be so critical — after a deep recession, the situation with the export of machines improved a little bit by 2011, but nevertheless positive tendencies remain unstable.

Among the export goods from Belarus to Ukraine, oil products are in the lead. Their importance during the latest years has been growing steadily — it is possible to see it on Diagram 15. If in 2007 the share of oil products was only 29%, then in 2011 it grew up to 68% and, thus, it started to be more than 2/3 of the export price. Other categories of the goods were not considerable — the average share of agricultural production in 2007-2011 was only 3,3%; that of wood, timber, and construction materials was about 3%, etc.

In spite of the fact that the available information on the export structure is not full, the general profile of export from Belarus to Ukraine, which has developed for the last five-six years, can be described as follows — the first place belongs to oil products (52-60%), the share of "technological" production does not exceed 20-25%, the share of agricultural production is about 3-4%, and 10-15% is the share of production of other branches of manufacture (it is mainly the Category B industrial production). Thus, for Ukraine, Belarus acts first of all as a country of raw materials processing (oil). The situation is complicated by the fact that on the territory of Belarus there are almost no oil raw materials and its basic volumes are imported from Russia, which makes the country extremely dependent on external deliveries and the Russian political conjuncture. Certainly, the segment of the Category A production is considerable, but it is not crucial for the creation of a positive trading balance with Ukraine.

**Diagram 15.** Volumes of machines export (blue) and oil products (red) from Belarus to Ukraine, 2007-2011, thousand USD



**Import structure.** The structure of import from Ukraine looks much more stable and balanced than the structure of Belarusian export to Ukraine. The most important is the import of base metals and products from them. Although, it is possible to consider this production as raw materials processing, which is somehow similar to the processing of oil raw materials; the basic distinction is that the basic volumes of both iron ore and coal are extracted on the territory of Ukraine, which makes this business much less dependent on deliveries from the outside. The metal products share is 22-30% of import. If to speak about machines, this share is 9-11%, other production of Category A adds more 4-5%. Thus, the general share of “technological” production is smaller, but comparative with the Belarusian level and is 20%. More 14-18% belongs to agricultural production, 3-8% — electric power, and the rest is the Category B production (building materials, production of woodworking, etc.).

Thus, the general profile of Ukrainian import differs from the profile of Belarusian export. The share of processed raw materials is considerably smaller (about 1/4); thus, raw materials are mainly of Ukrainian origin. The importance of the Category A production is smaller (1/5), but comparative with its share in Belarusian export. Considerably more important is agricultural production (on the average, about 16%), electric power (about 4%), and the rest is mainly the industrial production of Category B.

### **Caucasian region (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia)**

The development of stable contacts between Belarus and the countries of Caucasus is a rather recent phenomenon. In spite of the fact that such connections can be considered traditional as they appeared during the USSR, it is possible to say that in the 1990s the region of Caucasia practically dropped out of the field of vision of Belarusian foreign policy. It can be explained by the geographical remoteness, the low mutual economic interest, the absence of common political interests, the concentration of Belarus’ external activity on Russia, and the insufficient diplomatic experience. Besides, many contacts in this region were carried out on the multilateral CIS platform, and at a certain stage it was enough for the solution of topical problems. The only exception was Belarus’ two visits to Azerbaijan, but both of them cannot be considered important — in 1996 Baku was visited by the minister of culture Alexander Sosnovsky and in 1999 — the minister of justice Gennady Vorontsov.

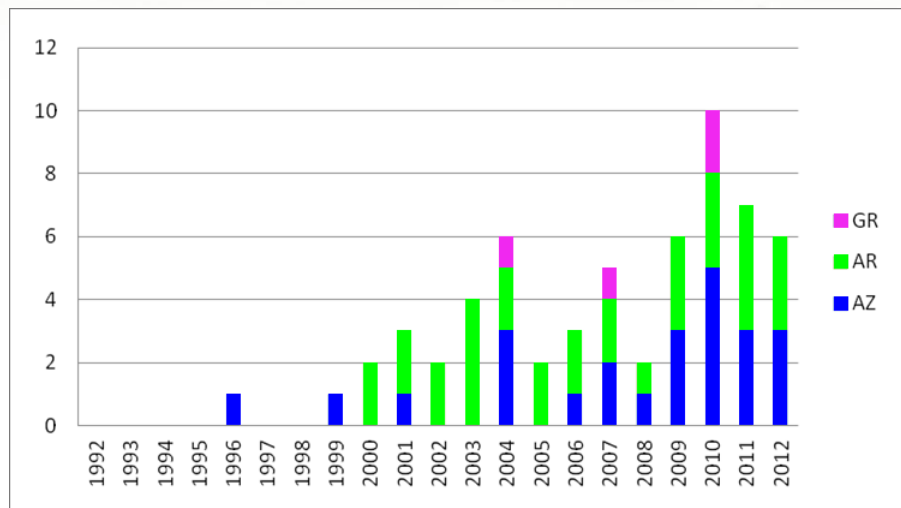
In the 2000s, with the crisis in Belarus’ relations with Russia, the situation considerably changed, which led to a change of Belarus’ policy in the Caucasian region. Relations and direct contacts started to develop very fast and it was already possible to speak about the formation of a new direction of Belarusian foreign policy. The dynamics of relations is not uniform; it has a separate history with each country, but the intensity does not fall to the zero level any more. In total, from 1992 to 2012, there have been 60 visits, but only two of them took place before 2000; the average number of contacts per year since 2000 is 5,9. For comparison, during the whole period that we study, there have been 100 meetings with Ukraine; 19 out of them — before 2000. Thus, the average number of meetings per year after the Caucasian vector appeared is comparative with the total number of contacts with Ukraine — 6,2 meetings per year. The same can be said about the rating of contacts.

A new stage in Belarus’ relations with the countries of Caucasia begins in 2000 with the development of steady relations with Armenia, which was reflected, at first, in the visit of the minister of defense and then — the prime minister of this Transcaucasian country to Minsk. After that, the Belarusian authorities’ contacts with Armenia’s politicians and officials of various levels become extremely stable and become a considerable part Belarus’ general activity in the region.

Since 2001, the relations with Azerbaijan started developing as well, but they became stable only since 2006. In October 2006, Minsk was visited by Ilham Aliyev and after that the contacts became regular.

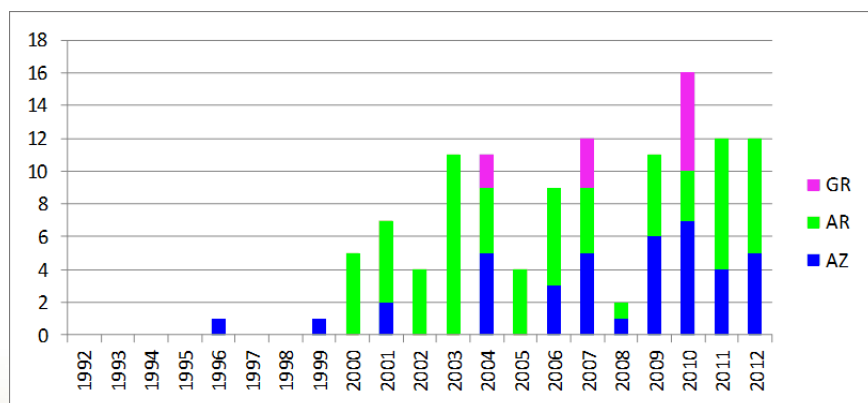
Relations with the third country of the Caucasian region — Georgia — began to develop much later. The first official contacts were in 2004, since the visit of a Georgian ministerial delegation to Minsk, but until now they have a sporadic and unstable character. There have been no official top-level visits yet.

**Diagram 16.** General dynamics of Belarus' mutual relations with the countries of Caucasia, 1992-2012



The general dynamics of mutual relations is on Diagram 16. Except for a gradual growth of Belarusian foreign policy in the Caucasian region, it is necessary to highlight the bursts in 2004 and particularly in 2010 (as well as the period of 2009-2012 as a whole). The growth of contacts in 2004 can be a result of the first serious “energy crisis” in relations with Russia<sup>3</sup>, while the year 2010 is explained by a wider attempt of Belarus to reorient its foreign policy in 2008-2010. It is necessary to notice that the end of the Belarusian authorities’ “liberalization” policy, cooperation with the West, and the general activity in the Eastern Partnership region after 2010 has practically not affected the dynamics of relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia.

**Diagram 17.** General dynamics of the rating of Belarus' mutual relations with the countries of Caucasia, 1992-2012

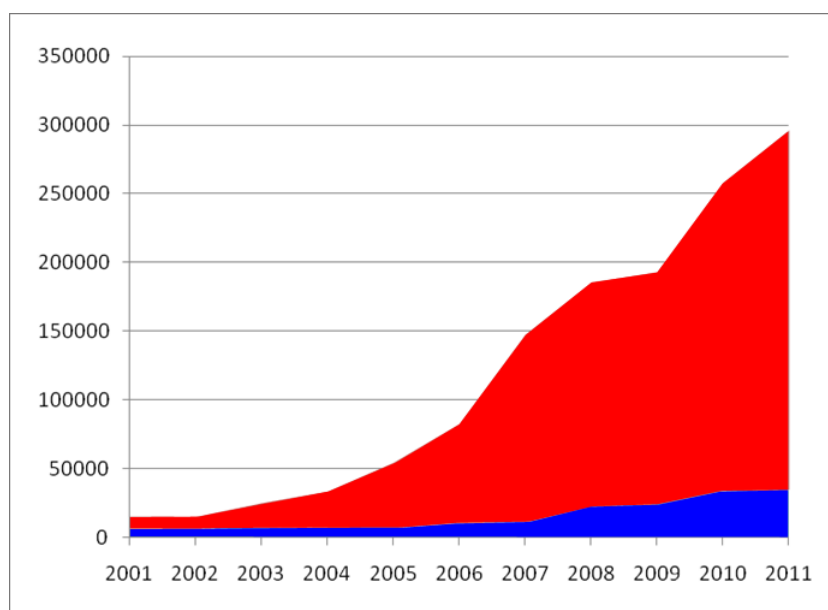


<sup>3</sup> In 2003-2004, various Russian political structures, including those close to the Kremlin, even started to work with the Belarusian opposition.

In order to understand the situation, we shall review the measurement of ratings, which consider the status of visits. Diagram 17 shows that the number and level of visits strongly correlate with each other (it proves once again that the policy is balanced and bursts happen in a complex). In comparison with the number of contacts, the rating shows a more expressive burst in 2003, which practically coincides with the level of 2004, but it is reached exclusively at the expense of Alexander Lukashenko's two meetings with representatives of Armenia. Also, there was a burst in 2007, at the expense of contacts with Azerbaijan and Georgia.

**Economic relations.** In such a situation, the question of the economic efficiency of contacts is always interesting. In general, it is possible to say that Belarus' economic relations in the Caucasian region are quite successful as for many parameters. Obviously, the region has a certain export potential, although it is not crucial for Belarus' economy. This potential has practically nothing to do with the export of oil products, which sale traditionally helps the Belarus' balance of payments in its trade with the majority of European countries. Insignificant volumes of oil products are sold only to Georgia. The import potential is used to a lesser degree, although Azerbaijan can act as an oil source, which was used in considerable sizes only in 2011 (See Diagram 18).

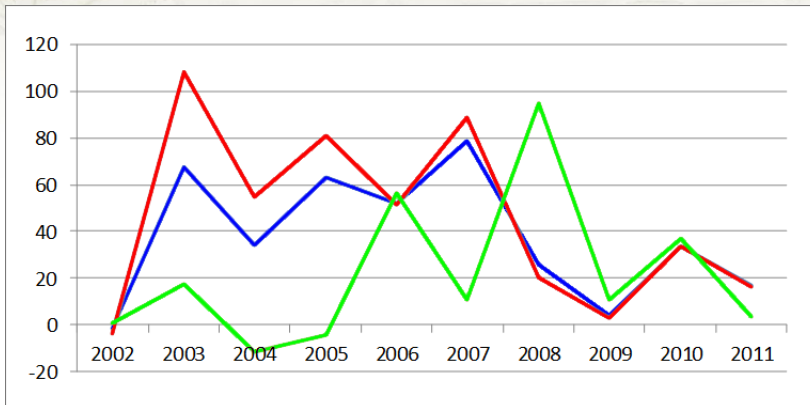
**Diagram 18.** Volumes of Belarus' import (blue) and export (red) to the Caucasian countries, 2001-2011, thousand USD



**Goods turnover.** In general, the goods turnover between Belarus and the countries of Caucasia has been growing constantly and from 2000 to 2012 it increased twenty times — from 15 million USD to more than 300 million USD (without the oil transaction with Azerbaijan). Also, it is necessary to notice that the gain in this region has always been positive since 2002. The years 2003-2007 were the most successful for goods turnover (the growth from 34% to 79%), after that there was a certain delay, which was particularly vivid in 2010 when the growth was only 4% (See Diagram 19).

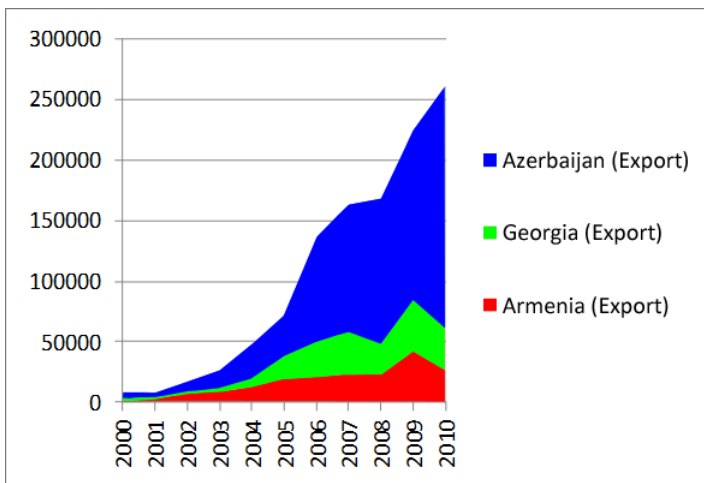
Still, the balance has always been positive for Belarus (if not to consider the purchase of oil in 2011). The balance was negative only in the trade with Georgia in 2002-2004 and Armenia in 2001.

**Diagram 19.** Rates of the increase of goods turnover (red line), import (green line), export (blue line) of Belarus with the countries of Caucasia, 2002-2011, in % to a previous year



Recently, the situation has been developing very positively as for Belarus' export. Before 2012, Belarus sold on the average 6-8 times more than it purchased. The most successful was the year 2007 when export was more than 135 million USD and import was only a little bit higher than 11 million USD. The most important export partner is Azerbaijan — the average export in 2007-2011 was more than 130 million USD (for comparison, this indicator for Georgia — 33 million USD and for Armenia — 27 million USD). The export to Azerbaijan has been increasing since 2002; the dynamics has not been so unequivocal for the other countries (See Diagram 20).

**Diagram 20.** Volume of Belarus' export to the countries of Caucasia, 2000-2010, thousand USD

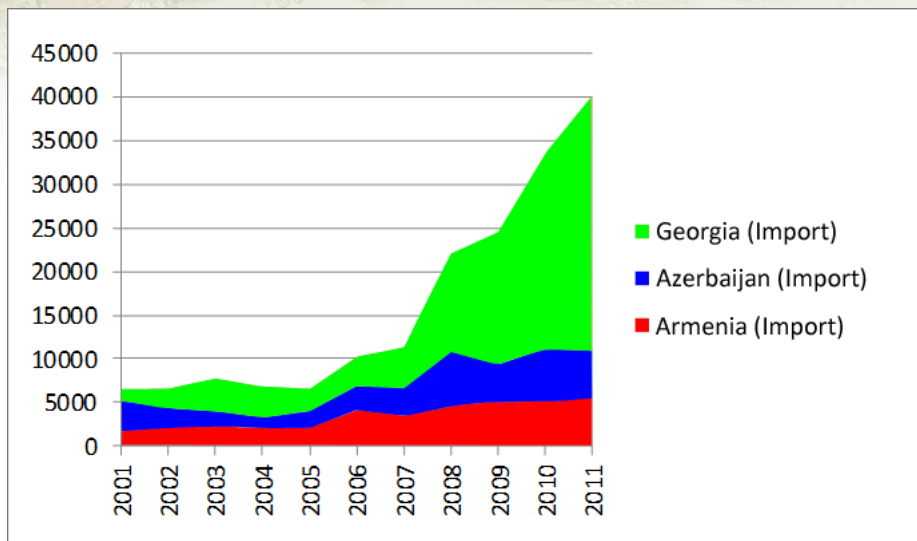


If to consider import, the situation is absolutely different. The first place is occupied by Georgia and the import from this country has been constantly growing since 2004 and in 2012 it reached 34 million USD (certainly, there are some goods which go to Russia later)<sup>4</sup>, while for Azerbaijan this indicator was about 5 million USD, and for Armenia — 4,8 million USD (See Diagram 21).

<sup>4</sup> Some sources and analysts say that Georgia's business uses Belarus so as to detour visa and customs barriers. For example, it is informed that illegal migrants in Russia use Tbilisi-Minsk air flights for this purpose (there is no visa control between Belarus and Russia; Georgian citizens need no visa for their trip to Belarus, unlike their trips to Russia). For the same reason,

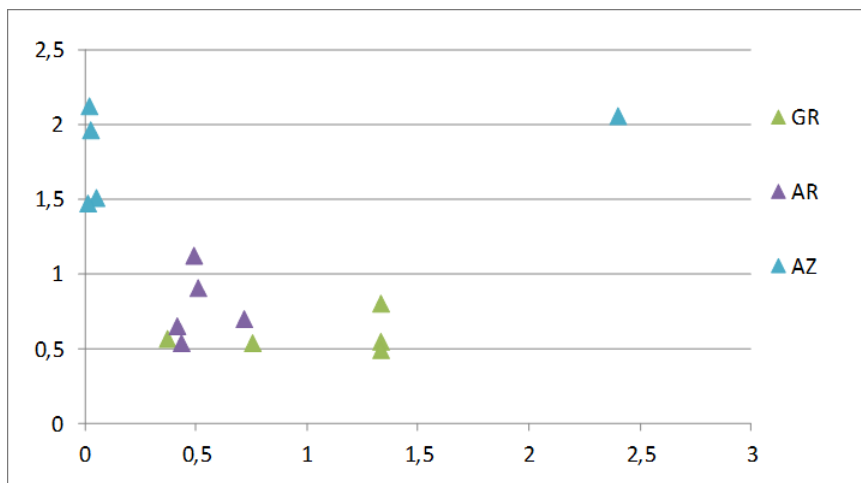


**Diagram 21.** Volume of Belarus' import to the countries of Caucasia, 2001-2011, thousand USD



**Export structure.** Obviously, the Caucasian region is a commodity market for Belarusian goods, which has considerably extended for the latest decade. The world economic crisis has played its role, but the positive dynamics has remained. Diagram 22 demonstrates that the growth of Belarus' export to the region during the latest decade is considerably higher than the import growth; the positive balance is reached not at the expense of selling oil products, which traditionally helps Belarus' trading balance with the majority of European countries<sup>5</sup>.

**Diagram 22.** Belarus' share in the Caucasian countries' export (vertical) and import (horizontal), 2001-2011, %



Minsk is used as a place of meetings of representatives of Georgia's business, which works in Moscow and central Russia, with partners directly from Georgia. Also, the mass media periodically publish the information that Belarus is used to avoid customs and sanitary barriers on the Russian market for some Georgian goods (mineral water, wine, etc.). Nonetheless, this information is not proved officially.

<sup>5</sup> Certain volumes of oil products are sold only to Georgia.

If to consider an average share during 2007-2011, a really considerable share in Belarus' export is occupied by "technological" production, although there is a big difference between the countries. The share of products of machinery manufacturing, home appliances, etc. in the trade with Azerbaijan is about 40%, which can be considered a rather high indicator. For Armenia, this share is 33%, and only in the case with Georgia it is much lower (it is similar to Ukraine and Moldova) — only 14%. Products of the chemical industry, medicine, cosmetics, etc. can be added to the block of "technological" production. The share of these goods in Belarus' export to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia is about 3%, 15%, and 10% accordingly. Thus, the share of "technological" production in import for Azerbaijan is 43%, 48% — for Armenia, and only 24% — for Georgia.

The block of less "technological" production, i.e. raw materials (wood, some building materials) and raw materials processing (timber, metalwork, oil products, etc.), is 18% — for Azerbaijan, 12% — for Armenia, and about 25% — for Georgia (here — 4% is oil products). Such production is particularly important in the trade with Georgia where it considerably exceeds the products from the first group; for other countries, these products are an essential additional segment.

The last category is products of agricultural and food-processing industries. Its share is practically identical for Armenia and Azerbaijan (12%), while in the trade with Georgia these goods act as the most important and are 38%. Such a high indicator for Georgia is reached mainly at the expense of sugar (23%) which is a part of not only export, but also different re-export schemes.

Thus, the export analysis allows us to draw the following conclusions about the profile of Belarusian relations with the countries of the Caucasian region. Belarus obviously acts as an industrial and technological country in relation to Azerbaijan and Armenia. The share of "technological" industrial production reaches here 43-47%, i.e. it is practically a half. More 12-18% is the production connected with the primary processing of raw materials, and about 12% is the share of agricultural production. The profile of export to Georgia is more complex and, it is necessary to stress, absolutely different. In this case, Belarus acts as an agricultural and raw country. The share of "technological" production is about 25%, approximately the same is processed raw materials (including 4% of oil products, wood), while the greatest importance belongs to agricultural production with the expressive domination of sugar — 38% (23% — sugar, 15% — other products of agriculture)<sup>6</sup>.

**Import structure.** As it was already marked above, Belarus' import from the countries of the Caucasian region has considerably smaller sizes than export, which provides the positive balance for Belarus. Although, if Belarus would regularly buy considerable volumes of oil in Azerbaijan, as it was in 2011, the character and dynamics of relations could be absolutely different, but at present such purchases are not economically justified as Russia offers lower prices for crude oil.

If to leave this circumstance aside, the basis of import from all the countries of Caucasia is agricultural products, as well as products of food and alcoholic industry. Spirituous liquors (wine, cognac, etc.) and spirits are 63% of import from Armenia; for Georgia, the share of this production reaches 55%. About more 3-4% includes other agricultural production — in the case with Armenia and 14% (nuts, juices, etc.) — with Georgia. For Azerbaijan, the situation looks a tad different — about 11% is spirits and strong alcoholic beverages, while other products of agriculture (juices, as well as nuts and tobacco, are the most important) — are more than 31%.

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<sup>6</sup> The price of purchasing oil in 2011 exceeded 800 million USD that was practically equal to the total goods turnover between all the countries of the Caucasian region and Belarus for five years.

The share of raw materials and products, which do not require processing, is important only in the trade with Azerbaijan (mainly oil — 15%) and Georgia (mineral water — 8%). Processed raw materials are 4% for Azerbaijan (mainly building materials) and 17% — for Georgia (ferroalloys).

“Technological” production for Azerbaijan is up to 18% (15% — light industry products, about 3% — mechanical engineering production), for Armenia — up to 22% (11% — medicines, vitamins, and 11% — chemical products), and about 2% — for Georgia.

Thus, relations of the countries of the Caucasian region with Belarus can be characterized as relations of agricultural and raw countries. The share of manufacture of alcoholic products and agriculture is almost 70% — for Armenia and Georgia (alcoholic products dominate) and up to 40% — for Azerbaijan. The share of raw materials and production, which does not require additional processing, is 8-15% (Azerbaijan and Georgia). The share of actually industrial production (both “technological” and “non-technological”) is rather low — 19-22%.

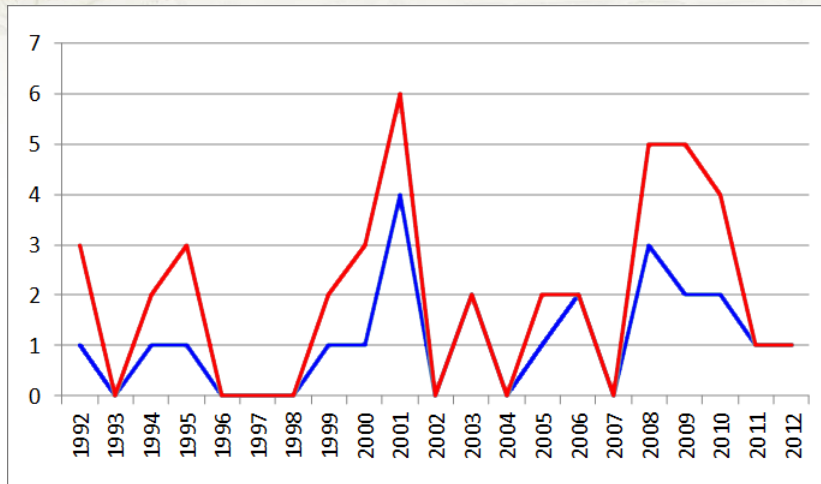
## Moldova

Among the analyzed countries, Moldova is the next important trading partner of Belarus after Ukraine, with the average goods turnover during the latest years of about 270 million USD. As for the number of official contacts, the country occupies only the fourth place among the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, although the difference between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova cannot be considered essential in this context. Since 2000, the average intensity of contacts is 1,5 meetings per year. The rating of meetings since 2000 is 2,4 points per year (it is the fourth place as well).

**Political contacts.** The cooperation between Belarus and Moldova has a long history; it was not interrupted after the dissolution of the USSR. Nonetheless, as it can be seen on Diagram 23, Belarusian-Moldovan political contacts have developed quite non-uniformly and passed through several periods of ups and downs. In the 1990s, the biggest activation was observed in 1992 and 1995. Then, after the longest in the Belarusian-Moldovan relations three-year standstill, when there were no political contacts at all, there was a three-year period of their gradual activation in 1999-2001. This burst can be considered a result of the general attempt to diversify Belarus’ foreign policy after 2000. These attempts led to Belarus’ activation on the post-Soviet territory, which is seen due to the analysis of the other countries. Also, in 2001, communists came to power in Moldova, which played its role as well; there even appeared an idea of joining Moldova to the Union of Belarus and Russia — this project circulated in Moldova’s political environment for a short time and drew considerable (including propagandistic) attention of Minsk.

However, this idea had no development and after that a sharp decrease of contacts is observed. In 2002-2007, contacts were rare and mainly at low levels. A new increase happened in 2008-2010, which coincides with another attempt of Belarus to change the orientation of its foreign policy and to lower its dependence on Russia, as well as with the beginning of the EU’s Eastern Partnership Initiative. However, after the presidential election in Belarus in 2010, when the policy of “liberalization” and the normalization of relations with the West were stopped, the relevancy of such contacts vanished and relations were minimized again.

**Diagram 23.** Distribution of the number of Belarusian-Moldovan meetings (blue line) and their rating (red line) in years, 1992-2012



Considering the facts mentioned above, it is impossible to say that Belarus' relations with Moldova were thought to be strategic or important. Their development began in the 1990s, unlike the Caucasian countries, relations with which started to develop only since the 2000s, but these relations have faced certain stagnation and the absence of dynamics.

Thus, the political cooperation between the countries cannot be called strategic or stable. There is an impression that Moldova does not play a fixed role in Belarusian foreign policy — it is not included in the counterbalance system against the Russian influence (like Ukraine and Georgia), it does not possess strategic raw materials resources (like Azerbaijan) or an important commodity market (like Ukraine), and it does not act as a constant partner in supranational organizations (like Armenia and Azerbaijan). It seems like the relations with Moldova are aimed at supporting a certain level of contacts reached back in the 1990s, instead of their development.

We can also pay attention to the fact that Moldova cut political contacts with Belarus, in particular at the highest level, after 2000. It is true — the pause in contacts of the heads of states in 2001-2008 was the longest during the whole history of mutual relations. However, it is necessary to note that before that the top-level contacts had not been regular either — there had been breaks that had lasted for several years; it had been a usual thing; and for all the period of relations there have been no rounds of exchanging visits. It is possible to consider the beginning of the 2000s to be a certain border in Belarusian-Moldovan relations. If all previous meetings of the heads of these two states had an official character, then the meetings in 2009 and 2010 were of a working character.

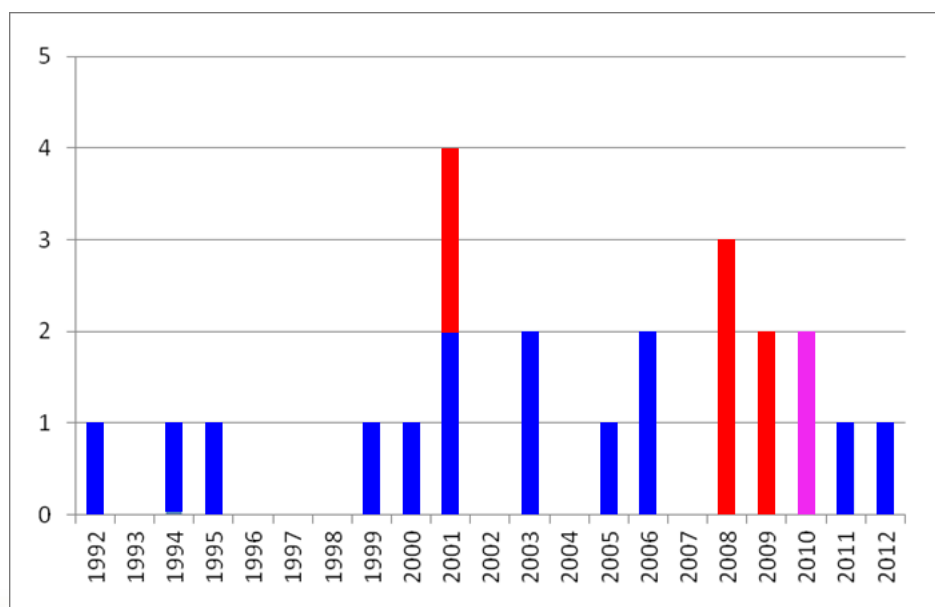
It is very difficult to explain the ups and downs of Belarusian-Moldovan political contacts by the changes in the internal political conjuncture of Moldova. After all, even if it may seem paradoxical, Alexander Lukashenko has met almost all Moldovan leaders who represented the pro-West-focused liberal camp (with Mircea Snegur — in 1995, with Petru Lucinschi — in 2000, with Mihai Ghimpu — in 2009 and 2010), while he has never met with Vladimir Voronin — the representative of Moldovan communists, who are ideologically close to him, who ruled Moldova in 2001-2009. The main reason is probably not only the internal political conjuncture, but also limited possibilities to use Moldova for the solution of the basic foreign policy problems of Belarus (the relations with Russia and the West, the search for commodity markets and financial resources). Except this, the limited growth of economic cooperation, the fact that Moldova joined the World Trade Organization early, its course on European integration, and Moldova's orientation on the West could play its role as well.

Prior to 2008, contacts on the level of the governments had been more regular, although less productive as for the development of the contract-legal base, but since May 2009 they stopped at all. The prime ministers of Belarus and Moldova met for the last time at the summit of the heads of the governments of the CIS countries in Astana in 2009. Before 2001, all meetings at the high level had an official character, after that — a working one.

The most numerous category is the contacts on the level of MPs. They began in 2001 with the participation of a group of Moldovan deputies headed by the vice-president of the parliament — they supervised the course of the presidential election in Belarus, and with the official visit of the chairperson of the Moldovan parliament Eugenia Ostapciuc to Minsk in December 2001. The Belarusian parliament created a working group on cooperation with the parliament of Moldova and the Moldovan parliament created the same group on cooperation with the parliament of Belarus. There were contacts at the level of delegations of working groups and at the level of the chairpersons of the parliaments. They were the most intensive in the late 2000s — there were 6 inter-parliamentary meetings in 2006-2012 in Chişinău, Minsk, St.-Petersburg, and Geneva.

**Interaction in international structures.** Belarus and Moldova are united by their participation in a number of international organizations (e.g. the CIS and the OSCE), and in the beginning of Vladimir Voronin's presidency it was even declared about Moldova's desire to join the Union of Belarus and Russia. However, any example of support rendered by the two countries to each other on the international scene is not known, while the other examples — when the parties occupied opposite positions — have taken place from time to time. Here, it is necessary to remember the trial in the CIS Economic Court<sup>7</sup> and numerous votes of Moldova's representatives in the OSCE PA in support of resolutions condemning the Belarusian authorities' policy in the 2000s.

**Diagram 24.** Format of Belarusian-Moldovan meetings (blue — special visits; red — meetings within the framework of post-Soviet supranational structures; lilac — others), 1992-2012



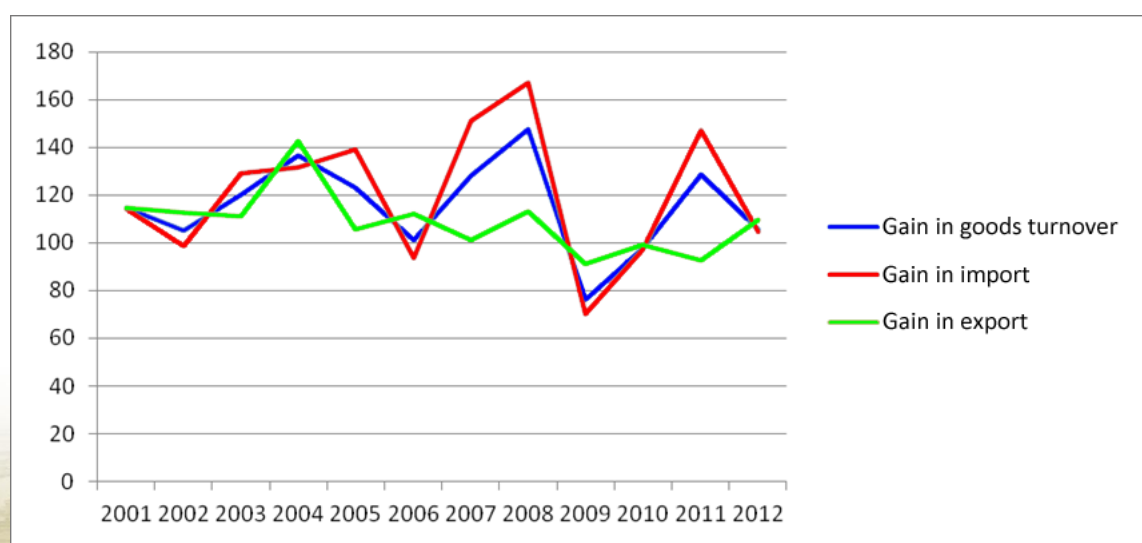
<sup>7</sup> In August 1995, after having concluded the Agreement on the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus unilaterally introduced customs duties for export from Moldova. Such actions violated the free trade agreement conditions concluded between Belarus and Moldova in 1993. Moldova addressed to the CIS Economic Court, and on 25 March 1996, as a result of judicial consideration, it accepted the decision which recognized the correctness of the Moldovan claims.

**Format of meetings.** Together with Ukraine, Moldova is among the countries with a big share of bilateral meetings carried out on different supranational platforms. As it is possible to see on Diagram 24, this format had especial importance in 2001 (after the victory of Moldovan communists) and in 2008-2010. Actually, the burst in mutual relations connected with Belarus' attempt to reorient its own foreign policy passed not in the form of bilateral visits, which demonstrates once again the absence of a strategic vision of the place of Moldova in Belarus' foreign policy. Also, it can mean both parties' low interest in the development and expansion of mutual relations.

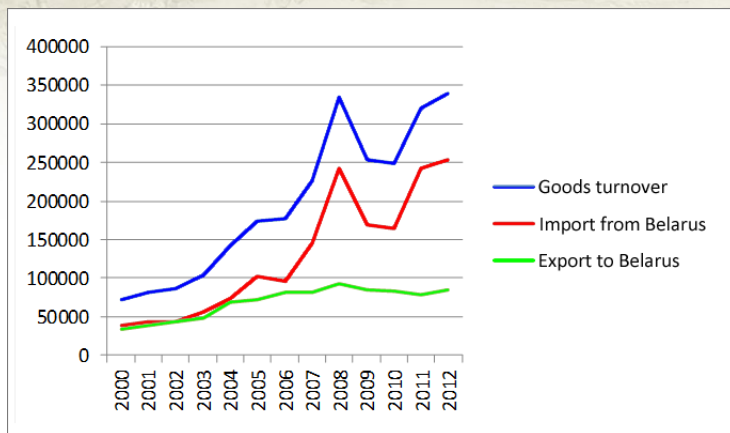
**Goods turnover.** Moldova is a constant trading partner of Belarus, but, unlike Ukraine and the countries of the Caucasian region, the relations with it during the last decade have been developing not so dynamically. More than that, it is possible to speak about certain stagnation, particularly on the Moldovan part. In 2000-2013, the general goods turnover grew only 4,7 times, which is much lower than the similar indicator for Ukraine (11 times) and the Caucasian countries (20 times). Still, Moldova is a country for which Belarus has the biggest economic importance among the other countries of the Eastern Partnership region, from the point of view of the share of export and import (the average index in 2007-2011 is 6,29% and 5,57% accordingly). The schedule of the rates of the goods turnover increase shows a considerably bigger instability in comparison with the other analyzed countries; there were three stops of growth or recessions (2002, 2006, and 2009).

The rates of the general goods turnover increase correlate well with the rates of the Belarusian export increase, but practically do not coincide with the dynamics of import of Moldovan production to Belarus. Belarusian export successfully grew in 2003-2005, but its biggest rates were in 2007-2008 (at the expense of the increased export of oil products). The global economic crisis led to a considerable fall of export in 2009; the positions were recovering in an unstable way during the following years — it is possible to see it even more vividly if to consider the absolute figures of the rates of increase and the volumes of trade (See Diagram 25). The situation with the import of Moldovan production is quite interesting; it demonstrates stagnation expressively. A rather high growth was characteristic of only 2004, while in 2009-2011 there was an essential recession. Actually, since the middle of the 2000s, it is possible to say about the stagnation of Moldova's import, and if to take into account the US dollar inflation, it is possible to consider it as a recession (See Diagram 26).

**Diagram 25.** Rates of the increase of trade between Belarus and Moldova, 2001-2012, %



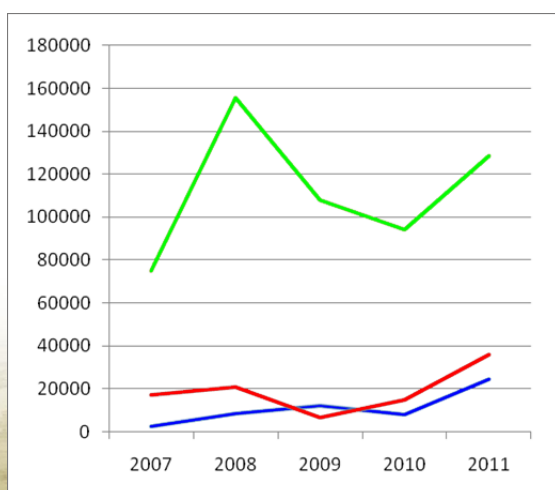
**Diagram 26.** Volumes of trade between Belarus and Moldova, 2000-2012, thousand USD



**Export structure.** The structure of Belarus' export to Moldova reminds export to Ukraine. The basic volume of deliveries is formed at the expense of oil products, which is usually more than a half and which is recently 51-64%. The peak of deliveries was in 2008; after that there was a certain decrease. In 2007-2011, the average share of machines and mechanisms in import was only 9,64% and about more 7% was other production from Category A. The Category B production was about 10%. Although it is also possible to note a certain positive dynamics — in 2011, the sales of Belarusian machines exceeded the pre-crisis sales in 2007-2008. The sales of agricultural production had a positive dynamics, too; their growth was considerable — from 2,7 million USD in 2007 to 24,6 million USD in 2011 (i.e. 9 times; the share of this production in export grew from 1,88% to 10,1%). Nevertheless, these positive tendencies did not change essentially the general structure.

On the basis of the available data on export, it is possible to formulate the general profile as follows — oil products are 55-60%, machines and other “technological” production — about 20%, agricultural production has 6%, products of woodworking, manufacture of building materials, light industry, and other production of Category B — up to 14-19%. Thus, Belarus in its trade with Moldova acts as a source of processed raw materials (first of all, oil products); the share of hi-tech production is small enough (See Diagram 27).

**Diagram 27.** Volumes of export of oil products (green line), machines (red line), and agricultural production (blue line), 2007-2011, thousand USD



**Import.** As for economic relations, Moldova acts, first of all, as an agricultural country for Belarus. The import structure is similar to that with the Caucasian countries. The most important place is occupied by wine and other alcoholic drinks, which are 36-48% of import. Other agricultural production is 17-23%. Thus, the general share of agricultural production is 2/3. The share of machines is insignificant — 2,6-4,9%. Other production of Category A adds about 3-4% more, and the rest is mainly the industrial production of Category B.

As a result, the general profile of import from Moldova can be outlined as follows — alcoholic production is about 45%, other products of agriculture — 20-23%, the industrial production of Category A — up to 10%, and up to 20-25% — the industrial production of Category B.



## Basic conclusions

Following the results of our research, it is possible to formulate the following conclusions as for the character and intrinsic characteristics of Belarusian foreign policy in the Eastern Partnership region. Practically all data shows that Belarus' foreign policy in this region is quite unstable (it is especially demonstrated by its relations with Ukraine and Moldova) and is preconditioned not by some defined strategy of mutual relations or policy in the region, but by the necessity to react to various external impulses and challenges.

In general, it is possible to specify two basic lines (axes) which define Belarus' foreign policy: 1) geopolitical (a search for mechanisms to influence Russia and a search for a counterbalance to Russia's influence and / or attempts to stabilize its relation with the West and to form intermediation channels); 2) economic (a search for financial and credit aid, alternative sources of strategic raw materials and, to a lesser degree, a search for new essential commodity markets). On the basis of this research, it is possible to understand what roles are played by the other countries of the Eastern Partnership region within the pale of these lines. Some countries play a considerable and changeable role (Ukraine); others can be built in Belarus' foreign policy only partially (Moldova).

By beginning its integration project with Russia in the mid-nineties, the Belarusian authorities received considerable financial assistance, low prices for energy carriers, a possibility to manipulate customs rules, and access to the market of Russia. It led to the growth of their political and economic dependence on the eastern neighbor, which forces them to seek for a counterbalance (which is hard enough in the conditions of the isolation from the West) and mechanisms to influence Russia's leadership. In order to settle this matter, Belarus has used and/or has been using: Ukraine — as a potential partner in integration projects (1995 and 2003), as a counterbalance to Russia's influence (during the whole period, but particularly in 2008-2010); Armenia — as a partner in the CSTO, the only ally of Russia in the Caucasian region; Azerbaijan — as an alternative source of oil (particularly in 2011); Georgia — as a factor that irritates Russia (2008-2010); Moldova — as a supporter of the idea of the Union with Russia (2001-2002). Also, all countries of the Eastern Partnership region have been used to diversify Belarus' foreign policy after 2000 (when Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia).

Since 1996, Belarus has been politically isolated by Europe and the USA. It creates a considerable number of problems for the country. First, only the West can be a real counterbalance to the influences of Russia. Second, this isolation does not allow the country to develop a whole spectrum of economic relations, to participate in programs of development, assistance, etc. Since 1999, or since the middle of the 2000s, and particularly in 2008-2010, Belarus has been trying to normalize its relations with the West and to find corresponding channels of mediation. For this purpose, the following countries have been used: Ukraine — in order to soften the consequences of the isolation (the late 1990s), as an intermediary and a partner in the Eastern Partnership (2008-2010); Georgia — as a potential intermediary (2008-2010).

Also, it is still important for Belarus to keep seeking support on the international and regional arena (e.g. during voting for resolutions concerning Belarus in various international organizations). Here, the following countries have been important: Armenia, Azerbaijan and, situationally, Ukraine.

As for the second line of Belarus' foreign policy (a search for financial and credit aid, alternative sources of strategic raw materials, and commodity markets), among the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, the most important is Ukraine (an important trading partner); less important are Azerbaijan (as an industrial production commodity market) and Moldova. Azerbaijan is also important strategically as an alternative source of oil and the only country of the Eastern Partnership which can act as a source of credit resources. Besides, Belarus

is of interest for Georgia as a mechanism of overcoming visa and customs barriers on the Russian market. Within the bounds of this “financial” line, it is possible to highlight Belarus’ attempt to use its good relations with Armenia so as to get included in the negotiation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the form of a mediator. It is possible to believe that the basic task of such intentions is to receive additional mechanisms of influencing Azerbaijan. The importance of the countries of the Eastern Partnership region in Belarus’ foreign policy is reflected in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Summary table of the Eastern Partnership countries’ importance in Belarus’ foreign policy (green — very important; yellow — rather important)

	Ukraine	Armenia	Georgia	Azerbaijan	Moldova
Influence on Russia (integration projects, a coalition game in supranational structures)	1995 and 2003, since 2010	since 2000			2001-2002
Mediation in relations with the West, European integration	particularly 2008-2010		2008-2010		
Foreign policy diversification	since the late 1990s	since 2000	since 2004	since 2004	since 2000
Support at the international level					
Importance of trade, commodity market, and additional schemes					
Alternative source of raw materials					

**Belarus’ economic place in the region.** As for the economic importance of Belarus for the countries of the Eastern Partnership region, it is necessary to mark that Belarus is quite important for Ukraine and Moldova (the share of trade with Belarus in goods turnover since 2007 is on the average 3,5-5%). For the other countries, the share of trade with Belarus in goods turnover is low — 0,6-0,9%. More than 1% is found only in two cases: export of Georgia (1%) and import of Azerbaijan (1,8%). Also, it is necessary to stress that situationally Belarus is of high interest to Georgia (as a mechanism to detour Russia’s visa and customs restrictions); the importance of Belarus can be potentially big for Azerbaijan (purchases of crude oil).

If to speak about the trade structure, then in this region Belarus acts in different economic roles. For Ukraine and Moldova, Belarus is mainly a source of oil products which are the basis of Belarus’ export (50-60%). The share of mechanical engineering production and other production of Category A is rather low (20-25%). Agricultural production has also small importance (3-6%).

Belarus acts as a rather industrial and technologically developed country only in its trade with Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this case, the share of production, which manufacture presupposes difficult technological operations, is 40-45%; the rest is agricultural production, raw materials (wood, timber), and production of Category B. A tad different is the situation with Georgia, for which Belarus acts, first of all, as an agricultural country because the share of agricultural production in trade is up to 40% (out of which 23% is sugar); the share of “technological” production here is also low and the situation is similar to the situation with Ukraine and Moldova (20%).

The majority of the Eastern Partnership countries act as agricultural countries for Belarus. The share of agricultural production, food and alcoholic industry is 60-70% in the import of Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova, and to a lesser degree — Azerbaijan — 40%. Also, the deliveries of oil from Azerbaijan and metal alloys from Georgia are important. The share of production of mechanical engineering and other production of Category A is small (up to 4%). More difficult is the situation with Ukraine, which export is quite diversified — the basis is metal products (30%), machines (20%), and agricultural production (16%). It is necessary to notice that the share of processed raw materials in the import from Ukraine is smaller than in the export from Belarus.

Summing up the analysis, the importance of the Eastern Partnership countries for Belarus can be ranged as follows. The most important country, from different points of view, is Ukraine. The second place is occupied by Azerbaijan. The third place can be assigned to Armenia (although, the economic basis of cooperation with this country is low, which can be a factor that would decrease the intensity in the future). The fourth place (right now) can be given to Georgia (mainly, considering the Russian factor, but the conjuncture here can change fast if Russian-Georgian relations are improved). From political and economic points of view, today's last place in the region is occupied by Moldova (mainly, in the absence of political cooperation during the latest years and the stagnation of economic mutual relations). Still, in this case, the difference in the positions of Georgia and Moldova is quite conditional and they can be placed on one level (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Degree of the Eastern Partnership countries' importance for Belarusan foreign policy and economy (red — the most important; orange — important; yellow — less important)



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of the Eastern Partnership countries  
(1992-2012)**

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Political and economic role in the region.

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