

Acronym: **B2B**

**1. PRIORITY:** FACILITATION OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**1.1. Support strand:** Facilitation of socioeconomic development and support for entrepreneurship

**Project applicant:** Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Riga, Latvia)

**Project partners:** Belarussian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Minsk, Belarus), Panevezys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Panevezys, Lithuania), Daugavpils University (Daugavpils, Latvia)

**Financial support:** LATVIA, LITHUANIA and BELARUS Cross-border Cooperation programme within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership instrument of 2007

**Aim** – to facilitate long-term cross-border cooperation and common innovative entrepreneurship, to balance the general conditions for regional business development, development of cross-border exchanges of good practices as well as the increase of circulation of goods and services.

**One of the project activities is a cross-border experience exchange, participation in activities that facilitate entrepreneurship in Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus.**

## PARTNERSHIP OF NEIGHBOURS



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**Useful appointments, new contacts and contract negotiations unite Latvian, Lithuanian and Belarusian participants of the business forum “Latvia- Lithuania-Belarus-border cooperation” that was organised in Riga in the framework of the days of Minsk project. The meeting place was in Riga (Latvia). This entrepreneur matchmaking was focused on three sectors: construction, food production and innovation.**

**Valerijs Kozlovs, Representative of Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Latvia**

There is a saying - you can't choose your neighbours. We, however, have very good relations with our neighbours. This meeting is another opportunity to share experiences, exchange information and to network. I myself regularly visit Belarus since 2000, and such events expand my horizons. If one goes on a business trip, it is more difficult to establish such contacts. There are regional business forums in Belarus, nevertheless there is a potential for such forums in Latvia too. At the current political situation Belarus has become a very important partner and a country that opens up possibilities, because as the result of the economic war between the European Union and Russia, we have to look for other markets for our products. In that sense Belarus poses a great potential. It is much closer than Indonesia or China. The mentality is also similar. This day will yield fruit, but we cannot speak of specific figures yet. The areas that have potential have been defined already. It is innovation, where we have a huge potential – we are a small country, but we can stand out with our intelligence. Innovative technologies are essential. The situation in Belarus is rather similar. The second sector is the food production. This is especially important right now, since we have to find new markets for our products. The third – large construction projects, where our builders have opportunities.

**Janis Endzins, Head of the Board, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

In the framework of this project many activities take place in Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. The project fitted in well into the days of Minsk in Riga. The two events are complementary. From an economic point of view, taking into account the situation in the Ukraine, the direction towards Belarus is becoming more attractive. I think that at least from a business perspective we will see an increase trend for exports from Latvia to Belarus, as well as establishment of Latvian-Belarusian companies. The food industry is suffering. We should seek new export opportunities to recover in the market our position that was lost. Entrepreneurs have to be flexible – either bankruptcy or seeking new opportunities. The larger is the company, the greater the responsibility. Latvian exporters have had such experience in the past years already, such as during the Russian crisis in the 90s. Now we have found our export markets. Latvia on average exports to 17 different countries.

**Aleksandr Fedorchuk, Director General, Minsk Department of the**



**Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

The export turnover in our countries has decreased. This event is an important step to do something about the situation. Belarusian delegation is diverse. There are representatives from small and medium sized business as well as the strategic enterprises, which play a major role in the national economy. The same applies to the representatives from Latvia. It is a good soil for a successful and practical dialogue. We already have a good start: 263 companies working in Belarus with joint capital that stems from Latvia and Belarus; there are 31 representations of Latvian companies in Belarus; 1400 Latvian companies have Belarusian capital, there are 17 representations of Belarusian companies in Latvia. It is a solid and substantial base that will help us to grow. People are interested in how to organize export, how to cooperate. Serious negotiations are the base for good cooperation. Not only there will be new contacts, but also – contracts.

**Alexander Ahremchik, head of Administration, State Institution “Administration of Free Economic Zone “Minsk” (Belarus)**

I have been to Riga several times, participated in forums and

delegations. There is good feedback. Latvian capital is being invested in Belarus. We are interested in cooperation to build production plants, to promote Belarusian goods in Europe. Within 5 days investors can obtain a special economic zone status. The area we have is 1034.64 ha in Minsk and 1601.31 ha in Minsk oblast – these sites we are developing. Europe is investing here, for example, Great Britain invested more than 30%, as well as German and Swiss companies are investing here. There are more Lithuanian companies here than the Latvian. On average there are 8% –9% companies with Lithuanian and Latvian capital. We are neighbours, so not only we should be friends but also work together.

**Stanislovas Latvenas, Director of “Panevežios egle” (Lithuania)**

I learned about the conditions for exports and imports to Belarus and the EU. It will be more difficult for our company to cooperate with Belarus; however it's easier with Latvia. Raw materials can be bought not only in Lithuania, but also in Latvia. In the past, we used to sell our products in Latvia, but the cooperation did not work out. We are producing a distinct product – Shakotis. Marketing requires a lot of attention. It is not easy to produce large export quantities; however we will seek cooperation opportunities.

**Alexander Rivkin, Director of SIA “Baltkrievijas Tirdzniecības centrs” (Latvia)**

It would be difficult to succeed without such meetings. Here we gain new contacts, establish cooperation, address common issues, and we can solve questions in person rather than over the phone. Each country benefits from having such meetings, thus organization of these events must be a priority for every country in order to develop exports of goods and services. After the exhibitions we see increase in demand of the relevant products and an increased volume of turnover. We managed to restore old contacts and negotiate new cooperation projects.

**Andrey Kuchinsky, General Director of OOO “Шляхетский маёнтак” (Belarus)**

We have been cooperating with Latvia for three years already. We hope to find more new partners. If there is mutual interest, then it happens naturally. Problems can be solved. There is no language barrier, we understand each other well. It is not only economic cooperation that is important, but also collaboration in the cultural sphere.

**Brigita Sabaliauskaite, Editor of the “Panevežio balsas” and “Sekunde” (Lithuania)**

It is the first time that I take part in a forum where there are representatives from three countries. It is facilitating the exchange of information. I personally represent the media - I am an editor of two newspapers. I will reflect this event in these newspapers. I believe that articles about the economy are very important. With the help of media we can reflect the current trends and attract new investors.