

## Prospects for the development of the EAEU project

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### Перспективы развития проекта ЕАЭС

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**Резюме:** После того, как был окончательно институционализирован Евразийский экономический союз (ЕАЭС), и страны-члены ЕАЭС достигли высокого уровня интеграции, перед ЕАЭС встала задача интеграции в глобальную торговую систему. В настоящее время там происходят значительные изменения, главным образом потому, что отдельные страны и группы стран, при отсутствии дальнейшей либерализации мировой торговли со стороны ВТО, стремятся к наилучшим условиям на внешних рынках, в основном посредством заключения различных договоров, способствующих устранению тарифных и нетарифных барьеров для товаров и услуг, росту инвестиций, развитию научно-технического сотрудничества, свободному передвижению рабочей силы.

**Ключевые слова:** Евразийская экономическая комиссия, ВТО, научно-техническое сотрудничество, институциональные форматы, зона свободной торговли, ЕАЭС.

### Եվրասիական տնտեսական միության զարգացման հեռանկարները

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**Ամփոփում:** Եվրասիական տնտեսական միության ինստիտուցիոնալացման ավարտից և անդամ պետությունների միջև առավել խորը մակարդակի ինտեգրման հասնելուց արձանագրումից հետո, ԵԱՏՄ առերեսվում է համաշխարհային առևտրային համակարգին ինտեգրվելու խնդրին. մարտահրավերին: Ներկայումս տեղի են ունենում նշանակալից փոփոխություններ՝ առավելապես այն պատճառով, որ առանձին պետություններ և պետությունների խմբեր ԱՀԿ-ի կողմից համաշխարհային առևտրի հետագա ազատականացման բացակայության պայմաններում ձգտում են արտաքին շուկաներում հասնելու իրենց համար ամենաշահեկան պայմաններին՝ հիմնականում սակագնային եւ ոչ սակագնային խոչընդոտների վերացմանը, ներդրումների ավելացմանը խթանմանը, գիտա-տեխնիկական համագործակցությանը և աշխատուժի ազատ տեղաշարժին նպաստող տարբեր պայմանագրեր կնքելու միջոցով:

**Վճռորոշ բառեր**՝ Եվրասիական տնտեսական հանձնաժողով, ԱՀԿ, գիտա-տեխնիկական համագործակցության, ինստիտուցիոնալ ձևաչափեր, Ազատ առևտրի գոտի, ԵԱՏՄ

The EAEU has three main institutional formats for building relationships with external partners:

1. Agreement on a free trade zone (FTA). Today, the Eurasian Economic Commission, focusing on world practice and expectations of external partners, is trying to raise the issue of concluding not just classic agreements on a free trade zone, providing for the removal of tariff barriers, but agreements with obligations in the field of trade in services and investment cooperation, as well as government procurement, protection of intellectual property, etc.

2. Non-preferential trade agreements. This type of agreement does not contain obligations for the abolition of duties and, as a rule, involves

cooperation in the removal of non-tariff barriers, customs regulation, infrastructure projects.

3. Memorandums of cooperation with third countries and international organizations. They primarily involve the mutual exchange of information. For their part, external partners wish to receive information about the EAEU (its customs and tariff regulation, non-tariff restrictions, etc.) as a subject at the level of which foreign trade policy is being formed for a market with more than 180 million consumers.

Planning in the field of international cooperation of the EAEU is as follows. The Eurasian Economic Council on an annual basis approves a document entitled "On the main directions of the international

activity of the EAEU”, which describes current forms of interaction with the wide range of states and trade blocs and determines the desired target states (FTA, agreement on trade and economic cooperation, etc. d.). In the early years of the Union, it is about building a system of partnerships, primarily at the level of concluding FTA agreements, with those countries with which there is a good level of political dialogue, and deepening economic cooperation brings more benefits than potential risks.

The EAEU countries have different approaches to the format and speed of the Union to build its international relations.

The EAEU countries have different approaches to the format and speed of the Union to build its international relations. Thus, the member states of the EAEU are trying to maintain control over such areas as trade in services and investments, which makes it difficult to negotiate progressive agreements on an FTA. This creates not only organizational difficulties, but also varying degrees of willingness of member states to take on agreed commitments on trade in services and investments. For example, such obligations under the FTA with Vietnam so far have been assumed only by Russia (although the agreement states that other countries can do it in the future if they wish).

In addition, there are differences in geographical priorities among member states: in particular, for Kazakhstan, partnership with China and the European Union (which are its main trading partners - 50% and 11% of Kazakhstan’s exports in 2016, respectively), and for Armenia - with Iran (partnership with which offers great benefits from the provision of transport and logistics services) and the European Union. In turn, official representatives of Kyrgyzstan declare that the international circuit will be of interest to Bishkek only after a fully functioning common market is created within the EAEU itself (which is relevant for Kyrgyzstan in light of the existing veterinary and sanitary restrictions on the export of its products to other countries of the Union). Due to the special structure of its economy, Belarus will act as a potentially interested actor (in terms of exporting its engineering products), and at the same time as a champion of various kinds of compensation for its own sensitive industries.

Currently, it is known that about 50 countries have shown interest in concluding free trade agreements with the EAEU, including those that are usually classified as developed. This made it necessary to determine the priorities for the development of international relations of the EAEU. After an analysis conducted at the level of national ministries and the Eurasian Economic Commission,

the top-priority countries were identified from the original list.

In 2015, an agreement on a free trade zone (FTA) between the EEU and Vietnam has been signed and has already entered into force. Currently, negotiations are underway at various stages to establish a free trade area with countries such as Singapore, Israel, Egypt, India, Iran, South Korea, and the unification of the trade regime with Serbia (with which Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan already have bilateral agreements on free trade).

The states with which the EAEU conducts (or has already completed) negotiations on the creation of an FTA (at the level of experts or official representatives) can be divided into several groups. The first includes countries such as Vietnam, Egypt and Serbia. With them, the EEU (and first of all Russia) maintains good political relations, has complementary trade flows, with the opportunity to increase trade and at the same time protect the most sensitive sectors. For example, Egypt is the largest importer of Russian grain and engineering products and an exporter of fruits and vegetables to the EEU markets.

The second group of countries, to which India and Iran can be attributed, also has good political relations with the countries of the EEU, is of great interest to Russian exporters, especially in terms of non-primary and high-tech exports. However, their market is well protected by various kinds of tariff and non-tariff barriers. This was one of the main reasons why official negotiations on the conclusion of a temporary agreement (leading to the creation of an FTA) with Iran have failed so far, although many observers expected a positive result in light of the meeting between the presidents of Russia and Iran in March 2017. India the same applies to countries that apply to the products from the EAEU countries the largest number of different restrictive measures (in this case, 13 measures). In addition, there are a number of sensitive sectors in the trade relations between the EAEU countries and Iran and India. For example, India is the largest producer of meat and dairy products in the world, from the import of which the EAEU countries are trying to protect their market. Iran has recently been protecting its domestic market from foreign grain, one of the key goods of Russian exports.

The third group of countries includes Singapore, Israel and South Korea. These are countries with which the EAEU would be interested in interacting not so much in terms of increasing exports of goods, but in terms of investment cooperation and trade in services. The difficulty in negotiating with these countries is to find the best balance between the benefits of the parties. For example, in the case of South Korea, the main issue is to avoid reducing the fees under the FTA agreement to reduce the

motivation for South Korean investors to locate their “assembly plants” in the EEU countries (this is primarily relevant for Russia and Kazakhstan).

In addition to the aforementioned countries, in the near future, the EEU is likely to proceed to negotiations on the establishment of an FTA also with other dynamically developing countries, such as Chile and Indonesia.

Prospects for partnership with the EU and China

The EAEU faces a serious challenge: to formulate approaches to building relations with two main actors in Greater Eurasia - China and the European Union. Recall that even in V. Putin’s article in the *Izvestia* newspaper in 2012, the future Eurasian Union was positioned as a bridge between Europe and the dynamically developing Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, as the international situation developed, it turned out that the implementation of this priority was possible in the long term rather than in the short or medium term.

In the European Union, in light of the deterioration of relations with Russia, forces dominate in favor of non-recognition of the EAEU as a potential partner.

Thus, the Ukrainian crisis gave rise to a political conflict with the European Union. Nevertheless, Russia, being interested in infrastructure, energy, investment, science and technology cooperation and visa liberalization, came up with the concept of “integrating integrations” or “connecting” the EU and the EAEU. Other countries of the Union eagerly supported this initiative. Thus, the talk was about the possibility of concluding a non-preferential agreement that would not deepen trade liberalization beyond the level set by the WTO, but would nevertheless promote the development of cooperation in the listed priority areas of interest to the member states of both the EEU and the European Union. However, in the European Union, in the light of deteriorating relations with Russia, forces dominate the non-recognition of the EAEU as a potential partner. Some EU countries, in particular, Germany, see in the negotiations with the EAEU the possibility of “engaging” Russia, but this, however, does not change the overall situation.

In October 2015, the Eurasian Economic Commission sent a proposal to the European Commission to establish official contacts and dialogue on the creation of a common economic space. However, the operational response was not in the direction of the EEC (and thus the EAEU), but in Russia. European Commission President J.C. In November 2015, Juncker sent an official letter to the Russian leadership in which he spoke in favor of developing relations between the EU and the EAEU, noting that he had already instructed the European Commission to work out proposals on potential areas of cooperation. At the same time, he noted that

the decision on the implementation of this idea should be taken by consensus by all EU member states and synchronized with the implementation of the Minsk agreements on Ukraine. Zh.K. initiative Juncker caused sharp criticism especially in Poland and the Baltic countries. In turn, Russia expressed doubts about the need to synchronize the alignment of the EU-EAEU dialogue with the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, noting that the implementation of the Minsk accords now largely depends on Kiev. Despite the failure of his first initiative, Zh.K. Juncker once again ventured to take a symbolic step towards Moscow (again criticized by many in the EU), when in June 2016 he visited the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. However, the exchange of views and the expression of a general commitment to the dialogue did not go beyond the negotiations.

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As a result, the “conjugation” of the EU - EAEU remains an unrealized idea, despite its relevance for the development of relations not only between the EAEU and the EU, but also between Russia and a number of Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova). The European Union prefers to build a bilateral dialogue with the countries of the EEU with the signing of relevant agreements: thus, it looks particularly successful with the example of Armenia and Kazakhstan.

According to experts of the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), by 2025 the EU and the EEU need to realistically reach an agreement not just on an FTA (which is not very profitable for them because of the structure of the economies of Russia and Kazakhstan) which would include such issues as the reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade, access to financial markets, regulation of the protection of intellectual property rights, visa liberalization, energy partnership, the development of international transport corridors.

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