

**Project “Assisting the Government of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise”**

**(Phases IV and V)**

**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

***Submitted by:***

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**REPUBLIC OF BELARUS**

**30 June 2022**

### **Final Evaluation of the Project**

“Assisting the Government of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through  
Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise”

(Phases IV and V)

The evaluation took place from 8 April 2022 to 20 June 2022

### ***Acknowledgements***

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- The Project Team and the UNDP Country Office in Belarus;
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, especially the Head of the Interministerial Commission, other federal and local authorities, national experts, academics and business community representatives involved in the Project,
- Officials of the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Belarus.

PROJECT INFORMATION	
PROJECT TITLE	Assisting the Government of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise
Atlas ID	Phase IV (2015-2018) - Atlas ID 00093349 and Phase V (2018-2022, extended) – Atlas ID 00109228
Corporate outcome and output	UNDAF Outcome: Outcome 2.1: By 2020, the economy's competitiveness will have been improved through structural reforms, accelerated development of the private sector and integration in the world economy. CPD 2016-2020 Outputs: Output 2.1: National and subnational systems and institutions are able to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and geared towards enhancement of employment and livelihoods.
Country	Republic of Belarus
Region	RBEC
Project document signed	25.12.2014
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Project budget	589,680 USD (Phase IV) 742,503 USD (Phase V)
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	587,443.22 USD (Phase IV) 695,596.42 USD (Phase V)
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Implementing party	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

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<b>Evaluation type</b>	Project
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<b>Evaluator</b>	Dr Tatsiana Mikhaliyova
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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

CO	Country Office
CU	Customs Union
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPD 2016-2020	Country Program Document for the Republic of Belarus (2016-2020)
CPD 2021-2025	Country Program Document for Belarus (2021-2025)
DSB	Dispute Settlement Body
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GATS	General Agreement on Services
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
Interministerial commission	Interministerial commission on accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus
ITC	International Trade Centre
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PSC	Project Steering Committee
QA	Quality Assurance
RTA	Regional Trade Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPS measures	Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Guidelines
WTO	World Trade Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the final stages of the multistage project “Assisting the Government of Belarus in Accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise”. The Project commenced in 2008. Its overall goal was to improve Belarus’ potential to join the multilateral trade system and become a member of the WTO.

The process preceding a country’s accession to the WTO is generally challenging and multifaceted as it involves a wide range of sectoral and general economic issues, a specific legal and institutional framework, and permanent developments in negotiations. Therefore, a multi-pronged strategy was developed to target the full range of issues through the provision of analytical support; translation and interpretation assistance; capacity-building and awareness-raising at the national level; as well as organisational, administrative and informational support.

Phase I focused on raising awareness of various aspects of the WTO accession process. The main goal of Phase II was to review Belarusian legislation for compliance with the WTO Agreements. Phase III focused mainly on assessing how Belarus’ participation in the Common Economic Space (CES) would affect its accession to the WTO.

This final evaluation covers two of the five project phases: Phase IV (December 2014 to March 2018) and Phase V (2018 to 2020, extended until 30 June 2022 due to COVID-19). During this period, the Republic of Belarus entered the concluding and most intensive stage of negotiations and the drafting of its final WTO commitments.

Phase IV was dedicated primarily to the preparation of analytical reports on the compliance of Belarusian legislation with WTO rules, and on the amendments that must be implemented; the training of national experts in the different aspects of world trade; and awareness-raising among businesses on the functioning of the multilateral trade system.

Phase V focused on providing support, including operational support, to the negotiation process, which had been actively taking place over 2018-2020; further enhancement of institutional governmental potential; awareness-raising among the public on the accession process; consolidation of the network of experts; and finalisation of the results.

### **Purpose and objectives of the evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an impartial review and assessment based on the following criteria under the ToR: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, human rights and gender equality. The evaluator applied an additional benchmark — “coherence” — to provide a holistic overview of the Project<sup>1</sup>. The scope of the evaluation covers project development and design, project implementation and monitoring, all project outputs, and outcomes and impact, for phases IV and V.

The main objectives are to evaluate to what extent the expected results have been achieved, whether the interventions conformed to the UNDP criteria and ensured the sustainability of the outcomes of the Project; to assess the overall project performance and management; to define the results of the Project; to make recommendations and draw lessons.

The target audience includes the government bodies and organisations responsible for the country’s accession to the WTO and involved in WTO-related matters; local authorities; UNDP Belarus; universities and research institutions; and the business community.

### **Evaluation Approach and Methods**

The overall methodology is collaborative, with a discursive exercise to validate preliminary findings. Three synergistic and inter-related approaches have been used. Firstly, the theory-based approach to the evaluation involves structuring the evaluation around the Theory of Change/Logical Framework of the development intervention that is under assessment. Secondly, the explanatory sequential approach

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the ‘map’ of criteria (Annex 10) for full list and information on how they are evaluated, as well as the ranking and abbreviations.

is applied to follow up quantitative results with qualitative data. Thirdly, the inclusive participatory approach is deemed appropriate due to the range of stakeholders and beneficiaries.<sup>2</sup> All categories of stakeholders and beneficiaries have been engaged during the evaluation and have been selected for interviews, questionnaires and consultations through purposive sampling.

Methods used in the evaluation include: data collection, analytical methods (such as formal analysis, descriptive analysis, qualitative and quantitative analysis), and cross-validation form the methodological background.

## Conclusion

The Project has proven highly relevant to both global and national objectives, as well as national policy priorities and programs. Although implementation of the Project has been challenged by COVID-19, there is a strong evidence that the expected results, outcomes and outputs have been achieved and the common strategy fulfilled throughout the milestones and the workstreams of the Project. The approaches used for the development, planning and monitoring of the last phase of the Project has proven comprehensive and led to tangible and long-lasting results. The project has demonstrated that the results can be perpetuated thanks to both the laying down of intervention and exit strategies, primarily based on a national professional and expert network and the creation of a National WTO Centre. The implementation has also provided examples of good practices and inspiration for similar interventions in the future.

## Recommendations

### 1. Strategic planning for future projects

1.1. *Extended results matrix* is recommended with wide quantitative and clear qualitative indicators from the design stage. Planning of the *final conference with a wide circle of stakeholders and beneficiaries* in advance is recommended to make a clear exit strategy for all involved parties and to adjust long-run connections to a continuator (e.g., the National WTO Center).

1.2 *Digitalisation of the achieved results and remote access to it* is of a high necessity in order to increase information accessibility, promote continuity of the results and exclude any possible gaps in knowledge transfer.

1.3 It is recommended to design and allocate respective budget for *software and innovative technologies* initially and put this as one of the priorities/outcomes for the UNDP country program, projects design, or to elaborate on alternative funding sources.

1.4 *Replication of approaches and methods*, along with the Glossary (2022) used in this project is recommended for the use by actors in the macro-region also acceding and seeking for an expert and technical support.

1.5. The project management should rely on quantitative and qualitative *regular monitoring of gender equality*, systematically gather information and evidence on the relevance of the measures to promote women empowerment.

### 2. Operational recommendations and support to exit strategy

2.1 Establish a *Digital platform* as an operational coordination mechanism to facilitate network, address information gaps and support awareness, especially within the non-expert groups or regional bodies.

2.3 *Two-tier targeting* needs to be applied: 1. Sectors. Orientation for several sectors of economy, e.g. mostly involved in external trade, indicated in national program priorities, as a basis for more profound interaction within the activities. 2. Subjects. Orientation for those subjects who have not been fully covered previously. The recommendation can be used for both: design of the future UNDP projects for Belarus and for national government further actions in capacity building and G2B (Government to Business) communication.

2.3 *Long-term education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy* should be put in place and used country-wide, with a deeper involvement of regional universities in WTO related programmes providing opportunities of internship and visits to the National WTO Center.

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to Annex 4 for a full list of key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

## I. Introduction and overview

This evaluation report presents the findings of the final evaluation of the last stages of the multi-stage project on “Assisting the Government of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise”: Phase IV (2015 to 2018) and Phase V (2018 to 2022, extended) — Atlas ID 00093349 and 00109228, respectively.

The final evaluation was initiated by the UNDP CO in Belarus. It was included in the Project Evaluation Plan and the CO Evaluation Plan for 2021 to 2025.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an impartial review and assessment of the two final phases of the Project, its outputs, outcomes and overall impact; to assess how project was designed, implemented and what results it led to; to define outcomes of the Project and their scope; to make recommendations and draw lessons that can improve the continuity of project benefits and help improve UNDP programming as a whole.

The target audience is government bodies, primarily involved in the negotiation and accession process (MFA as a key stakeholder), and dealing with WTO-related issues; local authorities; universities and research institutions; business entities and associations. The report provides an impartial assessment of the project design and implementation for the use of UNDP CO officers as well as the officials of the Government of the Russian Federation (who acted as a donor). The evaluation includes recommendations and lessons learned which might be useful for other regional programs and projects involved in capacity-building and related to multilateral trade and economic issues.

For the purposes of safeguarding the rights of the people involved and the confidentiality of the views and opinions shared, this evaluation was carried out in line with the UN Evaluation Group Ethical guiding principles for evaluation and data protection. It followed the UNEG rules and standards as well as the guidelines, rules and procedures established by the UNDP as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.

The report is structured as follows: the introduction gives an overview and the purpose of the evaluation; section 2 outlines the background and the rationale for the intervention, section 3 describes the evaluation scope and objectives, section 4 presents the approved evaluation approach and methodology, section 5 focuses on the indicative data analysis collected and validated through triangulation, section 6 presents the findings based on the criteria set out in the ToR and proposed additionally by the evaluator, with the conclusions (section 7), recommendations (section 8) and lessons learned (section 10) finalising the evaluation. Eleven annexes contain the information on the ToR; the reviewed documents; the list of key project stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners; the evaluation matrix and the table of questions, the map of criteria and rankings; the introductory note to the interviews; the lists of deliverables and annual activities, maps of achievements and recommendations; a table on gender/cross-cutting issues.

## II. Brief description of the intervention being under evaluation

The UNDP has run the multi-stage project on “Assisting the Government of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Expertise” since 2008. The Project consisted of five phases in total. The phases under evaluation are Phase IV, which ran from December 2014 until March 2018, and Phase V, which was extended until 2022 due to the complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The general objective was to assist the Government of the Republic of Belarus in its accession to the WTO through strengthening the capacity of the national institutions and raising public awareness about Belarus accession to the WTO and what impact it would have.

*Table 1. Expected results*

*Source: Project Proposals*

Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational support of the negotiation accession process</li> <li>- National capacity-building and strengthening</li> <li>- Raising awareness of the community (business, academia)</li> </ul>
Tasks <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To perform analytical studies, incl. recommendations on the use of best regulation practices in trade policy;</li> <li>• To prepare analytical materials for the negotiation team;</li> <li>• To implement training activities, incl. workshops;</li> <li>• To form an expert team (the 'pool');</li> <li>• Assist with the translation of all the necessary documents for the Working Party and the negotiation team, incl. legislative acts;</li> <li>• To endorse other activities aimed at enhancing the negotiation skills of the experts, incl. facilitation of the participation of national experts in WTO events;</li> <li>• To involve international or national experts into the preparatory work and the negotiation process;</li> <li>• To supply the negotiating team with up-to-date office equipment;</li> <li>• To conduct an informational and educational campaign regarding WTO rules and the accession process;</li> <li>• To improve knowledge potential;</li> <li>• To prepare the necessary publications and presentations.</li> </ul>
Total budget Phase IV Phase V	Donor: Russia-UNDP Trust Fund for Development 589,680.00 USD 742,503.00 USD (plus parallel financing from MFA 983,100.00 USD)

*Table 2. Relation to global and country priorities*

*Source: Project Proposals and Quality Assurance Reports*

UNDAF Outcome	Outcome 2.1: By 2020, the economy's competitiveness will have been improved through structural reforms, accelerated development of the private sector and integration in the world economy.
CPD 2016-2020 Outputs	Output 2.1: National and subnational systems and institutions are able to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and geared towards enhancement of employment and livelihoods
Indicative Outputs with Gender marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational support of the negotiation process on Belarus' accession to the WTO (Gen2);</li> <li>- Finalisation of national capacity-building in preparation for the country's subsequent accession to the WTO (Gen 2);</li> <li>- Awareness-raising among the business community regarding the working rules in the context of Belarus' membership in the WTO (Gen 2).</li> </ul>
SDGs	Reduce inequalities within and among countries (SDG 10)  Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17)

The accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO is an important issue for the country's sustainable economic growth and inclusion in the multilateral system of liberalised trade. The country acceding to the WTO is required to undergo the negotiation process and participate in multilateral meetings, to adjust its legislation and comply with the rules of the WTO system regarding the regulatory environment and measures, to eliminate the existing barriers to liberalised trade in accordance with individually scheduled requirements drafted within the Working Party, bilateral negotiations.

The conformity of the national legislation with the WTO trade rules is reviewed during the multilateral meetings of the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to the WTO. Based on the Working Party's findings, WTO Members may decide to move to the next round of negotiations. It depends on how fast

<sup>3</sup> Based on the project Phase IV and Phase V proposals.



the acceding country progresses in aligning its national legislation with the WTO trade rules. The Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to the WTO comprises 47 countries. The progress of the acceding country and further conditions of its accession to the world trade system depends on the expertise and the skills of the negotiation team, competent officials, the awareness among multiple bodies and institutions of the process, requirements, and outcomes of WTO membership.

The Republic of Belarus has been negotiating accession to the WTO since 1993. The national legal framework for its accession is based on the Presidential Decree No 439 (1999) and the Government Resolutions Nos 782 (2012), 758 (2020), and 1338 (1999, rev. 2022).

In 2014, Belarus still had to finalise its bilateral negotiations on market access with another 12 WTO members including the European Union and the United States, which were the key actors of the accession negotiations. Considerable amount of work was required with regard to the Working Party Report – the key document of the accession process reflecting the complete package of the country's WTO commitments on systemic issues<sup>4</sup>.

In 2015–2016, Belarus significantly scaled up its efforts to join the WTO<sup>5</sup>. The principal decision to accelerate the negotiation process was taken during that period at the meeting on Belarus' accession to the WTO on 29 March 2016<sup>6</sup>. The updated Interministerial Commission on Belarus' Accession to the WTO included representatives of over 40 ministries and agencies<sup>7</sup>.

In 2017–2020, five Working Party meetings were held; the last took place on 11 July 2019<sup>8</sup>. Transition from the Factual Summary to the draft Report of the Working Party<sup>9</sup> was arranged, and Belarus entered the final stage of its accession negotiations.

From 2016 to 2021, bilateral bargaining sessions on market access were completed with the remaining 12 WTO members. This brought the total number of bilateral protocols to 21. The latest protocols were those concluded with Switzerland and Australia.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the discussion of the fifth edition of the Draft Working Party Report and the work on the final discussion of Belarus' commitments in the WTO were postponed to 2022. On 20 April 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Makei, while on his visit to Switzerland, met with Director General of the WTO, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and confirmed Belarus' intention to continue the work completing the negotiations on its accession to the WTO<sup>10</sup>.

In 2021, the focus was on the domestic procedures to improve foreign trade regulations taking into account the WTO requirements. This approach is supported by the WTO Secretariat and by the Government<sup>11</sup>.

Last year, a number of consultations were held with Brazil and Costa Rica; a format for formalising bilateral agreements is under consideration now. Official negotiations with Brazil have been completed, and a protocol is expected to be signed soon. The talks on bilateral market access agreements continued with the United States of America, Ukraine, the EU, Canada, Costa Rica and New Zealand; the talks with the last four of them are in their final stage<sup>12</sup>. The main negotiations with Costa Rica have been

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<sup>4</sup> Proposal for the extension of the project (proposal for Phase IV), p.2

<sup>5</sup> Since 2016, when the accession of Afghanistan took place, no more accessions to the WTO have been finalised.

<sup>6</sup> Based on interviews and the information provided on the official website - <https://economy.gov.by/ru/peregovory-ru/>

<sup>7</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No 319 of 16 August 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Information from the official website <https://mfa.gov.by/en/export/wto/accession/>. For reference, between its establishment in October 1993 and 2017 the Working Party held seven Working Party meetings.

<sup>9</sup> The negotiation stages are set by the WTO accession procedure and represent documents adopted in a specific sequence: Memorandum – Checklist – Factual Summary – Draft Working Party Report.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. [https://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news\\_mfa/a39d2f35e41e9aa6.html](https://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/a39d2f35e41e9aa6.html)

<sup>11</sup> Information from the interviews; <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-vto-obsudili-rasshirenie-vzaimodejstviya-499159-2022>

<sup>12</sup> <https://eng.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-wto-accession-talks-proceed-to-final-stage-147763-2022/>. Information provided during the interviews and consultations.

completed. Technical details are being finalised in working order. There are also pending agriculture-related issues with Canada and New Zealand. Negotiations on goods with the EU have almost been completed (out of 843 positions only 17 have not been yet finalised), and the negotiations on services are in progress. The negotiations with Ukraine on goods have been completed, the negotiations on services are underway. The United States confirmed its readiness to complete the negotiations on services; the negotiations on goods are in progress<sup>13</sup>.

The experts who were interviewed or consulted during the visit to the Project headquarters, concluded that the results of the Working Party (the draft Report and all corresponding issues) were finalised to roughly 95–98%. The final version of the Working Party Report comprised 106 obligations: 101 had been finalised, and only 5 were still under consideration<sup>14</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that Belarus is a party to the Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union, which is a functioning RTA. All other members of the EAEU are members of the WTO (the Kyrgyz Republic – since 1998, Armenia – since 2003, Russia – since 2012, Kazakhstan – since 2015), and its instruments are incorporated into the legal system of the Union, making Belarus bound by most of the commitments. This resulted in Belarus making its accession terms as closely coordinated as possible with the already existing WTO commitments of the other EAEU member states.

Therefore, the Project phases under evaluation were intensive and multifaceted, affecting many spheres of the economy, a lot of institutional governmental bodies, business actors, experts and representatives of academia. Overall, more than 50 ministries, agencies, and organisations<sup>15</sup> were involved, as well as dozens of partners and experts from foreign countries and institutions, and thousands of people who participated in the various activities<sup>16</sup>: in 2018–2021, direct beneficiaries counted 2576 people, indirect beneficiaries — 6335 people, while the number of national and local partners involved was 415 people<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Design, implementation and Monitoring of the Project***

The project design was outlined in the Proposal for Phase IV and the Proposal for Phase V. The working plans specified the details of how expected results would be achieved year after year.

Phase IV was designed as a logical follow-up of the previous project phases allowing to engage international expertise, to widen and to use the established network of national consultants, available analytical instruments and channels of interaction with the regions, business associations and the entrepreneurial community. Close contact with the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation as one of the key project partners was one of the goals set out in the project proposal.

The main medium-term output of Phase IV was accession to the WTO on terms favourable for the country and the Eurasian integration. The Project's main goal was to assist the Government of Belarus in its accession to the WTO by strengthening national (government) expertise as well as by raising public awareness of the process and the impact of the country's accession to the WTO. This was supposed to be achieved through the following:

1. analytical studies leading to action-oriented recommendations on issues related to Belarus' WTO accession;
2. training activities targeting national organisations, institutions and government agencies and touching upon various aspects of WTO accession;
3. an informational and educational campaign aimed at increasing public awareness regarding WTO rules and the country's accession process;
4. contributing to a more balanced and sound negotiating position of the country in its WTO accession, as well as the quality of its presentation.

The target audiences, as outlined in the proposal, were: the business community, academia and the media, specialists in the line ministries and agencies. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring productive activity on the part of the Interministerial Commission on Belarus' accession to the WTO and

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<sup>13</sup> Based on information from <https://mfa.gov.by/en/export/wto/accession/> and the interviews.

<sup>14</sup> Based on information from the interviews and the field visit.

<sup>15</sup> Please refer to Annex 4 for the list of the key stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners.

<sup>16</sup> Please refer to Figures 3 and 4 in Annex 11 for the exact numbers.

<sup>17</sup> Annual report 2021, p.22.

the Interministerial Expert Group on the WTO responsible for formulating a sound position for the negotiations and initiating the required legislative changes. It was expected that under Phase IV a permanent expert team made up of national consultants and independent experts would be consolidated in order to create a permanent expert team to support the MFA in the WTO accession negotiations (the 'expert pool').

The goal of Phase V remained the same, i.e. to assist the Government of Belarus in its accession to the WTO. Expected outputs were:

- 1) operational support for the negotiation process,
- 2) finalisation of national capacity-building in preparation for subsequent membership in the WTO,
- 3) awareness-raising among the business community regarding the rules to follow once Belarus has become a member of the WTO.

The activities included the establishment of the National WTO Centre, the participation of national experts in WTO events, the improvement of competencies of the members of the Interministerial Commission on Belarus' Accession to the WTO, capacity-building among the teaching staff and independent experts, as well as an informational campaign.

The Project was designed to align with the SDGs, namely the reduction of income inequality within and among countries (SDG 10), and strengthening of the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17). The project was planned, implemented, and monitored in consistency with the UNDP CPD 2016–2020 (output 2.1)<sup>18</sup> and the UNDAF 2016-2020 (outcome 2.1)<sup>19</sup>. It corresponds to the CPD 2021–2025 framework<sup>20</sup> and priorities (e.g. priority area 1, especially para. 23, 25, 27)<sup>21</sup>.

Due to the fact that their drafting was set apart in time, the overall and annual work plans and reports under phases IV and V at times included different approaches to design and implementation. However, several main workstreams (lines of activities grouped according to targeted groups criteria) could be differentiated to make an overall estimation of the data collected during the project implementation:

- preparation of analytical materials to support the negotiation process;
- technical assistance in drafting the accession documents (translation of legal acts and draft Working Party Report);
- improving national expertise through capacity-building events including training sessions for experts, workshops, visits to the WTO and other WTO related events;

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<sup>18</sup> CPD 2016–2020. Output 2.1: "National and subnational systems and institutions are able to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and geared towards the enhancement of employment and livelihoods", p.10.

<sup>19</sup> "Outcome 2.1: By 2020, the economy's competitiveness will have been improved through structural reforms, accelerated development of the private sector and integration in the world economy" – United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020, Minsk, 2015, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> "An independent evaluation of the country programme during 2016-2018 highlighted the UNDP contribution to the promotion of Belarus as a reliable, competent partner in the international arena, including in terms of its accession to the World Trade Organization. <...> The lessons learnt emphasised that the UNDP work may be further strengthened and expanded in supporting sustainable socio-economic development at the regional and local levels, developing private sector and public-private partnerships, and using new financing mechanisms and tools. Other strategic areas include advancing cooperation in technology, innovation, research and development, and national capacity-building." – para 8-9 of CPD 2021-2025, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> "23. Through existing mechanisms, UNDP will provide expert and other support for the rapid development of the services sector until 2025, with an emphasis on high-value-added services (scientific, professional and other)."

25. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, state institutions, local authorities and the private sector, UNDP will support entrepreneurship and private sector development, innovation and public-private partnerships, including social sectors, and effective regional and local development, taking into account location-specific social and economic conditions and the needs of the population, including vulnerable groups.

27. "UNDP stands ready to provide expert support and best international practices to the Government and interested national parties in developing social and environmental standards to improve the quality of public property management in accordance with the national interests. This will allow the economy to adapt quickly to technological changes in the context of globalization, accelerate the process of innovative development, and contribute to the development of human capital and private initiative. UNDP will provide support in the field of trade development in the context of the accession of Belarus to the World Trade Organization." – CPD 2021-2025, p. 5.

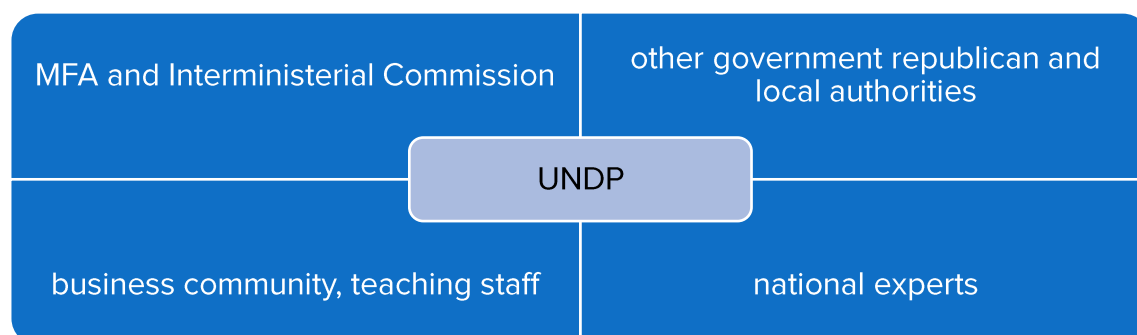


- improving competencies of the members of the Interministerial Commission and related republican and regional governmental bodies;
- raising awareness among the business community, academia, training staff on WTO-related matters, consequences of accession and conditions for promoting products/services and upholding the country's interests in international markets.

Moreover, the plan included launching a National WTO Information Centre as a part of the capacity-building strategy, which was done by the MFA.

Table 3. Key stakeholders, beneficiaries, partners by groups <i>Source : project documents, site visits, consultations</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus,</li> <li>- other ministries and institutions within the Interministerial Commission,</li> <li>- other republican executive authorities, whose mandate deals with external trade,</li> <li>- members of the Parliament of the Republic of Belarus,</li> <li>- local authorities,</li> <li>- national experts from academic and research institutions and individual experts,</li> <li>- universities,</li> <li>- business associations and private sector enterprises,</li> <li>- Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Belarus,</li> <li>- Trade Representation of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Belarus.</li> </ul>	

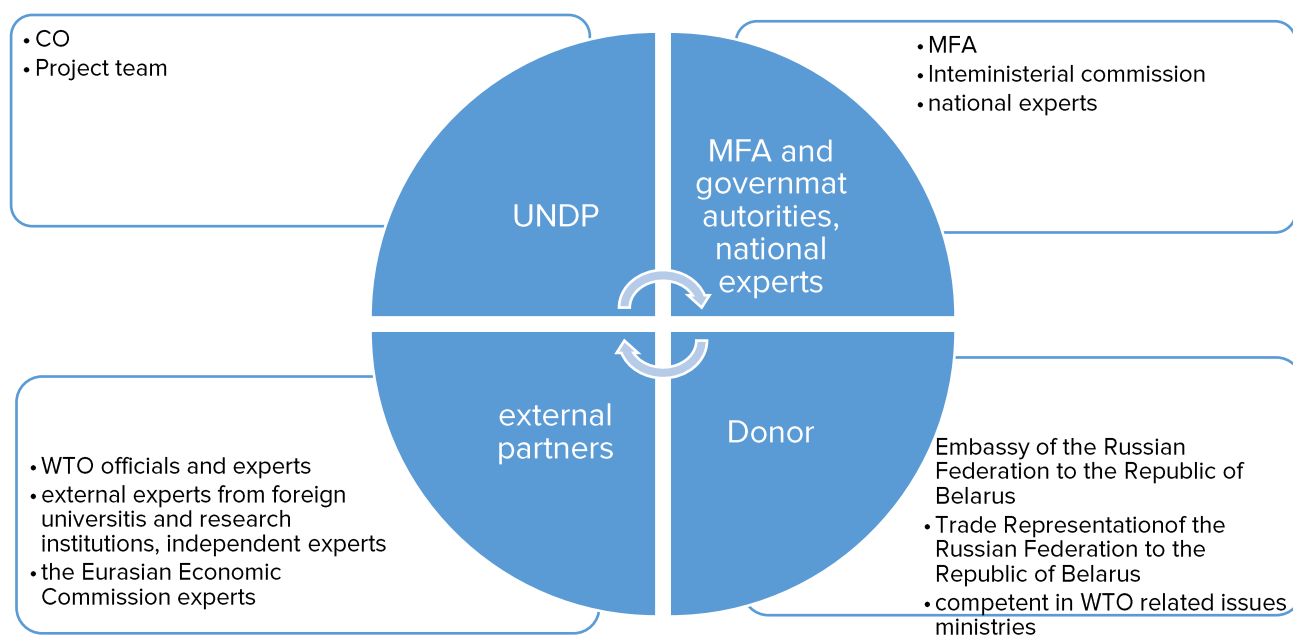
Overall, more than 50 key stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners (Please refer to Annex 4) took their respective part in the implementation of the Project depending on their role, functions and duties. The UNDP played an integrating role in creating and strengthening the network at the national and international level (Figures 1 and 2).



*Fig. 1. National networking frame for the Project*  
*Source : project proposals, reports, consultations and interviews*

Most activities were carried out in close cooperation with the experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, the Eurasian Economic Commission, Russian WTO Expertise Centre, the St.Petersburg State University, National Research University Higher School of Economics<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Based on the data in annual and final reports, e.g., Annual Narrative and Financial Progress Report, 2018, p.6.



*Fig. 2. External networking frame for the Project*  
Source: project proposals, reports, consultations and interviews

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted as the national Implementing Partner for the Project and chaired the PSC as a steering mechanism. The PSC included representatives of the key stakeholders from government bodies, the donor, and the national expert pool.

Table 4. PSC Membership Source : PSC minutes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus;</li> <li>- Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus;</li> <li>- National Centre for Marketing and Price Study;</li> <li>- Institute of Economics of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus;</li> <li>- Belarusian State Economic University;</li> <li>- Belarusian State University;</li> <li>- Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Belarus;</li> <li>- Trade Representation of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Belarus.</li> </ul>	

The Project Manager was supported by the UNDP Project Team and the CO; he was responsible for the day-to-day project management. The Project Manager was a new person appointed for the phases under evaluation. Project staff included 2 people (Project Manager and Administrative Assistant). Project staff was also responsible for public relations.

Monitoring was conducted on a regular basis. Within PSC it happened at least twice a year; annual donor reports contained descriptive and financial information. Phase V had a sound monitoring plan. It included 7 monitoring activities (progress tracking, risk log, learnings and information from other projects, quality assurance, internal data review, project report, project review by PSC). Risk logs were updated two or three times a year. Quality assurance reports were prepared on an annual basis (every other year starting 2018 due to changes in the corporate policy) and reflected, *inter alia*, the sufficiency of risk monitoring. It contained analysis of the achievement of tangible outputs and implemented activities. Internal monitoring covered review of questionnaires, visits to project sites<sup>23</sup>, financial reporting<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> According to an interview.

<sup>24</sup> Provided annually in the financial reports, combined delivery reports annexed to annual reports.

## **Implementation constraints**

COVID-19 negatively affected the timing and scale of the activities of the Project and the accession in general. Due to the pandemic, the Project was extended until 30 June 2022. Some measures were adopted to mitigate the influence of COVID-19 on the implementation of the Project, making it more flexible (e.g. 9 virtual workshops were held in 2020<sup>25</sup>; some project activities were postponed to the second half of 2021 and the first half of 2022)<sup>26</sup>. In response to an urgent request of the MFA to support the country in preventing further spreading of COVID-19 in Belarus, a remote meeting of the PSC was conducted on 13 April 2020. The PSC members unanimously endorsed the allocation of 10,000 USD from the project budget for respective procurement (70,000 nitrile medical gloves were purchased to transfer to the State Institution “Republican Centre for the Organisation of Medical Response”<sup>27</sup>. The donor reimbursed it on top of the project Phase V budget at a later stage<sup>28</sup>.

Also, joint monitoring and consultations with the MFA were undertaken to avoid any possible adverse effects due to the situation after the presidential elections, as the risk indicators pointed out. In 2021, the impact and probability of risk indicator N° 2 “Change of the country's political course on the issue of accession to the WTO” was deemed “Negligible” as the Belarusian government was following the approved plan for the country's accession to the WTO<sup>29</sup>.

## **III. Evaluation scope and objectives**

The Consultant reviewed the problem addressed by the Project and the project strategy, which encompassed an assessment of the suitability and applicability of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to their cost-effective alternatives. The assessment also looked at the executing modality and managerial arrangements.

The evaluation assessed the implementation of the Project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities carried out. In particular, the evaluation assessed how the Project Team used adaptive management in project implementation.

The evaluation assessed the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the Project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. It referred to the achievement of immediate objectives and contribution to attaining the overall objective of the Project. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the Project had been able to encourage collaboration between the different partners. It looked at whether the Project had significant unexpected effects, either of beneficial or detrimental character. The Consultant reviewed the work plans and assessed the extent to which the indicators were achieved.

The evaluation also assessed whether the Project strengthened the application of a rights-based approach and mainstreamed gender in development efforts<sup>30</sup>.

The main objective was to evaluate the overall project concept and design, project implementation, project outputs, outcomes and impact, with special attention paid to the extent of the expected results achieved, the conformity of the planned activities with the UNDP criteria, and the continuity of the Project results for the future.

The criteria of evaluation under the ToR included relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender and human-rights sensitivity, and sustainability. Coherence is included as well — in order to provide a systemic overview of the project (Please refer to Annex 10 for the map of criteria with their description and applicable ranking).

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<sup>25</sup> 2020 Annual report, p.7.

<sup>26</sup> 2021 Annual report, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> 2020 Annual report, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> Based on the interviews.

<sup>29</sup> 2021 Annual report, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> ToR, section 2.

The evaluation matrix contains the table of questions (Annex 6). They are formulated as per the ToR requirements. The answers to the questions form the basis for findings in the final evaluation. They can also be used as a source of information for the readers of the report to draw their own conclusions.

## **IV. Evaluation approach and methodology**

### ***Approaches***

The evaluation is carried out by an independent consultant who, based on the evidence gathered, impartially presents her findings and recommendations. The overall approach is collaborative, with a discursive exercise to validate the preliminary findings.

Firstly, a theory-based approach to the evaluation involves structuring the evaluation around the theory of change/logical framework of the development intervention in question. This approach is used to better identify the contextual factors that have contributed to the final results, whether they were foreseen and whether they were positive or negative, to which extent the observed changes could be attributed to the Project, which contextual factors are critical in producing the intended outputs and which of them deter the progress. This aspect of the analysis is performed with the use of an evaluation matrix (Please refer to Annex 6).

Secondly, an explanatory-sequential approach is applied to follow up the quantitative results with qualitative data: the latter is used in the subsequent interpretation and clarification of the results from the quantitative data analysis. Indicators from the different workstreams of the Project are also analysed in terms of their evolution.

Thirdly, the nature of the Project, given the multitude of stakeholders and beneficiaries (Please refer to Annex 4), calls for an inclusive participatory approach. It draws on the knowledge and experience of the project stakeholders, on the progress of the Project, on the perception and behavioural changes and, finally, impact.

Purposive sampling is based on the identification of the key stakeholders and the beneficiaries best suited for providing detailed answers to the evaluation questions. The preliminary desk review of the documentation corresponding to different periods and the review of the media coverage of the Project allow choosing representatives of all target groups who can clarify different aspects of the Project according to the evaluation criteria.

The data was sourced through interviews, questionnaires, observation of activity (visit to a regional workshop on 12 May 2022) and a field visit to the Project Team office, as well as from the documents (see full list in the Annex 3) and openly available information in the media and on official websites.

### ***Methodology***

To be precise in assessments, to ensure credibility of the results and to make the findings more reliable, the following methods of evaluation were used:

1. Data collection: relevant general documentation and project documentation, national programs, publicly accessible information, consultations with the key stakeholders/beneficiaries, interviews, and questionnaires.

Document review consisted of a review of all relevant documentation for both Phases: the UNDP-approved project, annual work plans, financial reports, donor reports, PSC minutes, Risks Logs, Quality Assurance (Please refer to Annex 3).

Additionally, the consultant referred to such corporate programming instruments as the UNDP Strategic Plans for 2015–2018, 2018–2021, 2022–2025, country programs, the SDGs, and Agenda 2030; national legislation and regulations that were mentioned during the interviews as included in the LAP (Legislation Action Plan); the national legal framework accession and negotiation team and the Interministerial Commission; the legal framework for the EAEU member states.

Interviews with all stakeholders and beneficiaries were confidential (Please refer to Annex 5 for the sample questions and confidentiality clause). The List of key stakeholders and beneficiaries is anonymised (Please refer to Annex 4) for the same confidentiality reasons.

Interviews with the representatives of all groups of stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners were essential for an accurate evaluation. The main beneficiary of technical assistance under the Project is the MFA. The project activities benefit the government bodies and institutions responsible for the WTO accession process or involved in external trade issues through their mandates. Representatives of the Interministerial Commission or persons included in the PSC were also interviewed, as were representatives of the donor and experts.

Successful implementation of the Project was also expected to benefit local authorities, therefore all of the regions (Brest, Hrodna, Homel, Moghilev, Vitebsk, and Minsk) were represented in the survey. Interviews were also conducted with universities and academic institutions conducting research in the area of foreign trade, as well as business associations and entrepreneurs.

The sampling from the main groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries is based on the principle of gender equality (to reach approximately 50% of men and women in each of the groups). Questions are formulated as gender-sensitive (Please refer to Annex 5).

The mode of communication also varied depending on the group. For those involved in all of the stages of the Project, from design to implementation, or key stakeholders, a semistructured interview was the choice as it provided an opportunity to dive deeply in the facts and perceptions.

Questionnaires were distributed among the regional representatives of business associations, researchers or teaching staff who benefited from the awareness-raising, informational and educational campaigns.

However, it was important with regard to all stakeholders and beneficiaries, to follow how their perception of the results change with time, as well to reveal any additional benefits such as networking and active dialogue. Open-ended questions and an option to give recommendations were provided.

After the interviews, some additional information was verified using publicly available sources: the websites of the universities — to find information on the programs and special courses dealing with WTO-related matters, as well as the UNDP, the MFA, the Ministry of Economy websites — to seek information on the activities, progress and results of the Project.

The Consultant visited the Project office for an on-site validation of the key tangible outputs and an interview with the staff, as well as to gather additional information on the data for 2022, including gender-disaggregated data.

The Consultant was also invited to one of the events. The Regional seminar that took place on 12 May 2022. It provided the Consultant with an opportunity to observe the extent of collaboration between the stakeholders and the beneficiaries and their sustainable networking, as well as to establish the most recent developments in the intervention process.

## 2. The Consultant used the following analytical methods:

- Descriptive analysis: to describe the components of the project;
- Formal analysis: to structure the goals, indicators, baselines, etc.; to find and to group main and secondary expected results;
- Content analysis: to identify common trends and patterns, as well as diverging views;
- Quantitative analysis: to generate summary statistics, to validate or withdraw hypotheses regarding trends;
- Comparative analysis: to identify good practices, innovative approaches, lessons learned throughout the project lifecycle;
- Counterfactual analysis: to evaluate impact by comparing real outcomes with possible outcomes had the project not been implemented.

- Cross-validation based on triangulation and a combination of different sources and methods of evaluation of each of the components of the Project, at least observation of the facts through desk review, the perceptions through interviews and/or surveys, applied study of external official sources (national programs, reports, educational programs). The principles of cross-referencing (simple triangulation) across responses and background documents, with consideration of the internal coherence in information derived from detail around specific issues were applied.

### ***Cross-cutting issues***

Gender consideration involved ensuring an equal proportion of men and women participating in different activities within the Project (factual evaluation), as well as using a gender-balanced approach at all stages of designing, implementing and monitoring the Project. The aspects of the Project assessed against gender criteria included: the composition of the Project Team; the way activities were designed, planned and implemented; whether any measures were taken to assign female experts, or to attract more women from the business community through the informational and educational campaign.

Other vulnerable groups: the evaluation looked at whether the actions and activities within the Project were accessible for persons with disabilities as Social and Environmental Standards (SES) apply to all UNDP programs and projects. For the purposes of the evaluation people with special needs were not regarded as a separate target group. The evaluation looked for inclusive approaches in decision-making and implementation modes of the Project (e.g. accessibility of information for people with special needs and choice of venues).

The evaluation itself was based on principles of non-discrimination<sup>31</sup>, integrity, transparency regarding assessment methods and tools, confidentiality of personal information, with full respect to diversity and freedom of opinion and its expression.

Limitations to evaluation were low as there were no language limitations (English and Russian/Belarusian were used in data analysis and interviews) or technical obstacles (in relevant cases face-to-face interviews were replaced with online meetings or calls).

COVID-19 and connected restrictions had almost no influence on the process of evaluation and interviews. The only limitation had to do with the unavailability for consultations/interviews of some officials representing stakeholders due to their transfers to different posts. However, it was mitigated through purposive sampling and an adjustment in the selection in accordance with the changes from a wide circle of people involved in Phases IV and V of the Project.

In accordance with the ToR requirements, the evaluation presents the key findings based on the following criteria: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; cross-cutting themes (gender; inclusion; rights-based approach); and sustainability. Coherence is included as well in order to give a systemic overview of the Project. Each criterion was defined using standard UNEG definitions. The evaluation matrix table is provided in the Annex 6. The applicable rating criteria for assessment are described in Annex 10 (Map of criteria).

Consultations, briefings and debriefings with the UNDP officials were held regularly. Before finalisation, all draft documents were submitted to the UNDP focal point for review and feedback.

## **V. Data analysis**

The data generated preliminary at the desk review stage was systematized according to the main workstreams: activities, deliverables, target groups. Annual and overall dynamics showed tendencies in progress, information gaps. A map of annual events and activities was generated from 2015 to 2022 to present an overall systemic overview of the dynamics of the project (Annex 11). Gender disaggregated data of 2021, information on the activities held in 2022, were additionally requested. Open access

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<sup>31</sup> All human beings are entitled to civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights regardless of nationality, place of residence, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, religion, language, etc.



sources were searched and official information was collected through websites of UNDP, MFA, Ministry of Economy, Center of Hygiene, National Center on Intellectual Property; universities sites; republican and local media agencies sites. The UN acts and national legal framework were referred to.

Then all the data was cross-referenced and cross-validated with data collected through interviews, questionnaires, visits. Interviews were scheduled in the inception report, the project team assisted in reaching the interviewees. An over-planned survey become possible thanks to the project team invitation to the regional seminar organized on 12 May 2022. The on-site visit and observation enriched the perception overview and widened the catalogue of opinions through some group interviews and consultations with randomly chosen beneficiaries. Communication via email (questionnaires) helped to reach distant beneficiaries in regions. Finally, the consultant visited the project team office for an interview and observation of the analytical materials of non-restricted access, publications, and booklets.

The in-depth review of the collected data was guided by the key questions and subquestions of the UNDP approved evaluation matrix (Annex 6). To answer the questions within each of the criteria relevant aggregated and disaggregated information was used. All stages of each evaluated Phase of the project were analyzed: from general project design and annual planning to the implementation, monitoring, and progress in mid-term changes if necessary. The answers to one or more questions under the criterion in the matrix let form evidence-based group of findings, overall assessment of which led to the conclusion on the level of success.

Each criterion was rated according to the rating criteria (the description and abbreviations of the rating criteria are in the Annex 10). Each criterion was accorded to indicators (success standards) individually fixed in the evaluation matrix. In order to answer the questions and to produce credible evaluation findings, data analysis was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Numerical (quantity) and qualitative methods were based on the assessment of the indicators (success standards) adjusted to systemize all information and to define tendencies through all the process of design, implementation and recommendations for future. To target this objective a range of tables/maps on project planning and performance was made, where value in numbers was important and designed.

Quantitative indicators involve:

- quantity of analytical materials;
- volume of analytical materials;
- number of countries, which experience of negotiation process was put into the ground of analytical materials;
- annual and total number of translated legal acts and other documents;
- costs of technical equipment provided;
- annual number of external events (WTO events) and quantity of people involved;
- annual number of trainings and quantity of people involved;
- quantity of available materials (either open or restricted online access, or printed materials, brochures, books, video or audio materials, etc.);
- annual and total number of participants from business associations, private sector and events for them.

They were compared to the ToC concept of the planned and achieved results of both phases. Baselines were mostly descriptive as contained in the Phase IV project Proposal. However, this type of analysis (on the number of planned and performed) was not always available for the Phase IV as far as its annual working plans contained only generalized narrative and financial information. The proposals for the phases were based on different design methods. Strict criteria follow-up were reflected obviously in the Phase V design and, further on, in the annual plans and the reports on implementation. Phase IV design and further reports on implementation were not such comprehensive on disaggregated data or the names and places of events, however, multiple monitoring sources allowed to collect accurate information.

As well, each criterion analysis covered the dynamics through the project. For this purpose, tables and charts with annual sequential information were prepared. Some target groups, events or activities were put in one table sequentially in order to tackle two analytical targets: to analyze the implementation of

the planned results linearly and to analyze the planning and implementing of the outputs as a part of the general process of capacity building and raising awareness. It lets clarify direct and indirect impact, interdependence and coordination of different workstreams. The Chart 1 (p.41), e.g., put along two main factors of operational support to negotiation process, namely 1) technical support in translation and interpretation and, 2) preparation of analytical materials for negotiating team. These workstreams were analyzed, therefore, for separate and combined effect on the project. This analysis allows to conclude on the performance of each of the indicator, and to assess the general logical framework of the activities within the operational support to the negotiations.

Accumulation of the data on annual numbers of events and trainings and the participants in 2015–2022 revealed some limitations to information in several periods, such as non-differentiated groups of participants in the Phase IV, that led to generalized conclusions in the categories of Interministerial officials and expert participation.

Gender disaggregated data was available partially. It was not indicated in the Phase IV. Gender markers were taken into consideration in formulating outputs in the proposal of the Phase V. Gender data was partially reflected in the reports on the Phase V.

Annual financial data was analyzed according to the budgeted and delivered values annually, and the progress through the phases: financial difference between planned and delivered in the Phase IV was explained with regard to the relevant budget lines and based on the information from the PSC minutes and annual reports. Financial information on 2022 results was not available still, however, comparative analysis for previous years in percentage let conclude on the tendencies and future results.

Quality analysis was oriented, though not limited, to the following indicators assessment: scope of networking and partnership, relevance of the events and activities, timeliness of translations; involvement of national experts, translators and interpreters in the expertise and operational support of the negotiation; involvement of stakeholders in design and implementation, networking and participatory benefits of the project; stakeholders' satisfaction with Project progress; facilitation of access of people with special needs; barriers to access to the Project participation and/or results; accuracy, completeness and consistency of information in plans and reports; the topics and scope of analytical and expert materials, quality of the performance of the planned knowledge results.

The achievements were assessed based on different indicators dependent of the character of the output. Recommendations made upon the evaluation were related to each of the outputs dependent on the scope and form of the delivered results.

## **VI. Findings**

### **Relevance**

Relevance was measured as the extent to which the objectives and the design of the Project responded to the needs, policies and priorities of the beneficiaries at the international and national levels, as well as partners/institutions, and continued to do so if the circumstances changed.

*The overall assessment on this criterion is highly satisfactory (HS)* as the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plans for the relevant periods, CPD and national priorities were duly taken into consideration and interconnected in the design and implementation of the Project. Moreover, the necessary indicators related to sustainable development and global partnerships were included in the planning, monitoring and reporting, which ensured the implementation of a ToC approach. The Project contributed significantly to the trade development of the country. The Project was responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries, was aligned with the national priorities, as well as with those of the donor, was aligned with the regional agenda and built on the lessons learned and results achieved in the previous phases.

The Proposal of the Phase IV missed the gender issues at the design stage, and the Proposal of the Phase V addressed the assessment of the risks related to gender equality and women empowerment. The gender equality, however, was met at the quantitative level.



The legislation that was developed and the analytical work that took place as part of the Project, as well as the capacity created, the strengthened expert network and other achieved project results will most likely continue to be relevant for further foreign trade development and the WTO accession process.

### **Finding 1. Global and Country Priorities. Multi-stakeholder Partnership and Engagement**

The data analysis showed that the Project contributed to the sustainable development pathway of the Republic of Belarus, which was indicated as one of the national priorities and interinstitutional workstreams in 2017<sup>32</sup>. Design of Phase V was based on SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) as it was mentioned in the proposal; narrative reports also included reference to these SDGs.

The analysis of the wording of the objective and outputs in the project proposal showed that the Project was based on the principle of engagement, with the aim of developing the policies, partnership potential and institutional capabilities that could sustain results over time. It corresponded to Outcome 1 of the UNDP Strategic Plan for 2014–2017 “Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded”. The UNDP Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 enhanced the multi-stakeholder partnership agenda<sup>33</sup>. The design of the Phases IV and V targeted this agenda purposefully. The Project assisted and, according to the interviews, succeeded in forging a national and external network, building professional connections between national (republican and local) and regional authorities, national and international experts, academia, business associations<sup>34</sup>. The planned activities helped to reach the ambitious result on multi-stakeholders’ involvement. The workshops and conferences targeted over 50 national and regional government authorities: the MFA, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Antimonopoly regulation and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, State Customs Committee, the National Centre for Intellectual Property, the National Centre for Legislative and Legal Research, the National Academy of Sciences, all regional (“oblast” level) and some districts (“rajon” level) executive committees, among others. Although the legislative branch was less involved, according to the list of participants, some members of Parliament took part in the WTO Weeks, and in their opinion, any further participation in this sort of events would be useful.

The Project contributed to global partnerships by enabling the creation and support of an international network involving both Belarussian experts and authorities and WTO officials, as well government bodies of the donor, leading research institutions, independent international experts, RTA bodies and member-states. According to annual reports, a wide range of partners from the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Spain, the WTO and the Eurasian Economic Commission were involved in visits by experts and events. All governmental officials and national experts who have been interviewed, have stressed how the Project helped foster personal, professional and institutional connections and confirmed that they are currently in touch regarding professional issues outside of the project. All participants noted the high level of external expertise and the wide range of partners that were taking part in the events. Although the Project did not include direct SP output indicators, by providing support in the WTO accession process, it did nonetheless contribute to such SP indicators as ‘an improved enabling environment for expansion of decent work and livelihoods’<sup>35</sup>.

The Project was designed in such a way that events ran with a certain regularity. As per the annual work plans, each year all targeted groups were included into the plan of events. The plan of activities helped the Project be impactful in terms of competence-raising and ensuring the wide involvement of different audiences. The implementation brought more results than planned when it came to external (WTO) events (Please refer to Annex 9) due the synergistic effect of knowledge-based strategies: the more actors involved, the more activities organised, then more people reached and involved, etc. Therefore, it can be concluded that a diverse, multi-subject, regular awareness-raising and informational campaign took place.

CPD for 2016–2020 indicated the development of governance systems for sustainable development, ensuring transparency and openness of the public administrative bodies (NSDS 2030), ensuring more

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<sup>32</sup> [https://sdgs.by/news\\_events/news/d2f0343b28ab075.html](https://sdgs.by/news_events/news/d2f0343b28ab075.html),  
[https://sdgs.by/architecture/nacional\\_coordinator\\_p\\_dostijeni\\_u\\_CUR/](https://sdgs.by/architecture/nacional_coordinator_p_dostijeni_u_CUR/)

<sup>33</sup> UNDP SP 2018-2021, DP/2017/38, p.5 // <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1318769>

<sup>34</sup> Please refer to Annex 4 for the list of stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners.

<sup>35</sup> QA Reports 2019, 2021, p.4 in both.

inclusive social and political processes, with gender equality as a crosscutting issue. According to annual reports and many reports from the respondents, the Project facilitated inclusive and open communication between the participants. The events were attended by a wide circle of participants, representing both government and local authorities, as well as business and academia. This aligned project design and implementation with the CPD framework. The design of the project provided the necessary brief description of the gender framework, and the gender indicators were mentioned. However, the implementation did not focus on proactive empowerment, although some attention was paid to the number of men and women participating in the activities, providing expert support and decision-making through the PSC.

The consistent and intentional alignment of the Project with the UNDP agenda on sustainable economic development bore fruit, and CPD for 2021–2025 mentioned “support in the field of trade development in the context of Belarus’ accession to the World Trade Organization” as a priority area<sup>36</sup>.

Quality assurance reports referred to the SP outcome regarding the improvement of an “enabling environment on the expansion of decent work and livelihoods” and assessed as satisfactory the alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan through non-direct influence of all capacity-building measures on eradicating poverty in all its forms<sup>37</sup>.

Therefore, the Project contributed to forming a wide network both at the institutional and professional levels. It helped build horizontal (within each of the target groups) and vertical (between the groups involved in the Project) connections, with the UNDP acting as integrator, in consistency with the SDGs and UNDP SP requirements on inclusivity and partnership, and the CPD frameworks for Belarus.

## **Finding 2. Positive changes in the regulatory framework and relevance to the national priorities**

The evaluation confirmed the success of the long-term strategy to achieve the results and outcomes of the country program. The results matrix laid out in the project design for Phase V focused on indicators that were also important for Phase IV (though, not clearly designed in the Phase IV proposal). Annual reports 2018-2021 followed the same matrix and showed steady progress in their implementation (Please refer to Annex 9).

The Project assisted in sustainable development and improvement of the legal and institutional framework, which went far beyond immediate results and promoted long-standing opportunities. Bringing the legislative framework in accordance with the WTO provisions helped with the integration of Belarus into the multilateral trade system and corresponded to the national priorities as set forth in the Belarus’ sustainable development roadmap<sup>38</sup>.

Special departments in line ministries have become more involved in WTO related issues, new competences and knowledge help expand trade, investment, and economic relations, as it was stressed by the key stakeholders in their interviews and reports during the regional seminar, which the Consultant attended. So, the negotiations on bilateral RTAs in services were successful, in their opinion, thanks to the analytical and capacity-building work done as part of the project.

Further analysis of this additional outcome of the project revealed that the conclusion of regional trade agreements in the service sector was defined as a fully-fledged instrument of foreign trade policy in Belarus’ planning and program documents. Thus, the implementation of this strand of work is provided for in Chapter 10 “Development of Foreign Economic Activity” of the Program of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2025, approved by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 758 of 24 December 2020. Also, this approach is confirmed in the [Program of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025](#) (Part 8). These agreements widened trade opportunities for Belarus and Belarusian businesses.

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<sup>36</sup> UNDP stands ready to provide expert support and best international practices to the Government and interested national parties in developing social and environmental standards to improve the quality of public property management in accordance with the national interests. This will allow the economy to adapt quickly to technological changes in the context of globalisation, accelerate the process of innovative development, and contribute to the development of human capital and private initiative. UNDP will provide support in the field of trade development in the context of the accession of Belarus to the World Trade Organization.” – CPD 2021-2025, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> QA Report 2021, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> <https://economy.gov.by/uploads/files/ObsugdaemNPA/Kontseptsija-na-sajt.pdf>, pp. 73-74.

Therefore, the economy's competitiveness was improved through structural reforms, accelerated development of the private sector and integration in the world economy — as per UNDAF Outcome 2.1.

The previous stages of the Project focused on launching the process of aligning national legislation with the WTO Agreements in four areas of regulation – economic policy, trade in goods, trade in services, and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (see “Detailed information about Project Phases” Project Proposal Phase V, p.24). The emphasis was then shifted to the provision of analytical and technical support. However, amending legislation never lost its importance and this work throughout all stages of the Project. Phase IV resulted in an analysis of 736 national legal acts and the EAEU instruments. Recommendations regarding amendments to over 200 national legal acts were presented<sup>39</sup>. Such areas as IP issues, SPS measures, tariffs and trade barriers, agriculture and subsidies received considerable attention and substantial amendments were made to legislative acts, which was beneficial to the country's development. Interviews with the stakeholders confirmed the high relevance of these topics and their correlation with legal and economic changes in the country.

The Project also supported the development of normative legal acts and capacity-development tools. A Legislation Action Plan (LAP) is always part of the obligations of a negotiating state. Members of the Working Party may and do request information about legislative measures and changes. The plan of amendments in the case of Belarus included, among other things, price regulation, alcohol and tobacco markets regulation, export of non-ferrous scrap and other specialised issues. Legislation on IP issues, SPS measures, agriculture and a lot of other spheres was amended and brought in line with the WTO rules. Analytical materials dedicated to these issues were produced<sup>40</sup>. Over 150 legal acts were translated. Therefore, the Project supported the development and implementation of the annual legislative plans and contributed to the transparency of the legislative measures undertaken. New legislation and measures in the sphere of services, as well as state protective measures either contributed or attempted at contributing to bringing about structural changes in how the economy functions. In 2021, as part of the Project, information on Belarus' services sector regulation was fed into the WTO I-TIP Services database and was used to calculate the World Bank Service Trade Restrictions Index, which helped identify which policy measures restricted trade, as well as helped find hidden opportunities for improving the business climate, boosting competition, improving the investment climate and increasing the transparency of Belarus' trade regime for WTO members. According to a number of interviewees, these sectors (IP, services, agriculture and SPS measures, and trade barriers) were of great importance for the national priorities. Therefore, the Project positively impacted the regulatory framework, which was the result of long-standing measures within the project and its alignment to national priorities.

### **Finding 3. Relevance to regional and donors' priorities**

All the EAEU partners of Belarus within EAEU are WTO Members: the Kyrgyz Republic – since 1998, Armenia – since 2003, Russia – since 2012, Kazakhstan – since 2015. As outlined in the Proposal for Phase V, this resulted in Belarus making its accession terms as closely coordinated as possible with the already existing WTO commitments of the other EAEU member states and to accelerate the accession process while ensuring compatibility of commitments assumed under the WTO regarding preservation of the opportunities to develop and deepen Eurasian integration<sup>41</sup>. The compatibility of commitments (an intention to maximise compatibility) is an obligation under the Treaty on the EAEU<sup>42</sup>.

During this period, the previously finalised bilateral negotiations were rescheduled because of the changes in the RTA obligations of the partners such as the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. Overall, as an EAEU member state, Belarus is interested in coordinating its individual obligations with the requirements of the Union. Its partners in the Eurasian Economic Union, including the project donor, were also interested in ensuring conformity and as few exceptions from the RTA regime as possible, regarding the acceding stipulations for Belarus. Therefore, there was a need for analysis onto the conformity to the EAEU obligations, as well as consequences from a macroregional point of view. A large portion of the

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<sup>39</sup> Donor report on Phase IV, p.1; “Detailed information about Project Phases” Project Proposal Phase V, p.26-28.

<sup>40</sup> The project proposals, annual plans and reports contain references to the “assigned”, “agreed” with the key stakeholders agenda on legislative and regulatory measures and coherent analytical materials.

<sup>41</sup> Project Proposal Phase V, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Para 3 and 5 of the Agreement on the functioning of the Customs Union within the multilateral trade system of 19 May 2011 (applicable on the basis of Annex 31 to the Treaty on the EAEU of 2014).

materials prepared dealt with these topics. As requested by the MFA, an international consultant from the WTO Expertise Centre (Russian Federation) was commissioned to review individual sections of the Draft Report of the Belarus WTO Accession Working Party. As pointed out in the 2021 report, this analysis helped eliminate the problem associated with the lack of a full, coherent and detailed analysis of the language conformity of the commitments contained in the Draft Report with the obligations of the Russian Federation as a member of the WTO along with the EAEU legal acts. The analysis also helped to ensure that all the international commitments that Belarus would undertake would not contradict the commitments of the Russian Federation and the EAEU legislation. The necessary changes were made to the text of the Draft Report before its adoption<sup>43</sup>. In their interviews, key stakeholders confirmed the high level of importance of alignment between the regional and universal obligations.

Thus, the Project helped ensure the conformity of the negotiating terms and provisions to the RTA to which Belarus is a party, which was important for Belarus, for the donor and the partnership within the EAEU.

#### **Finding 4. Consideration of lessons learned from the past phases and other practices, responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs**

Design of Phase IV was based on the WTO accession practices (mainly in the Eurasian region – Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation)<sup>44</sup>, the results of the initial phases of the Project and expressed interest of the MFA and the donor<sup>45</sup>. Also, a new Provision on the Interministerial Commission was adopted, which introduced significant changes in its membership and functions<sup>46</sup>. These factors led to an extension and a new agenda that was centred around the preparation for an intensification of the negotiations.

CPD 2016-2020 output 2.1.3 established the following number of capacity-building measures to support the bilateral negotiations on Belarus' accession to the WTO: 10 measures by 2017, with the 2014 baseline at 0.<sup>47</sup> According to the 2015 and 2016 reports on implementation this result was achieved: in 2015 and 2016 a total of 10 various measures were implemented.

As the Project proposal and annual reports showed, the problem addressed by the project was tackled with a full-fledged strategy of multidimensional and multi-stakeholders character: from operational assisting in “a detailed negotiating position with WTO” to “informing... and upgrading qualifications”<sup>48</sup>. Planned outputs were directed to the fulfillment of the objectives, clearly structured and progressively implemented (see Table 5). The project design integrated many aspects of support to stakeholders and they were combined in groups and various activities, that was useful for leveraging synergies across target areas (e.g. participation in WTO events and training workshops were mutually complementary), better coordination among the various activities (operational support activities were interdependent, see Chart 1, p. 41), and more cost-effective through sharing of logistical and human resources across components.

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<sup>43</sup> Annual Report 2021, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Project Proposal Phase IV, p. 3. See also the list of deliverables for Phase 4 and the analysis of Kazakhstan's accession (Annex 7), as well as a map of events and activities (Annex 11) and Russia's accession experience analysis and transfer through expertise.

<sup>45</sup> This Proposal for extension of the Project “Assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus in Accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening National Institutional Capacity and Expertise” (2008-2013) to Phase 4 was developed based on the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing interest in extending the international technical assistance taking into account the comments made by the donor (Letter of the Director of the Department of International Organizations of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation of 22 November 22 2013) – p. 8 of the Project Proposal of Phase IV.

<sup>46</sup> “The new Provision assigns responsibilities under the scheme “set of issues for WTO negotiations — provisions of WTO Agreements — responsible government bodies” involving over 40 ministries, agencies and organisations with designation of the authorised representatives of these organisations (80 to 100 people) to support the WTO accession process”/ — p. 3 of the Project Proposal, Phase V.

<sup>47</sup> UNDP CPD 2016-2020, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Proposal Phase V, p.2-3

Table 5  
**Phase IV and Phase V activities and outputs**

	Result by 2018	Result by 2022
<b>Conduct studies to assess the potential impacts of Belarus' accession to the WTO and operational support for the negotiation process</b>		
Analysis of the legal acts of the Republic of Belarus and the CU/EAEU for compliance with WTO rules and best international regulatory practices / Preparation of analytical materials for the negotiations	15	10
Translation/interpretation	60	116
<b>Strengthen national capacity on various aspects of the country's preparation for WTO accession and membership</b>		
Facilitation of the participation national experts in WTO events	24 events	20 events
Supplying the Belarusian negotiating team with the required up-to-date office equipment	Equipment for videoconferences	
Training workshops on various aspects of WTO accession	10	16
Establishment of the WTO National Centre	-	established
<b>Raise awareness on various aspects of the WTO</b>		
Regional roundtables with the business community	7	22
Publications on WTO-related issues	2	2

The acceleration of the project during Phase V and the talks become effective due to the results achieved under Phase IV (conducted studies, trained experts and negotiators, operational support and equipment supplied as seen in Table 5, cross-verified with information pointed out by the interviewees)<sup>49</sup>.

According to the donor reports, cross-referenced based on the information from the interviews and the PSC minutes, the required analytical work on assessing potential impacts of WTO accession on Belarus' economy (by individual sectors) was undertaken, potential scenarios for minimising and preventing negative impacts of WTO accession were developed and options were identified. So, as requested by the MFA and the government, the international consultant from the WTO Expertise Centre (Russian Federation) was commissioned to study the procedure for the reconsideration of Belarus' 'non-market-economy' status and to provide recommendations for Belarus for when the status is reconsidered, as well as for discussing that commitment with WTO members. Reconsideration of the non-market status of the economy of the Republic of Belarus, given favourable development, could allow the country to obtain the status of a market economy, which in turn would have a positive effect on the conditions for Belarus' accession to the WTO.

Results of triangulation proved that all analytical materials responded to the identified needs of the key stakeholders and were highly important for the national negotiation team and republican government bodies. According to the representatives of the key stakeholders, the analytical assistance provided was indispensable for successful negotiations. The project proposals, annual plans and reports contained references to the requested analytical materials which were "assigned" or "agreed" by the key stakeholders. Annual work plans contained references to the requests of the key stakeholders. The interviews and the visit to the Project office confirmed that the Project Team systematically deals with feedback from beneficiaries and requests from stakeholders. The PSC minutes reflected discussions on requests for relevant thematic studies.

Over 70 countries were analysed<sup>50</sup>. The dynamics of trade (bilateral, regional) were presented. The first analytical materials dealt mostly with general issues but later became more specialised<sup>51</sup>.

Desk review showed that the analytical materials prepared in 2015–2018 focused *inter alia* on the commitments of Kazakhstan as an EAEU member state that became a WTO member in 2015, on trade in

<sup>49</sup> Based on the interviews.

<sup>50</sup> Based on the review of non-confidential analytical materials, including a printed version of the "Analysis of trade relations of the Republic of Belarus and other EAEU members with countries which are parties to the Working Group on accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO", by D. Popov, an external expert (2016, 90 p.).

<sup>51</sup> Based on the review of analytical materials listed in Annex 7.



goods and services, on SPS measures and technical regulations<sup>52</sup>. The analysis of the overview of Kazakhstan's commitments showed that "a unique aspect of Kazakhstan's rules commitments is the extent of accession-specific commitments "accepted" by Kazakhstan, which shall be applicable to and bind the EAEU and its member States on matters falling under the competence of the EAEU"<sup>53</sup>. Key stakeholders stated that the matter of the EAEU partners' specific commitments as well as other topics studied in analytical materials corresponded to the requests of the MFA and the members of the negotiating team.

Other analytical materials prepared during Phase IV concerned IP issues<sup>54</sup>. This analysis was important for the competent authority, namely the National Centre of Intellectual Property, in order to prepare necessary amendments to national legislation on IP matters, as it was included in the Legislation Action Plan<sup>55</sup>. The special law of Belarus on Copyright Law and Related Rights was revised in 2019 (Law no. 216-3)<sup>56</sup>. As was confirmed by interviewees, the amendments were based on the analysis and expertise accumulated within the Project.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health (Centre for Research and Applied Science in Hygiene) found useful the analysis on SPS measures and food safety<sup>57</sup>. The information was useful for further WTO negotiations, Working Party sessions<sup>58</sup> and work with the WHO.

Access to some of the materials was restricted for well-grounded reasons and they were available only to the relevant stakeholders. According to the stakeholder, the materials were high-quality and of relevance. Discussions related to EAEU obligations and national regulation on legal services arose within the Working Party and therefore these topics were included upon request from the negotiating team<sup>59</sup>. All above mentioned approves high relevance of the analytical and operational support to the requests and needs of national key stakeholders.

Thus, the Project drew upon the previous phases, as well as other countries' accession experience, was responsive to the needs and interests of the stakeholders and assisted the Government negotiation team with the impartial expert assessment of different scenarios, which was important for defining the position and the further unfolding of the negotiations. The feedback from the stakeholders regarding their needs was being monitored and reacted to promptly and fully.

## Coherence

The coherence criterion was measured as compatibility with other development programs and international economic cooperation projects in Belarus.

The Project Team interacted with three UNDP projects that reinforced each other in achieving development-related goals. The Project contributed to expert capacity-building which was important for the participants in several external projects of other international intergovernmental organisations. All in all, *project coherence is rated as highly satisfactory (HS)*. It was compatible with the priorities and ensured synergy with other development programs and international economic cooperation projects in Belarus.

### Finding 5. Interaction with other international projects

The Project intervention was notable for its holistic and systematic approach based on multi-stakeholder collaboration. The selected topics were useful in WTO-related aspects and were much needed within the line ministries and authorities, e.g. the analysis on SPS measures and food safety was useful for the WTO negotiations, as well for the sessions of the Working Party. At the same time, the competences and knowledge acquired were helpful for engaging with other relevant international instruments, as well (e.g. FAO codex alimentarius)<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Donor report on Phase IV, p.1, paras 1-4, and 7.

<sup>53</sup> Overview of Kazakhstan's commitments [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news15\\_e/kazakhannex\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/kazakhannex_e.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Report by the donor on Phase IV, p.1, para 5.

<sup>55</sup> As discussed during interviews with the key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

<sup>56</sup> National legal database ConsultantPlus (ilex.by).

<sup>57</sup> Donor report on Phase IV, p.1, para 5.

<sup>58</sup> Based on interviews.

<sup>59</sup> Based on Report on Phase IV, p. 3, para 2.1, referred to in the interviews.

<sup>60</sup> Based on interviews.

Stakeholders noted synergies between the Project and the programs and projects conducted within the framework or with the assistance of FAO, WIPO and the World Bank. They pointed out that the Project played a central role in WTO accession matters and also the general upgrade of expertise.

### **Finding 6. Coherence with other UNDP projects**

The Project was coherent with other UNDP projects and they complimented each other in positive regulatory changes, in raising awareness on trade opportunities and enabling networking and communication between the private sector and local authorities. The Project participated in the events of other projects to increase the awareness-raising effect and share synergies between different related projects<sup>61</sup>.

One of the coherent UNDP projects was the LED-project (“Local Economic Development”). The Project Teams shared their experience in defining the best channels for disseminating information about project events within the private sector. Given similar regional contexts, interaction between the projects was helpful in a range of practical situations as the teams supported each other in their work<sup>62</sup>.

The Project explored and leveraged synergies with the parallel UNDP – Russia Trust Fund project on the promotion of employment and self-employment in small and medium-sized towns in the Republic of Belarus, as was planned for in the Project Proposal for Phase V and eventually implemented<sup>63</sup>.

At a seminar held as part of another UNDP initiative on mediation and dedicated to the use of alternative dispute settlement of mechanisms related to the economic activity of legal entities in Belarus, the Project Manager shared his experience and knowledge on alternative dispute settlement in the framework of the WTO<sup>64</sup>.

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness was measured according to the extent to which Phases IV and V achieved (or were expected to achieve) their objectives and expected results, including any differing results for different groups.

Although COVID-19 made project implementation challenging, the expected results, outcomes and outputs were achieved, and the common strategy was carried out in accordance with its milestones and workstreams. The project objectives and outputs were clear, practice-oriented and substantial. The postponement of the final accession procedures had no adverse effects on the finalisation of the project results. Phase IV had shortcomings in terms of design (e.g. lack of results matrix, mostly narrative description of the planned activities) while planning and implementation were comprehensive. Design, project planning and monitoring approaches of the last phase were highly consistent, proved to be comprehensive and led to significant achievements.

The Project contributed to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and national development priorities. Analytical and operational support was rated highly satisfactory. Institutional and expert capacity-building and awareness-raising in WTO-related matters was designed and implemented successfully for a wide range of partners and beneficiaries. The Project ensured an internal and external networking framework and leveraged synergies between economic and external trade development and cooperation. The engagement of the stakeholders of the Project was sufficiently effective. The business community was actively involved in the last Phase, and Phase IV being less participatory, though still satisfactory; teaching professionals were also involved. The Project had some shortcomings in terms of the design and implementation of women empowerment mechanisms. Therefore, the effectiveness in different periods and for different groups slightly varied; *the overall assessment is highly satisfactory for Phase V (HS) and satisfactory for Phase IV (S).*

### **Finding 7. Negotiation progress**

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<sup>61</sup> QA Report 2021, p.21.

<sup>62</sup> Based on interviews.

<sup>63</sup> Proposal for Phase V, p.8, and based on interviews.

<sup>64</sup> Based on consultations and interviews with the UNDP team.

Analytical work was central for several reasons: WTO members submitted a lot of questions in writing, then sanctions interfered with the process, and the negotiations became busy at the same time as the Government reaffirmed a strong interest in continuing with and finalising accession to the WTO. The accession negotiations were supposed to finish by the middle of 2020. So, the process was very active and busy. Over a couple of years, more than 20 bilateral negotiations had been finalised, hundreds of documents translated, and dozens of analytical reports prepared by mostly external but also by national experts. The evaluated period demonstrated significant progress in this area. According to national experts and the negotiation team, the process had almost been finished with around 95–98% of the work on accession done. Draft final report of the Working Party was agreed upon, prepared and translated.

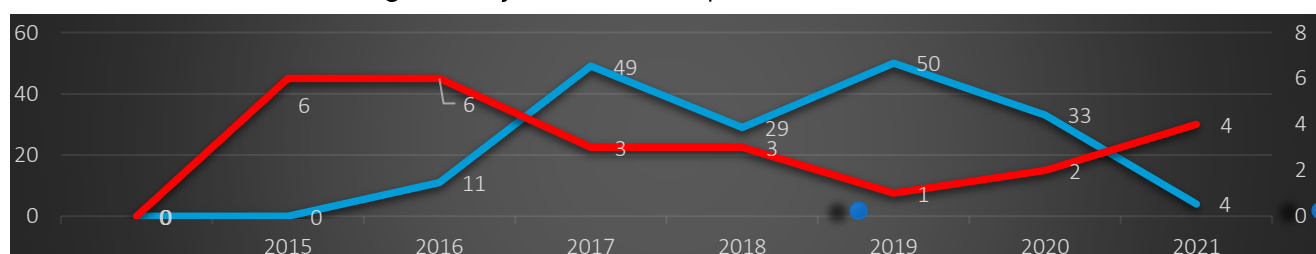
The Project facilitated prompt preparation of responses by Belarus, based on previously conducted in-depth studies and analytical reports. Analytical support for the preparation of the negotiating team for subsequent meetings of the Working Party was provided.

Therefore, the Project provided significant support for the intensification of the negotiation process and steady and productive work of the Interministerial Commission on Belarus' Accession to the WTO, which was responsible for formulating the negotiation position, as well as arranging and holding accession negotiations.

On 13 April 2022, the Delegation of Belarus circulated a communication (document WT/ACC/BLR/95) in response to two earlier communications submitted by groups of WTO Members (WT/GC/244 and WT/GC/246). Belarus recalled the technical progress achieved in its accession between 2016–2020 and indicated that, although its accession process had stalled, the country remained open for dialogue with interested Members<sup>65</sup>. Belarus pointed out the contribution of the Project, as well as UNDP activity in general, to its progress and the achievement of socio-economic goals<sup>66</sup>.

It let conclude, that the postponement (the “freeze”) of the final decision on accession did not have any negative effect on the internal and external work on improving access to the markets since all planned activities continued and were concluded. According to the stakeholders, they are absolutely ready to finalise the acceding procedures as soon as an ‘opportunity’ arises.

As mentioned above, operational assistance in negotiations (Output 1) included two types of activities: preparation of analytical materials and technical support in translation and interpretation. The number of analytical materials prepared throughout the project also indicates common tendencies of all accession procedures and the Project's ‘response’: more analytical materials were drafted in 2015 and 2016 (6 each year), fewer — during intense negotiations in 2017-2019 (one to three), and then more again — before the finalisation of draft Report of the Working Party (4) (see *Chart 1. Assistance to the negotiation process, p.41*). Accordingly, there were more documents for translation and requests for interpretation in the middle of the Project (also indicated in *Chart 1 in blue*) — up to 50 a year while in the beginning and towards the end there were significantly fewer such requests<sup>67</sup>.



**Chart 1 Assistance to the negotiation process.** The chart is dual vexed and reflects different scale of and correlation between translations and analytics. The timeline is horizontal (2015-2021).

<sup>65</sup> WTO Accessions Newsletter // <https://mailchi.mp/wto/wto-accessions-newsletter-n-108-may-2022-15444805?e=9c067e1dee>

<sup>66</sup> <https://mfa.gov.by/multilateral/organization/list/aeb2eeaa52fa575a.html>;  
<https://www.belta.by/society/view/peregovory-o-prisoedinenii-belarusi-k-vto-vyshli-na-zakljuchitelnuju-stadiju-484660-2022/>

<sup>67</sup> The exact numbers are provided in annual reports and were verified by referring to the final report on Phase IV and in discussions with the Project Team.



*The blue line indicates annual technical support provided by the project (number of translated documents – legal acts, draft Working Party Report, and interpretation) in the process of negotiation. The vertical numerical axis for the blue line is shown on the left.*

*The red line indicates annual quantity of analytical materials necessary for preparing to or finalizing negotiations. The vertical numerical axis for the red line is shown on the right.*

This dynamic demonstrates that the Project Team and the key beneficiaries, the negotiating team and the MFA, namely, conducted vigorous and coordinated work in line with the negotiation methodology. The design of the project did not contain clear indicators on this output, therefore the dynamics was assessed *ex post*, and the assessment proved its high quality and wide scope. Total number of legal acts translated in 2015-2018 exceeds 60 with a total of more than 2000 pages<sup>68</sup>. The quantitative and qualitative progress are described in the Map of achievements and recommendations (Annex 8). The dynamics of analytical and operational support by 2018 and by 2022 was shown in Table 5 (p.35).

In their interviews, project stakeholders pointed out the timeliness and promptness of this technical assistance. The national pool of translators was also involved, which contributed to strengthening national potential in this area as well. This, too, was confirmed by the interviewees<sup>69</sup>.

### **Finding 8. Expert capacity building and development**

The Project contributed to expanding and enriching national expertise potential. To enhance the expertise pillar of the Belarusian delegation and to facilitate the participation of national experts in WTO events, the Project ensured participation of the representatives of the government bodies, academia, education and business communities involved in the negotiations on Belarus' accession to the WTO in WTO events held in the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Spain, USA, Kenya, Australia and other countries. Experts pointed out that the mixed approach to studies – scientific and practical, theoretical and based on case-studies – was very efficient. A positive element of the expert capacity-building campaign was the interaction between the experts and the representatives of negotiation teams, as well as experts from other countries with extensive practical experience. Another especially useful aspect of engagement with international experts was that they mostly came from the same region and therefore had a profound understanding of the existing challenges.

Capacity-building among experts was designed as a separate outcome with specific activities planned and organised. The indicators of the expansion of national expertise can be generally assessed as demonstrating a steady positive improvement in quality and number of experts. Importantly, the expert pool that was formed in the beginning, later expanded and did not change drastically. This contributed to the development of sustainable expert potential.

National experts participated in informational and educational campaigns, spreading the knowledge received as part of training. Publications and analytical materials are also drafted by the national consolidated pool of experts.

The Project Team manages a list of experts indicating their specialisation and contact details. National government bodies and agencies learned about national expert potential and the experts interviewed expressed interest and firm certainty in the necessity to further interact with competent organs, regional bodies and business actors. Most of the experts are also members of academia and study WTO-related issues in their fundamental or applied research.

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<sup>68</sup> Para 2.2, p.3 of the Report on Phase IV results.

<sup>69</sup> Based on interviews.

Table 6. Events and training sessions<sup>70</sup>

Number of participants/ Number of events	2015 Prs/evts	2016 Prs/evts	2017 Prs/evts	2018 Prs/evts	2019 Prs/evts	2020 Prs/evts	2021 Prs/evts	2022 Prs/evts
WTO events <sup>71</sup>	2/1	Not avail./18	48*/9	24/8	26 /7	3 /1	12/3	7/2
Training sessions for officials	12/1	300*/4	500*/5	55/2	251/5	102/6	124/3	43/2
Expert training sessions	n/d**	10/1	n/d**	12/2	10/1	-	10/1	-

Table 6 provides yearly information on the number of events, training sessions and participants for 2015–2022. It clearly demonstrates the scope of activities and number of people involved. It also revealed some limitations of the data collected: non-disaggregated data led to generalised conclusions as to what categories of interministerial officials and experts participated in Phase IV. However, it proved the versatility and the multi-stakeholder format of the events, which was of high importance for reaching the project objectives.

These numbers demonstrate the negative effects that COVID-19 had on the frequency of capacity-building activities (see *Table 6. Events and training sessions*). The drop in 2020 across all categories was significant (compared to 2019): 8.5 times fewer WTO events, 2.5 times fewer training sessions, zero expert training sessions. However, the UNDP-driven training sessions and some events were moved online, e.g. according to the PSC minutes, annual reports 2020 and 2021, and the information from the Project Team, training sessions and workshops were organised via zoom. This enabled the continuation of a wider educational programme for state officials, including the negotiating team and experts in 2021. This conclusion is proved by relatively high numbers of participants in 2020 and 2021, though fewer than in 2019.

Initially external experts took part in informational campaigns and workshops, but the final Phase involved a lot more national experts who had upgraded their knowledge and skills during the Project<sup>72</sup>.

### Finding 9. International networking

The Project promoted external regional and bilateral partnerships. Close cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Commission, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, Centres for WTO matters from other countries gave practical guidance and, moreover, built a strong professional and expert network at a multilateral or bilateral level that spans across regions. Activities aimed at fostering partnerships were set out in the proposals and also planned at a later stage as part of both outputs – analytical support and the finalisation of national capacity-building activities. Therefore, it was, though an indirect, but a very important outcome of the Project. Among the institutions and bodies involved and listed in the reports were the International Trade Centre, the WTO Secretariat, the Centre of Expertise on the WTO (Russian Federation), the Centre for the WTO in Kazakhstan, the National Research University “High School of Economics” (Russian Federation), St. Petersburg University, the University of Barcelona, and others<sup>73</sup>. The interviewees pointed out the high level of expertise demonstrated by all external consultants, especially from the Centre of Expertise on the WTO (Russian Federation) and continuous interaction with them.

### Finding 10. Local stakeholders

According to the participant lists and annual reports, local authorities from all regions participated in the Project. Many regional bodies were represented by officials from different departments: according to the interviewees, most of the local officials participated once or twice as did their colleagues from other departments. It had a double effect. On the one hand, this enabled a wider dissemination of the information about the Project since a lot of new people came to the events and were introduced to WTO-

<sup>70</sup> Information was collected and cross-referenced based on annual reports by the donor, PSC minutes, Report on Phase IV. Please refer to Annex 11 for the full list of events by year with brief description.

\*Only a total number is available (together with national experts and/or other categories of participants).

\*\*n/d – not disaggregated by groups of participants

<sup>71</sup> Please refer to Annex 11.

<sup>72</sup> QA Report 2021, p.4; Interviews data collected.

<sup>73</sup> Proposal Phase V, p.27.

related matters. On the other hand, it meant less continuity in further implementation. It was discussed at the PSC meetings as part of the Project progress review and improvements were made if necessary. The interviews and consultations within the visit of the Evaluator to a regional seminar showed high interest in events and access to information on WTO-related matters, external trade and investments. According to relevant business community representatives, some local authorities are a highly effective channel of communication with regional business entities thanks to their direct contacts and the opportunities to exchange opinions. It is worth noting that local authorities received information that could be transmitted across the regions, assisted socio-economic progress on a municipal level and, therefore, directly contributed to the implementation of SDG 10 and the UNDP SP objectives. The line ministries representatives proved to be ready to spread further on all available information on trade and development capacities through regular contacts with local authorities, as they stressed in their public remarks.

## **Finding 11. Awareness-raising**

### *Business community*

Roundtable discussions and other awareness-raising events for the business community (professional associations) were organised and held at the regional level to disseminate information and to discuss the most relevant aspects of the accession process, status and impact, as well as the rules of operation within the WTO. There was at least one event per year for each of the six regions of Belarus. The “WTO Weeks” held since 2016 became a popular annual event. Every year, highly-qualified practitioners and experts, both national and international, visited all regional centres as part of an informational and educational campaign. Initially foreign experts were invited. Later on, the national ‘expert pool’ expanded and in 2020-2022 their role in providing expertise and spreading knowledge greatly increased<sup>74</sup>.

The main purpose of the events was to increase awareness among the Belarusian business community about the process and the status of Belarus’ accession to the WTO, as well as showcase the efficiency of the WTO’s tools in helping Belarusian businesses prepare for the accession and to work effectively within the WTO afterwards. The thematic dialogue was diverse in order to identify the most sensitive topics for the local businesses to be discussed before the accession of Belarus to the WTO: the status and consequences of WTO membership for companies and industries, the rules of operation in different sectors of the economy (e.g. according to annual reports, agriculture was in focus in 2018; tariff protection, accessing markets of third countries with Belarusian products, and increasing services export were discussed in 2021).

The main target audience for this type of event was the business community. However, the events were inclusive and participatory. Representatives of republican and regional authorities, companies, business associations, universities and academic institutions were always invited<sup>75</sup>.

In their interviews, most beneficiaries pointed out the importance of such seminars, the openness of the experts and an excellent opportunity for business-owners to meet decision-makers, practitioners and experts altogether and clarify the necessary matters, provide feedback and contribute to the agendas of future seminars. There was always an opportunity to discuss, ask questions and point out important topics<sup>76</sup>. Experts pointed out the participants’ increased awareness and understanding of the matters discussed. The “WTO Weeks” were well covered in the media, including official websites and news outlets<sup>77</sup>.

The number of participants in Phase V changed over time (see Table 7, which also shows a drop in 2020 due to COVID-19).

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<sup>74</sup> According to the interviews and information on the “WTO Weeks” speakers in the media: <https://svisgaz.by/news/regional-news/wto-weeks-in-belarus-2021-to-kick-off-on-21-april.html>, <https://export.by/news/wto-weeks-in-belarus-2021-to-kick-off-on-21-april>

<sup>75</sup> According to the lists of participants, data drawn from the annual reports and PSC meetings and the requested information from the Project Team.

<sup>76</sup> According to the opinions of the participants involved in interviews by sampling, and observation during the visit to the regional seminar on 12 May 2022.

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.undp.org/belarus/press-releases/wto-weeks-belarus-2018-time-determine-favorable-conditions-wto-accession>; <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-accession-to-wto-expected-to-facilitate-undp-projects-126267-2019/>; [https://twitter.com/undp\\_belarus/status/768428053701783553](https://twitter.com/undp_belarus/status/768428053701783553); <https://svisgaz.by/news/regional-news/wto-weeks-in-belarus-2021-to-kick-off-on-21-april.html>

There is no mention of a baseline number of events nor baseline number of participants in the Proposal. The only target indicated in the Proposal for this type of activity was the number of events. Since awareness can be measured based on the number of participants, not just events, it would have been useful to provide this information in the Proposal. The overall trend is very positive. Approximately 300 participants were involved in Phase IV (year-by-year values are not featured in the reports) and by the end of the Project the total number exceeded 2200.

*Table 7*  
*Number of Participants in annual “WTO Weeks” in the regions*

2018	2019	2020	2021
614	369	202	716

Close cooperation with ministries and state institutions, local authorities and the private sector supported public-private partnerships and private sector development. Briefings with and participation of the members of the negotiation team were highly effective for achieving the project objectives<sup>78</sup>. Based on feedback from the business community and the understanding of their needs as the end beneficiaries of all processes, as well as the gradual improvement of their understanding the WTO accession terms and consequences, there was a need for activities focusing on specific and specialised topics in order to take into account location-specific economic interests regarding trade development. This deep specialisation in activities is now in high demand according to the interviewees. They point out that they would be interested in taking part in more specialised activities as part of similar projects in the future if they focus on their trade interests and their sector of the economy.

Therefore, if a large-scale information campaign is a part of a profound preparatory work, this lowers risks associated with the accession and increases the potential benefits with regards to any external trade developments.

Publications played an important role in providing the background needed for the awareness-raising activities. The interviewees pointed out the following issues as the most useful:

- A manual for enterprises — “The World Trade Organization in the Interests of Enterprises” (2018) — by G.Turban, a national expert, was published and distributed. Representatives from the business community highlighted two main benefits of the publication in terms of awareness-raising: easy-to-understand and the ‘put-in-a-nutshell’ approach to the most important issues.
- The multilingual Glossary on WTO Terms and Definitions (2021) which was drafted, published and distributed as part of the Project, contributed significantly to knowledge dissemination and capacity-building. It contains over 300 terms currently used in the WTO and commonly used in the area of trade policy and international trade. Its target audience is professionals, experts and diplomats working in the area of international trade, as well as public officials, academics, students, teachers and the business community. It is unique in that it covers a wide range of terms in three languages. It can be a useful knowledge product ready for use in similar UNDP projects.

A range of analytical reports along with other planned publications were published and widely distributed. According to the beneficiaries, one of the most useful publications for professionals was “The Analysis of Trade Relations of the Republic of Belarus and other EAEU Members with Countries that are Parties to the Working Group on Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO” by D. Popov, an external expert (2016, 90 p.). The CD provided a printed version. This format was essential for wide dissemination.

*Teaching staff and academia* were invited to participate. They represented central and regional universities, both public and private, from different professional segments (mostly economists but also lawyers, agriculture and management specialists). Students had the possibility to attend online webinars and the interviewees recommended mainstreaming this practice. The knowledge products are available in the libraries at the universities where experts from academia work. Other universities could do the same should the Project publications be reissued. According to the 2021 annual report, five Belarusian universities launched specialised WTO courses, thus multiplying capacities and engaging young talents

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<sup>78</sup> QA report 2021



who would work in the WTO environment. According to the interviews, questionnaires and searches across their e-libraries, the Belarusian State University, the Belarusian Economic State University and Grodno State University, offer educational programs on WTO-related matters for BA and MA students across various subjects. Students and teaching staff had some opportunities to participate in the awareness-raising campaign (mostly the Minsk, Grodno and Mogilev regions<sup>79</sup>). State and private higher education entities took part as well. A common request from academia and teaching staff who were an important category of beneficiaries contributing to a sustainable development of the community of knowledge was to continue and to widen the opportunities for students to take part in roundtable discussions and seminars, especially through online means.

### Overall assessment of activities that raise awareness and develop expertise

Table 8 provides a comparison of the planned and reported numbers of different groups of participants in Phase V.

*Table 8. Project Performance Data:  
Number of participants that upgraded their qualification  
(Outputs 2 and 3 under Phase V, 2018–2022)*

		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
National experts	Project plan	2	2	2	10	0	16
	Project results report	24	18	3	12	7	64
Interministerial Commission	Project plan	30	30	20	10	10	100
	Project results report	34	243	102	54	15	448
Teaching staff, independent experts, specialists	Project plan	10	10	10	10* rescheduled from 2020	0	30
	Project results report	12	10	–* (10 in 2021)	10	0	32

\*Due to restrictions related to COVID-19 training and some events were postponed until 2021.

Highlighted in yellow are the cases where the results exceeded the target number by a factor of two or more. This discrepancy between target numbers and the outcome mostly occurred among the representatives of the Interministerial commission and experts. At the same time, financial reports for this period show consistent data. Therefore, this difference in numbers testifies to the shortcomings in planning or generalisations in calculating the results. If unique beneficiaries participate in a range of activities, they should be counted as one person.

General map of achievements (designed output/indicator/result achieved) is provided in Table 9. It is built upon the Project Proposal and contains all outputs, indicated targets and the results achieved. A correlation to the relevant recommendations is given in the Map of achievements and recommendations (Annex 8).

*Table 9  
“Expected immediate project outputs”<sup>80</sup> (Phase V)*

No	Output/target	Indicators in plans and/or reports	Results achieved
1	Carrying out of the required analytical work on the assessment of potential impacts of WTO accession on Belarus’ economy (individual sectors) and the development of potential scenarios for minimising and preventing negative impacts of WTO accession and identification of options. N/a	Periodicity of analytical work, consideration of the requests and promptness of analytical materials	Annual involvement on defined topics upon request, incl. sectoral or macroregional context, in a timely and professional manner. Minimum 10.

<sup>79</sup> The number is N/A. Information provided in an interview.

<sup>80</sup> As set forth in the Project Proposal p. 4.

No	Output/target	Indicators in plans and/or reports	Results achieved
2	Translation of the normative legal acts and other documents from/into English/Russian; simultaneous translation at bilateral and multilateral negotiations; and to organise access to economic and legal databases. n/a	Number of translations Access to economic and legal databases	100+ translations (minimum 116). Incl. draft WG Report, and interpretation at several rounds of negotiations, all upon request, in a timely and operational manner. Economic and legal database access partially satisfied (specialists taught how to work with the database, access to software not provided).
3	Establishment of a National Centre for WTO (the output will be financed by the Government of the Republic of Belarus).	Establishment	Established in December 2021.
4	Participation of representatives of government bodies, academia, education and business community in WTO events	Number of events and participants; variety of beneficiaries	44 WTO events (high-level meetings, conferences, roundtable discussions under the aegis of the WTO and/or with the participation of WTO representatives).
5	Improving competence of up to 100 members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus' Accession to the WTO directly involved in the negotiation process	Number and efficiency	100+ (433) and highly efficient. Competences used in the WTO and RTA negotiations
6	At least 30 independent experts, teaching staff and specialists offering WTO-related counselling and training will improve qualifications	Number of participants	30+ (32). Certificates of qualification upgrading issued.
7	High level of awareness on the most relevant aspects of the process, status and impacts of WTO accession, and the rules of operation within WTO for the regional business community; at least 1000 people participated in the Project activities	Number of events and participants	Annual WTO Week (roundtable discussion in all regions) gathering 614 prs (6 events) in 2018, 369 prs (6 events) in 2019, 202 prs (4 events) in 2020, 716 prs (6 events) in 2021. In Phase V a total of 1091 prs in 22 events.

The results matrix on annual basis as it is designed in the project proposal is attached to the evaluation to follow implementation of the results framework (Annex 9).

In most cases the actual numbers for the reported years correspond to the target values. However, some of the actual numbers significantly overcome the targets (by a factor of two or more). It highlights one of the design and management challenges: planning for a feasible result and achieving the set target<sup>81</sup>. It is clear that there should be a unified matrix of values, e.g. should the project design indicate 'unique beneficiaries' of an activity, the result should also be calculated for 'unique beneficiaries', otherwise the results turn out to be generalised and therefore not validated. However, there is another possible explanation for the inconsistency in numbers, this time of positive nature: the Project reached more beneficiaries through online participation (in 2020 and later on) and engagement with the stakeholders improved, etc. The factors that influenced the calculation of direct or indirect beneficiaries should be monitored.

## Finding 12. National WTO Centre

The National WTO Centre was inaugurated on 9 December 2021, at the National Centre for Marketing and Price Study of the MFA. A launch of the National WTO Information Centre as a part of the capacity-building strategy was planned and fulfilled by the implementing partner and could be defined as a relatively separate initiative, though connected to all other activities. Due legal and institutional

<sup>81</sup> Data on project proposal and project progress is in Figures 4, 5.

comparative analysis was undertaken regarding the form and institutional affiliation of such a centre<sup>82</sup>. The key interviewees noted and particularly pointed out the special consolidating and coordinating role of the Centre for the development of any activities within and between stakeholders and beneficiaries in the future, as well as its particular relevance in this respect.

### **Finding 13. Visibility of the Project**

The visibility of the Project was mainstreamed in the very last years of its implementation, and this was successful. This was a supplementary activity, though a very important one for, among other things, raising awareness about the Project. Both in 2020 and 2021 over 50 publications, press releases and online articles were released (according to the narrative reports and an additional search in publicly available online sources). However, there is no one-stop-shop online resource covering the progress of the project, which could be helpful for the visibility of the results, knowledge dissemination and awareness-raising. Some links to UNDP materials on the Project are broken (e.g. [https://www.undp.org/ru/content/belarus/ru/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction/PPP1](https://www.undp.org/ru/content/belarus/ru/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/PPP1)).

The media were not a target group in most workstreams. They were, however, engaged in their professional capacity in a range of events.

UNDP CO, the MFA of Belarus and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus websites contain separate pages dedicated to the Project at [http://www.by.undp.org/content/belarus/ru/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction/PPP1.html](http://www.by.undp.org/content/belarus/ru/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/PPP1.html), <http://mfa.gov.by/export/wto/assistance/>, and <http://economy.gov.by/ru/peregovory-ru/>.

Project press releases were regularly published on websites and the social media, in particular: [the UNDP in Belarus website](#), [the UNDP in Belarus facebook page](#), [UNDP in Belarus twitter page](#)<sup>83</sup>. The estimated number of news and other media pieces where project was featured in 2018-2021 was 191<sup>84</sup>.

### **Efficiency**

Project efficiency was measured as the extent to which the Project was able to reach the results in a financially efficient and timely way.

*The overall assessment of the financial and human resources management, as well as the monitoring system is satisfactory in Phase IV (S) and highly satisfactory in Phase V (HS).*

Flexibility needed due to COVID-19 limitations was very good, and online participation as soon as the pandemic started gave high results in terms of a wider dissemination of the results and involvement as well as proved to be cost-effective. Online formats can be used as a tool on a regular basis. Time management was satisfactory and could have been more productive if the finalisation of the results had been planned for earlier dates. The project management structure was efficient in generating the expected results, the chosen project implementation strategy proved to be efficient and cost-effective; all the resources were allocated strategically and balanced through the project in the Phase V, multiple monitoring mechanisms were helpful in effective implementation. Project delivery in Phase 4 in 2015-2016 was below the expected target, however, in Phase V more rigorous planning and efficient communication with the MFA helped to shorten the gap.

### **Finding 14. Financial planning and implementation**

The evaluation has shown that the Project design was economically proven and the implementation mostly corresponded with the plans with some transfer to other periods or budget lines due to circumstances. The delivered and planned budgets were almost equal in the final stage, with a minor inconsistency. However, budget planning in Phase IV was less consistent. The budget planning, implementation and monitoring in Phase V is well balanced.

According to the final report, the residual budget under Phase IV stood at 12,935.92, out of which 10,000.00 was not used for the final evaluation due to the transfer to Phase V; 958.22 was left in the administrative budget; and the planned budget for the participation of national experts in WTO events exceeded the de-facto expenditure by 1,977.70.

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<sup>82</sup> Annual Narrative and Financial Report 2019, p. 5; Annual Narrative and Financial Report 2020, p.4.

<sup>83</sup> Annual Report 2021, para. 8 p. 11

<sup>84</sup> Annual Report 2021, p. 22

The final financial report for Phase V is not available at the moment of evaluation. Therefore, the planned and actual budget was evaluated based on the annual reports (see disaggregated data in Table 10). The latest financial reporting appeared in the 2021 annual report and the progress for Phase V was as follows:

*Table 10  
Financial progress by outputs, Phase V*

	Operational support for the negotiation process	Finalisation of national capacity-building	Awareness-raising	Project management and technical support	Total
Budgeted for the entire project	106,220.00	295,420.69	71,620.00	226,219.77	775,438.90 Incl. GMS 8%
Delivered since the start of the project	80%	91%	90%	86%	88%

Taking into account that by the end of 2021, 4 out of 4.5 years of the Project had passed, the remaining 12% can be considered reasonably planned for the last 6 months of the Project. Therefore, the budget is balanced annually, and it is strategically structured for different activities similarly in a balanced way (as the annual working plans showed) and implemented efficiently according to the planned with minor fluctuations (as the financial part of the annual reports showed). The key stakeholders reported no obstacles in financing.

*Table 11  
Annual financial target and progress (delivered)<sup>85</sup>*

	2015	2016	2017*	2018	2019	2020	2021
Budgeted	161,676.0	339,660.00	193,539.00/1 61,201.00 and 27,749.55 for 2018	196,153.92	231,630.50	177,081.13	160,164.00
Delivered	66,303.98	274,915.72	218,473.97	196,727.27	221,872.78	93,297.34	149,861.43

\*In July 2017, the annual work plan was amended. In January–March 2018 (last months of Phase IV), 27,749.55 were allocated.

Overall, the financial reports do not always correspond with the budget lines as outlined in the approved work plans (Table 11): budgeted v. actual budgets varied in 2015-2017 and then again in 2020. As it is clarified in the PSC minutes and as confirmed by the managing team, the situations where result delivery was expected to be slightly delayed were discussed within the PSC and the measures to overcome the obstacles to due implementation were approved consensually<sup>86</sup>. The financial resources were reallocated where necessary: in 2016, 2017, and during the COVID-19 period (2020).

The 2015 discrepancy was explained by budget savings in connection with expert visits, as well as the non-completion of one of the analytical materials initially planned for and the absence of the translation requested. As regards the latter and turning back to Chart 1, p. 41, it is yet another proof of interdependence and correlation of analytical and translation work within this type of project. Therefore, in the beginning, there is no need to plan for equally high expenditure for both activities. Translations become more necessary in the third and consequent years, when the preliminary analytical work is already finished. Project design should take such dependencies into consideration.

In 2016, the Project Manager was reappointed. As advised in the PSC minutes for 2015, the Project Team established more close contacts with the national implementing partner; representatives of both of them reported on highly efficient cooperation within the Project and the team in the interviews. The plans and implementation schedule were slightly shifted in 2016-2017 for a couple of months, causing a shift in delivering the budgets. The results for 2016 showed fewer inconsistencies in budget lines. Finally, by the end of Phase IV all planned resources were delivered and all the tasks fulfilled successfully.

<sup>85</sup> Data from project proposals, annual work plans and annual project financial progress reports (reports by the donor).

<sup>86</sup> PSC minutes.



COVID-19 in 2020 presented an extraordinary situation for budget implementation for several reasons: postponement — reallocation of resources for later periods, and reshaping — changing modes of activities, switching to online. The overall influence of the force-majeure situation on budget implementation was handled efficiently, and Phase V budget was delivered in due course.

The Project shared the costs associated with the premises with other projects — in order to ensure cost efficiency gains. The value for money principle was respected in procurements, as the reports showed and the respondents proved<sup>87</sup>.

#### **Finding 15. Interference and adaptiveness**

COVID-19 influenced the timeline of the Project. All outputs and outcomes were achieved, with some adjustments in terms of the time of implementation: the Project was extended for a total of 18 months. The prolongation of Phase V mitigated the negative effects of the context, and the results are satisfactory. The additional period was used to hold the rescheduled events (as annual report 2020 indicated trainings and regional seminars had been postponed to 2021, p. 11-12) and organise some new ones (Table 12). Flexible meetings formats were used, allowing the same number of activities and with a higher overall participation rate.

Table 12. Information campaign in Phase V

Number of conducted information campaigns	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
Project plan	6	6	6	4	18
Project results report	6	6	4* (2 rescheduled for 2021)	6	18

Therefore, the Project was successful despite the challenges associated with the pandemic. A couple of activities, namely the final conference and the presentation on the outcomes of the Project are scheduled for the very end of June 2022 and, due to that, are out of the scope of this evaluation.

Changes in the institutional framework: in 2019, the composition of the Interministerial Commission was renewed and, although it was highlighted in the Risk Logs, it did not delay implementation. The changes to the Project Team that took place in 2016 had, as it was mentioned above, a positive effect.

The Project was adaptive to the requests and needs of the key stakeholders. There were different ways to provide feedback (questionnaires, consultations, PSC discussions) and different tools were used to monitor project implementation (reports within PSC, a monitoring schedule plan was activated in ATLAS and updated regularly, risk log was activated and updated). The agenda of events would sometimes be modified according to requests (e.g., for that reason, agriculture-related issues were in the spotlight in 2018).

#### **Finding 16. Management**

Managerial efficiency is deemed highly satisfactory based on the analysis of the progress in the reports, the quality of planning, risks management, and reporting. Annual reports become better- structured and more detailed with each year and clearly reflect the systemic integration of new organisational competences. The overall perception of the interviewees, especially those who participated in the previous phases of the Project, reflects a positive trend across the lifecycle of the project and high efficiency of the project management and the Project Manager, in particular.

The Project was implemented under the National Implementation Modality with the support of the UNDP Country Office and in accordance with the UNDP rules and procedures. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus acted as the Implementing Partner of the Project. The MFA is ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of the project activities, the continuity of the achieved results as well as reporting to the government authorities of the Republic of Belarus. The PSC was established to provide oversight and strategic advice on the implementation of the Project. The PSC was ultimately responsible for making sure that the Project remained on course to deliver the desired results.

<sup>87</sup> QA Report 2021, p.21.

The establishment of the PSC and its regular sessions were an effective instrument that served many purposes. As it can be concluded from the agenda and the PSC minutes, it was deeply involved in scheduling and planning, monitoring and coherent rescheduling. It included representatives of different groups (Table 4, p. 21) and, therefore, assisted in multi-interest tracking and networking, which was confirmed by the PSC participants. From the PSC minutes and decisions, as well as the interviews it can be concluded that the Project used the adaptive approach in response to the changing environment, the plans were regularly reviewed to embrace the needed adjustments, and COVID-19 response measures were implemented at the request of the national partners and upon the approval of the donor.

The team composition appears to be optimal and cost-efficient: one Project Manager and one Administrative Assistant both working full-time. The day-to-day management and implementation of the Project were carried out by the Project Team. Project Manager was primarily responsible for the daily project management and decision-making, coordination of the Project activities, maintaining relationships with the Project's stakeholders, building partnerships and supervising the Project Team. Administrative and Finance Assistant was providing administrative and logistical support, dealt with the recruitment processes, as well as ensured proper accounting, financial monitoring and reporting. Additional specialised expertise was sourced by the Project Team through short-term contracts and assignments.

Stakeholders characterised communication as professional and prompt, information delivery — as correct and smooth. Therefore, management and communication efficiency is deemed highly satisfactory.

#### **Finding 17. Monitoring, risks assessment, quality assurance**

Monitoring was conducted on a regular basis. Within PSC it took place at least twice a year<sup>88</sup>; annual and mid-year donor reports contained full narrative and financial information in accordance with the outputs and the outcomes set forth in the Project proposals. A sound monitoring plan was elaborated for Phase V. It included 7 monitoring activities (result progress tracking, risk log, “learn and inform” from other projects, quality assurance, internal data review, project report, project review by PSC).

Risk logs were supposed to be held quarterly<sup>89</sup>, and were held two to three times a year<sup>90</sup> due to changes in corporate policy and in coordination with the UNDP office. However, the progress and indicators were clear-cut. The risks were clarified and marked in accordance with the situation, e.g. changes in the Interministerial Commission were reflected in due time (in 2018) as a possible cause of delay in the project activities, monitored throughout those six months and then completed and tagged as “no adverse effects”.

Quality assurance reports were submitted yearly (after 2018 every other year as prescribed by corporate policy)<sup>91</sup> and reflected, *inter alia*, satisfactory risk monitoring. It contained analysis into the achievement of specific outputs and implemented activities. Internal monitoring included reviewing of questionnaires, visits to project sites<sup>92</sup> and financial reporting<sup>93</sup>.

#### **Gender equality**

The evaluation addressed gender equality and women empowerment with regard to the project design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of all the main outputs.

*The overall assessment regarding gender equality is moderately satisfactory (MS): project implementation demonstrated adherence to gender balanced policies and women empowerment,*

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<sup>88</sup> As it is seen from the PSC minutes, regular reporting was effective. It was always done according to the outputs and the planned activities. The information in the PSC minutes and donor reports, as well as in quality assurance reports was compatible. Cross-verification of different sources from the revised documents (listed in Annex 4) led to the same results and conclusions.

<sup>89</sup> Project Document Template, Phase V, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Risk Log, Phase V.

<sup>91</sup> Based on consultations with the UNDP office.

<sup>92</sup> According to an interview.

<sup>93</sup> Held annually in the form of financial reports, combined delivery reports annexed to annual reports.

however, design and planning stages lacked attention to gender and women empowerment using strictly quantitative indicators in results matrix.

### Finding 18 Gender mainstreaming

Gender indicators were not always considered at the design stage or accounted for during implementation. The gender quantitative indicator was used in the Phase V design and monitoring. Within Phase IV, it was implied but not clearly indicated. Annual work plans did not include gender indicators.

The implementation of the Project was gender-balanced, and the Project was free of any forms of gender discrimination, according to the interviewees. In general, the percentage of men and women participating in the events was equal. However, in different groups of stakeholders the percentage of men and women varied (see Table 13).

Table 13  
Participants data disaggregated by gender<sup>94</sup>

Female/Male participants	2018 F/M	2019 F/M	2020 F/M	2021 F/M	2022(till June 30) F/M
WTO events	8 / 16	12/14	1/2	1/11	2/5
Training sessions for officials	27/30	136/95	50/52	0/4	9/6
Expert training sessions	8/4	8/2	- <i>postponed (COVID19)</i>	8/2	- <i>not planned</i>
WTO Weeks and seminars	315/299	193/176	122/80	422/398	18/10
Total, participants	358/349	349/387	173/134	431 / 415	29/21
Total, %	50,63%   49,37%	47,42%   52,58%	56,35%   43,65%	50,95%   49,05%	58%   42 %

Data disaggregated by gender was not always available. It was not available for Phase IV. Gender markers were taken into consideration in the formulation of outputs in the Proposal for Phase V. Gender data was partially reflected in the reports regarding Phase V. Additional data disaggregated by gender was requested and provided by the Project Team after the interviews.

According to the key stakeholders, the gender aspect was irrelevant for the output “Operational support for the negotiation process on Belarus’ accession to the WTO (Gen2)” because of the gender-neutral and competency-based approach to the negotiation team. All interviewees pointed out that there was no gender discrimination in any aspects of accession and/or negotiation process, nor did they notice any gender discrimination in the analytical materials. At least 50% of the analytical materials were prepared by female experts<sup>95</sup>. No evidence was found that gender analysis had been undertaken in the analytical materials, and project design did not consider those aspects. The language of the publications is gender neutral<sup>96</sup>.

The output “Finalisation of national capacity-building in preparation of the country for subsequent membership in the WTO (Gen 2)” was partially considered within the Project from the gender perspective. Data review (information from annual reports cross-validated by final reports) demonstrates an overall gender balance (52,67% of women and 47,33% of men in 2018-2022 in total, please refer to Table 13 for full data).

The output “Raising awareness of the business community about the rules of work in the context of Belarus’ membership in the WTO (Gen 2)” was gender balanced. It is supported by the data in Table 13, as well as by the comments of the key stakeholders and beneficiaries. Quality Assurance reports had a range of gender indicators and contained reference to gender issues: “The Project Team has made

<sup>94</sup> Collected via donor reports, annual reports, additional disaggregated data requested from the Project Team and based on the participants lists.

<sup>95</sup> Based on annual reports.

<sup>96</sup> “The WTO Terms Glossary” (one of the outputs in Phase V) and “Analysis of trade relations of the Republic of Belarus, EAEU member states and Members of the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to the WTO” (one of the outputs of Phase IV) were reviewed as chosen by sampling.

efforts to engage women in the project-related discussions with target groups and beneficiaries, including inviting them as speakers and international or national experts to take the lead during most seminars held in Belarus on the issues related to the WTO accession. According to the lists of participants, the general practice is that no less than 55% of project events participants are women<sup>97</sup>. In 2021, it was indicated that the Project did not systematically analyse the impact of project activities on gender-related challenges<sup>98</sup>.

The Project Team composition was gender-balanced (50%/50%). The PSC membership was equal for men and women. Participation, voting, exercise of any other rights were equal and non-discriminatory, as the minutes' analysis and review proved. The approach used within the Project was characterised by the respondents as gender-neutral, competency/knowledge-based.

## Human rights

To evaluate the extent to which the Project applied a human rights-based approach, the design, implementation and monitoring were addressed. General human rights-based approach was analysed and the extent to which special attention was paid to persons with disabilities, women, as well as disadvantaged and marginalised groups was assessed in design, implementation and monitoring stages. The results proved consideration of vulnerable groups in Phase V project design, though less attention in implementation; inclusiveness and participatory approach was implemented and monitored as a guarantee for social and economic rights. *The overall assessment against this criterion is satisfactory (S).*

### Finding 19

Phase IV project documents did not contain any defined human rights indicators. The proposal for Phase V mentioned a human rights-based approach to vulnerable groups, supported "business and human rights principles"<sup>99</sup>. The indicators for this criterion, which had been mentioned at the project design stage, were reflected neither at the implementation, nor at the monitoring stages: e.g., "indicator-related data... disaggregated by sex, age, and type of vulnerability, which enable detection of the underlying factors of the multiple vulnerabilities among the groups targeted within the Project" were only mentioned in the Project Document for Phase V.<sup>100</sup> However, general impact was considered, e.g. in QA report 2021 "local priorities" were indicated as being targeted through beneficiaries feedback<sup>101</sup>.

Interviews provided information on the following aspects:

- approach to the event organisation, including venue selection, included consideration of the availability of necessary options for people with special needs;
- mode of communication with all the participants, beneficiaries, and partners was in conformity with the Ethical Code and human rights oriented UNDP policy;
- choice of representatives for the beneficiaries, participants, and external experts was based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights;
- information accessibility for people with special needs was considered partially: no special format was planned or implemented, though all publications are ready to be delivered for interested parties (digital platform could be an option to be discussed in future projects).

Therefore, vulnerable or marginalised groups were specifically targeted in project design, but less coherently observed in implementation.

However, the Project ensured respect for equal social and economic rights. This was reflected in the level of representation of state and privately owned companies among the participants of the WTO Weeks, participation of state and private high education universities in seminars and training sessions<sup>102</sup>. According to the interviewees, the general approach was bias-free.

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<sup>97</sup> Quality Assurance Report 2016, p.4, para.6. The same information contained in the Quality Assurance reports 2017-2021, with variations from 50% to 55%.

<sup>98</sup> Quality Assurance Report 2021, para.6, p.11.

<sup>99</sup> Project Document Template. Phase V, p.29

<sup>100</sup> Project Document Template. Phase V, p. 11.

<sup>101</sup> Quality Assurance Report 2021, para 3, p.5

<sup>102</sup> Information from the lists of participants in the consultations.



A participatory approach to project management (the PSC included different target groups and used a flexible and democratic decision-making process) and activities (wide-scale and mixed groups, open communication) endorsed the human development aspects, e.g., according to the latest QA Report (2021), the WTO Weeks helped to better understand some points of concern raised by the local business community (e.g. licensing of certain services, allowed subsidies, support for private farmers under the WTO) and to plan their extensive coverage within the activity of the Interministerial Commission, providing for the protection of economic and social rights of private sector entities. Therefore, adherence to participatory approach and involvement as guaranteeing social and economic rights was implemented and monitored thoroughly.

## Sustainability

The sustainability criterion was measured as the likelihood for the continuation of the net benefits of Phases IV and V beyond the end of the Project.

In this respect, the results of the evaluation showed that the Project demonstrated good potential for sustainability based on the combination of the intervention and the exit strategy. Scaling-up effect is feasible at the regional level as the Project can serve as an example for other regional initiatives in external trade facilitation. *The project results are likely sustainable (LS).*

### **Finding 20. Stable institutional and legal framework for professional and expert communication, deepened wide interest**

The legal and institutional frameworks stayed stable and are functioning. The key stakeholders support the Project's long-term objectives, as was reaffirmed at the high-level meeting<sup>103</sup> held during the regional seminar that the Consultant observed, as well as in the interviews conducted within the Project.

Networking was highly fruitful for building a systemic and self-sustained mechanism within the republican governmental institutions, among the negotiators and the 'expert pool'<sup>104</sup>. A national-level pool of professionals and experts was created with national experts providing full expertise and participating as speakers in the last information campaigns<sup>105</sup>. The network is both institutionally, professionally and personally supported and interconnected, as it can be concluded from the interviews and consultations.

Lead institutions have gained access to methodological and information capacities and a common institutional framework to continue working on issues related to multilateral trade and cooperation. The experience and knowledge gained during the Project proved essential for Belarus' drafting and conclusion of bilateral RTAs on services. Universities were involved and started to integrate WTO-related programs into their educational process: "Thanks to this activity, Belarusian experts launched special WTO courses in five Belarusian universities, thus multiplying capacities and engaging young talents who will work in the WTO environment"<sup>106</sup>. Therefore, the Project's benefits widened the scope and enabled a scaling-up effect. However, financial support and information coordination, as well as providing access to information about developments on the topic will be important to overcome risks of suspension of WTO studies, educational and research activities, and reducing interaction of expert community on WTO-related issues.

### **Finding 21. A sample track**

The experience gained within the Project, including activity mapping, the creation of an 'expert pool' and the general understanding of the main needs and challenges of such kinds of projects become an example (a sample track) and serve as good advice for other similar processes within the region that aim at facilitating external trade and cooperation.

According to the interviewees, the same methodology in project design and implementation regarding financial and technical assistance is applicable to Uzbekistan. This country is located in the CIS region

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<sup>103</sup> On 20 April 2021, during his visit to Switzerland, Minister of foreign affairs V. Makei met with Director General of the WTO, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and confirmed Belarus' intention to continue its work on the completion of the negotiations on the country's accession to the WTO.

<sup>104</sup> Data based on interviews.

<sup>105</sup> Report 2021, p.9.

<sup>106</sup> Based on interviews, Report 2021, p. 8.

and is currently an acceding state to the WTO<sup>107</sup>. Indeed, ahead of the 5th Working Party meeting on the accession of Uzbekistan to the WTO scheduled for 21–22 June 2022, the UNDP together with the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade organised a five-day capacity-building event with key government agencies of Uzbekistan involved in the WTO accession process to learn about Belarus' experience in preparing for accession to the WTO. A series of consultations were organised between 31 May and 4 June 2022 in Tashkent, involving an international expert, Ms. Volha Kazakevich, a former member of the WTO accession team of Belarus. In total, ten experience sharing meetings were held.

The UNDP in Belarus became the first country office in the world to start taking part in supporting the country in its accession to the WTO. Based on this experience, several other UNDP country offices have launched similar projects.

## **Finding 22. National WTO Centre**

The National WTO Centre may become the successor to the Project and ensure sustainability of the achievements and outcomes.

During the closing meeting for regional representatives, the participants stressed the need for further coordination, the importance of briefings, seminars and meetings on WTO-related matters. Expert support, prompt and detailed information on external economic relations and opportunities for cooperation and/or mechanisms that help protect interests are essential for further development. Business actors will especially need information and general consultancy.

Based on the official press release and interviews with the stakeholders, the following information on the mandate and future activities of the Centre has been accumulated. At the initial stage, the Centre's work is focused on advising Belarusian business entities on a wide range of issues related to the country's accession to the WTO. Subsequently, the Centre will provide assistance regarding the membership of the Republic of Belarus in the WTO; analyse the economic consequences of the accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO; develop recommendations for improving the legislation of the Republic of Belarus in the field of foreign trade, taking into account the provisions of the key WTO agreements; provide expert support in the development of negotiation positions for the international trade talks and draft international economic agreements; study the problems related to accessing foreign markets and the resolution of international trade disputes; form the national pool of experts on trade policy and WTO law in order to reduce the dependence of the Republic of Belarus on foreign consultants and organisations in providing expert and legal support on issues related to the resolution of disputes within the WTO; provide expert support for the participation of the Republic of Belarus in the activities of the WTO working bodies. These aspects cover almost all the workstreams<sup>108</sup> that were targeted within the Project and need support in the future.

According to the stakeholders, they intend to transfer all information about the participants, experts<sup>109</sup>, and programs of the events within the Project from the Project Team to the management of the Centre. Therefore, the Centre can serve as the successor to the achievements and the activities of the Project ensuring its continuity.

Overall, it can be concluded that the Project has created the prerequisites for the sustainability of its results. Both the institutional and legal frameworks are fully ready for the continuation and development of the strands of work that the Project focused on. Still, a finalising conference or meeting of all stakeholders is necessary to better clarify how some connections and activities can be leveraged as part of a long-term strategy.

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<sup>107</sup> The Uzbekistan negotiation team on WTO accession holds experience sharing meetings on Belarus' WTO accession journey // <https://www.undp.org/uzbekistan/news/uzbekistan-negotiation-team-wto-accession-holds-experience-sharing-meetings-belarus%E2%80%99wto-accession-journey>

<sup>108</sup> Translation and interpretation as a part of professional technical assistance are not mentioned because the intense negotiation-related technical assistance is over, including the translation of the draft Working Party Report. However, the Centre is functioning within the MFA, and the MFA has all the necessary technical and professional capacities. According to the information received from the stakeholders, national translators are now experienced in WTO matters, as they have been taking part in the meetings during the Project. Therefore, if necessary, this workstream will be operational.

<sup>109</sup> The participant and expert 'database' includes only the information that they shared deliberately, indicated in the lists of participants (name, affiliation, phone number, and email).



To make its work more accessible for regional businesses, the Project Team recommended to open branches of the National World Trade Organization Centre in each region of the country<sup>110</sup>.

The newly drafted project “Assisting Commerce Development in Belarus” was presented at the UNDP-MFA meeting. It would allow to ensure the continuity of the WTO project outcomes and support Belarus in the key issues of foreign trade development, reinforce the country’s trade capacity, improve the competitive edge of its manufacturing industry and access of Belarusian products to international markets, expand the private sector’s manufacturing capacity and support it in order to more efficiently mitigate the effects and provide for a better rehabilitation after the crisis caused by the COVID-19-pandemic<sup>111</sup>.

## VII. Conclusions

The project has had a high level of relevance to global and country objectives, national priorities and programs that is evidenced by project proposals, annual reports and quality assurance reports and referenced by key stakeholders. It was compatible with the UNDP priorities and ensured synergy with other development programs and international economic cooperation projects in Belarus.

Although project implementation has been challenged by COVID 19 there is a firm conclusion based on evidence that the expected results, outcomes and outputs have been achieved and the common strategy fulfilled in its milestones and workstreams. Postponement of the final accession procedures has had no adverse effects for finalization of the project results. Effectiveness of the project varied dependent on the Phase and targeted groups.

The Project Phase IV proposal had a strong narrative, however, there were some shortcomings in its indicative design: lack of results matrix, undefined indicators, which influenced the implementation negatively relating to disaggregated data collection, and implementation of the planned events in the first year (2015). Design, project planning and monitoring approaches of the last phase proved comprehensive and feasible achievements.

All outputs of the project have been achieved and proven success of the project’s strategy. Operational and analytical support become indispensable for effective negotiations, which intensified within the project. National capacity building (improvement of competences and expertise, internal and external networking, establishment of the National WTO Center), information campaign in different regions with local involvement and overall participatory approach resulted highly satisfactory. However, some groups as vulnerable persons, women were supposed to be more clearly targeted that led to overall satisfactory results with some shortcomings. Business community and academia were regarded more in the last phase and would have been ready to be involved in specialized activities widely.

UNDP role as an integrator has proven efficient in national and international context. Building institutional and expert capacity and awareness-raising on the WTO-related matters have been designed and implemented successfully for a wide range of partners and beneficiaries, that has ensured an internal and external networking frame and leveraged a synergy for economic and external trade development and cooperation. Involvement of a wide circle of beneficiaries on early stages to ensure awareness-raising has become a part of general UNDP inclusive strategy on “leave no one behind”.

All the resources were allocated strategically and balanced through the project in the Phase V, multiple monitoring mechanisms were helpful in highly effective implementation. Little shortcomings in budget planning and implementation in the beginning of Phase IV were overcome and effectiveness for Phase IV was satisfactory. Flexible online formats can be used as a tool on a regular basis for disseminating knowledge. Time management was satisfactory and could have been more productive if the finalisation of the results had been planned for earlier dates. The project management structure was efficient in generating the expected results, the chosen project implementation strategy proved to be efficient and cost-effective.

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<sup>110</sup> QA Report 2021.

<sup>111</sup> UNDP-MFA Minutes, Steering Board Meeting, p.4.

The assessment regarding gender equality is moderately satisfactory and human rights is satisfactory, since the implementation of the Project demonstrated the adherence to gender balanced policies and women empowerment, promoted social and economic rights, inclusiveness for private sector, though, the design and planning stages lacked attention to gender and women empowerment using strictly quantitative indicators in results matrix, as well as not all indicators (such as 'vulnerable groups') were considered during project implementation.

The project has demonstrated a potential for achievements` sustainability based on the combined workings of its intervention and exit strategies, primarily based on national professional and expert network and the WTO national Center creation. The implementation has also provided examples of good practices and directions to further similar interventions.

## VIII. Recommendations

### Strategic planning for future projects

#### *Recommendation 1*

##### *Results framework and finalization*

Results framework (matrix with definite and wide-range indicators) is central for ToC and effective implementation, due monitoring and reshaping the plans (if necessary). In projects connected to awareness-raising, capacity-building not only number of events, but quantity of participants should be designed as indicators and calculated through all the stages. Other valuable indicators for the results framework include clear gender and women empowerment indicators; gender, sex, age with regard to vulnerable groups; clear indication on the direct and indirect beneficiaries. Quantitative data should be included both in project design and implementation, and wide-scale results framework should be used with the respective disaggregation. Qualitative data should be also included into the matrix with the relevant indicators explained.

In order to contribute to the continuity of the Project and the relevance of further interventions to its goals, the closing meeting is taking place at the end of June. It is recommended for further projects of this sort to plan the final meeting with a wide spectrum of stakeholders and beneficiaries in advance to make sure that the exit strategy is clear to all those involved and that the results can sustain, *inter alia*, a strong link is established with the National WTO Centre as the successor.

#### *Recommendation 2*

##### *Provision of the results in digital format and accessible offsite*

It is of utmost importance to provide the results achieved (deliverables) in digital format. The materials can be openly accessible or with restricted access. The database can feature relevant resources, the produced analytical papers, reports and educational materials. This will increase the accessibility of the results of the project, promote continuity of the results and exclude any potential gap in the transfer of knowledge. The beneficiaries were almost unanimous in their request to provide online access to the materials (analytical reports and publications) through a website or a database accessible remotely. Therefore the recommendation is addressed to future projects design and implementation and, as well, to the successors of the evaluated Project.

#### *Recommendation 3*

##### *Software and innovative technologies*

The Project contributed significantly to setting up the stakeholders (MFA as a key implementing partner) with the necessary technology and tools. Moreover, having access to the databases was a requirement mentioned in the project documentation. The necessary software (programs such as GTUP and WITS) were discussed during the PSC meetings as indispensable for further capacity-building and independent assessments of the possible benefits that foreign trade can bring to the national economy. The stakeholders of the Project were given access to the databases. However, software was not budgeted for, neither was it possible to fix once the Project had started. Given the importance of innovative software in today's world, it is therefore recommended to plan and budget for it initially, include it as one of the priorities/outcomes for the UNDP country program, for the design of the project, or to come up with alternative solutions to funding it.

#### *Recommendation 4*

##### *Replication and modelling*

Other actors in the macro-region, e.g. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which are also acceding and seeking expert and technical support, could benefit from using the same approaches and methods that were implemented in this project. Here are some of the reasons why the Belarusian model of capacity-building can be effective: - multisectoral and multi-stakeholders` involvement, - involvement of business actors at the very early stages, - in-depth analytical work.

It is recommended to use the Glossary (2022) as the basis for the UNDP Special Edition and to distribute it in the acceding countries mentioned above and throughout the EAEU.

#### *Recommendation 5*

##### *Gender approach and support for vulnerable groups*

Including gender-related indicators at both the planning and implementation stages, with regularity, clarity and cohesiveness, can significantly reinforce the women-empowerment strategy. Project management should rely on regular quantitative and qualitative monitoring of gender parity, systematic gathering of information and evidence on the relevance of the measures to address inequalities, and analysis of how the activities might impact gender-related challenges.

As a recommended measure in this respect, a clause on gender equality and/or reference to the UNDP gender policy may be included in correspondence and invitations to activities. Should the monitoring of the gender indicators reveal a disparity in participation of men and women, a gender priority clause may be included in correspondence and invitation letters.

Vulnerable groups must be accounted for at all stages of project design and implementation, e.g. through a non-discriminatory approach and assistance to those coming from remote areas. It is advised that the indicators be disaggregated by gender, age, type of vulnerability, which would allow for uncovering the underlying factors of intersectional discrimination of the groups targeted with the Project. All recommendations on online format of activities and digital accessibility of the results can contribute to support people with special needs, involved in this sort of projects, as well.

### **Operational recommendations and support for exit strategy**

#### *Recommendation 6*

##### *Two-tier targeting*

The objective of this project, especially at the initial stages, was to organise wide awareness-raising campaigns to disseminate basic facts about the WTO, create a general understanding of the processes in the organisation and the benefits it will bring the national economy. It is advised to ensure targeted involvement for any further interventions as part of similar projects. The task to disseminate basic knowledge about the organisation was successfully accomplished. What is important now is to ensure two-tier targeting: 1. Sectors of the economy. Targeting several sectors of the economy, e.g. those more involved in external trade, as indicated in the priorities for the national program, can provide a foundation for more profound interaction during the various activities. 2. Topics. Focusing on the subjects that were not fully covered previously. The recommendation can be used for both the design of future UNDP projects for Belarus and for further capacity-building activities and G2B communication by the government of the country.

#### *Recommendation 7*

##### *Digital platform as an operational coordination mechanism*

In line with the described above and going further, it would be helpful to have in place a digital platform with news, developments in external trade matters and some functionality to submit questions as well as to explore the post-project activities or new relevant interventions. The National WTO Centre can be involved in this work as a successor to the Project. It will facilitate networking, address gaps in information and support awareness-raising, especially within non-expert communities or regional bodies.

#### *Recommendation 8*

##### *Long-term education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy*

Continuous education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy regarding matters of external trade and participation in multilateral and bilateral economic (trade, investment, etc.) agreements and initiatives

ensure lasting results. Generally, strategic planning in UNDP projects can refer to earlier involvement of the wide audience, especially students and teaching staff.

In Belarus, further strengthening of horizontal connections and business and educational ecosystems of sustainable development could rely on the links established between the National WTO Centre and academia and universities, including but not limited to those who participated in the Project. Internship opportunities and visits to the National Centre can encourage interest among students towards WTO-related issues. To ensure a nation-wide effect, it is recommended that regional universities become more involved in the WTO-related programs. Educational research projects or products aimed at youth and developed in partnership can both ensure the continuity of the Project and emphasise its inclusivity — e.g. the annual WTO essay contest, the national round of the WTO DSB Moot Court, Model WTO or a trade-related interdisciplinary contest held under the aegis of the National WTO Centre or at the regional level is recommended. Collaboration with academia can be promoted through the Scientific and Consultative Council operating under the aegis of MFA and/or directly with the National WTO Centre.

## **IX. Lessons learned**

### **1. Multistakeholder and multidimensional strategy. Knowledge exchange. UNDP integrator role to engage different stakeholders**

The project, which objective is capacity building, combines multi-stakeholder and sustainable collaboration strategies, encourages knowledge dissemination and expertise. This project was a good example, generally, of the effectiveness of the intervention's multistakeholder and multidimensional strategy, *inter alia*, it proved the importance to design and to take regular activities, to gather together representatives of different target groups and to form a partnering collaboration, with a relatively permanent core of participants. UNDP's role as an integrator is indispensable for this type of projects. Project Steering Committee, comprised representatives of different beneficiaries' groups, provides system correlations. Its meetings are effective for internal monitoring and constant networking. Wide information sharing within the community of experts, national negotiation team could be an advantage, though, it challenges planning and presumes an additional information circulation. Open-access remote resources could be an option to intensify the exchange of expert knowledge, making it easier, faster, and wider.

### **2. A comprehensive and flexible approach to raising awareness strategy**

Work on updating business community, enterprises, the academic community on the progress in the negotiation process, explaining the WTO rules, the advantages and consequences of membership in the organization to them is very important. It forms credibility, contributes to transparency and implementation of 'leave no one behind' strategy. To start raising-awareness campaign long before accession is 'a success story' of the Project, which can be applicable to a similar context. Regional (local) authorities play a feasible role in connecting private entities. Dualistically, a comprehensive and flexible approach to raising awareness strategy works. An important element of the comprehensive functioning and connecting is involvement of all levels of government. The comprehensive contribution refers, as well, to a systematic raising-awareness campaign and well-organized expertise. Flexibility is necessary due to the differences in regional context – differentiation of business interests, sectors of economy, export or import oriented specialty. After general topics are presented several times, and the public has got a general perception of the WTO issues, further it comes right to topic-defined events, specialized seminars and briefings. Flexible decisions and prompt answers on specialized thematic are not sometimes available right in the course of the campaign events. Availability for asynchronized questions and answers can be implemented through feedback questionnaires, that was also tested through the project.

### **3. Systemic step-by-step improvements coherent to national priorities as an essential basis for strategic progress**

Emergencies or interruptions in the course of high-policy should not prevent from going on with the activities on knowledge dissemination, on expert potential involvement, improvements of legal and institutional framework. Policymaking processes and regulatory changes take time and need step-by-step progress. It finally contributes to implementation of sustainable development goals and partnering strategies. The Project assisted in the directions which are generally important for country's economic progress. Relevance of the project goals and objectives to country national priorities and close

cooperation with the key stakeholders and the key implementing partner led to the highly effective immediate results and mid-term achievements.

#### **4. Analytical and operational support. Similar context and sharing expertise**

Analytical support is effective if it is multisource, prompt and connected to the negotiation process. The Project made a contribution to the utmost analytically and expert supported negotiation process which resulted to the quality of the final draft Working Group Report.

External (foreign) expertise is important and necessary for both results – immediate analytical comprehensive assistance and long-term strategy in raising national expert potential. Expertise is effective when it stems and refers to similar context, including country context, to case-study and precedents.

#### **5. Demand-driven Information campaign**

Hands-on seminars, trainings are effective in education and information campaign. Feedback and requests from the audience have been essential to form a relevant and comprehensively targeted agenda of the activities. Visual and tangible results contribute to effective perception of the project.

#### **6. Exit strategy and final results oversight from early stages**

Exit strategy and sustainability support mechanisms should be formed on as early stages as possible and may have different forms – institutional, knowledge-based. Institutionally the National WTO Center is a strategic sustainable outcome for this type of projects. Digital forms of information dissemination, visibility of the results in media resources, professional networks, involvement of the academia are very important for immediate results and sustainability of the achievements





TERMS OF REFERENCE	
Position title:	Consultant for the Project Final Evaluation
Position type:	Local Consultant, IC/National
Office/Project:	UNDP project “Assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus in Accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening National Institutional Capacity and Expertise (Phase 5)”
Conditions of work:	Home-based, Republic of Belarus
Duration of contract:	April 8, 2022 – June 15, 2022 (approximately 40 working days)
Requirement for travel:	No travel will be required for this assignment.
Conditions of payment:	<p>The candidate should not have restrictions on part-time work.</p> <p>Fixed remuneration, lump sum (100% after completion of Deliverables by the Consultant and approval of work by the direct supervisor).</p> <p>The consultant is responsible for the timely and comprehensive performance.</p>
Qualifications:	<p>University degree in social sciences, economics, public administration or related fields.</p> <p>Previous experience engaging with government, international organization, NGO within the area of monitoring, evaluation, learning or knowledge management confirmed by CV.</p> <p>Experience in UNDP mandate or procedures confirmed by CV would be an advantage.</p> <p>Practical experience (within last five years) in mid-term or final evaluation of at least three international and/or regional projects confirmed by CV.</p>
Competencies:	<p>Working level of English, confirmed by relevant diploma, certificates or other relevant documents.</p> <p>Solid knowledge about best practices and international policies, project cycle, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Knowledge of human rights-based approach, gender-responsive methodologies and tools.</p>
Direct supervisor:	<p>Programme Analyst, UNDP Country Office in Minsk.</p> <p>Throughout the assignment the Consultant will work in close collaboration with the UNDP Country Office in Minsk.</p>



## **Background and context.**

### **Project background information**

Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the World Trade Organization is an important priority of the national trade policy. The accession will contribute to Belarus' integration in international trade flows, improve the regulatory environment for the Belarusian export of goods and services to the markets of WTO members, attract FDI to the national economy.

WTO accession requires a candidate country to adjust the national legislation and comply with several systemic rules bidding for all member states. Conformity of the national legislation with WTO systemic rules is reviewed through multilateral meetings of the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to WTO ("Working Party"). Based on the Working Party's meeting findings, WTO Members may decide to move to the next round of negotiations. It depends on the progress of the acceding country's efforts in aligning the national legislation with WTO systemic rules. The Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to WTO comprises 47 countries.

In partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus (MFA), UNDP has been implementing the multistage "Assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus in Accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening National Institutional Capacity and Expertise" project since 2008. The project has been dealing with the analysis of the national legislation for compliance with the WTO norms and agreements, raising awareness and capacity building of the government bodies, businesses community, and the general public about WTO accession.

The Republic of Belarus has entered the final stage of the negotiations and formulated commitments requisite for WTO accession. Effective joint work of the MFA and UNDP under Phase 4 of the Project has contributed to considerable intensification of Belarus' accession to WTO. In 2017 – 2020, five Working Party meetings were held. The last took place on July 11, 2019. Currently, bilateral negotiations on market access with 22 WTO Members have been completed. The latest protocols were signed with Switzerland and Australia. Negotiations are ongoing with seven other WTO Members: Brazil, Costa Rica, Canada, New Zealand, Ukraine, EU, USA. At the same time, all official negotiations with Brazil have been completed, and a protocol is expected to be signed soon. The main negotiations with Costa Rica have been completed. Technical details are being finalized in the working order. There are also pending agriculture-related issues with Canada and New Zealand. Negotiations on goods have been completed with Ukraine, negotiations on services are underway. Negotiations on goods with the EU have also been completed, and negotiations on services are in progress. The United States confirmed its readiness to complete negotiations on services; negotiations on goods are in progress.

Phase 5 of the Project has been building on the previous knowledge and results and focused on technical and expert support for Belarus negotiating team under the MFA leadership, awareness- raising and capacity building of local authorities and business communities, launching National WTO Information Center, strengthening national expertise.

### **Project overview**

#### Project/outcome information

Project/outcome	Assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus in Accession to the World Trade Organization through Strengthening National Institutional Capacity and Expertise
Atlas ID	00093349 (Phase 4) 00109228 (Phase 5)
Corporate outcome and output	<p>UNDAF Outcome: Outcome 2.1: By 2020, the economy's competitiveness will have been improved through structural reforms, accelerated development of the private sector and integration in the world economy.</p> <p>CPD Outputs: Output 2.1: National and subnational systems and institutions are able to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and geared towards enhancement of employment and livelihoods.</p>

Country	Republic of Belarus	
Region	RBEC	
Date project document signed	25.12.2014	
Project dates	Start	Planned end
	01.01.2014	30.06.2022
Project budget	589,680 USD (Phase 4)	
	742,503 USD (Phase 5)	
Funding source	Trust Fund Russia UNDP	
Implementing party	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus	

Phase 4 of the project was aimed at preparing analytical reviews concerning compliance of the Belarusian legislation with the norms of the WTO basic agreements and prospects of its improvement, training of national experts in the area of Belarus' integration into the world trade system, raising public awareness about benefits and impact of WTO accession.

The objective of the Phase 5 of the Project is to assist the Government of the Republic of Belarus in accession to the World Trade Organization through strengthening national (public) institutional capacity and raising public awareness about Belarus' WTO accession process and impacts through the operational support of the negotiation process on Belarus' accession to WTO, finalization of national capacity building for preparation of the country for subsequent membership in WTO, raising awareness of business community about the rules of work in the context of Belarus' membership in WTO.

The main achievements and results:

Over the period of implementation, the project made a contribution to the advancement of Belarus towards membership in the WTO and provided assistance to the Government of the Republic of Belarus in joining the WTO by strengthening the expertise of national (state) institutions, as well as raising public and business community awareness of the process and consequences of accession to the WTO.

The analysis of more than 2,000 national regulatory legal acts, acts of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space on systemic issues for compliance with the WTO standards was carried out and recommendations were proposed for more than 600 legal acts of the Republic of Belarus to bring them in line with the WTO standards.

More than 300 normative legal acts of the Republic of Belarus and other documents required for the negotiation process were promptly translated into English.

The participation of about 100 representatives of the national negotiating team in 40 rounds of bilateral negotiations with the member states of the Working Group on Belarus' accession to the WTO supported.

More than 300 representatives of the national negotiating team improved their qualifications on a wide range of issues related to the country's accession to the WTO.

More than 3,500 people, members of the Interdepartmental Commission on the Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO and other interested parties, have increased their competence on various aspects of the country's accession to the WTO within the framework of 30 project seminars.

More than 60 teachers who train in the Republic of Belarus on WTO issues improved their qualifications within 7 international specialized programs under the project.

To raise public awareness of the WTO accession process, 10 specialized publications have been prepared.

More than 3,000 representatives of the Belarusian business community took part in 24 regional round tables on Belarus' accession to the WTO within the framework of the information campaign of the project "WTO Weeks in the Republic of Belarus".

So far, thanks to the project's activities, more than 10,000 people have increased their knowledge of Belarus' accession to the WTO.

More detailed project documentation (project documents, concept notes, reports, etc.) will be provided to the successful candidate before the evaluation.

## **Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives**

This Final Evaluation is initiated by UNDP Country Office in Belarus in order to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

Respective activity is included in the Project Evaluation Plan, Evaluation Title - Final project evaluation, as well as in the office Evaluation Plan 2021-2025.

Target audience: the government bodies and organizations responsible for the WTO accession process including UNDP Belarus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, local authorities, universities and research institutions, business associations.

The evaluation shall cover the following project aspects:

**Project Concept and Design:** The Consultant will review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness and relevance of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be assessed.

**Project Implementation:** The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the Project team's use of adaptive management in project implementation.

**Project outputs, outcomes and impact:** The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project had been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it had been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project had significant unexpected effects, either of beneficial or detrimental character. The Consultant will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plans of the project.

The evaluation should also address whether the project strengthened the application of the rights-based approach and mainstreamed gender in development efforts.

## **Evaluation criteria and key questions**

Evaluation criteria and key guiding questions:

Relevance

Effectiveness

Efficiency

Sustainability

Human rights

Gender equality

Specific evaluation questions will be formulated based on the features mentioned below as part of inception report.

Relevance:

The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country

programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?

To what extent does the project contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country programme outcome?

To what extent were perspectives of those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, taken into account during the project design processes?

To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?

To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's

design?

To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?

#### Effectiveness

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups. Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention to the baseline ones.

To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and national development priorities?

To what extent were the project outputs achieved?

What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended country programme outputs and outcomes?

To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?

What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?

In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?

What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project's objectives?

Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame?

To what extent have stakeholders been involved in project implementation?

To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?

To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?

How and why outcomes (listed as outputs in the project document) and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results?

Has the project been effectively undertaking adaptive management in order to respond to changing conditions?

To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights?

#### Efficiency

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?

To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?

To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?

To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective?

To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?

To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?

#### Sustainability

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. The sustainability assessment will give special attention to analysis of the risks that are likely to affect the persistence of project outcomes. In particular, the evaluation should focus on the sustainability of efforts and whether or not resources will

continue to be available for such investments after the end of the project. The sustainability assessment should also explain how other important contextual factors that are not outcomes of the project will affect sustainability.

Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?

To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?

Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and

the project's contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?

Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits? To what extent did UNDP actions pose an environmental threat to the sustainability of project outputs?

What is the risk that the level of stakeholders' ownership will be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained?

To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development?

To what extent do stakeholders support the project's long-term objectives?

To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?

To what extent do UNDP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?

What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?

#### Human rights

To what extent has human rights-based approach been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

To what extent have poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of the project?

How did the project mainstream the human rights-based approach?

#### Gender equality

To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

Is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality?

To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?

How gender issues were implemented as a cross-cutting theme and to what extent did the project give sufficient attention to promote gender equality and gender-sensitivity?

The range of aspects described above should be provided with the assessment based on rating of achievements. The applicable rating criteria are as follows:

**HS:** Highly Satisfactory: no shortcomings

**S:** Satisfactory: minor shortcomings

**MS:** Moderately Satisfactory: moderate shortcomings **MU:** Moderately Unsatisfactory: significant shortcomings **U:** Unsatisfactory: major problems

**HU:** Highly Unsatisfactory: severe problems

Ratings for sustainability assessment are as follows: **LS:** Likely sustainable: negligible risks to sustainability **MLS:** Moderately Likely sustainable: moderate risks **MUS:** Moderately Unlikely sustainable: significant risks **US:** Unlikely sustainable: severe risks.

Additional ratings may be also relevant:

**N/A:** Not Applicable

**U/A:** Unable to Assess

All ratings given should be properly substantiated.

#### Methodology

The Consultant should seek guidance for his/her work in the following materials:

[UNDP Evaluation Policy](#); [UNDP Evaluation Guidelines](#);

[UNDP Programme and Project management regulations](#); [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#)

It is recommended that the evaluation methodology includes the following:

(DR) Documentation review (desk study), to include Project Document, Theory of change and results framework, programme and project quality assurance reports, annual work plans, financial reports, activity designs, Donor Reports, Minutes of the Steering Committee meetings (for more details see **Annex 1**). The required documents will be provided by the Project Manager;

Interviews with Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and key project stakeholders, including UNDP Belarus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, other stakeholders, beneficiaries and project partners, such as representatives of the business community and academia, national negotiating team, members of the Interdepartmental Commission on the Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO, etc. Interviews should be taken in full confidence and anonymity. The final evaluation report should not assign specific comments to individuals.

The Consultant may suggest additional methodological approaches. The methodology should explicitly address issues of gender and under-represented groups.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners. The evaluation must be responsive to gender, vulnerable groups and human rights. The evaluation must be gender and culturally sensitive and respect the confidentiality, protection of source and dignity of those interviewed.

The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach that ensures close engagement with the assigned evaluation manager, implementing partner, key stakeholders and direct beneficiaries.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule and data to be used in the evaluation should be clearly outlined in the inception report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the evaluator.

#### Evaluation products

Evaluation Inception Report (10-15 pages): As the first deliverable of the Evaluation, the Consultant submitting an Inception Report with the following tentative structure:

Title and opening pages with details of the project and the evaluator.

Project and evaluation Information details: project title, Atlas number, budgets and project dates and other key information.

Table of contents.

List of acronyms and abbreviations.

Introduction and overview.

Brief description of the intervention being evaluated.

Evaluation scope and objectives.

Evaluation approach and methods (included: updated scheduler, timeframe, sampling methodology, draft of evaluation instruments, evaluation questions updated, etc.).

Annexes (including evaluation matrix, ToR and signed Code of Conduct for Evaluators in the United Nations system)

The inception report should be carried out following and based on preliminary discussions with UNDP after the desk review and should be produced before the evaluation starts. Instruments, methodology and schedule,



presented as part of Inception report and approved by UNDP will be used for data collection and final report development.

Draft Evaluation Report: The Draft Evaluation Report will contain the same sections as the Final Evaluation Report. The Draft Evaluation Report will ensure that each evaluation question is answered with in-depth analysis of information and back up the arguments with credible quantitative and/or qualitative evidences.

Audit Trail Report: The UNDP Programme Unit and key stakeholders shall review the Draft Evaluation Report and provide an amalgamated set of comments to the evaluator. Comments and changes by the evaluator in response to the draft report should be retained by the evaluator to show how they have addressed comments.

Final Evaluation Report: The core product of the Final Evaluation will be the Final Evaluation Report that will include the following sections:

Title and opening pages with details of the project and the evaluator.

Project and evaluation Information details: project title, Atlas number, budgets and project dates and other key information.

Table of contents.

List of acronyms and abbreviations.

Executive summary.

Introduction and overview.

Brief description of the intervention being evaluated.

Evaluation scope and objectives.

Evaluation approach and methods.

Data analysis.

Findings

Conclusions.

Recommendations.

Lessons learned.

Annexes.

The detailed guidelines on what has to be included in each section of the evaluation report can be found on p. 49-53 of the [UNDP Evaluation Guidelines](#).

The draft and final report will be written in the format aligned with the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and should include evaluation matrix (Annex 2). The expected length of the report is at least 30 pages, not including annexes. The first draft of the report and a final report are expected to be submitted to the UNDP Belarus within deadlines stipulated in Section 7 below. The first draft shall include the results of the interviews with PIU and key project stakeholders, including UNDP Belarus and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

The reports shall be submitted both electronically and in printed version, in English language.

In line with the UNDP's financial regulations, when determined by the Country Office and/or the consultant that a deliverable or service cannot be satisfactorily completed due to the impact of COVID- 19 and limitations to the evaluation, that deliverable or service will not be paid.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation and its implications, a partial payment may be considered if the consultant invested time towards the deliverable but was unable to complete to circumstances beyond his/her control.

#### Team Composition, duties and responsibilities

The evaluation will be carried out by a national consultant. A person involved in any way in the design, management, implementation or advising on any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation will not be qualified.

The national consultant will be selected by UNDP CO. The minimum requirements for the national consultant are provided in respective sections of this TOR.

The Consultant performs duties and responsibilities according to this TOR.

The Consultant shall work in close coordination with PIU members who are to assist him/her in collecting necessary information requested by the Consultant and in communicating with all stakeholders. The Consultant must not have restrictions for off-hour work and should not have participated in preparation and/or implementation of this very project (Independence from any organizations that have been involved in designing, executing or advising any aspect of the project.) and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

#### Timeframe and implementation arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing the evaluation resides with the UNDP CO. The CO will contract the national consultant and ensure quality management response and follow-up actions. The CO will provide operational support in organizing meetings and interviews if necessary.

The Project team will provide all required information and documents for review. The project team will provide assistance for setting up stakeholder interviews and coordinate with the national implementing partner (where necessary).

Reports are to be submitted to UNDP for review before the deadlines specified below. Approval of these reports by the UNDP Country Office will govern payment under the contract for this assignment.

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to the PIU, UNDP CO and stakeholders. The PIU, UNDP CO and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 10 working days after receiving the draft. All comments and suggestions (if any) shall be addressed and the report will be considered as the final deliverable as soon it is accepted by UNDP CO.

The final version of the evaluation report should be submitted in electronic format (MS Word) to UNDP CO (kiryl.stsezhkin@undp.org), no later than June 6, 2022.

No	Deliverable	Report type and size	Deadline
1	Inception report, proposed evaluation methodology, schedule of the evaluation compiled, and desk review completed	Report, at least 20 pages, not including annexes	April 25, 2022
2	Work conducted, including briefings by PIU and UNDP CO, all necessary interviews, data collection and de-briefings for UNDP CO	Presentation for de-briefing for UNDP CO	May 10, 2022
3	Drafting of the evaluation report completed, and the draft sent for comments to the project manager	Report, at least 30 pages, not including annexes	May 25, 2022
4	Circulation and other types of feedback mechanisms for reviewing and commenting on the draft completed, and comments received	Report review in track-changes/review mode	May 30, 2022
5	Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on the draft report from the feedback / audit trail) and provision of the final evaluation report to the project manager	Final Report, at least 30 pages, not including annexes	June 6, 2022, not later than 4 days from the date of UNDP feedback submission to the Consultant

### **Evaluation ethics**

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG '[Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations](#)'. The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

### **Supervisor**

Kiryl  
Stsezhkin

Programme  
Analyst

04-Apr-2022

DocuSigned by:

Kiryl Stsezhkin

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### **Supervisee**

Maksim Hubski Project Manager

DocuSigned by:

Maksim Hubski

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## Annex 2. List of documents to be reviewed by the evaluators

### General documentation

UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures

UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results

UNDP Evaluation Guidelines

UNDP Evaluation Policy

A Practitioner's Guide to Area-Based Development Programming

UNDP Strategic Plan

CPD

### Project documentation

UNDP approved project document

Annual work plans

Financial reports

Donor Reports

Project Steering Committee minutes

Risk logs

Quality assurance reports

### ANNEX 2 SAMPLE EVALUATION MATRIX

Relevant evaluation criteria	Key questions	Specific subquestions	Data sources	Data collection methods/tools	Indicators / success standard	Methods for data analysis



# ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

## PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION

By signing this pledge, I hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviours.



### INTEGRITY

I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- Honest and truthful in my communication and actions.
- Professional, engaging in credible and trustworthy behaviour, alongside competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- Independent, impartial and incorruptible.



### ACCOUNTABILITY

I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- Transparent regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- Responsive as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- Responsible for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.



### RESPECT

I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Access to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether powerless or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- Meaningful participation and equitable treatment of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- Fair representation of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).



### BENEFICENCE

I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits from evaluation processes.
- Maximum benefits at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- No harm. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

I commit to playing my part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, I will report the situation to my supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

*Tatiana Mikhaliova*

(Signature and Date)



### Phase IV

1. Memorandum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and the UNDP on extension of the technical assistance project dated 27.12.2013
2. Project document 00057626 (UNCTAD involved)
3. Proposal for the Phase IV
4. Annual work plan 2015
5. Annual work plan 2016
6. Annual work plan 2017 July
7. Annual work plan 2017 December
8. Annual work plan 2018
9. Financial report 2015
10. Financial report 2016
11. Financial report 2017
12. Financial report 2018
13. Report on implementation of the Phase IV
14. Report on implementation in 2015
15. Report on implementation in 2016
16. PSC Minutes 28.12.2015
17. PSC Minutes 05.10.2016
18. PSC Minutes 24.03.2017
19. PSC Minutes 07.07.2017
20. PSC Minutes 18.02.2018 (Eng)
21. PSC Minutes 18.02.2018 (Rus)
22. Risk Logs Phase 4
23. Quality Assurance 2017
24. Quality Assurance 2016

### Phase V

1. Project Document Phase 5
2. Annual work plan 2018,
3. Annual work plan 2019,
4. Annual work plan 2020,
5. Annual work plan 2021 signed 15.07.2021,
6. Annual work plan 2022 signed 09.12.2021
7. Financial reports CDR 2018
8. Financial report CDR 2019
9. 2018 Annual Narrative and Financial Progress,
10. 2019 Annual Narrative and Financial Progress,
11. 2020 Annual Donor Report,
12. 2021 Annual Donor Report
13. PSC Minutes 30/03/2018
14. PSC Minutes 11.12.2018
15. PSC Minutes 16.08.2019
16. PSC Minutes 16.12.2019
17. PSC Minutes 13.04.2020
18. PSC Minutes 14.07.2020
19. PSC Minutes 23.12.2020
20. PSC Minutes 15.07.2021
21. PSC Minutes 09.12.2021
22. Risk Logs Phase V
23. Quality Assurance 2019
24. Quality Assurance 2021



## Annex 5. Key stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners

(selectively, represented in survey)

1. Interministerial Commission. Negotiation team

MFA

Ministry of Economy

Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade

Ministry of Agriculture

2. Republican government authorities (other)

Ministry of Justice

National Center of Intellectual Property

National Assembly, House of Representatives

National Centre for Marketing and Price Study (within MFA)

Center of Hygiene

3. Regional government authorities (executive committees, incl. departments of external economic relations, investment departments)

Brest

Gomel

Grodno

Mogilev (Bobruisk region incl.)

Minsk (oblast` and capital)

Vitebsk

4. National Experts (10 individuals)

5. Academic and research institutions

Belarusian State University

Belarusian State Economic University

Hrodna State University

Belarusian Institute for Jurisprudence

Institute on promotion and retraining of economists (BSEU)

Belarusian National Technological University

Belarusian State Agricultural and Technical University

6. Business associations and private sector representatives

7. Project team and UNDP CO

8. Donor representative (Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Belarus)

(and not involved in survey)

9. Partnership with Belarusian organizations (indirect and nonpermanent beneficiaries) : the State Property Committee, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, National Bank, the State Customs Committee, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Forestry, the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research

10. Partners and external experts: the Russian WTO Expertise Centre, the Federal State Budgeted Educational Institution of Higher Education "Russian Foreign Trade Academy of the Ministry for the Economic Development of the Russian Federation, University of Barcelona, the National Research University "High School of Economics" (Russian Federation) , UNCTAD/WTO International Trade Centre, Eurasian Economic Commission, the International Trade Centre, UNECE and the WTO Secretariat, St Petersburg University.

## Annex 6. Introductory note and sample questions to the interviews

*NB The survey is a significant part of the data collection and evaluation of the project results. Your opinion on the project and perception of its implementation is important. Future projects rely upon the results estimated in previous projects and recommendations on the improvement. All the information discussed, personal data are confidential. The information will be used in the final evaluation report as depersonalized and generalized.*

*General*

1. In what capacity and period have you taken part in the project?

*Relevance*

2. Which strategies objectives and activities of ... level were relevant to this project, in your opinion? To what extent has the implementation of the project contributed to the overall development of your sector on participation in the multilateral trading system?

*Coherence*

3. What tasks can be continued in the future? Which of them can be implemented in other, parallel, similar projects? What is the compatibility of participation in the project with other relevant areas of activity in your industry specifics?

*Effectiveness*

4. Which project activities have attracted the most attention from your side? In what context were they useful? ...

5. What analytical or training or expert materials have been available within the framework of the project? How effective are they? What recommendations for their further use or development can be identified? ...

*Efficiency*

6. How do you assess the organizational efficiency and timeliness of the tasks implemented by the project (activities, results) in relation to the direction in which you took part? ...

*Cross-cutting issues*

7. How gender-balanced was the approach within the project's activities?

*Sustainability*

8. What tasks can be continued in the future? Which of them can be implemented in other, parallel, similar projects?

*General*

9. What other features, advantages or directions of improvement of work within the framework of the project could you note?

Thank you for your time and consideration!

## 1.Relevance

## Key questions

1.1 To what extent the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change?

1.2. To what extent the project is relevant to general economic and trade development of the country on international level?

## Subquestions:

1.1.1 To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?

1.1.2 To what extent does the project contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country programme outcome?

1.1.3 To what extent were perspectives of those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, taken into account during the project design processes?

1.1.4 Has the project been responsive to changes in institutional, economic or any other perspective? To what extent?

1.1.5 To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's design?

1.1.6 To what extent did Phase IV results influence the Phase V design and implementation?

1.1.7 To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?

1.2.1 What evidence is there for the alignment between the Phase IV, Phase V of the project and the commitments of the Republic of Belarus in international trade, as well on regional level?

1.2.2. What is the connection between donor's priorities, project objectives and national goals?

Data sources	Data collection methods/tools	Indicators/success standards	Methods for data analysis
Country development strategy and program SDGs <b>UNDP strategic plan</b> <b>UNDP approved project document</b> <b>Annual work plans</b> <b>Donor reports</b> <b>PSB minutes</b> <b>Risk logs</b> <b>QA reports</b> <b>Open access information on the project</b> <b>National programs</b>	Documents review  Examination of open access information related to the project  Survey based on interviews (MFA, other governmental, incl. local bodies, UNDP CO, national experts)	Evidence of alignment between Project objectives and country strategies/ plans, international development frameworks, previous Phases	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.  Interviews, consultations.  Cross-reference and cross-validation
Consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries			

## 2. Coherence

## Key question

2.1 To what extent the project is coherent, harmonized and complimentary to other projects in the field?

Subsequent questions

2.1.1 What are the intersections with government efforts and other projects on issues of WTO accession and trade development? Are they duplicative or complimentary in goals and tools?

Data sources	Data collection methods/tools	Indicators/success standards	Methods for data analysis
Country development strategy and program SDGs <b>UNDP approved project document</b> <b>Annual work plans</b> <b>Donor reports</b> <b>PSB minutes</b> <b>Risk logs</b> <b>QA reports</b> <b>Open access information on the project</b> <b>National programs</b> Relevant consultations	Documents review  Examination of open access information related to the project  Survey based on interviews with key stakeholders (MFA, other governmental bodies, UNDP CO)	Evidence of complementarity of the Project and any other strategies and plans in the field	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.  Interviews, consultations.  Cross-reference and cross-validation

### 3. Effectiveness

Key questions

- 3.1 To which extent has the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups?
- 3.2 Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame?
- 3.3 Has participation in the project been effective?
- 3.4 To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and national development priorities?
- 3.5 What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

Subquestions:

- i. In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements?
- ii. What have been the constraining factors and why?
- iii. How can or could they be overcome?
- iv. What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project's objectives?
- v. How and why outcomes (listed as outputs in the project document) and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results?
- vi. Has the project been effectively undertaking adaptive management in order to respond to changing conditions?
- vii. To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights?

3.2.1 Could be the project's outcomes, outputs be formulated in another (more clear or more detailed way)?

3.2.2 Were they enough/not enough/too much ambitious?

3.5.1 To what extent have stakeholders been involved in project design and implementation? What was the role of PSB in the processes?

- 3.5.2 To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?
- 3.5.3 To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?

<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Data collection methods/tools</b>	<b>Indicators/success standards</b>	<b>Methods for data analysis</b>
<b>UNDP approved project document</b> <b>Annual work plans</b> <b>Financial reports</b> <b>Donor reports</b> <b>PSB minutes</b> <b>Risk logs</b> <b>QA reports</b>  Consultations with stakeholders – MFA, members of PSB, UNDP, Donor representatives, national authorities, business community, researchers, teaching staff	Documents review  Survey based on interviews, questionnaires	Evidence of wide involvement of different groups of beneficiaries, stakeholders (participatory approach to design and implementation) Level of functionality and sustainability of the planning and implementation Level of adaptation of the project to external circumstances, changing needs, feedback corrections	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.  Interviews, consultations. Cross-reference and cross-validation

#### 4. Efficiency

##### Key questions

- 4.1 To what extent the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic way?
- 4.2 To what extent the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in a timely way?

##### Subquestions:

- 4.1.1 To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
- 4.1.2 To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?
- 4.1.3 To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?
- 4.1.4 To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective?
- 4.1.5 To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?
- 4.2.1 To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
- 4.2.2 What were the reasons, if any, for delay or postponement?

<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Data collection methods/tools</b>	<b>Indicators/success standards</b>	<b>Methods for data analysis</b>
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<b>UNDP approved project document</b>	Documents review	Evidence of: - adequate Project resources (human; time; financial; etc.)	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.
<b>Annual work plans</b>			
<b>Financial reports</b>			
<b>Donor reports</b>	Survey based on interviews	- timely dissemination of required Project resources	
<b>PSB minutes</b>		- review of the results of monitoring;	Interviews, consultations.
<b>Risk logs</b>		- timely revisions to Project strategy;	
<b>QA reports</b>		- continued progress towards results achievement;	Cross-reference and cross-validation
		- stakeholders' satisfaction with Project progress	
Consultations with stakeholders: UNDP, MFA, PSB members, Donor representative, national experts, members of Intergovernmental Commission, governmental and local authorities, business community, academia and teaching staff			

#### 5. Cross-cutting themes: Gender equality, Human rights

#### Key questions

5.1 To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

5.2 To what extent has human rights-based approach been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

#### Subquestions:

5.1.1 Is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality?

5.1.2 To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?

5.1.3 How gender issues were implemented as a cross-cutting theme and to what extent did the project give sufficient attention to promote gender equality and gender-sensitivity?

5.1.4 Were there any disproportion in different components of the project as regards gender equality and empowerment of women? If there were such, did the project contribute to balance it through the time?

5.2.1 How did the project mainstream the human rights-based approach?

5.2.2 What evidence is there to show that Project activities were implemented using rights-based principles to facilitate social inclusion?

5.2.3 What vulnerable groups were indicated and adequately treated, if any?

5.2.4 To what extent have poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of the project?

<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Data collection methods/tools</b>	<b>Indicators/success standards</b>	<b>Methods for data analysis</b>
Country development strategy and program SDGs	Documents review	Evidence of the integration of transparent	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.
<b>UNDP strategic plan</b>	Examination of open access information related to the project	gender equality considerations and practices into Project design and implementation,	Interviews, consultations.
<b>UNDP approved project document</b>			
<b>Annual work plans</b>			
<b>Financial reports</b>			
<b>Donor reports</b>			



<b>PSB minutes</b> <b>Risk logs</b> <b>QA reports</b> Consultations with stakeholders: UNDP, MFA, national experts, governmental and local authorities, business community, academia and teaching staff	Survey	incl. facilitating equal opportunities for Project participation, identifying and eliminating barriers to access, opportunity to participate; integration of rights-based principles, facilitation of access of people with special needs; identifying and eliminating barriers to access to the Projects` participation and/or results	Questionnaires  Cross-reference and cross-validation
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## 6. Sustainability

### Key questions

- 6.1 What are risks that are likely to affect the persistence of project outcomes?
- 6.2 To what extent do the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue? Whether or not resources will continue to be available for such investments after the end of the project?
- 6.3 How do other important contextual factors that are not outcomes of the project affect sustainability?

### Subquestions:

- 6.1.1 Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?
- 6.1.2 Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project's contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?
- 6.1.3 Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?
- 6.1.4 To what extent did UNDP actions pose an environmental threat to the sustainability of project outputs?
- 6.1.5 What is the risk that the level of stakeholders' ownership will be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained?
- 6.2.1 To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?
- 6.2.2 To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development?
- 6.2.3 To what extent do stakeholders support the project's long-term objectives?
- 6.2.4 To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?

6.3.1 To what extent do UNDP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?

6.3.2 What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?

Data sources	Data collection methods/tools	Indicators/success standards	Methods for data analysis
Country development strategy and program SDGs <b>UNDP strategic plan</b> <b>UNDP approved project document</b> <b>Annual work plans</b> <b>Financial reports</b> <b>Donor reports</b> <b>PSB minutes</b> <b>Risk logs</b> <b>QA reports</b> <b>Open access information on the project</b> <b>National programs</b> Consultations with stakeholders: UNDP, MFA, PSB members, Donor representative, national experts, members of Intergovernmental Commission, governmental and local authorities, business community, academia and teaching staff	Documents review  Examination of open access information related to the project  Survey based on interviews	Evidence of networking and collaboration on national and international level; use of best practices and innovative approaches	Desk review incl. descriptive analysis, formal analysis, content analysis; quantitative analysis; comparative analysis, counterfactual analysis.  Interviews, consultations.  Cross-reference and cross-validation

**Phase IV**

- Analysis of the set of agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan for compliance with EAEU norms as regards an access to services market, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures of trade regulation, technical regulation measures, domestic policies affecting trade in goods except SPS and technical regulation measures •
- Analysis of the Belarusian legislation on intellectual property rights for compliance with WTO norms •
- Analysis of the Belarusian and EAEU legislation for compliance with WTO norms and international best practices of SPS regulation as regards safety of food products for human health •
- Recommendations on the use of best regulation practices in trade policy (with involvement of international expertise under the Project) •
- Analysis of Belarus' current legislation and law enforcement practices for a possibility of service delivery by foreign legal entities in Belarus without a need to get registered in the Republic of Belarus and development of recommendations for reflection of the concept of foreign companies' branch offices in the Belarusian legislation •
- Analysis of trade relations of the Republic of Belarus, EAEU member states and Members of the Working Party on the Accession of Belarus to WTO •
- Manual on negotiating an access to the market of goods •
- Manual on formulating the list of GATS commitments for negotiators and specialists •

**Phase V**

- Booklet on the project goals, tasks, and expected outputs •
- Analytical works and publications on assessment of potential impacts of WTO accession on Belarus' economy (in specific sectors) with the developed potential scenarios for minimization and prevention of negative impacts of WTO accession and identified options •
- Project booklet for regional business community on the most relevant aspects of the process, status and impacts of WTO accession, and the rules of operation within WTO •
- Translated specialized materials, normative legal acts and other documents from/into English/Russian •
- Articles on the project implementation, results of improvement of qualification of independent experts, teaching staff and specialists offering WTO related counselling and training •
- The WTO Terms Glossary •

Report-presentation of the results of the project

Planned for  
the  
finalizing  
conference  
in June  
2022

<sup>112</sup> Based on project documents and annual workplans. Referred to in the annual reports, Report on the Phase IV results.

## Annex 9. Maps of achievements and recommendations

“Expected immediate project outputs” <sup>113</sup> (Phase V)				
No	Output	Indicators	Results achieved	Recommendations
1	Carrying out the required analytical work on assessment of potential impacts of WTO accession on Belarus’ economy (individual sectors) and developing potential scenarios for minimization and prevention of negative impacts of WTO accession and to identify options.	Periodicity of analytical work, demands` consideration and promptness Number	Annual involvement on defined topics upon requests, incl.sectoral or macroregional context, in a timely and professional manner 10	<a href="#">Recommendation 2</a> <i>Provision of the results in digital format and accessible offsite</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 3</a> <i>Software and innovative technologies</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> <i>Replication and modelling</i>
2	Translation of the normative legal acts and other documents from/into English/Russian; simultaneous translation at bilateral and multilateral negotiations; and to organize access to economic and legal databases	Number of translations Access to economic and legal databases	More than hundred translations (at least 116). Incl the draft WG Report, and several rounds interpretations, all upon request, in a timely and operational manner. Economic and legal database access partially satisfied (specialists have been learned to work with, software not in possession)	<a href="#">Recommendation 3</a> <i>Software and innovative technologies</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> <i>Replication and modelling</i>
3	Establishment of National Center on WTO (the output will be financed by the Government of the Republic of Belarus).	Establishment	Established December 2021	<a href="#">Recommendation 1</a> <i>Results framework and finalization</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 2</a> <i>Provision of the results in digital format and accessible offsite</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> <i>Replication and modelling</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 6</a> <i>Two-tier targeting</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 7</a> <i>Digital platform as an operational coordination mechanism</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 8</a> <i>Long-term education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy</i>
4	Participation of representatives of the government bodies, academia, education and business community in WTO events	Number of events and participants; variety of beneficiaries	44 WTO events (high-level meetings, conferences, round table under the aegis of WTO and/or with WTO representatives` participation)	<a href="#">Recommendation 1</a> <i>Results framework and finalization</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> <i>Replication and modelling</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 5</a> <i>Gender approach and support for vulnerable groups</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 6</a> <i>Two-tier targeting</i>
5	Improving competence up to 100 members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus’ Accession to WTO directly involved in the negotiation process	Number and efficiency	More than 100 and highly efficient. Competences used in WTO and RTA negotiations	<a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> <i>Replication and modelling</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 5</a> <i>Gender approach and support for vulnerable groups</i> <a href="#">Recommendation 7</a> <i>Digital platform as an operational</i>

<sup>113</sup> As designed in the Project Document p. 4

				coordination mechanism
6	At least 30 independent experts, teaching staff and specialists offering WTO related counselling and training will improve qualifications	Number of participants	More than 30. Certificates on qualification improvement provided	<a href="#">Recommendation 1</a> Results framework and finalization <a href="#">Recommendation 2</a> Provision of the results in digital format and accessible offsite <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> Replication and modelling <a href="#">Recommendation 6</a> Two-tier targeting <a href="#">Recommendation 7</a> Digital platform as an operational coordination mechanism <a href="#">Recommendation 8</a> Long-term education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy
7	High level of awareness about the most relevant aspects of the process, status and impacts of WTO accession, and the rules of operation within WTO for the regional business community; at least 1,000 people participated in the project activities	Number of events and participants	WTO Weeks (round tables in all regions, annually) 614 prs (6 events) in 2018, 369 prs (6 events) in 2019, 202 prs (4 events) in 2020, 716 prs (6 events) in 2021. In Phase V totally 1091 prs in 22 events. More than 300 persons in Phase IV	<a href="#">Recommendation 2</a> Provision of the results in digital format and accessible offsite <a href="#">Recommendation 4</a> Replication and modelling <a href="#">Recommendation 5</a> Gender approach and support for vulnerable groups <a href="#">Recommendation 6</a> Two-tier targeting <a href="#">Recommendation 7</a> Digital platform as an operational coordination mechanism <a href="#">Recommendation 8</a> Long-term education and scientific multidisciplinary strategy

Expected output	Output indicator	Baseline	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	notes
Output 2	2.2. number of national experts participated in WTO events	Quantity 2017	2	2	2	10	0	
delivered			24	18	3	12	7	
	2.3 Strengthened capacities of the number of participants of the InterAgency Commission on Belarus' Accession to WTO	Quantity 2017	30	30	20	10	10	
delivered			34	243	102	54	15	
	2.4 Improved qualification of the number of independent experts, teaching staff and specialists offering WTO related counselling and training	Quantity 2017	10	10	10	10	0	
delivered			12	10	0 Postponed to 2021	10	0	
	Number of conducted information campaigns	Quantity 2017	6	6	6	4	1	
delivered			6	6	4 Postponed to 2021	6	1	716 prs Inform. disaggr.

<sup>114</sup> Indicators and targets from Project Document Template Phase V, p. 9-10. No results matrix was included in Phase IV project document.



## Annex 11. Map of the criteria: descriptions, ratings

Criterion	Description of measuring	Rating
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives and design respond beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change	HS
Coherence	The extent of the compatibility with other development programs and international economic cooperation projects in Belarus	HS
Effectiveness	The extent to which the Phases IV and V achieved its expected results	HS/S <sup>115</sup>
Efficiency	The extent to which the project was able to reach the results in an economic and timely way.	HS/S <sup>116</sup>
Human rights	The extent to which the human-rights based approach has been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project	S
Gender Equality	The extent to which the equality and empowerment of women have been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project	MS
Sustainability	The likelihood for the continuation of the net benefits of the Phases IV and V beyond the end of the project	LS

### The applicable rating criteria

<b>HS</b>	Highly Satisfactory: no shortcomings
<b>S</b>	Satisfactory: minor shortcomings
<b>MS</b>	Moderately Satisfactory: moderate shortcomings
<b>MU</b>	Moderately Unsatisfactory: significant shortcomings
<b>U</b>	Unsatisfactory: major problems
<b>HU</b>	Highly unsatisfactory: severe problems

### Ratings for sustainability

<b>LS</b>	Likely sustainable: negligible risks to sustainability
<b>MLS</b>	Moderately Likely sustainable: moderate risks
<b>MUS</b>	Moderately Unlikely Sustainable: significant risks
<b>US</b>	Unlikely Sustainable : severe risks

### Additional ratings

<b>N/A</b>	Not applicable
<b>U/A</b>	Unable to Assess

<sup>115</sup> Different results for Phase IV and Phase V

<sup>116</sup> Different results for Phase IV and Phase V

Name of the event (place, date, number of participants within the project)	Type of the event
<b>2015</b>	
10 <sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, 14-18 December 2018 (2 MFA officials)	WTO event
Seminar "Functions and challenges of the EAEU in the context of its member-states accession to the WTO" (December 23, Minsk; 60 participants)	Seminar for government officials and national experts
Expert trainings in Barcelona University, Spain (2 experts)	Expert training
Educational seminar co-organized with Barcelona University and UNCTAD (3 December, Minsk; 12 participants)	Seminar for teaching staff from universities
Regional Seminar "Some aspects of accession of Belarus to the WTO" within the initiative "UN`express-70" (Mogilev, Belarus, October 28, 2015; 35 participants)	Regional seminar
<b>2016</b>	
4 hands-on seminars, total number of participants 300 prs - "Practical use of databases "Market Access Map" and Trade Map" (March 22, Minsk; in cooperation with ITC, number of participants N/A) - Seminar on DSB WTO case-study (August 2, Minsk, in cooperation with the WTO Center of the Russian Federation, number of participants N/A) - Seminar on Subsidies (October 18, in cooperation with the WTO Center of the Russian Federation, number of participants N/A) - Seminar on RTA (October 9-10, in cooperation with WTO Secretariat)	Training/Seminars for government officials and national experts
Expert trainings in Barcelona University, Spain (10 experts)	Expert training
WTO Weeks" (Grodno, Vitebsk, Brest, Gomel, Mogilev, Belarus, August 22-26, 2016; more than 250 participants)	Regional seminar
20 WTO events for national negotiation team members, in Russian Federation, Switzerland, Spain, Kazakhstan, USA, Ukraine, Australia, based on PSC minutes	WTO events
<b>2017</b>	
4 hands-on seminars, total number of the participants around 400 -Seminar on some aspects of Kazakhstan accession, April 13, -Seminar on the Protocol of accession and its role in DSB practice, May 23, - Seminar on trade protection measures, October 10-11, n/a, in cooperation with WTO Secretariat -Seminar on subsidies in agriculture and general aspects on legislation and implementation, December 1	Training/Seminars for government officials and national experts
9 activities on WTO issues, The activities took place in the Russian Federation (6 activities), the Swiss Confederation (2 activities), the Kingdom of Spain (1 activity) based on PSC minutes	WTO events
<b>2018</b>	
8 WTO-related activities (total number of participants is 24, incl. 16 men, 8 women): 6 activities in the Russian Federation: working meetings of the MFA Belarus representatives with the representatives of the MFA Russia, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, Eurasian Economic Commission, Russian WTO Expertise Centre; participation in the conference "Trade Policy"; 1 activity in the Swiss Confederation: participation in the WTO Public Forum 2018 – "Trade 2030";	WTO events

1 activity in the Republic of Kazakhstan: meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the “Center for Trade Policy Development” under the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.	
Advanced training “Trade Negotiation Tactics” was organized for 10 representatives (4 men, 6 women) of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus’ Accession to WTO (from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Food) directly involved in the negotiation process. The training was specifically developed for the participants upon agreement with the UNDP and held at the University of Barcelona (July 2018, Barcelona, Spain);  Seminar “Quantitative Restrictions and the Information Technology Agreement within Accession of Belarus to the WTO” was held jointly with the WTO Secretariat. 45 representatives (24 men, 21 women) of government bodies-members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus Accession to WTO took part in the seminar (November 2018, Minsk, Republic of Belarus)	Training/ Seminars for government officials and national experts`
XIX April International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development organized by the National Research University Higher School of Economics (April 2018, Moscow, Russian Federation), 3 experts (2 men 1 woman).  Advanced training at the Institute of Trade Policy of the National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (June 2018, Moscow, Russian Federation). 9 national experts (2 men, 7 women)	Experts and teaching staff trainings

## 2021

1) 2 WTO-related activities in the Russian Federation and 1 WTO-related activity in the Swiss Confederation. 12 national experts (11 men, 1 women) directly involved in the negotiations of the Republic of Belarus with the WTO took part in the events.	WTO event
2) A virtual hands-on seminar on trade-related investment measures (TRIMS) was co-held in cooperation with the WTO Secretariat and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus (12 May, 2021). The event was attended by 50 (32 men, 18 women) representatives of government agencies who are members of the Interministerial Commission on Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO, as well as independent experts, professors, professional consultants and trainers on the WTO issues	Training for officials
3) Training "Improvement of competence of the members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus' Accession to WTO" was held in Moscow, Russian Federation on 20-23 December 2021. 4 participants took part.	Training for officials
4) The hands-on seminar “The Main Trends in International Trade in the Context of Belarus’ Accession to the World Trade Organization” was held on December 6, 2021 in Minsk, Belarus. 54 (17 men, 37 women) officials of the republican government bodies, representing 30 ministries and agencies attended the seminar.	Training for officials
5) An advanced course was held at the Federal State Budgeted Educational Institution of Higher Education “Russian Foreign Trade Academy of the Ministry for the Economic Development of the Russian Federation”(14-15 October, 2021, Moscow, Russian Federation). It was arranged for 10 (2 men, 8 women) national experts (professors and professionals from Belarusian State University, Belarusian State Economic University, Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University, Belarusian National Technical University, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the National Centre of Intellectual Property, the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research), who provide consultations on the WTO issues,	Expert training
6) The WTO Weeks : 6 regional roundtables with the business community on the accession of the Republic of Belarus to the WTO (716 participants).	Regional seminars

**2022**

1) 1 WTO-related activity in the Russian Federation and 1 WTO-related activity in the Swiss Confederation (7 national experts (5 men, 2 women) directly involved in the negotiations of the Republic of Belarus with the WTO)	WTO events
2) The hands-on seminar “The Main Trends in International Trade in the Conditions of Turbulence in the World Economy: A Practical Perspective for Belarus” was held. The seminar was attended by 28 (10 men, 18 women) officials of the regional government bodies (12 May, 2022, Minsk, Republic of Belarus).	Training for officials
3) An advance course was arranged and held for 15 (6 men, 9 women) members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Belarus’ Accession to WTO directly involved in the negotiation process.	Expert training