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## **IT as a Driver of the Belarusian Economy**

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Information is now becoming one of the most important resources of an organization. Regardless of the industry, the form of ownership and the specifics of the work, information technology, whether it be software products, operating systems, devices or technologies, are becoming the primary, basic need for the functioning of almost any organization in a modern market economy. According to the definition adopted by UNESCO, information technology (IT) is a complex of interrelated scientific, technological, engineering disciplines that study methods of efficiently organizing the work of people involved in processing and storing information; computing technology and methods of organizing and interacting with people and production equipment, their practical applications, as well as related social, economic and cultural problems. The economy of the 21st century – it is not an economy of goods and services, the more the economy is not factory chimneys, and the economy of knowledge and values, which are then transformed into products or services. Now the world is at the borderline when the entire world economy is changing and we need to become a part of these global transformation processes. The IT sector is the brain, circulatory and nervous systems of the economy. The Internet is a global transport artery for the dissemination of information, the development of electronic services and digital money, a link between many industries and the economy as a whole.

The Internet is the infrastructure for the development of new services and products. Information technologies are used in medicine and art, science and education, government and business, industry and trade. Further development of the financial sector and the economy as a whole is impossible without IT. The information and communication technologies (ICT) sector has become a driver of the Belarusian economy. This industry in 2019 makes the main contribution to the GDP growth of Belarus [1].

### **Explosive growth of computer services**

The ICT sector employs only about 70 thousand people, but, despite the small number, it was this sector that began to determine this year the dynamics of the key economic indicator – gross domestic product. In January-August, GDP growth amounted to 1.1%. At the same time, the contribution of various types of economic activity to this growth clearly shows who exactly is the driver of the Belarusian economy today. So, for 8 months of this year, organizations that work in the "information and communications" sector ensured a GDP growth of 0.5%. The same contribution to GDP growth was made by other types of economic activity, but taken together (!) – industry, construction, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and trade (Figure 1). And this despite the fact that in the organizations that provide information and communication services, only about 70 thousand people work, and in other sectors of the economy - millions. International studies confirm that the contribution of the information and communication services industry to the Belarusian economy is growing. At the same time, a fresh UNCTAD report says that Belarus is ahead of other developing countries in terms of growth in the contribution of the ICT sector to GDP [2].

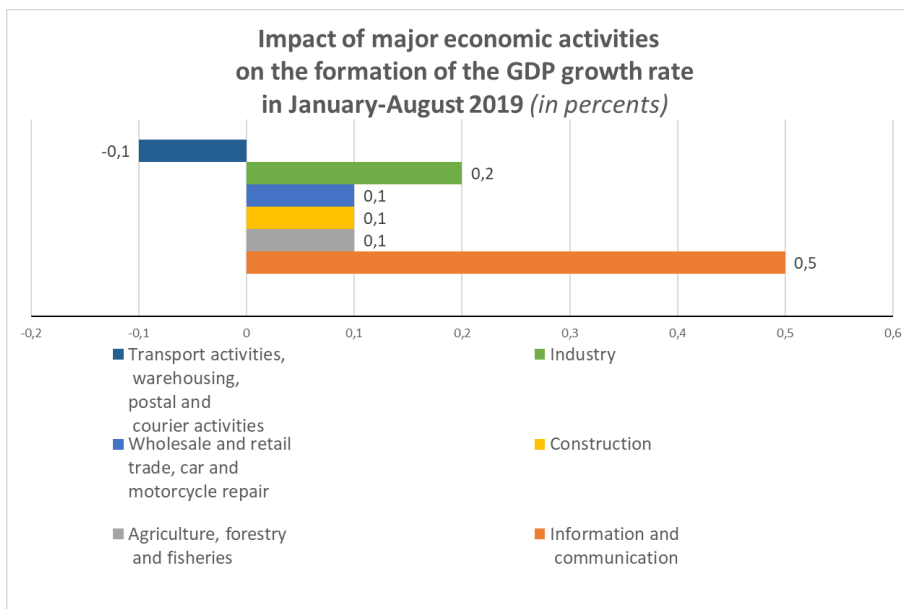


Figure 1 – Impact of major economic activities in January – August 2019

The core of the Belarusian information and communication services sector is the High Technology Park (HTP). According to official statistics, the average number of employees of the park residents in the first half of the year amounted to 47.5 thousand people and increased compared to the same period last year by almost 10 thousand employees.

As of July 1, 2019, 563 organizations were registered as HTP residents. Compared to the same date of the previous year, the number of residents of the park has increased by 272 organizations, or almost doubled. Today there are already 684 of them. But it is not even this that is impressive, but the high growth rates of export earnings of the residents of the Park of High Technologies.

In the first half of the year, the export of services by HTP residents amounted to \$ 908.1 million and increased by 38.1%. The basis of HTP exports is computer services. Their exports in the first half of the year increased compared to January-June 2018 by 31.7% to \$ 843.8 million. In the first half of the year, HTP residents received another \$ 36.2 million in the form of payments to non-residents for the use of intellectual property, which is 2.5 times more than in January-June last year. We all can observe the formation of a market niche for the products of the “economy of the 21st century”, with the dominance of intellectual industries, the implementation of constant innovative progress, as well as continuous improvement in the professional knowledge and skills of employees in most professions. Products and solutions in the field of “big data”, mobile applications, cloud technologies and business intelligence are becoming drivers of growth. The priorities of the companies were mobility, quick business adaptation to market volatility, accuracy and efficiency of decisions, and cost reduction [3].

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