

# Representatives of Belgian companies in Kazakhstan on the development of business and relations between the countries

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*What is the peculiarity of working with Belgians and with Belgian companies, what is the secret of their success and long-term cooperation with Kazakhstan.*

**Raikhan Yesseyeva, Administrative Director [Sarens Kazakhstan](#)**

## About myself

I started working as an administrative assistant at Sarens in 2003, i.e., since the registration of this Belgian company in Atyrau. As a result of my hard work, I have grown to the position of administrative director.



## About company

[Sarens](#) is a family business that started in 1930-1940 with one horse carriage and plow. Today [Sarens](#) is the global leader in heavy lifting, transportation of oversized equipment and making unique engineering solutions.

The main [Sarens](#)'s motto is "Nothing too heavy, nothing too high".

The most important value of the company is its employees; more than 650 people work in Kazakhstan and abroad, side by side with highly skilled foreign specialists, adopting rich experience and technical knowledge.

Since 2020, [Sarens Kazakhstan](#) has become a regional office in Central Asia and Russia due to the successful implementation of a number of projects for lifting and transportation of heavy columns, reactors and other equipment for the petrochemical and gas industries. We have successfully completed two major projects at Tengiz: projects for the future expansion of the second generation factory and wellhead pressure control, which will increase the design capacity of the factory. The company continues to develop and master new projects in Russia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.



Invaluable experience came over the years, it was difficult, complex production issues required non-standard solutions, but we managed it thanks to the managerial experience of our foreign managers and the prompt assistance of the head office in Belgium and the UK office.

## About Belgium

My first visit to Belgium took place in December 2003 together with an expert group of Kazakhstani specialists, with whom we inspected the cranes in order to deliver them to Kazakhstan in the future. After this trip, I had several times to visit the head office of [Sarens](#) in Wolvertham, Belgium, at various trainings

and reporting conferences at the end of the year. These were unforgettable meetings, exchange of international experience and, most importantly, live communication with colleagues from different countries and continents. [Sarens](#) has over 100 branches in over 60 countries around the world.

**Among the Belgian cities, I liked Bruges the most, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most beautiful and picturesque cities in Europe.** I remember Brussels, especially the Grand Place square, the Manneken Pis Monument and the Atomium - one of the main attractions and symbols of the capital of Belgium, symbolizing the endless peaceful possibilities of nuclear energy. Interesting fact, that [Sarens](#) company took part in the installation of this monument.

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**Geert Horemans, co-founder and chief technologist [JV “Kormovik”](#)**

### About myself

**I came to Kazakhstan less than 30 years ago and started doing business here.** Back in those days, people spoke to me only in Russian and paid in rubles, good restaurants in Almaty, where I could eat were so rare, they could be counted on the fingers of one hand. There were no traffic jams, since foreign cars were more likely the exception than the rule.



Since then, much has changed: tenge - the national currency has appeared; many good restaurants have opened; Astana became the capital and a symbol of modern and rapidly developing Kazakhstan.

### About company

**12 years ago, together with my Kazakhstani partners, I decided to create an enterprise for the production of premixes and PVMS (protein-vitamin and mineral supplements).** We invested in the economy of Kazakhstan because we believed in the country, its people and the future. In difficult economic times, without a single bank loan, we purchased a land, laid an asphalt road, supplied electricity and gas, and built a modern plant with a new laboratory.

**While working in Kazakhstan for so many years, I found myself not a stranger anymore here and do not consider myself as an outsider.** Notwithstanding that our company is a joint venture, I consider and speak about it as a domestic producer, meaning a Kazakhstani one. I am proud that thanks to our Kazakhstani employees, managers, technologists, laboratory assistants and other specialists, we produce excellent products under the brand “Made in Kazakhstan”. Among them is our company “Kormovik” as well.

**When we entered the Kazakhstan market with our production, our motto was quality and stability.** And these were not empty words, since:

- we were first who implemented the quality management systems HACCP, ISO. Up to nowadays it works not only on paper, but also in practice
  - we carefully selected ingredient suppliers
  - we use only vitamins and minerals from leading international manufacturers.
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**Yevgeniy Li, co-founder and director** [BergHOFF - Central Asia](#)

### **About myself**

**I graduated from KazGU (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University) with a degree in engineering and mathematics, but since my student days I have always been engaged in commerce and entrepreneurship.** I knew that the business is my sphere and I was good at it.



In 2000, my family and I moved to Belgium for permanent residence. After obtaining my second degree in Management and Marketing, while having Kazakhstani experience, I started working in French and Dutch companies as an export manager. And in 2011 I have got a job in the regional department of [BergHOFF Worldwide](#). In 2012, I opened a subsidiary company in Kazakhstan [BergHOFF — Central Asia](#), where I am a co-founder and director of the company.

### **About company**

**The Belgian company [BergHOFF Worldwide](#) is one of the world-famous brands of tableware and kitchen accessories.** Our company celebrated its 26th anniversary this year. We were represented on the



Kazakhstan market from the very beginning of the company's activity, but the representative office was opened eight years ago.

**At first time, there were problems with a work visa when opening a company, and with finding partners.** But the main thing is that the people of Kazakhstan already knew about the [BergHOFF](#) trademark and were loyal to us, thanks to European quality and original design solutions. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and assistance of the VQ Business Club community.



The Kazakhstani customer is a modern and educated consumer with good taste and interest, waiting for new products of excellent quality. When they learn that I am from Belgium, they always note that Belgian chocolate and beer are the most delicious. Belgian carpets are also praised, and, of course, our brand [BergHOFF](#).

### **About Belgium**

I moved to Belgium in 2000. I was surprised by the close cooperation of three national communities: the French, the Dutch and the Germans in a single kingdom, the intertwining of different mentalities, cultures and languages.

I liked the friendly attitude towards foreigners and the selfless desire to help.

### **About business relations with Belgium**

**I started working in the regional department and supervised Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the Caucasus region.** At the end of 2011, I came out with a proposal to open a representative office in Kazakhstan. I wanted to provide an opportunity for every family to cook and enjoy the process.

In the job culture of the Belgians, I was surprised by the high competence, ability to work, commitment and responsibility.

Collaboration and communication with the Belgians taught me to think more constructively and globally.

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Vyacheslav Koltyshev, General Director [AHLERS Kazakhstan](#)

## About myself

After the graduation of the high school, I applied at KazPTI (Kazakh Polytechnic Institute) at the Faculty of Automation and Telemechanics. When I graduated from the institute, the USSR and many factories collapsed, so I was had to master other professions.



I started my career as a customs broker, then I was the head of a customs warehouse, then I worked at Pepsi Company, where I was involved in the organization of transportation and customs clearance of goods. In 1998 I signed a contract with [Ahlers](#) Company; I opened an office in Almaty and worked as an operational manager. Four years later, I became the director of the [Ahlers](#) Company in Kazakhstan, and three years later I become the director for Central Asia region.

## About company

The [Ahlers](#) Company was founded in 1909 in Antwerp, Belgium, where headquarter is located. [Ahlers](#) is represented in three regions: Europe, CIS, Asia, and currently the company employs more than 650 employees.

For more than 110 years, [Ahlers](#) has been helping clients to develop their businesses around the world. We provide a modern logistical support in the field of sustainable supply chain management, warehousing, project logistics, transport of goods of high value, trade logistics, after-sales service, and data analysis.

In 1996, [Ahlers](#) opened an office in Tashkent. At that time, the main activity of the company was the transportation of cotton. Later, in 1998, [Ahlers](#), like many other international companies, began to develop a new and perspective market and opened an office in Almaty. The main task of the employees of our company in the largest megalopolis of Kazakhstan was not only the development of transportation within the country, but also in all countries of Central Asia.

From the first days of opening an office in Almaty to the present time, one of the priority tasks for us is to achieve recognition in the market and trust among partners. It seems to me that we are doing our job well.

**Our first big project was the transportation of excise goods by rail to the CIS countries, the Caucasus, Mongolia and Afghanistan.** Due to the fact that until that moment there was no transportation of such a scale by rail in the region, we had to contact the customs authorities of all countries and regulate the nuances of transportation. At the moment, we have completely adapted and normalized these routes. As a result, transportation along these routes has become one of the most successful projects of our company.

With our offices around the world, our approach to shipping combines style and etiquette with a strong local culture. This helps us to easily build trusting business relationships with clients.



## About Belgium

**[Ahlers](#) is a family-type company, and great attention in the team is paid to personal relationships, mutual respect and trust of employees among themselves.** Therefore, in 1999 I went to Belgium for 2 weeks and met my colleagues, adopted their principles and system of work.

**Belgium is a country with its own unique history, old buildings, narrow stone streets, houses without fences. You feel comfortable there, like at home.** People in Belgium are kind, open minded, always help or give advice.

Belgium is called the diamond and chocolate capital of the world. During my business trips to this country, I have not yet had the opportunity to buy diamonds, but I always bring a few bars of the famous chocolate home.

## About business relations with Belgium

**Asian and European cultures are different. In order to work with partners from Belgium or from any other country, it is necessary to understand how people think, what is valuable to them, how they relate to business, family and friends.** Therefore, in addition to arithmetic calculations, you need to communicate more often. In order to maintain not only job, but also personal relationships, we constantly

hold joint meetings not only for the management team, but also for operational employees who are involved in various projects.

**One of the main rules in our business is constructive dialogue. You can and should always express your opinion.** Working polemics never turn into confrontation. All problems are discussed, and together with our colleagues we find ways to solve them. Moreover, the discussion involves not only the project team, but also IT, HR, marketing departments.

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Alexey Narezhnyy, director [Reynaers Kazakhstan](#)

### About myself

I have been in the aluminum business for 15 years. Before joining [Reynaers](#), I worked for another large European company, in fact, for our competitor. I have been with [Reynaers](#) for six years.



### About company

[Reynaers](#) is the world's largest supplier of aluminum profile systems for external building envelope structures: windows, doors, stained glass windows, winter gardens, sun protection elements and much more. Our company supplies aluminum systems to the Kazakhstani market both for buildings construction and for private housing ones.

[Reynaers](#) has been operating in the Kazakhstan market for about ten years. During this time, like any company that enters the market for the first time, we have had difficulties. We were faced with the task of gaining the trust of customers, maintaining the declared high quality of products and delivery times, providing timely and high-quality technical support to customers.



**The reaction of customers after the completion of the project is always positive.** The client receives a very high quality product. A great advantage of our systems is the fact that almost any idea of the customer and his architect can be realized on our materials.



### **About Belgium**

**I came to Belgium for the first time in 2015.** On this visit, we brought a large group of clients from Kazakhstan in order to visit our headquarters in the city of Duffel, to better acquaint them with the company, test center and showroom.

From this trip, I remember the impressive architecture, local cuisine with a wide variety of seafood and of course, Belgian chocolate, waffles and beer.

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Daria Belkina, Sales Manager [Modulyss](#)

### **About company**

**[Modulyss](#) is a high-quality and long-term partner in the supply of sustainable carpet tiles.** Since 1990 the company has been operating in 140 countries of the world and is part of the [Balta](#) group of companies - the number one manufacturer of carpets and carpeting in Europe.



[Modulyss](#) has over 50 varieties of carpet tile designs for office spaces in a range of colors from 9 to 24.

The company operates in Kazakhstan since 2015. Local customers appreciate Belgian quality of the carpet tiles, everything new and advanced.

### **About business relations with Belgium**

**One of my colleagues shared that while working with the Belgians, she learned to be as efficient and precise in work and negotiations as possible, respecting national culture and adhering to corporate etiquette.** I agree with her 100%. Since the success of a Belgian company is, first of all, a teamwork. And if in 2015 I did not know anything about the carpet tiles business and designs, but thanks to my colleagues and my boss, who came to Kazakhstan and taught me everything that he knew, I was able to effectively negotiate and make big deals.

I am impressed by the business intuition, modesty and education in the corporate culture of Belgian companies. This can be noticeable even at business cards simplicity, which, for example, our company [Modulyss](#) has, are minimalistic, matte surface and smaller than usual size of business cards.



We are doing our best for our [Modulyss](#) Company and achieve the target of annual sales plan, and in response to our efforts, the company thanks us by incredible teambuildings. I managed to organize one of these teambuildings upon the arrival of sales managers from 15 countries of Eastern Europe, when they visited Kazakhstan for EXPO-2017.

### **About Belgium**

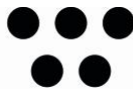
**Belgium is a completely different world. I was lucky enough to visit the Belgian diamond capital - Antwerp, the city of education and Gothic architecture - Ghent, and the capital of the North Sea - Ostend.** And in March 2015, I visited a carpet tile factory in Seele for the first time.

**Business trips to Belgium helped me get to know the country and people better. I admire that every Belgian speaks at least four languages.** Also, the Belgians are modest people; with all their capacity they have a lot of knowledge and historical victories in different eras.

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**[The Wallonia Export-Investment Agency office in Kazakhstan](#) is ready to advise and help Kazakhstani entrepreneurs to establish contacts with Belgian business in case of interest.**



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