

SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo Seizing Opportunities as China-Russia Trade Ties Strengthen

By Jin Yuhan

Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a state visit to China from May 19 to 20, drawing international attention to China - Russia relations. The visit comes against the backdrop of deepening bilateral trade ties that are also shaping the outlook of foreign trade enterprises in Ningbo.

According to the latest data from China's Ministry of Commerce, China - Russia trade has exceeded \$200 billion for three consecutive years, with China remaining Russia's largest trading partner for 16 consecutive years. Statistics from Ningbo Customs show that in the first four months of this year, the total import and export value between Ningbo Port and Russia reached 17.04 billion yuan, up 22% year-on-year.

Lighting the Way in Russia's Consumer Market

As a leading exporter of lighting products in Ningbo, Ningbo Yourlite Co., Ltd. specializes in LED luminaires, indoor and outdoor lighting, smart solar lighting, and small home appliances. The company first entered the Russian market via the Canton Fair in 1996, initially serving household lighting demand before expanding into applications for industrial and infrastructure projects.

"We work with leading Russian partners and tailor R&D to client requirements. With strong cost performance and consistent quality, our products have been well received on the market," said Bi Wenjun, general manager of Yourlite. He added that the company is expanding its portfolio in electrical and electronic products and expects exports to Russia to grow about 10% year-on-year this year.

Similarly, Ningbo Careline Electric Appliance Co., Ltd. has worked with clients to develop air fryers tailored for Russian consumers. Over the past four months, it has exported more than 200,000 units, worth 46.7 million yuan, a threefold increase year-on-year.

In recent years, Ningbo companies have played a dual role in Russia's consumer



Ningbo companies step up their presence in the Russian market. [Photo by Wang Jiamei]

goods market, both as established suppliers filling market gaps and as early movers into new business models. Since 2022, following the Russia - Ukraine conflict and the withdrawal of several Western brands and suppliers, Russian importers have increasingly turned to alternative sourcing markets. Demand has grown for light industrial products such as home furnishings and consumer goods, as well as mid- to high-end branded products. Cross-border e-commerce has become an increasingly important sales channel for Russian consumers. These factors are translating into new opportunities for Ningbo exporters.

To capture this shift, Ningbo has expanded its overseas trade platforms and business formats. In 2024, the city became the first in China to organize a consumer goods expo in Russia, organized by the municipal government. Now in its third edition, the event has generated more than 1 billion yuan in intended orders to date.

At the same time, Ningbo companies have been expanding both offline and online retail channels. Brick-and-mortar product exhibition centers have been established in Russia, while cross-border e-commerce platforms geared towards Rus-

sian consumers have been developed.

From Exporting Goods to Building Local Presence

Three years ago, Huo Qinggong, director of Yanbao Technology Group and chief executive of Luban Car Maintenance Technology Co., Ltd., was an exporter of Chinese-made vehicles. He noticed that many of those vehicles struggled to adapt to local conditions after arriving in Russia. It prompted the company to explore extending its services into repair and maintenance for Chinese-brand cars in Russia. The company opened its first service center in Moscow. Now, two and a half years later, the workshop is almost constantly busy with customers.

Huo's experience reflects a broader trend among Ningbo companies expanding into Russia. Rather than focusing solely on exports, many are seeking to establish a longer-term presence and offer upstream and downstream services.

Ningbo Megawatt Co., Ltd., a company that specializes in marine electronic control systems, generator sets and auxiliary electrical equipment, has also seen rapid growth in the Russian market. In the first four months of this year, the

company exported around 65 million yuan worth of marine engine sets and associated products to Russia, up 395% year-on-year.

"Given the strong bilateral relationship between China and Russia, we expect export volumes to continue rising in the second half of the year," said Hu Bin, general manager of Megawatt.

As Ningbo companies step up their presence in the Russian market, the city has also been expanding its logistics network. Last September, Ningbo Zhoushan Port launched its first China-Europe Arctic container express route, making Ningbo the world's only port hub with routes across the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic and Arctic oceans.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko has said Russia is willing to include Ningbo Zhoushan Port in its broader strategy to expand China-Russia trade and diversify export routes, including through the development of Arctic shipping corridors.

Upgrading China - Russia Trade Through Logistics and Industrial Links

Experts and industry insiders note that, compared with two to three years ago, supply

gaps in the Russian market have narrowed and import demand is shifting. Against this backdrop, they say Ningbo still has considerable room to upgrade its trade cooperation model with Russia.

Xie Wenkai, director of the Russia and Central Asia Research Center at the Ningbo Maritime Silk Road Institute, said that the "Polar Silk Road" could be used as a platform to better connect trade, logistics and shipping flows. He suggested that Ningbo strengthen the capacity of its import and export firms, advance the development of a Ningbo - Russia digital trade supply chain, improve services along Arctic shipping routes, and expand supporting industries such as vessel management and insurance for polar navigation.

A representative from the Ningbo Chamber of the China International Chamber of Commerce said Ningbo could make better use of its port and logistics advantages, including multi-route shipping networks, sea - rail intermodal transport and the emerging Arctic shipping corridor, to facilitate the import of Russian resources and goods. He added that Ningbo could also leverage its strengths in manufacturing small household appliances and hardware to meet evolving consumer demand in Russia and further consolidate its position in the retail goods market.

New Agreements Signed for Ningbo-Serbia Cooperation

By Zhao Yu

According to the website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić is on a state visit to China from May 24 to 28, placing renewed attention on China - Serbia relations, often described as an "ironclad friendship".

On May 20, the CEEC Products Permanent Pavilion in Ningbo hosted a Serbia - Vojvodina Economic and Trade Cooperation Promotion Conference, bringing together Chinese and Serbian participants.

Bojan Vranjković, Secretary of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the Minister of the Ministry of Energy, Construction, and Local Self-Government, spoke of his province's ties with Ningbo. He noted that with the establishment of the Vojvodina Chamber of Commerce and Industry's China representative office and the Serbian Business, Technology and Tourism Center, Ningbo is increasingly serving as a hub linking Chinese and Serbian businesses for two-way cooperation.

Six agreements were signed at the event, including a memorandum on the establishment of the China representative office of the Vojvodina Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which was inaugurated on the same day. The deals focus on building joint platforms to expand cooperation between Chinese and Serbian companies in trade, tourism and culture.

Rajko Leposavić, China Market Director of the Serbian Export Development Association and China Regional Director of Frug Ltd., came to Ningbo in 2025 to promote Serbian products and facilitate two-way trade.

"I've lived in Ningbo for nearly a year and really love the traditional culture here. We should make full use of these cooperation opportunities to support economic development on both sides," Leposavić said. He added that the liquors showcased at the event reflect a high standard of Serbian distilling. "I believe they will be well received in China."

Before the event began, many Ningbo companies had already held in-depth discussions with Serbian delegates.

In the lounge area, Cheng Xianshui, general manager of Ningbo Shuomei Daily Necessities Co., Ltd., was in talks with Serbian representatives. The company exports beauty products to Western Europe and is now looking to expand into Central and Eastern Europe.

"From our initial discussions, we learned that Serbian supermarkets already carry a wide range of Chinese daily necessities. I believe our beauty products have a chance to become popular," he said.

He added that the agreements reached at the event, along with the establishment of the Vojvodina Chamber's China representative office, are expected to facilitate future cooperation. "We hope to use this as a gateway to the wider CEE region."

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Ningbo sees surge in NEV exports in April

By Jin Lu

Exports of new energy vehicles (NEVs) through Ningbo port surged in April, according to data released by Ningbo Customs. Export value reached 4.37 billion yuan (\$641.77 million), while export volume hit 41,000 vehicles, up 148.1% and 138.2% year-on-year, respectively. Compared with March, both figures nearly doubled.

In April, total automobile exports through Ningbo

port reached 5.27 billion yuan, with NEVs accounting for 82.9% of the total, making them the primary driver of export growth.

Brazil, Jordan and ASEAN countries were among the largest overseas markets for Ningbo's NEV exports. Export values to these markets surged by 361.6%, 112.1%, and 67.1%, respectively, reflecting the growing global competitiveness of Chinese-made electric vehicles.

Local company ZIC International Trading has ex-

panded its presence in Latin America, South Asia, and Central Asia. The company said it exported more than 1,300 NEVs to Central Asia in the first four months of the year, with export value up 1,197% year-on-year.

From January to April, Ningbo port exported 169,000 vehicles worth 17.33 billion yuan. Customs officials said Ningbo's NEV exports now reach more than 120 countries and regions worldwide, with market share steadily increasing in Belt and Road partner countries.



New energy vehicles await export. [Photo by Zhu Jiana]

