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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH KAZAKHSTAN IN THE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

The article pays special attention to the most currently discussed topic – the development of the world economy in the post-pandemic period.

In particular, the possibilities of increasing trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Slovenia in this difficult period, the international economy's recovery from the crisis experienced during the period of COVID – 2019 are being considered.

The methodological basis of the study is empirical data that were taken from statistical documents and grouped in tabular and schematic form, a comparative analysis of the trade turnover of the two countries was carried out.

Countries around the world have faced many difficulties related to problems in logistics, the functioning of production facilities, ensuring the availability of various tourist destinations, etc. That is why, in modern conditions, the development of cooperation and the preservation of friendly relations between states is the main task. The analysis of the indicators of the foreign trade turnover of Slovenia and Kazakhstan is carried out, indicators for the main exported and imported goods are given, the ways taken by the state to overcome difficulties are considered. The author considers the possibilities for further cooperation between the two countries in order to successfully overcome the difficulties caused by the pandemic and stabilize the economy of Slovenia by strengthening cooperation with Kazakhstan.

The value of the conducted research lies in a detailed comparative characteristic of the post-pandemic mutual trade turnover of the two countries and promising development directions for the economy of Kazakhstan are given.

Key words: agro-industrial complex, COVID-2019, post-pandemic period in the economy, economy of Slovenia, economy of Kazakhstan.

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Пандемиядан кейінгі кезеңде Словения Республикасының дамуы. Агроөнеркәсіптік сектордағы Қазақстанмен экономикалық ынтымақтастық үшін мүмкіндіктер

Мақалада Словенияда қазіргі кезеңде қалыптасқан экономикалық жағдай және Словенияның Азия елдерінің, соның ішінде Қазақстанның нарыққа шығу мүмкіндігі Еуропа мен Азия елдері арасындағы негізгі көпір ретінде қарастырылады.

Екі елдің импорты мен экспорты бойынша өткен жылдардың қорытындылары және экономикалық ынтымақтастықты одан әрі дамыту мүмкіндіктері егжей-тегжейлі қарастырылады.

Зерттеу әдістемесі статистикалық құжаттардан алынған және кесте мен диаграмма түрінде топтастырылған эмпирикалық деректер болды, екі елдің сауда айналымдарына салыстырмалы талдау жүргізілді.

Мақалада Словениядан Қазақстанға импортталатын негізгі тауарларға сипаттама беріледі және ауыл шаруашылығы өнімдеріне ерекше назар аударылады. Авторлар жүргізген талдау Қазақстан мен Словенияның өзара сауда – экономикалық ынтымақтастығы бұл елдерді экономикалық тұрғыдан едәуір нығайтуға, жаңа логистикалық тізбектер құруға, жаңа технологиялар алуға қабілетті екенін көрсетті, бұл сайып келгенде ауыл шаруашылығында ғана емес, экономиканың басқа секторларында да мультипликативтік әсерге қол жеткізуге мүмкіндік береді.

Жүргізілген зерттеудің құндылығы екі елдің пандемиядан кейінгі өзара сауда айналымының егжей-тегжейлі және құрделі салыстырмалы сипаттамасында жатыр және Қазақстан экономикасы үшін дамудың перспективалық бағыттары көрсетілген.

Түйін сөздер: агроөнеркәсіптік кешен, COVID-2019, экономикадағы пандемиядан кейінгі кезең, Словения экономикасы, Қазақстан экономикасы.

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Развитие Республики Словения в постпандемический период. Возможности экономического сотрудничества с Казахстаном в агропромышленном секторе

В статье рассматривается экономическая ситуация, сложившаяся в Словении на современном этапе, после ковидных издержек и возможности Словении выхода на рынок Азиатских стран, в том числе Казахстана, как основного моста между странами Европы и Азии.

Подробно рассматриваются итоги прошлых лет по импорту и экспорту двух стран и возможности для дальнейшего развития экономического сотрудничества.

Методологией исследования стали эмпирические данные, которые были взяты из статистических документов и сгруппированы в табличной и диаграмной форме, проведен сравнительный анализ торговых оборотов двух стран.

В статье также даётся характеристика основных импортируемых товаров в Казахстан из Словении и особое внимание уделено сельскохозяйственной продукции. Анализ, проведённый авторами, показал, что взаимное торгово-экономическое сотрудничество Казахстана и Словении способно значительно экономически укрепить эти страны, создать новые логистические цепочки, получить новые технологии, что в конечном итоге позволит достичь мультипликативного эффекта не только в сельском хозяйстве, но и в других секторах экономики.

Ценность проведенного исследования заключается в детальной и подробной сравнительной характеристике постпандемического взаимного оборота торговли двух стран и даны перспективные направления развития для экономики Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: агропромышленный комплекс, COVID-2019, постпандемический период в экономике, экономика Словении, экономика Казахстана.

Introduction

Countries, both with a developed economic system and developing ones, are unique and inimitable in the process of their development. As a result, no state can pursue a closed economic policy at the present stage, especially since this is relevant for states struggling with the consequences of the COVID-2019 pandemic (Miklashevskaya, 2008).

This work is designed to show possible ways for the economy of the Republic of Slovenia to pass the stages of recovery from the post-recession as soon as possible, including by increasing trade and economic ties with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Main provisions of the article. The authors note that due to the existing socio-economic crisis caused by COVID-2019, issues of international economic integration, especially integration in the agro-industrial sector between the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, will contribute to solving various economic and social problems through mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields. The study of the potential of the two countries of Kazakhstan

and Slovenia meets the need for modern economic development in the post-pandemic period.

Thus, the integration of the trade potential of Slovenia and Kazakhstan will contribute to the development of economic potential.

The world community has entered an era of global change and international integration. With the intensification of the processes of internationalization of economic systems, a new round of development in international relations between various economic systems of the entire world space has begun. Globalization has changed the world by accelerating the cross-border movement of goods, human and financial resources. The experience of agricultural enterprises in the Republic of Slovenia has shown that in order to grow high-quality agricultural products and obtain high yields, modern scientific achievements in agriculture must be taken into account. A special feature of Slovenian agriculture is the emphasis on the use of modern equipment and technologies that minimize losses at all stages of crop cultivation. All this is possible with international integration in the agro-industrial

complex, such integration will make it possible to more effectively introduce and use new agricultural machinery and industrial technologies in Kazakhstan's agriculture.

Literature review

Since Slovenia is an important exporter of EU agricultural products, trade policy issues in the agricultural sector have been discussed and studied for quite a long time, so T. Volk, in his doctoral dissertation «The impact of agrarian policy on the development of agriculture in Slovenia during the transition and accession to the European Union», notes that before Slovenia joined the European Union (EU), the National Agricultural Policy was aimed at maximally imitating the measures of the Common Agricultural Policy (SKP) and thus preparing for the situation after Slovenia joined the European Union and faced new opportunities and risks. Despite the relatively high level of comparability of Slovenia's agricultural policy with SKP, Slovenian agriculture expects further adaptation. A number of Slovenian scientists Erjavec E., Rednak M., Volk, (2006), Kavčič (2005), Juvančič L., Kuhar, (2006) predicted that significant shifts in trade would occur during the accession, and competitive pressure would increase, and this happened over time, we observe this picture at the current stage of development of foreign agricultural trade in Slovenia. Prices for many agricultural commodities have fallen or are trending downward, and the shortfall in income is more successfully compensated in some sectors and less successfully in others by increasing budget support. Agricultural producers respond to these changes by making adjustments to production plans, which also leads to a change in the situation in individual agricultural markets. Thus, Slovenia is interested in new sales markets, not only for products, but also for technologies used in agriculture. The low level of knowledge of the markets of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, is explained by the lack of elaboration of logistics chains and the low interest of Slovenian exporters in the markets of Central Asia, as well as for Kazakhstani importers and exporters. The growing importance of foreign trade policy for the economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is due to the expansion and deepening of international trade in goods and services. However, the effectiveness of this policy is not so high yet. This is fundamentally due to the fact that the instruments of foreign trade policy are not fully connected and coordinated with the economic processes taking place in the country.

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Prominent Kazakhstani scientists, such as Argyngazyuly A., Usen S. Alimbetov, note that the competitive entry of our products into foreign markets will require the revival and intensification of scientific and industrial cooperation of enterprises among themselves and with foreign partners, attracting the latest technologies and know-how. Thus, one of the main priorities in the foreign economic policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the development of a union similar to the European Union with a common economic base and even with a single currency for mutual settlements, which should make it possible to fully use competitive advantages in the Eurasian continental market. Therefore, the Republic of Kazakhstan is interested in the development of the technological complex not only in agriculture, but also in other areas, especially since Slovenia has potential in this direction (Republic of Slovenia: Article IV Mission November 21, 2022).

Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study was the work of foreign scientists on economics, integration processes, the impact of globalization on the development of trade and economic relations between states and the author's research published earlier. To solve the set theoretical and applied tasks in the course of the research, the authors used various general scientific research methods, including the method of analysis, methods of forecasting, planning and comprehensive economic analysis as the main methods of economic research. Thus, the article examines the problems from different points of view, as well as analog methods of interpreting the results of previous years. The informational and empirical component of this scientific research is official documents on the development of trade and economic relations – official statistical program documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Slovenia aimed at planning, as well as data from the global Internet information network, data from the state statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Slovenia were actively used.

Results and discussion

The creation of conditions for the formation of sustainable economic growth in the country and the further development of all sectors of the economy will allow us to reach the indicators of the pre-pandemic period and create new business processes for integration with other countries. Of course, according to the authors, the cyclical decline of the international economy will then turn into growth, as a necessary condition for a cyclical economy. Therefore, cooperation and mutual investments are reaching a new level, which can cause a new impetus to increase the long-term growth rates of economies (Discover Slovenia, 2022) and the plan implemented by Slovenia to restore and ensure sustainability together with other countries meets the urgent need to facilitate the rapid recovery and preparation of both the Slovenian and Kazakh economies in order to develop and make a special contribution to supporting business and leading countries out of the post-pandemic recession (Republic of Slovenia, 2022).

The transformative impact of the Slovenia plan is the result of a powerful combination of reforms and investments aimed at solving specific problems. Reforms eliminate bottlenecks on the way to strong and sustainable growth, and investments are aimed at accelerating the transition to a greener economy, maximizing the benefits of digital transformation and ensuring socio-economic cohesion and sustainability (China-CEE Institute, 2022).

The plan is expected to make a significant contribution to the digitalization of Slovenia, including by strengthening digital skills through education and lifelong learning. It can be noted here that Kazakhstan is geographically distant from Slovenia, which negatively affects the development of logistics supplies, but Kazakhstan is also implementing programs to digitalize the socio-economic sphere, this may become an additional incentive for the development of cooperation and exchange of experience in the IT field between the two countries.

Economic experts from different countries identify those areas of the economy of different countries in which rapid growth is expected, and it will continue until 2035. A technological breakthrough. ZOOM and other technologies that allow employees to work from home have increased the category of freelancers and contributed to the development of communication technologies and bringing them to a new level. External debt to other States. Over the past decades, the public debt of many countries has increased significantly, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant increase in

public debt can negatively affect the country's strategic plans, as there is a constant need to control the budget (Wolf, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all spheres of human life and revealed all vulnerable points, including global politics, food supply chains, the financial system and, of course, science. Based on the fact that many states faced problems during the pandemic and how the population experienced this crisis, it is possible to draw a reasonable conclusion that people in the 21st century are poorly prepared for various force majeure circumstances. Various diseases, not only physical, but also psychological, have become an integral part of the pandemic period, the deterioration of the educational process that will affect our children after 5-10 years, as well as the gap in economic development caused by stagnation during this period. The coronavirus pandemic has become a powerful lever in changing the international economic and social situation in the world, it is possible that this is a necessary condition for the development of international integration and in the future we will face this process more often.

Studies conducted in Slovenia that identify a pattern of consumer preferences in the behavior of citizens before, during and after the pandemic indicate that consumer spending by citizens on public health and increased food consumption has increased. This can be explained by a change in shopping preferences due to the covid situation, when there was a boom in medical services and the inability to leave home. Kazakhstan needs to look for its niche in such a situation, developing exports of agricultural and other products in the future (Nared, 2017: 7-32).

If we pay attention to the current directions in foreign trade for Slovenia, it is in the field of transport, nuclear energy and space activities (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 January 2024).

Studies conducted by the International Monetary Fund show that the Slovenian economy is developing at a fairly good level, despite the continuing impact of post-pandemic problems, at the same time, a low unemployment rate can be indicated as the main indicator of satisfactory growth. In particular, the «new era of socio-political changes» is mentioned (Grinin, 2016).

The Real GDP indicator demonstrated growth of more than 9.5 percent in 2022, thus exceeding its pre-pandemic level. Exports and consumption within the country accounted for the main growth indicator, the latter was due to the need to support domestic producers and the average level of savings among the population. Unemployment is at historic lows, and there is a shortage of labor in some sec-

tors. Meanwhile, an independent structural analysis of the economic situation conducted by the authors indicates that the pace of economic growth will slowly decrease, this is due to the fact that it will be difficult for households and economic agents to restore the pre-pandemic level of production of goods and services, as well as their consumption (Slovenia – Annual GDP growth, Trading Economics, 2024). At the same time, as in most similar countries, Slovenia is experiencing a steady increase in the overall price level, which will negatively affect the overall price level within the country. High global energy and food prices have led to a significant increase in inflation, which amounted to 10 percent. Although inflation has decreased slightly over the past year, it remains at a fairly high level, and core inflation continues to rise.

Prospects and risks – Slovenia's economic prospects have become more complex. Economic growth was expected to decline from a projected 5.4 percent in 2022 to 1.8 percent in 2023, in accordance with the baseline scenario, which assumes further normalization of monetary policy and fiscal stimulus in 2023 in accordance with the budget of

the authorities. But statistics show that in 2022 the growth was 2.46 percent, and in 2023 1.58 percent. The slowdown is mainly due to weakening external demand, as well as high inflation and greater uncertainty, which are expected to put pressure on consumption and investment growth.

How cooperation with Kazakhstan can help Slovenia, according to data for 2018, about 800 food industry companies generated revenue of \$ 2.8 billion. The predominant directions in this industry are the processing of meat and milk, the production of beverages, flour and confectionery. The products of meat processing companies bring 30% of revenue, the sale of milk and dairy products – 10%, and the production of soft drinks, beer and wine – 16%. Kazakhstan can consume agricultural products of Slovenian commodity producers, together with the main imported goods from Slovenia, such as pharmaceutical products, fast-cutting steel and electrical equipment are exported from Kazakhstan to Slovenia (Nared, J., et al., 2016).

Figure 1 shows a picture of comparative analysis in the context of export – import of Slovenia for 6 years.

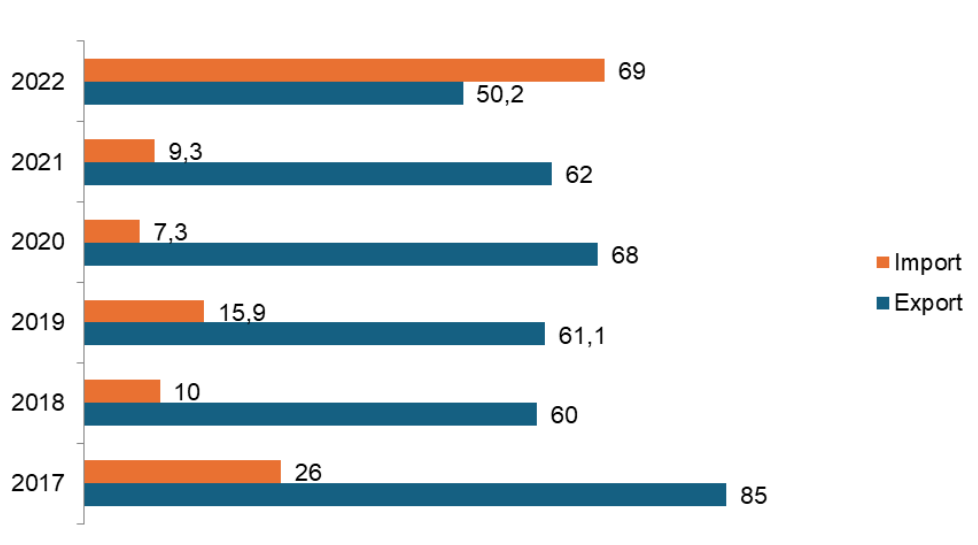


Figure 1 – Indicators of Slovenia's exports and imports with Kazakhstan over a five-year period, in millions of dollars.

Note – compiled by the authors based on the sources of the spreadsheets «Main indicators of foreign trade of the Republic of Kazakhstan by country» annually from 2017 to 2023, Bureau of National Statistics Agencies for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan; The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS), 2017 – 2023.

As can be seen from Figure 1, both Slovenian exports and imports show an uneven curve, so in 2020 – 2021, Slovenian imports decreased, which was due to pandemic restrictions, but exports were at a high level. However, 2022 showed a different

dynamic, a sharp increase in imports and a decrease in exports compared to 2021. Perhaps this is due to Kazakhstan's accession to the EAEU or the orientation of Slovenian producers to the EU market. At the same time, Slovenia has no restraining factors that

increase trade with Kazakhstan. If we consider Slovenia's exports to Kazakhstan, in monetary terms by goods for 2021, then three main goods can be distinguished:

- pharmaceuticals – 44 million doll.
- equipment and computers – 6 million doll.
- equipment and communications – 4 million doll.
- products of the agro-industrial competition – 1 million doll.

Based on these data, it can be concluded that Slovenian pharmaceutical products are in great demand in Kazakhstan, as well as electronics. Exports should be increased with respect to these goods, but as we can see from Figure 1, exports are decreasing, although there are no significant barriers to the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries at the legal level, so currently 19 enterprises with Slovenian capital are registered in Kazakhstan.

In particular in the fields of pharmaceuticals, renewable energy sources, engineering, telecommunications (KRKA, Gorenje, Lek, BisolGroup, DUOL, Iskrat) of which 8 are joint ventures, 11 enterprises with 100% Slovenian capital participation (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

But in 2022, we are seeing an increase in trade relations and exports from Slovenia of goods such as: pharmaceutical products, high-speed steel (Trade and economic cooperation with Slovenia, 2023).

In 2016, Kazakhstan and Slovenia signed a convention allowing the two countries to trade without paying double tax. The purpose of the Convention is to strengthen the multifaceted economic cooperation between the two countries, increase mutual investments in various sectors of the economy, especially in agriculture (Lukianov, 2022: 468).

Figure 2 shows the import of goods from the Republic of Slovenia in dollar terms in 2021 and 2022.

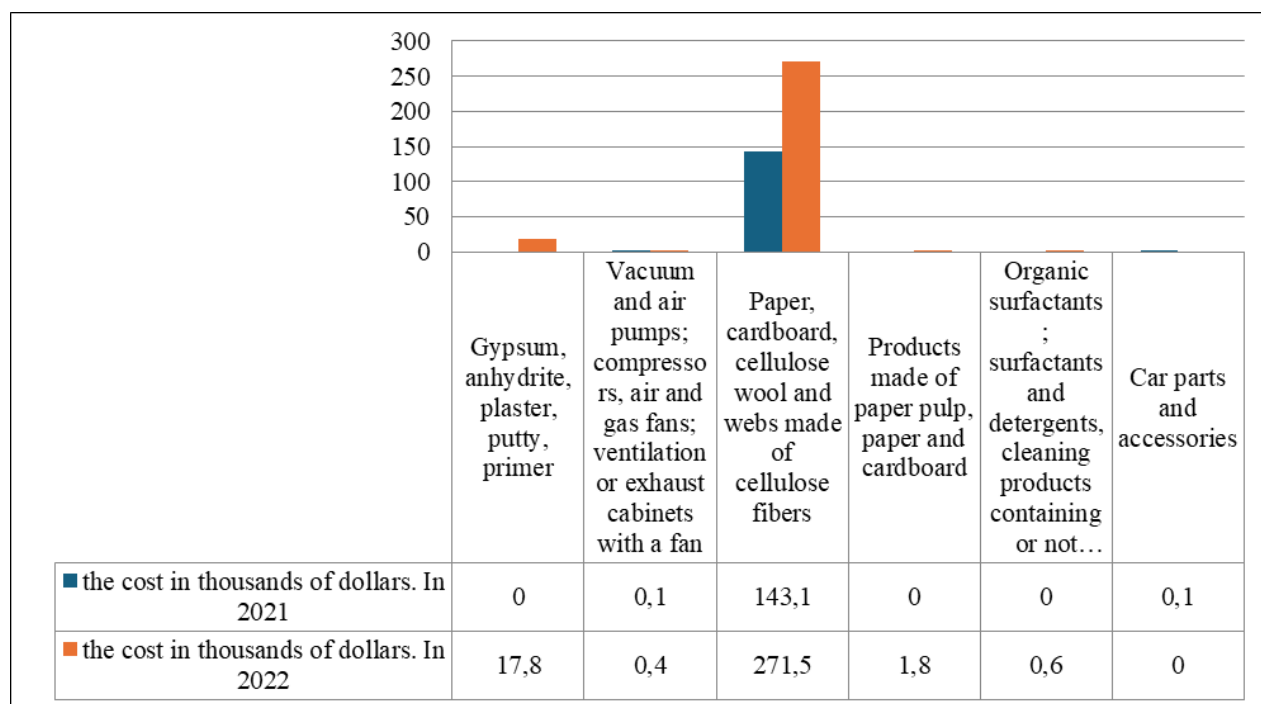


Figure 2 – Indicators of imports to the Republic of Kazakhstan from the Republic of Slovenia for two years in the context of goods, in thousands of dollars.

Note – compiled by the authors based on the sources of the spreadsheets «The structure of exports and imports of the Republic of Kazakhstan by major commodity groups», 2021-2022,

Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

If we consider the import of goods from Slovenia to Kazakhstan, then in monetary terms for goods for 2022, the percentage increase in car parts and accessories goods amounted to 36.6%, paper,

cardboard, cellulose wool and cellulose fiber webs 189.6%. Based on the data obtained, the authors consider it necessary to increase the possibilities of importing technologies and equipment used in the

agro-industrial complex of Slovenia. Exports from the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Republic of Slovenia amounted to 738.4 thousand dollars, the only goods were ferroalloys. The analysis of imported products to Kazakhstan in the direction of the agro-industrial complex showed an insignificant share of goods from Slovenia, and a significant share from countries geographically doubled from Kazakhstan compared with Slovenia.

In 2023, according to APK-Inform, Slovenia was among the countries where lentils, peas and chickpeas were exported (The export of legumes from Kazakhstan increased 2.5 times in 2022/23 MG. AIC-Inform Online Publications, 2023).

The authors suggest that even small businesses can participate in the development of international policies in the field of technology trade and environmental protection, which can contribute to further research in this area, and we see in this that communication channels between innovators and politicians are important and promising. (Hofmann, 2023 : 98).

Of course, the situation on world markets, in particular delays in supply chains, negatively affected Slovenia's exports. In particular, they caused a reduction in the supply of goods, because of this, supply chains may become closer to European markets, and thus Slovenian companies will have access to new opportunities. The recovery of export volumes is predictable, of course, Slovenian companies need to open new markets for the sale of goods, Kazakhstan can become this market. The author suggests a number of companies that will be interesting for the Kazakhstan market:

1. Novartis-Lek specializes in the development of innovative biological products and was the first company in Slovenia to start the production of innovative biologically active ingredients. The innovative manufacturer of pharmaceutical generic drugs (generics) has been spending 10% of its revenues on research and development for many years. Pharmaceutical products make up the bulk of Slovenia's total exports to the Kazakhstan. In 2021, the export of pharmaceuticals amounted to \$44 million.

2. NIERO Metal, d.o.o. is a global developer and manufacturer of high-tech stainless steel products for a wide range of industrial needs. Their product range includes solutions from a stainless steel sink to a fully automated in-house logistics solution for the entire production

3. The Keko Equipment company is engaged in the development and production of special-purpose equipment, mainly in the field of electronics and other areas based on multilayer technologies.

4. The company «BSH Hišni aparati Nazarje» specializes in the development and production of small household appliances for cooking and drinks.

5. Gorenje company offers household goods in the segments of food cooling, washing and drying, dishwashing, cooking and baking, home care and personal hygiene, heating and cooling of the house, as well as kitchens and ceramics.

6. C-ASTRAL drones fly over all continents in the most difficult conditions, and in 2021 and 2022 they were delivered to Africa and the Arctic.

7. Lenabox is a manufacturer of finely chopped, chopped and powdered wheat straw packed in convenient packaging (Discover Slovenia, 2022).

The author believes that Kazakhstani producers will benefit if they increase the "commodity basket" of exported goods to Slovenia, since Slovenia can become an excellent starting point for promoting goods on the European market. Especially, such hopes are pinned on the port of Koper on the Adriatic Sea, which is developing rapidly. This port has the fastest connection between Central Europe and the Asian market. This will allow in the future to increase the number of products and create new logistics chains necessary for the effective external economy of both countries.

The effectiveness of building logistics chains is probably based on modern knowledge of the technology of polling, questionnaires, and consumer research, which undoubtedly should be the focus of international trade communications, given the refined taste of consumers in the European space and market (Tiran, 2019: 183-187).

Conclusions

As the negative effects of the pandemic are currently decreasing, opportunities are emerging for the development of strategic partnerships between different countries, creating new chains for trade and technology exchange. To mitigate the situation, Slovenia has taken a number of measures along with the implementation of EU measures. However, the current economic situation in Slovenia remains uncertain and unstable. For Slovenia and Kazakhstan, the expansion of economic cooperation can bring great benefits, both in a political and economic format. A large market of Central Asian countries, especially China, opens up for Slovenia (Xinhua News Agency, 2023) and the European market opens up for Kazakhstan, with the possibility of concluding export contracts. We would also like to note that the economic attractiveness of the two main markets of the region (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) is based not

only on the fact that they are both, respectively, the richest, but also the most densely populated in Central Asia (more than 50 million people), and Central Asia itself is 1/5 of the European Union, This indicates huge opportunities for trade between Slovenia and Kazakhstan, and then through Kazakhstan with other Central Asian countries.

In the study, the authors convincingly show the need to develop trade and economic relations be-

tween the two countries, especially in the field of agro-industrial complex, and that this will allow the two states to reach a new level of development. This is justified by the fact that Slovenia is a country with a developed mechanical engineering and chemical industry, which allows us to develop agriculture at a high level. At the same time, Slovenia is interested in supplying raw materials from Kazakhstan for further processing and production of necessary goods.

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