



ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE EAEU AS THE BASIS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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Received 22.05.2024.
Received in revised form 03.07.2024.
Accepted 23.07.2024.
UDC – 005.94

Keywords:

Economic integration, EAEU, Improvement of the management of knowledge and information systems, Digital economy, Digitalisation, Cooperation

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the assessment of the formation of economic integration in the EAEU as the basis for improving the management of knowledge and information systems in the digital economy.

The goal of the paper was to find the specifics of the influence of economic integration on the level of formation of information systems and knowledge management in the digital economy in countries of the EAEU and the EAEU on the whole.

In the course of the research, we studied the factual state, problems, and perspectives of the influence of the tools of the digital economy on the level of economic integration in the EAEU member countries. It was also determined that the programme principles of the EAEU influence the support for the intellectualisation of partnership (unification of knowledge management and information systems). We proved the hypothesis about the direct dependence between the formation of conditions of economic integration and the level of the digital economy in the EAEU member countries, which demonstrated the necessity of improving these components as the precondition of economic growth.

The methods of classification, comparison, and ranking analysis were used, as well as the factor method.

Based on the conducted analysis, we determined the effectiveness of interaction of the EAEU member countries, the perspective of improvement of the digital environment given the main sectors, and the possibility of adapting the experience of each member country given the similarity of the systems of state management.



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1. INTRODUCTION

International economic integration of the regional character allows countries to solve common problems in the infrastructural, currency, and entrepreneurial spheres and creates conditions for the formation of additional opportunities in the conditions of external threats. Innovative trends of the digital economy, which are connected with the implementation of information systems and knowledge management in various sectors allow raising the competitiveness of countries at the domestic and global markets. Integration of the economic potentials of the member countries of regional international structured for the creation of innovative digital spaces offers new opportunities for mutually profitable cooperation and an increase in value-added of products (services) that are manufactured by the regions' companies.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an integration union of countries, on the territory of which, according to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, the common and coordinated industry policies are conducted, with free movement of workforce, capital, services, and goods (Eaeunion, 2024). Cooperation of member countries of this structure (the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia) started in January 2015, with the Treaty coming into force. The global phenomenon of the digital economy and processes that are connected with its dissemination (management of knowledge and information systems in the main sectors) influenced the national and regional features of the economic development of the EAEU member countries. Adaptation of the capabilities of the digital economy and the legal and regulatory foundations of integration allow the countries to ensure the modernisation of certain sectors and multinational corporations and exchange technologies and knowledge based on mutually profitable cooperation. The digital economy allowed simplifying many processes of information exchange relating to international partnership at all levels in the economies of the EAEU member countries. Its tools facilitate economic stabilisation in the conditions of external and internal challenges. Interaction of the EAEU member countries allowed ensuring certain results in the sphere of the management of knowledge and information systems in the digital economy at the national and regional levels.

The goal of this paper was to elaborate on the features of the influence of economic integration on the level of formation of information systems and knowledge management in the digital economy in countries of the EAEU and the EAEU on the whole. For this, the following tasks were set: systematising the conditions of economic integration in the EAEU member countries, which were designated in the provisions of the programme documents and created in the course of implementation of joint initiatives; assessing the impact

of the improvement of the conditions (management of knowledge and information systems) in the improvement of the level of the member countries' economic development.

2. EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

In this research, we checked the hypothesis, according to which the improvement of the created conditions of the economic integration influences the state of the member countries' digital economies.

To deal with the tasks posed, we used research methods and the corresponding experimental basis. The experimental basis includes the indicators of economic, information, scientific, and digital development of the EAEU member countries. The volume of materials on the studied countries' economies is different because members of the EAEU have various levels of economic development and specialisation of economic sectors. The period of the research is 2015-2023.

We used the method of classification, which was necessary for creating a list of conditions for the economic integration of the EAEU members, declared in the Treaty. The method of comparison allowed comparing the state of the considered indicators in the process of economic integration and implementation of digitalisation in the member countries and the EAEU on the whole. The factor method allowed identifying the influence of the conditions of economic integration on the state of the economy and digitalisation. The ranking analysis was used to find the leaders in the EAEU in economic development and improvement of the implementation of ICT.

There is a scientific and empirical basis for the research on the issues of economic integration as the foundation of the formation of the digital economy, growth of well-being, and increase in GDP of the EAEU member countries.

Eremenko (2021) dwelt on the influence of digitalisation in the improvement of economic integration of the EAEU member countries and identified the leaders among the member countries in the implementation of digital economy strategies, which facilitate economic growth. Attention should be paid to the author's substantiation of the influence of certain tools of the digital economy, used by Russia, on an increase in the economic integration in the EAEU region.

Popova (2021) studied the state and problems of implementing the digital agenda in the EAEU member countries and revealed the directions for improvement of partnership given the consideration and implementation of its new models. A special scientific and practical value of this work consists in the formation of recommendations on the improvement of

the legal and institutional basis of digital integration and synchronization of interaction at the different levels of management.

Kulakova and Kirova (2020) assessed the level, problems, and perspectives of the interaction of the EAEU member countries in the sphere of higher education and personnel training. The presented statistical data demonstrate the dynamics of the indicators of the formation of the higher education systems in the considered countries and the indicators of the integration of applicants in the universities in the EAEU. Based on the materials of the research, the authors established the leaders in the attraction of applicants from the EAEU countries (Russia and Kazakhstan) and proved the necessity of transforming the mechanisms of implementing this process for other member countries.

Kumar, et al. (2023) considered the possibilities and examples of application of smart energy grids and studied the new trend for energy storing in the systems based on the modern tools of the digital economy. Benčić, et al. (2020) analysed the specifics of the

formation of the digital economy in developing and developed countries of the world and established the optimal scenarios for its transformation.

Despite the large array of studies on the considered problems, the economic integration of the considered regions is transformed, which requires complex research on its dynamics and results.

3. RESULTS

An important task of the assessment of the influence of the declared conditions of economic integration in the EAEU on the improvement of the management of knowledge and information systems in the digital economy is establishing the regulatory norms of this category. These norms are presented in the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union and the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union. We systematised their categories and main provisions in Table 1. Table 1 also contains indicators on the implementation of the declared provisions of economic integration within the main spheres.

Table 1. Conditions of the economic integration in the EAEU member countries, presented by the programme documents

	Condition of economic integration	Declaration in the programme documents	Level of implementing the declared conditions of the economic integration in the EAEU member countries
1	Free movement of workforce between the EAEU member countries		
1.1	Absence of limitations as to employers' attracting workforce from the EAEU member countries, except for:	Envisaged by Paragraph 1 Article 97 of the Treaty	Achieved by 70 % as of late November 2023. In other cases, there are certain bureaucratic issues, which resolution is of top priority
1.1.1	Limitations for attracting workforce in the spheres of economic activities that are connected with national security	Envisaged by Paragraph 2 Article 97 of the Treaty	Implemented according to the regulatory and legal norms
1.2	Absence of limitations as to type of employment in the EAEU member countries	Envisaged by Paragraph 1 Article 97 of the Treaty	Achieved by 70 % as of late November 2023. Resolution of the organisational and bureaucratic issues is part of the agendas of joint forums and commissions of the EAEU member countries. A promising direction is the unification of the level of education in secondary, secondary vocational, and higher schools in the EAEU member countries
2	Free movement of capital between the EAEU member states	Parity in joint recognition of licenses of bank and financial organisations, conditions for avoiding discrimination in access to the financial market of the EAEU member countries (Article 70 of the Treaty). Parity coordination of the currency policy to create trust in the currency environment of the EAEU member countries. Avoiding the measures of currency policy that can aggravate the economic integration, support for the reduction of their negative consequences (Article 64 of the Treaty)	Achieved by 40% as of late November 2023

3	Free movement of services between the EAEU member countries	Article 66 of the Treaty envisages the following: - Liberalisation of the market of services between the subjects of the EAEU member countries (free provision of various categories of services, creation of foreign companies and joint companies); - Support for the creation of a common market in the service sphere	Achieved by 45% as of late November 2023
4	Free movement of goods between the EAEU member countries	Provisions of Article 25 of the Treaty envisages the following: - Creation of a common customs union; - Application of the common customs tariff for commodities trade at the external market of the EAEU and other countries; - Free movement of commodities in the internal market of the EAEU: absence of the national non-tariff control and customs declaration of commodities moved within the region for the internal trade	Achieved by 65% as of late November 2023

Source: Compiled by the authors based on (Consultant.ru, 2022; Eec.eaeunion, 2023; Eaeunion, 2024)

As shown by Table 1, a large share of economic initiatives that were declared by the EAEU Treaty have been implemented as of year-end 2023. The promising issues include further liberalisation of the labour market, services market, market of capital, and educational market.

Provisions of the Treaty and the EAEU Digital Agenda contain the foundations of the regulation in the sphere of information and communication technologies, which ensure the programme aspects of the management of knowledge and information systems in the digital economy in the EAEU (Table 2).

Table 2. Regulation of ICT and information cooperation between the EAEU member countries

	Programme foundations of the regulation of ICT and the interaction in the sphere of management of information systems and knowledge exchange	Declared directions	Level of implementation in the EAEU member countries
1	Regulation of ICT, partnership in the management of informatization and electronic document turnover	Provisions of the Appendix 3 to the Treaty establish the following: - Framework of digitalisation and the use of ICT in the management of knowledge exchange and information systems; - Obligations in the creation of an integrated information system that would ensure management in the main infrastructural directions and organisation of the management of the EAEU economy. This involves the management of the exchange of statistical data, common electronic document turnover, etc.	Implementation of the provisions of the Treaty in the part of gradual transition to electronic document turnover and exchange of statistical data
2	Creation of common digital economic space	The EAEU Digital Agenda envisages the following: - Formation of the common regulatory and legal basis of the digital economy of the EAEU; - Foundations of the digital support for infrastructure and logistics on the territory of the EAEU; - Obligation on the formation of a common digital market of the EAEU member countries; - Digital support for economic integration and state management; - Industry and financial digitalisation, which will facilitate economic growth and an increase in the well-being of citizens of the EAEU member countries.	In February 2024, the the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council adopted a decision on the implementation of an integrated system of risk management in the customs sphere for the control over movement of commodities from other countries and unification of the approach to customs procedures.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Consultant.ru (2022), Eremenko (2021), and Tadviser.ru (2024)

These documents envisage the formation of the foundation to strengthen the integration of countries within the common digital space, which facilitates the mastering and achievement of new economic capabilities.

The EAEU has its programme foundations of implementing ICT in the sphere of the interaction of subjects and governments of the member countries. There are also new solutions to the functioning of most problem spheres (including the customs sphere). Despite certain difficulties with implementing digital support in the EAEU, this process is rather active, and each member country has different levels of achievements in this sphere.

An important direction of economic integration in the EAEU is the improvement of the management of information systems in the digital economy. As shown in Table 2, the programme documents declare the creation of an integrated information system, which is a form of the digital information space. It provides the following: exchange of electronic documents and data at the level of countries (electronic document turnover); formation of databases of common information resources: implementation of processes and measures at the inter-governmental level; support of the necessary level of information security (System.eaeunion, 2024). The common concept of the integrated information system of the EAEU envisages digital support for the functioning of a common market of medical and pharmaceutical products, the market of financial services, the common system, of quarantine, veterinarian, and sanitary measures, the common customs, etc. Assessment of the analytical data has shown that at this stage, the integrated information system of the EAEU is at its final stage of implementation, with organisational measures being coordinated, and regulatory and legal aspects being agreed. Important issues that are solved at this stage include the establishment of unified competitions and procurement of goods (services), similar to those functioning at the national levels; establishment of the system of work of information departments that deal with the administration of operations and processes at the supra-national level (Lenta.ru, 2022).

Economic integration in the EAEU member countries also facilitates the improvement of knowledge management in the conditions of digitalisation at various levels, namely:

1) At the level of countries: knowledge transfer in the sphere of e-government, including the provision of online services to individuals and legal entities. The best results have been achieved in the customs sector of the EAEU. In 2022, there was adopted a decision on the implementation of an integrated system of risk management in the customs sphere (Tadviser.ru, 2024). This system's functioning will allow ensuring better interaction between customs bodies of the member

countries, will reduce the time required for customs clearing of commodities from other countries, and will increase tax revenues in the national budgets. It is also necessary to note knowledge management in the sphere of technologies and communications. Five member countries have various levels of achievements in implementing e-government. In 2020, Kazakhstan was ranked 29th in the UN ranking by the E-Government Development Index, Russia was ranked 36th, Belarus – 40th, Armenia – 68th, and Kyrgyzstan – 83rd (United Nations, 2024a). In 2022, Kazakhstan was ranked 28th, Russia – 42nd, Belarus – 58th, Armenia – 64th, and Kyrgyzstan – 81st (United Nations, 2024b). Kazakhstan and Russia are leaders in the EAEU in the sphere of implementing e-government. The creation of a unified approach to the organisation of e-government service will allow ensuring equally attractive conditions for life and business in each country. This can positively influence the reduction of incoming migration flows in the EAEU member countries, including among able-bodied citizens.

2) At the level of the business environment, unified mechanisms of management based on the use of ICT are created. Certain pilot projects have been started – they are oriented towards the needs of internal markets and the integration in the third countries' markets (Popova, 2021). Stimulation of the unified digital mechanisms of markets' functioning will allow creating of unique trade digital platforms, which ensure the demand from individuals and legal entities. The work of such platforms may be transferred in the online form.

3) At the level of scientific & technical and educational environment and representatives of large companies. Here the project of R&D exchange in the EAEU is implemented. It involves the functioning of a unified educational environment, in which young scholars and specialists receive knowledge on the EAEU space and its opportunities; participation in lectures, forums, and workshops organised by the representatives of science, international law, and international economy; receive the possibility of finding promising partners for business and technological cooperation (Hse.ru, 2023). The knowledge received by the participants of the research exchange of the EAEU allows improving inter-governmental interaction and partnership at the level of companies and organisations of various sectors of the economy, science, and education. Representatives of science and the system of higher education of the EAEU member countries suggested creating a unified university. This measure was justified by the possibility of scientific and educational integration in the EAEU member countries (Kulakova and Kirova, 2020), which consists in the formation of unified approaches in education and science; creation of the chain of development, realisation, and commercialisation of R&D; implementation of technologies; possibility for interaction in the sphere of commercialisation of technologies at the level of subjects in the EAEU member countries; creation of the unified level of digital readiness of companies' personnel and university

graduates. Thus, Eurasian Network University was opened in 2022 (Esuniversity, 2022).

Let us further analyse the influence of the conditions of economic integration on the improvement of the digital economy in the EAEU member countries.

As was mentioned above, Kazakhstan and Russia are leaders in the creation of an effective digital economic space in the EAEU in the sphere of e-government and

electronic document turnover. Due to an increase in general results, these countries ensure an increase in their effectiveness in the digital economy. Despite certain underrun in the implementation of initiatives on the improvement of the management of knowledge exchange and information systems, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan also demonstrate an improvement in the development. We should note the achievements of the above three countries in an increase in Internet speed.

Table 3. Influence of the conditions of economic integration in the EAEU on the formation of the digital economy of the member countries

	Conditions of economic integration in the EAEU	Indicators of the digital economy formation
1	Implementation of e-government at the level of the EAEU, aimed at citizens' receiving public services in the digital form	As of year-end 2023, Kazakhstan was the leader of the EAEU in the sphere of transfer of experience and knowledge in the organisation of the function of digitalisation of state management. This involves registration of legal entities; and interaction between business subjects and non-profit organisations in the spheres of taxation, customs, and social services. The general level of digitalisation of public services in the country was 90% as of year-end 2023.
2	Internet speed – the basis for the effective functioning of the digital environment of the EAEU, including:	As of March 2024, the ranking and speed of the Internet connection in the world rankings were as follows:
2.1	Mobile	Kazakhstan – 70 th , 38.04 Mbps Kyrgyzstan – 87 th , 29.92 Mbps Armenia – 89 th , 29.07 Mbps Russia – 111 th , 24.88 Mbps Belarus – 138 th , 11.59 Mbps.
2.2	Fixed Broadband	Russia – 65 th , 87.28 Mbps Belarus – 87 th , 64.60 Mbps Armenia – 96 th , 52.76 Mbps Kyrgyzstan – 95 th , 57.06 Mbps Kazakhstan – 98 th , 52.17 Mbps
3	E-commerce	Growth of the volumes of e-commerce in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation grew by 30% in 2022 compared to 2021. In 2022-2023, the Eurasian Economic Commission implemented measures for the improvement of the mechanisms of e-commerce, including regulation of intellectual property rights on the Internet, taxation and technical regulation, and customs norms.
4	Digitalisation of the energy sector	Implementation of smart energy grids, which ensure precise accounting and transfer of data and their control by consumers and operators. This allows for the integration of consumers, operators, and grids into the unified automatized system. Precise accounting of electric energy consumption allows forecasting the need for it within territories. A large role in the creation of operators of energy storing with the use of ICT belongs to Belarus, which developed this direction after putting the Astravets Nuclear Power Plant into operation in 2021.
5	The complex influence of the created conditions of the integration in the EAEU member countries	GDP: 1) Russia: 2015 – USD 1.36 trillion, 2017 – USD 1.57 trillion, 2018 – USD 1.66 trillion, 2019 – USD 1.69 trillion, 2021 – USD 1.84 trillion, 2022 – USD 2.24 trillion. 2) Armenia: 2015 – USD 10.55 billion, 2017 – USD 11.53 billion, 2018 – USD 12.46 billion, 2019 – USD 13.62 billion, 2021 – USD 13.88 billion, 2022 – USD 19.51 billion. 3) Belarus: 2015 – USD 56.45 billion, 2017 – USD 54.73 billion, 2018 – USD 60.03 billion, 2019 – USD 64.41 billion, 2021 – USD 69.67 billion, 2022 – USD 72.79 billion. 4) Kazakhstan: 2015 – USD 184.39 billion, 2017 – USD 166.81 billion, 2018 – USD 179.34 billion, 2019 – USD 181.67 billion, 2021 – USD 197.11 billion, 2022 - USD 225.5 billion. 5) Kyrgyzstan: 2015 – USD 6.68 billion, 2017 – USD 7.7 billion, 2018 – USD 8.27 billion, 2019 – USD 9.37 billion, 2021 – USD 9.25 billion, 2022 - USD 11.54 billion.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Sputnik.by (2023), the United Nations (2024a), the United Nations (2024b), Ookla, LLC (2024), Uae.mid.ru (2023), the World Bank Group (2024a), the World Bank Group (2024b), the World Bank Group (2024c), and the World Bank Group (2024d)

As shown in Table 3, improvement of the conditions of economic integration in the EAEU positively influences the indicators of the formation of the digital economy in the member countries. Effectiveness is observed in the context of the implementation of e-government, increase in the Internet speed, e-commerce, digitalisation of energy, as well as general economic results (growth of national GDP due to the implementation of the digital economy tools, which include the management of the exchange of digital knowledge and information systems).

4. DISCUSSION

In the course of the analysis, we proved the research hypothesis on the influence of the improvement of the conditions of economic integration on the level of the digital economy in the EAEU member countries (management of knowledge exchange and information systems). This influence is manifested in the cost (growth of GDP of all five members of the EAEU) sphere and the sphere of intellectual, information, digital, and energy development. Despite the presence of certain problems in the considered member countries of the EAEU, which hinder effective economic integration, we can mention the synergetic effects of cooperation within this international partnership.

Further cooperation between the EAEU member countries at the current stage has various perspectives. This could be an updated model, which envisages new members' joining the EAEU from among countries of Central Asia. This would allow expanding the logistics, transport, scientific and technical, and energy connections due to the use of opportunities offered by the digital economy. Also, this cooperation could be focused on the resolution of issues of security of the member countries in various spheres. A rather promising direction, substantiated in modern scientific circles (Kumar et al., 2023), is the implementation of smart energy grids. It is used in the management of energy systems of the EAEU member countries, however, only in automatized interaction in energy networks at the level of certain territories (mainly in the capitals of the countries). Another promising direction is an innovation system of energy storing, as a precondition for ensuring energy security for each EAEU member state.

Another important issue is the unified system of education and science, which will allow labour resources to receive offices and positions in any of the five members of the EAEU, due to the use of the unified standard in training and organisation of R&D. The possibility of forming the unified scientific and educational system of the EAEU can also be a factor in

the attraction of foreign applicants in the universities. This would facilitate the growth of universities' revenues from educational activities. Support for an attractive scientific and research environment can lead to the attraction of talented scholars from third countries, for the development of science in the EAEU countries.

This research showed that a specific feature of the digital economy of the EAEU countries is the unique combination of a rather high level of integration of information systems and the business environment's interest in further implementation of digital tools in the main sectors. According to Benčič et al. (2020), the first component is manifested predominantly in developed countries. Experience of the formation of the EAEU allows disproving the existing characteristics of digitalisation of the economy, which are observed in most developed and developing countries. This is because the EAEU member countries are clearly focused on high growth rates of the digital economy in the main sectors and spheres.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results obtained, it is possible to state the sufficient effectiveness of economic integration in the EAEU member countries due to the improvement of the management of knowledge and information systems. Accordingly, this model of partnership, though requiring improvement in the context of legal, institutional, and digital regulation, ensures mutually profitable conditions for member countries and demonstrates priorities and perspectives for countries that consider the possibility of joining this partnership. Over 2015-2023, the EAEU was able to acquire an important place in the international arena thanks to the activities of its participants (Russia and Kazakhstan) in the creation of favourable conditions for the formation of a digital environment for the functioning of the digital economy sectors. Efficiency of Kazakhstan's activities in the creation of e-government became a model of this process management, which can be adopted in other member countries, due to a rather high level of similarity in state management.

New directions for the interaction in the context of economic integration could be developed in the context of the focus on the innovative capabilities of the digital economy and its trends at the global level. Special attention should be paid to modelling with the help of artificial intelligence and big data analytics. These tools can be used during the improvement of the integrated information system of the EAEU in the context of the creation of opportunities for forecasting processes and the compilation of information databases.

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