

EXPERIENCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN OVERCOMING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of combating the coronavirus pandemic in the European Union. As you know, the pandemic has caused severe consequences in the social, economic and political spheres of life, and has also exacerbated the problem of social inequality around the world. European countries, despite the relatively high level of social and medical support, also suffered from the coronavirus. In the article, the authors analyze the EU policy to contain the spread of the pandemic, to combat it at the supranational and national levels. Based on a comparative analysis of the measures taken by a number of EU Member States, their path to post-coronavirus recovery is shown.

Keywords: European Union, Central Asia, coronavirus, fight against covid-19, pandemic, quarantine, economic, social.

Аңдатпа. Мақала Еуропалық Одақ елдерінің коронавирус пандемиясымен күресу мәселесіне арналған. Коронавирустық пандемия әлеуметтік, экономикалық және саяси салаларда ауыр зардаптарға алып келді, сонымен қатар әлемдегі әлеуметтік теңсіздік мәселесін күшейтті. Еуропа елдері де әлеуметтік және медициналық қолдаудың салыстырмалы түрде жоғары деңгейіне қарамастан, коронавирустан зардап шекті. Мақалада авторлар пандемияның таралуын тежеу, онымен ұлттық және ұлттық деңгейде күресу бойынша ЕО саясатын талдайды. Бірқатар ЕО-ға мүше мемлекеттер қабылдаған шараларды салыстырмалы талдау негізінде олардың коронавирустан кейінгі қалпына келу жолы көрсетіледі.

Түйін сөздер: Еуропалық Одақ, Орталық Азия, коронавирус, КОВИД-19-бен күрес, пандемия, карантин, экономикалық, әлеуметтік.

Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме борьбы с коронавирусной пандемией в Европейском Союзе. Как известно, пандемия повлекла за собой тяжелейшие последствия в социальной, экономической и политической сферах жизни, а также усугубила проблему социального неравенства в мире. Европейские страны, несмотря на сравнительно высокий уровень социального, медицинского обеспечения, также пострадали от коронавируса. В статье авторы анализируют политику ЕС по сдерживанию распространения пандемии, борьбы с ней на наднациональном и национальном уровнях. На основе сравнительного анализа мер, предпринятых рядом государств-членов ЕС, показан их путь к посткоронавирусному восстановлению.

Ключевые слова: Европейский Союз, Центральная Азия, коронавирус, борьба с ковид-19, пандемия, карантин, экономический, социальный

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has had a huge impact on public policy and the lives of people around the world. It has forced the government to take unprecedented measures, such as restricting travel and imposing strict

quarantine requirements. In this most difficult situation, most countries are putting into effect incentive packages, including employment, social, business, primarily tax support measures.

The world's largest economies were not ready for the coronavirus pandemic: in the spring of 2020, one after another,

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countries announced lockdowns and froze the work of entire industries to stop the spread of the infection. This turned into a decline in the economy in all countries facing the pandemic. Countries with an extensive service sector and a large share of small and medium-sized businesses, such as Spain or Italy, which obtain a significant part of their GDP from tourism, had a particularly painful experience. In order to support the population and business, the authorities were forced to make large expenditures in excess of the planned budgets.

Today, the pandemic is considered overcome in most countries, but the threat of coronavirus infection still hangs like a sword of Damocles over the world. As you know, the situation remains critical in China, where the policy of zero tolerance for the coronavirus has begun to cause outrage among the population. In such conditions, it is relevant to study the world experience in combating the coronavirus pandemic. And the EU policy to overcome the pandemic, where the emphasis was placed on social support for the population and business, is of real scientific interest.

Methodology

In the article the processing, introduction of primary sources into scientific circulation was carried out by using such research methods as content analysis, peer-review, methods of processing statistical data.

In general, the study of the experience of the EU countries in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic was implemented on the basis of two closely interrelated approaches, both regional (supranational) and national ones, the synergy of which was obvious on a pan-European scale.

Based on a systematic approach, the general context of the problem and the specifics of European countries in the conditions of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic were identified. The use of a comparative analysis in a cross-national aspect made it possible to determine the features of the fight against coronavirus in the EU countries. The historical-logical and specific political science methods (event analysis, situational analysis, peer-review) were operable for the analysis of the formation and development of national policies to combat the coronavirus pandemic

in a number of EU countries. The final conclusions of the study relied on the results of the SWOT analysis, which revealed the strengths and possibilities of tactics to overcome the coronavirus in the EU member states.

Ways to overcome the pandemic in the EU: supranational level

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused serious consequences for the economies of states, not only the EU, but also the whole world. It became clear to many experts that the EU economy is expected to stagnate. Despite the fact that various political and economic response measures have been taken, EU states will have to deal with the consequences of the pandemic for several more years from the moment of the outbreak of the pandemic.

Since the beginning of 2020, the GDP of the European Union countries has been changing for the worse. For the period of March 17, 2020, when the species was detected throughout Europe, record cases of infection were recorded in Italy, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, as well as in France. All these countries are tourist centers, perhaps this fact played a negative role. The territory of Italy was particularly affected, Italy showed a sad record for the number of victims, unfortunately, Italy was the second most infected in the world, after the USA.

Italy became the first country in which a large number of cases were recorded. At the very beginning of the pandemic, Italy took measures and stopped air travel with China. Quarantine measures began in the country in February 2020. But despite all the measures taken, the epidemic of Covid began in Italy, as a result of which a lot of people died, especially the elderly ones.

Both firms and various trade organizations in Italy found themselves at a disadvantage. According to analysts, about 72% of firms in Italy were affected by the pandemic. Firms lost from 5 to 18% of income, the most affected were companies that were engaged in cargo transportation, they lost about 99% of income, also firms engaged in tourism lost 89.9% of income, fashion houses almost 80%, and farmers lost about 78% of income. For many companies and organizations, such losses meant almost bankruptcy (Andrea Remuzzi, Giuseppe Remuzzi, 2020);

In the EU, at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, about 1,400 different measures were taken to mitigate the crisis that arose in connection with the pandemic. At the very beginning of the pandemic, there were cohesive measures of action by all health care structures in Europe, not only local residents could receive treatment in European countries, but also foreign citizens who were in the country at that time were not denied in treatment. More than 600 thousand European citizens were returned to their homeland, all the forces of the states were mobilized to fight Covid. At the same time, work began on the development of an effective vaccine that could protect people from a new infection.

An "Information Center" of the European Commission was established, according to which analytical work was carried out on the consequences of the pandemic in the EU. As a result, it was decided to provide assistance of 4.2 trillion euros, and more than 30% of the GDP of the European Union was concentrated by the European Union and distributed to help EU member states.

In the early days of the pandemic, the European Commission developed the necessary measures to prevent unemployment and mitigate the consequences of the crisis, especially in countries where the consequences of the pandemic had particularly affected the economy of the state. Global measures have been taken to overcome the consequences of the pandemic, such as the adoption of an enhanced long-term budget for the next 6 years, until 2027. Adoption of a package of social measures in the amount of 1.8 trillion euros to help both ordinary citizens and companies and organizations to overcome the crisis (Hussein Kassim, 2022);

This package of socio-economic assistance to the EU countries was adopted in order to restore the countries of Europe after the pandemic, as well as to help in the development of such modern trends as "green technologies", digitalization, etc.

AstraZeneca and BioNTech (Pfizer), CureVac, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Sanofi/GlaxoSmithKline had signed agreements with various companies involved in the development of a modern vaccine against Covid, as well as agreements with AstraZeneca and BioNTech (Pfizer), CureVac, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and

Sanofi/GlaxoSmithKline. Such agreements with vaccine development companies were important for the EU, since from the very beginning of the pandemic, the European Commission advocated the creation of an effective vaccine that could protect the population from the deadly virus. As a result, Pfizer developed a vaccine, which was approved for use by the European Commission on December 21, 2020 (Cardeans, 2022, pp. 442-443);

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the European Commission has focused on the work necessary to maintain stability in the EU countries. The work was carried out through online meetings and video conferences. This mobilization of work contributed to the fact that decisions were made in record time, which allowed avoiding major economic and social problems.

The European Council also held meetings to resolve several issues, so meetings were held on the issue of relations between the EU and England, and a long-term budget was also approved. As you know, the EU Solidarity Fund covered significant costs for providing countries during the state of emergency. A new investment policy was also organized and discussed. In the period from March to October 2020, the meetings of the commissions were held in Brussels, from October these meetings were replaced with a hybrid format, as a result of which participants who did not live in Brussels could join the meeting online.

The Council continued its work continuously, despite the complexity of the situation; all issues were resolved quickly and promptly. Also, the pandemic did not affect the work of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions, both of these committees held consultations and made a number of necessary conclusions, which made it possible to launch a platform for exchange and development of cooperation between the regions of Europe in April 2020. The EEC also approved a special award in honor of civil solidarity, which were aimed at overcoming the coronavirus pandemic.

In mid-March 2020, the Council of Europe adopted a number of measures to support the economies of the European Union countries, and allocated about 37 billion euro. Correspondingly, in order to maintain stability in the economies of the

countries, a special program on securities in the amount of 750 billion euro has been adopted. The proper functioning of hospitals has been organized, funds were allocated to help the population, information work has been carried out, ventilators have been purchased, a policy of assistance to entrepreneurs and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses has been carried out. Mortgage loans in European countries have been frozen, tax deductions for the pandemic period have been abolished in a number of countries, severance pay has been paid to those workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, huge funds have been allocated for healthcare (Zak, Garncarz, 2020).

National levels of fight against coronavirus

Italy. During those difficult days, the Italian government took all possible measures, so the Italian Ministry of Health issued a special decree to restore the supply and production of necessary protective and antiseptic products for the population. It was also decided to finance, in the amount of 50 million euros, the production of ventilators, companies that produce medical equipment, protective masks, protective screens, glasses, etc.

During that difficult period for the country, the government was forced to admit that all the measures that had been taken earlier could not be effective in this situation, which requires special measures. At the same time, four main directions were identified, according to which the government began to develop the obligatory measures:

- Taking the necessary measures to increase the interventional potential of the healthcare sector;
- Socio-economic assistance to employees of companies who were left without earnings;
- Providing support to families and small and medium-sized businesses;
- Tax reduction.

In addition, separate business assistance measures were organized.

A moratorium was announced for business enterprises on credit obligations. Various loans and credits were frozen until September 30, 2020. Credit institutions were given the opportunity to activate a state

guarantee covering almost 33% of the loan amount. The budget funds of the Central Guarantee Fund were raised to 1.5 billion rubles. euro. The reserve fund was also raised by 5 billion euro, it allowed employees to pay wages for 9 weeks, mortgage payments were also frozen, including for self-employed citizens. Various social benefits were also provided for public taxi workers, postal employees, waiters, etc. That is, employees of the most affected areas of activity (Boccia, Cascini, McKee, Ricciard, 2020);

In Spain, the first cases of the disease were recorded around March 13, 2020, in fifty provinces. On March 25, data were received that the death rate in Spain exceeded the death rate in mainland China, Spain was in second place after Italy in terms of the number of deaths from coronavirus.

The “shock therapy” plan that the Spanish government undertook was supposed to help the state’s economy.

This plan included:

- introduction of a moratorium on taxes for the self-employed for a period of six months;
- providing loans to industries that have been most affected by the pandemic;
- in order to maintain employment in the tourism sectors, there was an expansion of social supply bonuses in intermittent fixed contracts to cover contracts from February to June 2020;
- the government has provided a new package of measures for March 17 in the amount of \$ 200 billion.;
- to support exporting firms, about 100 billion euro were provided through state guarantees;
- the provision of loans has been digitalized, for a more simplified obtainment of assistance;

Additional measures were provided to help those owners of firms whose business was terminated as a result of the pandemic. The state has also generated a mechanism to help citizens left without work, as well as self-employed citizens left without earnings as a result of the pandemic (Amuedo-Dorantes, C Borra, N Rivera Garrido, 2020);

In Germany, a number of measures have also been generated to support the population during the pandemic. As you know, the first case of infection was recorded on March 17, 2020. All educational institutions were immediately closed, as well

as schools and universities were switched to online study mode. In Bavaria, a state of emergency was declared, as a result, all the measures taken gave a positive result, in Germany the death rate was much lower than in other countries.

Germany, as well as other European countries, has adopted a package of measures worth more than \$750 billion euro. The following measures have been taken:

- Compensation was provided to families in which working parents were forced to go to work, while children remained at home to study;

- in firms where more than 10% of employees were confined, a social subsidy from the state was provided;

If social assistance from the state was needed, the citizens could apply for it, while the property was not taken into account.

- If a retiree earns up to 45 thousand euros a year, then this would not affect the payment of pensions, such a measure would attract retiree to those areas in which there was a shortage of workers.

- It was decided that the lease agreements would not be terminated during the pandemic, a moratorium on payments for rental housing during the pandemic would be proposed;

- Small firms with a staff of up to five people would be provided with assistance in the amount of 5 thousand euros, as well as for companies with a staff of up to 10 employees, they could be provided with financial assistance in the amount of 15 thousand euros. Such measures should help German entrepreneurs overcome the crisis (Ulrich, Emanuel, Simeon, 2020);

In France, coronavirus infection was officially recorded on January 24, 2020 in Bordeaux. A strict quarantine was immediately declared, a ban on going outside was announced, as well as holding events. Schools and universities were sent for online training. Also, as in other European countries, the government announced its package of social measures, namely:

- tax breaks have been announced;
- Guarantees were offered in the amount of almost 90% on loans, depending on the loan amount;

- employees received compensation payments for job loss;

- Intermediary services of the state in case of conflicts between small and medium-sized businesses, as well as clients;

- Creation by the government of a Solidarity Fund to help firms with a small number of employees up to 10 people;

- utility bills could be paid later, if the payment was overdue during the pandemic, it would not entail any penalties;

- Modernization of credit intermediation was being introduced;

- Social assistance to unemployed and needy citizens has also been introduced.

Since March 17, France has decided to introduce additional measures of assistance during the pandemic. According to the new measures, it was decided to transfer about 2 billion euro to the Solidarity Fund, also as an aid to small and medium-sized businesses, the payment of utility bills at the expense of the state was offered. Compensation was also introduced for small companies, whose turnover is less than 1 million euros per month, these companies could receive assistance from the state in the amount of 1,500 euros (Чепера, 2022);

The UK left the EU in 2019, but it is also a European country, so we think it is necessary to consider the measures it took during the pandemic. The UK has responded to the new pandemic in a united way and has developed a new action plan. The British bank assumed obligations to pay loans for small and medium-sized businesses, and also promised assistance to all firms and companies that found themselves in a difficult situation. The interest rates of the Bank of England have been changed; they have become less by 0.25%.

For the first six months, support was organized for citizens who had found themselves in a difficult situation and had been left without work as a result of the pandemic. In general, in the UK there were some generous conditions for helping citizens, this is a non-taxable grant of 80% of the average monthly earnings over the past three years, this grant was also provided for employees who had lost their jobs. In addition to the described measures, the UK has adopted the following stages of business support:

- Public health services;
- Introduction of grants in the amount of 25 thousand pounds for SMEs;

- An increase in social support in the amount of 7 billion pounds;

- assurance of employees' full earnings in case medical leave;

-A tax break has been introduced; employees who have lost their jobs can count on a tax break during the year;

- There has been a 3 months grace period on mortgage payments, without withholding interest. Despite all the efforts made, they turned out to be insufficient and on March 11, 2020, the UK government adopted a new package of emergency measures in the amount of 30bn.pounds sterling.

According to the new package of socio-economic measures, companies and firms with 250 employees will be reimbursed the amount of earnings for two weeks, in case of illness. In order to provide assistance in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic a special loan program in the amount of 1.3 billion pounds has been proposed for SMEs (Сорокина, 2022);

Complementary industries have been mainly affected in the given countries, analysts cite figures from the beginning of 2020 and compare them with figures for the development of related industries after March 2020. Industries such as Exhibitions, galleries, restaurants and cafes, fast food chains, hotels, cleaning companies – they suffered the most.

Various protection programs have been undertaken by other European countries. For example, Austria is introducing a social package in the amount of 4.4 billion euro to help the citizens of the state. Such assistance package has been prepared predominantly for enterprises that were forced to send their employees on leave without pay and without payment.

In Hungary, exemptions were introduced for the companies and firms operating in the most affected sectors of the economy, a moratorium was imposed on loans that were previously received by small and medium-sized businesses.

The Greek government has decided to pay 800 euros to citizens who have lost their jobs. In addition, small and medium-sized businesses have been granted a deferral on loan repayments for a period of 3 months, while interest on these loans was paid by the state.

Denmark provided a package of social measures in the amount of 40 billion crones, previously it has provided social support in the amount of 200 billion Danish crowns.

Post-pandemic recovering of the EU and assistance to the countries of Central Asia

As we can see, each country supports the business sector that has suffered the most, while measures to ensure social measures have not been abandoned. Each state presented its own measures to overcome the consequences of the crisis, as well as to provide the population who were left without income. All the EU countries coped with this problem, despite the critical indicators of the pandemic - the high level of infection and mortality. The countries of Europe began to recover from the crisis, largely thanks to the socio-economic measures taken by the states in order to help the population and business. The internal economic policy of the EU has not suffered much, all this is due to the correct and reasonable state policy.

In this context it is necessary to mention several countries whose economic policy has proved to be the most effective and has been able to support other countries.

First of all, these are the countries that have allocated the largest amount of funds from the budget. They are: Germany 1 trillion.418 billion dollars, Spain 439 billion dollars, Italy 402 billion.dollars and France 376 billion.dollars. All these countries have allocated colossal amounts from their budget to help overcome the crisis.

Of all the EU countries, Spain was the most distinguished in providing various benefits to the population and business. Experts call it the most generous of all EU countries, which has made the most investments into its economy and to help the citizens of the country in such a difficult period.

Germany turned out to be the most socially oriented country during the pandemic, because the country's government allocated large funds to protect children and people in need of help. Employees who found themselves out of work as a result of the pandemic were also covered.

The measures proposed by the EU governments played a role in stabilizing the situation, despite the decrease in GDP indicators in the countries in early and mid-2020, experts predicted an increase in indicators in 2021 and 2022. Also, the measures taken during the beginning of the pandemic can have a positive impact on the

further development of the economies of the states. It is safe to say that even if the pandemic continues, the economies of the European Union states will be able to overcome all difficulties. Currently the EU is intensively preparing new instruments to ensure that the development of the economies of the countries reaches the level of 2018-2019.

In December 2021, at a meeting of EU heads of state and Government in Brussels, it was stated that only through global cooperation the pandemic can be overcome. The EU was concerned about the situation with the spread of the new Omicron coronavirus stamp around the world, as a result of which a decision has been made at the meeting on the need for vaccination with a third dose of coronavirus vaccine (revaccination). As a result, EU countries and partner countries should strengthen cooperation with companies producing vaccines, as well as increase cooperation with WHO and other international organizations in order to cooperate in the fight against coronavirus infection.

In turn, the European Union has also launched a coronavirus support program in the Central Asian countries, called "COVID-19 in Central Asian countries: Crisis Response Measures" (CACCR) with a budget of 3 million euros (1.4 billion tenge). As EU Ambassador to Kazakhstan Sven-Olov Karlsson stated: "The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown how vulnerable our national health systems are and how important it is to reconsider our approach to public health emergencies. That is why, within the framework of the CACCR program, along with the provision of essential medicines and equipment needed today, assistance will also be provided to laboratories and hospitals (Central Asian countries - Ed.) so that they are better prepared to deal with such a pandemic in the future."

In addition, it was decided by the EU countries that assistance will be provided to support the health systems of the Central Asian countries in order to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic in the future (Грacheва, 2020);

This CACCR program is divided into three stages, at the first stage it is intended to provide assistance in priority needs, medicines and necessary medical equipment, etc. After the stabilization of the

situation, the second stage of this program is proposed. It suggests the use of various mechanisms to restore the economies of countries and prepare for a possible repeat of the pandemic wave. The third stage involves the development of economies and health systems in order to prepare them for the possible resumption of such emergencies. As we can see, such programs are designed to help the countries of the region and prepare them for possible repeats of the pandemic waves, such measures are necessary and have a preventive nature, which today is one of the optimal solutions to the current situation.

The European Union provides financial assistance to such countries as Tajikistan. At the beginning of the pandemic, Tajikistan received financial assistance from the European Union in the amount of almost \$ 50 million and a loan in the amount of \$30 million to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economies of the countries.

At the same time, Turkmenistan has stopped receiving assistance from the European Union. This is primarily due to the fact that the state was able to overcome the consequences of the pandemic and, according to economic indicators, does not belong to the number of low-income countries. According to the criteria of the World Bank, countries with incomes from \$4,086 to \$12,615 fall into the category of countries with above-average income. Such countries include not only Turkmenistan, but also Kazakhstan, as a result of which they cannot count on financial assistance from the EU (Международные процессы в Центральной Азии, 2020.с.125-132).

Conclusion

So, as we can see that all the EU countries were able to take a number of measures that helped stabilize the situation. They reacted virtually the same way to the consequences of the pandemic. Funds were mobilized to help small and medium-sized businesses, and social benefits were also provided to employees who lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. Huge funds were involved in the development of healthcare. Certain amount of work has been carried out to provide organizations with means of protection, loans at low interest rates have been issued, mortgage payments have been frozen without accruing interest. In general,

in the fight against coronavirus infection, European countries have placed great emphasis on social support for citizens and the business sector.

At the same time, within the framework of cooperation with the countries of the CAR, the EU pursued a policy of humanitarian assistance. Grants and loans were allocated to the countries of the CAR that were also in

distress. The European Union also sends humanitarian aid to the CAR countries to fight the coronavirus, it includes both means of protections, medicines, and food products. The experience of combating the Covid-19 pandemic has shown that the most effective way to combat it is constructive interaction, cooperation between countries.

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ЕУРОПАЛЫҚ ОДАҚТЫҢ КОРОНАВИРУСТЫҚ ПАНДЕМИЯНЫ ЖЕҢУ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

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ОПЫТ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО СОЮЗА ПО ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЮ КОРОНОВИРУСНОЙ ПАНДЕМИИ

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