International cooperation in the transport and logistics sector within the EAEU as a factor in the implementation of the strategy of sustainable development of the Eurasian region

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1 Introduction

In the current geopolitical situation, when deglobalization processes prevail, it is the intensification of regional cooperation between states that becomes the main trend in the development of international relations. At the same time, the task of digitalization and interconnection of the transport and logistics systems of the partner states is an important area of joint work [1,2,4,5]. The so-called "soft law" documents—memorandums, joint statements, framework agreements and other documents that are not binding on the parties, which, however, effectively coordinate joint activities in the spheres regulated by them, are becoming increasingly important.

In the context of Industry 4.0, the leading trends in the development of international legal regulation of interstate relations are now the regulation of the digitalization of all sectors of the economy, the sectoral activities of enterprises, including transport.

Abstract. The article examines the process of integration of transport and logistics ecosystems within the framework of implementing the goals of the EAEU, its main trends and tasks, as well as the change in the paradigm of cooperation development under the influence of the current geopolitical situation. Improvement, harmonization and unification of the effective legal and regulatory framework is the central task for the implementation of regional policy in the Eurasian region. Its implementation is necessary to create a single legal, digital, infrastructural transport and logistics space, ensuring the growth of both the national economies of the EAEU member states and the synergistic effects of integration processes and the cohesion of economic and transport systems.

It appears that the implementation of digital initiatives is necessary to create an ecosystem of seamless transstate logistics interaction.
In addition, against the backdrop of current challenges and threats to Russia’s economic stability and security, the implementation of regional projects to integrate transport and logistics systems of the Eurasian region on the basis of the EAEU with other partner countries will be the basis for the future prosperity of the region. The paper attempts to show that the adoption of detailed international legal documents will contribute to the sustainable development and regulation of new integration processes in the Eurasian region.

2 Materials and methods

The study used open-source materials, the official website of the EAEU, and statistical data on the results of the development of integration processes in the EAEU. The authors used methods of analysis, synthesis, systematization and comparison.

3 Results and discussion

The EEU Treaty of 29.05.2014 provides for the following tasks in the transport sphere:

- Creation of a common market for transportation services
- Reducing the harmful effects of transport on the environment and human health
- Formation of a favorable investment climate
- Ensuring transport safety
- Improvement of the quality of transport services
- Effective use of the transit potential of the Eurasian Economic Union member states
- Integration of transport systems of the Eurasian Economic Union member states into the world transport system

Fig. 1. The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014 provides for the following objectives in the transport sector, including the railway industry

- Harmonization of legislation regulating the transport and logistics industry, including its digital component
- Application of unified tariffs in the field of transportation services
- Ensuring equal access of transport and logistics companies to the service market of other EEU member states and to their transport infrastructure
- Development of intelligent transportation systems
- Expansion of the sphere of passenger transportation
- Joint development of infrastructure, transport and logistics systems, implementation of joint infrastructure projects in "bottlenecks"
- Improvement of transit and multimodal passenger and freight transportation
Ensuring freedom of transnational transit within the EAEU;

- Simplification of procedures at border crossing points of member states when organizing transportation;
- Harmonization of professional qualification requirements for employees of companies and sole proprietors of member states engaged in international transportation.

Fig. 2. Estimated positive effects of transport policy coordination on the economies of EAEU member states (compiled by the authors).

The integration of the transport systems of the member states certainly contributes to the intensification of economic relations and will have a positive effect on the growth of entrepreneurial activity in the EAEU.

Fig. 3. Estimated synergistic benefits of integration processes within the EAEU in the field of transport for the business community of the member states (compiled by the authors).

Signed in May 2015. The joint statement on cooperation within the framework of the project to link the construction of the EAEU and China’s Silk Road Economic Belt strategy has opened up new prospects for integration processes in Eurasia [8].
At the same time, a promising direction for the development of integration processes within the framework of the current geopolitical agenda is the development of the idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, proposed in 2016 at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum by Russian President Vladimir Putin, which suggests the cohesion of the EAEU development paradigms and the Chinese project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The development of the projects is supposed to be based on the principle of partnership, rather than the EAEU joining the PPI, as noted in the Joint Statement of the President of Russia and the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China in 2019.

One of the key areas of cooperation should be the transport and logistics industry, including infrastructure projects. In 2014, the United Transport and Logistics Company (UTLC) was created in the EAEU with the participation of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. The latter performs the functions of an operator in the organization of railway transportation and forwarding. The main task of the UTLC is related to servicing cargo flows circulating between the countries of Southeast Asia and the EU through the territory of the EEU and seeks to reorient the container cargo flow from sea to rail transport.

The main driver and condition for the balanced development of international corridors passing through the transport and logistics space of the EAEU is the formation of an actual set of unified documents as a full-fledged tool to regulate and organize transportation and other operations of the transportation process among the EAEU member states. For example, such unified documents could be a form of international consignment note for transit transport along such logistics routes as “East-West”: through Zabaikalsk, Erlyan, Dostyk, Khorgos, Suifenhe.

Another important factor is the ratification of an agreement between the railroads of China, Belarus, Germany, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Poland and Russia, which will be aimed at ensuring cooperation in organizing container trains along the China-Europe routes as a condition for sustainable development and implementation of the EEU transport and logistics development strategy.

At the same time, experts believe that the main problems of the EAEU's sustainable development lie in the increasing demand for rolling stock. The situation is complicated by the fact that there is an imbalance in the volume of freight flows in the global transport market, as well as many “bottlenecks” in the existing logistics infrastructure, which largely determines the lack of capacity at border crossings and Russian Railways' eastern range as a whole. The above-mentioned circumstances significantly limit the growth of traffic speeds in the organization of transit traffic through the EAEU, including, above all, in container trains.

There are “bottlenecks” in the road infrastructure. They are associated with the underdevelopment and poor quality of roads, especially non-highways.

It should be assumed that the solution to these problems can be found in finding ways to increase the speed of transit container trains, in the digitalization of all logistics operations along the entire transport routes, as well as in the implementation of transport and logistics services online, “in one window” and personalized “for the customer”. In addition, there is an urgent need to expand the geography of routes and the range of cargoes covered by transit container services, including digital ones.

At the same time, it should be noted that much has already been done. For example, the EAEU and DPRK have agreed on the implementation and financing of transport and infrastructure projects concerning the construction and reconstruction of roads, the creation of transport and logistics centers and transport hubs. In 2019, the parties signed an agreement on cross-border information exchange on goods and the CU, which contributes to improving the seamlessness of transport and logistics activities in the region and the integration of information systems.
Another promising area of cooperation between the EAEU and the IPP is the digital economy, including the development and implementation of AI technologies, the Internet of Things, cross-border electronic payments, digital platforms, and cybersecurity.

4 Conclusion

The role of the transport and logistics component in ensuring sustainable development in the Eurasian space and Eurasian economic integration as a whole cannot be overestimated. The international single transport and logistics space, which includes legal, digital and infrastructural components, is a key link in the system of global economic relations both within the EAEU and in ensuring sustainable transit along transport corridors that pass through its territory. The presence of the relevant legal regulation of the main transport and logistics processes, unified and ratified throughout the EAEU, will be a necessary and sufficient factor for the formation of new local industries, the inflow of international investment and ensuring high labor mobility.

Sustainable functioning of transport in the EAEU space can and should become one of the non-commodity drivers of EAEU development by forming favorable organizational, legal and economic conditions for uninterrupted organization of transit traffic. The unique location of the EAEU at the "crossroads" of dynamically growing volumes of goods turnover along international transport corridors "East-West" and "North-South" is one of the fundamental determinants for increasing land transit across the EAEU. Even today, experts and carriers call the key competitive advantage of overland transit across the EAEU territory a fairly high speed of delivery. The speed of delivery is largely determined by the simplification, unification and digitalization of all customs formalities within the EEU single customs territory, as well as the regulatory and legal framework for the unhindered implementation of all options of the multimodal transport and logistics delivery system.

Thus, the paper shows that the prerequisites of transport and logistics cooperation within the EAEU are inseparable from the prerequisites of legal regulation of economic integration. It is the "soft" law in this sphere that is one of the significant and effective regulators of the promotion of new initiatives, as its flexibility and dynamism will allow the parties to adjust their actions in the rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

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