

The role of the consumer basket as a tool for regulating the quality of life and safety at different stages of development of the Russian economy

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Abstract. In the article, the author examines the role of such important socio-economic indicators as the consumer basket, the subsistence minimum, the minimum wage in monitoring, assessing and regulating the quality of life of society as a whole, different social groups and the individual, which is especially important in the modern stage of scientific and technological development of Russia. Sustainable scientific and technological development of the country is based on the special role of man as the main factor of production, and imposes strict requirements on the level and quality of human and social capital. The level of quality of life of the population acts as both an "accelerating" and "inhibiting" driving force for the development of the state. Ensuring the necessary and sufficient level of quality of life of the population at the present time, to solve current and strategic socio-economic problems is a challenge for all countries of the world economy. The relevance of the study of this topic is determined by the fact that in January 2021, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation adopted a fundamentally new method for calculating the subsistence minimum, the minimum wage, and the role of the "consumer basket" indicator was also changed.

Keywords: *consumer basket, living wage, minimum wage, quality of life of a person and society, human capital, safety, danger, poverty level, scientific and technological progress.*

Russia, among other countries of the world economy, is solving the problems of modernization and the transition of the economy to a new technological mode associated with the spread of scientific and technological progress not only in the sphere of production, as it was at the previous stage, but also in virtually all areas of human life. Under these conditions, people and human capital are promoted by progress to a leading position, and are the main factor in the production of both traditional and modern goods. Currently, the level of human capital (that is, competencies, knowledge, skills, skills that a person has accumulated in the learning process, obtained as a result of practical activities), which allows him to create value on a global scale, is acquiring special significance. The quality, composition and structure of human capital is a competitive advantage domestically and in the global economy. It has been scientifically proven

that the level of human capital is interconnected and interdependent with the level of the quality of human life. A high level of quality of life of the population and a high level of human capital are the necessary prerequisites, factors and the result of the process of progressive socio-economic modernization of the country, regions, industries and departments. Otherwise, these indicators can act as restraining and even inhibiting factors of development, changing the nature of the modernization process, causing, instead of the expected public solidarity (the idea of the need for public solidarity to respond to modern threats, challenges and risks is developed in the "Society 5.0" building program, which is being implemented now in Japan) [1], a dangerous stratification of society into different social groups with divergent, parallel and conflicting interests [2].

In world practice, the quality of life indicator is used as an aggregated measure of the quality of life of a person, society and the state in the system of regional and national government, including objective (standard of living, life expectancy, level of education, health care, etc.) and subjective (satisfaction of a person with his life, whether he considers his life to be happy, prosperous, protected, etc.) indicators and indices characterizing society as a whole and an individual person (which is a more difficult task).

Society consists of a set of individuals, therefore, the quality of human life, the human capital accumulated and realized by him in the process of life, acquire special significance, and the level of social capital depends on them, affecting the security, direction and potential of the country's development, especially in the context of a constantly growing scientific technological progress. Man has ceased to be perceived as a "cog" of a huge mechanism. A modern person now does not postpone the satisfaction of his various interests and needs for an indefinite time (as it was 50 years ago), but wants to live here and now, and often sees hedonism as the goal of his life. Of great importance for the formation of a person's interests, needs and incentives that induce him to activity are samples of mass culture, which, thanks to network trade, scientific and technological progress (telecommunications, the Internet, etc.), are freely distributed in the global space.

In Russia and a number of other countries of the world, such indicators as: "subsistence minimum", "consumer basket", "minimum wage" are traditionally used as tools for monitoring, assessing and regulating the quality of life of the population and individuals. At different stages of the country's socio-economic development, depending on the goals, scale and priority of tasks, the level of progress, these indicators performed different functions, had a different composition and structure, and established different interdependencies.

The conducted scientific historical research and analysis show that in the practice of Russian management, the "consumer basket", "subsistence minimum" and "consumer budget", as their logical prototypes were used in the Soviet and pre-revolutionary period of management. In 1913, in Russia, a list of 24 names of agricultural and industrial products and goods was used to analyze the standard of living. In 1928, the Soviet government calculated the consumption set to assess the standard of living of the population. The set has already been expanded to include 40 food items and basic necessities, it also includes utilities, urban transport costs, as well as education and cultural needs (for example, 4 newspapers, 0.5 sheets of writing paper, 8 trips to the cinema). During the transition of the Soviet economy to the system of market economy, at the stage of perestroika in 1989, the program "Transition to the market" [3] used a new socio-economic concept - "the minimum consumer basket", developed by the USSR State Labor Committee. It was planned that the entire system of socio-economic indicators of the country would be based on this indicator. The methodology for calculating the minimum consumer basket differed from the consumer basket in the modern sense. It was planned with this minimum consumer basket to satisfy not the minimum needs of a person, but to ensure a decent standard of living for a person, even with minimal income. The basket included 12 items of expenditure, including: food - 76 items, clothing - 45, sanitary items - 28, furniture - 20, dishes - 28 and more than 250 items of services (including housing and communal services, transport, communications, recreation, gifts, flowers, etc.). In the new Russia in 1992 the very concept of a "consumer basket" appeared, based on the minimum consumer budget (in fact, it determined the level of human survival). The composition and structure of this consumer basket was determined by the need to support the impoverished population after the monetary reform (Pavlovsk) in 1991. The territory of Russia was divided into eight zones, and the consumer basket included only food products - 35 items, accounting for 70% of the minimum consumer budget, the other part was not deciphered, and non-food products are presented in relative terms. The methodology for calculating the subsistence minimum has changed, its national values, as well as the territorial and natural-climatic characteristics of the country's regions, have been taken into account.[4] In 1999, Federal Law № 201 "On the Consumer Basket" was adopted in Russia as a whole [5], and on the basis of "Methodological Recommendations" № 192 approved by the Government of the Russian Federation, the composition and structure of the consumer basket was established. [6] The consumer basket included 129 items of goods and services.

In 2001 and 2005, new versions of the law "On the consumer basket in the Russian Federation" were approved, which were adopted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation "Methodology for calculating the value of the consumer basket" in 2001 and 2005, respectively. In the 2005 methodology, an innovation was the division of the constituent

entities of the Russian Federation into three natural and climatic zones (with cold, temperate and warm climates), which affected the consumption of non-food products. Some of the items of the consumer basket began to be set not by composition (as was the case in previous versions), but by percentage, which may indicate a further trend towards a reduction in consumption expenditure rates. In 2006, the Federal Law "On the consumer basket in Russia as a whole" № 44 (dated 31.03.2006) was adopted. The composition and structure included 29 consolidated items in three groups: food, non-food products and services. In 2010, FZ №332 "On the consumer basket as a whole in Russia in 2011-2012" (dated 08.12.2010) was adopted, in the composition, structure and volumes provided for by the previous FZ - №44. This FZ became invalid on January 1, 2013 due to the adoption in 2012 of FZ "On the consumer basket in Russia as a whole" № 227 (dated 03.12.2012) and was valid until December 31, 2020 inclusive. (In the current FZ "On the consumer basket in Russia as a whole," Article 1 sets the terms for revision, at least once every five years. Consequently, the expected period for revising the consumer basket is the beginning of 2018, but Article 4 on the validity period of the law № 421 - FZ (dated 28.12.2017) changes were made that extended the validity period of the actual consumer basket until 2020). Since 2018, the consumer basket has been legally used to establish the average monthly living wage for a person, which corresponded to the minimum wage, but was not supposed to exceed it according to the standards. In accordance with Russian legislation, the size of the minimum wage was set annually in the amount equal to the full subsistence minimum of the working-age population in the country as a whole for the second quarter of the previous year and was used as a tool in overcoming social inequality and fighting poverty in the country.

Thus, this review and analysis of the main stages of the formation and development of the consumer basket, the subsistence minimum, as scientific concepts and socio-economic indicators, proves that the state was searching and adapting a meter that would perform control and regulatory functions to ensure a safe, necessary and sufficient living standards of the population, taking into account the actual socio-economic situation of the country.

The value of the subsistence minimum was adopted in Russia as a basic socio-economic indicator, measured in value and physical terms of the consumer basket, including mandatory payments and fees. The consumer basket is the minimum set of food and non-food products and services established by the state that a person needs to meet physiological needs, maintain health and ensure safe life. The goal of improving the indicators "consumer basket" and "subsistence minimum" at the Soviet stage was a steady increase in the well-being of citizens, at the present stage, an increase in the quality of life of both society as a whole and an individual. Comparing the consumer baskets of the Soviet period and the modern one, we note that the Soviet basket

was constantly growing, while the modern one demonstrates a steady tendency towards a simplification of the structure and a decrease in volumes. The actual composition and structure of the consumer basket and the subsistence minimum calculated on its basis make it obvious that they are significantly behind the scientifically grounded norms of rational consumption and income level, which allow a person to overcome the poverty line and maintain a decent standard and lifestyle. The volume of the consumer basket and the size of the subsistence minimum influenced not only the size of the minimum wage, but also the size of pensions, social benefits, subsidies to low-income citizens, scholarships for students, the amount of alimony and money for the payment of maternity capital at the birth of a third and subsequent child and other types material support for different groups of the population, and also served as a guideline by which the poverty threshold is determined. The consumer basket has traditionally been a tool for providing different groups of the population with a socially guaranteed maximum permissible level of consumption of economic benefits.

In the media in 2019, there were publications about conducting social experiments, when a person followed the norms of the consumer basket in consumer behavior, at the end of the month, a person's labor ability and health declined dangerously. This example and the experience of the life of a part of the country's population based in life on the consumer basket, the subsistence minimum and the minimum wage proved that it is almost impossible to overcome poverty, as a result, the level of personal security of a person is extremely reduced (in such conditions, a person not only has no opportunity, but also cannot save the already acquired one). With the massive nature of these socio-economic processes, the security of society and the state decreases (a long life in poverty for children, as the future development of the country, is especially dangerous), therefore, the need for accelerated institutional transformations in this area was obvious. According to Rosstat, in general, the cost of the consumer basket has increased 4.9 times (in 2001 - 883 rubles, in 2019 - 4367 rubles). Inflation during this period increased by 5.33 times.

From the 2000s to the present, the President of the Russian Federation, the Government, the Public Chamber, scientists-researchers, politicians, independent trade unions, public figures and other subjects of management have asserted the need for a radical modernization of the existing consumer basket in order to reduce the level of poverty (according to the Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation T. Golikova in 2020, 12.7% of the total population - 18.5 million people are considered poor, that is, these are citizens whose incomes are below the subsistence level), ensuring social justice and ideas of accumulation and preservation of

sufficient potential for a person to live in conditions wide dissemination of the achievements of scientific and technological progress in all spheres of life and branches of activity.

In 2018, a special working group was created at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to improve the methodology for determining the consumer basket and the subsistence level. During this period, until December 31, 2020 (until the entry of the new law on the consumer basket), a lot of preparatory work was carried out: the world experience was studied; specialists from the Federal Research Center for Nutrition and Biotechnology were involved, political parties "Fair Russia", "Communist Pariah", etc. made their proposals, and as a result, various proposals were made. It was proposed: to expand the list of products, goods and services (for comparison, there are 156 items in the consumer basket of Russia, 700 in Germany); to allocate more socio-demographic groups (in the current basket, three groups were distinguished: the able-bodied population, pensioners and children, leaving without attention and ensuring the specific interests and needs of the rest of the unaccounted part of the population: young children, schoolchildren, adolescents, women, pensioners, centenarians, etc.); revise the structure of the consumer basket and bring it closer to physiologically more justified norms of healthy nutrition and the necessary requirements of scientific and technological progress for non-food products and especially services, etc. For the first time, the Federal Research Center for Nutrition calculated food consumption separately for men and women, which will amount to 980 kg for men and 837 kg for women per year. To raise the minimum wage to 50-60 thousand rubles, and the living wage to at least 31 thousand rubles.

On January 1, 2021, a new law came into force, which proposes to abandon the consumer basket and switch to a new system for determining the minimum social guarantees. This law can be viewed as an act of radical modernization. Among the proposed innovations, we will single out, first, the rejection of the consumer basket when calculating the minimum wage. According to the Ministry of Labor, it is not planned to calculate the consumer basket in the future.[7] Secondly, the relationship between the consumer basket and the cost of living has been broken. The subsistence minimum is no longer the statistical cost of the consumer basket, but is determined on the basis of the median per capita income for the previous year (according to Rosstat, in 2019, the median per capita income is 26,365.3 rubles). It is not installed for a quarter, as it was before, but for a year. The subsistence minimum is 44.2% of the median income. In accordance with the new methodology, the subsistence minimum will increase by 3.7% (which will amount to an increase of 185 rubles). Thirdly, the minimum wage is interconnected with the cost of living and the median wage. The minimum wage is 42% of the median salary in the country, and should not be lower than the subsistence minimum for the next year. The minimum wage will increase by

5.5% to 12,792 rubles (this corresponds to an increase of 662 rubles). Fourth, the ratio of the subsistence minimum to the median income, and the minimum wage to the median salary will be revised at least once every five years (previously, the consumer basket was also revised every five years and the revision increased its cost from 3-5%). Fifth, in the new methodology, the absolute approach to calculations has changed to a relative one.

The advantage of the new technique is the simplicity of the calculations. It is expected that the subsistence level will grow as the real incomes of the population grow, and the income of working citizens will grow at a higher rate than the subsistence level. [8] But let us note that all countries of the world, including Russia, are in a state of pandemic, and the real disposable income of the population is not growing, but even decreasing. According to Rosstat, real cash disposable income of the population in 2020 decreased by 3.5% compared to 2019 (in the second quarter of 2020, which was the peak of self-isolation from COVID-19, this indicator decreased by a record 8.4% in annual terms). According to NielsenIQ, during the pandemic from September 2020 to January 2021, the share of Russians whose incomes decreased due to the pandemic doubled to 53%, the global average of this indicator was 46%.

In such crisis conditions, the subsistence minimum calculated using the methodology using the consumer basket will be higher than in the new version - according to the median income. Objective calculation of real monetary income per capita is a difficult task for both calculation and control, and this is dangerous due to errors in establishing the level of the subsistence minimum and the poverty threshold, also does not reflect the true income from employment, the indicator of average wages. National, regional natural and climatic features of 85 subjects of the country disappear (a person experiences different needs in different climatic conditions, including primary ones).[9]

Thus, we believe that ignoring the consumer basket when calculating the subsistence minimum, minimum wage and other socio-economic related indicators is a transition to a less sensitive, objective and manageable vital system. Under the previous conditions, it was possible, on the basis of monitoring and analyzing the actual composition and structure of the consumer basket, to assess its adequacy to the current socio-economic state of the state and regulate, now these abilities are lost, and the cost of living indicator becomes abstract. We believe that the "withdrawal" from the use of the consumer basket is erroneous, the entire history of its use confirms this, and the scientific discussion on updating should be resumed. The consumer basket needs to be modernized, based on the best elements from proven practice, for example, the consumer basket should be based not on the minimum consumer budget, as it has been for 20 years, but on a rational budget that allows one to approach the average income of an able-bodied

person, supplement and take into account modern trends in the development of the Russian and world economies.

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