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Sociological Analysis of the Situation and Prospects of the Development of Socially Responsible Business in Kazakhstan

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The aim of the article is to analyze promising areas of socially responsible business development in Kazakhstan. The term «socially responsible business» the author understands a wide range of actions of private capital in the development of specific areas (regions, communities, conglomerates), where the company is located, care for the environment at its place of operation, contribution to the economy as a whole and social capital employee, in particular. The article considers socially responsible business as one of the key markers of sustainable development of regions and the state. Based on a sociological analysis of key aspects of modern development of socially responsible business, the author concludes that strengthening the social responsibility of business, encouraging social activity of entrepreneurs are necessary conditions for sustainable development of society. In addition to the positive trends on the way to the formation of corporate social responsibility, there are many unresolved issues current issues and problems that need to be solved and studied by scientists.

Key words: responsibility, socially responsible business, standard, criteria, social responsibility strategy, concept of socially responsible business.

Альпеісова Шолпан. Соціологічний аналіз стану та перспектив розвитку соціально відповідального бізнесу в Казахстані. Мета статті – аналіз перспективних напрямів розвитку соціально відповідального бізнесу в Казахстані. Під терміном «соціально відповідальний бізнес» розуміємо широкий спектр дій приватного капіталу в напрямі розвитку конкретних територій (регіонів, громад, конгломератів), де розміщене підприємство, турбота про екологію на місці свого функціонування, внесок в економіку загалом та наповнення соціального капіталу працівників зокрема. У статті соціально відповідальний бізнес розглянуто як один із ключових маркерів сталого розвитку регіонів і держави. На основі соціологічного аналізу ключових аспектів сучасного розвитку соціально відповідального бізнесу зроблено висновок, що посилення соціальної відповідальності бізнесу, заохочення до соціальної активності підприємців є необхідними умовами сталого розвитку суспільства. Окрім позитивних тенденцій на шляху до формування соціальної відповідальності бізнесу, існує, ще безліч невирішених актуальних питань і проблем, які потребують розв'язання та вивчення.

Ключові слова: відповідальність, соціально відповідальний бізнес, стандарт, критерії, стратегія соціальної відповідальності, концепція соціально відповідального бізнесу.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, in the development of the digital economy, the issue of building civil society, involving various actors (state, for-profit and non-profit organizations, social groups, individuals, etc.) to

solve existing social problems in society and implement socially responsible activities in various spheres of public life.

During the period of a number of radical transformations of the world economy in the post-Soviet countries, a number of business enterprises appeared and a significant part of the formerly profitable state industry, which was the main supplier of jobs, the basis for social infrastructure, housing, etc. This contributed to the fact that certain sections of the population in the post-Soviet countries found themselves in a situation of economic insolvency and / or being outside the real social partnership.

With the transition to a digital society, the situation in the labor market has become even more complicated, as information technology has radically transformed the model of relations between workers and employers, private capital and the public, and most communications have been transferred to the online plane. The COVID-19 pandemic is a prerequisite for the formation of two polar classes of workers – on the one hand, mobile, highly qualified and well-paid employees who are active in information technology, and on the other – people who cannot adapt to new realities of production process virtualization. due to the rapid development of cybersystems, which are characterized by long periods of unemployment and work outside the field of information and modern technology. Between these two social groups, over time, there will be a layer of low-skilled workers, which will work temporarily. Therefore, global business is increasingly faced with a number of social problems at both national and global levels that need to be addressed quickly and efficiently by the private sector. The realities of today show that the formation of entrepreneurship for social purposes should become a separate area of economic activity. Therefore, the problem of social responsibility in its broad and contextual sense is relevant to the social relations that have developed in Kazakhstan. that the formation of entrepreneurship for social purposes should become a separate area of economic activity. Therefore, the problem of social responsibility in its broad and contextual sense is relevant to the social relations that have developed in Kazakhstan. that the formation of entrepreneurship for social purposes should become a separate area of economic activity. Therefore, the problem of social responsibility in its broad and contextual sense is relevant to the social relations that have developed in Kazakhstan.

1. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN RESEARCH OF THIS PROBLEM

The works of M. Weber and E. Giddens are the general industry basis for studying the phenomenon of social responsibility. Such scientists as G. Hertz, G. Jonas, G. Lenk, S. Anisimov, V. Kanke, and others made a significant contribution to the creation of the foundations of the theory of social responsibility.

It is worth noting that the classical concept of responsibility has developed in modern times. Its essence was that the subject of the action, the act must be responsible to society for their consequences. Over time, this theory has lost its appeal to scientists, its place has been taken by the non-classical concept of responsibility. She considered man in a world full of coincidences, risk, uncertainty, myriads of relationships, connecting him with society only by participating in common affairs.

At the beginning of the XXI century. The theory of «corporate social responsibility» was transformed into the theory of «sustainable development» and «corporate citizenship», which is based on the paradigm of multilevel corporate responsibility of A. Carroll (2001).

However, the creation of a unified approach to the interpretation of the essence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its components is one of the most pressing problems of modern science. The lack of a clear scientific concept in the digital society hinders the effective implementation of CSR principles in the business practice of enterprises. This problem, according to numerous studies, affects most countries in the post-Soviet space.

In this context, research on the importance of social responsibility of large enterprises in crisis situations deserves special attention. Thus, O. Klymenko, analyzing the role of key enterprises in the old industrial region of Donbass in the leading sectors of the economy of Ukraine, considered the issue of environmental responsibility of large capital to local communities (Klymenko, 2017). The author drew attention to the importance of preserving not only human capital for private sector enterprises, but also the environment and greening of production processes. I. Dolia developed the idea of expanding the range of social responsibility of business, describing among the non-standard challenges the need to adequately respond to the risks associated with political and military conflicts (Dolia, 2017). The researcher highlighted the need to study possible strategies of social responsibility of large and medium-sized capital to society in crisis situations.

However, in sociological discourse, corporate social responsibility is defined as the economic action of business associated with the allocation of limited resources to improve the quality of life of individuals, communities and the social environment, implemented in accordance with existing laws, but not limited.

Several international organizations deal with the problems of corporate social responsibility, the largest of which are the UN Global Compact Network, the Center for the Development of Corporate Social Responsibility, the Socially Responsible Business Community, and others. In Kazakhstan, the UN Global Compact Network began its existence in 2006, bringing together 42 companies and organizations. Since then, it has expanded to more than 250 members and continues to grow. The main result of the work of these organizations was the development of the project «Concepts of the national strategy of social responsibility of business in Kazakhstan». The draft Concept does not clearly interpret the essence of corporate social responsibility and its components, which have several levels: responsibility to the consumer, responsibility to subordinates, responsibility to society and the country.

In 2015, the UNO adopted an agenda for sustainable development until 2030. The program consists of 17 goals aimed at eradicating poverty, conserving the planet's resources and ensuring prosperity. Each goal contains a number of indicators that must be achieved in 15 years, for the implementation of this project within the state requires the joint efforts of government, civil society and business (UNO, 2020).

The purpose of the article is an analysis of key trends in modern development of socially responsible business in Kazakhstan.

2. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In modern economic conditions, business tasks, in addition to short-term economic goals of profit maximization, should cover other areas of society and the state, the so-called philanthropic responsibility, including participation in social, educational programs, environmental projects, development and support of ethnic minorities. etc. The main task is social responsibility, adequate to the expectations of society, which aims to increase non-economic benefits for businesses in the long run (strengthening the company's image, business reputation, promoting the company as a positive brand for consumers of its products, etc.), in turn, will increase its economic efficiency.

For the effective functioning and development of a modern enterprise is not enough to draw attention only to its productivity, financial capacity and economic growth. The public expects corporations not only to demonstrate high economic results, but also significant achievements in terms of socially oriented management. To form the trust of consumers, suppliers and other stakeholders in the company is possible only with adequate management of socially oriented behavior of the company. Discussions on corporate social responsibility have recently received a new impetus.

In Kazakhstan, most companies (both large and medium) do not have a defined CSR strategy, as they are at the stage of organizing work in compliance with the legal framework of the state and point charity projects, or permanent charities. Leaders of Kazakhstani business, in particular private ownership, carry out active charitable activities (strategic philanthropy) and use public relations tools only as effective PR mechanisms. Almost all large companies carry out projects to improve the efficiency of business processes with certain social or environmental benefits, but most do not link such business projects to their own social responsibility.

As part of the survey of corporate social responsibility in 2021, according to a study conducted by Cone Communications, 87 % of respondents said they would buy the company's product if it advocates for the problem that worries them. Despite the fact that this figure is relatively high, it is still impossible to conclude that there is a widespread understanding of corporate social responsibility, as one in five companies in Kazakhstan is unaware of the practice of implementing such strategies (Cone Communications, 2018).

Social responsibility policy must also take into account the fact that companies must have their own position on many socially important issues. If before business preferred to remain silent and adhere to neutrality, today it is time to talk openly about everything that affects the lives of citizens.

2.1. World and Domestic Experience in the Effectiveness of Business Implementation of Socially Responsible Strategies

In post-Soviet countries such as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Georgia, a significant number of companies have made social responsibility part of their marketing plans and development strategies. Studies show that this has a positive effect on public loyalty to the brand and increases financial

performance. The fact is that consumers are ready to «vote in rubles» for those companies that pay attention to social projects.

In 2020, the research company Nielsen surveyed more than 30,000 consumers from 60 countries. As a result, 55 % of respondents said they were willing to pay more for the goods and services of those companies involved in social and environmental projects. The study showed that businesses that have integrated social responsibility into their management model can count on increased sales through the formation of positive public opinion that arises from the implementation of social initiatives (Sustainability accounting..., 2021).

A secondary analysis of the results of this study showed that the size of the company does not affect its awareness of CSR. Almost the same number of large (79,2 %), medium (78,5 %) and small (78,1 %) companies gave a positive answer as to whether they had heard about corporate social responsibility (CSR). Regarding the forms of ownership of companies that are informed about CSR, the leaders with a slight advantage are joint-stock companies (91,5 %), state-owned companies (88 %), private companies with several owners (78,5 %) and private companies with one owner (74,8 %) (State and prospects..., 2021).

The industry breakdown of companies familiar with CSR is interesting. The least informed about corporate social responsibility were transport enterprises (52,9 %) and those organizations that provide household and communal services (57,5 %), respectively. Leaders in terms of awareness are companies in the financial sector (94 %), enterprises producing industrial goods (84,5 %) and trade (83,2 %).

In 2020, under the auspices of the President, a global survey of companies participating in various ESG rankings was conducted. More than 140 CEOs and managers of companies representing 13 sectors of the economy took part in the survey. Among the respondents were both domestic enterprises and representative offices of foreign concerns. 48 % of respondents are companies with up to 1,000 employees, 24 % have a staff of 1 to 5 thousand people, 7 % – from 5 to 10 thousand, 6 % – from 10 to 20 thousand and another 15 % of companies surveyed. can be attributed to large corporations, their staff exceeds 20 thousand people. Thus, the study can be considered representative because it reflects the views of not only big business but also medium-sized companies (Sustainability accounting..., 2021).

In our opinion, it is important not only quantitative but also qualitative analysis of indicators of understanding the role of CSR in the development of modern business. Thus, the heads of Kazakh companies that participated in the survey were asked to choose from fifteen statements about the nature of CSR. Most companies attribute the implementation of social programs to CSR: improving the working conditions of staff (36 %), staff development and training (25,7 %), charitable assistance to the public (16,2 %). Entrepreneurs pay less attention to participation in regional development programs (12,3 %), implementation of environmental programs (9,8 %) (Economy of Kazakhstan..., 2021).

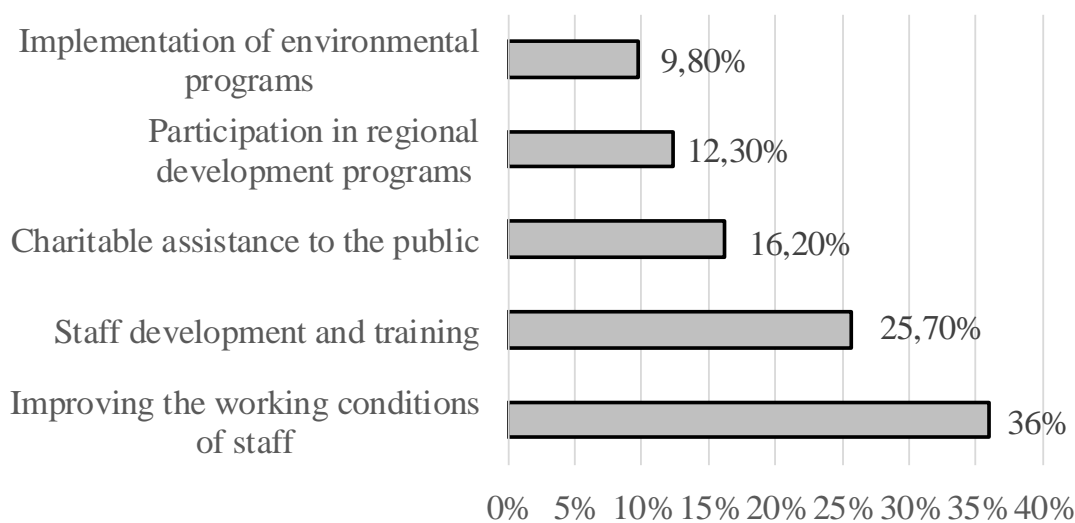


Fig. 1. Distribution of Answers to the Question: «Which of the statements Best Fits Your Understanding of Socially Responsible Business?».

Source: author, data from (Economy of Kazakhstan..., 2021).

The data clearly show that CSR is no longer associated with charity. Emphasis is focused on internal social programs of companies, staff. The explanation for this may be the current high dependence of the efficiency of companies on the productivity of employees in Kazakhstan. Despite the relatively high level of unemployment, enterprises still have an urgent need for skilled labor.

Only a small number of surveyed companies attribute to CSR participation in regional programs for the development and implementation of environmental projects. It is interesting to note that recently, the problem of environmental protection has receded into the background. Because maximum attention is paid to maintaining the efficiency of personnel in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why, in our opinion, the identification of social responsibility with environmental security and environmental protection is quite low (Business and responsibility, 2021).

As the experience of recent years shows, the influence on the formation of social responsibility of domestic entrepreneurship is exerted not only by national traditions that have historically formed in society, but also by the political and economic situation in the world, but also the lack of common guidelines for social policy.

According to the level of economic freedoms in 2021, Kazakhstan took 34th place out of 178 countries of the world. Among the post-Soviet countries, the worst indicators are only in Turkmenistan – 167 positions, in Belarus – 95, in Moldova – 85, Ukraine – 127. Quite stable positions in the ranking are the Baltic States and Eastern Europe: Estonia (8), Georgia (12), Lithuania (15), Latvia (30), Armenia (32) (Rating of countries..., 2021).

It is worth noting that Kazakhstan's indicators are rising for the fifth consecutive year, despite the economic downturn last year, which is due to the pandemic. However, there are still aspects that the world community is still focusing on. Among them are corruption, the imperfection of the financial system, bureaucratic obstacles that complicate business operations and business creation, gaps in legislation. Regulatory and legal boundaries remain ineffective and burdensome. Of course, this situation affects the formation of social responsibility of Kazakhstani business.

As already mentioned, Kazakhstan does not have a state policy on the development of corporate social responsibility, which the government perceives rather one-sidedly as «social partnership», «social dialogue», «charity». The result is insufficient support for social programs, projects and initiatives of enterprises by public authorities. The lack of an open dialogue in society to develop appropriate incentives for businesses that seek to implement the principles of social responsibility in their activities also hinders the development of large and medium-sized capital (How corporate social..., 2021).

In addition, companies try to avoid publicizing their socially responsible activities, so as not to attract the attention of tax authorities and local authorities, which may be interested in forcing their involvement in solving social problems of a particular region or country as a whole. Companies that have defined and implemented their own strategy of social responsibility face a number of obstacles inherent in both countries with close to the Ukrainian phase of CSR development, and purely domestic.

On the other hand, there are still not enough positive examples of business cooperation with local communities and authorities in Kazakhstan. The facts of cooperation of competing companies are unique, which, of course, depends solely on the will of the owners. However, in our opinion, the main criterion should be the economic and social feasibility of implementing CSR strategies. We must not forget the problem of adequate business response to modern migration processes, which have become a real challenge for many countries. Cooperation with other groups of influence is often possible only on the basis of representation of separate interests, separate territorial communities, instead of development of common strategic social purposes. This aspect was discussed in detail in the article «Interregional Migration: Economic Aspects and Foreign Experience of Public Regulation». Distrust of cooperation as a form of realization of socio-economic interests creates obstacles to the effective implementation of the CSR strategy (Interregional Migration, 2021).

2.2. Advantages of Implementing Socially Responsible Business

Most multinational companies (TNCs) operating in Kazakhstan have their own detailed CSR policies that shape their image internationally. Without adapting corporate strategies and programs to the needs of Kazakhstan's economy and society, companies risk incurring unjustified costs in terms of financial costs.

CSR policy should be implemented by companies in the day-to-day operations of marketing, production, sales, strategic management, etc. The lack of a critical mass of managers who are competent in their functional responsibilities and who understand the company's CSR strategy, but are ready to join its implementation, is a significant obstacle to the further development of CSR in Kazakhstan.

Thus, the benefits that businesses receive from the implementation of the principles of social responsibility are to ensure the public reputation of the organization; increasing public confidence in the company's activities, its goods and services; increasing professionalism and development of human resources at the enterprise, ensuring staff loyalty; the ability to create a safe environment and the company's development through its own corporate policy; compliance with norms and standards of the world economic community; the possibility of forming partnerships with government agencies, the public and the media.

The benefits that society receives from business compliance with the principles of social responsibility: the ability to establish partnerships between business, government and the public; the possibility of providing targeted emergency assistance to citizens who need it; improvement and development of social protection of the population; the possibility of attracting investment in certain public spheres; opportunity to support public initiatives, innovative projects, development of social and creative activity of the population, preservation and use of «intellectual resource» for the needs of the country and the region.

The results of sociological research identify the main obstacles to the formation and development of social responsibility of business are the following: imperfection of the legislative and regulatory framework governing business participation in social programs and educational institutions in the formation of socially responsible professionals; lack of formed and effective independent civic expertise and evaluation of the results of social programs, standards and quality of training of business professionals; lack of a system of incentives (moral and economic) of responsible social actors.

According to a poll conducted by the Institute of Marketing and Sociological Research «Elim» «Kazakhstan's Economy 2021: real figures, analysis, forecasts», in which 1359 enterprises of different sizes, forms of ownership and spheres of activity took part, business structures position their attitude to aspects of social responsibility as follows: 60 % have a positive attitude to the implementation of social projects and consider it useful for society as a whole; a quarter of respondents showed «neutrality»; 5 % of respondents recorded a negative attitude, assessing such activities as «a waste of time and resources»; in assessing the possibilities of their participation in the implementation of social projects – 4 % of respondents noted the lack of any opportunities for business structures to implement social projects; a third believes that this possibility exists for all business organizations; half of the respondents are convinced that such a possibility exists, but only in some companies. Thus, the areas identified those in need of social projects - assistance to children with disabilities – 69 %; assistance to the elderly, the disadvantaged – 60 %; health care – 58 %; education – 50 %; ecology – 39 %; science – 30 %; culture, art – 22 % (Economy of Kazakhstan 2021).

In addition, more than a third of commercial organizations are not directly involved in supporting social development. This can mean a significant difference between readiness for various forms of social investment, the desire to be socially responsible and real business practices. This trend is obviously due to the fact that the business sector itself needs significant institutional support, as it is not yet very developed. Most businesses and entrepreneurs feel insecure and try to raise capital for their own development, pushing the needs of society and the community to the background.

An interesting fact in recent years is that the population expects charitable assistance primarily from commercial structures, and only then from the state and its social welfare bodies. This indicates some reorientation of the population and their rejection of paternalistic expectations of the state.

According to a study by the AISEC project, the lowest awareness of corporate social responsibility is characteristic of transport companies and those that provide household and utility services – 52,9 % and 57,5 %, respectively. The companies in the financial sector (94 %), production of industrial goods (84,5 %) and trade (83,2 %) are the most informed about the concept of socially responsible business.

Significant differences are observed at the regional level. If in Nur-Sultan and the region 90,7 % of the surveyed companies showed awareness of social responsibility, in Astana only 62,9 %, and in Karaganda already – 56,5 % of companies (State and prospects..., 2021).

2.3. Obstacles to the Implementation of Socially Responsible Business

Problems of stimulating the participation of commercial organizations in solving priority social problems of settlements are still not comprehensively considered at the local or national level. In these circumstances, the issue of encouraging the participation of commercial organizations together with local

governments in the implementation of social policy is often addressed by these bodies chaotically and inconsistently, which in turn slows down the involvement of NGOs and their additional resources in social development. In addition, the current regulatory framework of Kazakhstan for the incentives of these entities has a number of shortcomings, including: lack of comprehensiveness in the approach to incentives; weak development of competitive principles in providing benefits; low technological development of procedures for consideration and decision-making on encouraging commercial institutions to participate in social projects; insecurity of budget items related to the provision of benefits and other incentives; decisions on the provision of benefits are usually entrusted to financial authorities and other disinterested bodies; Incentives are in most cases only declared, but not mandatory, and so on.

Limiting factors for the development of corporate social responsibility are the following: the lack of an established and influential civil society sector that would promote the ideas of social responsibility and professionals who would professionally deal with this problem; lack of independent public expertise of social and cultural projects and programs; existing legal restrictions on the size and methods of possible assistance to the needy; lack of regional law on charity; lack of a system of informing the public about social and charitable projects, about investors of social programs and a system of public evaluation of the results of social programs of business; lack of interest in this area of business structures, which is related to the role of the state and problems in the legislative sphere; lack of experience and successful examples of social entrepreneurship; lack of a center for the development of social entrepreneurship and donor organizations that are constantly engaged in this area.

The most effective measures that would promote the principles of corporate social responsibility in Ukrainian society and encourage commercial organizations to solve social problems are the following: creating favorable organizational and legal conditions for the activities of economic entities involved in solving social problems; providing benefits for taxes, fees, rents and other expenses to enterprises and organizations engaged in sponsorship, sponsorship, charity activities; targeted financial support of non-state actors of social policy at the expense of budget funds; application of economic and other sanctions to those who act to the detriment of the social interests of the territorial community; establishing cooperation with tax authorities and conducting consulting and familiarization work, etc.

Encouraging business participation in the social development of the community is extremely important, as the main source of charitable assistance to the citizens of Kazakhstan is considered to be the commercial sector. Experience shows that social responsibility is good for everyone – companies, the state, society, so the implementation of targeted social projects is no less important than the allocation to the budget for social needs of the state.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Thus, the current situation in Kazakhstan is characterized by the need to continue and detail research, analysis, development, modeling, adaptation and dissemination of practical systems and methods of corporate ethics and social responsibility at the company level and the business community as a whole. It can be concluded that corporate social responsibility is an integral feature of its quality and requires appropriate evaluation and formation. The offered sociological methods of its diagnostics allow to solve this problem. As this direction is innovative for Kazakhstan, the issue of legislative support of socially responsible business and development of innovative methods of its evaluation and stimulation remains unresolved. Based on the analysis of trends in socially responsible business in Kazakhstan, because this is a necessary condition for creating social solidarity in the country.

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