

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



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**Boris A. Kheyfets**<sup>a)</sup>, **Veronika Yu. Chernova**<sup>b)</sup>

<sup>a)</sup> Institute of Economics of RAS, Moscow, Russian Federation

<sup>a)</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation

<sup>b)</sup> RUDN University, Moscow, Russian Federation

<sup>b)</sup> State University of Management, Moscow, Russian Federation

<sup>a)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6009-434X>

<sup>b)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5951-9091>; e-mail: veronika.urievna@mail.ru

## Consumer Involvement in the Globalisation of Trade: Case of the European Union<sup>1</sup>

*Consumer globalisation is a fundamentally new stage in modern economic development. The Internet and digital technologies are becoming key drivers of consumer globalisation. To assess these processes, a quantitative evaluation method was developed that distinguishes consumer globalisation twofold — actual and potential. The example of the EU countries was analysed for consumer globalisation. The results obtained allow concluding that consumers in countries with high per capita income and higher prevalence and availability of Internet technologies are more globalised. The highest growth rates of globalisation were noted in countries with basically low globalisation indicators — among consumers in Cyprus, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia and Romania. There are differences between the EU countries in the intensity of globalisation processes due to different levels of economic development, different provision of infrastructure and information and communication technologies. The assessment of consumer globalisation showed that consumers of all EU countries in 2018 became more globalised in comparison with 2014. The results obtained make it possible to speak with confidence about the beginning of a new stage of economic globalisation, which will be determined by new technologies and consumer networks. The research findings contribute to the better understanding of the ongoing globalisation processes. The consumer globalisation index can serve as a tool for studying the involvement of consumers in international relations, exploring the potential for these relations' development, as well as the differences in consumer globalisation between different countries, particular regions within the same country and between various social groups of population.*

**Keywords:** globalisation index, consumer globalisation, economic differentiation, consumer networks, producer integration, economic growth, European Union, market behaviour, factors of globalisation, trade flows

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Б. А. Хейфец <sup>а)</sup>, В. Ю. Чернова <sup>б)</sup>

<sup>а)</sup> Финансовый университет при Правительстве РФ, г. Москва, Российская Федерация

<sup>а)</sup> Институт экономики РАН, г. Москва, Российская Федерация

<sup>б)</sup> Российский университет дружбы народов (РУДН), г. Москва, Российская Федерация

<sup>б)</sup> Государственный университет управления, г. Москва, Российская Федерация

<sup>а)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6009-434X>

<sup>б)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5951-9091>; e-mail: veronika.urieвна@mail.ru

## Глобализация потребления: пример Европейского союза

Глобализация потребления — принципиально новый этап современного экономического развития. Интернет и цифровые технологии стали ключевыми факторами такой глобализации. Для исследования происходящих процессов был разработан метод количественной оценки, который рассматривает как фактическую, так и потенциальную глобализацию потребления. Процесс потребительской глобализации был проанализирован на примере стран Европейского союза. Полученные результаты позволяют сделать вывод, что уровень глобализации потребителей выше в странах с высоким доходом на душу населения и большей доступностью интернет-технологий. Самые высокие темпы роста глобализации отмечены в странах с низкими показателями глобализации — среди потребителей на Кипре, в Болгарии, Греции, Словении и Румынии. Разный уровень экономического развития, а также обеспеченности инфраструктурой и информационно-коммуникационными технологиями в государствах ЕС обуславливает различия в интенсивности процессов глобализации. Оценка глобализации потребления показала, что потребители всех стран Европейского союза в 2018 г. стали более глобализованными по сравнению с 2014 г. Полученные данные позволяют с уверенностью говорить о начале нового этапа экономической глобализации, в котором важную роль играют современные технологии и потребительские сети. Результаты исследования способствуют лучшему пониманию происходящих процессов глобализации. Индекс глобализации потребления может использоваться для анализа вовлеченности потребителей в международные отношения, изучения потенциала развития этих отношений, а также исследования различий в глобализации потребления между разными странами, отдельными регионами внутри одной страны и различными социальными группами населения.

**Ключевые слова:** индекс глобализации, глобализация потребления, экономическая дифференциация, потребительские сети, интеграция производителей, экономический рост, Европейский союз, рыночное поведение, факторы глобализации, торговые потоки

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### 1. Introduction

The development of economic globalisation has an evolutionary character. Its first stage included the financial aspect, and the driver was the integration of manufacturers. At the present stage, when information and digital technologies are of particular importance (Akberdina, Kalinina, Vlasov, 2018), consumer networks are becoming the driver of globalisation (Romanova, Korovin, Kuzmin, 2017). In 1983, Levitt pointed out that technology is one of the most important prerequisites for the globalisation of consumers. He wrote that a powerful force pushed the world towards convergence and community, and this force was technology (Levitt, 1983). The growing role of consumers in globalisation processes is due to the fact that modern consumers increase their influence in the market as a result of the exchange of information on what should or should not be

bought; share their experience; create new directions of commodity supply and demand; stimulate innovations (Manyika, Lund, 2019; Litau, 2018a; Litau, 2018b; Toffler, Toffler, 2008). The trend towards consumer globalisation is convincingly reflected by the dynamics of coverage of the population with social networks. If in 1995 there were 15 million Internet users (0.39 % of total population of the Earth), in 2007 — 1.15 billion (17.2 %), then on 1 April 2020, there were 4.6 billion users (58.7 % of all people)<sup>1</sup>.

However, globalisation is not homogeneous. There are differences in the intensity of globalisation between countries, between regions within

<sup>1</sup> Statista. (2020). Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide as of July 2020, Ranked by Number of Active Users (in Millions). Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/> (Date of access: 10.09.2020).

countries, and even between social groups. The patterns of the spread of globalisation as a whole repeat the infrastructural and communication differences between urban and rural areas (Zhadnova, 2014), between age groups (Yessenbekova et al., 2020). As for social status, wealthy people in general have much more access to international connections, and, therefore, are more involved in global trends (Brussevich, Dabla-Norris, Khalid, 2020). The complexity of the formation of consumer networks means the problem of assessing and analysing the course of globalisation. This requires improved research methods, since tracking only the flows of physical goods (assets) does not give a sufficient idea of the real situation in this area (Kheyfets, 2018).

The formulated statements allowed proposing the research hypothesis: consumers have become more globalised, which results in an increase in their spending on foreign products and services, including tourism and information ones, and the current differences in the globalisation level are due to heterogeneous differentiation in income and infrastructure development. The problem of observability and fixation of these trends underlies the purpose of this study, which was to develop a consumer globalisation index. To achieve this goal, we summarised the achievements of quantitative assessment of various manifestations of globalisation, which made it possible to identify the factors characterising the scale of the spread of consumer networks, their degree of coverage and to determine the factors contributing to the development of the potential for consumer globalisation.

## 2. Literature Review

A fairly large number of scientific works are devoted to measuring the processes of globalisation, in particular, Gygli et al. (2019), Kluver and Fu (2015), Vujakovic (2010), Figge and Martens (2014), Martens and Raza (2009), Amburn (2009), Raab et al. (2008), and others. As a rule, macro-economic indicators are used in globalisation indices that take into account its multidimensional nature. They measure economic and political globalisation, less often social and environmental globalisation, and poorly characterise the participation of a person-personality and a person-consumer in the globalisation processes (Ley, 2004; Ray, 2007).

Attempts to take into account social and cultural aspects, personal contacts of citizens, and technological development when measuring globalisation have been undertaken in Martens et al. (2008); Vujakovic (2010); Caselli (2006).

Human participation in the globalisation processes is usually described by social globalisation (GlobalIndex; Maastricht Globalisation Index (MGI)), cultural globalisation (GlobalIndex; Maastricht Globalisation Index (MGI); Cultural Globalisation Index), and personal contacts (A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalisation Index (ATK/FP); New Globalisation Index (NGI)), and the factors contributing to the development of social and cultural globalisation are often identified in the sub-index of technological (Maastricht Globalisation Index (MGI); A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalisation Index (ATK/FP)) or information globalisation (CSGR Globalisation Index; DHL Global Connectedness Indicator (GCI)). These tools often differ from each other in the methodological approach of assessment (Table 1).

The existing globalisation indices, although they contain indicators and variables that can be fully or partially related to the consumer aspects of globalisation, take into account mainly the economic and political aspects. The inclusion of social and cultural aspects in the indices does not give a complete picture of the participation of consumers in the processes of economic globalisation.

## 3. Materials and Methods

From the authors' point of view, the KOF Globalisation Index 2018v is of the greatest scientific interest for the development of the consumer globalisation index. According to its developers, globalisation is de jure a prerequisite for de facto globalisation. The authors have developed this approach and highlight the globalisation of consumers as twofold – the actual globalisation and the potential of consumer globalisation.

Actual consumer globalisation is taken into account in the form of consumer spending on the purchase of imported food and consumer goods and in the form of consumer spending on the purchase of goods and services produced by foreign companies in the country. Purchases of foreign goods and services in another country are statistically taken into account in consumer spending on tourism services abroad. In recent years, online purchases of goods, services, information products have become increasingly widespread, which is also reflected in the authors' index as online purchases of foreign goods and services, and online purchases of information content.

The potential of consumer globalisation is shaped by the factors contributing to its development. These factors include the availability of the Internet, knowledge of at least one foreign language, the number of tourist trips, the number of consumers using the Internet to order goods and

Globalisation at the level of individuals in globalisation indices

Globalisation index	Globalisation at the level of individuals
KOF Globalisation Index — 2018 Version (Gygli et al., 2019)	<p>Social globalisation.</p> <p>Interpersonal globalisation:</p> <p>De facto globalisation — international voice traffic; cross-border transfers; international tourism; international student mobility; population migration.</p> <p>De jure globalisation — telephone services; freedom of visit; international airports.</p> <p>Information globalisation:</p> <p>De facto globalisation — the used bandwidth of the Internet; international patents; export of high technologies.</p> <p>De jure globalisation — access to television; access to the Internet; freedom of the press.</p> <p>Cultural globalisation.</p> <p>De facto globalisation — trade in cultural goods; trade in personal services; international trade marks; McDonald's restaurants; IKEA stores.</p> <p>De jure globalisation — gender parity; human capital; civil liberties</p>
Maastricht Globalisation Index [MGI] version 2012 (Figge, Martens, 2014; Martens, Raza, 2009)	<p>Social and cultural globalisation: flows of migrants; flows of tourists.</p> <p>Technological globalisation: incoming and outgoing telephone traffic in minutes per capita; the share of Internet users in a country's population</p>
A. T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalisation Index [ATK/FP] (Amburn, 2009)	<p>Social and cultural globalisation: international travel and tourism, international telephone traffic and cross-border remittances by the population, and other personal and private transfers.</p> <p>Technological globalisation: number of Internet users, the Internet hosts and secure servers</p>
GlobalIndex (Raab et al., 2008)	<p>Socio-technical globalisation.</p> <p>Personal contacts: outgoing telephone traffic; cross-border money transfers; international tourism; the share of the foreign population in the total population.</p> <p>Information flows: the Internet hosts per capita; the share of the Internet users in a country's population; cable TV for 1,000 people; daily newspapers for 1,000 people; radio for 1,000 people; international trade in books and brochures in USD per capita; international trade in newspapers and periodicals per capita; the availability of fixed communications and mobile phones per 1,000 people.</p> <p>Cultural globalisation.</p> <p>Development factors: the share of the urban population in the total population; the share of high-tech exports in industrial exports; research and development (R&amp;D) spending as a percentage of the GDP.</p> <p>Values and standards: Freedom House Index; government spending on education as % of the GDP; accessibility of primary education, including for women; number of McDonald's restaurants</p>
CSGR Globalisation Index (University of Warwick, n.d.)	<p>Globalisation of the population: the share of the foreign population in the total population; influx of the foreign population into the total population; cross-border remittances by labour migrants in % of the GDP; the share of arriving and departing tourists in the total population.</p> <p>Globalisation of information: international outgoing telephone traffic per capita; the share of the Internet users in a country's population; the number of imported and exported films; the cost of imported and exported books and newspapers per capita; number of international letters sent and received per capita</p>
New Globalisation Index [NGI] (Vujakovic, 2010)	<p>Indicators: flow of migrants; international tourism; student mobility; international phone calls; international bandwidth of the Internet network; international trade in newspapers; international trade in books; international money transfers</p>
DHL Connectedness Indicator [GCI] (Altman, Bastian, 2019)	<p>Globalisation of the population: international tourism; flow of migrants; student mobility.</p> <p>Globalisation of information: international Internet traffic; minutes of phone calls; trade in printed publications</p>
Cultural Globalisation Index (Kluver, Fu, 2015)	<p>Indicators: films; television programs; volume of imported printed publications; availability of foreign satellite channels from cable television systems</p>

End of Table 1

Globalisation index	Globalisation at the level of individuals
Person-Based Globalisation Index [PBG] (Caselli, 2013)	Indicator groups: possession of resources and abilities necessary for life in the global world; effective mobility and activity in supranational and global spheres; belonging and a sense of belonging to global organisations; integration into the global streams of mass communication; participation in global communication flows; degree of global consciousness

Table 2

**Methodology for calculating indicators included in the indicator of actual globalisation and the indicator of the potential of consumer globalisation**

Indicator	Calculation methodology
<i>GS</i>	consumer spending on the purchase of imported food and consumer goods per capita in the <i>i</i> -th country/ consumer spending on the purchase of imported food and consumer goods per capita in the country with the highest per capita costs
<i>GSF</i>	consumer spending on the purchase of goods and services produced by foreign companies in the <i>i</i> -th country per capita/consumer spending on the purchase of goods and services produced by foreign companies in the country with the highest costs
<i>TS</i>	spending of consumers of the <i>i</i> -th country on services of the tourism industry in a foreign country / spending of consumers of a country with maximum costs on services of the tourism industry in a foreign country
<i>TSO</i>	share of consumers purchasing foreign goods and services via the Internet in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>EO</i>	share of consumers who receive educational services online in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>OC</i>	share of consumers purchasing online content in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>IA</i>	share of consumers using the Internet at least once a week in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>FL</i>	share of consumers who speak at least one foreign language in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>OP</i>	share of consumers using the Internet to order goods and services in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>BO</i>	share of consumers using the Internet for financial transactions in the total population of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>QT</i>	number of tourist trips per capita of the <i>i</i> -th country
<i>GDPC</i>	GDP per capita in the <i>i</i> -th country/GDP per capita in the country with the highest GDP per capita

services, as well as to carry out financial transactions. In addition, the ability of consumers to purchase goods and services plays a significant role in consumer globalisation. The authors use gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as a measure of this ability.

The consumer globalisation index, in this approach, is defined as the geometric mean of the actual consumer globalisation and the potential for its development:

$$IGC = \sqrt{GF \times PG}, \quad (1)$$

where *IGC* – index of consumer globalisation, *GF* – actual consumer globalisation, *PG* – potential of consumer globalisation.

Actual consumer globalisation is defined as

$$GF = \sqrt[6]{GS \times GSF \times TS \times TSO \times EO \times OC}, \quad (2)$$

where *GS* – consumer spending on the purchase of imported food and consumer goods; *GSF* – consumer spending on the purchase of goods and services produced by foreign companies in the country; *TS* – consumer spending on tourism services in a foreign country; *TSO* – online purchases of foreign goods and services by consumers; *EO* –

online education at foreign universities; *OC* – online purchase of foreign content.

The potential for consumer globalisation is calculated using the formula

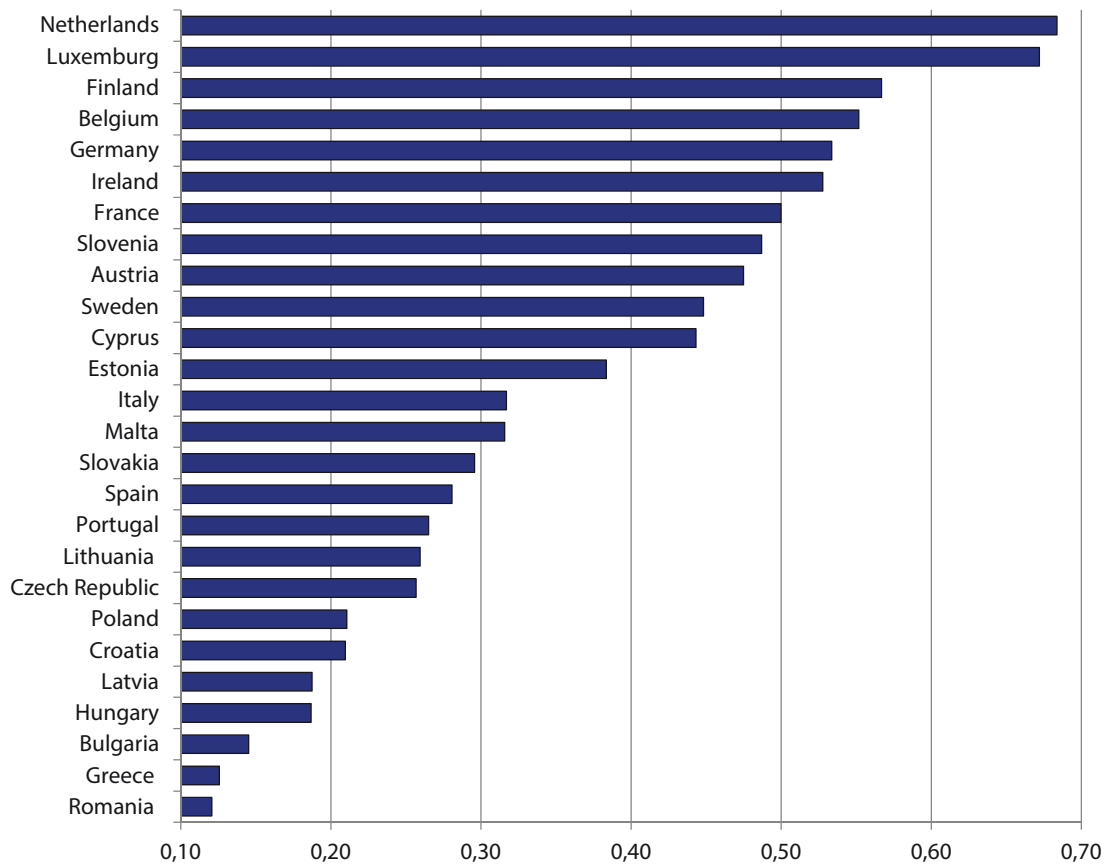
$$PG = \sqrt[6]{IA \times FL \times OP \times BO \times QT \times GDPC}, \quad (3)$$

where *IA* – Internet access; *FL* – knowledge of foreign languages; *OP* – online purchases of goods and services; *BO* – online financial services; *QT* – tourist trips; *GDPC* – GDP per capita.

The methodology for calculating the indicators included in the indicator of actual globalisation and the indicator of the potential for consumer globalisation is presented in Table 2.

The assessment of consumer globalisation was carried out by the authors via a case study of the EU countries, which is associated with the availability of statistical information, its completeness, and uniform principles for collecting and presenting data. The source of information is Eurostat<sup>1</sup>. The lack of some statistics for 2019 prevented the

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat. (2020). Database. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p\\_p\\_id=NavTreeportletprod\\_WAR\\_NavTreeportletprod\\_INSTANCE\\_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p_p_id=NavTreeportletprod_WAR_NavTreeportletprod_INSTANCE_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_)



**Fig. 1.** Consumer globalisation (actual) as of 2018 (source: Eurostat. (2020). Database. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p\\_p\\_id=NavTreeportletprod\\_WAR\\_NavTreeportletprod\\_INSTANCE\\_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=column-2&p\\_p\\_col\\_pos=2&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=3](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p_p_id=NavTreeportletprod_WAR_NavTreeportletprod_INSTANCE_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-2&p_p_col_pos=2&p_p_col_count=3) (Date of access: 10.09.2020))

authors from including this year in the analysis of consumer globalisation at the time of the study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

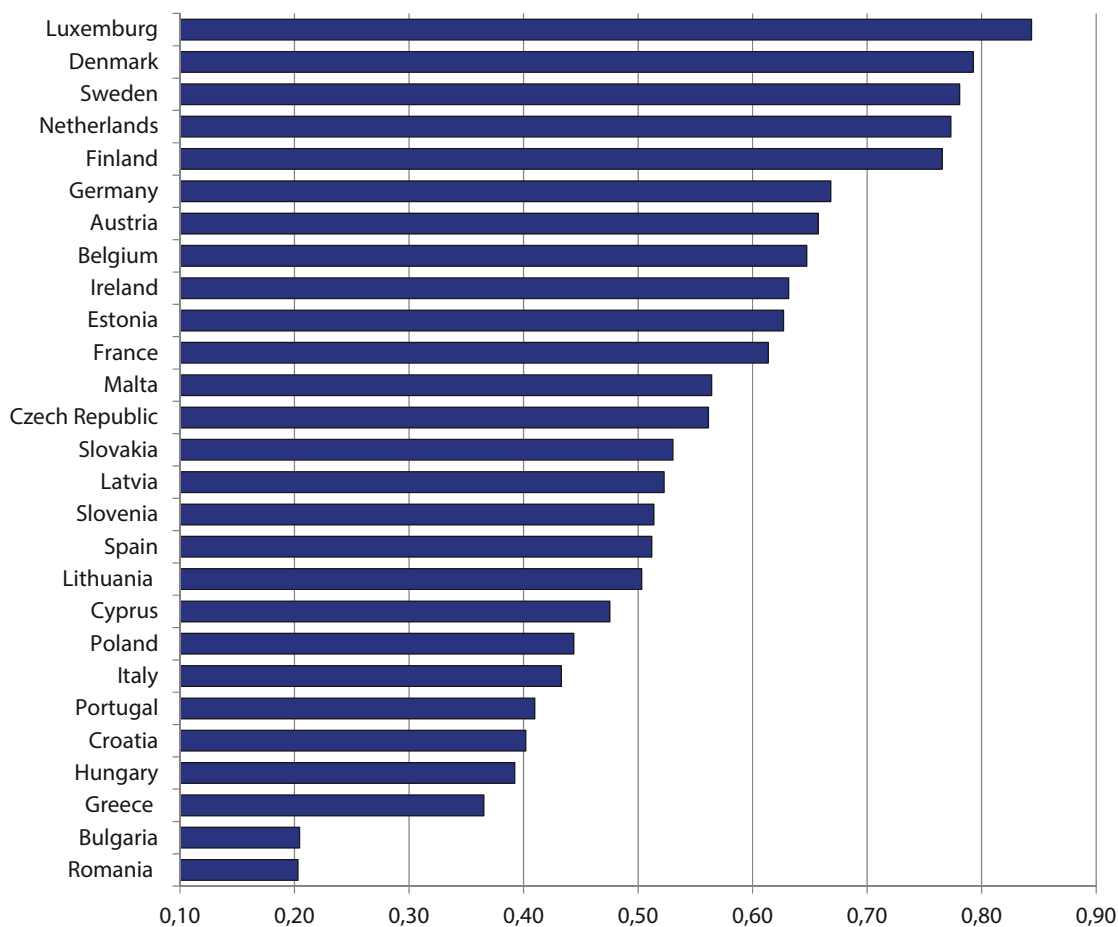
Among the EU countries, the highest rates of actual globalisation are observed among consumers in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, followed by Finland, Belgium, Germany, and Ireland by a significant margin. The least globalised consumers are Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria (Fig. 1).

The high rates of actual globalisation of consumers in the Netherlands are due to a significant excess of imports of consumer goods and food products (4.71 thousand EUR/person in 2019) over the same indicator in other EU countries. For example, imports of food products and consumer goods per capita in Romania in 2019 amounted to 0.37 thousand EUR/person, in Croatia — 0.48 thousand EUR/person, in Slovakia — 0.51 thousand EUR/person. The production of foreign companies in Luxembourg and Ireland is also significantly higher than in other European countries:

in Luxembourg — 73.17 thousand EUR, in Ireland — 35.1 thousand EUR, in Greece — 1.81 thousand EUR, in Bulgaria — 3.57 thousand EUR.

The highest expenses of tourists from the EU countries when they visit other countries are among consumers of Luxembourg (3.49 thousand EUR/year/person), Finland (2.63 thousand EUR/year/person), Denmark (2.6 thousand EUR/year/person), Germany (2.01 thousand EUR/year/person) and Austria (1.75 thousand EUR/year/person). Consumers in Bulgaria (0.12 thousand EUR/year/person), Romania (0.137 thousand EUR/year/person), Greece (0.21 thousand EUR/year/person) spend the least on tourist trips. In addition, Luxembourg consumers are more likely to purchase online content compared to consumers from the other European countries (36 % of the country's residents), but they are inferior to consumers from Denmark, Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, and Germany in the frequency of online orders. Therefore, during 2019, 84 % of Danish residents, 82 % of Swedish residents, 81 % of Netherlands residents, 79 % of German residents, 73 % of Finland residents, and 72 % of Luxembourg residents ordered goods and services

id=column-2&p\_p\_col\_pos=2&p\_p\_col\_count=3 (Date of access: 10.09.2020).



**Fig. 2.** Potential for consumer globalisation as of 2018 (source: Eurostat. (2020). Database. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p\\_p\\_id=NavTreeportletprod\\_WAR\\_NavTreeportletprod\\_INSTANCE\\_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=column-2&p\\_p\\_col\\_pos=2&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=3](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?p_p_id=NavTreeportletprod_WAR_NavTreeportletprod_INSTANCE_nPqeVbPXRmWQ&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-2&p_p_col_pos=2&p_p_col_count=3) (Date of access: 10.09.2020))

via the Internet. Most of the online purchases in foreign countries were made by Luxembourg (62 % of the population). Online shopping is the least common among consumers in Romania (4 %), Poland (9 %), and Bulgaria (11 %).

Largely, the difference in the levels of consumer globalisation is caused by the level of globalisation potential (Fig. 2).

The high potential for the development of consumer globalisation in Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland is provided by such indicators as GDP per capita, the number of tourist trips, and the availability of the Internet. Thus, the GDP per capita of Luxembourg in 2019 amounted to 328.6 % of the GDP of the EU-27 countries. In addition to Luxembourg, the following countries have high GDP per capita: Ireland (232.3 %), Denmark (171.3 %), the Netherlands (150.2 %), Sweden (148.3 %), Austria (144.4 %), Finland (140.1 %), Germany (132.9 %), Belgium (132.4 %). The lowest indicators of GDP per capita are in Bulgaria (27.9 %), Romania (37 %), Croatia (42.9 %), Poland (44.3 %), Latvia (51.2 %), Slovakia

(55.5 %), Lithuania (55.8 %) and other countries of Eastern Europe. Residents of these countries make fewer tourist trips. Therefore, only 27 % of the population of Romania and 33 % of the population of Bulgaria are consumers of the tourism industry, while among the residents of Finland, they are more than 91 %, among the residents of Sweden and Luxembourg – 85 % and 81 %, respectively.

Poor digital accessibility, including Internet accessibility, is also limiting consumer globalisation in several countries. Among the residents of Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, according to data for 2019, 95 % of the population constantly use the Internet. In Luxembourg and Finland, 93 % of the population use the Internet, 91 % in Germany. Meantime, in Bulgaria, only 67 % use the Internet at least once a week.

An assessment of the globalisation of consumers in the EU countries using the index showed that consumers of all EU countries in 2018 became more globalised in comparison with 2014 (Fig. 3).

The highest growth rates of globalisation were noted in countries with low globalisation indi-

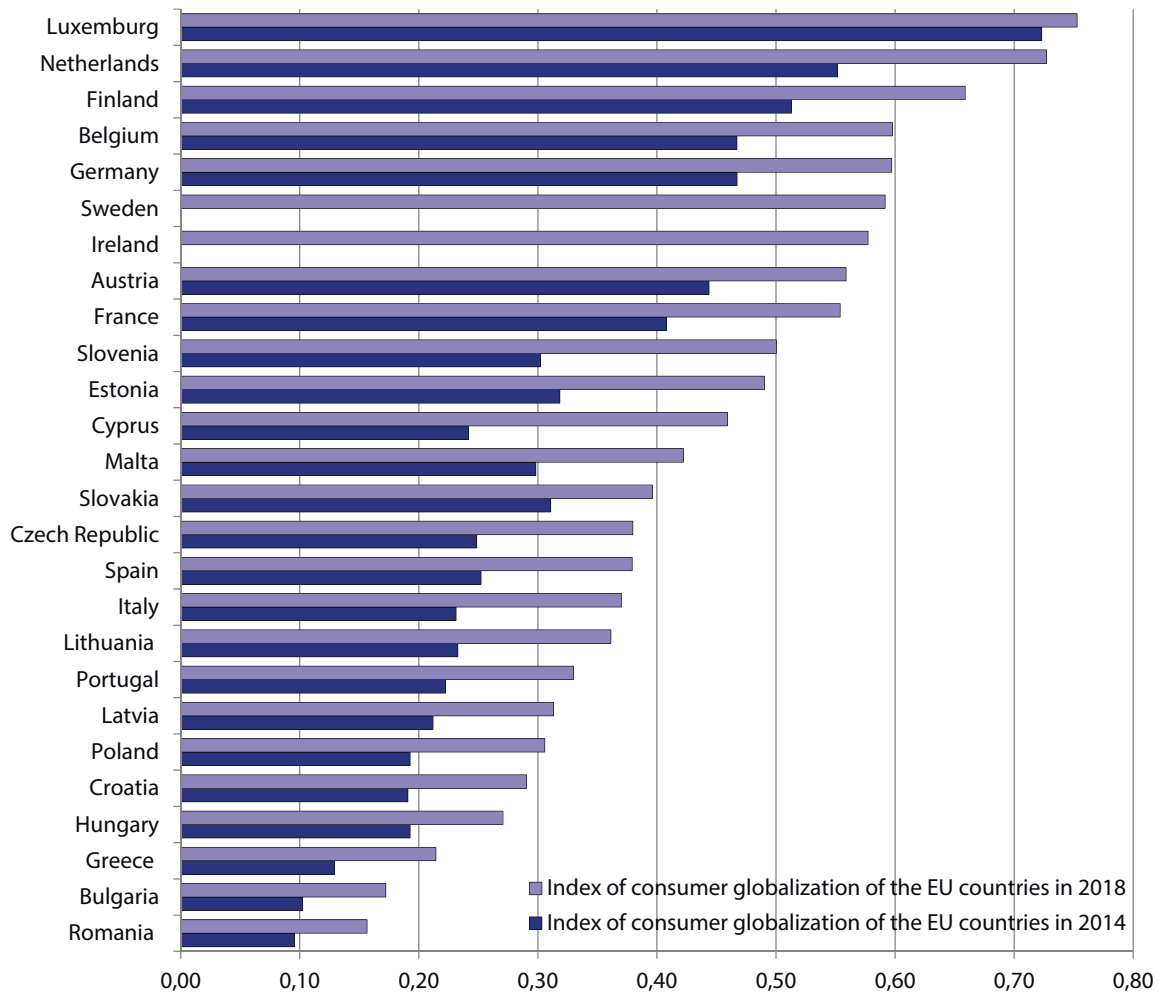


Fig. 3. Index of consumer globalisation of the EU countries in 2014 and 2018

cators — among consumers in Cyprus, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovenia, and Romania.

Testing of the index using the example of the EU countries showed that there were some differences between countries in the intensity of globalisation processes due to different levels of economic development, which limits consumer spending on the purchase of foreign goods and services, different infrastructure provision and development of information and communication technologies. This feature is also supported by an analysis of business activity in the EU countries. In general, in countries with a low average enterprise survival rate, in the first year, there is a persisting low rating in almost all of the industries, assuming that trends in enterprise sustainability dynamics depend on an overall economic situation instead of specifics in a particular sector (Kuzmin, Vinogradova, Guseva, 2019).

The results obtained allow speaking with confidence about the beginning of a new stage of globalisation, which will be governed by new technologies and consumer networks. As some researchers note, pre-existing differences in national or

regional preferences are gradually being eliminated. Therefore, the index can be used for a comparative analysis of the involvement of consumers in certain regions/countries in the globalisation processes.

Limitations in the use of the index for assessing the globalisation of consumers in a wider range of countries are caused by the unavailability of statistical data on a number of indicators, primarily related to the use of Internet technologies.

## 5. Conclusions

Currently, when information and digital technologies are gaining importance, one of the manifestations of globalisation has become the expansion of the range of subjects involved in international relations. Consumers are playing a pivotal role in the development of globalisation processes. In practice, the development of consumer globalisation takes the form of growing consumer spending on foreign products and services, including tourism and information ones. In theory, the development of consumer globalisation implies adopting new approaches to



measuring and conceptualising the next stage of globalisation.

The incipient consumer globalisation marked new trends in economic development. The Internet and digital technologies are becoming its key drivers. Assessing these changes required the application of appropriate metrics. The proposed Consumer Globalisation Index takes into account the factors that both characterise its actual state and identify its development potential. This approach to assessing globalisation makes it possible to substantiate the cause-and-effect relationships of the ongoing processes, making it possible to predict the dynamics of globalisation in the future. The analysis of the globalisation of consumers in the EU countries showed that consumers in 2018 became more globalised in comparison with 2014. However, between the

EU countries, there are some differences in the intensity of globalisation processes due to different levels of economic development, which limits consumer spending on the purchase of foreign goods and services, different infrastructure provision and development of information and communication technologies.

The research results contribute to the better understanding of the ongoing globalisation processes. The consumer globalisation index can serve as a tool for studying the involvement of consumers in international relations, exploring the potential for these relations' development. The future research can aim to identify the differences of consumer globalisation not only between various countries, but also individual regions within the same nation, as well as between various groups of population.

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### About the authors

**Boris A. Kheyfets** — Dr. Sci. (Econ.), Professor, Chief Research Associate, Institute of Economics of RAS; Professor, Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation; Scopus Author ID: 57194977918; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6009-434X> (32, Nakhimovskiy Ave., Moscow, 117418; 49, Leningradskiy Ave., Moscow, 125167, Russian Federation; e-mail: bah4l2@rambler.ru).

**Veronika Yu. Chernova** — Dr. Sci. (Econ.), Associate Professor, Department of International Economic Relations, RUDN University; Associate Professor, Faculty of Advertising and PR, State University of Management; Scopus Author ID: 57191925715; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5951-9091> (6, Miklukho-Maklaya St., Moscow, 117198; 99, Ryazanskiy Ave., Moscow, 109542, Russian Federation; e-mail: veronika.urievna@mail.ru).

### Информация об авторах

**Хейфец Борис Аронович** — доктор экономических наук, профессор, главный научный сотрудник, Институт экономики РАН; профессор, Финансовый университет при Правительстве РФ; Scopus Author ID: 57194977918; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6009-434X> (Российская Федерация, 117418, г. Москва, Нахимовский пр-т, 32; 125167, г. Москва, Ленинградский пр-т, 49; e-mail: bah4l2@rambler.ru).

**Чернова Вероника Юрьевна** — доктор экономических наук, доцент кафедры международных экономических отношений, Российский университет дружбы народов (РУДН); доцент кафедры рекламы и связи с общественностью, Государственный университет управления; Scopus Author ID: 57191925715; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5951-9091> (Российская Федерация, 117198, г. Москва, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 6; 109542, г. Москва, Рязанский пр-т, 99; e-mail: veronika.urievna@mail.ru).

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