

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MECHANISM OF STATE FINANCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE POPULATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

**Saltanat S. Rakymzhanova**

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages  
050022, 200 Muratbayev Str., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

**Nadiya M. Sabitova**

Kazan Federal University  
420012, 4 Butlerova Str., Kazan, Russian Federation

**Parida B. Issakhova**

Almaty Management University  
050060, 227 Rozybakiyev Str., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

**Ainur Ye. Kaiyrbayeva**

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages  
050022, 200 Muratbayev Str. Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

**Gulnara Sh. Beisenova**

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages  
050022, 200 Muratbayev Str., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

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**Abstract.** *This article aims proves that social protection is an effective tool for reducing poverty, contributing to the integration of economic and social aspects of sustainable development. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the current state of the social protection system in the Republic of Kazakhstan and to develop measures to improve the level of social security and mechanisms for financing social protection. The results obtained during the study allow for the conclusion that over the years of independent development in the Republic of Kazakhstan a national model of social protection has been created and a number of important social programmes have been adopted aimed at reducing the level of poverty among the population. The social protection system is a key element of national governance, embodying the social values of any society. The social protection system has three main purposes: to guarantee all members of society access to basic goods and services, to promote active social and economic security, and to develop individual and social potential for poverty reduction and the sustainable development of society. Social protection supports people in handling risks and reducing inequality and also allows them to fulfil their full potential for personal growth and making a meaningful contribution to society throughout their lives.*

**Keywords:** *financial mechanism, social protection, financing of social protection, pension provision, social benefits.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *finansinis mechanizmas, socialinė apsauga, socialinės apsaugos finansavimas, pensijų aprūpinimas, socialinės pašalpos.*

## **Introduction**

The study of financial support for the social sphere in Kazakhstan requires a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the main monetary fund in the country to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of strategic, socially important tasks of sustainable economic growth. In transformational conditions, the state budget of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the main source of funding priority socio-economic tasks, including: providing citizens with education, healthcare, social protection, and social assistance, especially to low-paid social groups; a gradual increase in the rate of pensions, state benefits, and the salaries of civil servants and employees of budget organisations; support for the real economic sector through the activation of investment; financing state and sectoral (branch) programmes and republican and local investment projects; strengthening the country's defence capability, etc. The establishment of economics is the result of cognition of its historical sources and development patterns (Wong et al. 2020). Each branch of science is a product of long-term evolution, the development of qualitative characteristics, and the identification of important economic ideas. The task of economic theory or analysis, as noted in "Economics. Principles, Problems and Policies" (McConnell et al. 2016), is to systematise, explain, and generalise facts, principles, and theories. The final result of economic analysis is to bring order and content to a set of facts, linking them into a unified whole, establishing the appropriate relationship between them, and deriving appropriate generalisations from them (Wamoyi et al. 2020). According to the above, a selective analysis of the main theories and concepts of financing social protection was conducted (Aygön and Qizi 2020). Social protection is also an important issue for discussion in international forums, and this subject became central at the World Summit on Social Issues (Hanh et al. 2020) in Copenhagen in 1995, when governments pledged to "develop and implement policies aimed at ensuring that all people have appropriate economic and social protection during unemployment, poor health, motherhood, child-rearing, widowhood, disability, and retirement" (Litvinov et al. 2020).

Before proceeding to a substantive discussion of financing social protection, it is necessary to consider approaches to the definition of *social protection*. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines social protection as a set of state measures provided to members of society to protect them from economic and social disasters that may be caused by the absence or substantial reduction of income as a result of various unforeseen circumstances (illness, maternity, work injury, unemployment, disability, old age, and death of supporter of the family), and the provision of medical care and benefits to families with children (Pevnaya and Telepaeva 2020). The starting point is the definition adopted by the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS), which is based on the definition used in the ILO Convention on Social Security (general standards) of 1952 (No. 102), including the risk of "social exclusion". According to the ESSPROS definition, social protection "covers all activities of public or private bodies aimed at relieving households and individuals from the burden of a certain set of risks or needs, provided that it is not a simultaneous mutual or individual agreement" (Pevnaya and Telepaeva 2020).

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the current state of the social protection system in the Republic of Kazakhstan and to develop measures to improve the level of social security and mechanisms for financing social protection.

## Materials and Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study are the fundamental provisions of social protection theories (Emrich et al. 2020). This article uses a set of methods of scientific cognition, both general scientific and special, which make it possible to ensure conceptual unity. The research methodology was based on the use of mathematical and graphical methods of analysis – in particular, the partial equilibrium method. The general scientific and special methods used in the course of this study fall under systems analysis – a theory of systems which lies in the research of any objects represented as systems, their structuring, and their subsequent analysis. The main feature of systems analysis is that it includes not only methods of analysis, but also methods of synthesis. The main goal of systems analysis is to detect and eliminate uncertainty in solving a complex issue by finding the best solution amongst the existing alternatives. Using this method, regulations, laws, and official strategies created to control social policy and its financing in the Republic of Kazakhstan were analysed. This study also applied the following methods:

Theoretical generalisation, comparison, and analysis. This involved historical and logical approaches to: examining the essence of social development and state policy, and the financial mechanisms of its implementation, in this regard; clarifying the basic categories and concepts related to the establishment of theoretical foundations; and substantiating the methodology of research on financial mechanisms for the implementation of state social policy.

Systematisation and grouping to study the essence, functions, and principles of building financial mechanisms and their systematisation.

Comparisons, induction and deduction, and graphics to analyse modern trends in the development of regions in the context of the introduction of reforms, as well as for the research of budgetary mechanisms for the implementation of state social policy.

Economic and statistical analysis, grouping, index analysis, and factor analysis to examine: the importance of capital investments in financing the implementation of state social policy; investment mechanisms of public-private partnerships; bank investment lending; and international lending.

Strategic and structural-functional analysis and programme-target algorithm construction to identify the strategic determinants of improving state social policy and designing the modernisation of financial mechanisms, as well as improving the performance of the state social development fund.

## Results and Discussion

At the end of the 20th century, regional policy in many countries mainly focused on investment support for individual regions, the development of their infrastructure, and the policy of intervention in clearly defined territories. At that time, the policy of economic development in most countries was similar, with little regard for specific regional features, and focused on public investment in large infrastructure projects – the construction of roads, railways, water treatment plants, and industrial and household waste disposal. According to the conclusions of many foreign and national researchers, the impact of such an infrastructure policy, on the one hand, was positive; on the other hand, there was an increase in regional polarisation and further marginalisation of peripheral regions. Financial support, as the basis of such a policy, was aimed at internal investment and provided for the attraction of funds from large companies to problem territories. However, this approach to overcoming the imbalances between economically developed and pe-

ripheral regions did not produce the expected positive results. In short, this policy – based solely on improving management, allocating resources for the creation of infrastructure, and creating favourable conditions for investment so that private capital begins to move to economically backward regions – has confounded expectations.

Globalisation, substantial institutional and technological changes on a global scale, and alterations to the definition of the role of regional and local development in the economic growth and well-being of European countries have led to a gradual transformation of the influence of the conventional state on regional development. Competitiveness and growth based on endogenous factors are becoming important political goals in European countries, and the use of tools to support enterprises is gradually decreasing. With this in mind, numerous instruments of regional influence focus on innovation-oriented assistance, training and retraining of the workforce, providing services that improve the business environment, and financial assistance that extends to all regions through the introduction of multi-level management systems. State regional policy gradually began to expand to the maintenance of all regions in the conditions of constant change brought about by the external challenges of an inclusive economy. Nevertheless, the implementation of regional policy measures in all regions requires the introduction of new, coordinated approaches to their creation, which would cover a wide range of socio-economic issues. The studies of the leading scientific schools of the world on the creation of new approaches to determining the content of regional policy in the context of globalisation indicate the presence of two main modern views: territorial-neutral (spatially neutral) and territorial-oriented. The first approach is based on the theory of new economic geography, and suggests the creation of territorial policy taking into account three types of economic integration instruments: institutions, infrastructure, and interventions.

In Table 1, the indicators of spending on education, health, culture, sports, tourism, and social security and assistance are analysed as they represent the so-called “social block” of the state. Notably, every year the state increases spending on “social services”, both in relative and absolute values. Moreover, there is a tendency for spending to prevail over revenue. Such a conclusion is confirmed by the indicators of the budget deficit, which fluctuate every year from 718 billion Tenge in 2013 (the lowest indicator) to 1357 billion Tenge in 2017 (the maximum value for the reviewed period) (Table 1).

*Table 1. Budget spending indicators of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the social sphere for 2013–2019, billion Tenge*

Indicator	Years						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Social spending	2,336.4	2,699.5	2,847.7	3,276.4	3,786.4	4,274.6	4,827.7
% of total spending	36.0	37.9	39.4	37.3	32.5	42.2	44.5
Education	453.2	464.5	443.7	531.0	464.6	473.8	594.1
Healthcare	499.3	647.2	657.3	791.91	018,6 1	071,2 1	112.7
Culture, sports, tourism	93.8	108.2	105.0	115.1	140.7	150.8	117.8

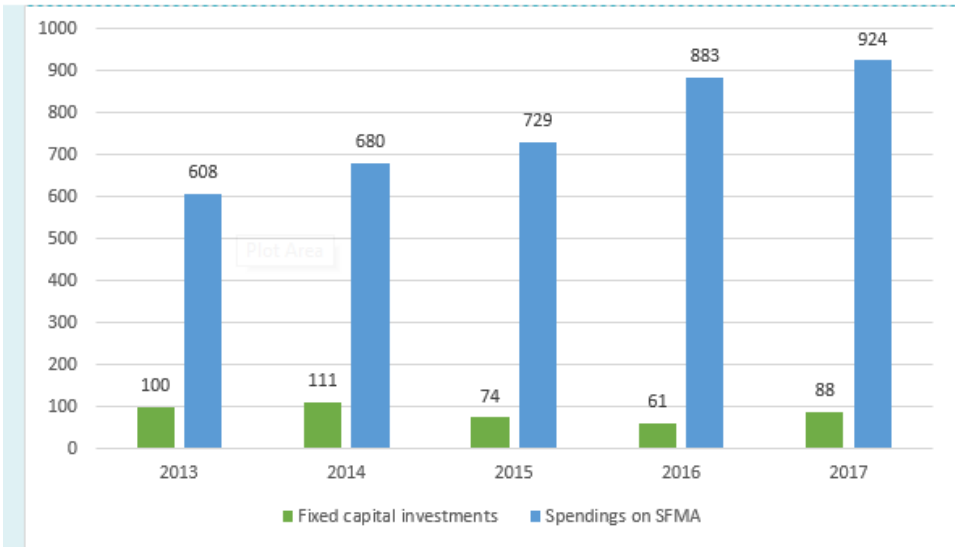
Social security and assistance	1,260.9	1,441.7	1,602.3	1,838.1	2,130.2	578.8 2	2,967.1
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**Source:** Authors' own research

On this issue, economists specify that the state has to take an intentional step towards a budget deficit since it must fully finance its social obligations to the citizens of the country, especially in times of crisis. However, from the standpoint of national security, the deficit threshold should not exceed 1.0% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, in 2018, the deficit was halved in relation to the 2017 budget, when spending exceeded the receipt of funds and the national interests of the country were threatened. In 2017, the security threshold for the budget deficit exceeded 2.4% and finally amounted to 3.4% of GDP. The main reason for such a sharp increase in the budget deficit in relation to the country's GDP is considered to be the rehabilitation of Kazakhstan's banking structure, to which the state was forced to allocate around 2.1 trillion Tenge from the budget.

Hereafter, this study considers the financing of the healthcare system in the Republic of Kazakhstan in more detail (Fig. 2, Fig. 3). According to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On people's health and the healthcare system" (2020), the sources of financial support for the healthcare system are: budget funds; assets of the social health insurance fund; voluntary medical insurance funds; funds received for the provision of paid services; funds received as voluntary donations from individuals and legal entities; and other sources that do not contradict the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The financial resources of the healthcare system are applied to:

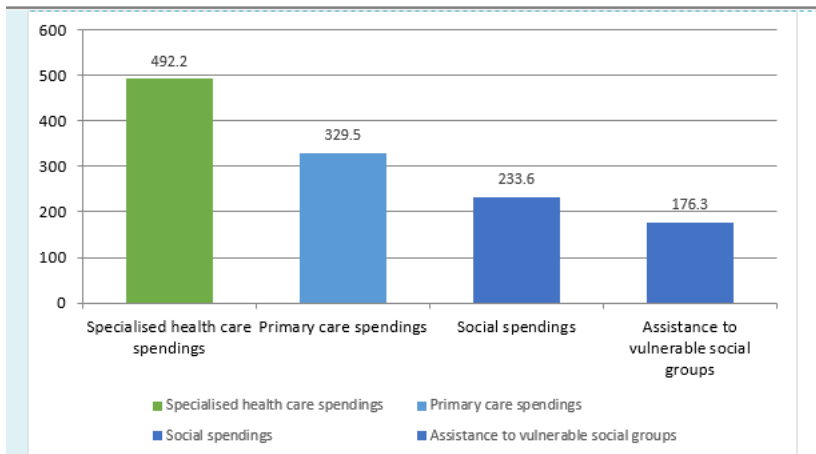
- 1) payment for the services of healthcare entities within statutory free medical assistance (SFMA);
- 2) material and technical equipment for healthcare organisations;
- 3) the purchase of medicines, orphan preparations, blood and its components, vaccines, other immunobiological preparations, medical devices, and medical equipment;
- 4) the elimination of cases and epidemics of infectious diseases;
- 5) the training, advanced training, and retraining of personnel in the field of healthcare;
- 6) the development and introduction of achievements in medical science;
- 7) the development of social assistance to the population;
- 8) other spending not prohibited by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



**Figure 1. Spending on SFMA and investments (billion Tenge)**

Source: Authors' own research

According to Figure 1, spending on SFMA grew in the period from 2013 to 2017, and investments in fixed assets fell from 2013 to 2016 and increased slightly in 2017. Spending on in-patient care in 2016 accounted for 60% of total expenses, with primary care occupying 40%.



**Figure 2. Spending on medical assistance (billion Tenge)**

Source: Authors' own research

As presented in Figure 2, in 2019 spending on specialised medical care exceeded social costs and assistance to disadvantaged social groups.

The system of financing the social sphere in Kazakhstan has undergone substantial changes in recent years, which were accompanied by reforms aimed at strengthening the democratic foundations of its development, fulfilling certain priorities of the country's economy, and solving socio-economic issues of individual regions. In particular, with the adoption of "The Strategy of Territorial Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2015" (2006), for the first time, taking into account the experience of the European Union in the implementation of the unity policy, the principles of social policy were defined and their purpose, strategic goals, and objectives, as well as the scenario for the long-term social and economic development of the regions, were shaped. The purpose of this State Strategy was to create conditions for increasing the competitiveness of the regions, ensure their sustainable development on a modern technological basis, guarantee high production productivity, and provide employment for the population. To determine the impact of the state social policy on the development of the regions, a list of indicators for evaluating the implementation of the Strategy was compiled; that is, the strategic document contained systematic approaches to solving the main tasks of the social financing system.

Notably, since 2008, Kazakhstan has been implementing The OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme, which is aimed at accelerating economic reforms and improving the business climate to achieve sustainable economic growth and employment in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the South Caucasus (OECD, n.d.). With this programme, the "Support for the Decentralisation Reform in Kazakhstan" project is being implemented, the purpose of which is to support decentralisation reforms by state authorities and to strengthen public administration institutions at the national and regional levels throughout the country. Decentralisation in Kazakhstan has a geopolitical value in addition to its economic and social benefits. Considering the development vector chosen by the Republic of Kazakhstan and certain similarities between the issues and tasks for reforming various spheres of state policy – and taking into account the common socialist past – the Polish experience was used when choosing a reform model.

Awareness-raising efforts appear to have had only limited success in the poorest areas. The outreach activities described in interviews for one study (Seidikenova, Akkari, and Bakitov 2020) mainly consisted of information dissemination in urban centres, including public announcements and meetings. However, low-income respondents in the poorest areas mostly reported that they hear about social assistance via word of mouth, and the large number of people who do not know about social assistance indicates that this is not an effective channel for disseminating information in every case. International experience shows that there is a risk that an on-demand application will not cover those who are insufficiently informed or have no communication (Seidikenova, Akkari, and Bakitov 2020). In general, it is obvious that more information should be provided at the beginning of the application, both in relation to social assistance and special social services, including: (I) eligibility criteria; (II) which documents people will need to apply for and how they can be obtained; and (III) where to apply. Awareness and understanding can be increased through information campaigns and targeted awareness-raising in schools, health services, and the police. Strengthening the capacity of social services to conduct awareness-raising activities is especially important for identifying disadvantaged families and facilitating their access to social assistance and services. There should be a clear focal point or contact point for families to find information about the support available.

The need for employment certification raises broader issues related to the development and

coordination of social assistance policies and employment promotion in Kazakhstan. This is a response to the fear that social assistance is a deterrent to working – in other words, that instead of getting a job, people will rely on social assistance payments. However, in the manner that the TSA and SCA application processes are currently conceived, rather than working to support programmes and employment goals, they almost run counter to them. This is especially relevant for people living in remote rural villages who are forced to work in public roles for low wages. These salaries are so low that the combination of transportation costs and the possibility of losing casual income compel those people to make a rational decision not to register in public works schemes. There should be a clear and agreed goal in the social assistance and employment sectors, and programmes in both sectors should aim to achieve these agreed goals. Employment conditions should be reviewed taking into account the financial incentives necessary for people to be ready to work, especially in rural areas, as well as the availability of suitable jobs. To overcome these issues and change the financing conditions, the Budget Code of Kazakhstan was adopted in 2001, which secured 17 different sources of income on a long-term basis. These were not taken into account when calculating inter-budgetary transfers, however, and the fiscal powers of local authorities remained inconsiderable. Therewith, and as a result of inter-budgetary transfers, “equalisation” has emerged: local authorities are deprived of the opportunity to solve their own issues independently due to their dependence on subsidies or because of the withdrawal of over-planned funds. Local authorities have no incentive for the effective development of the local economy – it is more profitable to remain a recipient than to switch to the category of donor.

## **Conclusions**

As result of research into the state financial mechanism of social assistance to the population, the authors developed following conclusions:

In the medium term, budget financing of the social sphere in Kazakhstan will remain relevant. In this regard, it is necessary to find non-budgetary (sponsorship, crowdfunding, venture financing, etc.) sources of financial development for social spheres and areas of spiritual growth in the country. Extra-budgetary financial support of the social sphere can be increased through the development of public-private partnerships. In addition, it is advisable to increase the revenues of the state budget. Measures aimed at increasing the tax base and reducing shadow income, including the intensification of non-cash transactions, will make it possible to unload the budget and diversify inflows into the country’s budget. The increasing social obligations of the state require greater economic returns to be obtained from the digitalisation of tax and customs administration. Difficulties in setting and managing local budgets in Kazakhstan, which have been observed in the past, have gradually become systemic. Nevertheless, the innovations of the Budget and Tax Codes during 2010–2016, which were aimed at decentralising the state budget system and ensuring greater financial self-sufficiency and independence of local budgets, did not change the situation, and even deepened a number of issues at the level of local budgets.

The Kazakh government claims that it has paid compensation for lost income caused by the ongoing COVID-19-related lockdown to more than 2.7 million people as a form of social assistance to the population. The majority of requests for assistance came from residents of the city and region of Almaty, where more than 1.2 million people received payments of 42,500 Tenge (100 USD). In South Turkestan, around 631,000 people received money, as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection reported on April 15. Direct payments to the public, at a cost of \$270 million as of the 1st of January 2021, are perhaps the most daring effort made by the government to mitigate



the economic and social impact of the national shutdown, which was introduced to halt the progress of COVID-19 in Kazakhstan. As the first Deputy Prime Minister Berik Sholpankulov stated on April 2, 2021, the government allocated 5.9 trillion Tenge (13 billion USD) to ensure economic stability, which will also allow supporting business and protecting jobs.

It should be clarified that the Government of Kazakhstan makes recommendations on improving the development and provision of social assistance and special social services to families with children. The focus is on the way to facilitate access to these forms of support for low-income families and families living in poor areas. The developed methodology allows data to be obtained on the barriers that low-income families with children face when accessing these benefits.

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Saltanat Rakymzhanova, Nadiya Sabitova, Parida Issakhova, Ainur Kaiyrbayeva,  
Gulnara Beisenova

### Valstybės socialinės paramos gyventojams finansinio mechanizmo plėtra

*Šiuo straipsniu siekiama įrodyti, kad socialinė apsauga yra veiksminga skurdo mažinimo priemonė, prisidedanti prie ekonominių ir socialinių darnaus vystymosi aspektų integravimo. Pagrindinis šio tyrimo tikslas – įvertinti esamą socialinės apsaugos sistemos būklę Kazachstano Respublikoje ir parengti socialinės apsaugos lygio gerinimo priemones ir socialinės apsaugos finansavimo mechanizmus. Tyrimo metu gauti rezultatai leidžia daryti išvadą, kad per savarankiško vystymosi metus Kazachstano Respublikoje buvo sukurtas nacionalinis socialinės apsaugos modelis, priimta nemažai svarbių socialinių programų, skirtų gyventojų skurdo lygiui mažinti. Socialinės apsaugos sistema yra pagrindinis nacionalinio viešojo valdymo elementas. Ji įkūnija bet kurios visuomenės socialines vertybes. Socialinės apsaugos sistema turi tris pagrindinius tikslus: visiems visuomenės nariams garantuoti pagrindinių prekių ir paslaugų prieinamumą, skatinti aktyvų socialinį ir ekonominį saugumą, ugdyti individualų ir socialinį potencialą skurdo mažinimui ir darniam visuomenės vystymuisi. Socialinė pagalba padeda žmonėms valdyti riziką ir mažinti nelygybę, taip pat leidžia išnaudoti visą savo asmeninio (viso gyvenimo) augimo ir reikšmingo indėlio į visuomenę potencialą.*

Saltanat S. Rakymzhanova, MSc in Economics, head of the Department of Hospitality Management at Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Kazakhstan.

E-mail: ss\_rakymzhanova@lund-univer.eu

Saltanat S. Rakymzhanova, ekonomikos mokslų magistrė, Kazachstano Ablai Khan tarptautinių santykių ir pasaulio kalbų universiteto Svetingumo vadybos katedros vedėja, Kazachstanas.

E. paštas: ss\_rakymzhanova@lund-univer.eu

Nadiya M. Sabitova, PhD in Economics, professor at the Department of Financial Markets and Financial Institutions at Kazan Federal University, Russia.

E-mail: n-sabitova@toronto-uni.com

Nadiya M. Sabitova, ekonomikos mokslų daktarė, Kazanės federalinio universiteto Finansų rinkų ir finansų institucijų katedros profesorė, Rusija.

E. paštas: n-sabitova@toronto-uni.com

Parida B. Issakhova, PhD in Economics, professor at the School of Economics and Finance at Almaty Management University, Kazakhstan.

E-mail: issakhova@nanyang-uni.com

Parida B. Issakhova, ekonomikos mokslų daktarė, Almatos vadybos universiteto Ekonomikos ir finansų mokyklos profesorė, Kazachstanas.

E. paštas: issakhova@nanyang-uni.com

Ainur Ye. Kaiyrbayeva, PhD in Economics, professor at the Department of International Tourism Management at Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Kazakhstan.

E-mail: a\_kaiyrbayeva@tanu.pro

Ainur Ye. Kaiyrbayeva, ekonomikos mokslų daktarė, Kazachstano Ablai Khan tarptautinių santykių ir pasaulio kalbų universiteto Tarptautinio turizmo vadybos katedros profesorė, Kazachstanas.

E. paštas: a\_kaiyrbayeva@tanu.pro

Gulnara Sh. Beisenova, PhD in Economics, associate professor at the Department of International Tourism Management at Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Kazakhstan.

E-mail: [gbeisenova@lund-univer.eu](mailto:gbeisenova@lund-univer.eu)

Gulnara Sh. Beisenova, ekonomikos mokslų daktarė, Kazachstano Ablai Khan tarptautinių santykių ir pasaulio kalbų universiteto Tarptautinio turizmo vadybos katedros docent, Kazachstanas.

E. paštas: [gbeisenova@lund-univer.eu](mailto:gbeisenova@lund-univer.eu)