Now let us look at the largest of the developed nations, the US. How many baskets of goods do you guess that the average American can buy a year? Well, have you got your ideas? Here are the answers. In our depiction, each basket is worth $100 of buying power per year. Using the data from the International Monetary Fund, Real GDP per capita, it is about $600 per year in the Central African Republic. It is just six baskets. In contrast, Real GDP per capita in Mexico is $17800 per year or it is 178 baskets. By the way, both of these numbers have been converted into dollars by taking into account differences in prices in these countries. These are so-called purchasing power parity conversions. This is the most accurate way we know to compare living standards across different countries. Now let us look at Mexico and the CAR again. The average person in Mexico can buy 29 times as many goods a year as the average person in the CAR. As for the average American, he can buy 545 baskets. That is three times more than the average person in Mexico, and 90 times more than the average person in the CAR. So, when we are talking about differences in wealth between countries, we do not mean small differences. It is 10, 20, 50 and sometimes 100 times more in one country than in another. The countries that we might count together in our mind as being poor, like Mexico and the CAR, they are not nearly in the same league. Let us take an example of the prosperity in Mexico, which is much closer to the US than it is to the truly destitute nations, such as the CAR. Here we may ask the questions now: if these huge disparities in wealth have always existed; if the countries are converging; if they are diverging; if it is getting better or worse and if any countries are catching up.

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**SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES**

**РАЗВИТИЕ «ГИБКИХ НАВЫКОВ»: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ**

Nowadays students and future employees are increasingly focused on getting high results in tests and exams in the process of preparation for the world of work. Not infrequently they are competent in terms of academic knowledge. However, al-
most every skilled job requires dealing with other people. And the higher you get on the career ladder, the more significant the soft skills become to you.

The term «soft skills» is widely used in the modern world. In its general sense, it includes interpersonal skills, which are used to describe your approach to life, work and relationships with other people [1]. They are not directly connected with a specific job. The list of the soft skills is nearly endless. We will briefly mention the main groups of them.

1. Verbal and non-verbal communication. It deals with abilities to convey information and communicate with other people clearly and effectively. This group includes an ability to persuade people, deliver presentations, an ability to «tell stories», use the body language effectively, etc.

2. Analytical skills. This group includes lateral thinking (thinking «outside the box»), creativity, an ability to conduct experiments, analyze and implement the results, etc. They are very important in the digital age.

3. EI or EQ — emotional intelligence. Such skills are believed to be the most important ones in this category. This group includes an ability to deal with stress, empathy and self-awareness.

4. Leadership skills. They can also be called managerial skills, but the meaning is much narrower. This group includes problem solving, coaching (an ability to teach and to be understood), delegation and supervising.

5. Teamwork. This category includes an ability to cooperate, coordinate each other’s performance, an ability to mediate conflicts inside the team and effectively collaborate with other teams.

6. Time management. Time is the most valuable asset in our modern rapidly changing world. This category includes an ability to schedule tasks, track what it done and what remains untouched, and arrive in time.

7. Adaptability. This category includes adapting to the new people, new work responsibilities and new country or culture [1; 2].

The aim of our research was to reveal how university students, or future specialists, evaluate their present level of soft skills development and to compare it with the opinion of the employers. For this purpose we canvassed 100 respondents from the faculty of international relations. We have arrived at the following results.

On average, 73 % of the respondents think that they have good soft skills. However, the opinion of the employers at a global level differs from it: from their perspective, 30 % of employees are lacking even basic soft skills [2]. In our opinion, work-
The objective of this paper is to analyze the occurrence of kakonomics within Belarusian socio-cultural environment and to identify behavioral patterns of consumers in relation to the quality of goods and services. Methods used in the study include the review of literature and the analysis of the empirical data collected by spreading a questionnaire in Google Forms. The relevance of the study is the need to deal with issues associated with the paradox of mediocre exchanges in Belarus.

International companies operating in foreign markets take into account socio-cultural characteristics of consumers in order to satisfy their needs and to make a profit. Consumer behavior in emerging markets, e.g. in Belarus, is a complex phenomenon that does not always meet the expectations of international companies that have succeeded in the West. Behavioral patterns can be defined using the concept of “kakonom-