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**INCREASING THE COUNTRY'S COMPETITIVENESS BY
IMPROVING THE MERCHANDISE EXPORT STRUCTURE (ON THE
EXAMPLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF BLACK SEA ECONOMIC
COOPERATION)**

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Research methodology. The following scientific methods were used: the systemic method in determining the role of exports in the countries' competitiveness factors; hypothetical method in formulating and justifying assumptions about the impact of export structure on national competitiveness; comparative analysis in comparing the structure of exports; statistical method in the calculation of indicators of the productivity of the export basket; econometric modeling method in determining the type of the competitiveness dependence on the export structure.

Results. On the basis of summarizing the main provisions of the concept of «export driven growth» the positive impact of exports dynamics on the country's GDP is explained mainly indirectly through increasing the productivity of the economy. High proportion of products with low added value in the merchandise composition of exports of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation countries were found, resulting in low productivity export basket in comparison with the U.S., the EU and China.

The observed impact of the export basket on labor productivity allows including the merchandise export structure into the set of competitiveness drivers.

Based on the calculation of revealed comparative advantage index it is shown that the productivity of the export basket can be improved by increasing the proportion of more productive goods having competitive advantage in the global or regional markets.

Novelty. A linear relationship between labor productivity expressed in terms of GDP per person employed, and the productivity of BSEC countries' export basket for the period 2004–2011 was revealed, which helped to confirm the hypothesis of «export driven competitiveness» offered by the author.

Practical value. Recommendations are given to improve the merchandise export structure of BSEC countries by increasing the share of products with higher added value, based on the calculation of revealed comparative advantages index.

Keywords: economic growth, exports, export basket, productivity, competitiveness, innovation.

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