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Problems Faced by Container Shipping in the Modern World

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Container transportation is a modern type of cargo delivery, in which special containers are used for transportation. Today, container transportation of goods is leading in the delivery from one point of the country to another or to the territory of other countries and continents. Popularity of container transportation is conditioned by the fact that the cargo is transported from the point of origin to the point of consumption in a unit load – a container, which is transferred from one mode of transport to another at transshipment points, it saves both time and money for the customer. This method of transportation ensures the safety of goods and high speed of delivery due to the fact that the contents of containers aren't checked in the moment of crossing the borders of states: packing and checking the contents is controlled at the point of departure and unpacking – at the point of delivery [1].

However, despite all the advantages of container transportation, especially by sea and rail, which are characterized by low cost, a high level of transportation safety and safety of goods, container transportation also have problems.

Thus, according to Seaexplorer (an index that tracks the number of ships, idling in the largest container ports in the world), 612 container ships were idle at anchor or on the road at key ports at the end of January, 2022. The launch of a new index – Seaexplorer disruption indicator – has recently been

announced. This indicator is an addition to the Seaexplorer index that shows the total delay time of containers in 9 “hot spots” of the port container industry - the ports of Prince Rupert, Vancouver/Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles/Long Beach, New York, Savannah, Hong Kong, Shanghai/Ningbo, and Rotterdam/Antwerp – in TEU-days. The value of this index (11.6 million TEU-days) indicates that TEU delays in 9 key ports of the world are almost 12 times higher than the norm (in normal conditions this figure should be around a million TEU-days) [2].

Asia-Europe is currently one of the most developing destination. According to the Ocean Timeliness index, which tracks changes in the length of time from the moment, when the cargo is ready for shipment by an exporter, to the moment, when it is received by an importer, container delivery times have approximately doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic as shown in figure 1.



Fig. 1 – Cargo Ready Date to Destination Port Departure

This indicator ranged from 45 to 50 days for routes from Asia to North America on the average for 2019, the index value of January 2, 2022 set a new record of 110 days. Similarly, for routes from Asia to Europe the average delivery time for a container was in the range of 55 to 60 days before the pandemic, and on January, 2 it's reaching 108 days. This indicates that congestion problems are far from being resolved. Thus, according to the Southern California Maritime Exchange, the number of container ships, anchored in the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach within the 40-mile zone and outside it and moving toward the ports on the eighth of January reached 134.

To sum up, all the advantages of using containers for the transportation of goods at the moment become less significant against the backdrop of emerging problems, since there is a congestion of a large number of container ships in the ports, which leads to an increase in the delivery time of goods to final customers and thus freezes funds.

References:

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