

Socio-Demographic Features of Business Environment of Dnieper-Dvina Region

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Abstract. The article includes the results of a study of the business environment of the Dnieper-Dvina region (Smolensk, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions) for the period from 1992 to 2018. The article substantiates the allocation of three regions of the Russian-Belarusian border in a separate region. The integration of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation took place over this period in several stages, each of which reflected on the state of the business environment of the border regions. The article highlights the socio-economic consequences of integration for the business environment of the Dnieper-Dvina region. The lag of the Russian-Belarusian border regions from national trends in terms of wages and incomes of the population is established, which provokes the outflow of skilled labor in the capital regions, and also worsens the demographic situation, which is characterized by a low birth rate and high mortality rate. The article highlights the stages of socio-demographic development of the Dnieper-Dvina region. The results of the study confirm the hypothesis that the inter-metropolitan border regions of the Russian-Belarusian border section are developing more slowly and lagging behind the nationwide growth rates. The business environment of the Dnieper-Dvina region is characterized by low solvency of the population, migration outflow and a decrease in the number of potential consumers. The article suggests options for improving the business environment and the attractiveness of the border regions of Russia and Belarus.

1. Introduction

The Dnieper-Dvina region is a unique territorial collectivity, which is located in the Russian-Belarusian border. In addition to the features expressed in transit and cross-border, Dnieper-Dvina region (hereinafter DDR) is distinguished by its capital position. In the East it borders with Moscow, and in the West with the Minsk region, and the distance between Minsk and Moscow is only 710 kilometers. It seems that this unique situation creates special conditions and DDR economic development trends that differ from the country-wide ones.

Historically, economic interaction of Smolensk, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions, which is appropriate to unite under one name – the Dnieper-Dvina border, was carried out on the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. To date, the region has retained its specificity of the main goods transit from Europe to the Russian Federation, which is carried out by road and rail, but the Western Dvina and the Dnieper remained as the main elements that ensure the unity of the territory in question in a geographical context. Most of Vitebsk region territory is located in the Western Dvina basin; most of Smolensk region and entire Mogilev region territory are located in the Dnieper basin and its tributaries.

The Dnieper- Dvina section of the Russian-Belarusian border is the most actively interacting part of it, including Vitebsk, Smolensk and Mogilev regions. The area of this region is almost 118.9 thou-

sand square kilometers (48.1 % of the Russian-Belarusian border total area), and the population at the beginning of 2018 amounted to more than 3.1 million people or 48.7% of the Russia and Belarus border total population.

The DDR business environment in the period from 1992 to 2017 changed following the decisions taken at the level of two independent states – the Russian Federation (Hereinafter RF) and the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter RB). The integration stages that RF and RB have passed after the Soviet Union collapse are usually described in the following projects: the Union State (1996), the Customs Union (2010), the Common Economic Space (2012), the Eurasian Economic Union (2015). It should be assumed that each of these projects created new conditions for the business functioning in the border region, reflected on the income of the population, and therefore its purchasing power. Integration has had an impact on the socio-demographic situation of DDR, which needs to be investigated and assessed.

2. Analysis of known studies about the Dnieper-Dvina region

Until recently, the Dnieper-Dvina region as a holistic cultural entitie was considered in the scientists works from the history, archaeology, culture, geography point of view. However, in recent years, scientists have increasingly turned to the socio-economic development peculiarities of the region. We highlight a number of modern studies which are devoted to the socio-economic development of the Dnieper-Dvina region. They can be divided into several directions.

One of the approaches to the study of Russian-Belarusian border territorial structure modernization, which is based on geotransformation processes, is considered by L. E. Mazhar. The author makes proposals for purposeful transformation for Russian-Belarusian border territorial structure modernization [1,2].

Kutrowski A. P. and G. V. Radevsky have made long-term Russian-Belarusian border studies mainly for the Smolensk-Mogilev border. One of them considers the Russian-Belarusian cross-border region formation after the Customs Union conclusion. This authors for the first time come to the conclusion that Russia and Belarus border regions are developing more slowly compared to the economies of their countries [3,4]. In A. P. Karaskovo, Y. V. Rideskole and S.A. Shadrikova work among the most important directions of Russian-Belarusian border area modernization and transform it into one of the most developed regions of the Eurasian economic Union, highlighted the development of infrastructure, including transport and creation of innovative universities [5-8].

Insufficiently intensive development of the Dnieper-Dvina region is noted in the L. B. Vardomsky and A. S. Kuzavko work, where is spoken about the inability of the region to form a consumer market today that can become a center of satisfying the solvent demand of both local residents and citizens of the Union state as a whole. The capital regions mainly benefit from the Belarusian-Russian integration. This situation repeats what is happening in the EU [9].

In K. A. Morachevskaya studies is said that the economy of the regions in the context of state integration processes has not yet received serious incentives for development, which requires special attention in the regional policy formation in relation to these territories [10]. The author believes that the main problem hindering the development of the region is the lack of understanding on the part of the authorities of integration changes positive effect [11]

Considering the problems and prospects of socio-economic region development E. V. Lavrov speaks about the need for structural modernization of the Russian-Belarusian border region economy in accordance with the target setting of the transition to an innovative development type, integrated development of industries and territories, making adjustments to the legislation in the field of innovation and investment activity [12]

In A. V. Naumenkov's researches ways of investment potential increase of region as a whole, and its separate areas are considered. Thus, she sees rational use of natural resource potential, modernization of production on the basis of innovative technologies, development of infrastructure as the main ways to increase the investment potential of the region [13-14].

The problems of socio-economic development of Russian-Belarusian border rural areas are considered in the works of N. V. Blokhin. The author identifies the basic principles of sustainable development of these territories, for example, investment and resource allocation for results-developed plans; strengthen strategic coordination at national, regional and global levels in order to improve regulation and achieve better allocation of resources; development of steady increase efficiency system of the agricultural organizations, expansion of response possibilities to emergency situations [15]. The author believes that it is needed significant reform of local government system to improve the socio-economic situation in rural territories of Russia and Belarus [16].

There are a lot of works devoted to the development of tourism and transport in the Russian-Belarusian border.

So Mazhar L. Yu., and Shcherbakova, S. A., as priority measures for the development of cross border tourism see the creation of an unified information center of the Russian-Belarusian border area; construction of tourist complexes, such as theme parks, ethnic villages [17]; the development of integrated tourist routes; the organization of joint promotional companies and the total stands at tourism exhibitions; publication of a tourist guide, event calendar, gift products on Russian-white-Russian borderland and other measures.

Scientists see the integration of human capital as an important aspect of the Dnieper-Dvina region development. According to A. P. Karaskovo, J. P. Kovalev and other scientists demographic processes in the region depend on the socio-economic development, and human capital is the main resource of structural changes in a socially-oriented regional development model [6]. The Russian border regions economy is lack in qualified specialists. The decline in the number of budget places in universities and rising tuition negatively affected on the students number that will subsequently affect the economic development of the region in the future [18].

The analysis of the situation revealed a number of problems in the Dnieper-Dvina region, indicating destructive changes in the socio-economic sphere, which are the most serious in comparison with other regions of Central Russia. To address these problems requires a long-term rehabilitation programme aimed at economic growth, social infrastructure [19].

Despite the large number of works devoted to the Russian-Belarusian border study, the Dnieper-Dvina region is currently not studied deeply enough, most of these studies cover the late period, mainly after 2000.

3. Description of the research method

The main research methods are: analysis of statistical data, induction method, tabular and graphical methods, analysis of dynamics indicators, comparison, identification of trends.

The study used statistical data provided by the Federal state statistics service (hereinafter Rosstat) and the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter NSC RB).

The main comparisons are: comparison of DDR indicators with the same indicators in Metropolitan regions and neighbouring regions.

The social sphere of the region is closely related to demographic indicators, indicators of income. In this article we will analyze the following indicators for the DDR areas: population size, dynamics of fertility and mortality, migration population growth.

For comparison, we used relative indicators – population growth rate, fertility rate, mortality rate, wages in US dollars, the dynamics of real disposable income of the population and others.

This study is described data from 1992, when Belarus legally gained independence.

4. Research result

Socio-economic situation of the region is mainly characterized by population dynamics. Consider the population dynamics in Smolensk, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions and compare it with other regions of Russia and Belarus (table 1).

Table 1. Population dynamics, thousand people (at the beginning of the year).

Years	Vitebsk region	Mogilev region	Smolensk region	Gomel region	Minsk region	Minsk	Pskov region	Bryansk region	Moscow region	Moscow
1992	1430	1255	1163	1595	1591	1654	838	1456	6719	9068
1995	1426	1245	1173	1572	1596	1666	830	1469	6672	9086
1998	1391	1222	1158	1552	1572	1676	813	1448	6657	9604
2001	1355	1197	1119	1532	1535	1690	782	1408	6614	10114
2004	1306	1160	1039	1497	1492	1772	747	1361	6622	10536
2007	1259	1124	1018	1459	1448	1776	708	1318	6646	11091
2010	1229	1097	993	1439	1420	1844	682	1278	7095	11504
2013	1208	1076	975	1428	1402	1901	662	1254	7048	11980
2014	1202	1073	968	1426	1403	1922	657	1243	7134	12108
2015	1199	1071	965	1424	1408	1938	651	1233	7231	12198
2016	1194	1068	959	1423	1417	1960	646	1226	7319	12330
2017	1188	1064	953	1421	1423	1975	642	1221	7424	12381
2018	1180	1059	949	1416	1427	1982	637	1211	7503	12507
2019	1172	1053	942	1410	1429	1993	630	1200	7600	12616

Source: Rosstat, NSK RB [20, 21].

Population dynamics for the considered Dnieper-Dvina region is negative. Population decline in Vitebsk region from 1992 to 2019 was 18%, in Mogilev-16.1%, in Smolensk-19% (in Belarus during this period the population decreased by 7.1%, in Russia – by 1.3%).

This situation is typical for most regions of Russia and Belarus, excluding the capital. For example, in Minsk and Moscow regions in different periods there is both a decrease and growth of the population. The total population growth in both capitals is: in Minsk – the growth rate was 22%, in Moscow – by 39%. The main reason for the decline in the population is the decrease in the birth rate. For example, in Mogilev region in 1990 13.3 children were born per 1000 population and in 2018 – 9.8 children per 1000 population. Mortality rate in 2018 is amounted to 13.9 inhabitants per 1000 population, it exceeds the birth rate by 1.4 times. Also the region is characterized by migration population decline (in 2018 – 1583 people), mostly migration is interregional in nature. The average age of the population is 40.6 years (for 2017), which is 0.4 years more than the national average.

In Vitebsk region in 2018, the mortality rate is 1.7 times higher than the birth rate, migration loss (mostly local) and amounted to 1833 people. It should be noted that unlike Mogilev region some years in Vitebsk region are characterized by a positive migration growth (2000, 2010, 2014). The general

result is a small increase in the birth rate in 2012-2016 against the background of an increase in the number of marriages in 2011-2015, which indicates a more prosperous socio-economic state in this period for the studied regions. A slight improvement in the situation was observed in 2014-2015, when the migration flow from Ukraine and partly from Russia and Kazakhstan went to the country, but fundamentally this did not save the situation. The population of the region is considered to be the oldest in comparison with other Belarus regions, the average age in 2017 is 41.7 years, which is 1.5 years more than the national average.

Comparing the demographic processes in Mogilev and Vitebsk regions with Minsk, it can be noted that in Minsk, although there is a natural decline in the population (in 2018, the mortality rate exceeds the birth rate by 1.3 times), but there is a fairly steady migration growth of the population mainly due to inter-regional migration. So in recent years there has been a large migration increase from Vitebsk region, which is almost 2 times more than Mogilev region.

Part of the Belarus population migrate into Russia, including Smolensk region. In 2017 the number of arrivals from Belarus to Smolensk was 7515 people, in 2018 – 5665 people, which is higher than the migration flow from other countries. More than half of these migrants remain in the region.

The population decline in the regions affected such factors as rising unemployment, especially hidden, falling living standards, and the migration of population in the more prosperous regions of the country. And the 1990s are marked by migration of certain nationalities to other countries (for example, Jews - to Israel).

Unlike Western European countries, where low fertility is compensated by migration, Belarus cannot expect this because of economic problems, affected by the overall demographic situation in the country. Stimulating measures taken to increase the birth rate have ceased to have a positive effect.

In Smolensk region was also observed that the natural population decline, but compared with the 2000-ies it is not so quick (in 2000, the natural decrease was 13 per 1,000 population, in 2018 – 7.2 persons) and the mortality rate in 2018 exceeds the birth rate by 1.9 times. Migration decline in the region in recent years is small, so in 2018 it amounted to 137 people, although the migration turnover in the region is higher than in Vitebsk and especially in Mogilev regions.

Thus, in contrast to the Belarusian neighboring regions in the Smolensk region, the population is reduced due to high mortality and low fertility. In the region a growing share of the population older than working age (in 2001 it amounted to 23,5%, in 2018 – 28,4%). The average age of the population in the region is about 42 years, which is 2 years more than the average in Russia. According to international criteria, the population is considered old if the region has a population of 65 years and older more than 7%, in the Smolensk region such 16.1%. Such indicators negatively characterize the business environment of the region. Due to the decrease in the share of the able-bodied population, the attractiveness of the implementation of projects in the region by types of economic activities associated with the use of manual labor is reduced. The predominance of the older generation in the population structure will have a negative impact on consumer behavior, which will be conservative, indifferent to innovative products and prone to savings.

Smolensk region demographic indicators were more regressing compared to Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. Its indicators are also lagging behind compared to other regions of Russia: in demographic regions rating in 2019 - 62 place.

It can be assumed that the demographic indicators in the region are influenced by the income of its inhabitants. Consider the dynamics of average wages in the region (table 2).

According to table 2, there is a slight difference between wages in Vitebsk and Mogilev regions and quite significant between these regions and wages on average in Belarus, as well as other regions and Minsk. Moreover, this difference increases: in 1995, the difference in wages in Mogilev and Vitebsk regions compared to the national average was about 9%, in 2010 – 11.7%, in 2018 – 18%. In Minsk, the average salary in 2018 is 653.4 US dollars, and compared to Belarus Dnieper-Dvina region it is more by 64%. So it is natural that the inhabitants of these regions migrate to the capital region.

Table 2. Average nominal salary in US dollars.

Year	Vitebsk region	Mogilev region	RB	Gomel region	Minsk region	Minsk	Pskov region	Bryansk region	Moscow region	Moscow	Smolensk	RF
1992	9	10	9	11	10	11	-	-	-	-	-	22
1995	61	62	66	66	63	88	-	-	-	-	67	104
1998	61	62	67	68	64	87	-	-	-	-	79	107
2001	173	169	190	187	184	236	71	62	118	169	82	111
2004	148	143	162	158	156	201	158	146	257	369	174	189
2007	292	300	326	310	311	403	350	321	635	925	374	564
2010	366	366	409	387	397	516	477	406	837	1265	478	690
2013	508	511	576	543	559	717	620	596	1121	1742	642	935
2014	522	586	596	552	586	757	547	544	1005	1593	580	846
2015	366	365	423	384	420	559	354	356	667	1055	385	558
2016	308	306	363	319	359	496	369	378	703	1177	414	605
2017	356	357	422	374	421	583	405	424	803	1265	450	671
2018	398	394	470	423	472	653	428	435	828	1336	460	693

Source: Rosstat, NSK RB [20, 21].

Thus, considering the dynamics of the average wage in Belarus Dnieper-Dvina region, we can say that it is lower than in other regions of the country, even compared to Gomel region (the difference is 6-7%).

The data on wages in Russia for 1992 is quite approximate because of hyperinflation and the average wage increased 11 times in 1992. Also there are no official data on wages for 1995-1998 in some regions of Russia. The average salary in Smolensk region is higher than in Bryansk and Pskov regions about 6-7% according to 2018, but lower than in Moscow region by 80% than in Moscow – almost 3 times. Compared with the average value in Russia it is lagging behind at 45-50%. When comparing wages in the Smolensk region with Belarus, in dollar terms, it is lower than the average in Belarus by 2% and higher than in the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions by about 16-17%.

The wage differentiation of the population in Russia is much higher than in Belarus.

The real disposable income of the population in the Smolensk region since 2014 has been gradually increasing, while in Mogilev and Vitebsk regions it has been growing since 2016 (Fig. 1).

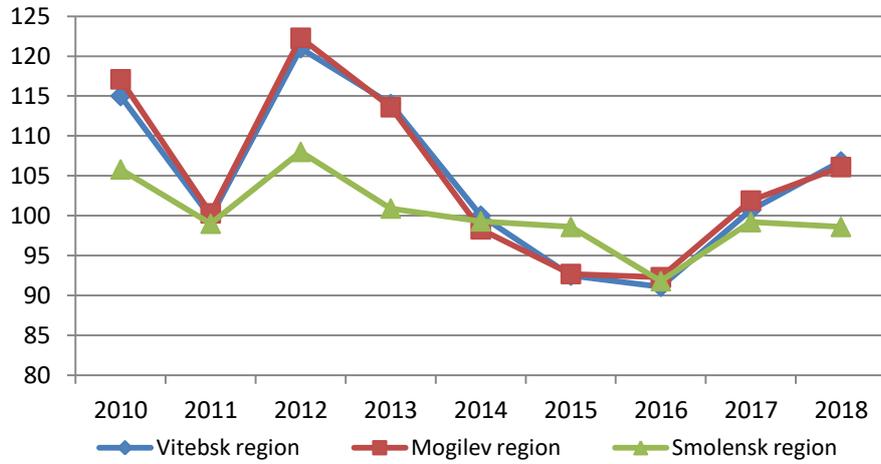


Figure 1. Real disposable income of the population of the Dnieper-Dvina region, as a percentage of the previous year [20, 21].

In the Smolensk region, there is a large proportion of population with incomes below the subsistence minimum: in 2017 – 16.3%. This is the lowest figure in the Central Federal district.

In Vitebsk and Mogilev regions, real incomes in the dynamics showed themselves approximately the same: in the period from 2014 to 2016 they decreased, and in 2017 – began to grow. This dynamics can be explained by the economic crisis in Belarus in 2015-2016, when there was a decline in production and a slowdown in GDP growth. According to statistics the share of the poor (with income below the subsistence minimum) in the Vitebsk region is 7.1%, in Mogilev-7.5%. Although the subsistence minimum in dollar terms in Belarus is about \$ 80, which is more than 2 times lower than in Russia (\$172). Poor number in Mogilev and Vitebsk regions is 15.3 and 16.1%, respectively, which is commensurate with the Smolensk region.

Comparing the ratio of the average wage to the subsistence minimum should be clarified that the cost of living in Russian regions is established by the Administration of these regions, and in Belarus are centralized by the Council of Ministers of the Republic. The ratio of the average wage and the subsistence minimum in the Dnieper-Dvina region is shown in figure 2.

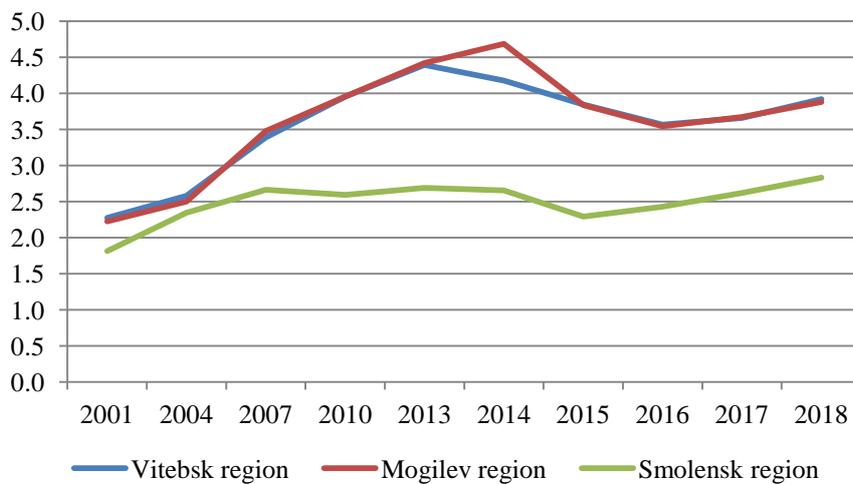


Figure 2. The ratio of the average wage and the subsistence minimum in the Dnieper-Dvina region [20, 21].

According to figure 2, there are significant differences in the ratio of wages and the subsistence minimum. In Smolensk region, the average wage is only 1.8 in 2001 and 2.8 times in 2018 more than the subsistence minimum. In the regions of Belarus, the ratio of wages to the subsistence minimum in 2001-2004 was slightly different from Smolensk (it was in the range of 2.2-2.6). In 2013-2014, it reached its maximum in Vitebsk and Mogilev regions and amounted to 4.4 times. Currently, the ratio in Belarus is 3.9 times. These results positively characterize the socio-economic situation of the Belarusian DDR regions, as the well-known threshold value for the figure presented. 2 indicator is a 3-fold excess of wages over the subsistence minimum. However, these results are the result of a low subsistence minimum, established in the Republic of Belarus centrally, therefore, the real cost of living can be much higher.

Considering the structure of Dnieper-Dvina region population expenditures, we can say that it is identical for the regions under consideration. Food accounts a large share of expenditure. In 2018, in Mogilev region it is 39.7% (in 2010-40.6%), in Vitebsk – 40.2% (in 2010 – 38.6%), in Smolensk – 39% (in 2010 – 32.6%). About 30% are non-food products and about 23% are services. In Metropolitan regions, residents spend less on food and more on services and non-food products, the structure of consumption in them is more uniform.

Considering the socio-demographic development of the Dnieper-Dvina region since 1992, we can distinguish several stages (table 3).

Table 3. Stages of social and demographic development of DDR.

Stage	Period	Characteristics of the social situation of Dnieper-Dvina region	
		RB	RF
I – formation	1992-1994	Intensification of international migration. The level of social development of various regions of DDR is low, as in the countries as a whole. Differentiation of the population by income is small. More than 40% of the population have an income below the subsistence level	
II – negative stability	1995-2004	Wage growth and a slight difference in wages in the areas of DDR. High unemployment. High rate of natural population decline. Especially in Smolensk region (more than 10%) A small net migration from the CIS countries. The ratio of marriage and divorce indicators - 55%	Negative balance of migration, including from Belarus (the number of those who left the Smolensk region in Belarus exceeded 2 times the number of arrivals). Ratio of marriage and divorce rates-85%
III – growth differentiation capitals	2005-2010	Increased differentiation of population by income in areas of DDR compared to the capitals. Reducing international migration. Growth of positive migration balance in the capital regions. Increasing the rate of population decline in the DDR and population growth in the Metropolitan regions, especially in Moscow	
IV – differentia-	2011-	Slight increase in the birth rate of the popula-	

tion in DDR	2016	tion. The slowdown in the natural population decline Increase of population differentiation by wages. Growth of inter-regional and international migration. The increase in the wage gap in the Russian and Belarusian regions of the DDR towards the Russian. Population with incomes below the subsistence minimum-less than 8%	Increase in the number of arrivals from Belarus to the Smolensk region (in 2011, the number of arrivals compared to 2010 increased by 13 times). Positive balance of migration from Belarus. Large population with incomes below the subsistence minimum (more than 15%)
V – growing crisis	2017-2019	Increasing population differentiation on wages with Metropolitan regions. Low unemployment. Fertility decline. Growth of natural population decline.	

Based on the data in table 3, it can be seen that at the beginning of the integration processes in the DDR, the socio-demographic situation was equally unstable. Then there was a division of regions on a number of indicators (migration, income, fertility, etc.), which is especially noticeable since 2011. In recent years (2017-2019), the situation in the region has worsened and there is growing concern about the futility for the life of the population. We will identify the factors influencing this situation in the region.

1. The DDR regions are characterized by low fertility, high mortality, migration outflow (especially for the Belarusian regions), which led to a decrease in the population of the regions from 1992 to 2019 by more than 16%. This figure is significantly lower than the national average.

2. Nominal wages in the DDR are lower than the national average: in the Belarusian regions – by 18%, in Smolensk – by almost 50%. This shows less differentiation of the population by income in Belarus than in Russia. Low incomes are one of the main factors of population decline in the region.

3. The studied regions are unfavorable for attracting migrants because of their socio-economic situation, programs to stimulate the birth rate did not give the expected positive result, so the forecast of socio-economic development of the Dnieper-Dvina region is unfavorable.

Thus, Russia and Belarus integration only aggravated the already low social development of the Dnieper-Dvina region in comparison with the Metropolitan areas.

To solve the identified problems in the socio-economic sphere of the region and improve the business climate, it is necessary to: create a free economic zone throughout the DDR; tax preferences for residents of the DDR; active interaction of the population at the level of educational institutions with cultural and scientific goals; programs to support young professionals and youth entrepreneurship.

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