

### Attractiveness of the Kaliningrad region: pull factors and reasons for disappointments of migrants from Russian regions

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# ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE KALININGRAD REGION: PULL FACTORS AND REASONS FOR DISAPPOINTMENT OF MIGRANTS FROM RUSSIAN REGIONS

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*The Kaliningrad region's attractiveness to migrants results in increasing external (international) and interregional migration. The interregional flow is a major contributor, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of the net migration gain. However, the age composition and professional qualification of migrants from other regions of Russia do not fully agree with the specifics of the region's labour market and its strategic socio-economic development priorities. This lends urgency to a selective regional migration policy aimed at prospective internal migrants. Yet, the picture of pull, push and hindering factors remains incomplete, being limited to generally accepted drivers such as coastal location and proximity to EU countries. This article aims at a detailed analysis of reasons to migrate to the region, an assessment of the restrictions and difficulties faced by relocatees and migrants' satisfaction with the new place of residence. Methodologically, the study uses a mixed strategy: formal data collection methods are combined with respondent selection techniques peculiar to qualitative or expert methods. The authors draw on the results of an exploratory survey conducted in December 2021 with a view to analyse migrants' perception of the Kaliningrad region before and after their arrival and assess how their ideas change. The survey applied mixed research methods: respondents were recruited via social media and relocatee groups. The data analysis reveals a gap between migrant expectations and reality, identifying the causes of inconsistency between the incoming migration flow and the region's development objectives and labour market needs. Based on the findings, the authors provide recommendations for a migration policy based on an accurate picture of the region and aimed at attracting the required workforce, as well as at migrants' adaptation and support at the new place of residence.*

## **Keywords:**

attractiveness to migrants, interregional migration, pull factors, migration schedule, restrictions, associations and disappointments, Kaliningrad region

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## Introduction

Russia's Kaliningrad region stands out for its positive net migration rate of upwards of 10%. It ranked third in the country in 2020 and fifth in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Although in-migration has amply compensated for the natural decrease in the region since 2019 [1], the age structure, professional competences and qualifications of migrants do not fully meet the demands of the regional labour market, partly due to the high proportion of non-working age arrivals. This situation shifts the focus to pondering a targeted policy, which, whilst not discriminating against those seeking to move to the region, must ensure a more balanced age and occupation structure of the migration flow, using the tools of labour and educational legislation and creating attractive social and economic conditions for the most in-demand talent (doctors, teachers, IT specialists). The authors, following many Russian experts, believe that the problems of Russian inter-regional mobility are the remit of regional and spatial development policies, and whether they will be resolved “depends on investment in job creation and the development of housing and transport infrastructure” [2, p. 29]. However, formulating such a policy is impossible without understanding the attitudes of migrants, the factors of a territory's attractiveness, and motives for relocation to a concrete region.

Modern ideas about territories' attractiveness to migrants have been shaped by numerous Russian [3–7] and international [8–16] studies into migration factors, carried out since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The pull factors are socio-economic, climatic, political, denominational, cultural, institutional (including the presence of migrant communities and diasporas), those related to spatial structure (the presence of major cities, transport networks, etc.) and individual. As Rybakovsky [3] cogently points out, the concrete set of factors at play depends on the type of migration. Migration factors, moulded by one's objective circumstances, impact migration indirectly. They affect the minds and psychology of migrants who formulate their reasons for relocation based on their analysis of such factors. Therefore, employing sociological research methods when examining the reasons to migrate to a particular region opens up a promising avenue of research.

A region's economic and geographical position determine many of these factors [17]. The concept of attractiveness to migrants is used internationally in place-based planning [18; 19], especially when dealing with remote [20–23],

<sup>1</sup> Net migration per 10,000 population, 2022, *Statistical data showcase*, URL: <https://showdata.gks.ru/report/279008> (accessed 05.04.2022).

rural, coastal and island territories [24]. For border regions, the proximity to a foreign state can be both a pull and push factor. History abounds with such examples. A good neighbourhood stimulates cross-border contacts, trade, labour migration (temporary migration, cross-border commuting) [25–28] and academic mobility [29], pulling migrants to border regions [30]. The impact of a coastal location is also two-edged [31]. Environmental risks, sea level rise and coastal floodings [32; 33] cause people to leave coastal areas, whilst marine economy [34–38], balneology, tourism [39–44], internationalization of maritime education [45–47], comfortable living environment and infrastructure attract newcomers. Massive migration flows to warm coastal regions have given rise to the concept of “lifestyle migration”, which, according to Benson and O’Reilly [43], is a form of spatial mobility pursued by wealthy people of all ages, moving to places which they associate with a better quality of life or an opportunity for self-actualization. Such migration can be seasonal or permanent.

As recent studies into interregional migration<sup>2</sup> in Russia show [48–50], the main push factors forcing people to change their places of residence are disproportion between the population size and the number of jobs, a skewed age and sex structure, poverty, low incomes and housing problems. The pull factors are closely linked to the quality of life. These are developed and diverse infrastructure (from transport to entertainment), a sustainable environment, opportunities to find well-paid employment, and high-quality and accessible medical and social services. Although these factors generally correspond to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs [50, p. 127], their structure is markedly influenced by age. For instance, a mild climate is a prime consideration for people over 50. At the same time, 17–19-year-olds pursue educational goals and often return to their home regions after graduation, while people aged 25–39 are guided by work motives and take into account housing availability [48].

Despite a vast array of information collated, much uncertainty still exists about the reasons to relocate and migrants’ expectations, which eventually determine their attitudes, perceived well-being and life satisfaction. The way the ideas of a place transform when confronted with reality has been studied mostly in the context of immigration and within theories of migrant adaptation and integration. This problem, however, is no less acute for interregional migrants. Of course, the stress they experience is usually less considerable. However, they also have to part with many habits, changing not only their place of residence but also their lifestyle and circle of friends. Facing the reality and unmet expect-

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<sup>2</sup> Here and below interregional migration refers to migration between regions of Russia

tations can cause depression, protest impulses, as well as aggressive and deviant behaviour [51; 52], but not only. Humans tend to blame the external environment for their failures, and the factors that once attracted them turn into push factors. The region becomes a ‘hub’, a place for a temporary stay, losing its reputation along with much-needed professionals. Thus, it would be worthwhile to look at social lifts and practices facilitating the inclusion of yesterday’s migrants in the new community. This issue is highly relevant to both international and inter-regional migrants.

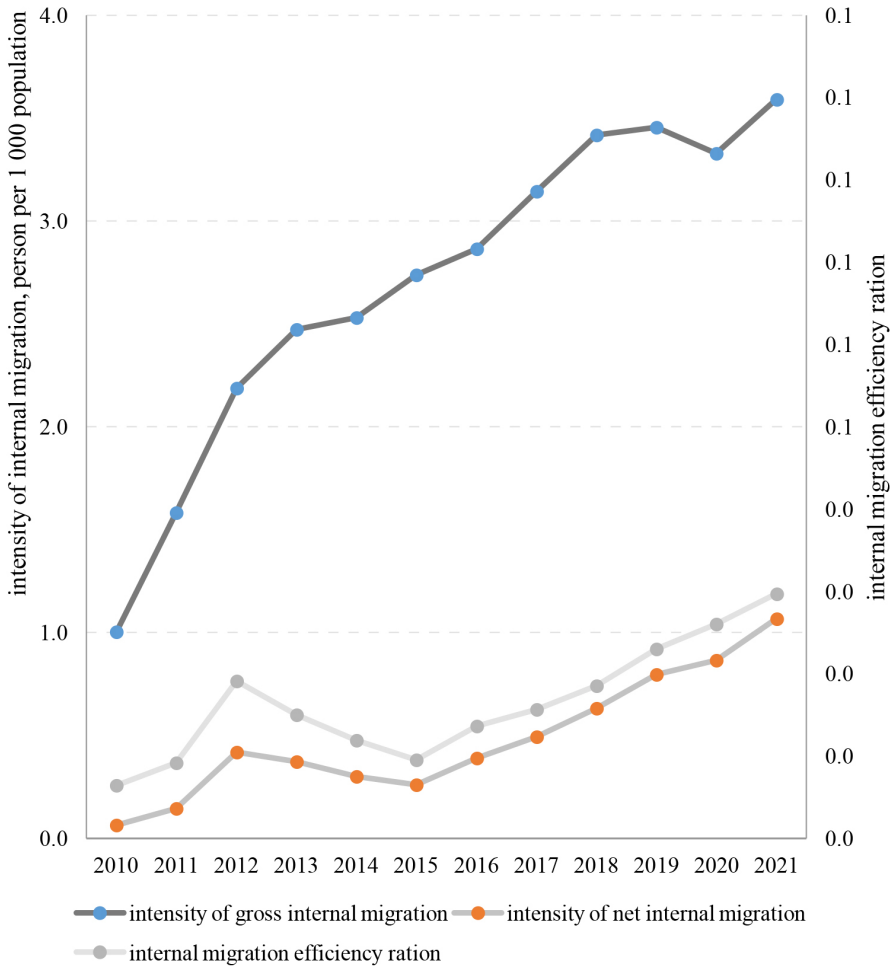
The migration attractiveness of Kaliningrad to residents of other Russian regions has not been explored. As a rule, researchers limit themselves to describing the region’s economic and geographical characteristics, its border and coastal location [53; 54]. However, drastic changes in the geopolitical situation after Crimea’s incorporation into Russia, the inflation of the security discourse, anti-Russian sanctions affecting the everyday life and the economy of the region, and freedom of movement restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic “locking Kaliningraders in” drove the need to devise a more detailed approach to reasons for relocating to the region, especially since the trend toward the population increase due to interregional migration continued in 2019—2021 despite the outlined problems. Thus, this research aims to assess whether the perception of the Kaliningrad region as an attractive place for relocation corresponds to its image as a coastal territory with a favourable geographical location and a mild climate. The specific questions which drive this research are: What are the reasons for choosing the Kaliningrad region? How spontaneous are usually the decisions to move to the region? What are the difficulties in moving to the region? Are the expectations of migrants fulfilled and what is their current perception of the region?

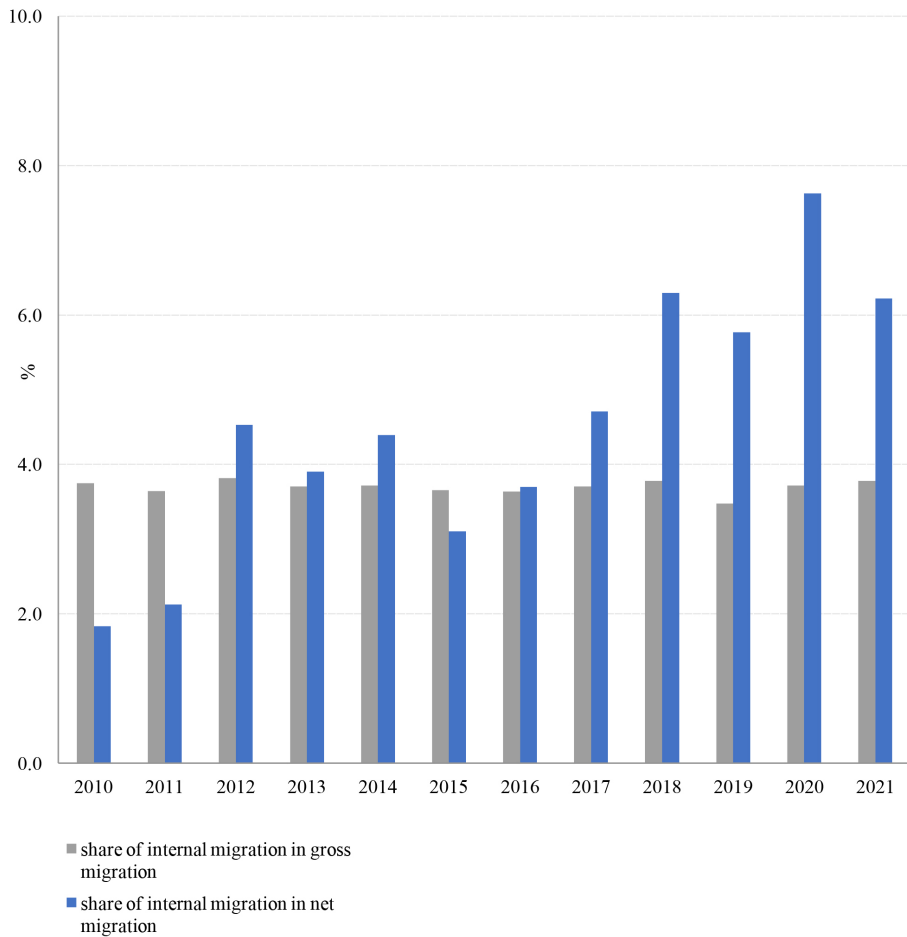
### **Migration in the region**

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Over the past decade, the effect of interregional migration on the demographic situation in the Kaliningrad region has grown. This trend emerged in the early 2010s, continuing throughout the coming decade. In 2021, the contribution of interregional mobility to net migration tripled to reach 62.2 %, albeit it changed insignificantly in gross values: from 36.5 % in 2011 to 38 % in 2021 (Fig. 1). Less than 6 % of all Russian arrivals stayed in the region in 2010—2011, while 2020—2021 it was over a quarter. Such shifts cannot be explained solely by the region’s growing attractiveness to migrants. External circumstances, such as changes to migration laws and pandemic-related travel restrictions, have also

impinged on bilateral migration with CIS countries. Yet none of this cancels the fact that gross and net migration rates outstrip the international migration figures in the region. The number of Russian regions whose residents relocate to Kaliningrad has also grown. The region welcomes more people from almost all Russian territories (except Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sevastopol) than loses to them. The most substantial inflow of migrants comes from the Siberian (the Kemerovo, Omsk, and Novosibirsk regions, the Krasnoyarsk and Altai krais) and Far Eastern Federal Districts (the Kamchatka and Khabarovsk krais). In 2011—2020, they accounted for almost two-thirds of the total migration gain in the region. Other places of origin are the northern territories of European Russia: the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, and the Republic of Komi.





*b*

Fig. 1. Gross migration intensity and net interregional migration in the Kaliningrad region, 2011–2020 average: *a* — interregional migration intensity; *b* — contribution of interregional migration to regional migration

*Source:* Number of arrivals, 2022, *EMISS*, URL: <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/43514> (accessed 12.11.2021) ; Number of departures, 2022, *EMISS*, URL: <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/43513> (accessed 12.11.2021).

As Rogers and Castro have shown, just like birth and death rates, migration has age-related patterns [55]. The migration schedule of Russian arrivals to the Kaliningrad region is no exception to this rule: 52 % of migrants who came from other Russian regions in 2011–2020 were 15–39 years of age (Fig. 2). As a result, the median age of interregional migrants to the Kaliningrad region

(30–31 years of age in 2020) is below that of international ones (34 years of age). This also applies to migrants leaving Kaliningrad for other Russian regions: 15–39-year-olds comprise 57% of the population outflow. These data correspond to the national trend [49; 56]. The main reasons younger people name for their relocation to Kaliningrad include employment or entering a local university.

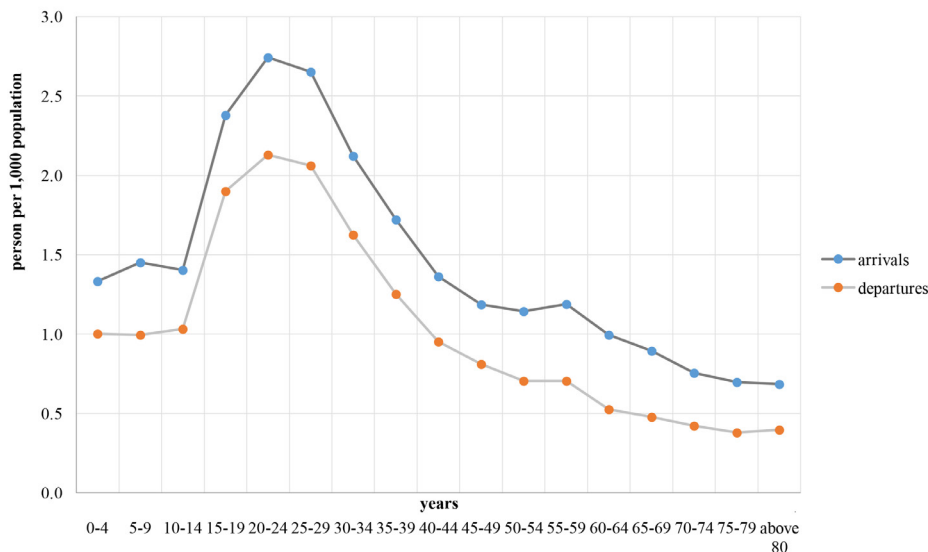


Fig. 2. The migration schedule of interregional migrants in the Kaliningrad region, 2011–2020 average

Source: The number of departures by sex, age and mobility flow, 2022, *EMISS*, URL: <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/58614> (accessed 17.11.2021) ; The number of arrivals by sex, age and mobility flow, 2022, *EMISS*, URL: <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/58613> (accessed 17.11.2021) ; *Population size and migration in the Kaliningrad region: a statistical digest, 2011–2018*, Kaliningrad, Kaliningradstat.

The other (although less prominent) peak in migration activity is associated with people of retirement and pre-retirement age (55–59 years of age). For this category, the most likely reason to relocate is family circumstances (changing residence with adult children or reunion with the family who has moved to the region earlier) or the desire to spend their retirement in a milder climate and a more pleasant environment.



## **Methods and materials**

Transformations in migrants' perception of a region before and after relocation are challenging to study. Comparing migrants' expectations with actual experiences (which often lead to disappointment) is not an easy task either. Firstly, a conspicuous problem is a discrepancy between the registration data from the Ministry of the Interior's Main Directorate for Migration Affairs and the information published by Rosstat [57; 58]. Moreover, Russian citizens do not have to register at temporary places of residence within the country if their stay does not exceed 90 days or if they return to their permanent residency at least once in three months<sup>3</sup>. Thus a significant proportion of interregional migration is accounted for by Russian citizens who either leave the region after a short stay or reside there permanently but make regular trips to their home towns. Such scenarios are not rare, as Mkrtchyan notes [58]. All these circumstances make identifying would-be Kaliningraders among all interregional migrants difficult.

Secondly, Russian interregional migrants, unlike international ones, do not create closed communities (except for natives of Russia's republics many of whom strongly rely on ethnocultural and religious associations). Although the social circle of Russian migrants is often limited to family and people from their home region, Russian newcomers do not tend to live where other individuals from their regions have settled before and do not occupy a single professional niche. Their distribution throughout the region and across various spheres is fairly even. Yet, newcomers were reluctant to participate in the study. Some informal groups declined the requests to do so, with distrust and disinterest cited as reasons for refusal.

The above circumstances determined the methodology of the study. It employs a mixed strategy to study migrants in the Kaliningrad region, including formalised data collation methods combined with respondent-driven sampling characteristic of qualitative or expert methods. An online survey was carried out without pursuing representativeness. The results obtained apply exclusively to the sample and can be used for reference purposes. The target group comprised migrants who have moved to the Kaliningrad region for permanent residence from other Russian territories after 2000. The study employed a snowball sampling technique [59]. The controlled characteristics were as follows: 1) congruity between respondents' age structure and the most numerous migrant age group; 2) occu-

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<sup>3</sup> On the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to freedom of movement and choice of residence in the Russian Federation, 1003, Law of the Russian Federation of 25.06.1993 № 5242-1 (amended as of 01.07.2021), accessed via the ConsultantPlus legal reference database.

pational diversity: trade, services, education, medicine, ICT, small business, etc.; 3) comprehensive geographical coverage of regions of origin. Respondents were recruited via migrant groups on the Vkontakte social networking service. New respondents were selected from the social network of earlier recruited members of the sample.

The questionnaire built on the theoretical ideas of pull factors in migration included 28 alternative, multiple-choice and rating scale questions divided into five thematic blocks. The first block was to gather general information about respondents: year of relocation, the place of arrival, how hasty/thought-through the decision to relocate was, and their family composition. If a respondent had visited the region before moving, information was elicited about the purposes and frequency of such trips, whether the respondent had family and acquaintances in the region, their local “historical” roots and informal ties to Kaliningrad. The second block considered pull factors, rated by respondents on a scale from 1 (had no effect) to 5 (had a decisive effect). The factors were divided into five groups: 1) personal economic factors; 2) personal social factors; 3) the economy, geography and history of the Kaliningrad region; 4) administrative factors; 5) general regional socio-economic factors (Table 1). The third block contained questions regarding the comparisons respondents made between Kaliningrad, on the one hand, and foreign countries and Russian regions, on the other, when deciding to move. The fourth block focused on the difficulties faced when relocating. It helped amass data on how respondents perceived the Kaliningrad region and the disappointments they felt after the relocation. The fifth block, aimed at people who had left the region, looked at push factors. The focus was on the significance of these factors, remaining ties to the region and possible plans to return.

*Table 1*

**Pull factors for the Kaliningrad region**

Factor group	Factors
1. Personal economic factors (PEF)	PEF.1 career growth opportunities; PEF.2 higher remuneration; PEF.3 business opportunities; PEF.4 relocation by the employer
2. Personal social factors (PSF)	PSF.1 learning opportunities for children; PSF.2 self-education opportunities; PSF.3 family reunion; PSF.4 living closer to friends; PSF.5 involvement with relocatee communities from one's home region

*The end of the Table 1*

Factor group	Factors
3. Economy, geography and history of the region (EGH)	EGH.1 proximity to the sea; EGH.2 nature and climate; EGH.3 favourable environmental situation; EGH.4 proximity to Europe; EGH.5 historical and cultural heritage; EGH.6 the image of a beautiful green city; EGH.7. the region's compactness and good connectivity
4. Administrative factors	ADF.1 initiatives of local authorities; ADF.2 Immanuel Kant Federal University; ADF.3 business benefits (the special economic zone, the offshore zone, etc.); ADF.4 federal support (Zemsky Doctor and Zemsky paramedic programme, etc.); ADF.5 naval infrastructure
5. General socio-economic factors	GSE.1 a low unemployment rate; GSE.2 high salaries; GSE.3 affordable housing (for purchase or rent); GSE.4 high life expectancy; GSE.5 a low morbidity; GSE.6 high percentage of small and medium businesses; GSE.7 a low crime rate; GSE.8 a low poverty rate; GSE.9 a high number of medical specialists; GSE.10 transport infrastructure; GSE.11 pre-school and school facilities; GSE.12 multi-campus and sectoral universities; GSE.13 brisk international trade; GSE.14 high innovative potential

The questionnaire concluded with a set of personal questions: a respondent's gender, age, level of education, place of residence, household financial well-being, social status, area of employment and whether their current job matched their qualifications. It was assumed that one member of a household could complete questionnaires for the rest of the family. The questionnaire was created using Google-forms (<https://forms.google.com>). The respondents were interviewed through an online survey.

The primary processing of the survey results used SPSS software, while the secondary employed systematic and logical-structural methods and universal re-

search techniques (analysis, synthesis, analogy, comparison, etc.). The ranking of pull factors by the interviewed migrants identified several groups of reasons for relocation to the Kaliningrad region.

There were 60 participants in the survey, with most of them fitting the “target” group profile: people of active working age (25—44 years of age) with a university degree/incomplete higher education/two or more university degrees. Most respondents were civil servants, specialists and skilled workers. The share of entrepreneurs and the self-employed, including freelancers, was insignificant. Pensioners comprised about 10 % of the sample. The putative “unemployed” accounted for just over 5 %. The presence of the “unemployed” amongst the migrants, most of whom come across as active and enterprising people, might be explained by their desire to conceal their informal or shadow employment or by limited options in the multiple-choice questions. Over half the respondents rated their financial situation as “average”, 20 % as “good” and “very good”, and the same proportion considered it “bad” and “very bad”. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (80 %) lived in Kaliningrad. A smaller share stated the Guryevsk, Zelenogradsk and Bagrationovsk districts as their places of residence. The least frequently mentioned locations were the Gusev, Krasnoznamensk and Chernyakhovsk districts. The eastern part of the region proved to be the least attractive to migrants. Half the respondents moved to the region within the past two years (2020—2021), and a quarter did it between 2014 and 2019. The share of the respondents who had come to the region before 2000 was insignificant.

### **Survey result analysis and interpretation**

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The analysis shows that most respondents moved to Kaliningrad with their families, parents or other relatives and sought permanent residence. They often mentioned the desire of their other relatives, friends and acquaintances to move to the region. Almost three-quarters of the respondents decide to move consciously, having been to the place at least once as tourists or family/friends visitors. Most of them were not “biographically” tied to the region.

While choosing their new place of residence, two-thirds of the respondents compared the Kaliningrad region with other Russian regions. The list of alternatives was long, containing the metropolitan areas (St. Petersburg, Moscow and the Leningrad and Moscow regions); relatively “rich” oil-producing regions known for high living standards (the republic of Tatarstan and the Tyumen region); southern Russia (the Krasnodar and Stavropol krais, Crimea and the Rostov region); the most populated and economically developed districts of the Khabarovsk and Primorsky krais. The respondents had been choosing between the region and foreign countries only half as often. In most cases, moving to the Kaliningrad region was juxtaposed with emigration to Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic or Lithuania.

### Reasons to migrate to the Kaliningrad region

The research confined particular attention to the reasons for choosing the Kaliningrad region, grouping the pull factors selected by the respondents from the list (Table 1) and identifying reasons to move to the region (Fig. 3). These motives were consistent with the disappointments people felt and associations they held after having spent some time in Kaliningrad.

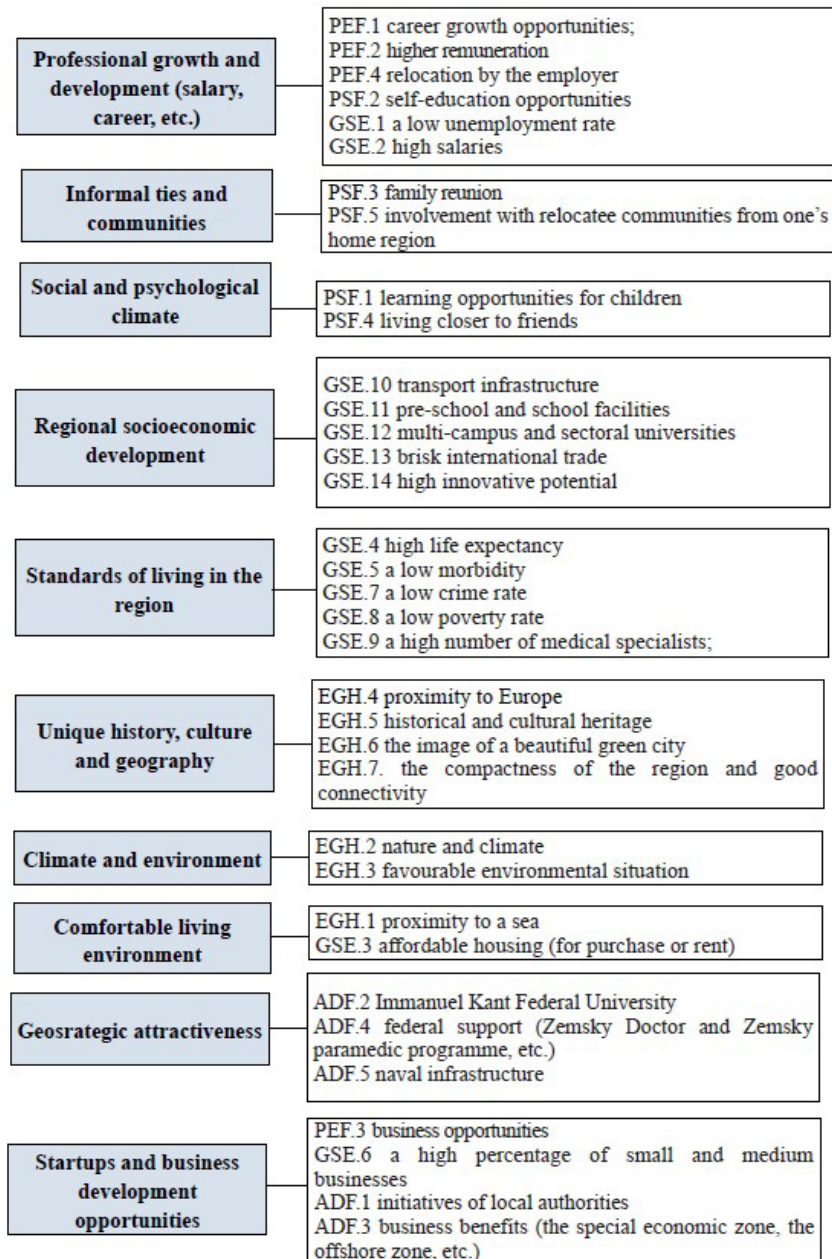


Fig. 3. Reasons to migrate to the Kaliningrad region

Below we will discuss the major reasons for migration in the descending order of their significance for those considering relocation.

*Climate and ecology* were the most common reasons to move to Kaliningrad. The then prospective migrants compared the region with the Krasnodar and Khabarovsk kraies, the Belgorod and Tyumen regions, Moscow and the Republic of Tatarstan, whose climate and ecology differ dramatically. These respondents mentioned similar causes of disappointment and associations the region triggered for them. This uniformity means that they did not develop a clear idea of their prospective place of residence.

*Unique history, culture and geography.* Most respondents cited reasons from this group. They stressed the compactness of the region, its proximity to Europe, and its historical and cultural heritage. They prioritized these considerations partly due to their previous experience of visiting the region for tourism or business purposes. Less than half of the respondents who did not mention history, culture and geography had visited the region before moving.

*A comfortable living environment* was also a significant factor. Proximity to the sea, the compactness of the region and housing availability were most relevant for people aged 35–44. The disappointments these respondents felt after having moved to the Kaliningrad region were also very much alike, possibly due to the shared ingrained stereotypes about it. On the one hand, newcomers encounter difficulties in adaptation and self-actualization, on the other, some of them consider Kaliningrad as a hub and eventually head for other regions.

*Regional socio-economic development* was the least considered factor, as many migrants had a vague idea of the region's economy. For some, acquaintance with the local labour market, prices, fares, and infrastructure came as a rude awakening. This situation is partly a product of migrants opting for information sources offering popular but inaccurate facts about the region. This, in turn, results from the Kaliningrad region's positioning as a tourist destination rather than a place to live. Most of these migrants (above the sample average) left it during the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020–2021 when it fared worse in socio-economic terms than many regions of Russia and the Northwestern District [60]. *Standards of living* were also among the least important factors taken into account by prospective migrants.

*Professional growth and development* were rare reasons to move to the region, albeit most of the respondents citing them planned to relocate permanently. At the same time, half of the interviewees said their decision to move had been conscious. The failure to take into account the labour market situation (the occupations and qualifications in demand, the unemployment rate, per capita income) often resulted in a mismatch between current employment and qualifications and

experience reported by the majority of the respondents. Despite the job search difficulties, they rated their financial situation as good. In this respondent group, the most common occupations, compared to the sample, were in trade, services and public administration.

*Startups and business development* opportunities, the motives relating solely to entrepreneurship, were relevant for one-third of the respondents. Aged 25–44, most of them are currently unemployed or engaged in education. There was no obvious link with their social standing as this group includes white-collar workers, managers and homemakers. Almost all the respondents rated their financial situation as “average”. Over half of them moved to the Kaliningrad region in 2021. Therefore, this respondent group seems motivated enough to run businesses and implement projects.

*Informal ties and communities.* The chance to reunite with one’s family and involvement with relocatee communities were strong motives for relocation for very few respondents, who, nevertheless, associated the region with positive events and impressions. Support from family or fellow migrant communities was rarely a source of disappointment within the sample. Yet, half the respondents stressed that they had had problems finding a job or accommodation and mentioned the absence of family and friends in the region as a severe limitation. The respondents from this group were most likely to rate their financial situation as “bad” or “very bad” (almost one-third), choosing these options 1.5 times more often than “good” or “very good”. That points to the positive influence of informal ties on the socio-economic adaptation of migrants, particularly those moving to the Kaliningrad region. The respondents rarely chose such reasons for relocation as a favourable social and psychological climate and geostrategic attractiveness. Therefore, only three out of the ten groups of reasons motivated respondents to migrate to the Kaliningrad region: unique history, culture and geography; climate and nature; comfortable living environment.

The survey results did not confirm our assumption that the motives for relocation to Kaliningrad differed from the traditional description of the territory (a mild climate and good environmental situation, the sea coast, proximity to Europe, etc.). This puts at risk migrants with insufficient information about the region and the vagaries of its development. The likely results are disappointment, difficulties in adaptation and self-actualization and even ineluctable departure. At the same time, this complicates the situation in the Kaliningrad region, imposing an additional burden as it receives human resources possessing skills little in demand in the local labour market. However, the results explain why the region generates considerable interest as a place for relocation, put on a par with Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Krasnodar krai, etc.

The survey results made it possible to augment the analysis of motives for relocation to the region by an examination of migrants' disappointments and associations Kaliningrad held for them. Their expectations were juxtaposed with the real situation in the region, and discrepancies were identified between the two. Considering associations helped trace the building-up of a new image of Kaliningrad after relocation. The problems faced by migrants indicated the issues to tackle in the early stages of adaptation in the region, whereas transformations in the perception of the region indicated the causes of discrepancies between migrants' skills and regional needs. From the scientific perspective, there is a need to create a profile of in-demand migrant talent to ensure the balanced development of the region's labour market with the participation of migrants.

### Discussion and recommendations

Three-quarters of the respondents reported their disappointment over relocation. They expressed dissatisfaction with prices and fares, local residents and their lifestyle, the lack of employment opportunities and the quality of social infrastructure. The region came as a bitter disappointment to the migrants (nine out of ten people) who had chosen it for a mild climate, a comfortable living environment, historical and cultural heritage, and unique geography.

When analysing migrants' disappointments, we matched them to motives for relocation divided into three groups depending on their significance for migrants and the effect they had on the decision to move: high significance (over 70 mentions), medium significance (30–69) and low significance (fewer than 29) (Fig. 4–6). The circle size shows how popular the motive was with the respondents: the more mentions, the larger the diameter.

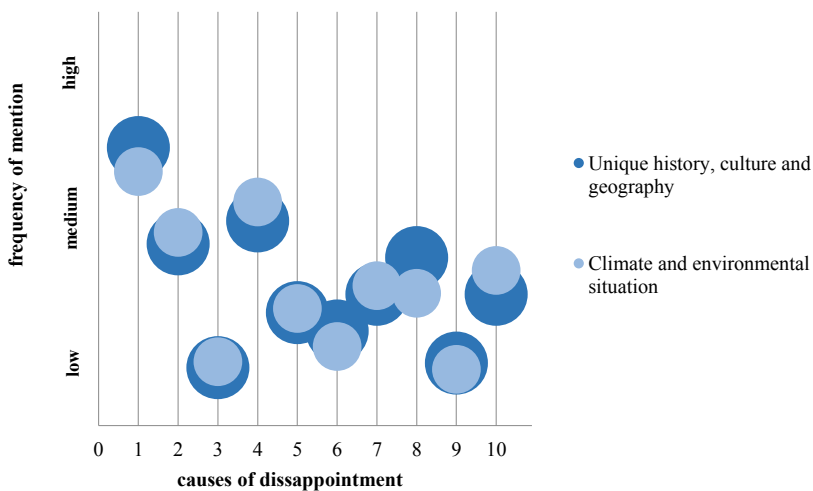


Fig. 4. Motives for migration of high significance and considerable effect on decision-making



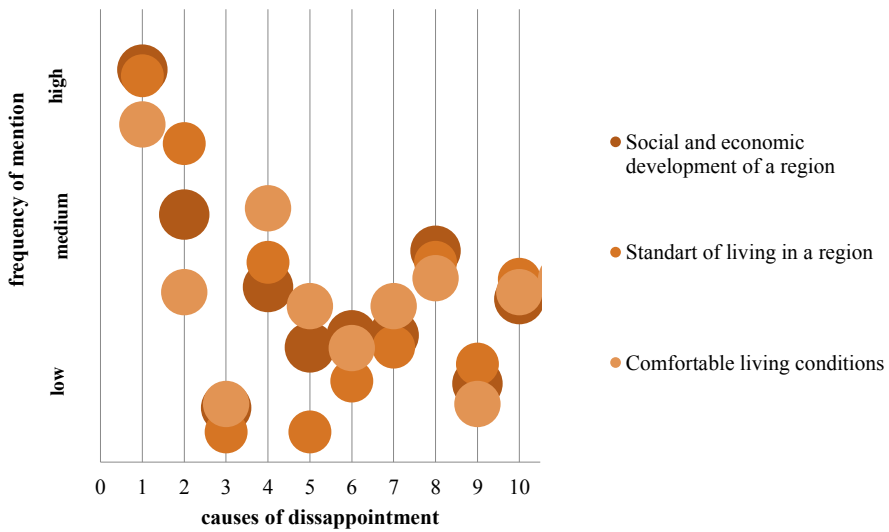


Fig. 5. Motives for migration of medium significance and effect on decision-making

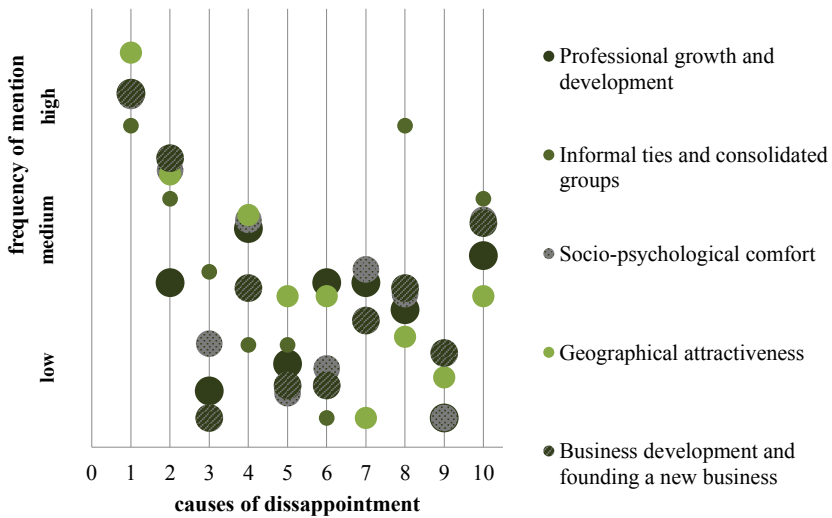


Fig. 6. Motives for migration of low significance and limited effect on decision-making

Identifying the causes of migrants’ disappointment and describing the problems of ineffective adaptation made it possible to produce recommendations for speedy and gentle acclimatisation to a new life, as well as for attracting in-demand migrant talent.

Disappointment at prices and fares was mentioned by the respondents looking to develop their business or start up a new one or those whose principal mo-

tives for migration were professional growth and the socio-economic situation in Kaliningrad. In those cases, dissatisfaction is often the result of migrants' poor knowledge of the region. In particular, one-third of the disappointed migrants had never visited it before and/or made the decision to move on the spur of the moment.

The lack of suitable employment opportunities was the second most popular cause of disappointment, particularly for those who had been motivated by the level of the region's socio-economic development, living standards, geostrategic attractiveness, business development opportunities, availability of informal ties and support from communities. At the same time, two-thirds of these respondents associated living in the region with missed opportunities, worsening financial situation and losing their status as professionals. The failure to adapt to the local labour market may be partly due to the fact that more than 40% of the respondents disappointed in employment prospects in the region had not visited Kaliningrad before moving.

Disappointment in the quality of social infrastructure (kindergartens, schools, hospitals, etc.) was mentioned by the respondents who had been motivated by the region's unique history, culture and geography, nature and climate, comfortable living environment, and prospects of professional growth and development. Striving for better living conditions, this group had high expectations of social infrastructure, which might have been of better quality in their former place of residence. Their dissatisfaction may also result from the decision to move made impulsively or from underestimating the importance of social infrastructure (one-quarter of the respondents described their decision to move as spontaneous rather than conscious).

Somewhat surprising is the disappointment over interactions with the local community expressed by the migrants who had relocated to reunite with family or had been motivated by community ties. Over half the answers given by the respondents dissatisfied with the locals revealed negative associations: poor career prospects and a precarious financial situation. Probably these data point to the exclusiveness of local migrant communities united by ethnicity, religion or professional affiliation; further research might explore this hypothesis.

Interestingly, respondents often felt disappointed over the region being "isolated" from mainland Russia. This points to the geostrategic need to increase its connectivity with the other Russian regions. Although in this respondent group, the share of those who had visited Kaliningrad before did not differ from the sample average (about two-thirds), their experience was mostly limited to tourist trips, which rarely involve longer stays; one-third made the decision to move

without much deliberation. Over half the respondents distressed by the “detachedness” of the region from mainland Russia associated their stay with career and financial losses.

Along with disappointments, migrants faced problems when moving to the region. Relocation meant losing contact with family and friends, lifestyle changes and moving personal belongings. The respondents also reported difficulties finding a job and accommodation and problems related to COVID-19 restrictions.

What is interesting about the survey results is the distribution of associations. One-third reported positive life changes and improvements in health and personal growth. For another third of the respondents, Kaliningrad held negative associations: missed opportunities, wasted time, and career and financial losses. Income growth and career advancement were mentioned much more rarely. Negative associations seem to be due to the disappointment over relocation.

Migrants’ disappointments, manifested in negative associations, point to acclimatisation problems, both socio-psychological (frustration over interactions with locals, quality of social infrastructure) and economic (adaptation to the regional labour market). The main sources of these problems are as follows. Firstly, there is a lack of comprehensive and reliable information, reference materials and resources focusing on life in the Kaliningrad region and aimed at potential relocatees. Secondly, mechanisms for attracting and supporting migrant talent, including specific target groups, are not used sufficiently. Thirdly, no initiatives are seeking to utilise migrant talent to its fullest, prevent an increase in the unemployment rate or help newcomers avoid career losses. Fourthly, migrants’ business skills (often described as more prominent than those of the locals) are not utilised to the full. Fifthly, migrants from Russian regions are not registered properly: there are no databases providing information on their social status, occupation, qualifications, etc. All this causes tension in the labour market, and the influx of migrants solves very few regional issues, the most visible being the improvement of the sociodemographic situation by compensating for the natural population loss. This brings several objectives to the fore. Firstly, there is a need to assist migrants in adapting to new conditions and joining the regional labour market. Secondly, measures to support labour migration should draw on studies into ways to attract in-demand qualified migrant talent. Thirdly, greater connectivity between the Kaliningrad region and mainland Russia would solve the problem of “detachedness” and facilitate the socio-psychological adaptation of migrants. Each of these objectives is worthy of scholarly attention. There is a need to develop a theoretical framework and produce practical recommendations,

which is too ambitious an objective to attain in this study. A migration policy designed to attract and assist migrants from Russian regions will help recruit in-demand migrant talent and overcome the discrepancy between migrants' skills and the needs of Kaliningrad.

The theoretical component of the findings seems to be a valid contribution to the existing body of research emphasising a strong connection between motives for migration, on the one hand, and the economy and geography of the region of settlement, on the other. The study shows that a mild climate and favourable environmental conditions attract not only older cohorts but also younger migrants, which supports findings obtained at the national level. Migrants moving to Kaliningrad from other Russian regions are driven by the belief that a change of residence will translate into a more fulfilling lifestyle and tend to ignore economic considerations. The decision to move is often informed by publications touting the region as a tourist destination. These findings fit into the concept of "lifestyle migration", which builds on studies into international migration. However, this study has demonstrated that the contemporary forms of mobility embraced by the concept of lifestyle migration pertain to interregional mobility, including that observed in the Kaliningrad region. Probably, it will be possible to draw on the experience of the Russian exclave when studying motives for migration in the southern Russian regions, whose attractiveness to migrants is largely accounted for by climate and nature.

The findings regarding disappointments in the region and the negative associations it holds for migrants seeking to improve their quality of life augment contemporary understandings of why such migrants fail to build "their ideal home". The study also shows that interregional migration is fraught with problems although interregional migrants do not encounter linguistic, institutional, ethnic, religious and other barriers associated with international migration.

The effect of economy and geography on interregional migration is not limited to motives for migration. It also manifests in migrants' disappointments. The findings demonstrate that the "detachedness" of the Kaliningrad region from mainland Russia entails additional risks for migrants' socio-psychological adaptation, for example, those relating to travel expenses incurred when visiting family in other regions of Russia. This is an important foundation to build a conceptual framework for a theory of special cohesion of regions and develop its practical applications.

In practical terms, to address the causes of migrants' disappointments and the negative associations the region has for them, it is essential to create a realistic image of the region and thus minimize the risks of ineffective adaptation. The most necessary measures are described below.

Firstly, it is advisable to diversify the incoming migration flow, which implies recruiting migrants with in-demand skills and qualifications and providing integration assistance for those who may experience difficulties or feel disappointment due to insufficient knowledge of the region and problems with finding a job and accommodation. Such measures will allow the target groups of migrants (doctors, teachers, ICT specialists, etc.) to derive maximum benefits from regional relocation and recruitment programmes. Targeted mechanisms for recruiting specialists within the framework of federal and regional relocation programmes should factor in migration connectivity between Kaliningrad and other Russian regions and pull factors for individual specialists and migrant cohorts. The region's multi-campus and sectoral universities can also contribute to the process by attracting applicants and young specialists from other Russian universities. This recruitment, however, should be accompanied by measures to retain university graduates in the regional labour market.

The diversification of migration flow has an immediate bearing on the region's positioning and raising awareness amongst migrants. It does not imply external or administrative coercion, much less the violation of citizens' constitutional right to freedom of movement. Thus, secondly, it seems effective to use the best practices of promoting the region as a tourist destination to create the image of Kaliningrad as an attractive place for permanent residence. Information about it must be easily accessible to the target audience.

Thirdly, there is a need for adaptation mechanisms for migrants from Russian regions, including information support. It is advisable to launch information resources and platforms to give insight into such issues as employment, real estate, education and access to medical services. Another important objective is providing information and analytical support for prospective entrepreneurs. Such initiatives would benefit from more extensive use of data from Rosstat's sampling surveys looking at employment in Russia, particularly in terms of economic activity of permanent, rather than temporary, interregional migrants: unemployment rate, industry-specific skills, qualifications, etc. Fusing the mechanism of interregional migration to the Kaliningrad region with the concept of lifestyle migration shifts the focus from migrants' activity in the local labour market to their contribution to the region's overall development. At the same time, our practical recommendations, which are certainly not exhaustive, can facilitate the adaptation of migrants and make the spontaneous migration flow more controllable in the interest of the region's socio-economic development.

## Conclusion

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The analysis of pull factors, problems, disappointments, and the perception migrants have of the Kaliningrad region has made it possible to answer the questions set in the study.

Firstly, the survey results have not confirmed the hypothesis about the influence of economic, social, administrative and other motives for relocation to Kaliningrad, apart from traditional and well-known ones. The key reasons for moving to the region are the mild climate, nature, comfortable living conditions, unique history, culture and geography. These are the pull factors for not only pensioners, as earlier studies have demonstrated [48], but also migrants of the most active working age (25–44 years of age). Therefore, the motives for migration to the Kaliningrad region make it possible to consider the phenomenon from the perspective of the modern concept of lifestyle migration. Applying the concept to interregional migration requires further research on other Russian territories considered attractive to migrants.

Gravitation towards a better climate and environmental situation is closely connected to push factors, which is confirmed by the geography of the region's migration flows: most migrants arrive from territories with a cold climate or severe environmental problems.

This perception of the region is a product of its heavily promoted image as a tourist destination. One-third of the respondents who had not visited the region before moving obtained information about it on the internet or from family and friends residing in the exclave. Easily available information highlights the advantages of the region and is often subjective. Facts are distorted, and some issues (employment, accommodation, prices, stores, range of available products, etc.) are covered sketchily, from the perspective of a tourist rather than a permanent resident. The absence of an objective picture of the region and the opportunities it offers creates a situation where migrants arriving here encounter difficulties with relocation or cannot find the right job for their skills. Migrants relocated by the employer do not generally have problems with labour adaptation, but for all the others the situation in the regional labour market may be a source of disappointment and negative associations.

Secondly, after relocation, almost all the respondents viewed the region differently than before moving. During adaptation, they encounter both socio-psychological and socio-economic problems. The former relates to their separation from family and friends and the disruption of their usual lifestyle, exacerbated by the “detachedness” of the exclave and travel expenses incurred when visiting family in other regions of Russia. As a result, migrants become dissatisfied with

the locals and their lifestyle. The latter problems are encountered by migrants who have misinterpreted the situation in the regional labour market, have problems with finding accommodation or resent the prices, fares and the quality of social infrastructure. The associations the region has for migrants are ambiguous. Although they mention positive changes in personal life, improved health and personal development, they report missed opportunities, wasted time, and financial and career losses just as often.

Thirdly, diversifying the migrant flows is proposed to utilise migrant talent to its fullest. The necessary measures include information support and assistance in adaptation and launching businesses. There is a need for interactions between Kaliningrad and the territories of origin. It is important to promote the region not only as a tourist destination but also as an attractive place to live and work. These initiatives will attract migrants of a certain age, with in-demand skills and qualifications.

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