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## Structural Changes in the Spatial Development of Russia: New Realities

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze changes in the spatial structure of the national economy, including those occurring under the influence of sanctions; to identify promising areas and forms of spatial organization of the economy, designed to help overcome the prevailing negative trends and territorial imbalances in the socio-economic development of the country's regions. One of the key problems of the Russian economy as a whole is structural imbalance. According to the author, its overcoming can be facilitated by the creation of innovative and industrial clusters, territories of advanced socio-economic development, special economic zones. Their role is primarily to strengthen intersectoral, intra- and inter-regional interaction of market participants, attract investment (including in infrastructure development), create new jobs, ensure industrial, scientific, technological and information development, which ultimately is designed to enhance the competitiveness of regions, smoothing differences in the level of their socio-economic development. In the process of work, general scientific methods were used: economic and statistical, comparative analysis, systematization of data. The results of the study can be taken into account when updating the strategies of spatial development of Russia and socio-economic development of the subjects of the Russian Federation to develop a more balanced approach to making organizational and managerial decisions in this area.

**Keywords:** national economy; spatial development; structural changes; territorial proportions; regions of Russia; forms of spatial organization of the economy

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## INTRODUCTION

Development and implementation of an effective strategy of spatial development of Russia and its regions is one of the most urgent directions of improving sectoral and territorial proportions of the national economy today.

Research aimed at finding ways to optimise the spatial structure of the national economy, improve the efficiency of territorial management at the federal and regional levels, and solve the problems of socio-economic development of individual regions of the country are reflected in scientific publications [1–3]. It should be noted that there are different points of view on possible means and methods of implementing regional policy, as well as approaches to solving the problem of uneven development of territories, as well as the fact that the authors of most works focus on analysing and assessing the impact of internal factors of regional development, given the huge variety of geographical, demographic, natural, infrastructural, and other conditions of our country. However, in recent years, the processes of spatial development have been increasingly influenced by external factors (consequences of the pandemic, anti-Russian sanctions), affecting the functioning of not only large, but also medium and small businesses.<sup>1</sup>

This study analyses the spatial structure of the national economy and its changes, including under the influence of the sanctions imposed on Russia, and identifies promising directions and types of spatial organisation of the economy.

## IMPACT OF SANCTIONS ON THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY

In recent years, the Russian economy has faced serious challenges and problems, the main ones being the consequences of the pandemic and

economic sanctions imposed by Western countries.

According to the preliminary estimates of the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, in 2023, taking into account the impact of rapidly changing external and internal factors, GDP is expected to decline by 0.8%, with growth forecasted only from 2024 onwards.<sup>2</sup> The recovery of the domestic economy is associated primarily with the expected growth of household incomes and domestic consumer demand, measures of state support for the labour market and the real sector of the economy, and increased investment activity.

The Forecast of Socio-Economic Development of the Russian Federation for 2022 and for the planned 2023 and 2024 years<sup>3</sup> highlights spatial development among the key areas, which implies a reduction in inter-regional differentiation in the quality of life while maintaining incentives for development in the leading regions and increasing the number of economic growth points. This approach is consistent with the overall Strategy for Spatial Development of the Russian Federation until 2025.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the restriction (full or partial) of both Russian exports, including supplies to the world market of oil, gas, ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, machine-building, chemical industry, and imports of high-tech products into the country, had a noticeable impact on the functioning of many industries, as well as

<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Economic Development has confirmed the forecast of GDP decline. RIA Novosti — News. URL: <https://ria.ru/20221130/vvp-1835411910.html>

<sup>3</sup> Forecasts of socio-economic development. Ministry of Economic Development of Russia (official website). URL: [https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/directions/makroec/prognozy\\_socialno\\_ekonomicheskogo\\_razvitiya/prognost\\_socialno\\_ekonomicheskogo\\_razvitiya\\_rf\\_na\\_2022\\_god\\_i\\_na\\_planovyy\\_period\\_2023\\_i\\_2024\\_godov.html?ysclid=lmrr8aary1132070031](https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/directions/makroec/prognozy_socialno_ekonomicheskogo_razvitiya/prognost_socialno_ekonomicheskogo_razvitiya_rf_na_2022_god_i_na_planovyy_period_2023_i_2024_godov.html?ysclid=lmrr8aary1132070031).

<sup>4</sup> Strategy of Spatial Development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025. Approved by order of the Government of the Russian Federation from 13.02.2019. No 207-o. URL: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/UVAIqUtT08o60RktoOXl22JjAe7irNxc.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Results of the survey “The Impact of Sanctions on Russian Business”. RSPP (official website). URL: <https://rspp.ru/activity/analytics/rezultaty-oprosa-posledstviya-vvedeniya-sanktsiy-dlya-rossiyskogo-biznesa/>

on the development of the economy of certain regions. This particularly applies to those regions where export-oriented and so-called “propulsive” industries (according to F. Perroux<sup>5</sup>), which are the drivers of economic growth, have been predominantly developed. According to expert estimates, Russian exports of 20 key industries in the non-resource sector of the economy in 2022 alone decreased by almost 1/5 as compared to the previous year, which in monetary terms exceeds 25.5 billion roubles.<sup>6</sup>

The study of the current state of the real sector of the economy allows us to conclude that its structure does not yet meet the criterion of sustainable development. One of the main problems is structural imbalance, which is especially manifested in the technological backwardness of the manufacturing industry. To implement the strategy of socio-economic, including spatial development of the country, we need effective organisational, managerial, and financial mechanisms of reproduction and distribution of resources [4].

In order to modernise production, develop and implement innovations, and solve accumulated social problems at the regional level, it is necessary to attract investment and, consequently, to create an appropriate investment climate in the country as a whole and its regions. In view of the sharp reduction (due to sanctions) in the inflow of foreign capital into Russia, the main burden of financing investment projects, primarily infrastructure projects, falls on the state and domestic business. Obviously, the share of the latter in investment financing will increase.

<sup>5</sup> According to the French economist F. Perroux’s theory of growth poles, the propulsive ones include the most dynamically developing branches of production that influence the territorial structure of the economy.

<sup>6</sup> Experts estimate losses from sanctions for 20 non-resource export industries. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/10/11/2022/636b871a9a794727d63e2f66?ysclid=lmrsidg21j559067860h>  
[https://www.rbc.ru/economics/10/11/2022/636b871a9a794727d63e2f66?utm\\_source=yxnews&utm\\_medium=desktop](https://www.rbc.ru/economics/10/11/2022/636b871a9a794727d63e2f66?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop)

At the same time, according to the data of *the rating of investment attractiveness of regions*, prepared by the RAEX agency (“RAEX-Analytics”), at the beginning of the 2020s, 58 constituent entities of the Russian Federation (or more than 2/3 of the total number) had low and insignificant investment potential and moderate or high risks of entrepreneurial activity,<sup>7</sup> which, in our opinion, is one of the main reasons for low investment activity in most regions.

### TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMY

The works of prominent economists and economic geographers [3, 5, 6] are devoted to the analysis of trends in changing the structure of the country’s economic complex. Therefore, N.V. Zubarevich notes that, according to numerous studies, most countries of the world, regardless of their level of development, are characterised by tendencies of territorial concentration of the economy in regions with competitive advantages. Nowhere can economic inequality in space be visibly smoothed out, as it is formed under the influence of objective factors. Since Russia is a catching-up country (with an economy in transition to a market economy), the growth of regional economic inequality is also inevitable for it, although its rates are already slowing down today [7]. According to this scientist, Russia’s economic space is shrinking and will continue to shrink in the future. The depopulation of peripheral territories and the pulling of the population to large centres, mainly urban agglomerations, is a sustainable phenomenon.

P.A. Minakir points out the objective nature of heterogeneity of economic space in his works, noting that it is associated not only with “heterogeneous distribution of non-mobile conditions of economic activity in space”, but

<sup>7</sup> RAEX regional investment attractiveness rating for 2020. URL: <https://raex-a.ru/ratings/regions/2020#graph>

also in the fact that “in the regions themselves a polarised space is formed around propulsive industries, which is transformed into polarisation of the national economic space” [8].

Studying the spatial proportions of the national economy, E.A. Kolomak concludes that they are formed under the influence of both market mechanisms and state regulators, as well as geographical, natural, and historical factors. Spatial transformations themselves reflect the result of redistribution of economic activity from peripheral regions to central regions and from eastern to western regions, from regions with predominantly extractive specialisation to those where manufacturing prevails [9].

Recently, the spatial organisation and territorial proportions of the national economy have been increasingly affected by external factors caused by economic sanctions.

According to the calculations made by S.V. Kazantsev, the strength of the impact of economic recession, deterioration of the situation on world commodity markets and financial and economic sanctions imposed against Russia on the changes in the totality of analysed indicators<sup>8</sup> in the country's regions is directly proportional to the dependence of economic entities on foreign capital, external sources of financing and foreign trade turnover [10].

The decline in exports of Russian goods and services leads to a drop in revenues of the federal budget and export-oriented economic entities. In turn, the curtailment of production volumes of export-oriented enterprises and the corresponding decrease in their profits causes a reduction in employment and tax revenues to budgets at all levels. Restrictions on imports of high-tech machinery and equipment caused by sanctions also hamper the development of

a number of industries, especially in the manufacturing sector, which affects employment and, ultimately, the income of the population.

Speaking in the State Duma, Central Bank Chairman E. Nabiullina noted that recent competitive advantages of the regional economy may be lost due to changes in foreign trade conditions and a drop in domestic demand. To withstand new challenges, the Russian economy needs structural reorganisation [11].

To date, the country has developed deep territorial socio-economic disproportions due to the diversity of natural conditions, the nature of population settlement, peculiarities of natural resource potential distribution, differences in transport accessibility and remoteness of many territories from developed economic centres, sectoral specialization of different regions [12, 13], which is reflected in the key macroeconomic indicators (*Table 1*).

As follows from the above data, the European part of Russia accounts for 3/4 of all employed in the economy, more than 2/3 of GRP produced, 2/3 of all industrial production and 4/5 of agricultural output. More than 3/4 of retail trade turnover and paid services to the population are concentrated here. At the same time, the share of the Eastern Economic Zone, which is huge in terms of territory, does not exceed 1/3 of the main macroeconomic indicators.

Among macro-regions, the Central Federal District has the greatest economic potential. Despite the fact that it occupies only 4% of the country's territory, it accounts for 30% of all employment, concentrates one third of all fixed assets and generates one third of the total GRP.

Disproportions are even more pronounced at the level of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Thus, the top ten regions account for 2/5 of all employed in the economy, over 1/2 of GRP, almost half of all industrial output and capital investments, and 2/5 of the country's agricultural production (*Table 2*).

<sup>8</sup> The following indicators were taken into account: inflow of direct investments; balanced financial result of organisations' activity; turnover of foreign trade with non-CIS countries; payment of funds for import of technologies and technical services; credit arrears.

Table 1

Territorial proportions of the Russian economy by federal districts at the beginning of the 2020s, % of total

Economic zone, federal district	Territory	Population	Employed in the economy	GRP	Cost of fixed assets	Industrial products	Agricultural products	Investments in fixed capital	Retail trade turnover	Volume of paid services to the population
<b>Western</b>	24	74	75	70	73	66	81	66	77	76
Central	4	27	30	35	35	30	28	31	35	33
North-West	10	9	10	11	13	12	5	11	10	10
Southern	3	11	11	7	8	5	17	7	10	12
North Caucasian	1	7	5	2	2	1	8	3	5	4
Volga	6	20	19	15	15	18	23	14	17	17
<b>Eastern</b>	77	26	25	30	27	34	19	34	23	24
Urals	11	8	9	14	14	17	5	16	8	9
Siberian	25	12	11	10	7	12	11	10	9	9
Far Eastern	41	6	5	6	6	5	3	8	6	6

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of Rosstat data. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru>

The data of *Table 2* indicate an extremely high concentration of production in a limited number of RF constituent entities, which, as a rule, act as donor regions within the framework of inter-budgetary relations between the federal centre and RF constituent entities. Over the last 15 years, the share of the leading regions in the total volume of industrial production has grown from 43 to 48 per cent.

Against this background, the Moscow urban agglomeration stands out, where more than 1/10 of all employed people in the Russian Federation, 1/5 of fixed assets, 1/5 of total GRP, 15–16% of manufacturing output and retail trade turnover, etc. are concentrated.

According to Rosstat data, the difference between the constituent entities of the Russian Federation with the highest and lowest per capita indicators at the beginning of the 2020s was: in terms of GRP and investment in fixed capital — over 50 times, retail trade turnover and volume of paid services to the population — 7–8 times, average per capita cash income of the population — 5 times, housing — 2.5 times, etc.

Moreover, territorial inequality (including due to differences in economic growth rates) not only persists, but in some parameters is even increasing, which indicates that the state regional policy is insufficiently effective [14].



Table 2

## Leading regions by individual indicators of the level of socio-economic development in 2020

Number of people employed in the economy	GRP*	Volume of industrial products	Volume of agricultural products	Investments in fixed capital
Moscow	Moscow	Moscow	Krasnodar Territory	Moscow
Moscow region	Moscow region	Moscow region	Rostov region	Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region
St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg	Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous region - Yugra	Belgorod region	Moscow region
Krasnodar region	Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous region - Yugra	Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous region - Yugra	Republic of Tatarstan	Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous region - Yugra
Rostov region	Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region	Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region	Voronezh region	St. Petersburg
Sverdlovsk region	Krasnodar Territory	Republic of Tatarstan	Kursk region	Republic of Tatarstan
Republic of Tatarstan	Republic of Tatarstan	Krasnoyarsk territory	Republic of Bashkortostan	Krasnodar region
Republic of Bashkortostan	Sverdlovsk region	Sverdlovsk region	Saratov region	Krasnoyarsk region
Chelyabinsk region	Krasnoyarsk Territory	Chelyabinsk region	Stavropol territory	Leningrad region
Nizhny Novgorod region	Republic of Bashkortostan	Republic of Bashkortostan	Lipetsk region	Sverdlovsk region
In % of the all-Russian indicator				
39	53	48	39	49

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of Rosstat data. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru>

Note: \* – по данным 2019 г. / according to 2019 data.

The accumulated social inequality can be judged by the number of constituent entities of the Russian Federation in which the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence minimum (in fact, below the poverty line) exceeds the national average. Thus, in 2020, the total number of such regions totalled 56, i.e., 2/3 of their total number. At the same time, in the Republics of Tyva and Ingushetia, almost a third of the population is below the poverty line; in the Kabardino-Balkar and Karachay-Cherkess Republics, the Republics of Altai, Kalmykia and the Jewish Autonomous Region, almost a quarter of the population is below the poverty line.

Uneven spatial development of Russia remains one of the most serious problems that cause large-scale inter-budgetary redistributions. At the same time, the analysis of steps taken by the state in the form of subsidies from the federal budget gives grounds to conclude that such a policy of inter-budgetary equalisation does not have any noticeable impact on reducing spatial differentiation in the socio-economic development of individual territories [15].

The scenario of changing the spatial socio-economic landscape through “polarised growth”, proposed as one of the possible scenarios for

the future, in which the task of economic recovery would fall on 10–12 so-called “core” regions (“engines of growth”), also poorly correlates with the peculiarities of Russia’s territorial development and, for a number of reasons, is unlikely to have a significant impact on its breakthrough in modernising production and introducing innovations as applied to the regions. On the contrary, according to a number of scholars, the consequence of such a regional policy will be an even greater gap in the level of socio-economic development and increased territorial stratification of the country [16, 17].

The problem is aggravated by the fact that the constituent entities of the Russian Federation themselves have noticeable spatial differences in the historical distribution of production and population, which has led to the formation of “nuclei of economic growth” and *peripheral* (or the so-called *marginal*) *territories* [18]. The uneven development at the regional level is also confirmed by the results of applied research [19, 20]. However, their authors, based on the theory of “poles of growth”, come to the conclusion that polarisation should not be considered an obstacle — on the contrary, polarised space provides a basis for identifying growth centres, as which can be considered not only large urban districts, but also rural municipal areas.

When discussing the new concept of the Strategy for Spatial Development of Russia until 2030, including from the point of view of national security, many experts draw attention to the need to reflect in it a balanced approach to solving the problems of ensuring further economic and innovative development, involving, on the one hand, the stimulation of established and the creation of new growth centres in the form of large and major urban agglomerations, and, on the other hand, government support for the development of small and medium-sized cities, as well as rural areas [21, 22].

The inevitable consequence of violation of such a balance may be a mass outflow of popu-

lation from the periphery to urban centres, degradation of the countryside, further polarisation of the economic space of both the country as a whole and its individual regions.

### DIRECTIONS AND FORMS OF SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF THE ECONOMY

Such forms of territorial organisation of economic activity as innovation and industrial clusters, territories of advanced socio-economic development (PSEDA — priority social and economic development area), special economic zones (SEZ), which have already proven themselves abroad and in domestic practice, can contribute in no small measure to the reduction of structural disproportions of the Russian economy and spatial differences in the level of socio-economic development.

However, under the conditions of sanctions, the process of forming territorial clusters focused on the production of high-tech and export-oriented products in the foreseeable future may face the problem of selling the latter in the foreign market and the need to replace foreign equipment and technologies used in production with domestic analogues.

Unlike other countries in Russia, the processes of economic clustering have started to unfold relatively recently — since the early 2010s.<sup>9</sup> According to the Russian Cluster Observatory (RCO), as of the early 2020s, there were over 110 cluster initiatives (employing about 1.5 million people) in the country, but almost 3/4 of them are in the initial stage of development, and about another 1/5 are in the middle stage.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the share of relatively developed cluster formations functioning mainly in the European part of the country: the Volga, North-Western and Central Federal Districts, is

<sup>9</sup> Concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 (approved by the RF Government Order No. 1662-o dated 17.11.2008).

<sup>10</sup> Map of clusters in Russia. URL: <https://map.cluster.hse.ru/list>

less than 10%.<sup>11</sup> Only half of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation located beyond the Urals are covered by clustering processes.

According to the existing ideas, a cluster is considered as a complex open socio-economic system functioning on a certain territory, uniting representatives of business, science and government, whose joint activities provide a synergy effect [23]. The transition to a new model of spatial development provides for the formation of various types of clusters in Russia with the provision of financial, administrative, and infrastructural support from the state and the creation of mechanisms to promote and sell their goods, works and services on the market.

State support for clusters is provided by the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation as part of programmes to support pilot innovation-territorial clusters and small and medium-sized enterprises,<sup>12</sup> the aim of which is to strengthen cooperation between enterprises, scientific and educational organisations — participants of cluster formations, as well as to increase the scientific, technical and production potential and, in general, the competitiveness of the Russian regions [24].

At present (due to the anti-Russian sanctions), special business support measures are being developed and adopted at the federal and regional levels. Their list is constantly being finalised and will be supplemented and updated, as the socio-economic situation in the country

is changing quite rapidly.<sup>13</sup> One of the latest decisions in this direction was the adoption of resolutions of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1956 dated 16.11.2021 and No. 2407 dated 23.12.2022 concerning government support measures for industrial clusters in order to stimulate their activities and enhance import substitution.<sup>14</sup>

The role of territorial clusters in the formation of the spatial structure of the economy is seen primarily in strengthening inter-sectoral, intra- and inter-regional interaction between market participants, attracting investment, including in the development of infrastructure, creating new jobs, ensuring scientific, technological and information development, which is ultimately designed to contribute to improving the competitiveness of regions and smoothing socio-economic differences between them. The effectiveness of clusters, their positive impact on the sustainable development of the region is confirmed by numerous studies of foreign and Russian scientists and relevant calculations [25–29].

Nevertheless, the Strategy for Spatial Development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025<sup>15</sup> does not adequately reflect the cluster policy. Therefore, when updating this document in view of new realities, it is

<sup>11</sup> The Kama innovation territorial production cluster in the Republic of Tatarstan (automotive industry and production of automotive components); petrochemical cluster in the Republic of Bashkortostan (chemical production); nuclear innovation cluster in Dimitrovgrad, Ulyanovsk region (nuclear and radiation technologies); consortium “Scientific-educational-production cluster “Ulyanovsk-Avia” (aircraft construction); St. Petersburg cluster of clean technologies for urban environment (environmental protection and waste recycling) are distinguished by a high level of development..

<sup>12</sup> State programmes to support small businesses. URL: <https://kontur.ru/articles/4710>

<sup>13</sup> Register of clusters in Russia. URL: <https://xn—dtbhaacat8bfloi8h.xn—p1ai/clusters-list-2015>

<sup>14</sup> Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of 16.11.2021 No. 1956 (On Amendments to Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of 31.07.2015 No. 779). URL: <http://government.ru/docs/all/137607/>; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2407 dated 23.12.2022 (On Amendments to the Rules for Granting Subsidies from the Federal Budget to Participants of Industrial Clusters for Reimbursement of Part of Costs in the Implementation of Joint Projects for the Production of Industrial Products of the Cluster for the Purpose of Import Substitution). URL: <http://government.ru/docs/all/145329/>

<sup>15</sup> Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025. Approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 207-o dated 13.02.2019. URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_318094/006fb940f95ef67a1a3fa7973b5a39f78dac5681](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_318094/006fb940f95ef67a1a3fa7973b5a39f78dac5681)



advisable to reflect the role of cluster forms of economic activity in the development of regions and centres of economic growth, and not only large, but also small and medium-sized cities.

Other forms of spatial organisation of the Russian economy designed to help reduce the level of interregional differentiation in socio-economic development and reduce intra-regional differences include special economic zones (SEZ) and priority social and economic development areas (PPSEDA). The creation and functioning of these entities are regulated by the relevant Federal Laws of the Russian Federation.<sup>16</sup>

The purpose of their creation is to attract investments (including foreign ones) primarily in high-tech sectors of the economy, as well as in the development of tourism and health resort sphere, production, and transport infrastructure; to ensure accelerated socio-economic development of regions, to improve the living standards of the population. For this purpose, special economic zones and priority social and economic development areas are subject to a special (favourable) legal regime for entrepreneurial activity, and a free customs zone procedure may also be applied.

According to the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, as of mid-2022, 45 special economic zones were functioning in the country: 26 industrial-production, 7 technology innovation, 10 tourist-recreational, and 2 port zones.<sup>17</sup> For more than 15 years of work in

special economic zones almost 1000 residents have registered, of which more than 140 are companies with foreign capital from more than 40 countries; the total volume of declared investments exceeded 1.6 trillion roubles, invested — 738 billion roubles; about 60 thousand jobs were created; about 295 billion roubles of tax payments, customs duties and insurance premiums were paid.<sup>18</sup>

The geography of special economic zones reflects uneven spatial development: the bulk of them, namely 4/5, are concentrated in the west of the country. Most special economic zones are established in the Central Federal District — 16, which is more than 1/3 of their total number. The second federal district in terms of the number of operating special economic zones — the Volga Federal District — has 10 special economic zones (1/5 of the total number). Thus, more than half of all special economic zones operate in the two districts, while in Siberia there are only 5 of them: one technology innovation zone, two industrial-production zones and two tourist-recreational zones; only one special economic zone of tourist-recreational type is organised in the Far East.

The assessment of the efficiency of special economic zones is ambiguous. During the period of their work since the adoption of 116-FL along with positive examples [techno-innovative special economic zone “Dubna” (Moscow region), special economic zone of industrial-production type “Alabuga” (Republic of Tatarstan), “Lipetsk”, “Togliatti” in the Samara region, “St. Petersburg”, etc.] serious shortcomings in their activities, mainly of legal and organisational nature, were revealed, which led to the liquidation of a number of ineffective special economic zones. However, the reasons

<sup>16</sup> Federal Law No. 116-FL dated 22.07.2005 “On Special Economic Zones in the Russian Federation”, (hereinafter — 116-FL). URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/22673>; Federal Law No. 473-FL dated 29.12.2014 “On Territories of Advanced Socio-Economic Development in the Russian Federation”, (hereinafter — 473-FL). URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/39279>

<sup>17</sup> In addition to SEZs established in accordance with Federal Law No. 116-FL (on the basis of government decrees), Russia also has SEZs established on the basis of separate federal laws: SEZ in the Kaliningrad Region, SEZ in the Magadan Region, free economic zone on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the city of federal significance Sevastopol, free port of

Vladivostok.

<sup>18</sup> Special economic zones. Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation (official website). URL: [https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/directions/regionalnoe\\_razvitiye/instrumenty\\_razvitiya\\_territoriy/osobyie\\_ekonomicheskie\\_zony/](https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/directions/regionalnoe_razvitiye/instrumenty_razvitiya_territoriy/osobyie_ekonomicheskie_zony/)

for their unsatisfactory performance, according to experts, are more of a subjective nature, and support should continue for this instrument of state regional policy and form of spatial organisation of regional economies to make fuller use of the potential of their transport and geographical location, natural wealth, labour resources and to ensure economic growth [30].

At the same time, plans for the further development of special economic zones, which were initially formed in anticipation of close cooperation ties with foreign partners, now have to be adjusted under the influence of sanctions and in connection with the need to implement import substitution measures [31].

Initially, the 473-FL covered the Far Eastern Federal District, where 22 priority social and economic development areas have already been established. As of the beginning of 2020, more than 300 residents were registered in these areas, and the total amount of announced investments exceeded RUB 2.3 trillion. The law also provides for the formation of priority social and economic development areas in other federal districts, in particular, Article 34473-FL stipulates the procedure for their creation in the territories of single-industry municipalities. Priority social and economic development areas are regarded as growth points that ensure the inflow of investment capital into the regions, promote their innovative development, the formation of a new economic structure and the development of the social sphere. In this case, the principle of “effect over cost” should be observed [32].

According to the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, by the beginning of 2021 about 90 priority social and economic development areas have already been created in single-industry towns, in which more than 700 residents have been registered; 70 billion roubles of investments have been attracted, and the number of new jobs has exceeded 27 thousand.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The number of PDA (priority development area) residents has

Thus, despite the sanctions pressure, the processes of economic clustering and the formation of territories with a special regime of entrepreneurial activity will continue to promote the spatial development of Russia. Moreover, a number of scientists and specialists conclude that sanctions can and should be used to mobilise regional economies in order to ensure advanced growth [33].

This requires: support for cluster initiatives at the federal and regional levels; implementation of national technology platforms, which serve as an important tool for combining the efforts of business, science and government to implement priority areas of modernisation and technological development of the Russian economy, as well as a set of programmes for import substitution and scientific and technological development; cross-industry integration; compact location of enterprises, allowing for maximum optimisation of logistics.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of structural changes and peculiarities of the spatial organisation of the Russian economy at the present stage has shown a number of negative trends due not only to internal factors (geographical remoteness of certain territories, their lagging behind in the development of infrastructure, social sphere, depopulation of the population, etc.), but also, to a large extent, to external reasons associated with the toughening of anti-Russian sanctions, which creates additional risks of economic, including investment and external economic risks.

One of the main problems of the national economy — its structural imbalance — is particularly manifested in the technological backwardness of manufacturing industries. The increase in spatial differentiation in the level of

increased by 22% since the beginning of 2020. Russian Ministry of Economic Development. URL: [https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/kolichestvo\\_rezidentov\\_tor\\_s\\_nachala\\_2020\\_goda\\_uvelichilos\\_na\\_22.html](https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/kolichestvo_rezidentov_tor_s_nachala_2020_goda_uvelichilos_na_22.html)

socio-economic development of the country's regions is also a negative process.

The solution to the problem is seen in the framework of more balanced management decisions at the state and regional levels. A balanced approach to solving the tasks of ensuring further economic growth within the framework of the Spatial Development Strategy should ensure, on the one hand, stimulation of the activities of established and creation of new growth centres in the form of large and major urban agglomerations, and, on the other hand, and no less importantly, government support for the development of small and medium-sized cities and rural areas.

Such forms of spatial organisation of economic activity as innovation and industrial clusters, territories of advanced socio-economic development, special economic zones can contribute to

the reduction of structural and territorial disproportions of the economy. Their role is primarily to strengthen inter-sectoral, intra- and inter-regional interaction of market participants, attract investments, including in the development of infrastructure, create new jobs, ensure industrial, scientific, technological and information development, which is ultimately designed to promote the competitiveness of regions, smoothing their socio-economic differences.

These instruments of state regional policy should be further supported in order to more fully and effectively utilise the resource potential of the country's regions and ensure their economic growth. At the same time, it is necessary to expand the geography of cluster associations and special economic zones in the eastern direction, where they have not been properly developed yet.

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