

## RESEARCH REPORTS

---

---



*Andrei Manakov*

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE BORDER POSITION OF THE PSKOV REGION ON THE SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES OF THE POPULATION



*This article presents the results of a sociological research on national and supranational (civilizational) identity of the Pskov region population conducted in 1999—2010. The Pskov region is the only European region of Russia that shares borders with three states, two of which are members of the EU. The author defines the areas of the neighbouring countries' socio-cultural influence on the lives of the border territory population. The article also describes the existing stereotypes about Russia and the neighbouring countries as well as the influence of frequent trips to these countries on the attitude towards them. The assessment of the EU-Russia cooperation prospects by the Pskov region population is presented in comparison to the results of a similar research conducted in the Kaliningrad region.*

**Key words:** border position, population identity, stereotypes, kinship and friendship, cross-border contacts, cooperation prospects, barrier type border, oppositional identity model.

The information basis of this article encompasses the results of a series of surveys conducted in 1999—2010 in the region, which represents the “new Russian border area” and holds most of the Russian border with Estonia and Latvia. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this ethnocultural frontier served as a state border only for 30 years, though, over the previous seven centuries, the tendency was quite opposite: during five centuries, the border had the political and, only over two centuries (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>), the administrative status.

The Pskov region is the only region of European Russia that borders on three states. Two of the neighbouring countries — Estonia and Latvia — are firmly associated with the local population and Western cultural world; one of them (the republic of Belarus) is perceived by the residents of the region as culturally very close to Russia.

The border position of the Pskov region affects the life of its whole population. The geometrical form of the regional territory — stretched from the north to the south — contributes to the phenomenon and is determined by the ethnical border, which has existed for many centuries and turned numerous times into a political frontier. At the same time, the areas of immediate sociocultural influence of the neighbouring countries were formed along the modern state border; these areas are characterised by close friendly connections and intensive cross-border contacts. First of all, the sociocultural impact of the neighbouring countries is felt in the border districts, and it is a little weaker in the adjacent inner districts, called secondary border districts.

So, as to the Pskov region, we can speak of three zones of contact with the neighbouring countries that are distinguished by certain sociocultural features, namely, Estonian, Latvian, and Belarusian border areas.

Within every zone, there is a clear distinction between two types of areas: the areas of border districts per se, characterised by the most intensive contacts with the neighbouring countries and the areas of secondary border districts, which, to a certain degree, are also involved in the sociocultural space of the neighbouring countries.

Beyond the areas of the most tangible contact with the neighbouring countries lie several districts of the north-west and east of the region. I referred to these districts, which do not gravitate to any neighbouring country, as inner districts of the region. The cities of the region (Pskov and Velikiye Luki), which carry out the functions of extrazonal centres of intergovernmental interaction, also hold a peculiar position in the region, since their population participates in the cooperation with all the three neighbouring countries with almost equal intensity.

The ethnocultural features of the border districts of the Pskov region are determined by family or friendly connections of the local population with the residents of the neighbouring countries. For example, every third resident of the districts bordering on Estonia has relatives, friends, or acquaintances in that country. The same situation is typical of the districts bordering on Belarus. Every fourth respondent in the southern-most areas of the region has relatives in Belarus. And every fifth resident of the districts bordering on Belarus speaks the Belarusian language and more than a half of the local population understands it [4].

### Stereotypes about Russia and the neighbouring countries

In 2003, I participated in the study on the features of national identification, which was carried out on the basis of interviews regarding the stereotypes of Russia in comparison to the neighbouring countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Belarus) [3]. The survey was conducted in the Pskov region and the adjacent districts of the neighbouring Russian regions using the standardised interview method. A total of 3152 interviews were held, 2569 of them were done in the Pskov region (on average, 100 respondents per administrative unit). In each administrative district or a city the number of interviewees of certain age groups or gender was the same

In general, the following characteristics — *strong, peaceful, spiritual, and independent* — are associated with the image of Russia. Against this background, Estonia and Latvia are perceived as *richer* and *more developed* countries. However, when compared to Belarus, Russia retains only three characteristics (*strong, independent, and spiritual*), while Belarus demonstrates such qualities as *peaceful, developed, and rich*. However, the gap between these stereotypes (except for two opposite characteristics of a *strong* Russia and a *peaceful* Belarus) is minimal, which speaks of the proximity of the images of the two Slavic countries as opposed to the Baltic states (table 1).

Table 1

**The national stereotypes of the residents of the Pskov region about Russia and the neighboring countries (2003, % of respondents, N = 2569)**

Which of the countries is most:	Russia — Estonia			Russia — Latvia			Russia — Belarus		
	Russia	Estonia	No answer	Russia	Latvia	No answer	Russia	Belarus	No answer
peaceful	<b>80</b>	14	6	<b>81</b>	5	14	22	<b>69</b>	9
strong	<b>81</b>	16	3	<b>77</b>	20	3	<b>69</b>	26	5
spiritual	<b>88</b>	9	3	<b>71</b>	25	4	<b>50</b>	45	5
independent	72	27	1	<b>66</b>	26	8	<b>52</b>	36	12
rich	41	<b>53</b>	6	37	<b>60</b>	3	45	<b>54</b>	1
developed	20	<b>77</b>	3	33	<b>65</b>	2	41	<b>54</b>	5

It is important to mention that the images of Estonia and Latvia developed by Russians make little difference, rather fitting into the image of a “Western country”. In other words, the stereotypical image of Russia in comparison to Estonia and Latvia reflects a greater degree of territorial than national identity. Literally, in this case, we deal with the supranational — civilizational — identity, which is confirmed by the answers of the respondents to the question regarding ethnical stereotypes about Russians in comparison to Estonians, Latvians, and Belarusians [5].

As the comparison of the results of the research conducted in 2003 and related pilot surveys carried out in 1999—2002 [1; 2] show, the stereotypes of the neighbouring countries and peoples are persistent over time. These stereotypes do not vary among different age groups. It testifies to the fact that these stereotypes are continuously reproduced in the following generations. As a result, stereotypes become an element of the national cultural tradition.

**The attitude towards the neighbouring EU countries  
(Estonia and Latvia)**

In winter 2009—2010, our team interviewed residents of Pskov and border districts of the Pskov region (N = 339) aiming to study the regional identity of the population as well as the impact of the EU border on the life of the population of the region. The research employed the standardised interview method. The following answers were given to the question “How does the border with the EU affect the Pskov region, in your opinion?”: “absolutely positively” — 5%, “mostly positively” — 23.5%, “mostly negatively” — 11%, “absolutely negatively” — 2%. The other respondents gave no answer to this question.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their attitude towards the two neighbouring Baltic countries. Participants of the survey gave predominantly neutral assessments. 8% of the respondents replied “friendly countries”, 52% — “just neighbours”, 16% — “unfriendly neighbours”, 5% — “rather enemies than friends”, 19% — “no answer”.

A similar research on the attitude of the Pskov region residents to the neighbouring countries and the assessment of cooperation prospects was conducted by our team in 2003 (N = 2569) [3] and 2006 (N = 500) [7]. Over those years, the general attitude towards the Baltic countries changed insignificantly, though the percentage of respondents who consider Estonia and Latvia friendly nations decreased (from 12% in 2003). There were also slight changes in the assessment of the prospects of cooperation between Russia and the Baltic countries, precisely, the mostly optimistic forecasts of 2003 (35% against 29% of the pessimistic ones) were replaced by more pessimistic ones in 2006 (44% against 11% of the optimistic ones).

However, we believe that certain mistrust towards the neighbouring countries, which has developed recently, is a temporary phenomenon. The attitude to the neighbouring countries is determined by long-term factors, particularly, by the fact that many relatives, friends, and acquaintances of the residents of the Pskov region live in Estonia and Latvia.

### The frequency of trips to other regions of Russia and the countries of the EU

Frequent trips to the neighbouring countries also positively affect the attitude towards the latter. However, this factor, due to the border control, has recently become less significant. It facilitates the formation of a more negative image of these countries in mass media. According to the 2009—2010 survey, only 12% of the respondents only seldom visit Estonia and 13% — Latvia. The frequency of trips has not changed over the last 10—15 years, but is very low in view of the fact that almost 100% of senior respondents used to visit Latvia and Estonia in the Soviet times.

In the spring of 2008, a survey aimed to study the population identity, residents' ideas the about the current socioeconomic situation, as well as problems and prospects of the development of both the region and Russia in general was conducted in the Pskov and Kaliningrad regions<sup>1</sup>. The 2008 survey was based on a probability sample and involved residents of the region over the age of 16. A total of 1460 interviews were conducted in the Kaliningrad region, and 740 — in the Pskov region. The sample is stratified by gender, age, and the place of residence.

Related pilot surveys were conducted earlier in both the Pskov [1—3; 6; 7] and the Kaliningrad [8—10] regions. Since 2004, each of these regions has bordered on two EU countries. Thus, of special interest is the comparison the survey results obtained in those western-most regions of Russia.

---

<sup>1</sup> The research was supported by the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation.

According to the 2008 survey, only 13.5 % of the residents of the Pskov region travelled abroad in recent years, 29.5 % did not leave the country during several years, and 57 % had never been abroad (table 2).

In this relation, the residents of the Pskov region are clearly left behind by those of the Kaliningrad region, of which only 23 % had never been abroad and 43 % did not leave the country in several years, while every third respondent travels abroad once in a few years or even more often.

Table 2

**The frequency of international trips of the residents of the Pskov region  
(2008, % of the respondents by age groups, N = 740)**

How often do you travel abroad?	16—19						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
I have never been abroad	67.7	65.9	50.8	49.6	43.9	65.4	57.2
Have not been abroad for several years	13.8	19.5	27.0	31.9	44.7	31.4	29.5
Once a year or less frequently	16.9	10.6	15.6	10.9	7.3	2.7	9.5
Several times a year	1.5	2.4	6.6	7.6	4.1	0.5	3.6
Once a month or more often	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3

Surprisingly, Pskovians visit other regions of Russia not much more frequently than Kaliningraders. The ‘sedentary population’ — those who had never been in another region — is represented by 12 % of Pskovians (table 3) and only 9 % of Kaliningraders. Even Pskov youth is less mobile than that of Kaliningrad.

Table 3

**The frequency of the trips of the Pskov region residents  
to the other regions of Russia  
(2008, % of the respondents by age groups, N = 740)**

How often do you travel to other regions of Russia?	16—19						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
I have never visited any other region	13.8	13.8	8.2	8.4	10.6	17.0	12.3
I have not visited any other region for several years	20.0	22.8	33.6	40.3	42.3	60.1	39.9
Once a year or less frequently	33.8	34.1	27.0	26.1	27.6	13.8	25.4
Several times a year	24.6	22.0	28.7	21.8	17.1	9.0	19.2
Once a month or more often	7.7	7.3	2.5	3.4	2.4	0.0	3.2

However, the comparative analysis showed that the demise of the USSR and the changes in the geopolitical position affected the frequency of trips to other Russian regions, especially, in the Kaliningrad region. In case of the Kaliningrad region, problems associated with visiting other Russian regions may have stimulated, to a certain degree, such trips. This is not the case in the Pskov region, where such problems are non-existent. Nevertheless, visits to the neighbouring regions are undertaken once a year or more frequently only by 48 % of the respondents (compared to 38 % in the Kaliningrad region).

### The assessment of the prospects of cooperation with the EU

More than four fifth of the respondents residing in the Pskov region believe that the region should be more active in the development of cooperation with the countries of the EU, including the immediate neighbours — Estonia and Latvia. Only every tenth of the respondents holds the opposite opinion (table 4). In the Kaliningrad region, the idea of strengthening connections with the EU countries is opposed by only 5 % of the respondents, although the attitude towards the prospect of cooperation with the EU is rather similar or, to put it more precisely, rather positive in both westernmost regions of Russia.

Table 4

#### The attitude of the Pskov region population to the strengthening of cooperation with the neighbouring EU countries (2008, % of the respondents by age groups, N = 740)

Do you agree that the Pskov region should strengthen cooperation with the neighbouring European countries and the EU in general?	16—19						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
Totally agree	46.2	37.4	44.3	42.9	30.9	39.9	39.7
Partially agree	32.3	39.8	37.7	44.5	45.5	32.4	38.6
Partially disagree	6.2	8.1	7.4	4.2	9.8	5.3	6.8
Fully disagree	4.6	4.9	3.3	0.8	3.3	3.7	3.4
No answer	10.8	9.8	7.4	7.6	10.6	18.6	11.5

Nevertheless, the views of the population of the two border regions of Russia on the accession of the neighbouring countries to the Schengen Area can hardly be called optimistic. In general, the reaction of Pskovians to the accession of Estonia and Latvia to the EU and the Schengen Area was similar to that of Kaliningraders to the accession of Lithuania and Poland to these unions (table 5). The enlargement of the Schengen zone was supported by more than 36 % of the respondents (33 % in the Kaliningrad region) and almost the same per cent of the interviewees expressed a negative view (44 % in the Kaliningrad region). A more negative reaction of Kaliningraders to the accession of the neighbouring countries to the Schengen area can be explained by the exclave position of the region, which affects the life of the

whole population of the region. As to the Pskov region, the changes in the visa regime had some impact only on a certain part of the population — people who often travel abroad.

Table 5

**The attitude of the Pskov region population to the accession of Latvia and Estonia to the EU and the Schengen area (2008, % of the respondents by age groups, N = 740)**

How do you evaluate the accession of the neighbouring countries to the EU and the Schengen area?	16—19						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
Absolutely positively	6.2	10.6	15.6	10.9	9.8	8.5	10.4
Mostly positively	27.7	19.5	36.1	26.9	23.6	23.4	25.8
Mostly negatively	21.5	32.5	18.0	29.4	21.1	22.3	24.2
Absolutely negatively	7.7	10.6	9.0	5.9	15.4	15.4	11.4
No answer	36.9	26.8	21.3	26.9	30.1	30.3	28.2

The opinion that Russia should become a full member of the EU is more popular in the Kaliningrad region than in the Pskov region (28% and 19% respectively). In both border regions, this position is predominantly shared by the younger population. The elder respondents hold a more cautious opinion, although many cannot give an answer to this question (table 6). The idea to estrange the region from the EU is mostly supported by the people who oppose the accession of Latvia and Estonia to the EU and the Schengen Area. These respondents are proud of residing in Russia and the Pskov region, yet they negatively evaluate the situation in Russia.

Table 6

**The opinion of the Pskov region population on the possible ways of cooperation between Russia and the European Union (2008, % of the respondents by age groups, N = 740)**

How, in your opinion, should Russia develop relations with the EU?	16—19						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
1. Russia should aspire to equal partnership relations with the EU rather than strive for the accession to the Union	50.8	46.3	61.5	61.3	58.5	44.1	53.1
2. Russia should aspire to become a full member of the EU	23.1	22.8	17.2	16.8	15.4	20.7	19.2
3. Russia should estrange from the EU and be independent of the Union	10.8	15.4	7.4	10.9	13.0	13.8	12.2
No answer	15.4	15.4	13.9	10.9	13.0	21.3	15.5

In the Pskov region, unlike the Kaliningrad region, a popular opinion is that Russia should reclaim the status of a superpower in the next 15—20 years (27% against 17%). However, Kaliningraders more strongly support the idea that Russia should catch up with the USA and the EU in terms of its political influence (22% against 17%). However, another opinion dominates in both border regions: 5—10% of the respondents believe that Russia should be in the first five-to-ten of the most economically developed countries of the world (table 7).

Table 7

**The opinion of the Pskov region population  
on the development targets of Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
(2008, % of the number of respondents by age groups, N = 740)**

In your opinion, what targets should Russia aim for in the next 15—10 years?	Age						Total sample
	16—19	20—29	30—39	40—49	50—59	Above 60	
1. To enter the top five-to-ten the most economically developed countries of the world	52.3	56.1	54.1	42.0	43.1	33.5	45.3
2. To reclaim the status of a superpower the USSR enjoyed	20.0	13.0	17.2	29.4	33.3	38.8	26.9
3. To become the leading state in the post-Soviet space and catch up with the USA and the EU in terms of political influence	9.2	21.1	18.9	19.3	15.4	14.9	16.9
4. Should not aim for any global targets	3.1	2.4	4.1	3.4	4.9	6.9	4.5
No answer	15.4	7.3	5.7	5.9	3.3	5.9	6.5

Today, mass media play the most important role in the formation of either ‘good-neighbourly’ or ‘oppositional’ identity model in the border regions, especially, if the state border is a barrier to the trips of the local population, i. e. the primary function of the border is that of a barrier. Mass media by implanting the “ally-partner-opponent-enemy” scale in the mass consciousness makes it easier for politicians to build up the images of friends and foes. The existing opportunity for immediate contacts of people residing astride the border with the neighbouring countries complicates the formation of the ‘opposition’ identity model, which is occasionally artificially imposed by the political elites of the neighbouring countries.

### *Bibliography*

1. Кувенева Т. Н., Манаков А. Г. Формирование пространственных идеентичностей в порубежном регионе // Социологические исследования («СОЦИС»). 2003. № 7. С. 77—84.



2. Манаков А. Г. Геополитические симпатии населения нового российского порубежья: социологическое и географическое измерение // Вестник научной информации. Реформы: вчера, сегодня, завтра. М.: ИМЭПИ РАН, 2000. №11—12: Приграничные районы, приграничное сотрудничество. С. 151—162.
3. Манаков А. Г. Фактор государственной границы в жизни населения Псковской области // Восточная Европа: вопросы исторической, общественной и политической географии: сб. науч. ст. Псков: Изд-во ПГПИ, 2003. С. 190—200.
4. Манаков А. Г. На стыке цивилизаций: Этнокультурная география Запада России и стран Балтии. Псков: Изд-во ПГПИ, 2004.
5. Манаков А. Г. Межнациональные отношения и этнические стереотипы населения западного порубежья России // Смоленщина многонациональная: этнические стереотипы и границы межкультурного понимания: сб. науч. ст. Смоленск: СГУ, 2005. С. 94—99.
6. Манаков А. Г., Григорьева Н. В. Региональная идентичность и миграционные намерения населения псковского порубежья России // Магілёўскі Мерыдыян: навукова-метадычны часопіс. Магілёў, 2007. Т. 7, вып. 3—4 (10—11). С. 29—35.
7. Манаков А. Г., Григорьева Н. В. Степень удовлетворенности жизнью и социокультурные ориентиры населения приграничных районов Псковской области // Псковский регионологический журнал. №4. Псков: ПГПУ, 2007. С. 77—87.
8. Регион сотрудничества. Вып. 2 (20): Калининградский социум: проблемы консолидации и стратификации / А. П. Клемешев, Г. М. Федоров [и др.]. Калининград: Изд-во КГУ, 2003.
9. Регион сотрудничества. Вып. 6 (31): Калининградский социум: по результатам социологических обследований 2001—2004 гг. / под общ. ред. А. П. Клемешева. Калининград: Изд-во КГУ, 2004.
10. Регион сотрудничества. Вып. 17 (42): Регион в условиях глобализации / под ред. А. П. Клемешева. Калининград: Изд-во КГУ, 2004.