

SPATIAL CONCENTRATION AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, 2019–2024

Irene Malgina *

* Corresponding author, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, Republic of Belarus

OPEN ACCESS

How to cite this paper:

Malgina, I. (2026). Spatial concentration and regional disparities in small and medium entrepreneurship development: Evidence from the Republic of Belarus, 2019–2024. *Journal of Governance, Economics, and International Affairs*, 1(1), 5–26.

Copyright © 2026 The Authors

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

[<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>]

ISSN Print: [XXXX-XXXX]

ISSN Online: [XXXX-XXXX]

Received:

22.07.2026

Reviewed:

02.08.2026

Accepted:

04.08.2026

JEL Classification:

L26, R11, R58

MRNTI Code:

06.52.17, 06.56.21, 06.56.31

DOI:

[10.xxxxx/jgeia.YYYY.V.N.pp]

Issue:

Vol. 1, Issue 1 (2026)

Abstract

This article investigates regional disparities in the development of small and medium entrepreneurship (SME) in the Republic of Belarus over the period 2019–2024, with particular attention to the alignment between observed SME dynamics and the regional development priorities set out in the Program of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030. Using official statistical data from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus on the gross value added (GVA) generated by micro-, small-, and medium-sized organizations and by individual entrepreneurs, the study applies economic-statistical analysis, comparative analysis, and descriptive synthesis at both the regional and district levels to assess how SME activity has evolved since the conclusion of the previous socio-economic development cycle. The analysis shows that regional SME development in Belarus is characterized by high spatial concentration: Minsk and the Minsk region account for a disproportionate share of SME gross value added, while the remaining regions display considerable internal heterogeneity, with regional-level performance driven less by uniform regional trends than by the presence or absence of a small number of high-performing districts. A subset of districts associated with large anchor enterprises or favorable logistics, most notably in the Vitebsk region, shows improvement even where broader regional indicators are declining, whereas a substantial number of peripheral districts, including several named as priorities in the Program of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030, show worse performance in 2024 than in 2015 or 2019. These findings indicate only partial alignment between the Program's designated priority districts and the districts that have, in practice, achieved positive SME dynamics. The study concludes that the spatial concentration of SME activity in Belarus reflects not only population density and administrative status, but also the presence of anchor enterprises, logistical accessibility, and the institutional capacity of local authorities, and it offers an empirical basis for refining regional SME support measures within the Program.

Keywords:

small and medium entrepreneurship; regional development; spatial concentration; regional disparities; Belarus

Authors' individual contribution:

Conceptualization — I.M.; Methodology — I.M.; Data Collection — I.M.; Data Analysis — I.M.; Interpretation — I.M.; Writing — Original Draft — I.M.; Writing — Review & Editing — I.M.; Visualization — I.M.

Declaration of conflicting interests:

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

1. Introduction

Speaking at the second session of the Seventh All–Belarusian People's Assembly during his Address to the Belarusian Nation and the National Assembly, President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko outlined 10 economic challenges facing the country, particularly regional development (President of the Republic of Belarus, 2025). He further stated that «the most important task is to stop the outflow of people from the regions and relieve congestion in the capital and regional centers. This issue must be resolved through revolutionary methods, definitively and without debate, otherwise we will depopulate the country. We will pull everything into Minsk and the regional centers» (President of the Republic of Belarus, 2025).

In the Republic of Belarus, the All–Belarusian People's Assembly approved the Program for the Socio–Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030 (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, 2025). This document notes that a number of systemic imbalances persist in the Republic of Belarus, in particular, «the insufficient use of the potential of the private sector, which flexibly responds to market changes and promotes economic growth, for import substitution, localization of production, and self–sufficiency».

This Program identifies several development priorities for the next five years, including strong regions (priority 5), the goal of which is to «create equal employment opportunities and quality of life for the population in each region» (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, 2025).

Small and medium entrepreneurship (SME) play a significant role in the development of regions in any country worldwide: they create local jobs, diversify regional tax bases, and are frequently more responsive to local market conditions than large enterprises, whose investment decisions are typically made at the national or corporate level rather than the regional one. This determined the choice of topic and focus of the study.

At the same time, regional economic activity of any kind, including SME activity, is rarely distributed evenly across a country's territory. It tends to concentrate where firms and workers benefit

from proximity to one another, a pattern long documented in the regional and urban economics literature (Duranton & Puga, 2004). For the Republic of Belarus, where the capital and a small number of regional centers historically account for a disproportionate share of economic activity, this raises the empirical question of whether SME development follows the same concentrated pattern as the broader economy, or whether it instead offsets regional imbalances by taking root in areas underserved by large enterprises. This question motivates the regional and district-level focus of the present study.

The purpose of this study was to analyze SME development in the regions of the Republic of Belarus. The objective of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of SME development across regions of the Republic of Belarus. The scientific hypothesis of the study is to justify the active development of SME in the regions based on an analysis of the share of SME in macro-indicators across regions, as well as an analysis of the direct regional development of SME.

The theoretical significance of studying SMEs in the regions of Belarus lies in expanding scientific understanding of regional SME development and its role in regional economic development indicators. The practical significance of studying regional SME in Belarus lies in substantiating the appropriateness of regional development priorities in the Social and Economic Development Program of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030. A key unresolved issue in the field of regional SME development is the interrelationship between SME development and effective regional development in Belarus, which this article aims to address. The article includes a literature review on the topic of the study, an analytical section, results, and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

A.Yu. Matsegor and A.E. Suglobov rightly note that «small and medium entrepreneurship make a significant contribution to the national economy, create jobs, and contribute to the growth of national wealth. Therefore, the development of entrepreneurship in the regions is an important area of state policy» (Matsegor & Suglobov, 2023). From our point of view, this statement is very important, however, the direction of state policy under consideration is only one of its elements, and rather, it is conducive, but not important.

In turn, A.R. Khamidullina states that «in the current conditions of economic instability and sanctions pressure, the development of SME is of particular importance...» (Khamidullina, 2024). We believe that SME development is of little importance amid economic instability and sanctions pressure, as it is not a critical factor in economic growth. SME development is only particularly important in terms of job preservation and revenue generation at various levels.

Reviewing the scientific interpretations of the concept of «small and medium entrepreneurship» presented in the works of foreign and domestic scholars, F.M. Dzhuraev and M.M. Ziyaev offer their own definition, emphasizing its regional component and defining it as «small and medium entrepreneurship —a set of economically independent, organizationally flexible, and territorially oriented business entities that ensure the development of the regional economy» (Juraev, & Ziyaev, 2026). Undoubtedly, the authors' fair definition has merit. However, the narrow scope of their concept fails to capture the full role that SMEs play in any country.

Analyzing the factors and trends of the structural transformation of the small and medium-sized business sector in the region, O.A. Inevatova, A.S. Silenko, and E.O. Mikhailova note that «a developed small and medium entrepreneurship sector contributes to increased tax revenues, higher household incomes, and the stimulation of innovation and scientific and technological progress, which together form a sustainable foundation for the socioeconomic development of the country and its regions» (Inevatova et al., 2026). From our point of view, the authors' idea that SMEs contribute to an increase in the population's income is not entirely correct, since an increase in the population's income depends not only on SME developed.

L.V. Glezman, examining the development of SME in the new conditions of the regional space, rightly notes that «the development of SME organizations is largely determined by regional factors and conditions» (Glezman, 2022). From our point of view, given the centralized state regulation of the economy without allowing for the possibility of separate regional regulations of SME development, this conclusion is not entirely correct.

We agree with S.F. Salikhova's opinion that «a high level of development of small and medium entrepreneurship is an undeniable competitive advantage for any region and, as a rule, indicates a favorable business climate and high investment potential of the territories» (Salikhova, 2022). In this case, the author's opinion coincides with ours, since SMEs are a competitive advantage for any region, but depending on its specialization.

Since the Republic of Belarus is largely an agricultural country, the opinion of M. Beckmann, M. Garkisch & A. Zeyen, that «small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in ensuring growth and sustainable development, especially in rural areas where multinational corporations are absent» (Beckmann, Garkisch, & Zeyen, 2023) is quite interesting. At the same time, in the absence of multinational corporations in the regions of Belarus, SMEs may play an important role in ensuring growth, but most often in providing employment.

We agree with the opinion of P. McCann, & R. Ortega-Argilés, who assert that «that SMEs and entrepreneurs are an important driver of the regional socio-economic system, they should be involved in the process of setting-up, implementation, and evaluation of smart specialization policies»

(McCann, & Ortega-Argilés, 2016). Some elements of smart specialization are observed in the Republic of Belarus, for example, in terms of interaction between the regional entrepreneurial community and regional authorities.

T. Makkonen, & B. Leick, examining the challenges and opportunities of locating small and medium-sized enterprises in border regions, state that «SMEs in border regions do benefit from cross-border cooperation opportunities» (Makkonen, & Leick, 2020). However, in our opinion, this is not entirely true, since five of the seven regions of Belarus are border regions and no particular differentiation in SME development was identified.

A. Ndrejoni conclusion that «SMEs constitute the region's economic backbone, but face persistent barriers, including limited access to finance, a complex tax system, institutional inefficiencies, and a shortage of skilled labor» is clearly surprising (Ndrejoni, 2025). This raises the question: If SMEs are the region's economic backbone, why do they face so many barriers, which are typically addressed through government support?

In our view, the most mature approach to regional SME development is that of McCann, P., & Ortega-Argilés, R. (2016). While smart specialization is based, in particular, on SMEs, there are certain challenges that could be explored in future articles.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive, quantitative research design grounded in the premise that small and medium entrepreneurship (SME) is one of the primary drivers of territorial development, economic diversification, and social stability at the regional level. Within this design, the study pursues two specific objectives: first, to identify the role of SME in regional development indicators of the Republic of Belarus; and second, to compare SME development trends across the country's regions and, at a more granular level, across its administrative districts over time.

The unit of analysis is the region (oblast) of the Republic of Belarus and, for a more granular assessment, the administrative district (raion), including the districts of the capital city. The core sampling period is 2019–2024, which corresponds to the interval between the conclusion of the previous socio-economic development program and the launch of the Program of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030, and it applies to all regions of Belarus and to the SME category as a whole. For district-level comparisons, the time frame was extended back to 2015–2016 in order to assess trends over a full decade rather than over a single five-year program cycle.

The study relies exclusively on secondary statistical data published by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat). Regional-level indicators, specifically the shares of

gross value added (GVA) generated by micro-organizations, small organizations, medium-sized organizations, and individual entrepreneurs in gross regional product (GRP), were obtained through Belstat's interactive statistical data portal for the years 2019–2024. District-level indicators of SME development were drawn from Belstat's 2026 structural statistics release and were cross-referenced against Belstat's 2016 report on small and medium entrepreneurship in the Republic of Belarus in order to establish a consistent baseline for longer-term, district-level comparison.

Data processing and analysis combined economic-statistical analysis with descriptive and comparative synthesis. Regional-level GVA shares were normalized and standardized to allow comparison across regions and over time, while district-level indicators for 2024 were compared against their 2019 and 2015 values in order to classify districts as showing positive or negative SME development trends. The resulting district-level classifications were then cross-tabulated against the priority districts and regional groupings identified in the Program of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030, including the Pripyat Polesie districts and the Minsk Industrial Belt, to assess the degree of alignment between stated policy priorities and observed statistical outcomes. All calculations and data visualizations were performed using Microsoft Excel software.

4. Results

The analysis of the share of GVA of SMEs in the gross regional product in the Republic of Belarus showed the leadership of Minsk (2019 - 44, 2024 - 39.9%) with a decreasing indicator in all regions of Belarus compared to 2019, except for the Vitebsk region (2019 - 18.7; 2024 - 19%). At the same time, with a general decline, there is an increase in the share of GVA of medium-sized organizations in the Minsk region (2019 - 9.3; 2024 - 9.6%); microorganisms of the Mogilev region (2019 - 4.7; 2024 - 4.8%); small organizations of the Gomel region (2019 – 4.0; 2024 – 4.1%) and the Vitebsk region (2019 – 5.2; 2024 – 7.0%) (Fig. 1 - 7) (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026).

A closer reading of Figure 1 shows that the regional ranking of SME GVA shares remained stable throughout 2019–2024, with the city of Minsk, Minsk region, and Mogilev region consistently occupying the top three positions and Gomel region persistently at the bottom. The year-by-year trajectory, however, reveals a pronounced dip rather than a smooth decline: shares fell sharply in every region between 2020 and 2021 — for instance, from 44.0% to 37.2% in the city of Minsk and from 32.3% to 25.9% in Minsk region — before partially recovering from 2022 onward. By 2024, most regions had regained only part of the ground lost during this trough; the share for the city of Minsk (39.9%) remained 4.1 percentage points below its 2019 level, and Grodno region recorded the

sharpest overall decline among all regions, falling from 19.6% to 16.5% (–3.1 p.p.), while Vitebsk region was the only region to end the period essentially at its starting level (18.7% to 19.0%, +0.3 p.p.).

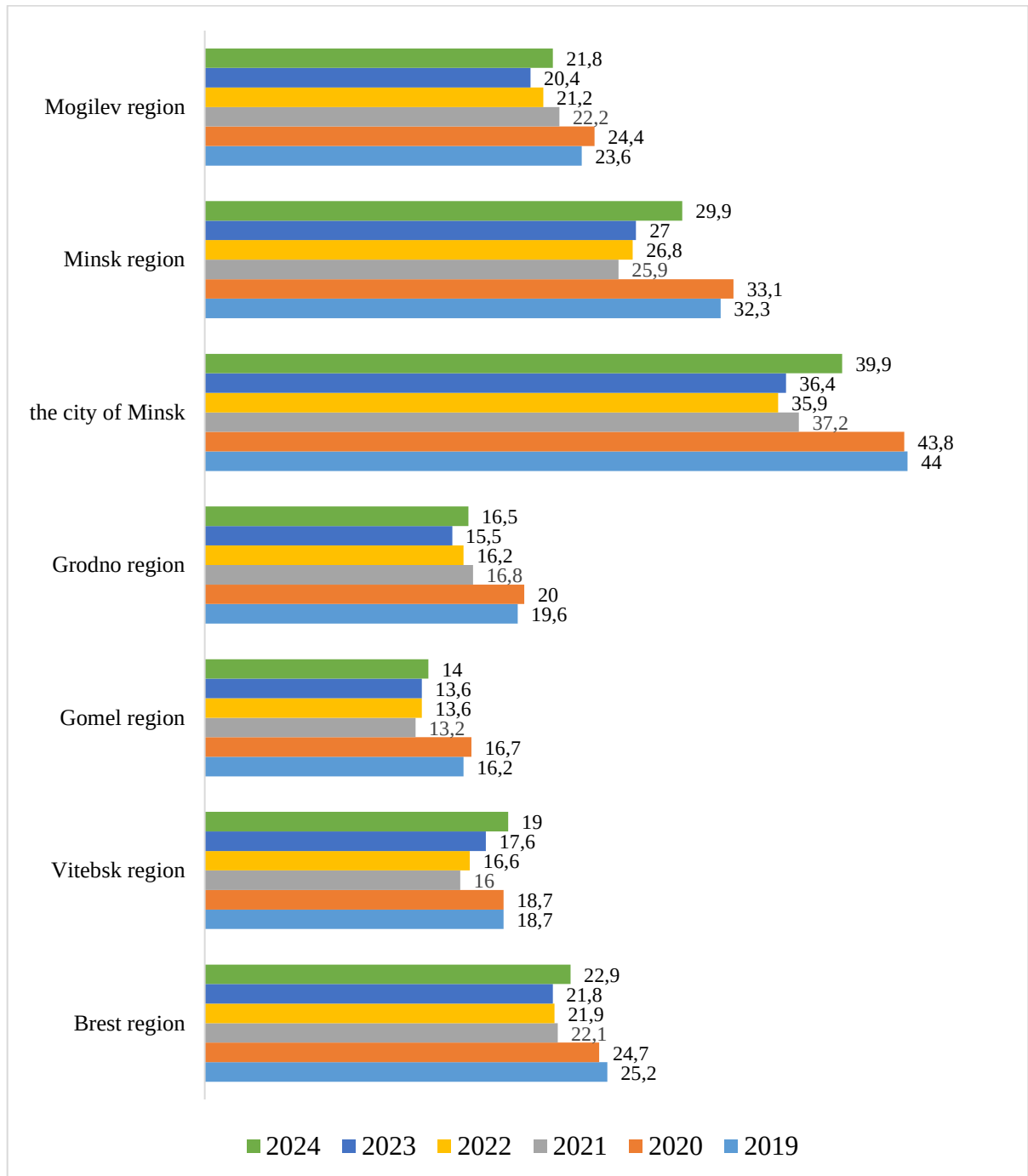


Figure 1. Share of GVA of small and medium-sized businesses in GRP in the Republic of Belarus by region in 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

Figure 2, which isolates the contribution of micro-, small-, and medium-sized legal entities from that of individual entrepreneurs, follows the same U-shaped trajectory as Figure 1 but with smaller amplitude. Comparing 2019 and 2024, Vitebsk region is again the only region to show a net increase (from 15.8% to 17.1%, +1.3 p.p.), while the city of Minsk fell from 39.7% to 37.9% (–1.8

p.p.) and Gomel region from 13.3% to 12.0% (–1.3 p.p.). Because the gap between Figures 1 and 2 corresponds to the individual-entrepreneur share, the fact that the decline in Figure 2 for the city of Minsk (–1.8 p.p.) was markedly smaller than its decline in Figure 1 (–4.1 p.p.) indicates that a disproportionate share of the capital's overall SME contraction is attributable to individual entrepreneurs rather than to registered legal entities — a pattern examined further in connection with Figure 7 below.

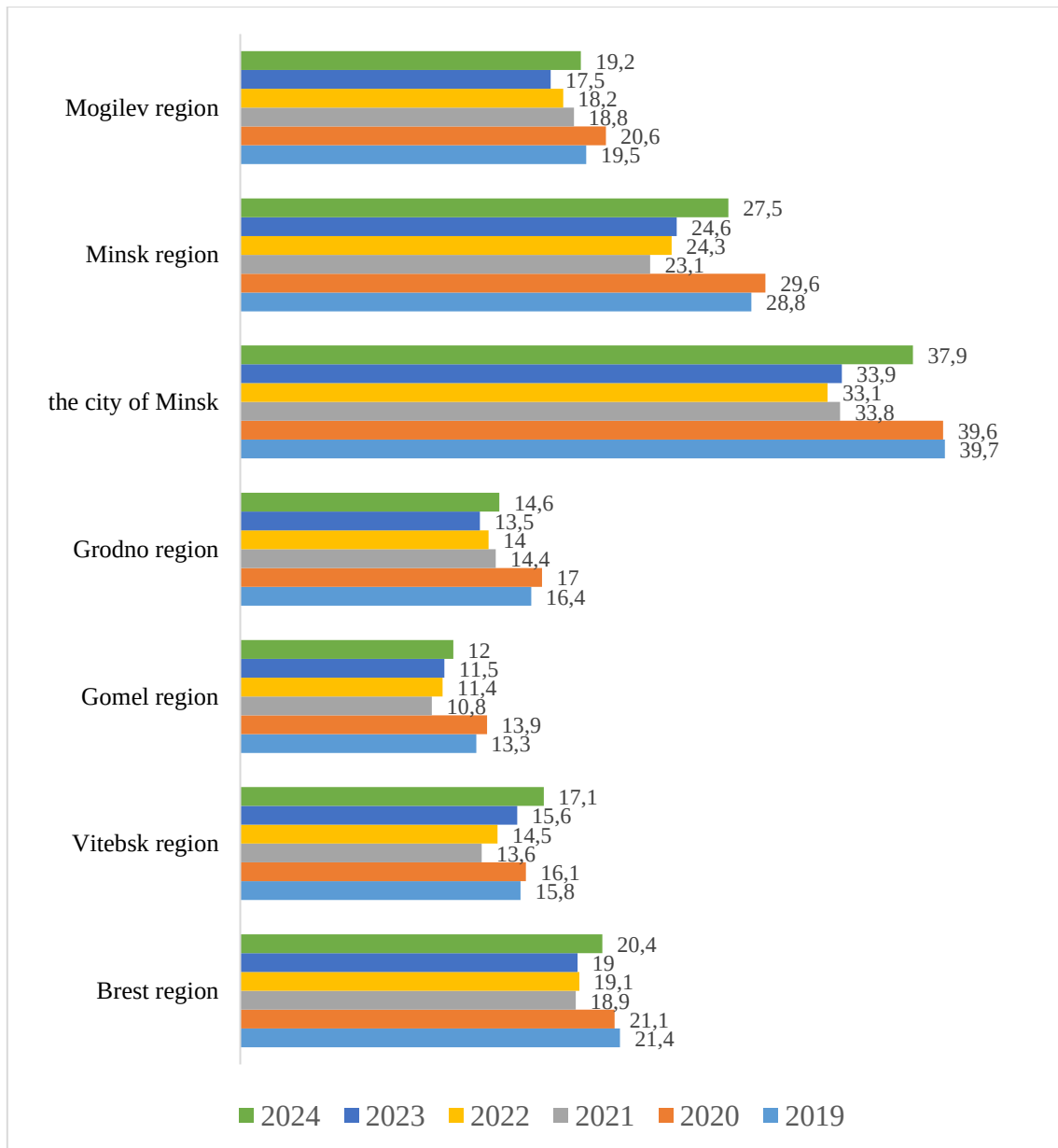
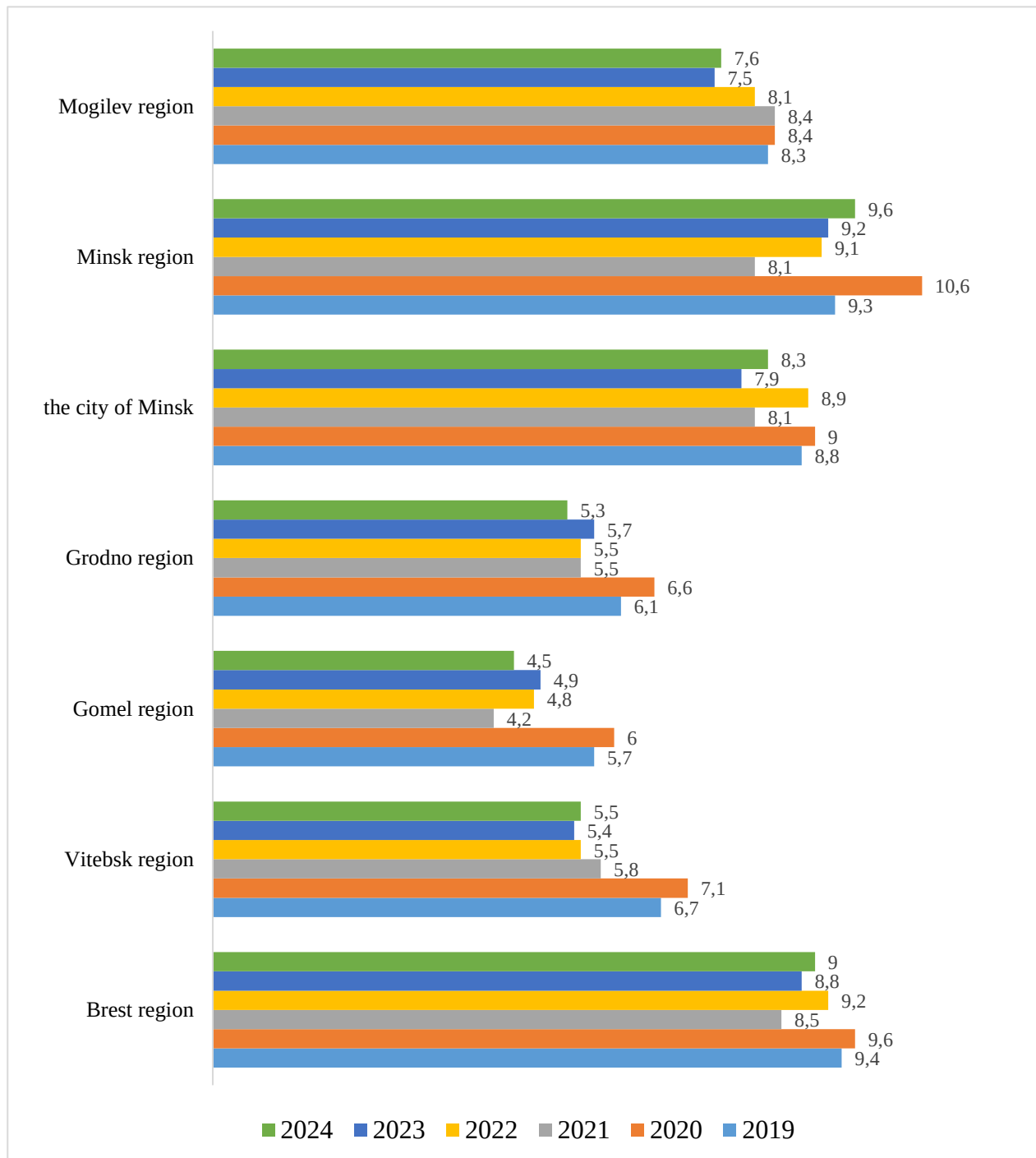


Figure 2. Share of GVA of micro-organizations, small and medium-sized organizations in GRP in the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

Medium-sized organizations (Figure 3) proved the most stable of the four organizational categories, with changes across all regions confined to a narrow band of –1.2 to +0.3 percentage points between 2019 and 2024. Minsk region was the only region in which medium-sized

organizations increased their share of GRP (from 9.3% to 9.6%), a result that, combined with the region's comparatively moderate overall SME decline in Figure 1, suggests that medium-sized



enterprises around the capital have been relatively resilient. Gomel and Vitebsk regions recorded the largest declines in this category (both –1.2 p.p.), consistent with their weaker performance in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 3. Share of GVA of medium-sized organizations in GRP across the territory of the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

Figure 4, which aggregates micro- and small organizations, shows more differentiated regional dynamics than the medium-sized segment considered separately. Vitebsk region stands out with one of the largest increases recorded across all seven figures, rising from 9.1% to 11.6% (+2.5 p.p.); read together with Figure 6 below, this growth appears concentrated in small rather than micro-sized firms. Minsk region recorded the largest decline in this category (19.5% to 17.9%, –1.6 p.p.), while Mogilev and Gomel regions were comparatively stable (+0.4 p.p. and –0.1 p.p., respectively).

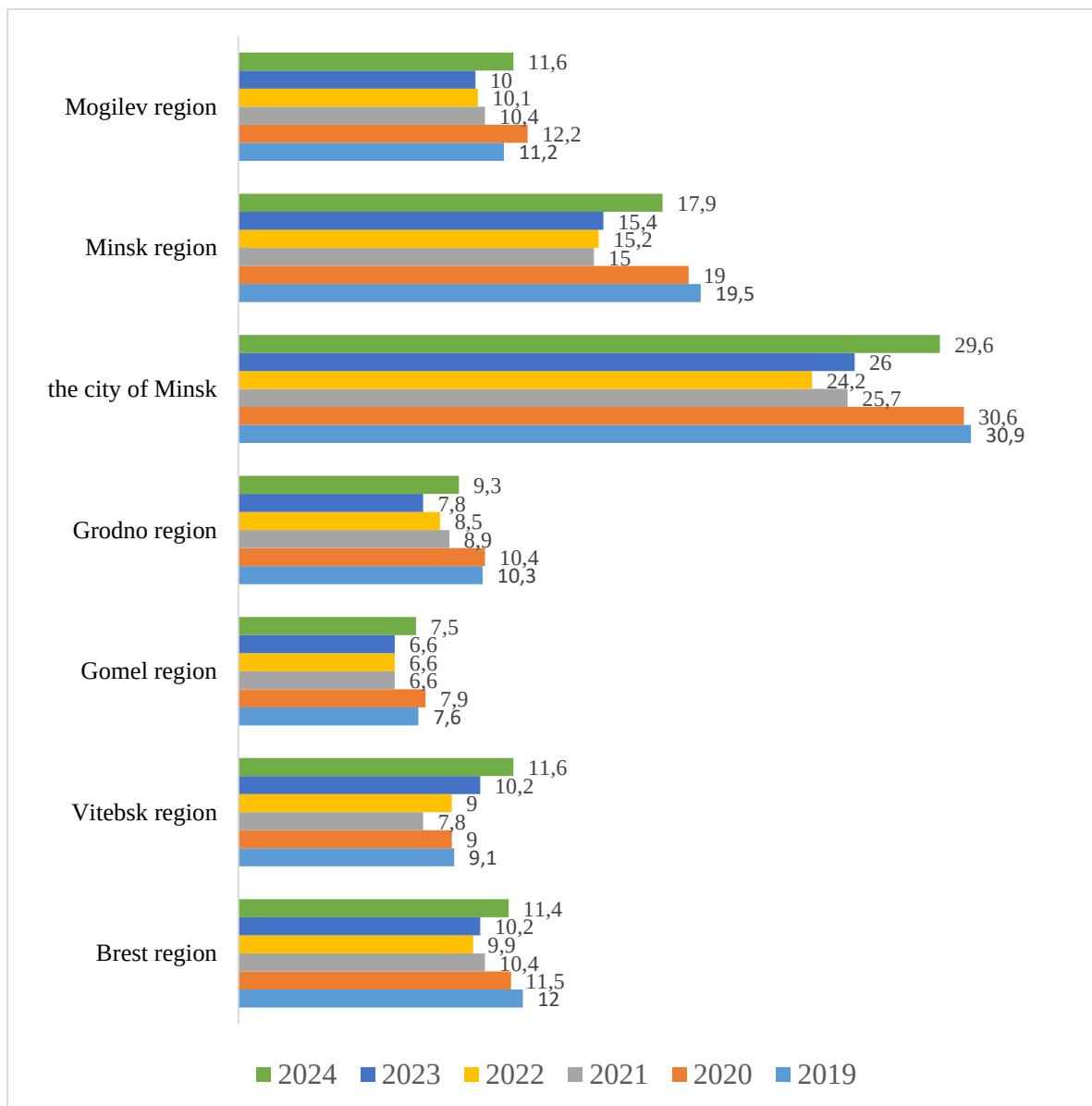


Figure 4. Share of GVA of micro- and small organizations in GRP in the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

The microorganization segment (Figure 5) shows the smallest absolute movements of any organizational category, with five of the seven regions changing by less than one percentage point between 2019 and 2024. The city of Minsk recorded the largest decline (13.1% to 11.8%, –1.3 p.p.), consistent with its overall contraction across Figures 1, 2, and 4, whereas Vitebsk region increased

from 3.9% to 4.6% (+0.7 p.p.), mirroring the positive trend already visible for this region in Figures 1, 2, and 4.

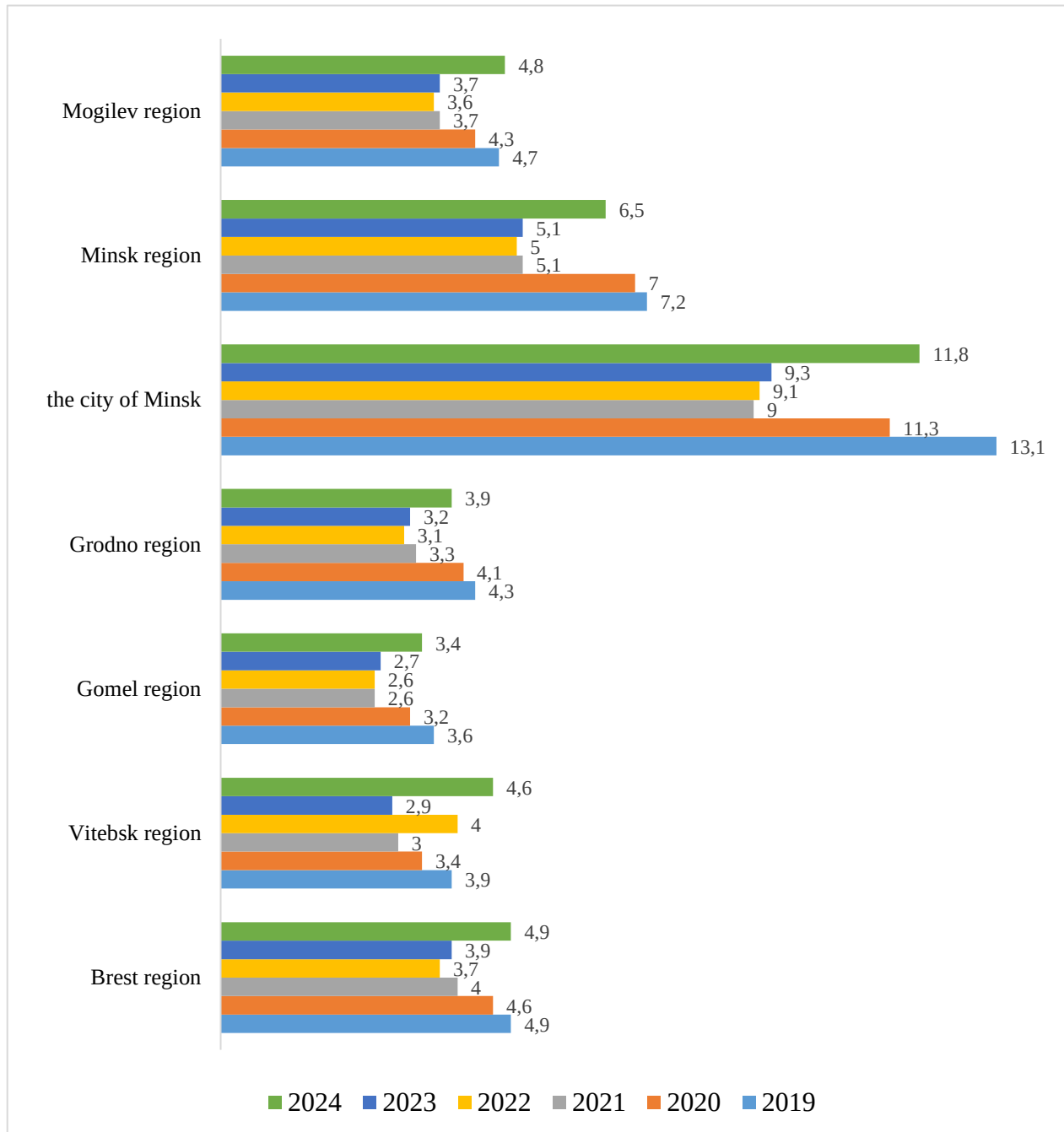


Figure 5. Share of GVA of microorganizations in GRP across the territory of the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

Small organizations (Figure 6) reveal the sharpest regional divergence among the seven figures. Vitebsk region's share rose markedly over the period, reaching 7.0% in 2024 from 5.2% in 2019 (+1.8 p.p.) — the second-largest increase recorded in any of the seven figures, after Vitebsk's own performance in Figure 4. The share for the city of Minsk was unchanged over the period as a whole (17.8% in both 2019 and 2024), even though it fell as low as 15.1% in 2022 before recovering,

indicating that the pandemic-era dip documented in Figure 1 was concentrated in small rather than micro- or medium-sized organizations in the capital.

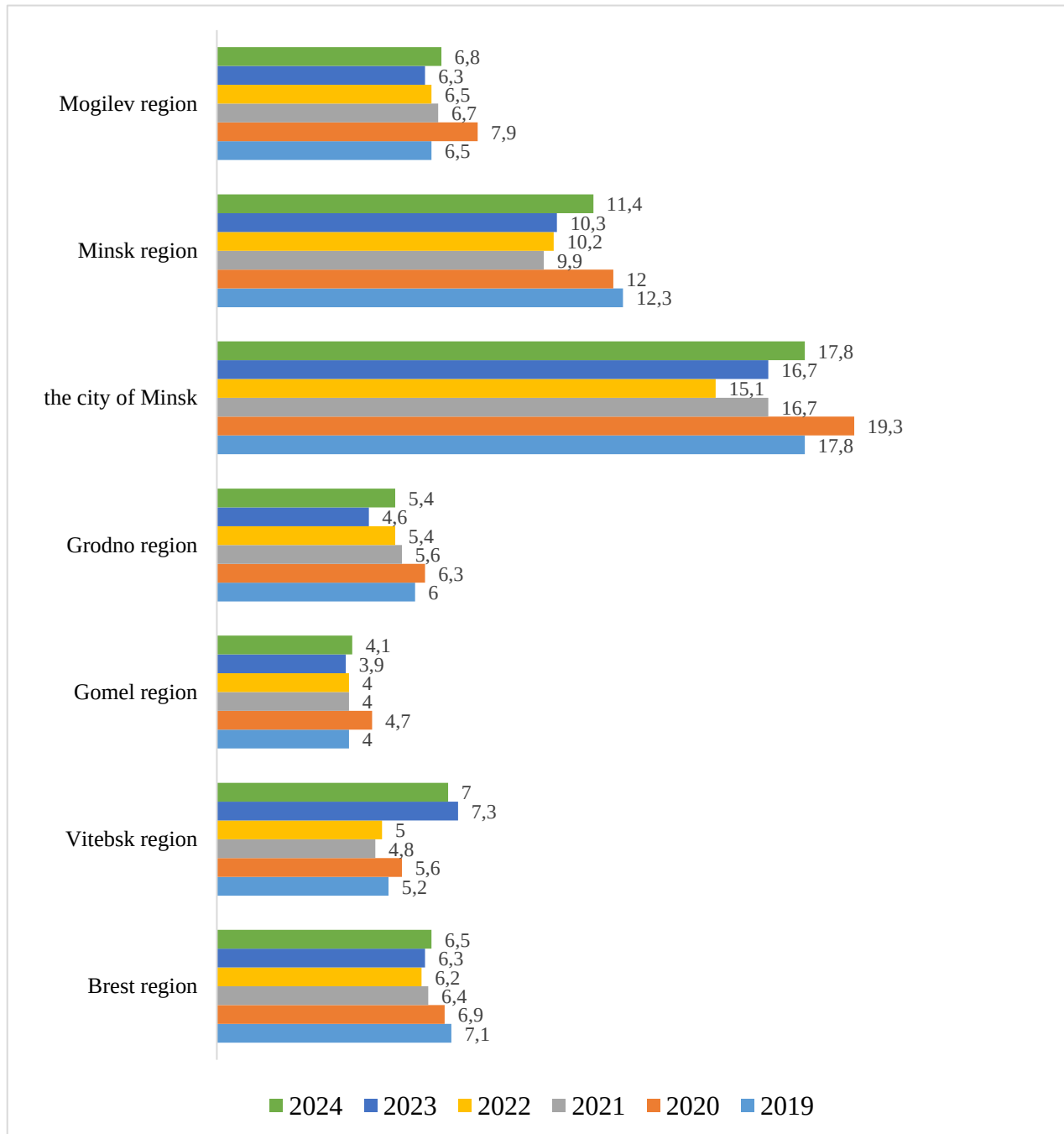


Figure 6. Share of GVA of small organizations in GRP across the territory of the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

Figure 7 presents the only pattern that is fully consistent across all seven regions: the share of individual entrepreneurs in GRP declined without exception between 2019 and 2024, from a range of 2.9%–4.3% to a narrower range of 1.9%–2.6%. The decline was steepest, in both absolute and relative terms, in the city of Minsk, where the individual-entrepreneur share fell from 4.3% to 2.0% — a drop of more than half — while Mogilev (4.1% to 2.6%) and Brest (3.8% to 2.5%) regions recorded the next-largest

reductions. Because this decline is universal rather than region-specific, it is unlikely to reflect purely local economic conditions; a more plausible explanation is a nationwide shift in business-registration behavior, whereby individual entrepreneurs increasingly convert to, or are absorbed into, small legal-entity forms, a possibility consistent with the relative resilience of the small-organization category documented in Figure 6 over the same period. This also explains why the city of Minsk's overall SME decline in Figure 1 (–4.1 p.p.) was substantially larger than its decline among registered legal entities alone in Figure 2 (–1.8 p.p.): the erosion of individual entrepreneurship, rather than of registered SME activity as such, accounts for most of the capital's apparent contraction.

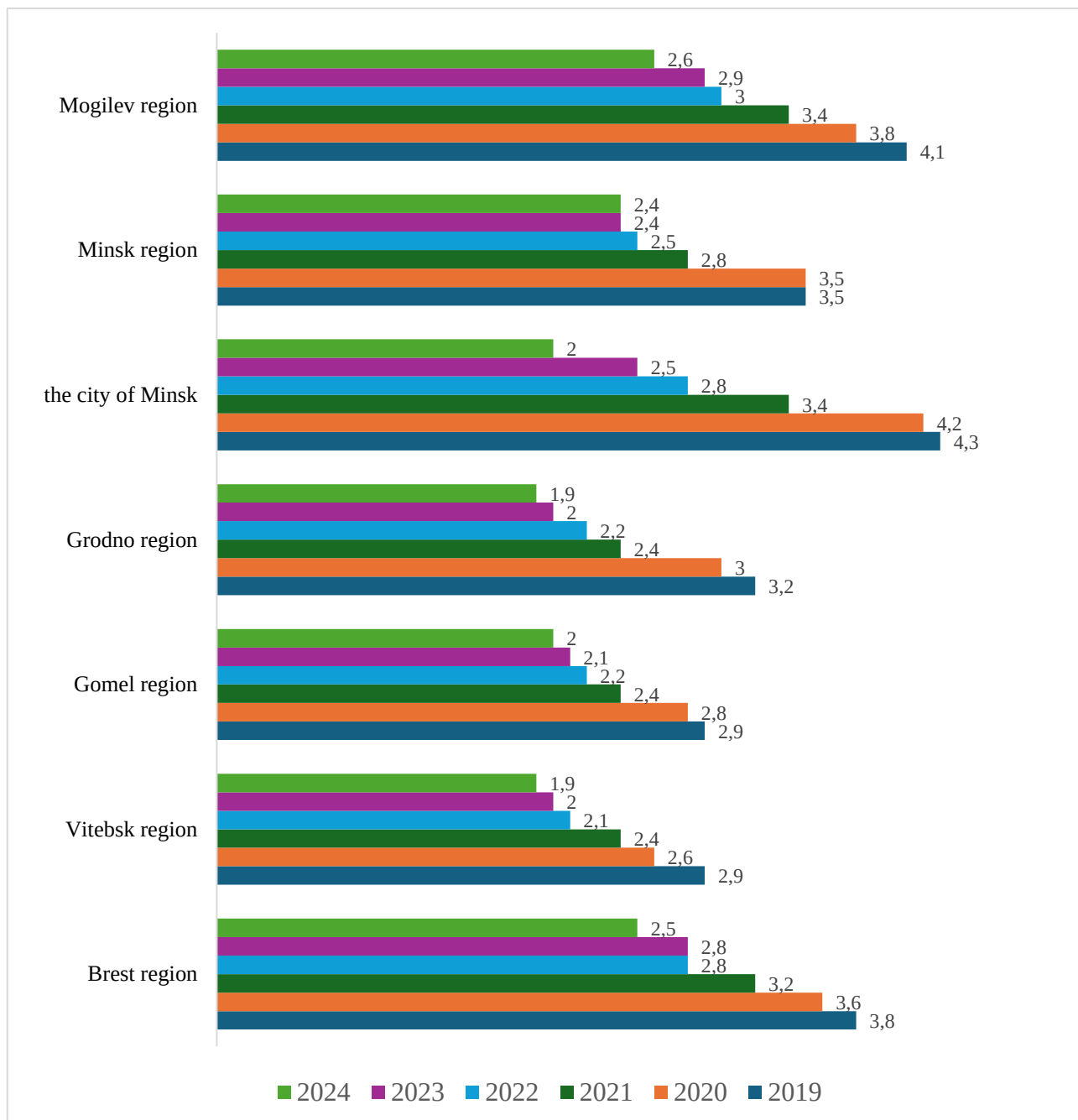


Figure 7. Share of GVA of individual entrepreneurs in GRP across the territory of the Republic of Belarus by region in the period 2019–2024, %

Source: author's own development based on National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026

The analysis showed that, from 2006 to 2024, certain districts of Belarus had the worst performance in terms of SME development. The Rossonsky, Ushachsky, Sharkovshchinsky, Berestovitsky, Dyatlovsky, Zelva, Khotsimsky, Kirovsky, and Kruglyansky districts had worse performance in 2024 than in 2015 (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2026; National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2016). According to the analysis, business support infrastructure entities do not play a significant role in the development of these districts.

At the same time, positive trends are also observed. For example, Kobrin, Braslav, Polotsk, Rechitsa, and other districts are showing undeniable positive trends.

An analysis of SME development in the regional and capital city districts revealed that, compared to 2015, the Gomel, Grodno, and Mogilev districts have shown negative growth trends. Positive trends are observed in the remaining districts.

Program for the Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030 Priority 5 - Strong Regions - highlights several districts where SMEs require close attention. The program under consideration includes specific measures in parts of the Pripjat Polesie region (Brest and Gomel regions). Specifically, «the following objectives are envisaged: implementing investment projects to create new production facilities, increase the processing of local raw materials, and modernize existing facilities in the Gantsevichi, Luninets, Pinsk, Stolin, Yelsk, Lelchitsy, Zhitkovichi, Kalinkovichi, and Petrikovsky districts» (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, 2025).

The analysis showed that, by the end of 2024, only the Pinsk, Stolin, Lelchitsy, Kalinkovichi, and Petrikov districts showed a positive trend in SME development compared to 2019.

Also, as part of the development of the Minsk Industrial Belt, the program in question «provides for... increasing the competitiveness of industrial complexes in the Borisov, Dzerzhinsky, Molodechno, Slutsk, Smolevichi, Stolbtsy, and Soligorsk districts» (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, 2025). The analysis showed that, by the end of 2024, only the Dzerzhinsky, Smolevichi, and Soligorsk districts showed a positive trend in SME development compared to 2019.

5. Discussion

Thus, based on the above analysis, we can identify positive and negative trends in SME development in various regions of the Republic of Belarus.

At the end of the study, we can put forward an assumption that confirms our initial hypothesis about the positive development of SMEs in the regions of Belarus without taking into account various factors. However, taking these factors into account provides a more specific picture of regional SME

development. The high share of SME GVA in Minsk is due to population density and high income levels, which is consistent with the broader agglomeration-economies literature explaining why firms and workers cluster where sharing, matching, and learning effects are strongest (Duranton & Puga, 2004). In the outlying areas, development is constrained by a shortage of skilled labor and remoteness from sales markets. Regions where SMEs are engaged in high-value-added manufacturing are more resilient to crises, which aligns with findings that regional economic structure conditions the capacity of territories to absorb and recover from recessionary shocks (Martin, 2012).

Thus, there is an imbalance between regions caused by low levels of entrepreneurial activity among the population. This may be due to this, as well as to the inability or reluctance of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial-minded residents from other regions to join, as well as the weak efforts of regional government bodies to attract these groups. It may also be due to the impossibility of pursuing entrepreneurial activity due to a lack of various resources in the region, including a skilled workforce, poor logistics, and other factors. Conversely, dependence on trading SMEs makes a region's economy vulnerable to logistical disruptions or declines in consumer demand.

The study shows that resources alone are not the only driver of SME development. The Vitebsk region demonstrates good results, which, however, is most likely due to the presence of a large oil refinery, with which SMEs operate in collaboration. This pattern is consistent with research on single-industry, or "monotown," territories, where the performance of surrounding small business is closely tied to the fortunes of a dominant city-forming enterprise, for better or worse (Rubtsov & Litvinenko, 2020). While an oil refinery is certainly more local in nature than a transnational corporation, on the scale of Belarus, it is one of two systemically important refineries in the oil refining industry, and the SMEs clustered around it resemble the satellite enterprises described in that literature more than they resemble a diversified regional entrepreneurial base.

In our view, these factors are the same throughout Belarus, with the exception of different population sizes in different regions. However, a smaller population does not necessarily indicate lower quantitative development of SMEs, and vice versa. Since the «one-stop shop» principle has been standardized across all regions of the Republic of Belarus, it is the entrepreneurial spirit of the region's population or invited entrepreneurs that can solve the problem of activating SMEs in the regions. This is broadly in line with the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach, which holds that once basic formal institutions and services are in place, further progress in regional entrepreneurship depends chiefly on the interdependent actors and factors, including entrepreneurial culture, networks, and local leadership, that make productive entrepreneurship possible (Stam, 2015). These research areas may be promising for future scientific conclusions and studies.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how small and medium entrepreneurship has developed across the regions and districts of the Republic of Belarus between 2019 and 2024, and to assess the extent to which this development aligns with the regional priorities set out in the Program of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030. Drawing on official regional- and district-level statistics, the analysis points to a pattern of high spatial concentration around Minsk, considerable heterogeneity among the remaining regions, and only partial correspondence between the districts formally designated as priorities and those that have, in practice, shown positive dynamics. The conclusions below summarize the study's main findings and set out their implications for regional policy, the limitations of the analysis, and directions for future research.

1. SME development at the regional level shows overall positive dynamics between 2015 and 2024, but this aggregate trend conceals substantial internal variation. A small number of districts, clustered around the capital and around a handful of anchor enterprises, account for most of the improvement, while a considerable number of peripheral districts — including the Rossonsky, Ushachsky, Sharkovshchinsky, Berestovitsky, Dyatlovsky, Zelva, Khotsimsky, Kirovsky, and Kruglyansky districts — performed worse in 2024 than in 2015. This divergence indicates that national- or even regional-level averages are of limited use for policy purposes, and that district-level monitoring should become a standard component of SME statistics going forward.

2. Regional SME development in the Republic of Belarus is marked by high spatial concentration: more than 30% of all SMEs are traditionally located in the capital and the largest regional centers, with the city of Minsk alone accounting for roughly 40% of SME gross value added in gross regional product throughout 2019–2024, despite a modest decline from 44% in 2019 to 39.9% in 2024. While this pattern is consistent with the general logic of agglomeration economies, it also means that regional development policy cannot treat the capital's performance — or its gradual relative decline — as representative of conditions in outlying districts, where the underlying picture is considerably more mixed.

3. Statistical data on SME development across regions largely support the regional priorities set out in the Program for Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030, though the alignment is only partial. Among the districts singled out for priority support under the Pripyat Polesie initiative, only the Pinsk, Stolin, Lelchitsy, Kalinkovich, and Petrikov districts had, by the end of 2024, achieved positive SME dynamics relative to 2019, while the Gantsevichi, Luninets, Yelsk, and Zhitkovichi districts had not; similarly, under the Minsk Industrial Belt initiative, only the Dzerzhinsky, Smolevichi, and Soligorsk districts showed improvement, while the Borisov, Molodechno, Slutsk, and Stolbtsy districts did not. This roughly even split between success

and stagnation within the very districts the Program identifies as priorities indicates that formal priority status alone has not yet been sufficient to reverse unfavorable trends, and that the instruments used to support these districts may need to be reassessed and differentiated on a case-by-case basis.

4. For government bodies and regional authorities, practical recommendations arising from these findings include, in particular: (a) expanding financial support for SMEs specifically in the lagging districts identified above, rather than distributing it uniformly across all priority zones; (b) reducing administrative barriers to new business registration and operation, especially in districts furthest from Minsk; (c) cultivating entrepreneurial initiative among the population through targeted training, mentorship, and outreach programs; and (d) directing support disproportionately toward districts whose statistical performance has not yet responded to their formal priority status, rather than continuing to allocate resources evenly across all designated priority districts regardless of demonstrated results.

5. Two limitations of the study should be noted. First, there is a lag in the relevance of the data, as regional statistical digests are published with a delay and do not always preserve full comparability with the previous reporting period, which constrains the precision of year-on-year comparisons. Second, the analysis relies on official aggregated statistics at the regional and district level rather than firm-level survey data, which limits insight into the specific mechanisms — such as individual entrepreneurial decisions, financing constraints, or local administrative practices — that underlie the district-level differences documented here. Future studies with access to firm-level or survey data could help disentangle these mechanisms more precisely.

6. Promising directions for future scientific and practical research include the digital transformation of regional SMEs, particularly the extent to which e-commerce and digital services can offset the disadvantages of peripheral location; closer study of the regional entrepreneurial community, including qualitative and survey-based work examining why entrepreneurial activity takes root in some districts but not in others with seemingly comparable formal conditions; and comparative research on the design of regional support instruments, so as to identify which specific measures — financial, administrative, or institutional — are most effective in the districts that have so far failed to respond to priority status.

7. Taken together, these findings indicate that regional SME development in Belarus is shaped jointly by agglomeration effects around the capital, dependence on individual anchor enterprises in a subset of outlying regions such as Vitebsk, and the uneven activation of entrepreneurial potential elsewhere. This heterogeneity suggests that a uniform, one-size-fits-all approach to regional SME policy is unlikely to be effective across all districts, and that policy design should instead distinguish

between agglomeration-driven regions, enterprise-dependent regions, and regions where the binding constraint is primarily a shortage of entrepreneurial activity itself.

8. Beyond its immediate policy relevance, the study contributes to the broader regional economics literature on small and medium entrepreneurship in post-Soviet and transition economies by demonstrating, with district-level statistical evidence, how agglomeration economies, enterprise dependence, and entrepreneurial-ecosystem dynamics can operate simultaneously within a single national economy — a pattern that may also be relevant to other centrally coordinated economies pursuing similarly structured regional development programs.

Funding Statement

This research received no external funding.

Ethics Approval / Informed Consent Statement

This study did not require ethics committee approval, as it did not involve human or animal subjects.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the results of this study are publicly available from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus at: <https://dataportal.belstat.gov.by/osids/rubric-info/10623>.

Generative AI Use Disclosure

No generative AI tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

Reference List

Beckmann, M., Garkisch, M., & Zeyen, A. (2023). Together we are strong? A systematic literature review on how SMEs use relation-based collaboration to operate in rural areas. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 35(4), 515-549.

Duranton, G., & Puga, D. (2004). Micro-foundations of urban agglomeration economies. In V. Henderson & J. F. Thisse (Eds.), *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics* (Vol. 4, pp. 2063–2117). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0080\(04\)80005-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0080(04)80005-1)

Glezman, L. V. (2022). Development of small and medium-sized business in a new regional environment. *Journal of Economics, Entrepreneurship and Law*, 12(7), 1855-1868. <https://doi.org/10.18334/epp.12.7.115120>

Inevatova, O.A., Mikhailova, E.O. & Silenko A.S. (2026). Factors and trends of structural transformation of the small and medium entrepreneurship sector in the region. *Economics*, (1 (56)), 4-13.

Juraev, F. M., & Ziyaev, M. M. (2026). To theoretical aspects of small and medium entrepreneurship in the regional economy. *Bulletin of the Tajik State University of Law, Business and Politics. Social Sciences Series*, 107 (2), 70–80. <https://doi.org/10.24412/3005-8023-2026-2-70-80>

Khamidullina, A.R. (2024). The role of small and medium entrepreneurship in the socio-economic development of the Orenburg region. *Natural Sciences and Humanities*, (6 (56)), 727-732.

- Martin, R. (2012). Regional economic resilience, hysteresis and recessionary shocks. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 12(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbr019>
- Matsegor, A.Y. & Suglobov, A.E. (2023). Supporting Entrepreneurship in the Regions as a Key Factor in Ensuring Economic Security. *Bulletin of Eurasian Science*, 15 (2S), 48.
- McCann, P., & Ortega-Argilés, R. (2016). Smart specialisation, entrepreneurship and SMEs: issues and challenges for a results-oriented EU regional policy. *Small business economics*, 46(4), 537-552.
- Makkonen, T., & Leick, B. (2020). Locational challenges and opportunities for SMEs in border regions. *European Planning Studies*, 28(10), 2078-2098.
- Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus. (2025). Program of Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2026–2030. Minsk. <https://economy.gov.by/ru/pser2030-ru/>
- National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. (2016). Small and medium entrepreneurship in the Republic of Belarus. https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_5272/?sphrase_id=2712782
- National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. (2026). Structural statistics, including statistics of small and medium-sized businesses. <https://dataportal.belstat.gov.by/osids/rubric-info/10623>
- Ndregjoni, A. (2025). Small and medium enterprises in the Western Balkans: Development, challenges, and prospects. *Revista Economicus*, 24(2).
- President of the Republic of Belarus. (2025). Address by the President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus «Time for Concrete Actions». <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/vtoroe-zasedanie-vii-vsebelorusskogo-narodnogo-sobrania>
- Rubtsov, G., & Litvinenko, A. (2020). Development of single-industry towns as a factor of economic and regional growth. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 208, 08005. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202020808005>
- Salikhova, S.F. (2022). Development of small business in the new reality: regional opportunities and limitations. *Economics, Entrepreneurship and Law*, 12 (12), 3189-3204.
- Stam, E. (2015). Entrepreneurial ecosystems and regional policy: A sympathetic critique. *European Planning Studies*, 23(9), 1759–1769. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2015.1061484>

Author Biography

Irene Malgina is an Associate Professor at the Department of State Economic Policy, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Belarus (Minsk, Belarus), and holds a Ph.D. in Economics (Candidate of Economic Sciences). She teaches and researches state economic policy, regional economics, and entrepreneurship management, focusing on the regional development of small and medium entrepreneurship, spatial concentration of economic activity, and the design and evaluation of state socio-economic development programs. She is the author of several scientific articles on regional economics and entrepreneurship in post-Soviet countries. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7516-8911>. E-mail: irina_malgina@list.ru.

ШАҒЫН ЖӘНЕ ОРТА КӘСІПКЕРЛІКТІ ДАМУДАҒЫ КЕҢІСТІКТІК ШОҒЫРЛАНУ МЕН АЙМАҚТЫҚ СӘЙКЕССІЗДІКТЕР: БЕЛАРУСЬ РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ, 2019–2024 ЖЖ.

Ирина Мальгина*

*Хат-хабар авторы, Беларусь Республикасының Президенті жанындағы Мемлекеттік басқару академиясы, Минск, Беларусь

Түйін:

Бұл мақалада 2019–2024 жылдар аралығында Беларусь Республикасында шағын және орта кәсіпкерлікті (ШОК) дамытудағы аймақтық сәйкессіздіктер зерттеледі, атап айтқанда, байқалған ШОК динамикасы мен Беларусь Республикасының 2026–2030 жылдарға арналған әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму бағдарламасында белгіленген аймақтық даму басымдықтарының сәйкестігіне ерекше назар аударылады. Беларусь Республикасының Ұлттық статистика комитетінің микро-, шағын және орта ұйымдар, сондай-ақ жеке кәсіпкерлер құратын жалпы қосылған құн (ЖҚҚ) туралы ресми статистикалық деректеріне сүйене отырып, зерттеуде ШОК қызметінің алдыңғы әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму циклі аяқталғаннан кейін қалай дамығанын бағалау үшін экономикалық-статистикалық талдау, салыстырмалы талдау және сипаттамалық синтез аймақтық және аудандық деңгейлерде қолданылады.

Талдау көрсеткендей, Беларусьтегі ШОК-ты аймақтық дамыту жоғары кеңістіктік шоғырланумен сипатталады: Минск қаласы мен Минск облысына ШОК-тың ЖҚҚ-ындағы үлесінің тым көп бөлігі тиесілі, ал қалған аймақтар айтарлықтай ішкі әркелкілікті көрсетеді, бұл ретте аймақтық деңгейдегі көрсеткіштер бірыңғай аймақтық үрдістерге емес, жоғары көрсеткішті аудандардың шағын санының болуына немесе болмауына байланысты анықталады. Ірі қала құраушы кәсіпорындармен немесе қолайлы логистикамен байланысты аудандардың бір бөлігі, ең алдымен Витебск облысында, кең аймақтық көрсеткіштер нашарлап жатқан жағдайда да жақсаруды көрсетеді, ал шеткі аудандардың едәуір бөлігі, соның ішінде Беларусь Республикасының 2026–2030 жылдарға арналған әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму бағдарламасында басым деп аталған бірнеше аудан, 2024 жылы 2015 немесе 2019 жылмен салыстырғанда нашар нәтиже көрсетеді. Бұл нәтижелер Бағдарламада белгіленген басым аудандар мен іс жүзінде оң ШОК динамикасына қол жеткізген аудандар арасында тек ішінара сәйкестік бар екенін көрсетеді.

Зерттеу қорытындысында Беларусьтегі ШОК қызметінің кеңістіктік шоғырлануы тек халық тығыздығы мен әкімшілік мәртебеге ғана емес, сонымен қатар қала құраушы кәсіпорындардың болуына, логистикалық қолжетімділікке және жергілікті билік органдарының институционалдық әлеуетіне де байланысты екені атап өтіледі, бұл Бағдарлама аясында аймақтық ШОК қолдау шараларын жетілдіру үшін эмпирикалық негіз ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: шағын және орта кәсіпкерлік; аймақтық даму; кеңістіктік шоғырлану; аймақтық сәйкессіздіктер; Беларусь

Автор туралы мәлімет

Ирина Валерьевна Мальгина - экономика ғылымдарының кандидаты, Беларусь Республикасы Президентінің жанындағы Мемлекеттік басқару академиясының (Минск қ., Беларусь) мемлекеттік экономикалық саясат кафедрасының доценті. Ол мемлекеттік экономикалық саясат, аймақтық экономика және кәсіпкерлікті басқару салаларында оқытушылық пен ғылыми-зерттеу қызметін жүргізеді, шағын және орта кәсіпкерлікті аймақтық дамыту, экономикалық белсенділіктің кеңістіктік шоғырлануы және мемлекеттік әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму бағдарламаларын бағалау мәселелеріне мамандандырылған. Посткеңестік елдердегі аймақтық экономика мен кәсіпкерлік тақырыбындағы бірқатар ғылыми мақалалар мен аналитикалық материалдардың авторы, зерттеулерінде ресми статистиканы кеңінен қолданады. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7516-8911>. E-mail: irina_malgina@list.ru.

ПРОСТРАНСТВЕННАЯ КОНЦЕНТРАЦИЯ И РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ДИСПРОПОРЦИИ В РАЗВИТИИ МАЛОГО И СРЕДНЕГО ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВА: ОПЫТ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ, 2019–2024 ГГ.

Ирина Мальгина*

**Автор для корреспонденции, Академия управления при Президенте Республики Беларусь, Минск, Республика Беларусь*

Аннотация:

В статье исследуются региональные диспропорции в развитии малого и среднего предпринимательства (МСП) в Республике Беларусь за период 2019–2024 гг., с особым вниманием к соответствию между наблюдаемой динамикой МСП и приоритетами регионального развития, закреплёнными в Программе социально-экономического развития Республики Беларусь на 2026–2030 годы. Опираясь на официальные статистические данные Национального статистического комитета Республики Беларусь о валовой добавленной стоимости (ВДС), создаваемой микро-, малыми и средними организациями, а также индивидуальными предпринимателями, в исследовании применяются экономико-статистический анализ, сравнительный анализ и описательный синтез на региональном и районном уровнях для оценки того, как развивалась деятельность МСП после завершения предыдущего цикла социально-экономического развития.

Анализ показывает, что региональное развитие МСП в Беларуси характеризуется высокой пространственной концентрацией: на Минск и Минскую область приходится непропорционально большая доля НДС МСП, тогда как остальные регионы демонстрируют значительную внутреннюю неоднородность, при этом показатели на региональном уровне определяются не столько едиными региональными тенденциями, сколько наличием или отсутствием небольшого числа районов с высокими показателями. Ряд районов, связанных с крупными градообразующими предприятиями или благоприятной логистикой, прежде всего в Витебской области, демонстрирует улучшение показателей даже на фоне ухудшения более широких региональных индикаторов, тогда как значительное число периферийных районов, включая несколько районов, отнесённых к приоритетным в Программе социально-экономического развития Республики Беларусь на 2026–2030 годы, показывают в 2024 году худшие результаты, чем в 2015 или 2019 годах. Эти результаты свидетельствуют лишь о частичном соответствии между приоритетными районами, определёнными Программой, и районами, фактически достигшими положительной динамики МСП.

Исследование приходит к выводу, что пространственная концентрация деятельности МСП в Беларуси обусловлена не только плотностью населения и административным статусом, но также наличием градообразующих предприятий, логистической доступностью и институциональным потенциалом местных органов власти, и предлагает эмпирическую основу для уточнения мер поддержки МСП в рамках Программы на региональном уровне.

Ключевые слова: малое и среднее предпринимательство; региональное развитие; пространственная концентрация; региональные диспропорции; Беларусь

Биография автора

Мальгина Ирина Валерьевна - кандидат экономических наук, доцент кафедры государственной экономической политики Академии управления при Президенте Республики Беларусь (г. Минск, Беларусь). Преподаёт и ведёт исследования в области государственной экономической политики, региональной экономики и управления предпринимательством, специализируясь на региональном развитии малого и среднего предпринимательства, пространственной концентрации экономической активности и оценке государственных программ социально-экономического развития территорий. Автор ряда научных статей и аналитических материалов по региональной экономике и развитию предпринимательства на постсоветском пространстве, активно использующий официальную статистику в своих исследованиях. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7516-8911>, E-mail: irina_malgina@list.ru.