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# Policy of population informing on perspective territories development of the Republic of Karelia as part of the Russian Arctic zone

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**Abstract.** The regions of the Republic of Karelia entered the Arctic zone later than the rest of the Arctic regions. Therefore, the important issue is the formation of positive attitudes of the population regarding the “Arctic benefits” of the regions of Karelia. The article presents the results of a study on informing the population about the Arctic status of the territories of the Republic of Karelia and the corresponding expectations of the local population from the assignment of the Arctic status to the territories. The purpose of the study is to determine the level of public awareness of social perceptions regarding the state and prospects of development of the Arctic territories of the Republic of Karelia. For the study, methods of content analysis and sociological survey of the population were used. Local media broadcast the general agenda of the republican media on the prospects for the development of the Arctic regions. However, no information is provided on the individual benefits to the area. Most residents of the Republic of Karelia know that they live in the Arctic zone, but do not associate high expectations for the development of territories with the Arctic status. Informing residents of the Arctic regions and the Republic of Karelia about the possible prospects for the development of the Arctic territories is not enough. Based on the results of the study, recommendations are presented on improving the policy of informing the population about the benefits of the Arctic status of the territories of the Republic of Karelia.

## 1. Introduction

The «Arctic» status is a special status that emphasizes the strategic importance and priority of the socio-economic development of territories. The status of the territories allows authorities and business community to attract investments for the implementation of investment projects, increase tourism potential, enhance the attractiveness of the territories and social responsibility of the local population. Together, these opportunities make it possible to achieve the main goal of strategic development - improving the quality of life of the local population and bringing the territories to a new socio-economic level of development.

The official status of the Arctic territories was assigned by Presidential Decree № 296 in 2014 [1], while the status of «Arctic» was legally assigned to part of the Republic of Karelia's territories later - in 2017 in accordance with Presidential Decree of June 27, 2017 N 287 [2] - the Arctic zone of Russia included the territories of the Belomorsky, Loukhsky and Kemsky municipal regions.

One of the conditions for attracting interested actors (the business community, the public, the population) to the development of the Arctic is a focused information policy. In a context of increased role of information in all areas of activity, the communication field determines nature of socio-economic



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ideas, life plans and orientations of the population, business, the public and government. In this regard, a study of the policy of informing the population about new status and development prospects of the Arctic territories is especially relevant in relation to the Arctic territories of the Republic of Karelia.

## 2. Methodology

The study was conducted in order to determine level of public awareness of social ideas regarding state and prospects of development of the Arctic territories of the Republic of Karelia. Achieving the goal requires a comprehensive approach to considering the importance of including the territories of the Republic of Karelia in the Russian Arctic in terms of socio-economic development prospects: how are these prospects covered in the information field at the regional level and at the level of the Arctic municipality? What expectations and moods have formed among the local population regarding the new status of their territories of residence, based on the information space being formed by the media?

Therefore, the idea of the article is to analyze the information content of municipal and regional media about the new Arctic status of the territories of Karelia for the annual period from the moment of inclusion. It is also necessary to consider features of information content and events held by municipal and regional authorities that reflect the Arctic status of the territories of the Republic of Karelia. It is also necessary to pay attention to perceptions and expectations of the population of the Arctic regions related to joining the Russian Arctic zone as potential actors in the development of these territories. The content analysis and the sociological survey of the population were selected as the main research methods.

Content analysis of regional and municipal media was carried out with the aim of identifying the specifics of the information content of printed and electronic informational publications about Arctic status of the territories of the Republic of Karelia. A set of semantic units for content analysis includes a unit of account - a word and a phrase; construct - inclusion of municipalities of the Republic of Karelia in the Arctic zone of Russia; conceptualization - the fact and context of the mention of a word or phrase; frequency - the number of references to words or phrases; intensity - the strength of a given direction of the broadcast message; space - a quantitative characteristic of the place occupied by the message in the general informational agenda of the publication. Thus, the characteristics of the studied sources of information, articles, units of account and frequency characteristics are given. Table 1 presents the semantic units for conducting content analysis.

**Table 1.** Study of media reports on the Republic of Karelia territories inclusion in the Arctic zone  
(Compiled by the author)

Characteristic	Account / Context Units / Characteristics
a unit of account	«Arctic», «Arctic zone», Definitions in which there is a root «arctic».
construct	How many times are the words «Arctic» / «Arctic Zone» mentioned in a newspaper issue?
Conceptualization	Positive / Neutral / Negative Context
Space	Number, date, volume of information source; How many related articles are there in a newspaper issue? The proportion of messages on the topic of the total content of the newspaper? Does the title of the article mention the Arctic? Approximate share of the article in the total volume of the issue; Number of sentences, paragraphs; The place occupied by the article in the room (strip, location).

The data array for the content analysis was 10 print and electronic media (units of analysis), of which 7 regional and 3 municipal media (Regional media selected for analysis: «Karelia newspaper» (print media), Republic news agency (electronic media), Online magazine "Stolitsa na Onego" (electronic), "Komsomolskaya Pravda in Karelia" (printed), "Arguments and Facts Karelia" (printed), Information agency "Karelinform" (electronic), Guberniya daily (electronic); Municipal media (print media): «Belomorskaya tribune »(Belomorsky district), « Our Pripolye »(Loukhsky district), «Soviet Belomorje »(Kemsky district). The analysis of information content for the annual media period (June 2017 - August 2018) was conducted with a view to information coverage of the new Arctic status of the Karelian territories. In total, the information data set on Arctic topics for the annual period amounted to 33 articles.

The identification of ideas and expectations of the local population about the inclusion of the territories of the Republic of Karelia in the Arctic zone complements the picture of the study. A pilot sociological study (questionnaire) in three Arctic municipal regions of Karelia made it possible to get the opinion of 200 residents about the inclusion of these areas in the Arctic zone, the main strategic documents; determine the expected positive and negative prospects for the development of territories among residents of these areas; to reveal the migratory mood of local residents. Thus, the object of sociological research is the resident population of the White Sea, Kemsky and Loukhsky municipal regions of the Republic of Karelia from the age of 18 years. The subject of the study is the expectations of local residents about the acquisition by the territories of their residence of a new status - "Arctic territories". For questioning residents of the Karelian Arctic territories, a questionnaire is used for each individual respondent. The questionnaire was formed to conduct a semi-formalized interview, where residents expressed their opinions on closed and open questions.

### 3. Results

#### *3.1 Coverage of the Arctic topics in the information agenda of regional and municipal media*

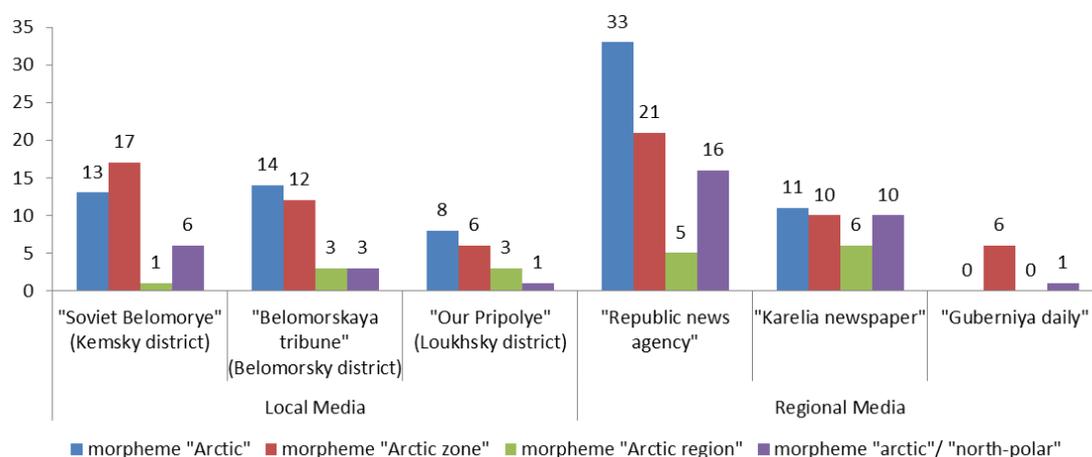
The topic of including the territories of the Republic of Karelia in the Arctic zone of Russia needs periodic coverage throughout the year, since it is in the first year of the event that it is necessary to create a positive information field aimed at covering information about the new status of the territories and the prospects for their socio-economic development. During the year, only 18 articles related to this topic were published in local republican media. Most often, the key information message, which the reader usually pays attention to, is reflected in the headings of articles – «The Arctic zone of Russia has expanded due to Karelia [3]; «Arctic project will give an impetus to the development of Karelia» [4]; «We must listen and hear the voice of the Arctic regions» [5]. The main information covered in the regional media over the year related to the fact that the territories of the Republic of Karelia were included in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, the participation of the Head of the Republic of Karelia in «the Arctic: Present and Future forum» in 2017, as well as some prospects for socio-economic development of the territories included. In the initial analysis of the information space, the content of the context is characterized, which can be expressed as the frequency distribution of the values of the variables. The variables characterize the totality of messages about the fact of the availability of information space and the specifics of the information that is broadcast by the media to the population of Karelia about the prospects for the development of the territories of the Arctic zone. Only in 6 out of 10 media selected for analysis there is an information on inclusion and prospects of the "new Karelian" Arctic territories. 18 media reports were published in mass media at the republican level, in which 119 references related to the category "Arctic" were recorded. Local media outlets published 15 informational messages with 87 references to the Arctic categories.

The informative context of regional media reports can be characterized as positive, with a predominance of statements of fact and provision of brief information on prospects for the development of the Karelian Arctic territories. Moreover, the designation of these prospects is of a design and expected nature without presenting specific results obtained. In regional media, there is information about the prospects for the development of Karelia as part of the Arctic zone of Russia. These plans are

related to the development of steel production, the construction of the White Sea port, the development of energy in Loukhsky, Kemsy and Belomorsky districts, and the creation of a center for the preparation of Arctic expeditions. At the forum "Arctic: present and future" in 2017, the Head of the Republic of Karelia noted that "In the Arctic, we still have to ensure our own food safety. Therefore, the competencies that we have in fish farming and fish processing are now aimed at complete import substitution» [6]. It should be noted that the authorities of the Republic of Karelia characterize these projects as complex. Today the authorities of Karelia are working on the issue of creating a support zone in the Arctic regions of the Republic of Karelia - the Karelian support zone.

Thus, the information agenda of the republican media contains information on prospects development of the Arctic territories of the Republic of Karelia, however, there is no information on specific results related to the long-term implementation of promising projects. The media broadcasts the formation of the foundations of a positive image of the Arctic Karelian territories among the local population, among other residents of the Republic of Karelia, as well as tourists and guests of the region. The phrase "Karelia - the gateway to the Arctic" is often found inspiring in the information space.

In the local media, the Arctic topic is less widely covered than in the regional media. At the same time, the themes of events and informational occasions are similar. Local media "Belomorskaya Tribuna" and "Our Pripolye" lack informational content on the municipal region development as part of the Arctic zone. In these sources, the information agenda completely repeats the regional theme and, moreover, the articles in these two sources are completely identical. In total, in the local media over the study period, 87 mentions of semantic units related to Arctic topics were found (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Mention of semantic units in regional and municipal media, number of references per year

It should be noted that the monthly media "New Karelia" is presented in the local media, in which the most important information and events of a regional scale are published. It is in this section that the most references are made to the Arctic topics relating to regional level, and not to a specific municipal region.

The informational context of local media is neutral and descriptive. An exception is the media context of Kemsky district, which reflects information on plans and prospects for the development of municipal region as an Arctic territory. The main topics of the informational context of local media are generally similar to those presented in the regional media. The context of information messages is generally positive reflecting prospects for the development of districts and also applies to general regional trends.

The categories "Arctic" and "Arctic zone" are most often mentioned in information agenda of regional and local mass media. In the sources there was no mention of the categories "Arctic territory", "Arctic terrain", "new Arctic". This may indicate neutral position of local authorities, public

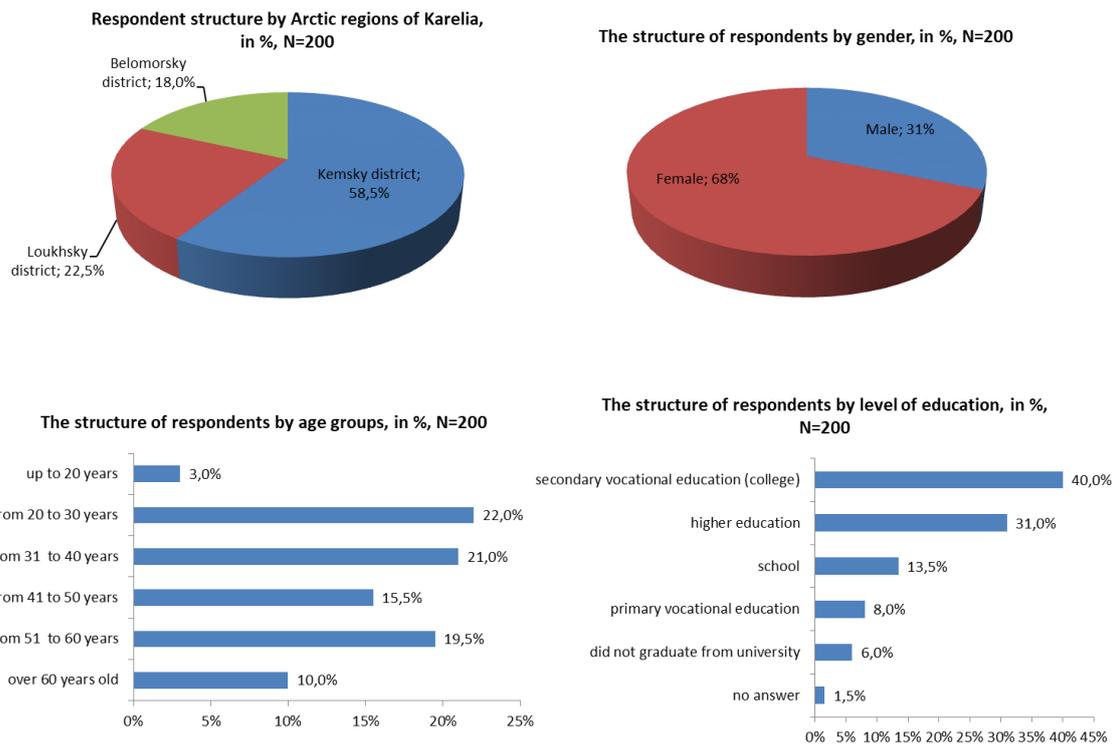
organizations, the business community in the information coverage of the new status of the municipal regions of Karelia and their development prospects.

Thus, the information presented in media of the region and municipal regions is not enough for the formation of a positive image of the Arctic zone and an explanation of the development prospects for the local population. Local media most often speak of the benefits of a region, not a specific region. Proceeding from this, it is necessary to remember that while forming a positive image of the region, it is first necessary to form positive attitudes at the local level [8].

### 3.2 Representations and expectations of the local population from the new status of the Arctic territories

**3.2.1 Social portrait of respondents.** *The social portrait of the respondents - residents of the Kemsy, Belomorsky and Loukhsky municipal districts, are average indicators of the surveyed population. As indicators characterizing the respondents, gender and age characteristics and social status were selected. The interview was attended by 200 people.*

Half of the respondents surveyed live in the Kemsy District (58.5%), 22.5% in the Loukhsky District and 18% in the Belomorsky District. The distribution of respondents by gender is 68% female and 31% male. The age range of respondents is represented by all age groups. The most representative age group is one in five respondents — age from 20 to 30 years old and from 31 to 40 years old. Most of the respondents have professional education - they graduated from college or university.



**Figure 2.** Description of social portrait of the respondents of Kemsy, Belomorsky and Loukhsky municipal regions of the Republic of Karelia, in%, N = 200 people

Occupation as the main social status determines role of the individual in the social system and is associated with certain rights, duties and role expectations, and is also one of the key factors in the selection and analysis of information sources. Every fourth respondent works in a state organization. As a rule, workers employed in such institutions are aware of current tasks, development vectors and changes at the state and regional levels. Every fifth resident is retired. It should be noted that the

retirement age in the Far North is below the usual average Russian. Only one in ten respondents is over 60.

*3.2.2 Awareness of the inhabitants of the Arctic regions of Karelia about the inclusion of these areas in the Russian Arctic zone. Most residents of the Arctic regions of the Republic of Karelia (69%) know that they live in the Arctic zone of Russia. Every fifth resident heard some information about this.*

The main sources from which residents received information about the new status of the districts are information and news sites on the Internet (44% of respondents), social networks (27%) and print media (26%), that is, the main traditional mass media.

*3.2.3 Awareness of the inhabitants of the Arctic regions of the Republic of Karelia about the main strategic documents for the development of the territories of the Arctic zone of Russia.* The inclusion of the territories of the Republic of Karelia into the Arctic zone of Russia means that the development of these territories in addition to general state and regional strategic direction will be based on plans for the socio-economic development of the Arctic territories as a special strategic object for the whole country. Hence new prospects for development in all spheres of public life follow. As a rule, development priorities and directions are strictly prescribed in strategic documents, which are published in the public domain. Do the residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia know about such documents and new development prospects?

Less than half of the surveyed residents know about strategic documents for the development of the Arctic zone. Answers to the categories "I don't know" and "no answer" can be arbitrarily combined and interpreted as the ignorance of the respondents. These categories were noted by every second resident.

Identifying the ideas of residents about the reasons for the inclusion of the regions of Karelia into the Arctic zone and determining the expected positive and negative prospects for the development of territories among the residents of these regions is important.

The inhabitants of the Arctic regions of Karelia were asked the question "Why do you think your area is included in the Arctic zone of Russia?". A detailed answer to this question was provided by 98 respondents. Respondents' answers are grouped into thematic blocks highlighted by keywords that respondents indicated when responding - these are "Climatic conditions" (45 marks), "Geographical location" (32 marks), "Conditions of the Far North" (10 marks) and "Economic reasons" (3 marks).

According to the residents of the Karelian regions, the assignment of the Arctic status to these territories is connected with geographical position and severe climatic conditions characteristic of the Far North and equivalent territories. The answers often include the words "severe", "cold", "winter", "position", etc.

On the other hand, respondents were asked to identify in their opinion positive and negative factors for the inclusion of areas in the Arctic zone. Only 75 of 200 respondents answered this question. Only 32 respondents noted negative trends. Main positive points noted by residents of the Arctic regions are the prospects for the development of the region; increase in salaries and additional payments; improving conditions and quality of life of the population; increase in job places. Main negative expectations of residents of the Arctic regions: "nothing will change, at best everything will remain at the same level"; "the implementation of strategic projects can lower the state of ecology in the regions." The grouping of respondents' answers by these aspects is presented in table 2.

**Table 2.** Respondents' answers to the question about positive and negative trends in the inclusion of municipal regions of the Republic of Karelia in the Arctic zone of Russia

Characteristic	The number of respondents
Positive aspects	
District development	28
Salary increase, additional payments	20
Improving the quality of life of the population	13

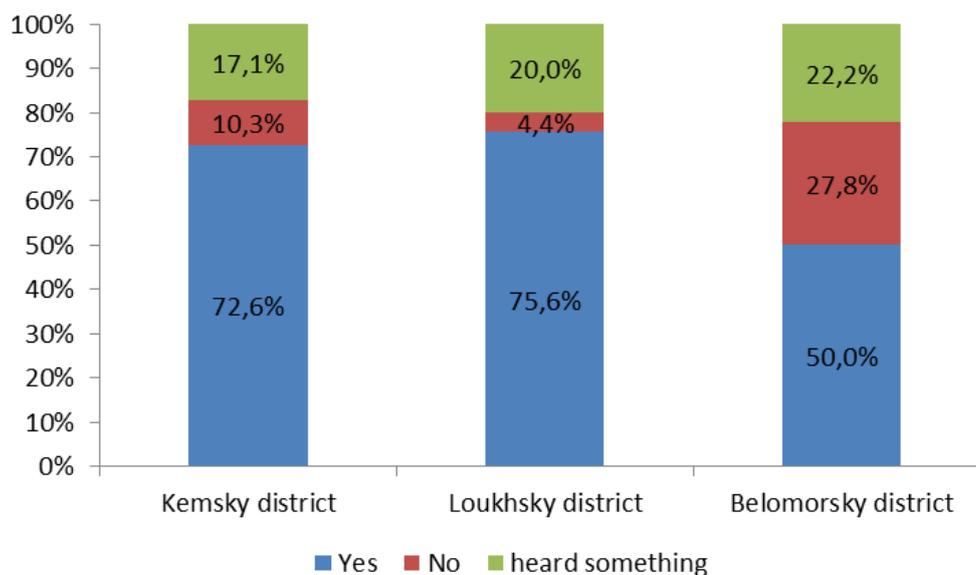
Additional benefits for residents	6
The increase in the number of new job places	3
Negative aspects	
Everything will remain the same	6
Environmental degradation	3
Underdeveloped infrastructure	4
Corruption	3

Every second respondent believes that the inclusion of the regions of Karelia in the Arctic zone will not affect the well-being of their family, and every fifth that will have a positive effect, but in the distant future.

*3.2.4 Migration moods of residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia.* To identify the migration mood of the inhabitants of the Arctic regions of Karelia, the question was asked: "If you had the opportunity to leave to live in another city / region, would you use it? If so, where would you stay?" Almost half of the respondents would refuse such an opportunity, since they do not want to go anywhere. Every fifth respondent would prefer a different region of Russia. The reasons why residents would like to leave their hometown are lack of jobs and unemployment; lack of decent wages; adverse climatic conditions; low living standards in the city; lack of prospects for personal and professional development; lack or insufficiency of infrastructure and diversity for leisure activities; adverse living conditions.

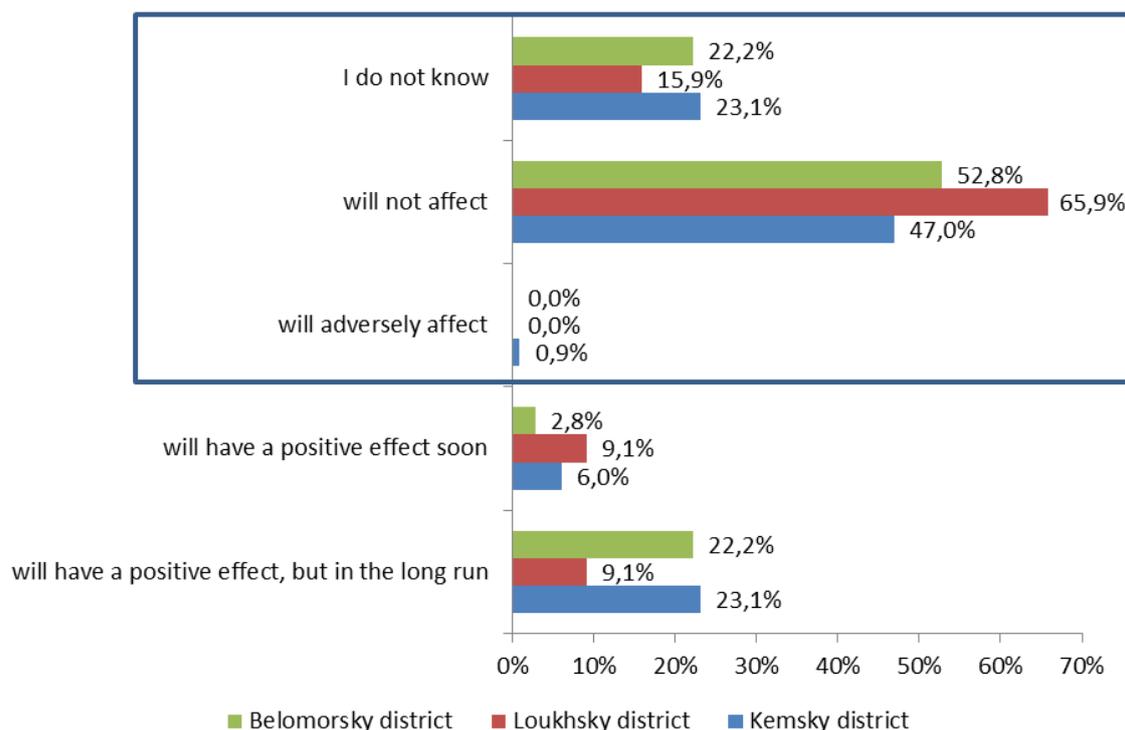
### 3.3 Comparison of content analysis data and survey results

Informing residents of the Arctic municipal regions about the prospects for the development of the Arctic territories in connection with their inclusion in the Arctic zone of Russia is not enough. Despite small number of media publications about the Arctic, residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia are aware that they live in the Arctic zone (Figure 3). The fewer publications in the media, the lower the proportion of those who are aware of this.



**Figure 3.** The awareness of residents of the regions of the Republic of Karelia about their inclusion in the Arctic zone, the proportion of the number of respondents in the region

If we consider the relationship between the awareness of residents about the prospects for the development of the Arctic regions and their subjective assessment of these development prospects, we can see the fact that residents do not see development prospects and are pessimistic about the broadcast information. According to Figure 4, it can be seen that the question "How do you think the inclusion of your region in the Arctic zone will affect the well-being of you and your family?" most of the residents answer that they will not have any effect. Only in the Kemsy district, where the largest number of publications among municipalities, are these estimates more positive.



**Figure 4.** "How do you think the inclusion of your region in the Arctic zone will affect the well-being of you and your family?", The proportion of respondents by region

In general, it can be stated that the expectations of residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia are in their initial state and are a continuation of general expectations, formed by inertia.

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendation

Thus, the results of the study show that informing residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia and the Republic of Karelia in general about the possible prospects for the development of the Arctic territories is not enough. It is necessary to create an information agenda about each municipal Arctic region of Karelia, which would be aimed at informing population and potential development prospects.

According to the results of the study, to improve the policy of informing the population of the Arctic territories of Karelia and to increase the level of awareness of interested actors about the prospects for the development of the Arctic Karelia, the following is recommended:

1) Creation on the official websites of the administrations of the Arctic regions of the Republic of Karelia of specialized sections devoted to the "Arctic" life of the region and filling these sections with relevant information.

2) Development of a list of activities aimed at conducting awareness-raising work among residents of the Republic of Karelia about the "Arctic" status of the region, as well as existing development prospects under the influence of the "Arctic" vector.

3) Publication of articles in electronic and print media, the creation of television and radio programs informing residents of the Arctic regions of Karelia about development prospects.

4) Development of infographic information products [9], [10] at the Internet dealing with future development of the Arctic regions.

5) Implementation of an information policy on the benefits of the Arctic regions of Karelia in the regions of the Russian Federation in order to attract additional investment.

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