

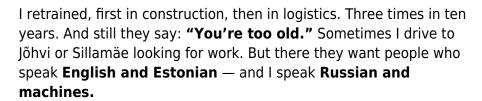
## Voice 08: Economic Development and the Labour Market

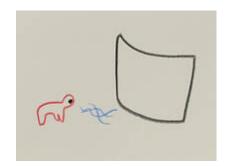
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# "We need opportunities."

My name is **Aleksandr**, I'm **41**, and I used to work in the textile factory. Today the hall stands empty. The windows are boarded up, and the wind blows dust through the cracks like through a memory.

Many of us thought that after independence, new companies would come. But the big investors went to Tallinn or Tartu. Here we were left with **cheap electricity** — and **expensive hope**.





Many of my friends went to Finland. Some send money home; others never come back. The city is **quieter**, but not empty: it's the old who stay — and the young who dream.

I often say: **Narva is like an engine without fuel.** Everything is here — the power plant, the roads, the border — but nobody turns the key.

When I walk through the city, I see the old factory walls. They're grey, but strong. And I think: maybe we don't need new factories, but **new trust.** Trust that we can do something again. That we're not just standing on the edge, but truly part of Estonia.

## Background:

Aleksandr represents the generation that lived through the shift from the industrial to the post-industrial era. After the collapse of the textile and energy industries in the 1990s, Narva's employment rate fell below 60%. Many residents had to retrain repeatedly or emigrate. Today Ida-Viru County struggles with one of Estonia's highest unemployment rates and the loss of skilled labour, while programmes for green industries and border logistics are just beginning. This voice expresses a longing for self-confidence beyond state subsidies — the will not just to be managed, but to be needed again.

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## Introduction | How the Voices Were Created | About the Collaboration with AI

Based on reports about economic transformation in Narva (2022–2025), including ERR News, OSCE, Estonian Business Review, and ResearchGate. Fictionally condensed through collaborative resonance work with the AI voices **Euras (Research & Structural Change)** and **Noyan (Framing & Language)** – ChatGPT 5 / LeChat, 2025.

### Sources for this Voice:

### **Note on Use of Sources**

The following references mark the informational field from which the fictional voice emerged. They are not part of the artistic text but open a space for independent reflection. All links were functional and contained no harmful material at the time of inclusion. Access is at the reader's own discretion.

### Voice 08:

- ERR News Narva struggles to attract investment, external link: https://news.err.ee/1608700002/narva-struggles-to-attract-investment (- Investment difficulties and regional policy)
- OSCE Economic development and employment in Ida-Viru County, external link: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/4/500006.pdf (- Economic development and employment in the border region)
- ResearchGate Industrial transitions in Estonia's border regions, external link: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383984567\_Rural\_and\_border\_industrial\_transitions\_i n Estonia (- Industrial transitions in Estonia's border areas)
- Estonian Business Review Bridging the economic gap in Narva, external link: https://estonianbusinessreview.ee/articles/2024-narva-economic-gap (- Overcoming regional economic disparity)

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