

РЭСПУБЛІКАНСКАЕ ГРАМАДСКАЕ
АБ'ЯДНАННЕ
“БЕЛАРУСКІ ДЗІЦЯЧЫ ФОНД”

220029, г.Мінск, пр. Незалежнасці, 31
тэл.(0172)906-267, 906-214, 906-640
факс (0172)906-267
E-mail: fund@bcf.by, site: www.bcf.by
р/р 3015740146011, в/р 3015740146024
ў аддзяленні № 539 ААТ «Белінвестбанк»,
г. Мінска, код 739
УНП 100184002
АКПА 37383007



РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВЕННОЕ
ОБЪЕДИНЕНИЕ
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220029 г.Минск, пр.Независимости, 31
тел. (0172)906-267, 906-214, 906-640
факс (0172)906-267
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р/с 3015740146011, в/с 3015740146024
в отделении № 539 ОАО «Белинвестбанк»,
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Information to the second cycle
of the Universal Periodic Review of Belarus
at the UN Human Rights Council

1. The republican public association “Belarusian Children’s Fund” was founded on February 27, 1988. Today it has 78 subdivisions all around the country, including 6 oblast and 72 regional and city branches of Belarusian Children’s Fund. It has 16,812 members and is supported by thousands of friends and volunteers.
2. The major activities of the organization, as recorded in the Articles of Association, are children’s rights protection, assistance to the orphaned children, sick children, children with special needs, talented children and children from low-income families, i.e. one of the most vulnerable categories of citizens.
3. As of 01.01.2014, children younger than age 18 account for 18,6% of the entire population of Belarus (or in absolute numbers – 1,761,321 people), which testifies to the significance and importance of protection of rights of this category of citizens.
4. In 2010, the Belarusian Children’s Fund contributed to the development of the country report of the Republic of Belarus and provided information to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (May 2010). Taking into account our previous experience and according to our perspective, we note the significant progress made by the state and society in carrying out the recommendations adopted by the state as the result of the first cycle of Universal Periodic Review in the sphere of children’s rights protection and creation of favorable living environment for children’s development.
5. From our perspective, one of the most significant and important indicators of this progress is the population growth by 30,384 children (10,831 children – in 2012, 19,553 in 2013).
6. The state, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, continued active law making process, aimed at solving one of the major problems of our country, i.e. the problem of social orphanhood, which occurs when children remain without parents’ care when parents are still alive. Very important decisions were made on establishing the procedure for securing residential property rights for the orphaned

children (Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus №850 from 27.06.2011), on patronage (Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus №596 from 28.06.2012), on designing a national database (register) of orphaned children (Resolution of the Ministry of education of the Republic of Belarus №118 from 02.10.2012), on post-internat (boarding school) support of orphaned children (Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus №443 from 13.05.2013) and on other issues. They have become an important complement to the legal framework governing the activities of the state, non-governmental organizations and all other members of society on child rights protection in our country.

7. Enhancement of national policy and legal framework in the sphere of deinstitutionalization as well as re-enforcement of partnership with non-governmental organizations was accompanied by development of specialists' professional knowledge on application of mechanisms of interdepartmental interaction and ensuring the priority of placing children in families over their placement in internats (boarding schools).
8. As of beginning of 2014, there are 23,081 orphaned children and children left without parents' care aged under 18 in Belarus (by 2,791 fewer than in 2010). 4,901 children (21,24%) are being brought up in state internats (boarding schools) and 18,179 children (78,76%) get alternative family care (foster care, family-type homes and etc.). Due to state and non-governmental organizations endeavors, one can witness sustainable increase in the number of children getting alternative family care and decrease in the number of boarding schools and internats (by 21 internat (34,4%) fewer in 2014 than in 2010).
9. While noting further post-2010 progress in improvement of child welfare, including that of orphaned children, Belarusian Children's Fund considers that the state has to continue its efforts aimed at strengthening family values, encouraging responsible parents' behavior and prevention of social orphanhood in partnership with non-governmental organizations. Further attention is to be paid to prevention of alcohol abuse among parents and to prevention and mitigation of consequences of domestic violence towards children.
10. In 2010, Belarusian Children's Fund noted in its report provided to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review the lack of interest on behalf of the state in engaging non-governmental organizations in development and discussion of state program documents and legislative acts, insufficient coordination between the state and non-governmental organizations' efforts aimed at solving the child protection issues.
11. From our perspective, the situation is now improving. Forging partnerships and enhancing cooperation between the state and the civil society constitute one of the state's strategies of improvement of effectiveness of all activities aimed at enhancing policies for the benefit of children and the whole society. In July 2012, the following new laws and regulations were adopted: a new version of Social Service Act (№ 395 from 13.07.2012), which includes a special chapter on "State Commissioning of Social Services", Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus "On Particular Issues of State Commissioning of Social Services" (№ 1219 from 27.12.2012), and a draft law "On Public-Private Partnerships".

12. Non-governmental organizations, including Belarusian Children's Fund, get more opportunities to contribute to development of solutions to major state issues in the sphere of human rights and child rights protection.
13. The following facts testify to the fruitful cooperation between Belarusian Children's Fund and state organizations and agencies mandated to resolve children's problems. Belarusian Children's Fund is represented at the National Commission on Children's Rights, which plays a significant role in coordination of state and non-governmental organizations' efforts aimed at children's rights protection. The representatives of Belarusian Children's Fund participated in 12 sessions of the Commission focusing on development, discussion and adoption of numerous vital decisions concerning protection of children's rights, identification of priority actions and ways to implement them.
14. The representatives of Belarusian Children's Fund in its capacity of a member of the National Coordination Council of Global UNICEF Initiative "Child Friendly City" got an opportunity to influence the decision-making process of local authorities to account for children's interests, to encourage local non-governmental organizations to collaborate with local state authorities in the field children's rights protection, and to promote partnerships between local authorities and NGOs.
15. In February 2013, the Government made a decision to include a representative of Belarusian Children's Fund into a Republican Interdepartmental Commission tasked with monitoring the state of orphaned children and children left without parents' care brought up in families. Together with representatives of state ministries and agencies, Belarusian Children's Fund has comprehensively monitored the activity of virtually all family-type homes in Belarus, which bring up 5 and more orphaned children, and assessed the children's welfare. As a result, consolidated information and recommendations of the Commission were shared with the Government and the President of the Republic of Belarus and concrete decisions were made on family-type homes and other alternative family care modalities in order to improve their functioning.
16. Belarusian Children's Fund established constructive cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus in the sphere of children's rights protection, deinstitutionalization, enforcement of children's rights to have a family as the most favorable environment for their development. Within the program "Warm Home", Belarusian Children's Fund together with educational agencies has established 41 family-type home, in which 390 children were brought up (289 children have already graduated from schools and now live on their own), bought houses, necessary furniture and equipment for the houses, and is supervising children till they become 18 years old. The family-type home creation program of Belarusian Children's Fund was supported by the President of the Republic of Belarus and was assigned the status of a national program.
17. The joint program of Belarusian Children's Fund and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus "Children's Heart" is aimed at promoting the children's rights to health and qualified medical assistance. Within the framework of this program, specialists from the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Russia and other countries are invited by the Belarusian Children's Fund

to come to Belarus and carry out unique medical operations on Belarusian children, who suffer from serious heart conditions, free of charge as well as to share the experience with Belarusian medical practitioners. As a result of fruitful cooperation between non-governmental and state organizations, the Children Cardiology Center of Belarus received an opportunity to get exposure to the methods of work used by the most advanced foreign clinics, and children with serious heart problems were granted with an opportunity to enjoy the right to qualified medical assistance and health in their native country.

18. All the above-mentioned examples provide evidence of an increasing interest of the state in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and an opportunity for any non-governmental organization in the country to participate in implementation of programs for children, contribute to development and implementation of the most important legal acts and other regulatory documents on children's rights protection and influence public policy concerning children.
19. Our common goal is further consolidation of efforts in favor of children, mutual understanding and partnership. We will continue to work in this direction.

Director of
Belarusian Children's Fund

Alexander Trukhan