



## **As people live and work with disabilities - Latvian experience**

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As people live and work with disabilities - Latvian experience Photos Information Service "EuroBelarus"

Social entrepreneurship, employment as a rehabilitation and "leisure time" at the expense of local government and sponsors.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Belarus has signed more than two years ago, provides for equal treatment in the provision of all rights, including the right to work. In the Belarusian society long elaborated stereotype that people with disabilities can not work.

However, disability does not prohibit working but only limit it. This issue devoted considerable space in the project "Equal - equal", which is implemented in the Stolín supported by the European Union within the framework of the campaign "Agenda 50", aimed at implementing the provisions of the Convention on the ground.

In particular, the project in the Stolín Rural Development Center held a round table on "Lessons learned independent living and barrier-free environment in Latvia and Belarus. Employment of people with special needs through the creation of social enterprises." The main speaker was the head of public organization "Wings of Hope" Eva Vilkina from Sigulda (Latvia). The Belarusian side was represented by the heads of government agencies and organizations ramadskih Stolína, as well as members of the initiative group of parents of children with disabilities who participate in the project.

Participants of the round table. Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"  
As in the hope appeared wings

His story Eva Vilkina start with, on the initiative of a few families there was a large organization that provides comprehensive services to people with disabilities and is now a social enterprise.

- At the beginning, in 2003, the experts refused to work with children with disabilities, so families with children decided to join forces. A year later, was able to get a small budget of around 7000 euros for the social rehabilitation services for children - said Eva Vilkina.

In 2004, the initiative "Wings of Hope" have already joined 30 families. Since then, the local government to allocate Sigulda became the organization is required to provide certain services to children budget. Services - this is a different kind of therapy, speech therapy, care during working hours. Use of children not only from Sigulda, but also from other rural municipalities of Latvia. The fact is that the country as there are only two such centers: in addition to the "Wings of Hope" in Sigulda another organization is in Riga.

- Care for children with disabilities allows 97% of the parents work. We believe that this is a great benefit for families - said the guest from Latvia.

Eva Vilkina. Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"

But the "Wings of Hope" did not stop there. In 2006 it managed to open special classes in secondary schools for the education of children with mild to severe injuries. Moreover, all of the school teachers, even those who do not work in these classes, have been trained. Last year marked 10 years since the classes are now taught in them 39 children with.

- The local government organized a transport that takes the children in the morning and the



afternoon and evening brings back. Until 18 pm, children can stay with us and passes therapy - said Eva Vilkina.

According to the speaker, twice a year, experts from the school and from the "Wings of Hope" gather and discuss the status of each child: what methods in his case the most successful work, and that he can still offer. Thus note the dynamics of progress and develop rehabilitation plans.

employment rehabilitation

When the children began to grow, the next step, "Wings of Hope" was the organization of services for young people and adults.

- In 2012, we began to create a day center and specialized workshops for young people and adults. We initially focused on employment. In all our people are involved in the workshops of the day center. In the future, we plan to give up the workshops and create a center for employment. We are now discussing the possibility of a social center to make it a comprehensive service - shared plans  
Evo Vilkina.

Director Stolinsky TTSSON Love Demidovich and Evo Vilkina. Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"

Now, in the center there are eight workshops (leather, weaving, sewing, mosaic, art, candle, ceramic, soap, stone sculpture), in which from 9.00 to 13.00 people work. Activity is for all, even for people with severe injuries. After lunch the work in the workshops varies rehabilitation - physical therapy, dance, theater and music studies.

Day center for young people with additional charge, visit costs 15 euros per day. This money goes to pay for the room, food (a meal in the middle of preparing their cook, and this, incidentally, is also a part of the rehabilitation: chefs teach cooking visitors, which contributes to their independence), physiotherapy. But do not pay the family and the local government. In general, in Latvia the government helps organizations for people with disabilities in the period of four years, gradually reducing the financing and completely translating it into local government.

The level of family income social services do not appreciate - of having a child with a disability is sufficient to be able to count on the center visit. It calculates the required budget organization itself, based on the service delivery costs. Last year, the local government funds for the maintenance of the center amounted to about 40%, and all the rest of the money, "Wings of Hope" was able to get from sponsors.

Presentation of the organization "Wings of Hope". Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"

Now the center has reached a level where it can offer some quality stuff made by people with disabilities, and receive money for them. And in 2015, a social enterprise was opened on its base. His every employee who makes things for sale, must be registered as an individual entrepreneur, that he could pay the salary.

- If a person comes to the center, he zapytvayutsa that he himself wanted to do. And he is given the opportunity to try to do it. The day center has guardians that help people work. After that a person goes to a specialized workshop, and the next step for him is a social enterprise, where it can produce the products and get paid for it. After the release of the labor market a person ceases to be under the care of the center, but at any moment it can turn to our experts, if he needs help, - explains Eva Vilkina.

Work there. A wish?

In addition to the social enterprise on the basis of the "Wings of Hope" Center for Social Support "House of Hope" was opened in 2016, which helps mothers who find themselves in difficult life siuatsyi. There is also a service for families with children with disabilities, which is called "a moment of rest" ("social break"). It provides that parents throughout the year can bring and leave



their child there for 30 days, and themselves at this time to relax.

Organization "Wings of Hope" is considered a social enterprise, but it is only up to April 2018 - that is associated with changes in legislation.

- Now we have a law according to which an NGO may engage in economic activities, which the proportion shall not exceed 50% of the principal of the institution. If the budget exceeds 50%, you need to be registered in a different status - commercial - Eva said.

In Latvia, according to the legislation, a person who draws up a social enterprise must solve socially important problems using business methods and revenue should invest in the development of the enterprise. But beyond that considered social entrepreneurs and those who produce goods or services for people with disabilities, and sell them for big money. Eva Vilkina do not agree with this understanding of social entrepreneurship. Belarusian colleagues supported guest in this matter.

Participants of the project "Equal - just" interested in Latvian experience. Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"

- For me, social entrepreneurship - particularly employment. And social business can not survive without government support, - expressed his opinion Chairman of the Stolín Center support young people with disabilities Mikhail Skrabeyka.

In general, the Latvian experience has had on the participants a strong impression of the project. Belarusian activists particularly interested in the idea of "social respite" for parents of children with disabilities.

- This is a lifesaver for parents who find themselves in a difficult position. We have a mommy and minors whose parents drink, why newborn babies are at risk. To receive support in the form of "social break" would be perfect for such mothers, - says head of social support of population control on labor, employment and social protection of the Stolín District Executive Committee Galina Voropaeva.

On the experience of founding a social enterprise in Stolín Information Service "EuroBelarus" said founder and director of social enterprise "Road to Life" Malvina Vydrytskih. In 2002, she organized with colleagues working ceramic and sewing workshops, which escalated into a unitary enterprise in 2006, that works today.

- A person with disabilities is difficult to find a job, because, in fact, anywhere there are no jobs, in addition to agriculture. Although I would say that this is not the worst option. For example, our neighbors - Poland, the Baltic states - very common work of people with disabilities in agriculture. This is possible, but it all depends on how the person with a disability wants something to do. After all, we have a lot of people who are not accustomed to work and wait for some privileges for themselves. But if you are abroad, you have seen that there are people with disabilities working in the same positions as the rest. Therefore, before talking about employment, it is necessary to both people with disabilities to prepare for the understanding that they - ordinary people who can work with your hands. But there are those who seek and love to work. I believe if there is a change, our society will change and our people with disabilities, - summed Malvina Vydrytskih.

Chairman of the Stolín district organization of NGO "BelTIZ" George Pyshnyak. Photo Information Service "EuroBelarus"

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