

# Venerable age dislikes loneliness

Who says that old age is a time for rest! A visit to the Centre for Social Services in Minsk's Leninsky District shows that this isn't always the case. A pensioner employment club is functioning here, helping elderly people to apply their experience and skills profitably. Natalia Rokmans, the Head of the Social Adaptation and Rehabilitation Department, tells us about this interesting project:

By Yekaterina Dovgialova

It may seem surprising, but pensioners are the most active group of citizens receiving help from our Social Adaptation and Rehabilitation Department. They always accept our proposals and projects with great enthusiasm and inspiration. Gradually, one-time thematic events have grown into permanent circles and clubs. Our pensioners are so active and really take the initiative. We always take into account their desires and interests and, over the last quarter, classes have begun in five new spheres, creating 12 clubs in all.

The idea of our club entitled 'Growing Younger in Your Soul' is to provide elderly people with the chance to chat and visit exhibitions, museums, concerts and various festive events. It helps them maintain interest in life. Everyone is aware that spiritual support is just as important for pensioners as

material support; most want to chat — to be heard and noticed. This club is especially good for lonely elderly people who feel lack of attention and understanding. Here, they find everything they lack.

'It's never too late to explore hidden potential and embrace new opportunities, receiving positive energy and high spirits' is the slogan of the 'Know Yourself' club. The 'Attraction' cinema club is ideal for film lovers while the 'Needlewoman' circle promotes creativity through embroidery, knitting, beadweaving and papier-mâché. The Centre also offers lessons in the basics of English language and computer literacy while the most cheerful are involved in the 'Dances of the World' club, learning Arab and Indian dances and sewing costumes for their performances.

**The skills of needlework can be applied in everyday life while dancing is more for the soul...**

Not at all. Our groups



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Pensioners taught computer literacy at Centre for Social Services

take part in district and city events. For instance, recently, Minsk's House of Veterans hosted a concert dedicated to the 60th anniversary of our district. It featured our dance group and choir.

Our groups arouse interest, are in demand and are invited to various concerts, where they perform with pleasure. Undoubtedly, this

is pleasant, since it gives the opportunity to receive skills and knowledge while demonstrating them in front of an audience.

**What is the average age of your pensioners?**

The age range is wide: from those who've just retired to 80 year olds. Our oldest 'pupil' is 81 years old and she is engaged in a dance group.

She is extremely energetic and active! Men usually attend the choir or study new computer and photography techniques.

**Do these lessons change elderly people?**

Of course, they do have a positive influence on them. Our lessons help them acquire confidence in themselves and allow them to feel

their importance to society. Many find faithful friends within our club and continue to meet up beyond the walls of our centre. Communication positively influences lonely people. The more active you are, the less time you have for boredom and the healthier you feel — in body and spirit. Our pensioners have succeeded in this.

## Achieving high transparency within definite borders

The European Commission has highly assessed the work of Belarusian border guards and is ready to jointly implement new projects, as announced by Ulrich Rainer, Attaché of the EU Delegation to Belarus. He recently took part in an international workshop in Minsk: *On Applied Legislation and Migration Control Procedures at the State Border*

By Yevgeny Ivanetsky

Mr. Rainer notes that work at the border has two sides. While co-operation is vital in strengthening control over transit of citizens and goods, borders should also be transparent and comfortable for legitimate tourists and commodities. "In this respect, we're satisfied with the work of our Belarusian colleagues and wish to continue collaboration," he underlines.

The European Commission has spent around 50m Euros over the last decade on projects across various states and plans to spend another 40m Euros — to include

projects at the Belarusian border.

In particular, it's planned to reconstruct Peschatka border checkpoint on the Belarusian-Polish border. The EC plans to cover 90 percent of the cost, with almost 11m Euros allocated. Another project aimed at enhancing the quality of control is to be implemented on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border, with financial assistance provided to Belarus and Ukraine; new equipment and educational training courses are planned. In total, 2.6m Euros are allocated, shared equally between each country.

Vasily Zorin, the Head of the Belarusian State Border Commit-



BELTA

International Brest car border checkpoint

tee's Department of Preliminary Investigation, notes that such measures primarily make it possible to co-ordinate the activities of border guards. He explains that changing situations worldwide and various military conflicts have raised migration flow. "Belarus is a transit state, with the whole flow of illegal migrants to EU states passing directly across the Belarusian border," he explains.

Since 1992, around 30,000 illegal migrants have been registered in Belarus. However, as a result of improved methods and legislation, the flow has fallen sharply. Mr. Zorin underlines

that, at present, the situation regarding illegal migration in Belarus is under control.

The workshop *On Applied Legislation and Migration Control Procedures at the State Border* was held with support from the EU's TAIEX programme. The two day forum tackled issues of co-operation in the sphere of migration control and the formation of migration control procedures. The seminar brought together over 60 representatives of Belarusian border services and the Interior Ministry, with border experts from Slovakia, Finland, Latvia, Spain, Hungary, Estonia and Germany attending.

## Aiming at maximum security

By Dmitry Petrovsky

**Atomic scientists promise safe burial of toxic waste**

Proposals to form a national strategy on radioactive waste management in Belarus have been discussed at a meeting between the Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology, Igor Voitov, and scientists from St. Petersburg's East-European Leading Scientific-Research and Design Institute for Energy Technology (VNIPIET Leading Institute JSC). Russian and Belarusian specialists consider that it's possible to dispose of waste via the Union State's *Decontamination and Processing of Radioactive Waste Resulting from the Operation of Nuclear Power Plants* programme.

According to Igor Rybalchenko, the Head of the International Co-operation Department at VNIPIET Leading Institute JSC, a range of scientific-research, design-experimental and project works are planned, alongside the creation of infrastructure to cope with radioactive waste (existing waste and that created by the new Belarusian nuclear power station). "We're ready to assist in solving these issues, since we're keen to enjoy constructive collaboration with Belarus," he notes.