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Backstage training of responsible volunteers

50-60. The average age for drivers is 35

sian citizens?

Are all the volunteers Belaru-

In choosing volunteers, we gave

preference to local residents, simply

because they know the country bet-

ter, as well as Minsk. Most are Minsk

residents, although there are some

In just over a month, the long-awaited 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship will commence in Minsk. Our ice arenas, hotels, restaurants and cafes are ready for an influx of sports fans, and a host of volunteers have been training to help the event flow smoothly. Maxim Koshkalda, who is heading the volunteer programme for the Ice Hockey World Championship, tells us more...

Maxim, how many applications did you receive from people wanting to become volunteers for the World Cham-AWARENESS HELPING pionship-2014 and what criteria did you use to select them?

We received over 3,800 volunteer applications and needed 1,050 people: over 3.5 people per position. Of course, they've been training for a while now. Motivation was the key factor in making our selection, as was an ability to speak English. About half of our volunteers can speak another foreign language too. We also looked at whether applicants had volunteered for similar activities in the past.

Naturally, those volunteering for first aid services need to have some existing knowledge, so we gave preference to those already connected with public health services. Another important factor is how people present themselves: they should look smart, be able to gain others' trust, act calmly and be able to make themselves clearly understood. If you're volunteering for linguistic services, you need to speak a foreign language confidently, while those applying to be drivers must have over two years of driving experience (and no penalties on their licence). Each area of volunteering has its own criteria but knowledge of foreign languages, a degree of experience and a desire to

What is the average age for your volunteers?

work are obligatory.

Three quarters are aged under 25 but we do have some older volunteers: our drivers include those aged 30, 40 and, even,

about 10 percent are from abroad —
from Slovakia, Latvia, Finland and
Russia. Taking into account
the recent Olympic Games
in Sochi, and various other
sports competitions, they have
experience and a huge desire to be
in Minsk for the Ice Hockey World
Championship.

Which activities are volunteers most keen on?

Team guides are probably the most interesting role, but also the most difficult, since it's a 24/7 commitment. You have to stay near the team at all times and resolve all issues, from travel to food, while observing protocol and keeping statistical data.

Those chosen to work directly with the teams began training long ago. They already have experience, having worked at previous World Championships; many worked at the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. During the Christmas tournament in Minsk, each team was provided with two volunteers — so that we could observe their work and select the best of them.

Did you use experience from the Olympic Games in Sochi in training volunteers for the coming Ice Hockey World Championship?

Certainly, we looked at experience from the Olympic Games. However, our needs differ slightly, since we are hosting just one kind of sport rather than a great many. It's easier in this respect. In addition, the Sochi Games have only just ended, while we began our training programme— 'Volonteer-2014' — over 18 months ago, starting with interviews. We've based our training on past Olympic Games, World Championships and other large competitions, rather than specifically on

How would you estimate volunteers' preparedness and do you think the Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk will go smoothly?

We know the ability of each volunteer, having conducted thorough interviews, so we know that we have a good team. You can never achieve an absolute ideal but we've done our best to train people to communicate clearly, to know what they should be doing and whom else they can summon for assistance. Our level of preparation is strong already and we still have time for more theoretical training, followed by practice exercises, to help them in predicting situations that may arise during the World Championship. I feel confident that our championship will be held at the highest level and will be known as the best in the history of hockey.



Tickets of various value

Over 70,000 tickets sold to foreign fans for IIHF World Championship matches in Minsk

Policy regarding ticket pricing and sales has been guided by foreign experience, allowing opportunities for those on lower incomes to gain access to matches. Prices range from 6 to 50 Euros, while tickets for the final cost 25-400 Euros.

As of April 7th, 2014, around 354,000 tickets had been bought and booked for Minsk Arena (75 percent of capacity) and 142,000 had been purchased and booked for matches at Chizhovka Arena (67 percent). An estimated 70,500 tickets have been sold to foreign guests, with Russia and Latvia accounting for the lion's share. Much interest has been shown from fans from Finland, Switzerland, Germany and Slovakia; each nation has purchased 2,000-3,000 tickets.

Fan zones filled with exciting events

Programme of cultural activities ready for Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk

Cultural activities planned include museum and exhibition projects, open-air and indoor concerts, various performances, and displays by masters of arts and crafts. Belarus' First Deputy Culture Minister, Vladimir Karachevsky, tells us, "All sites now have opening schedules, including museums and theatres. Cultural activities will be constant in fan-zones and, in fact, we lack room for the number of projects we plan to accommodate."

Minsk's Gorky and Chelyuskintsev parks will be hosting events, with stands and pavilions much in demand. The Belarusian State Academy of Arts and, even, BelAZ JSC plan displays and the *Spadchyna Belarusi* (Heritage of Belarus) project is sure to prove popular. Minsk residents and guests of the capital will see about 100 reproductions from the photo album of the same name, by journalists Alexander Alexeev and Oleg Lukashevich.

Watching with eyes wide open

Izuyi Chaya

Minsk is soon to welcome a great many foreign guests and it's interesting to think what impression our country will make upon them. A Chinese student here in Belarus tells us what astonishes him...

"You have very good roads and everyone obeys the traffic regulations! In Beijing, locals often ignore them, as do pedestrians; they cross the road without looking, Beijing is a city of bicycles, with about 8 million cyclists. I know that many people in Belarus have begun using

bicycles. I think it's a good trend.

I'm also surprised that it's against the law to drink alcohol on the street, including beer. I hear that smoking is also to be prohibited soon.

Your dairy products have impressed me: milk, sour cream and curd cheese are delicious. Chinese people see eating as more than an appeasement of hunger; it's a ritual — a solemn performance. Even today, older people in China greet each other by asking if they've eaten and a man who has lost his job is said to have 'broken his rice bowl'. I like Belarusian cuisine — such as



draniki (potato pancakes). It's interesting to me that most people in Belarus think that a dinner without soup isn't a dinner at all.

I'm attracted to Belarus more, the longer I remain. My favourite places for walking are near the National Library and around Troitsky Suburbe"

All confirm participation in championship All 16 countries confirm their

participation in IIHF World

Championship in Minsk

Teams from Sweden, the Czech Republic, Canada, Slovakia, Norway, Denmark, France, Italy, Finland, Russia, the USA, Switzerland, Germany, Latvia, Kazakhstan and Belarus will be fighting for victory in the World Championship. The first match, hosted by

Minsk Arena on May 9th, will see the national teams of Belarus and the USA face each other on the ice: tickets are completely sold out.