**YOUTH AND SOCIETY**

1. Today young people take an active part in the social life of the country. What youth organizations do you know?

It’s quite natural that young people want to socialize with their equals so as to express their views on several political and social issues. They join youth organizations and societies. The main aim of these organizations is to involve young people into socially useful activities such as sporting events, volunteering at hospitals, taking care of war veterans, assisting the old and the handicapped, carrying out some ecological projects and doing other things.

There are a lot of youth organizations in Belarus. The most authoritative of them are: the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM), the Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organization, the Association of Belarusian Scouts, the Belarusian Organizations of Falcons, the Belarusian National Scout Organization, the Association of Belarusian Guides, etc. The organizations take an active part in the formation of the basis and realization of the state policy in respect of youth. These activities are managed and directed by the State Committee on the Affairs of Youth.

At the same time there are a lot of informal youth movements that want to express themselves in different ways. Usually they are organized on the base of common interests or preferences in music styles or in arts priorities. Some try to express their political views others are searching for their own answers to universal problems: ecological, religious or philosophical. Anyway all young people want to express themselves and find their place in this world.

One more interesting phenomenon is sub-culture. It is generally held that sub-culture is the culture of those who are dissatisfied with their place in society. On the whole Teds, Mods, Rockers, Bikers, Skinheads and Punks are the sub-cultures of the politically or economically weak segments of the society.

It is interesting to note that sub-cultures follow a cycle. At first they shock then provoke a strong response. As soon as the sub-culture gains momentum it magnetizes youth in search of rebel unity. Many adopt it for fun, and play at rebellion in their leisure time. The sub-culture rapidly ceases to express serious dissent. In the end it becomes another recognized and colorful part of urban culture.

2. Have you ever joined a youth organization? Why (not)?

I joined the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) some years ago. It is a youth organization in Belarus. Its goals are to promote patriotism and to instill moral values into the youth of Belarus, to unite patriotically thinking young people for active participation in the construction of a society of social justice and progress using activities such as camping, sporting events and visiting memorials. The organization was created after a merger of other youth groups in 2002 and is the successor of the Leninist Communist Youth League of the Byelorussian SSR. The BRSM is the largest youth group in Belarus and is supported by the Belarusian government.

The Belarusian Republican Youth Union and its members accomplish their goals and objectives in the following activities:

- they participate in formation of youth policy and put it into practice;

- they support the initiatives of the youth, directed at self-perfection and all-round development of their individual abilities;

- they help young people to become integrated members of society;

- they elaborate and accomplish different educational, social and other youth programs which do not contradict the present legislation of the republic of Belarus;

- they render assistance in finding employment;

- they promote international youth co-operation;

- they attract the attention of the mass media and the bodies of state power to the problems and initiatives of the youth;

- they organize conferences, meetings, lectures, exhibitions, concerts for young people; etc.

3. What questions would you like to ask a person who has joined a new international organization?

Really it’s interesting to find out something about these people:

What is the name of your organization?

Why have you joined this organization?

What activities does your organization organize?

4. What issues would you recommend to discuss at a monthly meeting of a debate club?

I think there are so many things to talk about for young people. For example I would recommend to discuss: the ecological situation in our town, our modern national music styles, modern arts, some fashion issues. Maybe such questions will be interesting for discussions: Is there any threat from the space? Would you like to change the system of our education? Do you know your history well? What is the role of colours in our life? Is it possible to avoid all bad habits in the society?

So I can say that the topics and questions for discussions are unlimited.

5. A lot of young people in Europe work in hospitals and kindergartens as volunteers. What do you think attracts them to this kind of work?

Volunteer movement is a very unique phenomenon in a society. It shows the level of the development of the society. In this kind of work people have no any material motivation. The people who work as volunteers have some spiritual intentions and motivation. Some of them want to help other people, others hope to get some experience in this kind of work because they want to connect their lives with this sphere of activity. Also there are people who have overcome some situations or difficulties in their lives and now they want to help others.

In Belarus we also have volunteer movement. For example in Grodno you can work in the organization taking care about homeless animals. Some young people go to hospitals with Christian priests. Also there are people who go by bicycles around Belarus to clean the countryside.

**MASS MEDIA**

1. Let’s talk about mass media: TV, newspapers, radio. Which of these does your family like?

Mass media are one of the most characteristic features of modern civilization. People are united into one global community with the help of mass media. People can learn about what is happening in the world very fast using mass media. The mass media include newspapers, magazines, radio and television. The earliest kind of mass media was newspaper. The first newspaper appeared in Rome in 59 B.C. Magazines appeared in 1700′s. They developed from newspapers and booksellers’ catalogs. Radio and TV appeared only in the 20th century.

TV is the source of valuable information. It brings the world to our living room, where we can see people of other countries; learn their customs, traditions and problems. We can see great events and famous people. The choice of programmes, modern television provides, is really wide: the news, feature films, talk shows, music programmes, documentary and educational programmes, serials, interviews. There are different types of TV nowadays^ free pay channels, cable and satellite.

On the other hand, people tend to spend more and more time in front of the box just switching over from channel to channel with the help of remote control. Television and the Internet encourage passive enjoyment. They cut us off from the real world. Sometimes there is too much violence and crime on TV and on the Internet. Parents worry about the effect that television has on children. That’s why we should be selective in our choice of programmes and the Internet sites.

Speaking about my personal preferences on TV, I wouldn’t say a lot, as I’m not a TV fan. But some of my peers still watch TV, often tuning into a particular season of TV show or sporting event like football. The members of my family also demonstrate great diversity in their tastes. My mother enjoys watching lifestyle programmes, talk shows, soaps, drama and sitcoms. My father prefers news and sports programmes. Sometimes I watch music programmes.

To tell you the truth, I’m not really interested in any traditional media. Television, radio and newspapers are becoming less and less popular. I don’t read newspapers. Instead I watch the news summarized on the Internet. Sometimes I enjoy reading magazines or cheaper tabloids.

Nevertheless, newspapers are worth buying! My father thinks they are a daily source of news, education and fun that no home should be without. He is sure that every home should have at least 3 different newspapers a day to get a balanced opinion of world events. So my father buys newspapers to do our bit for the local economy. As for tabloids, as my Mum says, sometimes they come up with good stories. Just imagine the political scandals that would go unnoticed without reporters.

2. Is there any means of communication you can’t live without? Why (not)?

I wouldn’t say – I can’t live without any means of communication. To tell you the truth we should have rest from any form of communication. But I can’t imagine my everyday life without the Internet.

The Internet is a great source of information and entertainment for many people. It has made possible new forms of social interaction and has become a major source of leisure.

Thanks to it I have got an opportunity to access news, documents, images, sounds, video and games, to make friends, to book tickets and to purchase different things online. There are a lot of different sites for students, gardeners, businessmen, engineers, for people who are fond of music, cinema, theatre, sports and even for disabled people. What is more, the Internet has revolutionized the way people communicate. Sending electronic text messages is much faster and easier than writing letters. People use e-mail to stay in touch with friends worldwide.

3. What questions will you ask the participants of Dom 2, a TV reality show?

Frankly speaking, I wouldn’t like to talk to them at all. Well, my questions will be: What makes you take part in this kind of a TV show?

Is it hard to be in sight of thousands of TV viewers all the time?

Has the TV show changed your character and your personality?

4. I’d like to watch an interesting programme on TV. What can you advise me?

First of all, I would ask about your preferences and interests. Sometimes people watch TV just to relax. In this case my advice may be very different. So, I personally would recommend you to watch any programmes on Discovery Channel or on Viasat History Channel. If you’ve got a pet you would enjoy watching special programmes about cats and dogs on Animal Planet Channel. If you want to listen to hot discussions, visit RTVI Channel and choose anything to your taste.

Also there are many programmes about education and culture. There are programmes on wide range of subjects — from physics and literature to cooking and yoga. Public TV also broadcasts plays, ballets, symphonies as well as programs about art and history. So you’ve got a great choice.

5. Many people say that newspapers and radio are not as popular as TV and very soon they will lose their importance. What is your point of view?

Maybe. But I don’t think they will lose their importance. Probably they will change the forms. Many newspapers will be transformed into electronic versions on the Internet. As for radio, it has already lost its importance in its initial way of existence. Nowadays we can listen to the radio through the Internet.

№2

There are many ways for young people to be involved in social life. Tell me about some of them.

Have you ever joined a youth organization?

What questions can you ask about the campaign Education Free for Everybody?

What issues would you recommend to discuss at a monthly meeting of a debate club?

A lot of young people think that there is nothing better than having money. Do you agree with them?

№3

Today many young people take an active part in social life. What issues are important for them?

Have you ever taken part in an interesting international event? Why (not)?

What would you like to learn about the activities of cheerleaders in Minsk?

Which youth organization would you recommend to join and why?

If you had a chance to start a campaign, what kind of campaign will it be? What would you campaign for?

№4

Today young people take an active part in social life. How do they do it?

Would you like to join any of the organizations you’ve heard about? Why (not)?

What questions can you ask about the recent event organised by the BRSM?

What campaign would you recommend to start? Why?

Not all young people in Belarus have joined youth organizations. What stops them?

The main objectives of the organization are as follows:

- to express, defend and realize the rights and legal interests of its members;

- to form the world outlook, based on moral and spiritual, as well as Christian, values;

- to foster patriotism as the main spiritual and social value;

- to express devotion to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, to the country, its people and its state symbols;

- to give assistance to every member of the organization in his spiritual, intellectual and physical development and in realization of his abilities and creative potential;

– to take part in preparation of young people for the defense of their motherland.

ORGANIZATION

The BRSM national headquarters is located in Minsk, the national capital of Belarus. Each voblast of Belarus—Minsk, Brest, Vitsebsk, Homiel, Grodno and Mogilev—has its own branches of the BRSM. The BRSM has estimated that it has 6803 branches located inside Belarus.

The national leadership of the BRSM is controlled by the central committee, which is headed by the first secretary of the central committee. Below the first secretary are the second secretary of the central committee, the chairman of the central investigation commission, and three secretaries of the central committee. Collectively, these leaders are also referred to as the secretariat of the BRSM.

While the exact yearly and total funding of the BRSM are not known, the majority of funds given to the BRSM are given by the national government.

SYMBOLS

The BRSM has two official symbols: an emblem and a flag. The emblem, which is based on the Komsomol badge and modeled on the Belarusian national flag, has a red bar bearing the initials of the BRSM, written in gold in Cyrillic, over a green bar bearing a golden olive branch.

The flag of the BRSM has the same elements as the emblem, but the reverse of the flag bears the organization’s full name in gold (in Russian) in the red section, with the green section unemblazoned.

MEMBERSHIP

In order to join the BRSM, the applicant must be between the ages of 14 and 31 and must send a photo of himself or herself. If the applicant is between the ages of 14 and 16 written permission from a parent or legal guardian must be granted.

A person must also pay a one-time fee. Members of the BRSM have certain rights and duties and they can leave the organization at their own free will.

ACTIVITIES

Most of the BRSM’s activities are similar to those that were performed by the Soviet Komsomol. The main activities of the BRSM involve the promotion of Belarusian patriotism. This is accomplished by participating in wreath-laying ceremonies at various memorials around the country. BRSM members also pass out flowers to veterans of the Great Patriotic War (World War II) to honor their service during the national holiday Den Pobedy (Day of Victory). Both the memorial visits and the flowers for the veterans give BRSM members an idea of what sacrifices their ancestors made. During other national holidays, the BRSM passes out a ribbon that resembles the national flag of Belarus, to be worn on a shirt or jacket. This program, along with other events, is part of its “For Belarus!” (Russian: За Беларусь!) campaign.

The BRSM participates in outdoor activities and sports, including football, running, swimming and hockey. Some of these athletic events involve different groups from inside Belarus or from neighboring countries, such as Russia, Ukraine or Latvia. BRSM members also participate in competitions amongst themselves or with other foreign groups that are similar to the BRSM.

BRSM organizes student construction brigades, a practice also originated in the Soviet Union.