

# Youth Partnership

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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



## CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

### CHAPTER VII: BELARUS HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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## 7.1. General context

### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

According to the [Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus](#), in recent years public expenditure on health care amounted to 4% of GDP, corresponding to the threshold of health expenditure recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the minimum ratio indicated in the Concept of National Security of the Republic of Belarus.

Several factors at the national level have influenced the practice of public health. Belarus was one of the first CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries to sign up to and ratify the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. There are also state measures for the prevention of alcohol abuse, as alcohol is recognised to be one of the major health hazards in the country. In addition, there are state programmes to promote healthy lifestyles, including measures to stimulate physical activity and sports among youth. Increasingly, adolescents and youth are being targeted by social advertising to advise them on the hazards of tobacco smoking and alcohol abuse. UNDP and [WHO programmes](#) on prevention of infections with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and tuberculosis (TB) are carried out in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and NGOs. The relevance of these programmes is underlined by the fact that Belarus is designated as a high-priority country for TB in the WHO European Region (along with most other post-Soviet states) and ranks among the top 27 nations of the world with a high MDR-TB (Multidrug-resistant Tuberculosis) burden.<sup>1</sup>

Belarus collects data on young people's health through different research and data collection mechanisms. In particular, the [Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Medical Technologies, Informatisation, Management and Economics of Public Health](#), the [Republican Research and Practice Centre of Mental Health](#), the [National Statistical Committee](#) of the Republic of Belarus and other institutions issue yearly reports, books and analytical papers that provide statistical data on diagnosed diseases, conditions and injuries, the state of public health and use of health services by different populations, including youth and adolescents.

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 65-Z of 7 December 2009 on Foundations of State Youth Policy (Zakon Respubliki Belarus ob osnovach gosudarstvennoy molodejnoj politiki)<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter the Law on Youth Policy) the Ministry of Education in co-operation with other relevant ministries annually publishes the National Report On the Situation of Youth in the Republic of Belarus.<sup>3</sup> The report is drafted on the basis of the data submitted by all

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1. Belarus: Health System Review, 2013, Health Systems in Transition, Vol. 15 No. 5, European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2013, available at [HiT Belarus \(who.int\)](http://hit.belarus.who.int), accessed 3 November 2021.

2. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 65-Z of 7 December 2009 on the Foundations of State Youth Policy, available at [www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300\(017-034\).pdf&oldDocPage=9](http://www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300(017-034).pdf&oldDocPage=9), accessed 8 November 2021.

3. On the situation of the youth in the Republic of Belarus, 2017, National report, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 2018, available at <https://nihe.bsu.by/index.php/ru/natsionalnyj-doklad>, accessed 8 November 2021.

governmental institutions relating to youth issues within their competence. The National Report covers a wide range of issues relating to youth and adolescents, including health.

The [National Statistical Committee](#) of the Republic of Belarus issues statistical reports on the situation of young people in Belarus. Key among them is the statistical bulletin Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus,<sup>4</sup> published every three years and presenting official data on different aspects of relevance to children and young people, including availability of summer camps, sanatoriums, health resorts and other recreational facilities serving children and youth.

The [National Statistical Committee](#) of the Republic of Belarus also publishes public health and health care statistics. The section “[Healthy Lifestyle](#)” of the household living standards survey contains self-reported data on the prevalence of healthy lifestyles and health-promoting behaviours, like participation in sport, physical activity, nutrition and diets, and keeping regular daily routines corresponding to the basic domains of health behaviour. The data sourced are participant responses to an ad hoc survey administered by the state statistical bodies every three years in the context of the national household survey.

Medical survey data for children and adolescents aged 0-17 years – published in the [Statistical Yearbook](#) of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus – reveal a negative dynamic in the prevalence of certain medical conditions. For example, the percentage of children with visual impairments increased by 1.9% from 2012 to 2019, and of children with speech defects by 0.8%.

Data from the household survey reports show increases in the percentages of young people who engage in physical exercise or sport and practise other health-promoting behaviours (Table 1, Table 2).

**Table 1: Responses of the household survey participants to questions about their lifestyle (by age group, at 1 January, percentage of the corresponding group in total population)**

Percentage of respondents who practise healthy lifestyles		
Year	2017	2020
Age group: 16-29	13.8	16.8

**Table 2: Respondents who engage in physical activity and sports (by age group, at 1 January, percentage of the corresponding group in total population)**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Age group: 16-29	47.5	48.5	48.8	47.0	46.9	50.7

4. Children and youth in the Republic of Belarus, 2018, Statistical book, National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 2018, available at [www.belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-tatistika/publications/statistical-publications-data-books-bulletins/public\\_compilation/index\\_10765](http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-tatistika/publications/statistical-publications-data-books-bulletins/public_compilation/index_10765), accessed 8 November 2021.

According to the data of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the number of tobacco smokers among young people has been decreasing year on year (Table 3). However, the numbers who report keeping regular daily routines has decreased (Table 4).

Table 3: **Tobacco smokers (by age group, at 1 January, percentage of the corresponding group in total population)**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Age group: 16-29	23.6	22.9	22.4	22.3	18.8	17.5

Table 4: **Population who keep regular hours (by age group, at 1 January, percentage of the corresponding group in total population)**

	Total	Of which				
		Keeping regular hours				Not keeping regular hours
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	
2017 Age group: 16-29	100	12.5	25.0	20.4	23.9	18.2
2020 Age group: 16-29	100	10.0	25.1	20.9	20.5	23.5

There was a rise in the percentage of respondents who rated their current health condition as good (Table 5).

Table 5: **Respondents' self-rated health condition (by age group, at 1 January, percentage of the corresponding group in total population)**

	Total	Self-rated health condition		
		Poor	Fair	Good
2016 Age group: 16-29	100	2.0	40.2	57.8
2020 Age group: 16-29	100	1.9	33.5	64.6

### **Main concepts**

In the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 2435-XII of 18 June 1993, as amended on 11 December 2020 on Health Care (Zakon Respubliki Belarus ot 18 iyunya 1993 g. № 2435-XII O zdravookhranenii) (hereinafter the Law on Health Care) the following concepts are used:

- health – condition of complete physical, spiritual and social well-being of the person, and not merely the absence of diseases;
- health care – a field of activity of the state aimed at the organisation and the provision of accessible health care services to the population;

- medical care – a complex of medical services directed to protecting, improving and restoring the health of a patient, including medical prevention, diagnostics, treatment, medical rehabilitation and prosthetics carried out by medical practitioners;
- medical prevention – a complex of medical services directed to protecting, improving and restoring a patient’s health; to developing of a healthy lifestyle; to reducing the spread of diseases and pathological conditions, their early detection, establishment of the reasons and conditions of their origin and development; and also to preventing adverse effects of environmental factors on a person’s health.

## 7.2. Administration and governance

### Governance

Formation of the health policy in Belarus is governed by the Law on Health Care, state programmes and respective action plans. The Law on Health Care provides the legal, organisational, economic and social foundations of policy on health care, health protection and provision of public health.

The State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025 (*Zdorov’ye naroda i demograficheskaya bezopasnost’ na 2021-2025 gody*) sets the framework for policies for improving and promoting health throughout the lifetime, and enhancing the quality and accessibility of health care services.<sup>5</sup>

The State Programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021-2025 (*Gosudarstvennaya programma Fizicheskaya kul'tura i sport na 2021-2025 gody*)<sup>6</sup> is implemented by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism. The programme aims to achieve sustainable and positive dynamics in public health, youth sports, physical training of military personnel, training of amateur and career athletes, including members of the national teams of the Republic of Belarus.

The Law on Youth Policy and the Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030 (*Strategiya razvitiya gosudarstvennoy molodejnoj politiki Respubliki Belarus do 2030 goda*)<sup>7</sup> (hereinafter the National Youth Strategy) guide the policies of the state on the health and well-being of young people.

The chapter “Main areas of state youth policy” of the Law on Youth Policy names healthy lifestyle promotion as a key objective of youth policy. Furthermore, in line with Article 14 of the Law on

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5. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021–2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

6. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 54 of 24 January 2021 on the State Programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021–2025, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=C22100054>, accessed 28 November 2021.

7. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 349 of 19 June 2021 on the Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, available at [https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349\\_1624395600.pdf](https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349_1624395600.pdf), accessed 10 November 2021.

Youth Policy, the state has an obligation to put in place the necessary conditions for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people. State health care organisations provide the necessary medical care to young people, including annual medical examinations of minors, pupils and students.

Youth health is among the state priorities stated in the National Youth Strategy.<sup>8</sup> The main strategic objectives in the field of youth health are as follows:

- preventing crisis conditions, mental and behavioural disorders;
- encouraging health behaviours among young people and their understanding of health as a key value;
- encouraging broad participation of young people in making environmentally friendly policy choices.

The main stakeholders in the health care policy-making process are the President and the Ministry of Health, and the policy agenda is set at this level. Belarus has a national health system and [the Ministry of Health](#) has overall responsibility for it, although the funding of primary and secondary care is the responsibility of regional authorities. Administrative relationships in the Belarusian health system are hierarchical. The administrative arrangements and regulatory framework are such that the ultimate decision-making power rests with the central government, namely, [the Ministry of Health](#), the parliament and the President. The Ministry of Health is the principal regulator at all levels of the health system – national, regional and district (via the district departments of health care). Regional and district governments are also among the key stakeholders responsible for the financing of the health system at their level.

Therefore, the major institution that shapes national health policy is [the Ministry of Health](#). It is supported by [the Ministry of Education](#), with a mandate to implement uniform, coherent and sustainable youth policies, including on health promotion.

At the level of [the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus](#), youth policy and health issues are entrusted to [the Parliamentary Commission for Health, Physical Training, Family and Youth Policy](#). The Commission's consultative mandate also covers youth policy, marriage and family law, health law, physical education and sports, and tourism.

### **Cross-sectoral co-operation**

The stakeholders engaged in the design of activities and interventions under state programmes on young people's health include [the Ministry of Health](#); [the Ministry of Education](#); [the Ministry of Sports and Tourism](#); [the Ministry of Labour and Social Security](#), regional executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee, working with a range of other state bodies and institutions.

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8. Ibid.

[The Ministry of Health](#) is responsible for co-ordinating the work with other ministries and agencies in the field of health, health education initiatives and so on. [The Ministry of Education](#) is the responsible top-level authority for the overall development, co-ordination and drafting of the national development plans on youth issues in the central government.

The need to strengthen and expand cross-sectoral co-operation on the health of youth and adolescents is widely acknowledged. The Action Plan of the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025 calls for a co-ordinated approach to the expansion and enhancement of child and youth-friendly health care systems, including in terms of access and effectiveness.

[The Office for Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus](#) is primarily responsible for youth affairs and youth programming, which includes cross-sectoral co-operation. Nevertheless, collaboration among ministries and stakeholders has been established at different levels. Intersectoral committees have been set up to manage ongoing policy processes. [The Ministry of Education](#) and [the Ministry of Health](#) jointly address a range of youth and health issues. The cross-sectoral dimension of youth health policy is implemented jointly by [the Ministry of Health](#), [the Ministry of Education](#), [the Ministry of Sports and Tourism](#) and [the Ministry of Labour and Social Security](#). This includes co-ordination and joint implementation of youth sports and health policy measures.

### **7.3. Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

#### **National strategy(ies)**

No overarching document such as a national youth strategy defines the strategic tasks pertaining to youth sport, fitness and physical activity; instead, they are covered by separate policy documents, some of which are considered below.

The National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035 (Nacional'naya strategiya ustojchivogo razvitiya Respubliki Belarus' do 2035 goda)<sup>9</sup> defines the goals, tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the strategic objectives of sustainable development in the Republic of Belarus.

As stated in Section 4.3 of the National Strategy,<sup>10</sup> state policy in the field of health is aligned with the "health for all" principles; beyond maintaining universal health coverage, they call for a health-promoting environment, healthy lifestyle promotion and health education. With a view to promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles, work will be carried out to raise awareness

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9. The National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035, approved by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, protocol No. 10 of 2 May 2017, available at [www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/ObsugdaemNPA/NSUR-2035-1.pdf](http://www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/ObsugdaemNPA/NSUR-2035-1.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

10. Ibid.



among all population groups about the health risk factors through the media and social advertising.

A strong emphasis will be placed on prevention of tobacco smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, especially among young people. Concrete measures will be taken to reduce the vulnerability of adolescents and young people and reducing the incidence of addictions associated with violence and mental disorders. An important strategy for promoting health is to put in place a well-developed infrastructure for family physical activity, fitness and sports.

The Youth Policy sub-programme within the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2021-2025 (Gosudarstvennaya programma obrazovanie i molodezhnaya politika, EYP)<sup>11</sup> is a guiding document for youth policy implementation in Belarus. The responsible co-ordinator of EYP is [the Ministry of Education](#). A prominent objective of the EYP programme is to promote healthy lifestyles among young people.

The State Programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021-2025<sup>12</sup> provides the policy framework on sports as a subset of the social and economic development priorities of Belarus. Some key objectives of the programme include:

- promotion of physical education and sports among the general population;
- promoting young people's participation in sport.

The programme comprises two sub-programmes: "High-performance sport" and "Mass sport and fitness".

The aim of sub-programme 1 is to provide coaching for the national teams of the Republic of Belarus participating in high-level sporting events throughout the year.

The objectives of sub-programme 2 are as follows:

- to support sport and physical activity among the general public by implementing fitness and mass sport programmes; providing access to training programmes for athletes;
- to support science and research on sport, and the application of the results in the practice of sport coaching;
- to improve the infrastructure for fitness, sport, physical activity and recreation;
- to enhance civil education of youth;
- to facilitate wider participation in technical, aviation and military sports; to enhance the infrastructure for such sports.

The programme's responsible agencies are the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defence, the Republican state association "Belarusian Physical Culture and Sports Society 'Dynamo'", the Republican state association "Voluntary Society for Assistance to

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11. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 57 of 29 January 2021 on the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2021-2025, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22100057&p1=1>, accessed 8 November 2021.

12. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 54 of 24 January 2021 on the State Programme on Physical Culture and Sport for 2021-2025, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=C22100054>, accessed 12 November 2021.

the Army, Aviation and Navy of the Republic of Belarus”, regional executive committees, and the Minsk City Executive Committee.

The Programme of Student Sports Development for 2021-2024 (Programma razvitiya studencheskogo sporta v Respublike Belarus' na 2021-2024 gody) was approved by the Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 38 of 1 March 2021.<sup>13</sup> The programme defines the strategic areas and establishes a set of measures on encouraging participation in fitness, physical activity and mass sports among students of higher education institutions in the Republic of Belarus.

The aim of the programme is to facilitate the growth of national student sports. The main objectives include:

- enhancing physical education among students of institutions of higher learning;
- improvement of the quality of physical, recreational and mass sports work with students in higher educational establishments;
- increase in the number of students engaged in physical culture and sports;
- promotion of national student sports at the national and international levels.

[The Ministry of Education](#) ensures co-ordination of the activities within the programme and monitors the process of its implementation.

To implement the programme, an Action Plan has been developed and enacted. Within the framework of the Action Plan, the following key objectives are identified:

- to engage students of higher educational institutions in physical education and sports;
- to promote sports and a healthy lifestyle among students;
- to ensure the effective performance of students at international student sports competitions;
- to develop infrastructure for fitness and sports facilities in higher educational institutions;
- to attract leading sports experts to training.

### **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

The main focus of the Programme of Student Sports Development for 2021-2024, approved by the Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 38 of 1 March 2021,<sup>14</sup> is promoting sports and physical activity among young people (see 7.3., Sport, youth fitness and physical activity).

The training of the sports reserve is carried out by 453 organisations of physical culture and sports and 11 secondary schools of the Olympic reserve. 789 sports sections and sports centres involving more than 15 000 students work to maintain sport and recreation work with students at universities.

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13. The Resolution of the Ministry of Education No. 38 of 1 March 2021 on the Programme of Student Sports Development for 2021-2024, available at <http://sporteducation.by/img/file/normativnye-dokumenty/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BC%D0%B0.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2021.

14. Ibid.

Traditionally, sports contests, hiking trips, tourist rallies, healthy lifestyle festivals, actions such as “Health Fair”, “Book against Tobacco”, “Forget about Cigarettes”, youth marathon “Formula of the Future: Youth + Health”, tournaments in air rifle shooting, billiards, cycling, kickboxing, volleyball, basketball, mini-football, table tennis and skiing are held throughout the country. Outdoor sports are gaining popularity among young people, including outdoor gymnastics, freestyle football, skateboarding, roller sports and American dances.

There are more than 23 000 sports facilities in the country. Over the past 10 years, more than 100 sports facilities have been commissioned, ranging from modern sports grounds to large multifunctional sports complexes.

**Physical education in schools**The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 92-Z of 9 January 2018 on Physical Culture and Sports (Zakon Respubliki Belarus O fizicheskoy kul'ture i sporte)<sup>15</sup> states that “the mandatory academic discipline ‘Physical culture and health’ is taught at pre-school, special, general secondary, vocational, secondary special education institutions and is held for the entire period of education in accordance with the curriculum: at least two hours per week of training at the secondary education institution”.

One of the biggest events in the youth sports calendar of Belarus is the Republican Sports Contest of schoolchildren. More than 100 tournaments for children and teenagers are held annually in the country, e.g., biathlon competitions “Snow Sniper”; football competitions “Leather Ball”; handball competitions “Rapid Ball”; chess competitions among school teams “White Rook”; festival “Football holidays”.

[The Belarusian School Sports Association](#) was registered by the decision of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus No. 44 of 13 March 2020. It is a voluntary sports association of public, commercial and (or) non-profit organisations, including institutions of general secondary education of the Republic of Belarus, engaged in the development and promotion of sports.

The objectives of the association are as follows:

- to promote sports and a healthy lifestyle among students;
- to organise sports and mass sports events for schoolchildren;
- to promote talented students who have shown high sports results at the international and national level;
- to stimulate investment in the development of sports facilities of institutions of general secondary education;
- to co-operate with other national associations (unions) of school sports as well as with the International School Sports Federation;
- to represent the association in international organisations.

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15. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 92-Z of 9 January 2018 on Physical Culture and Sports, available at <http://sporteducation.by/img/file/normativnye-dokumenty/zakon.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2021.

## Collaboration and partnerships

The [Republican Centre of Physical Education and Sports of Pupils and Students](#) (hereinafter RCPES), as well as six regional centres in Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev regions and in Minsk promote youth fitness and physical activity among young people in the Republic of Belarus.

The founder of the RCPES is [the Ministry of Education](#).

Among the main objectives of the RCPES are:

- co-operating with organisations, clubs of physical culture and sports, educational institutions, trade unions, public associations, unions, federations, including international ones, in order to create the necessary conditions for improving the health of children and youth, their sports improvement, development of school and student sports;
- implementing international co-operation in the field of physical culture and sports.

The [Belarusian School Sports Association](#) co-operates with national associations of school sports and the International Federation of School Sports.

## 7.4. Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National strategy(ies)

There is no overarching document as a national youth strategy, but a set of public documents which define the strategic tasks of youth's healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition.

The explicit objectives of the health system are rooted in [the 1994 Constitution of the Republic of Belarus](#), which guarantees citizens universal access to health care services, free at the point of use. Implicit objectives for the health system include improving the health of the population, reducing morbidity and mortality rates, and improving average life expectancy levels. This is to be achieved by improving the quality of health care provided as well as its accessibility to the whole population, and through the strengthening of public health to address unhealthy lifestyle factors, working with individuals and community groups in order to address lifestyle factors which impact on health.

In line with the Law on Youth Policy (Article 14<sup>16</sup>), the state creates the necessary conditions for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle among young people is carried out by:

- organising physical culture and health-improving work with young people, attracting young people to systematic physical culture activities and sports;
- creating conditions for ensuring the availability of physical education and sports;
- conducting mass sports events in co-operation with physical culture and sports organisations;
- constructing physical culture infrastructure and sports facilities;

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16. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 65-Z of 7 December 2009 on the Foundations of State Youth Policy, available at [www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300\(017-034\).pdf&oldDocPage=9](http://www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300(017-034).pdf&oldDocPage=9), accessed 8 November 2021.

- organising health improvement and providing facilities in sanatoria and health resorts in accordance with the legislation;
- promoting a healthy lifestyle;
- prohibiting the sale of alcoholic, low-alcohol beverages, beer and tobacco products to minors;
- organising and holding other events aimed at encouraging a healthy lifestyle among young people.

As mentioned in 7.2., Administration and governance, youth health and well-being has been determined as one of the strategic youth policy priorities in [the National Youth Strategy](#).<sup>17</sup>

The main objectives of [the State programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021-2025](#) include creating conditions for youth health improvement (see more on the state programme in 7.2., Administration and governance, and 7.3., Sports, youth fitness and physical activity).

One of the key policy domains identified in the EYP sub-programme is the promotion of healthy lifestyles among young people. To implement the sub-programme, the Action Plan<sup>18</sup> has been developed and enacted. Within the framework of the Action Plan, one of the two key objectives is to encourage value attitude of young people to their health as a condition for the personal well-being and health of future generations.

The National Strategy for the Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2030<sup>19</sup> (Nacional'naya strategiya ustojchivogo social'no ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Belarus' do 2030 goda) states that it is necessary to encourage a healthy lifestyle among people and develop their moral personal responsibility for health protection. The emphasis is placed on creating conditions (labour protection and working conditions, environmental quality, development of physical culture and sports, etc.) for health prevention of the population throughout their lives. The strategic goal of the health prevention system development is to increase the healthy life expectancy of the population.

The main objectives are:

- prevention of HIV, drug addiction, smoking and alcoholism in the population;
- prevention of crisis states in adolescents and youth, strengthening mental health and prevention of suicidal behaviour by the preventive orientation of the health care system,

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17. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 349 of 19 June 2021 on the Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, available at [https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349\\_1624395600.pdf](https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349_1624395600.pdf), accessed 18 November 2021.

18. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 57 of 29 January 2021 on the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2021-2025, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22100057&p1=1>, accessed 8 November 2021.

19. The National Strategy for the Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, approved by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, protocol No. 10 of 2 May 2017, available at [www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/NSUR2030/Natsionalnaja-strategija-ustojchivogo-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitija-Respubliki-Belarus-na-period-do-2030-goda.pdf](http://www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/NSUR2030/Natsionalnaja-strategija-ustojchivogo-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitija-Respubliki-Belarus-na-period-do-2030-goda.pdf), accessed 10 November 2021.

- including conducting an active information campaign on a healthy lifestyle and self-preservation behaviour of a person;
- development of funding health care system, including a system of voluntary insurance of medical expenses, as well as the development of material methods to stimulate the population in strengthening their health;
- creation of a state mechanism to support a healthy lifestyle as a necessity (popularisation of “health trends” among the population);
- introduction of incentive mechanisms to encourage motivation for a healthy lifestyle among people.

The State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025<sup>20</sup> contributes to the achievement of the country’s national security indicators in the field of health and demographic security, as well as the achievement at the national level of the Sustainable Development Goals announced by the General Assembly of the United Nations, including Goal 3 “Ensuring a healthy lifestyle and promoting well-being for all at all ages”.

According to the State Programme,<sup>21</sup> national priority areas in the field of health protection and demographic security for 2021-2025 are as follows:

- development of measures to strengthen reproductive health, promotion of a healthy lifestyle and health-preserving culture;
- improvement of the support system for families with children, improvement of their living conditions, strengthening the institution of the family;
- development of outpatient services;
- transition from article-by-article financing of health care organisations to a system of financing based on the results achieved;
- implementation of the national system of medical accreditation of health care organisations;
- development of regional health care, including interregional and interdistrict centres.

The Doctrine on National Food Security of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, approved by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 962 of 15 December 2017 (Doktrine nacional’noj prodovol’svennoj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus’ do 2030 goda)<sup>22</sup> specifies the strategic goal of national food security development until 2030, which is to increase the availability of high-quality food for a full diet and develop a healthy lifestyle based on the sustainable development of competitive agricultural production, as well as the creation of social and economic conditions to maintain the consumption of basic foodstuffs at a rational level.

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20. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

21. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

22. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 962 of 15 December 2017 on the Doctrine on National Food Security of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=C21700962>, accessed 8 November 2021.

The main objectives in the field of ensuring and strengthening food security include:

- sustainable development of the production of basic types of food, that is sufficient to ensure food independence and the realisation of the export potential of the agro-industrial complex, the development of the production of new products in demand on the world market, including organic;
- guarantee of food safety and quality, support for the transition to a food quality assessment system according to international standards, improvement of regulatory requirements for food safety for human health at all stages of the technological cycle;
- achievement of a high level of physical and economic accessibility for the population;
- safe and high-quality food products in volumes and assortment that are necessary for an active and healthy lifestyle;
- timely identification, assessment, forecasting and prevention of internal and external threats to food security, minimising their negative impact through the formation of strategic stocks of agricultural products, raw materials and food, as well as operational monitoring of the state of food vulnerability of the population;
- promotion of nutrition culture of the population focused on the consumption of high-quality food products;
- enhancement of literacy and awareness of the population on food security and food safety.

### **Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people**

The Programme on Continuous Education of Children and Students for 2021-2025 was approved by the Resolution of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus No. 312 of 31 December 2020 (Programma nepreryvnogo vospitaniya detej i uchashchejsya molodezhi na 2021-2025 gody)<sup>23</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the PCECS).

One of the main directions of students' education, according to the PCECS, is fostering the culture of safe living and a healthy lifestyle; encouraging students' safe behaviour in social and professional activities, daily life; developing healthy lifestyle skills and awareness of the value of health.

The following results of the PCECS are expected: building students' knowledge about a healthy lifestyle and possible behaviour in emergency situations; development of students' valuable attitude to health, knowledge on the ways to preserve and strengthen health; students' active participation in sports associations and sections; promotion the culture of nutrition, balance between work and recreation among students.

To implement the PCECS the following initiatives are planned:

- activities aimed at the promotion of positive attitudes to a healthy lifestyle among students: contests, projects, essays, videos, motivator posters, trainings, flash mobs, etc.;

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23. The Resolution of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus No. 312 of 31 December 2020 on the Programme on Continuous Education of Children and Students for 2021-2025, available at <https://adu.by/images/2021/03/programma-vospitaniya-2021-2025.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2021.



informational, classroom (curatorial) hours on proper nutrition, compliance with sleep and rest, prevention of bad habits, etc.; republican contest of creative works: “A Healthy Lifestyle – the way to success”; “100 health tips”;

- events, projects, actions aimed at preserving and strengthening the health of students in educational and health-improving educational institutions;
- events within the framework of international and national health days (World Health Day, International Drug Control Day, International HIV Prevention Day);
- mass sports, physical culture and recreation events such as republican action “Week of sports and health”, etc.;
- activities aimed at forming an anti-drug barrier, prevention of the use of psychoactive substances and smoking mixtures;
- activities aimed at preventing internet addiction;
- activities aimed at preventing students’ involvement in the activities of destructive and unregistered organisations (round tables, thematic meetings, debates, discussions), etc.

### **Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

There is a growing understanding of the need to expand health promotion and health education among young people in Belarus. However, the traditional priority given to communicable disease prevention overshadows any health promotion activities relating to non-communicable diseases or ill-health. According to current Orders from the Ministry of Health, primary care doctors should spend six hours per year of their working time giving lectures on health to the population and then report these health education activities to the District Executive Health Committee. This practice has been carried over from the Soviet era, but its impact on health behaviour has not been fully evaluated. Similarly, much of the focus of health education has been awareness-raising events around specific days – 24 “days” against different diseases were noted in a total of 3 985 preventive events in 2011. Much emphasis is placed on the number of lectures given, adverts shown, round tables held and so on, but it is not clear how these initiatives are evaluated in terms of their impact on health or behaviour.

The National Strategy for Strengthening the Health of Children and Adolescents in the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2021 (Zdorov’e rebenka segodnya – zdorov’e nacie zavtra: Nacional’naya Strategiya ukrepleniya zdorov’ya detej i podroستkov v Respublike Belarus’ na 2018-2021 gody)<sup>24</sup> is aimed at protecting children’s health throughout all periods of life, creating favourable conditions for children’s health and development potential, reducing preventable morbidity and mortality, minimising the burden of the consequences of various diseases and ensuring a high quality of life towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Among the main objectives of the National Strategy for Strengthening the Health of Children and Adolescents in the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2021 are:

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24. The National Strategy for Strengthening the Health of Children and Adolescents in the Republic of Belarus for 2018-2021, available at [www.medcenter.by/documents-downloads/publicacii/88023.docx](http://www.medcenter.by/documents-downloads/publicacii/88023.docx), accessed 8 November 2021.



- to identify priority issues requiring complex and comprehensive solutions aimed at protecting the health of children and adolescents of the Republic of Belarus;
- to determine the directions of co-operation between state and non-state structures at all levels, to increase the role of public associations and non-governmental organisations in the field of child and adolescent health;
- to intensify joint approaches and concrete actions aimed at developing healthy lifestyle skills in children and adolescents in order to preserve and strengthen the health of the nation.

Health education in schools includes the following activities:

- extracurricular activities for promotion of healthy lifestyles among young people, where students acquire age-appropriate knowledge, skills and experience that help them to make a conscious choice in favour of a healthy lifestyle and health-preserving behaviour;
- contests, conferences, holidays, festivals, including children’s artistic creativity relating to health promotion for children and adolescents;
- interactive methods where children and adolescents are involved in the process of cognition, opinions and experience exchange, a joint search for solutions (role-plays, business games, simulation exercises, group work, interactive games, gamification, psychological trainings, seminars, group consultations, discussions, forum theatre, etc.);
- design of schools and classrooms with visual materials on hygiene and health protection and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle for children and adolescents;
- professional development of the teaching staff (once in five years) on the promotion of healthy lifestyles;
- lectures, seminars, consultations for parents on the health of children and adolescents, and promotion of their healthy lifestyle.

In general secondary education institutions, in addition to preventive work in extracurricular activities, considerable attention is paid to the formation of a healthy lifestyle within academic subjects. For example, the curriculum features mandatory subjects like Medical Training and the Basics of Life Safety. Within a course of Medical Training, students study the following topics: “Features of family planning”, “Reproductive health”, etc. The Basics of Life Safety aims to develop skills of self-protection and assistance in situations dangerous for the physical and mental health of children and youth.

Expected results of the strategy implementation are as follows:

- reduction of controlled morbidity and preventable mortality among children and adolescents;
- minimising the burden of loss of health of the child population (diseases, disability with severe loss of health, etc.);
- increase in the number of births of healthy children;

- growth, development and upbringing of children and adolescents in a safe and healthy family environment;
- expanding access of adolescents and young people to information on healthy lifestyle in order to increase motivation for health development skills.

The implementation of the strategy is based on interdepartmental co-operation – a set of activities carried out in close co-operation with an integrated team of specialists from various departments, public and other associations aimed at achieving common goals to improve the quality of health and life of children and adolescents, protecting their rights and interests.

To implement the strategy, the following stakeholders are involved: the government, the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; the Ministry of Information; the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the Ministry of Agriculture and Food; the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services; the Ministry of Sports and Tourism; the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade; the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection; the Ministry of Industry; the Ministry of Transport and Communications; the Ministry of Emergency Situations; public associations; international organisations; religious organisations; volunteers.

### **Peer-to-peer education approaches**

The teaching methodology based on the peer-to-peer approach is widely used in the country to train young volunteers.

Health prevention programmes for young people and by young people are being implemented in Belarusian cities with the support of international organisations and the involvement of volunteers.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

In accordance with the Law on Health Care, the implementation of any preventive measures aimed at eliminating risk factors for public health should be ensured on the principle of intersectoral co-operation, on an integrated interdepartmental approach and combining joint measures and resources of all structures related to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and strengthening public health.

Prevention processes involve not only health care organisations and institutions, but also other social sector actors (education, culture, social protection, physical education and sports), public, trade union organisations, legislative and executive authorities. In order to combine efforts and co-ordinate multilateral intersectoral and interdepartmental co-operation in the field of public health enhancement in the Republic of Belarus, a system of National Health Protection of the population has been developed. This system unites the activities of a wide social network of institutions dealing with the promotion of a healthy lifestyle of the population: health care institutions, educational institutions; industrial training institutions, health institutions and

organisations, institutions of additional education for children and youth, institutions and organisations of sports and tourism, public organisations and associations, mass media. The co-ordinating function of the activities of various bodies, institutions and public organisations in the field of public health belongs to the Ministry of Health.

### **Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

The main priority of the National Youth Strategy in the field of youth health is the use of social media technologies for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

There is a national-level organisation, the Republican Centre for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health, which co-ordinates the prevention of different illnesses (such as HIV) and the promotion of healthy lifestyles among the population at large and young people in particular. Public health departments in the centres for hygiene, epidemiology and public health seek to influence health risks at the population level and the negative influence of environmental factors, and to develop activities to reduce and predict these factors; they also develop strategies and decide the fundamental directions of activities in the field of disease prevention and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Over the last decades the state authorities have developed a roadmap to develop the nation's health. Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders undertake activities aimed at prevention of diseases, information campaigns, education work on healthy lifestyles (e.g., [Common Health Days](#)). The most dramatic challenges like HIV/AIDS, tobacco abuse, alcohol addiction, drug addiction and unwanted pregnancies are under intense scrutiny.

[Healthy lifestyle programmes](#) are held under the aegis of the Republican Public Organisation "Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs", the objectives of which are informing youth on a healthy lifestyle, carrying out trainings on disease prevention.

There are also local initiatives to inform on healthy lifestyles and prevent addictive behaviour: [Wellness and Sports Week](#); a dialogue platform [The health of the nation is in the hands of young people](#); [Wellness Week 2021 "Youth. Health. Lifestyle"](#) and others.

### **7.5. Mental health**

#### **National strategy(ies)**

There is no national strategy addressing young people's mental health and well-being in Belarus.

However, regulatory and legal framework on mental health includes a set of laws, instructions, and other documents that target mental health issues, including in youth:

- the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Health Care;<sup>25</sup>
- the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Providing Psychiatric Care;<sup>26</sup>
- the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Providing Psychological Care;<sup>27</sup>
- the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, their Precursors and Analogues;<sup>28</sup>
- the Instruction for Providing Psychotherapeutic Care at State Health Care providers;<sup>29</sup>
- the Instruction for Providing of Specialised Medical Care to Patients with Paroxysmal disorders;<sup>30</sup>
- the Social Rehabilitation Concept for Alcohol, Drugs, and Solvent Abusers;<sup>31</sup>
- Measures for the Prevention of Suicidal Behaviour in the Republic of Belarus in 2015-2019;<sup>32</sup>
- the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus in 2017-2025.<sup>33</sup>

Legislation is in place on psychiatric care to protect the rights of those with mental health problems – specifically the Law on Providing Psychiatric Care, which seeks to ensure universal access to psychiatric care for all Belarusian citizens, as well as tackling discrimination and protecting the human rights of people with mental health problems. Those with severe mental health problems also have access to disability benefits.

The fourth strategic priority – Youth health and well-being – of the National Youth Strategy<sup>34</sup> targets the mental health of young people. The objectives of the National Youth Strategy in the field of mental health are: preserving and strengthening physical and mental health; preventing

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25. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 2435-XII of 18 June 1993 as amended on 11 December 2020 on Health Care (Zakon Respubliki Belarus ot 18 iyunya 1993 g. № 2435-XII O zdavookhraneni), available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=v19302435>, accessed 8 November 2021.

26. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 349-3 of 7 January 2012 on Providing Psychiatric Care, available at <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=H11200349>, accessed 8 November 2021.

27. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 153-3 of 1 July 2010 on Providing Psychological Care, available at <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=H11000153>, accessed 8 November 2021.

28. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 408-3 of 13 July 2012 on Drugs, psychotropic substances, their precursors and analogues, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H11200408&p1=1>, accessed 8 November 2021.

29. The Instruction for Providing psychotherapeutic care at state health care providers, available at [https://mentalhealth.by/media/doc/npb/instrukciya\\_psihoterapiya.rar](https://mentalhealth.by/media/doc/npb/instrukciya_psihoterapiya.rar), accessed 8 November 2021.

30. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 189 of 27 February 2014 on the Instruction for Providing specialised medical care to the patients with paroxysmal disorders, available at <https://mentalhealth.by/media/doc/instrukcia.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2021.

31. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 803 of 25 September 2015 on the Social rehabilitation concept for alcohol, drug, and solvent abusers with the obligatory involvement of them in work, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C21500803&p1=1>, accessed 8 November 2021.

32. The Measures for the Prevention of Suicidal Behaviour in the Republic of Belarus in 2015-2019, available at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IG9FxFxXbsSxF4KlBlloQiaPEX\\_bECEhmz/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IG9FxFxXbsSxF4KlBlloQiaPEX_bECEhmz/view), accessed 8 November 2021.

33. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 451 of 13 June 2017 on the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus in 2017-2025, available at <https://mentalhealth.by/media/doc/nasionalni-plan.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2021.

34. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 349 of 19 June 2021 on the Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, available at [https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349\\_1624395600.pdf](https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349_1624395600.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

crisis, mental and behavioural disorders; developing value attitudes of young people to their health.

The State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025<sup>35</sup> addresses the mental health of the population of Belarus, including young people, in the third sub-programme, "Prevention and overcoming alcohol abuse and alcoholism, protection of mental health".

The key objectives set by the programme include:

- establishing structural, functional and material facilities for first aid for disorder prevention and provision of medical assistance to persons suffering from mental and behavioural disorders;
- developing measures for the prevention of suicides and for medical and psychological assistance to persons who have committed suicidal attempts; providing social assistance and psychological support to persons suffering from mental and behavioural disorders, increasing the level of their readaptation and resocialisation;
- creating effective interdepartmental interaction for the development of state policy aimed at preventing the formation of dependence on psychoactive substances;
- improving the system of training medical personnel to provide psychiatric services and medical care for mental and behavioural disorders at the request of the patient.

The government authorities responsible for the implementation, co-ordination and monitoring of the State Programme are the Ministry of Health, regional executive committees, Minsk city executive committee and 19 other ministries and departments within their competence.

Monitoring results of the programme implementation are represented in the official statistics, including the Statistical book "Children and Youth in the Republic of Belarus".<sup>36</sup>

### **Improving the mental health of young people**

The Action Plan of the State programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025 (*Zdorov'ye naroda i demograficheskaya bezopasnost' na 2021-2025 gody*)<sup>37</sup> includes the objective "Mental health care and reduction of suicide rates" and detailed measures on improving the mental health of the population, including youth.

The following measures are determined:

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35. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

36. Children and youth in the Republic of Belarus, 2018. Statistical book, National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 2018, available at [www.belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-tatistika/publications/statistical-publications-data-books-bulletins/public\\_compilation/index\\_10765](http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-tatistika/publications/statistical-publications-data-books-bulletins/public_compilation/index_10765), accessed 8 November 2021.

37. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

- launching an information hub on prevention and destigmatisation of mental disorders (diseases), including the development of a rubric for adolescents and young people;
- conducting informational and educational campaigns among the population to raise awareness on issues relating to mental health, including mental health of adolescents and young people, and to prevent suicidal behaviour; to increase the tolerance of the population to psychological and mental health care; to develop skills in identifying and coping with stress;
- conducting a study of risk factors and protective factors associated with the use of the internet by children;
- supporting pilot initiatives to develop skills in crisis coping, preserving mental health;
- creating adaptation school for parents and children with chronic disabling mental disorders;
- conducting adaptation trainings for first-year students in educational institutions.

The Sources of funding the State Programme are the republican budget, local budgets, and funds from UNICEF.

As the State Programme's measures are to be implemented until 2025, there is no information on the evaluation process so far.

Since 2019, the Republican Centre for Psychological Assistance has been operating. The centre coordinates the work of psychologists working at educational institutions, and provides advisory and methodological support to specialists, parents and youth.

Other measures to maintain the mental health of all groups within the youth population include, for example, the operation of telephone helplines.

There are [helplines](#) to provide emergency psychological assistance to children and adolescents (for example, the helpline "For children and adolescents", the Republican telephone "hotline" for providing psychological assistance to minors in crisis situations, and the children's telephone helpline from the Minsk Regional Clinical Centre "Psychiatry-Narcology"). There are also helplines to provide psychological assistance to specific target groups (for example, the Republican helpline for drug addicts, hotline for victims of domestic violence), and others (for example, helplines from Minsk City Centre for Social Services of Family and Children, "Belarusian Association of Young Christian Women"). Sources of funding are the state budget and public association funds. Results of monitoring and evaluation of the work of the helplines are reflected in the reports of organisations supporting the operation of the lines.

According to the Regulations on the Socio-pedagogical and Psychological Service of an Educational Institution,<sup>38</sup> socio-pedagogical and psychological centres are created in public and private educational institutions. The main tasks of the service are to provide socio-pedagogical support and psychological assistance for students. The target groups of the service are students and pupils. The service is funded from the budget. The performance evaluation of the service is annually

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38 The Resolution of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus No. 116 of 25 July 2011 on the Approval of the Regulations on the Socio-pedagogical and Psychological Service at Educational Institution, available at [https://adu.by/images/2019/02/Postanovlenie%20MO%20RB%2025.07.2011\\_116.docx](https://adu.by/images/2019/02/Postanovlenie%20MO%20RB%2025.07.2011_116.docx), accessed 8 November 2021.

represented in the reports. However, the materials of the reports are not published in the public domain.

UNESCO trainings on different topics relating to youth mental health are available regularly, including online courses (for example, on the platform [EDU-HUB](#)) for educators, mentors and youth workers. Courses' target groups are teachers, psychologists, curators, youth workers, and other professionals who work with young people. Funding is provided by UNESCO. The results depend on the objectives of the training, but the main outcomes are implementation of new knowledge and practices in work with youth, and improvement of youth work in the sphere of mental health care.

## **7.6. Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks**

### **Policy framework**

In line with Article 14 of the Youth Policy Law,<sup>39</sup> state health care organisations provide the necessary medical care to young people, including annual medical examination of minors, pupils and students. An annual medical examination is also provided for working youth.

Measures on early detection and signposting health risks in the population (including youth) are presented in state programmes. For example, within the implementation of the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2016-2020<sup>40</sup> two republican preventive projects have been launched:

- the state preventive project "Healthy cities and towns";
- the interdepartmental preventive project for institutions of general secondary education "School is the territory of health", as well as more than 160 regional preventive projects.

The projects aim to create and support initiative volunteer groups in local communities to prevent non-communicable diseases and promote a healthy lifestyle among the population.

The current State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025<sup>41</sup> in sub-programme 2, "Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases", focuses on information campaigns and educational work with the population on health risk prevention.

It is assumed that by 2025 the implementation of preventive measures will allow to ensure a decrease in 1) consumption of tobacco products of all types; 2) the number of persons whose physical activity does not meet the recommendations of the World Health Organization; 3) the risk

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39. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 65-Z of 7 December 2009 on the Foundations of State Youth Policy, available at [www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300\(017-034\).pdf&oldDocPage=9](http://www.pravo.by/document/?guid=2012&oldDoc=2009-300/2009-300(017-034).pdf&oldDocPage=9), accessed 8 November 2021.

40. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 200 of 14 March 2016 on the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2016-2020, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C21600200&p1=1>, accessed 18 November 2021.

41. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.



of cases of illness and death caused by human behaviour. The first two objectives target the population over 18 years old, and the third objective the population at large.

The primary health care network in Minsk and five regional centres is provided through the network of paediatric polyclinics, where a number of preventive, diagnostic, consultation and referral services are offered. In rural areas there have been concerted efforts to introduce GPs who provide primary care services to both adults and children.

Large sections of the population are required to have preventive health checks with the main specialists (neurologists, ENT specialists, surgeons, ophthalmologists, endocrinologists and gynaecologists). Annual check-ups are also provided for schoolchildren, students, patients from the contaminated areas of the Chernobyl zone, patients with chronic diseases, and certain workers in certain jobs. Since 2008, mass population screening (dispanserizatsiya) has sought to cover the whole adult population of Belarus, with an emphasis on those of working age.

### **Stakeholders**

Annual medical examination at the local level is provided by medical clinics staff and educational institutions, pedagogical and administrative personnel (in the case of working youth, administrative personnel of the employer and medical clinic staff).

Information campaigns and educational events on health prevention issues are provided by all specialists who work with youth, including pedagogical and administrative personnel, specialists of socio-pedagogical and psychological services, social workers, youth workers, doctors, health practitioners and others.

### **Guidance to stakeholders**

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education draft methodical recommendations and guidance on the early detection and signposting of health risks for educational institutions and medical clinic staff.

Besides, [methodical recommendations](#) for the staff of higher educational establishments have been developed by the Centre of Educational Work in Higher School in the National Institute for Higher Education.

Additional guidance for stakeholders is available on special information resources. [The official website of the Ministry of Health](#), the [website of the Ministry of Education](#), and the [information section](#) on the website of the Republican Research and Practice Mental Health Centre provide information on the regulatory and legal framework, instructions and recommendations, internal rules, and procedures to support stakeholders. Articles, news and recommendations on health issues are regularly posted on an educational website "[Healthy People](#)" administered by the Ministry of Health.



Trainings of volunteers and youth workers, NGOs and other stakeholders regarding prevention and the health and well-being of young people are regularly provided by the Republican Volunteer Centre in the National Institute for Higher Education.

### **Target groups**

The policy framework considers all population including youth as the target group. Nevertheless, young people with disabilities, with mental health problems, and children of Chernobyl are specifically highlighted in some documents.

### **Funding**

Sources of funding are the state budget and public association funds.

## **7.7. Making health facilities more youth friendly**

The Law on Health Care<sup>42</sup> and the State Programme on People's Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025<sup>43</sup> are the main top-level health policies in the country. However, the documents target all citizens of the state.

A separate system of specialists and diagnostic facilities for children and adolescents as well as children's hospitals and polyclinics has been developed in the country.

The medical services for young people are provided free of charge and based on the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

There are several ongoing preventive health projects and initiatives for children and adolescents. They involve a wide range of stakeholders: volunteers, representatives of youth organisations, other NGOs dealing with youth health issues, and primary health care institutions. Among them are:

- [helplines](#) for children and adolescents providing consultations and support on the issues related to mental health, suicidal prevention, violence;
- [adolescent-friendly centres](#), which have been set up to meet the criteria of equity and equality, accessibility, respect for children rights, and provide consultations on the issues of reproductive, mental, and somatic health;
- the [Centre of Healthy Youth](#), which has been open for addicted people and offers treatment for alcohol, drug and tobacco addicts.

Youth Health Centres (hereinafter – the centres) have been operating in different cities of Belarus. The centres provide qualified medical and psychological assistance in the field of reproductive

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42. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 2435-XII of 18 June 1993 as amended on 11 December 2020 on Health Care (Zakon Respubliki Belarus ot 18 iyunya 1993 g. № 2435-XII O zdavookhranenii), available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=v19302435>, accessed 8 November 2021.

43. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on State programme "People's health and demographic security for 2021-2025", available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 8 November 2021.

health; organise trainings on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, HIV, sexually transmitted infections; and promote healthy lifestyles and responsible behaviour of young people in relation to their reproductive health. The centres are staffed with doctors – gynaecologists, urologists, andrologists and psychologists – who have undergone special trainings organised by UNFPA and the Ministry of Health.

UNICEF and Belarusian Special Olympics Committee have agreed on an [inclusive health programme](#) that is provided based on an inclusive approach in the sphere of education and sports. The same health programmes and services are available for people with and without mental disabilities. The programme contributes to social rehabilitation of children with disabilities, teaching them healthy lifestyle behaviours and sports skills; addressing issues of adaptation for people with intellectual disabilities and building an inclusive world.

## 7.8. Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

Taking into consideration that the strategic documents in the field of youth policy and health – the National Youth Policy Strategy;<sup>44</sup> the State YEP Programme; the State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025;<sup>45</sup> the State Programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021-2025<sup>46</sup> – were adopted in 2021, no legislative amendments or adoption are foreseen in the near future.

Therefore, several laws that can affect youth health are pending before the Parliament:

- [On the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion](#) is prepared for the second reading in the Commission on Labour and Social Affairs. The law will ensure national legislation approximation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- [On amendments to the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Provision of Psychological Care](#) is currently prepared for the first reading in the Commission on Health, Physical Culture, Family and Youth Policy. The amendments are expected to become the basis for psychological education and psychological support.

### Ongoing debates

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused much [public debate](#) in terms of following hygiene rules and the importance of vaccination as the disease affects youth’s physical and mental health.

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44. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 349 of 19 June 2021 on the Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, available at [https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349\\_1624395600.pdf](https://pravo.by/upload/docs/op/C22100349_1624395600.pdf), accessed 18 November 2021.

45. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 28 of 19 January 2021 on the State Programme on People’s Health and Demographic Security for 2021-2025, available at [http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028\\_1611349200.pdf](http://minzdrav.gov.by/upload/dadvfiles/letter/22100028_1611349200.pdf), accessed 28 November 2021.

46. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 54 of 24 January 2021 on the State Programme on Physical Culture and Sports for 2021-2025, available at <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=C22100054>, accessed 19 November 2021.

The main participants involved in the debate are the [Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus](#), the State Institution [Republican Centre for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health](#), and the [Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus](#). As a result of their joint work, [Methodological Recommendations on the Organisation of the Educational Process in Educational Institutions at the time of COVID-19](#) have been issued.

According to the [Recommendations of the Ministry of Health](#), those who are involved in the educational process are strongly recommended to get vaccinated (if possible), to keep a physical distance of at least one metre from others, to avoid crowds and close contact, to wear a properly fitted mask, and to clean hands frequently with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.