

BELARUS

| International Instrument | Signature | Ratification, Acceptance (A), Approval (AA), Accession (a), Succession (d) | Entry Into Force |
|--|-------------|--|------------------|
| UN Convention on the Rights of the Child | 26 Jan 1990 | 1 Oct 1990 | 31 Oct 1990 |
| UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | | 23 Jan 2002 a ¹ | 23 Feb 2002 |
| Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons | 14 Dec 2000 | 25 Jun 2003 | 25 Dec 2003 |
| UN Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict | | 25 Jan 2006 a ² | 25 Feb 2006 |
| International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance | | | |
| Hague Convention on International Child Abduction | | 12 Jan 1998 A ³ | 1 Apr 1998 |

In Belarus, there are nine laws that refer directly or indirectly to missing children:

1. Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 2570-XII on the Rights of the Child of 19 November 1993;
2. Constitution of the Republic of Belarus of 1994;
3. Code of the Republic of Belarus on Marriage and Family of 9 July 1999;
4. Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus of 9 July 1999;
5. Criminal Procedure Code of Belarus of 16 July 1999;
6. Code of the Republic of Belarus on Administrative Violations of 21 April 2003;
7. Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 200-Z on the Basic Principles of Prevention of Child Neglect and Crimes Committed by Minors of 31 May 2003;
8. Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 263-Z on Internal Affairs Agencies of the Republic of Belarus of 17 July 2007; and
9. Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 307-Z on Operational Investigative Activity of 15 July 2015.

¹ See Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, G.A. Res. 54/263, Annex II, U.N. Doc. A/54/49, Vol. III, art. 2, para. c, Declarations and Reservations, at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en#EndDec (last visited June 29, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

² See Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, G.A. Res. A/RES/54/263 (May 25, 2000), entered into force Feb. 12, 2002, Status of Ratification, Declaration, at <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> (last visited June 29, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

³ See 1980 Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, Oct. 25, 1980, T.I.A.S. No. 11670, 1343 U.N.T.S. 98 Reservations, at <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/status-table/notifications/?csid=603&disp=resdn> (last visited June 29, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

General Child Protection

On 12 March 2012, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus approved the National Child Welfare Strategy for 2012-2016.⁴ The Strategy outlines certain measures to improve protection of children's rights in Belarus including measures to protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation, and child trafficking while bringing child protection legislation into compliance with the CRC, and the possible establishment of a national Office of the Children's Rights Ombudsman.

Currently, the main authority tasked with protecting children's rights in Belarus is the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, including representatives of the national and local legislative and executive authorities, law enforcement and other governmental organizations, and NGOs.⁵ There are only three NGO representatives in the Commission: the Belarusian Children's Fund; the Belarusian Association of Parents with Many Children; and the Belarusian Republican Youth Union.⁶ The Commission is accountable to the President of Belarus and is responsible for suggesting amendments to child protection legislation; considering applications on protection of children's rights submitted by children, their legal representatives, and NGOs; monitoring the activities of other child protection organizations and authorities; and cooperating with UNICEF and other international organizations on implementing provisions of the CRC into national legislation.⁷

One of the leading organizations focusing on child protection issues in Belarus is the international NGO Ponimanie (INGO "Understanding"). Among the primary groups assisted by Ponimanie are children in difficult situations, such as abused and neglected children, at-risk children, and orphans. Ponimanie organizes summer camps, seminars, and workshops; issues publications; and conducts analysis and research dedicated to the protection of childhood and prevention of child abuse and the sale of children. Among its projects are Child Helpline Belarus – a helpline that provides aid to children who have found themselves in difficult situations, and Dom Ponimania (House of Understanding) – a facility where child victims can receive comprehensive aid, including psychological assistance and rehabilitative services.⁸

General Missing Children's Issues

There is no legislation specifically dedicated to the issue of missing children in Belarus.

The Law on the Rights of the Child of 1993 focuses on children in disadvantaged circumstances who are in need of government protection including orphans, children without parental care, disabled children, children with particularities in psychophysical development, children who are victims of emergency situations or armed conflicts, child refugees, children who have been prosecuted, children in special educational organizations and medical educational organizations, children who are victims of abduction, trafficking, illicit transfer, and children not returned from abroad.⁹ The law outlines the

⁴ Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 12 March 2012 No. 218 On Approval of the National Child Welfare Strategy for 2012-2016, at <http://method.nchtdm.by/files/Metod/Gosprogram/nacplan2016.pdf> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁵ Presidential Decree of 16 November 2006 No. 675 On the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, at <http://sos-villages.by/ukaz-o-nacionalnoy-komissii-po-pravam-rebenka> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁶ Tatiana Shchurko, *Institutes of protection of the rights of the children in Belarus* (June 20, 2014), NASHE MNIENIE, at <http://nmnby.eu/news/analytics/5519.html> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁷ Clauses 3 and 6 of the Regulation on the National Commission on the Rights of the Child approved by the Presidential Decree of 16 November 2006 No. 675, at <http://sos-villages.by/ukaz-o-nacionalnoy-komissii-po-pravam-rebenka> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

⁸ INGO Ponimanie, *Our history*, *supra* note 20; INGO Ponimanie, *Projects*, *supra* note 20.

⁹ The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 2570-XII On the Rights of the Child of 1993, Section 4, at <http://sos-villages.by/zakon-o-pravah-rebenka> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

right of these children to be protected and explains the need for the government of Belarus to provide certain protections to these children.¹⁰

In 2012, Ponimanie, a member of both ICMEC's GMCN and Child Helpline International, created the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Belarus.¹¹ The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children assists law enforcement agencies in the search for missing children by disseminating information to the public using mass media resources, and by coordinating activities of volunteer groups dedicated to searching for missing children.¹² The Centre also plans to provide legal and psychological assistance to parents of missing children and carry out preventive work with children who regularly run away from home or educational institutions.¹³

Definition of "Missing Child"

While there is no definition for "missing child" in Belarusian legislation, Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of Ponimanie, explained that the Instructions on Interaction between the Internal Affairs Agencies, Prosecutors, Investigative Committee Units, Investigative Units of the State Security Agencies, Agencies of the National Committee of Forensic Investigation when Searching for Missing Persons and on Conducting Missing Persons Cases of 2016 defines "disappeared person" and "missing person."¹⁴

A disappeared person is "a person about whom law enforcement received a report of their disappearance." A disappeared person is considered "missing" if he or she could not be found after 10 days of searching and law enforcement opened a criminal case due to such disappearance pursuant to the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Belarus of 1999.¹⁵

The Law on the Basic Principles of Prevention of Child Neglect and Crimes Committed by Minors of 2003 (Law on Prevention of Child Neglect) highlights the following categories of runaways:

- minors who ran away from home;
- minors who ran away from children's boarding institutions, specialized educational and medical establishments; and
- minors who ran away from remand houses (e.g., temporary detention centers).¹⁶

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *About Us*, at <http://poisk-detei.by/about-us/> (last visited June 23, 2016); GMCN, *About Us*, at <http://internationalmissingchild.org/about-us> (last visited June 23, 2016); INGO Ponimanie, *Centre for Missing and Exploited Children*, *supra* note 20; Child Helpline International, *Where We Work*, at <http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/where-we-work/> (last visited June 23, 2016); INGO Ponimanie, *Child Helpline Belarus*, at <http://ponimanie.org/eng/projects/child-helpline/> (last visited June 23, 2016).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ According to INGO Ponimanie these definitions are given in the Instruction on Interaction between the Internal Affairs Agencies, Prosecutors, Investigative Committee Units, Investigative Units of the State Security Agencies, Agencies of the National Committee of Forensic Investigation when Searching for Missing Persons and on Tracing of Persons and on Conducting Missing Persons Cases, affirmed by the joint Decree of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, General Prosecutor's Office, Investigative Committee, the Committee of the State Security, and the National Committee of Forensic Investigation of January 5, 2016. This Instruction has restricted access.

¹⁵ Paragraph 2 of Article 167 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Belarus of 1999, at <http://etalonline.by/?type=text®num=HK9900295> (last visited June 23, 2016).

¹⁶ Article 23 of the Law No. 200-Z On the Basic Principles of Prevention of Child Neglect and Crimes Committed by Minors of 2013, the link to this law is posted on the official website of the Soligorsk ROVD, at <http://rovd-soligorsk.by/inspektsiya-po-delam-nesovershennoletnikh-idn> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children).

The Law on Prevention of Child Neglect further stipulates that Criminal Police Units are mandated to search for these runaways.¹⁷ Some of the abandoned or neglected children may have run away from home or from a children's boarding institution, which puts them in danger. The Law on Prevention of Child Neglect mandates authorities to identify such endangered children and provide them with protection and care services.¹⁸ Juvenile Affairs Inspectorates – special units within Internal Affairs Agencies in Belarus that actively search for missing children and investigate missing children's cases – are tasked with preventing the neglect and delinquency of children, assisting the Criminal Police Units in searching for runaways, and sending them to the relevant institutions and agencies mandated to prevent child neglect and juvenile crimes.¹⁹

The Law on Prevention of Child Neglect defines “a minor in a socially dangerous situation” as “a person under 18 years of age who is in a situation dangerous to his life or health or inadequate to his upbringing or care as a result of neglect or abandonment.”²⁰

Abandonment

Article 1 of the Law on Prevention of Child Neglect defines neglected and abandoned children as follows:

Neglected child – a person under 18 years of age left without adult control over his behavior due to nonperformance or improper performance of duties related to the child's upbringing, education and/or support by his parents or other legal representatives or officials or due to running away from home or from a children's boarding institution;

Abandoned minor – a neglected child without a place of residence.

Kidnapping and Abduction

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus of 1999, as amended in April 2016, criminalizes kidnapping and abduction of a child. The sentence may result in deprivation of liberty for a term of 5 to 15 years with forfeiture of assets.²¹

Additionally, Article 180 of the Criminal Code prohibits intentional substitution of someone else's child (*i.e.*, switching infants at birth) and is punishable by correctional labor for a term of up to two years or by imprisonment for the same term. If this crime was committed for financial gain or from bad motives (*e.g.*, when a woman switches infants at birth in the hospital because her own child was born with a disability and she wants a healthy infant), the punishment is harsher and constitutes restriction of liberty for a term of up to five years, or imprisonment for a term of three to six years with a fine.

Parental Abduction

Belarus acceded to the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction on 12 January 1998.²² The Ministry of Justice is the Central Authority for any incoming and outgoing cases,²³ but no implementing

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* at Articles 2, 13, and 15.

¹⁹ *Id.* at Article 21.

²⁰ *Id.* at Article 1.

²¹ Part 2 (1) Article 182 of the Criminal Code of Belarus, at <http://etalonline.by/?type=text®num=hk9900275> (last visited June 23, 2016).

²² Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction: Status Table, *supra* note 47.

²³ HCCH, *Belarus – Central Authority*, at <https://www.hcch.net/en/states/authorities/details3/?aid=68> (last visited June 23, 2016).

legislation has been adopted in Belarus that describes the return mechanism of an abducted child.²⁴ Parental abduction is not considered a crime in Belarus, unless such parent is deprived of his or her parental rights.²⁵

The Law on the Order of Departure from the Republic of Belarus and Entry into the Republic of Belarus by Citizens of the Republic of Belarus of 2009 (Law on Departure and Entry) contains a number of requirements regarding cross-border travel with children. As a general rule, a child traveling with both parents/guardians or one parent/guardian does not need the consent of the other parent/guardian to exit Belarus.²⁶ A parent or guardian in this case must submit a document certifying their relationship with the child (e.g., child's birth certificate; documents confirming custody, adoption, or guardianship; international passport of parent or guardian containing information about the child; travel document of parent or guardian containing information about the child).²⁷ However, if the other parent opposes the child's exit from Belarus, that parent can request the court to determine a different order of departure for the child from Belarus.²⁸ If the court determines a different order of departure, information about the child is added into the database of citizens whose right to leave Belarus is temporarily restricted.²⁹

According to the Law on Departure and Entry, if a child travels unaccompanied, the child must have a passport and notarized consent from both parents/guardians to leave Belarus.³⁰ In several exceptional cases, notarized consent is required only from one parent/guardian.³¹

While there are no requirements in the Law on Departure and Entry that specifically control entry of children into Belarus, upon arrival, children who are foreign citizens must be registered with the local authorities at the place of their stay by a legal representative of the child.³²

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for issuing passports for citizens of Belarus.³³ Only one of the parents/guardians may submit an application for a child's passport on behalf of a child under 14 years

²⁴ Law Library of Congress, *Republic of Belarus, Hague Convention On International Child Abduction* (2004), at <http://www.kinder-nach-hause.de/docs/belarus.pdf> (last visited June 23, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children); Our research did not find implementing legislation. This information was confirmed by Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (correspondence of May 23, 2016).

²⁵ Information provided by Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (May 23, 2016).

²⁶ Article 12, The Law No. 49-Z On the Order of Departure from the Republic of Belarus and Entry into the Republic of Belarus of 20 September 2009, at <http://pravo.newsby.org/belarus/zakon0/z465.htm> (last visited June 23, 2016).

²⁷ *Id.* at Articles 12 and 17.

²⁸ *Id.* at Article 12.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.* at Articles 12 and 18.

³¹ There are several exceptions to the rule stipulated in Articles 13-16 of the Law No. 49-Z On the Order of Departure from the Republic of Belarus and Entry into the Republic of Belarus of 20 September 2009. First, unaccompanied children may submit a consent form only from one parent in case of: (1) absence of one of the parents/ guardians or impossibility of obtaining his/her consent (e.g., another parent is legally incompetent, deprived of his parental rights, is on the wanted list, diseased, or missing) - such circumstances must be confirmed by relevant document; (2) traveling for health resort treatment together with an organized group of children (a person accompanying children must have a duly certified list of children included in the tourist group); (3) travelling for medical treatment (in this case a child also needs to present a decision of a Commission on Sending Citizens of Belarus Abroad to get medical help); (4) traveling as a permanent resident of another country or with a diplomatic or official passport; (5) traveling as an orphan or a child left without parental care (in this case a child must present a decision of a local executive authority to send him abroad to study for a term up to 30 days, documents confirming his departure to get health resort treatment or medical treatment, or a permission from local custody and guardianship authorities to depart from Belarus due to other reasons).

³² Paragraph 4 clause 10 of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 73 of 20 January 2006 On approval of the Rules of Residence of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus, at http://etalonline.by/?type=text®num=C20600073#load_text_none_2_1 (last visited June 24, 2016).

³³ Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus, *What do you need for departure of a child with distant relatives or friends for recreation abroad*, at <http://mvd.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=78383> (last visited June 24, 2016).

of age. However, if a child applies for a passport for the first time due to attainment of the age of 14, he or she must submit passports or other identity documents for both parents/guardians.³⁴

Reporting Mechanism

When a child is missing, a parent must file a missing report with the local police department and contact the Bureau of Registration of Accidents within the Internal Affairs Agencies. The staff at the Bureau will check the records of hospitals and morgues. There are currently four Bureaus in Belarus: Gomel, Minsk, Mogilev, and Vitebsk. If the Bureau has no data on the missing child, a missing report must be filed with the local police department.³⁵ A child can be reported missing to police in person or through the police 24-hour telephone number (102).³⁶ Any person can file a report, not only a relative of the missing child.³⁷ If a child has disappeared in a rural area such as a forest or near a river, it also is advised to call the Ministry of Emergency Situations telephone number (101).³⁸

There are several hotlines specifically dealing with cases of missing children in Belarus. The search-and-rescue squad Angel, an independent volunteer organization, has a 24-hour hotline (+375 33 6666 856).³⁹ The Angel hotline is not toll-free.⁴⁰ The hotline also can receive reports through Angel's website (angel-search.by).

Ponimanie operates Child Helpline Belarus (8 801 100 1611), a toll-free number anyone can call to report violence against children, child abuse, or missing children. In addition, child victims or their parents may call to receive emergency psychological help.⁴¹

Missing children also can be reported to Simuran, another search and rescue squad, by telephone (+375 29 500 41 84, +375 29 166 79 07, +375 29 801 71 08, +375 29 232 11 11), or through their website (http://vk.com/simuran_belarus).

ICMEC's research could not determine the extent to which information is being shared among hotlines, the Criminal Police Unit, and the Juvenile Affairs Inspectorates.

Investigation of Missing Children Cases

The Instructions for Internal Affairs Agencies on How to Receive, Register, Review and Record Complaints and Reports on Crimes, Administrative Offenses and Incidents of 2010 mandates law enforcement to undertake an immediate investigation for a missing person upon receiving a report.⁴²

³⁴ Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus, *Passports according to new rules* (Aug 20, 2012), at <http://mvd.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=88753> (last visited June 24, 2016).

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ A comment by INGO Ponimanie in response to the verification letter sent by ICMEC.

³⁷ Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus, *Searching for you!* (Dec. 27, 2012), at <http://mvd.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=102033> (last visited June 24, 2016).

³⁸ Volunteer search-and-rescue squad "Angel", *How to search and what to do in case a child went missing*, at <http://angel-search.by/node/294> (last visited June 24, 2016).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Correspondence with Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (May 23, 2016).

⁴¹ National Child Helpline, *About the helpline*, at <http://1611.by/about> (last visited June 24, 2016); correspondence with Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (May 23, 2016).

⁴² Clause 6 of the Instructions on how to Receive, Register, Review and Record Complaints and Reports on Crimes, Administrative Offenses and Incidents by the Internal Affairs Agencies affirmed by the Decree of the Ministry of Interior No.55 of 10 March 2010 (*the text of the Instructions is not available, this information was provided by the INGO Ponimanie*); Vasily Pervunin, *Missing persons. About 2.5 thousands people are reported missing in Belarus* (Feb. 11, 2016) AiF, at <http://www.aif.by/social/item/44393-bez-vesti-propavshie-gde-oni.html> (last visited June 24, 2016); Ekaterina Sinyuk, *The Center for Missing and Exploited Children may appear in Belarus* (Oct. 4, 2011), TUT.BY, at <http://news.tut.by/society/252644.html> (last visited June 24, 2016).

Criminal Police Units and Juvenile Affairs Inspectorates are mandated to search for any missing child.⁴³ Belarusian law enforcement authorities have internal guidelines and policies explaining how to proceed when a missing person case is reported to police including registering a report by a duty officer, informing the officers of the Investigative Committee of Belarus about the case, conducting operational search activities, initiating a criminal case, and its further investigation.⁴⁴

When a search for a missing child takes place in a rural area, the police engage the Ministry of Emergency Situations.⁴⁵ Volunteer search-and-rescue squads, like Angel or Simuran, also take part in the search for a missing child by creating and distributing posters in the neighborhood, disseminating information about the missing child on the Internet, and physically searching the area where the child went missing.⁴⁶ Although there is no formal agreement between the search-and-rescue squads, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Investigative Committee to strengthen their collaboration, according to mass media reports these entities appear to coordinate search efforts when possible.⁴⁷

The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children under Ponimanie aims to assist law enforcement in the search for missing children.⁴⁸ The Centre informs the public about a missing child case by disseminating posters, publishing information on its website, and sending out mailers.⁴⁹ On 27 April 2012, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ponimanie signed a plan of cooperation between the Centre and law enforcement authorities. Ponimanie is the only NGO in Belarus that has such an agreement in place. This plan describes the procedures for exchanging information on missing children between the Centre and law enforcement, disseminating information in public places and in transport, and engaging print and electronic media, as well as the public.⁵⁰

National Database

In Belarus, law enforcement registers all reports of missing children in the Book of Records by hand and also enters relevant data (e.g., information about a missing child, the starting date of the investigation, and the name of the agency that initiated the investigation) in a national database that

⁴³ Article 15 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 263-Z On Internal Affairs Agencies of the Republic of Belarus of 17 July 2007, at <http://www.pravo.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=H10700263> (last visited June 24, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children); Articles 21 and 23 of the Law No. 200-Z On the Basic Principles of Prevention of Child Neglect and Crimes Committed by Minors of 2013, *supra* note 153.

⁴⁴ Instruction on Interaction between the Internal Affairs Agencies, Prosecutors, Investigative Committee Units, Investigative Units of the State Security Agencies, Agencies of the National Committee of Forensic Investigation when Searching for Missing Persons and on Tracing of Persons and on Conducting Missing Persons Cases, affirmed by the joint Decree of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, General Prosecutor's Office, Investigative Committee, the Committee of the State Security, and the National Committee of Forensic Investigation of 5 January 2016. This Instruction has restricted access; Instructions on how to Receive, Register, Review and Record Complaints and Reports on Crimes, Administrative Offenses and Incidents by the Internal Affairs Agencies, *supra* note 179.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus, *Children are found* (July 20, 2010), at http://mchs.gov.by/rus/main/ministry/regional_management/str_gomel/news_gomel/~year_m22=2010~news_m22=1454 (last visited June 24, 2016); Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus, *Little kids – a brother and a sister – were found in Minsky district* (Aug. 21, 2012), at http://mchs.gov.by/rus/main/events/news/~year_m22=2012~news_m22=8725 (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁴⁶ Pavlyuk Bykovsky, *Search for missing persons with the help of Bynet* (June 14, 2013), DW, at <http://www.dw.com/ru/поиск-пропавших-людей-с-помощью-байнета/a-16880054> (last visited June 24, 2016); Olga Kalenik, *Angel is searching for missing persons* (Feb. 18, 2016), at <http://edinstvo.by/?p=127613> (last visited June 24, 2016); Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *Volunteers*, at <http://poisk-detei.by/volunteers/> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *What we do*, at <http://poisk-detei.by/about-us/chto-delaem/> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *About Us*, *supra* note 148; INGO Ponimanie, *Centre for Missing and Exploited Children*, *supra* note 20.

contains records of missing persons (including missing children) and unidentified corpses.⁵¹ Access to the database is restricted to the public.⁵²

Additionally, in 2008, a DNA database was created in Belarus,⁵³ which contains DNA samples of unidentified remains, criminals charged with grave and extremely grave offenses, evidence of crime, and DNA samples of relatives of missing persons.⁵⁴

Case Management System

The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children operates its own case management system that contains information on those children who were officially reported missing to law enforcement.⁵⁵ Information from this database is accessible to the public in the hopes that someone might recognize a missing child.⁵⁶ ICMEC's research could not confirm whether law enforcement authorities have a separate case management system.

Alert Mechanism

In 2014, Ponimanie became a member of AMBER Alert Europe, the European child rescue alert and police network on missing children.⁵⁷ No rapid emergency child alert system has been developed to date in Belarus. However, traditional photo distribution mechanisms are in place.

The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children and search-and-rescue squads (Angel and Simuran) assist law enforcement with informing the public about missing children by disseminating information about the missing child online and in print form.⁵⁸ The Directorates of Internal Affairs of the regional executive board publish information on missing persons on their official websites.⁵⁹ In addition, Angel volunteers can subscribe to emergency messages when active searches begin.⁶⁰

Awareness-Raising Initiatives

The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children holds educational events (sometimes with participation of specialists from other countries) for government officials, law enforcement, representatives of NGOs, and the general public, in order to make the search for missing children more effective, improve the prevention framework, and share experiences regarding the search for missing children.⁶¹

⁵¹ A comment by INGO Ponimanie to the verification letter; correspondence with Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (May 23, 2016).

⁵² A comment by INGO Ponimanie to the verification letter; correspondence with Andrey Makhanko, Chairman of the Board of INGO Ponimanie (May 23, 2016).

⁵³ Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus, *Genes will help investigators in solving crimes* (Sept. 19, 2011), at <http://mvd.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=53173> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁵⁴ Instruction on How to Maintain and Use the Genetic and Fingerprint Records, approved by the Decree of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus No. 247 of 12 November 2004, at <http://www.levonevski.net/pravo/razdel8/num1/8d11717.html> (last visited June 24, 2016) (on file with the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children); Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Belarus, *Genes will help investigators in solving crimes* (Sept. 19, 2011), at <http://mvd.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=53173> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁵⁵ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *Children's Database*, at <http://poisk-detei.by/base-missing/?start=20> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *INGO "Ponimanie" – a Partner of AMBER Alert Europe* (April 15, 2014), at <http://poisk-detei.by/2012-12-09-19-51-12/nashi-novosti/765-moo-ponimanie-partner-amber-alert-europe/> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁵⁸ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *What we do*, *supra* note 185.

⁵⁹ For example, see the official website of the Gomelsky Directorate of Internal Affairs, at www.uvd.gomel.by/Rozysk/Bez_vesti_propavshie/html (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁶⁰ Volunteer search-and-rescue squad "Angel", *Subscribe to SMS mass texting*, at <http://angel-search.by/node/39> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁶¹ Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, *What we do*, *supra* note 185.

Search-and-rescue squads Angel and Simuran are actively involved in educational and awareness raising campaigns dedicated to child safety issues. In February 2016, volunteers of the Belarus Red Cross organized an awareness raising campaign for third and fourth grade students introducing them to the rules of safety and responsible behavior, and teaching them how to better protect themselves from abuse.⁶²

Since 2013, the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, volunteer search-and-rescue squads, and the Belarus Red Cross have participated in organizing events around 25 May – International Missing Children’s Day to raise awareness of child abduction and to educate families about how to keep children safer.⁶³

Trafficking

Article 181 parts 1 and 2(9) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus prohibit recruiting, transferring, delivering, harboring and accepting a child for the purposes of his or her subsequent exploitation, including sexual exploitation, exploitation in forced labor, surrogacy, and organ harvesting.⁶⁴

Organizations such as NGO Children Not for Abuse, La Strada Belarus, and IOM Minsk are working to combat child trafficking, the sale of children, child abuse, and sexual exploitation in Belarus through awareness-raising campaigns, prevention, and rehabilitation work.⁶⁵

⁶² Belarus Red Cross Society, *Prevention of Child Abuse* (Feb. 23, 2016), at <http://redcross.by/en/profilaktika-detskogo-nasiliya/> (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁶³ *Events are organized in Minsk and Gomel on International Missing Children’s Day* (May 27, 2013), 212.BY, at <http://212.by/v-mezhdunarodnyj-den-propavshix-detey-meropriyatiya-proxodyat-v-minske-i-gomele.html> (last visited June 24, 2016); *Belarus will join the celebration of International Missing Children’s Day this year* (May 24, 2013), TUT.BY, at <http://news.tut.by/society/350069.html> (last visited June 24, 2016); Veronika Yuditskaya, *Volunteers of the search-and-rescue squad “Angel” will organize events for International Missing Children’s Day* (May 19, 2015), MINSK NEWS, at <http://minsknews.by/blog/2015/05/19/volonteryi-pso-angel-organizuyut-meropriyatie-ko-dnyu-pamyati-bez-vesti-propavshih-detey/> (last visited June 24, 2016); *We are looking for passionate people in Minsk and Gomel on International Missing Children’s Day* (May 25, 2013), NAVINY.BY, at naviny.by/rubrics/society/2013/05/25/ic_news_116_417521 (last visited June 24, 2016).

⁶⁴ Article 181 pts. 1 and 2(9) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, *supra* note 158. The Criminal Code defines exploitation as sexual exploitation, forced labor, surrogacy, and organ harvesting.

⁶⁵ NGO Children Not for Abuse, at <http://nonviolence.by> (last visited June 24, 2016); La Strada Belarus, at <http://lastrada.by/> (last visited June 24, 2016); IOM Minsk, at <http://iom.by/> (last visited June 24, 2016).