

## **Belarus Trade Union "Vmeste" (Together)**

**Date of creation:** 27 July, 2007

### **Aims:**

To protect the legitimate rights of the union members and their families' members (self-employed workers).

**Membership:** 750 members

### **Short history:**

Creation of the Belarusian Trade Union "Vmeste" was the result of the strike movement of individual entrepreneurs (hereinafter IE) in Belarus in 2005-2006. The union was formed at the request of IE themselves in 2007. The entrepreneurs have realized that the traditional trade unions are not only able to defend the interests of workers, but in fact, sometimes they interfere in the struggle for the economic and social rights of workers. This is because the trade unions have become part of the state machine, and their leaders served and still continue to serve as managers of enterprises and the state agencies.

For the first time in Belarus, IE alone, without the intervention of the administration, began to carry out trade union policy for the protection of their economic and civil rights. In recent years the activists of the trade union "Vmeste" initiated three strikes, not only stopping the operating on the markets of their own cities. The union members have been supported by other individual entrepreneurs from other regions. They, in turn, supported all the protest actions aimed at improving the lives of entrepreneurs and citizens of Belarus.

At present, the trade union organization "Vmeste" unites together more than 700 citizens of the Republic of Belarus, 90% of which are individual entrepreneurs. This is primarily self-employed entrepreneurs, operating in the retail trade and such services like: taxi, sewing, repairing, workers of private cafes and restaurants, farmers.

The union "Vmeste" is constantly working and will continue to work with the authorities and management, taking care of the improvement of economic activity and social security of self-employed, as well as negotiates on the rent issues. And it was the first time, when only trade union "Vmeste" succeeded to conclude a five year contract which stipulates "no increase in rent for the IE".

The trade union acts as a representative in courts, attends the discussions on the value of the tax burden. After the strikes in early 2016, the union Chairwoman, Mrs. Irina Yaskevich, was included in the Working Group under the Ministry of Economy, where changes are made to the related documents.

It should be noted that the current focus on the work through the funding of union dues is not realistic due to the fact that the trade union "Vmeste" is not registered and according to the Law of Belarus, such kind of organization doesn't have any right to have a bank account.

The union is working on preserving the working places for the IE and minimizes punishments or completely eliminates them.

**Leadership:**

Chairwoman – Mrs. Irina Yaskevich

Deputy Chairwoman – Mrs. Svetlana Lebedeva

Treasurer – Mrs. Dina Stepanova

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