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Changing trains and heading in a new direction



Delegations from the “Kinder von Tschernobyl e.V.” (Children from Chernobyl reg. soc). association from Winden and the Munstermaifeld catholic congregation visited their partner organisation “Kinder in Not” (Children in Need) in Minsk, Belarus.

Their journey took them from Koblenz to Minsk via Berlin, Warsaw and Brest. Despite missing their train at East Berlin Station, the group led by Maria Meuer and Karin Fust made up the time and, after almost 24 hours, was greeted by their Belarus partners with open arms.



During the first official meeting, Jewgeni Ukrainzew, the director of the “Kinder in Not” partner organisation, spoke of the joint responsibility they all had for the children during their stay in Germany. Parents of the children who would be travelling to Germany this year were particularly happy to meet the men and women looking after their children over the coming summer. A Russian mother hit the nail on the head when she said it was special to see the loving eyes of the people who would be looking after their children. Parents of children who had already had a holiday in the Nassauer Land and Eifel told of how excited their children had been about their holiday and how the change of air had been so good for them.



Highly qualified doctors, psychologists and educators are on hand in all the nurseries, children's cancer hospitals and convalescence homes to take care of each child's recovery. However, there is still a lack of funds for expensive medicines, particularly for rare forms of children's cancer. During the group's visit, a special drug was sent to the Borowlani children's cancer clinic. Karin Fust had found donations for this back in Germany. But besides financial sponsorship, bone marrow donors are also desperately needed. Although the chances of finding a matching marrow donor are 80,000:1, the doctors could report that, in the last 10 years, 50 marrow transplants have been carried out thanks to German donors. Unfortunately, the success rate of 50% is still too low and the cost of 80 euros per blood donation including analysis are still too high. This is where databases can help overcome geographical boundaries.



As soon as a child leaves intensive care for a rehab centre, their mothers are usually waiting for them to cook their favourite meal. The mothers also often accompany their children to the convalescent homes. There they are treated by specialists as well as holistically using music and physiotherapy. Children can also recover from their illnesses with their mothers at the Ostroschitzki Gorodog convalescent home, which was inaugurated by the German ambassador and others. The members of the visiting group were told here that follow-up visits in Germany played an important role in maintaining the long-term health of the children.



Although the catastrophe happened a long time ago, the children and later generations who suffer and will continue to suffer from the fallout and hereditary defects caused by the reactor accident will never be forgotten. A fact that is reflected in the hospitality and gratitude of the Belorussian people. The tough itinerary was worth it, and the beaming faces of the children more than made up for the effort.

Later on, at the border with Belarus, the change of train tracks from wide to standard gauge clearly symbolised that helping hands on both sides can overcome different systems.

