Charity organization «Kolibel’ Nadejdi»
Perm

«Okna jizni» in Russia
Baby boxes in Russia
History of baby boxes in Russia

1716
After the death of his beloved sister Natalia, Peter The First ordered people to “take care of the children that were left by their parents” at Natalia’s house, where the special room for admission was organized.

1764
The first “baby box” in Russia was opened in 18th century under the reign of Ekaterina The Second. At the same time, a maternity house for poor mothers and a connected orphanage were opened.

Churches and hospitals also had a special room for parents to leave their child there.
1917 – 1949
During the Soviet era, baby boxes did not exist. However, special centers for social help were operated. There was a big campaign, encouraging mothers not to abandon their children but to instead go to the social help centers.

2011
In modern Russia, the first baby boxes were opened in 2011 in the cities of Perm and Sochi.
A shocking accident triggered the creation of baby box

2010

After a big fire in one of the houses in Perm City, firefighters discovered the bodies of two babies on the balcony.

They were born to a 31 year-old woman, one year apart from each other. She was explaining that she already had three kids, that her husband is the only financial supporter of the family, and that her relatives were against the births.

She had murdered the babies and kept their bodies in her freezer during the warmer seasons and on the balcony during winter.

At that time in Russia, there were no existing ways to anonymously leave your baby in safe hands.
Opening the first baby box

Perm Region,
Perm City

Opened by
Initiative of
Charity organization
«Kolibel’ Nadejdi»
(Cradle of Hope)

October, 2011
The idea of opening a baby box was supported by all religious organizations.
Nowadays

Our project is supported by 10 regions in Russia. In total, there are 19 baby boxes operating in Russia.
Statistics

- 78 babies have been saved since the opening of the first baby box in Russia
- 12 of them eventually returned to their biological families (biological parents or relatives)
- 66 babies found a new family
Basic principle of depositing a baby
Every baby box is equipped with boards informing the parents about contact information of the social help centers and various religious groups. Also, there is a letter addressed to the parents, calling on them to think wisely about their decision.

There is no security guards or security cameras near the baby box, thus granting anonymity.
Action following the deposition of a baby in the baby box:

1. After a primary inspection, doctors evaluate the health condition of the baby, and all necessary medical help is provided.
2. Police are informed of the case. It is confirmed whether or not the baby is being searched for by police. If the baby is not being searched for and the parents are unknown, then the baby is registered as “lost or abandoned.”
3. A guardianship organization is informed of the case.
4. Since the moment of deposition in the baby box, the baby is placed under protection of the government.
The mother or relatives have a chance to get the baby back unless the baby has already been adopted

Apply at the orphanage or guardianship organization

* Apply for the return of the baby at the orphanage or guardianship organization.
* A return is granted by a decision of the guardianship committee after confirmation of circumstances and necessary documents.

Apply at a court

* Apply at a court in order to prove parenthood.
* Complete a DNA check to prove parenthood.

In Russia, 12 babies have been returned to their families.
"My history" box

- A note containing the date, time and name of the baby box in which the baby was deposited
- Name of the doctor that received the baby;
- Clothes and belongings that were deposited together with the baby;
- Photos, copies of documents and anything else that may link and connect the baby to the parents or relatives are kept in the "Cradle of Hope" or passed to the guardianship organization.
Based on our experience in supporting and consulting pregnant women and women with newborn babies, we started to raise the provision of support to women considering abandoning their babies to the federal level.

President of the “Cradle of Hope” Foundation, Kotova Elena, joined the following committees:

- Public council under the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights,
- Working group under the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Perm Region,
- Advisory board on childhood issues at the Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee for the Perm Region,
- Public council under the Ministry of Social Development of the Perm Region.
Opening of support centers for women

In 2012, by the initiative of the charity foundation “Cradle of Hope” along with the support of the Ministry of Social Development of the Perm Region, the first specialized center in the Perm region for the support of pregnant women and mothers in a difficult life situation opened its doors. Thereafter, two more centers were opened in the cities of Berezniki and Chaykovsky. Each center is based on the state-private partnership system. The center provides shelter and support for mothers who are victims of domestic violence or who find themselves in a difficult situation.
Since 2011, 26,697 families in the Perm region were provided with healthcare, consultation or legal support.

Since 2012, support centers in the Perm region provided shelter to:

781 people, of which 416 are children
- Perm City - total 475 persons, of whom: 211 females, 264 children
- Berezniki City – total 209 persons, of whom: 100 females, 109 children
- Chaykovsky City - total 97 persons, of whom: 54 females, 43 children

In 2017, the foundation received more than 450 appeals from families in a difficult situation
The Charity Foundation “Cradle of Hope” is taking part in educating society against the abandonment of children or any form of abuse towards children.
In 2016, Charity Foundation “Cradle of Hope” and its partners realized the social project “Choose a happiness”

In the maternity houses and hospitals in the Perm region, we placed 27 information boards aimed at the prevention of social orphanhood and abortion. Information boards contain an appeal to mothers and contact information of organizations providing help and support for families in difficult life situations. 10 such organizations in the Perm region joined the project.
Support center for large and poor families in the Perm region

Our foundation provides help and support not only to pregnant women, but also to families that already have children and are in a difficult situation.

Indeed, “Cradle of Hope” is the only partner of the “RUS” Provision National Foundation in the Perm region.
Multifunctional centers for those in a difficult life situation
7 proposed bills concerning baby boxes

For

☑ September 2011
Permission for parents to anonymously leave a baby during its first 6 months of life, without prosecution of the mother that left the baby, at a “designated place for anonymously leaving babies” – rejected in 2013

☑ August 2015
Permission to leave babies under 1 year old, permission for non-profit organizations to open baby boxes – not considered

☑ December 2015
Creation of designated places where mothers can anonymously leave their babies under the jurisdiction of local governments - rejected

☑ March 2017
Permission for all regions of Russia to control the activities of baby boxes via local governments – returned for revision

☑ December 2017
Same as above after revision – currently under consideration

Against

☒ September 2015
Proposed criminal liability for the installation and usage of baby boxes – not considered

☒ June 2016
Ban of activities in any way or form supporting anonymous leaving of babies, under penalty of about 1.5 million Russian rubles or shutdown of each organization’s activities for 90 days – returned for revision
In 2016, Charity Foundation “Cradle of Hope” and its partners conducted complex social research with the support of the President of Russian Federation

«Study into the social-psychological background of infanticide and ways of its prevention»

The results were presented in the highest level discussion meeting in the Public Chamber, under the title “Reasons and methods of preventing infanticide on the territory of the Russian Federation.”
Study about infanticide

To create a social-psychological image of females in the “risk group,” 152 cases of infanticide were analyzed.

3 layers of interviews were conducted:
1st layer: with acquaintances, friends and relatives of the females in question;
2nd layer: with doctors, policemen, social workers and staff of support centers;
3rd layer: with researchers, social officials, deputies, public figures and mass media figures.
Social-psychological portrait of the females in the “risk group”

Children:
- 4 children
- 3 children
- 2 children
- 1 child
- No children

Crime count

Husbands:
- No (single/divorced)
- Yes
- No data

Crime count
Data on infanticide

Crime scene and method:

- Freezing
- Drowning
- Strangulation
- Hitting

Crime motivation:

- Being judged
- Poor financial situation
- Revenge on a partner
On November 29th 2016, at the Round Table at the State Duma of the Russian Federation on matters concerning the prevention of baby abandonment and support for pregnant women in a difficult life situation, the President of the Charity Foundation “Cradle of Hope” gave a speech entitled, “A modern approach to the prevention of the baby abandonment”
With the appearance of a new phrase, “baby-box”, in Russia in 2015, “Cradle of Hope” created a Wikipedia page about the phrase.

We study the experiences of other countries, carry out research into statistics and legal matters pertaining to the function of baby boxes. The experiences of our friends in Latvia were used in designing the baby box system in Russia.
In just three weeks, more than 250,000 Russian citizens signed a petition on Change.org against a legal ban on baby box activity in Russia.

A public petition was addressed to the Commissioner for Children’s Rights for the President, Kuznetsova Anna Yurievna.
The Russia Public Opinion Research Center provided data on research into the opinions of Russian citizens towards baby boxes.

We found that 75% of Russian people support baby boxes.

What is your view on laws against baby boxes? (RPORC survey results)

- Completely support: 12%
- Support: 6%
- Somewhat against: 9%
- Strongly against: 24%
- Do not know: 49%

73% of Russian people know about baby boxes, with the following breakdown:
- Females: 79%
- Males: 66%
- Young people and adults (18-34 year-olds): 66-68%
- Elderly (45-60 years or older): 77-76%

42% of those interviewed stated that, “A ban on baby box activity will lead to an increase in the number of abandoned children.”
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Thank you for your attention!