

‘Digital’ portrait in relation to demography

Demographic data shows that, in early 2012, there were 4.5m men in Belarus — just under half of the population, with three quarters residing in cities



Easy to see portrait of modern Belarusian family on city's streets

By Veronica Krylova

Annually, over 50,000 boys are born countrywide (in 2011, 56,000). On average, there are 945 baby girls for every thousand boys: 947 in cities and 939 in rural areas.

As of early 2012, the average age of Belarusian men stood at

37 years, with those living in cities and towns being younger than those in villages (35.8 and 40.3 years respectively). Over all, the average age of men is five years younger than that of women.

Surprisingly, despite there being more women than men countrywide, there's a lack of brides in the age category of under 33.

“Older men are more greatly outnumbered by women, with the greatest difference seen among the elderly; by 65, there are 1.5 times fewer men than women aged 73. A significant 33 percent of men create families aged 25-29 while the average age for a bridegroom marrying for the first time was 26.6 years in 2011; for second marriages, 40 is

the average.”

Curiously, one poll shows that 32 percent of men assessed their health as good in early 2002, compared to 36.5 percent in early 2012. Moreover, a quarter of all men are involved in physical exercise while the number of smokers has fallen steadily; however, half of all men still smoke (as of early 2012).

Visit away brings home comfort

Celestial hotel sky gains addition of ‘three stars’

By Yekaterina Timofeeva

On visiting another city, travelers' first thoughts are on where to stay. Unfortunately, for those coming to Belarus, including Minsk, the choice can be limited. Nevertheless, the situation is beginning to change, driven by 2014's Ice Hockey World Championship. The capital is opening several new options, with one of the first ‘swallows’ on the horizon being the comfortable three star Hotel Garni, located in the centre of Minsk.

Currently, 40 Belarusian hotels have star certification, with just two awarded the highest status of ‘five stars’: the capital Crowne Plaza Minsk and the Europe. These are joined by three four star hotels: the Hotel Minsk, the Victoria and Vitebsk's hotel complex of Luchesa. However, 27 hotels hold ‘three stars’ across Belarus. “We do lack enough places to stay, of course, but many projects are being implemented: private and public, with foreign investments,” stresses the



Hotel Garni awarded ‘three stars’

Deputy Director General of Minotel JSC, Nikolay Ganul. “Competition will increase, providing an incentive to raise the quality of services. On checking out, we need to make guests feel that they'd like to return.”

The Hotel Garni is located in an historic building, on Internatsion-

alnaya Street. “We've begun from scratch, reading a lot of historical literature and planning the details with the designers,” explains Mr. Ganul. “Consultations with specialists have helped to avoid design errors in furnishing the hotel.” Over a period of two years, Minotel has been renovating the historic build-

ing in the centre of Minsk, transforming the previous administrative building. It's about 70 percent complete, with businessmen from Russia and other countries already making bookings, alongside tourists — mostly from Europe, Turkey and China.

Why is star certification important? Firstly, foreign visitors can use the rating to gain an idea of the level of service and comfort. Meanwhile, online booking is convenient and, accordingly, increases bookings. According to Gosstandart, certification of hotel services, with World Tourism Organisation classification, began in 1999 in Belarus. Each site has to demonstrate that it meets state health and safety standards, while ensuring the security of guests' possessions. Classification of hotels is commonplace in most CIS countries and, since 2008, has been obligatory for hotels wishing to display ‘star ratings’ in Belarus. Certification lasts for five years, with hotels receiving annual inspections to verify compliance.

Working reason for meetings

Ninth session of Belarusian-Vietnamese Intergovernmental Commission for Trade-Economic and Sci-Tech Co-operation hosted by Hanoi

The Belarusian delegation in Hanoi was headed by Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Aleinik. The session discussed issues of bilateral interaction in trade, industry, agriculture, science and technology, as well as sports and tourism. In particular, great attention was paid to the development of the joint manufacture of MAZ trucks, the expansion of their production and provision of service maintenance.

A joint project to produce compound mineral fertilisers from Belarusian raw materials was debated, with Belarusian companies being keen to extract mineral deposits from Vietnamese territory. The session also tackled the launch of the Belarusian Trade House in Vietnam and the expansion of the range of supplied goods from Belarus.

Direct air flights between Minsk and Hanoi would be advantageous, with Belarus eager to promote tourist ties and all forms of direct contact.

Skolkovo to assist Belarusian IT companies

By Andrey Anisimov

Russian Foundation helps set up investment structure to fund Belarusian IT companies' promising projects



Belarusian developers will be able to apply for financing from the Russian Foundation, negating the need to register companies in Russia. “We believe that money injected into Belarusian companies will allow them to later become holdings,” explains Valery Tsepka, the Director of the High-Tech Park's Administration.

Opportunities for collaboration between the High-Tech Park and the Russian Skolkovo Foundation were recently discussed in Minsk during an offsite session of the Advisory Scientific Council of this innovation centre. The HTP and Skolkovo have been liaising in various fields, notes Mr. Tsepka. He tells us, “The Skolkovo Foundation uses the allocated money while we have to earn money ourselves. It means that we don't take money from the state but interact with structures, presented in the IT sphere.”