

E-forms more wide-spread

On hearing of e-government, some might imagine state officers with cables linked to their heads but, of course, it simply refers to the automated process of rendering state services. What does e-government look like in Belarus and what changes should we expect to notice?

By Alexander Bogomazov

Programmes: follow one from another

Numerous definitions of 'e-government' exist but, simply put, it's the automated process of rendering state services. Gartner Group

views e-government as an ongoing process to ensure optimisation and to encourage citizens' participation (through technical means, the Internet and modern media). American and European specialists view such services as essential, paid for



E-government brings most contemporary communication

from budgetary funds.

As the Informatisation Department at Belarus' Ministry for Communications and Informatisation notes, our country can already be proud of its steps in setting up e-government. According to the fourth annual report on *Measuring Information Society*, published by the International Telecommunication Union in late 2012, our country is 46th on the ICT Development Index. Moreover,

Belarus is second among CIS states — behind Russia. The report notes that our country is among the top ten most dynamically developing states for 'assess' and 'use' while the UN has placed the Republic 61st (among 191 states) for its readiness to introduce e-government.

Keeping in touch with the state

To take advantage of all the possibilities of e-govern-

ment (online forms, references and enquiries) legislation is required to cover this paperless interaction between citizens and state bodies. Once in place, the country will be able to advance significantly down this road.

What's done

Last year, two programmes (out of 13) were completed as part of the E-training and Human Capital Development strategy.

This brought 10 new educational standards, 10 typical curriculum plans and 60 educational programmes for training ICT specialists. In addition, the automated information system for e-registration of top managers and reserve personnel was modernised.

Customs officers are working on e-customs, promising to launch electronic preliminary declaration, and to modernise customs bodies' information communication infrastructure. Moreover, the authorities' PR departments are to gain their own websites, as part of the National Content Formation sub-programme. Software is being developed to service national Internet streaming of television programmes and to create a national e-library.

"The Republic now has the foundations of an information society, with legislation being created and national ICT infrastructure developing. Belarus has a well-developed information industry of its own, being able to create its own fully-fledged e-government — which is vital for economic competitiveness," asserts the Ministry for Communications and Informatisation.

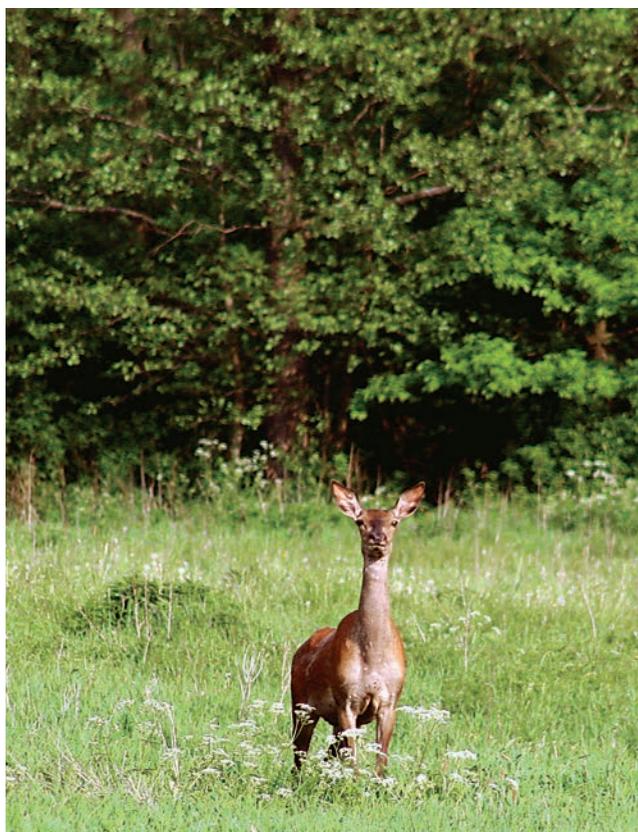
Belovezhskaya Pushcha worthily assessed by EU

Belarus' nature reserves registered on list of most valuable and protected sites of pan-European importance

By Mikhail Velekhov

Natalia Minchenko, the Head of the Biological and Landscape Diversity Department at the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, has told a press conference in Minsk, "As part of a programme entitled *Creating an Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites*, we aim to register a range of Belarusian natural pearls. The *Emerald Network* features only sites of pan-European importance." The programme continues the *Emerald Network* international project, first realised in Belarus from 2009-2011.

Initially, 12 sites of natural beauty were registered, included on a single database run by the Council of Europe: the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Braslav Lakes, and the reserves of Pripyatsky, Narochansky, Vygonoshchanski Bolota, Yelnya, Zvanets and Olman'skie Bolota, Osveyskiy, Sporovsky and Srednyaya Pripyat. The *Emerald Network* also promoted Belarus' joining of the Bern Convention this February — an international agreement on the protection of wild flora and fauna across European natural habitats.



Belovezhskaya Pushcha — Belarus' natural pearl

Using European experience, management methods are to be improved at Belarusian reserves, enhancing the efficiency of preservation activities and the use of our natural resources. Moreover, *Emerald Network* sites will receive additional opportunities to attract technical and financial assistance from the EU and other international

donors, aiming to preserve our unique biological diversity.

The Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is working jointly with the Ecological Initiative Belarusian Public Association to implement the four-year programme: from 2013, its total budget is almost 2m Euros.

Monument to be restored

By Victor Buinitsky

Israel keen to help revive Bykhov synagogue

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Israel to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Yosef Shagal, has stressed Israel's eagerness to help restore the medieval monument of Jewish culture and architec-

ture. Meeting the Bykhov District Executive Committee's Chairman, Dmitry Kaleev, he was delighted to hear of the Belarusian authorities' plans.

For the Day of Belarusian Written Language (hosted by Bykhov this year), the Republican budget has allocated Br350m, to conserve the synagogue. Construction and

design documents are being developed, to be followed by fortification of the building's ancient brick walls and plaster works, as necessary. The Bykhov synagogue was built around 1640-1650, as a defensive fortification for the city. After restoration, it will probably house a museum dedicated to Jewish history in Belarus.

Gaining profit from leisure

Minsk summer camps for teenagers

By Olga Pimenova

59,000 Minsk schoolchildren will be attending summer camps this year: 37 for older teens, as well as 366 urban and about 200 tent and specialised health camps, with over 31,000 students welcomed at countryside camps, and 28,000 at urban ones.

After a 30-year break, summer camps for older teenagers are being revived. Until this year, camps only took children aged 6-14 years, now almost 1,500 of those aged 15-18 will be taking part, explains the Head of the Minsk office of the Republican Centre for Health Improvement and Health Resort Treatment, Valery Nafranovich. He notes that the youngsters will be given jobs to do in schools and at such enterprises as Minskzelenstroy and Zhdanovichi farm (looking after animals). Various industrial enterprises around the city will be offering work.



Teenagers able to work and relax at summer camps

The teenagers' duties will include cleaning, gardening, landscaping and restoration of school buildings and furniture, for which they will receive a modest salary, reflecting what enterprises and organisations can afford. Each placement

will last 18 days. "Schoolchildren and their parents are keen to take part, giving us positive feedback; next year, we'll open more such camps countrywide, offering work on farms and at agricultural enterprises," Mr. Nafranovich tells us.