

River fleet of landlocked state

Last year, Belarus' water transport generated around Br14bn or over \$15,000,000

As the Head of the Ministry for Transport and Communications' Department of River and Sea Transport, Andrey Chernobylets, explains, almost Br15bn is not a huge sum yet it indicates the branch's steady development. At present, the Ministry is focusing on the development and modernisation of water transport. The country has 700 vessels across 10 national river ports, including passenger and towing motor ships and dredgers.

Full load

Our river fleet mostly transports construction and wood cargo. Last year, a reduced pace of construction resulted in minor loading of vessels but, in 2013, there is evident growth. "Despite the long winter, when navigation began late, we are monthly registering a 20 percent rise in transportation volumes," Mr. Chernobylets explains.

The share of passenger transportation remains small: in 2012, just over 200,000 passengers were transported within a single city and 74,000 were taken between cities. Such trips are mostly possible owing to the development of our water tourism. Brest, Pinsk, Gomel, Mozyr, Vitebsk, Grodno, Mogilev, Minsk, some national parks and Minsk Sea now have their own passenger and leisure boats.

"In recent years, we've



River workers from Brest port transport hundreds of thousands tonnes of cargo annually

constructed five new passenger vessels. Two travel along the Avgustovsky Canal and through the Pripyatsky National Park while another two (constructed in line with a new project) are equipped with air conditioning and quiet engines — for Vitebsk and Mogilev. Meanwhile, the floating hotel in Turov is a wonderful example of agro-tourism development," explains Mr. Chernobylets. He adds, "We're ensuring the necessary technical standards, having been seeking a good system since 2004. We even-

usually decided that those owning vessels should take independent responsibility for their ships' technical maintenance, while specialised tourist organisations are to oversee commercial loading."

Guest sailing

Apart from making and modernising vessels, river infrastructure is at the heart of development. The Dnieper-Bug Canal is being revamped, being given five new navigation locks to significantly improve shipping conditions and allow Belarus'

water routes to connect with those of Europe. Small hydroelectric stations are also being built along the Canal and quay facilities are being modernised, with a new port planned near Brest. A site has been chosen and design documentation is ready; last year, work began on moving quays outside the city, as is logical. Brest is steadily developing, so it makes more sense to place facilities in empty lots. The project is part of a Presidential order and the state investment programme. Accordingly, Mr. Chernobylets' Ministry will continue find-

ing additional finances.

Belarus is interested in connecting to neighbouring states' waterways, gaining equal access to water transport infrastructure. All Single Economic Space members would also then receive access. Vessels sailing under the Belarusian flag also hope to gain access to Russia's rivers, to the East. "Work began in early 2013," Mr. Chernobylets notes. "In addition, water shipments towards Ukraine are being developed."

White navy caps...

Belarus is now studying

the possibility of establishing its own sea fleet. Mr. Chernobylets explains that institutions are being set up to ensure registration of vessels sailing under the Belarusian flag. Simultaneously, the Republic is creating conditions for ship-owning business development. For several years, Belaruskali has chartered vessels abroad to ensure its foreign trade cargo transportation.

"When Belarusian residents acquire their own vessels, they need to register them under the Belarusian flag," Mr. Chernobylets tells us. However, since most lack experience, finances and access to cheap credit, it makes the process challenging, especially when they need to compete in offering their services to foreigners.

Over 2,000 national seafarer identity cards have been issued to date and a harbour pilot service is due to be established by late 2013. Steamboats may only sail waterways when manned by trained professionals, so seafaring instruction is vital. Belarusian sailors may then find employment with any company worldwide and may crew foreign vessels along our rivers.

Belarusian waterways stretch around 2,000km across Belarus: including via the rivers Dnieper, Pripyat, Berezina, Zapadnaya Dvina, Sozh and Nieman, and the Dnieper-Bug Canal.

Smart engineers are always much valued

Today's technical specialties are mostly chosen by those from urban areas

By Natalia Sokolova

In the past, adults used to frighten their children with the prospect of factory work if they failed to study hard at school but the technical professions now often require higher education and are enjoying increasing demand. Importantly, they are also among the most well paid jobs.

Future builders and machine operators

The Belarusian National Technical University's enrolment board assures us that young people have always been interested in working specialties. This year, the Construction Department is one of the most popular at the University, with over 200 applicants for 'Industrial and Civil Construction': over 150 are from cities. Urbanities prevail over villagers in other

departments, with the automobile branch enjoying the greatest popularity. Machine building and car-and-tractor departments are the first choice for many youngsters, as the Transport and Communications Department confirms. Last year, technical branches had five applicants for each place, while tool building and mechanical-technological departments enjoyed the greatest popularity.

Wages matter

Those boasting technical qualifications will never be at a loss for employment. Minsk Automobile Works is a major employer and even provides a hostel for new personnel arriving from outside the capital. "Many university and college students pass an internship with us," explains the Head of Minsk



Kvartsmelprom Plant ready to offer engineers interesting jobs

Automobile Works' Personnel Department, Victor Yelizarenko. The enterprise is currently in need of grinders, contact sealing welders, maintenance technicians, drivers and instal-

lation staff for sanitary engineering systems, among other specialists.

Grodno's Plant of Sanitary Engineering also has some vacancies. The Personnel Department tells us,

"Of course, we invite students to pass internships but we are a small firm and have enough personnel. Our employees value their jobs, tending to stay for a long time: some over forty

years." The high wages on offer are a great incentive.

Unclaimed prestige

Most of those taking technical courses train at state educational establishments, since private universities rarely offer the necessary syllabus. The First Deputy Education Minister, Alexander Zhuk, explains "Such universities occupy a niche of lower cost specialties, offering exclusively theoretical training. Moreover, private universities aren't guided by labour market demand but by popular demand. They tend to offer traditionally prestigious courses — in economics and law."

According to research, the top five most popular professions feature IT specialists, doctors, construction specialists and engineering-technical personnel.