



Belarusian Railways launches regular regional routes for Swiss-made Stadler electric trains

# Uncomfortable travel between regions remains thing of the past

*The Minsk Times* reporter travels by new electric train and shares his impressions

By Vladimir Terekhov

On arriving at Minsk-Tsentralny station on a Sunday morning, I see the modern train. It looks as if it might be heading for Europe but it's actually an electric train, designed for domestic routes. Passengers looking at it couldn't help but question whether it was really going to Baranovichi, despite the 'Polesie Baranovichi' display. Such trains were once only seen in films but, from now on, the comfort of 21st century travel will be a reality for Belarusians.

Belarusian Railways has been nurturing the idea of launching regional business class lines since 2010; on October 10th, tests began on a city line electric train for the Minsk-Kolyadichi-Rudensk route. Recently, regular regional schedules became operational, with *The MT* reporter among the first passengers.

"Why are the doors closed? Is boarding finished?" ask two concerned men, hurrying towards the carriages. We're used to seeing closed doors on our diesel trains directly before departure, but our doubts disappear on approaching: you simply push a green button at the centre to open them automatically. They close only once passengers are safely inside.

The carriage is warm, since the



New electric train offers high standards of service

doors have been closed, and everything smells new. Soft seats face both directions of travel and some are placed opposite each other: handy for families or groups of friends who want to pass the time chatting. All seats are numbered, with arrows indicating the direction of where the number can be found. There are also some fold-down chairs, which can be used during extra busy times.

Wide passageways, convenient hand-rails and luggage shelves add to the comfort of the train, while electronic display boards show the

distance between stops and the expected arrival time. At the push of a special button by the door, you can also talk to the driver.

"I'm travelling on a very nice electric train," boasts one young man, talking to his wife by phone. "I can visit my parents more often now. We can also take our baby, as it's quiet and warm inside."

At the last minute, the doors open again and several excited passengers board, asking whether the train is going to Baranovichi. On hearing the answer, they calm down, and the

train starts moving. The journey is smooth, so it's easy to occupy yourself with little tasks, like embroidery.

These new trains connect Brest with Baranovichi (2 hours) and Minsk with Baranovichi (90 minutes) daily, with tickets costing the same as they do for any other journey. Each fare costs slightly over \$1 (in equivalent).

Brest is the first regional centre to offer regular business class travel on electric trains. The Chairman of the Brest Regional Executive Committee, Konstantin Sumar, asserts

that the choice is wise. Belarusian Railways began in the city over the Bug River over 120 years ago and the Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow pan-European transport corridor today passes through the city. It's a logical choice to ensure that its trains meet Western European standards.

Manufactured by Swiss Stadler Bussnang AG, ten trains are being supplied to Belarusian Railways (within two years of March 2010). Belarus' Transport and Communications Minister, Ivan Shcherbo, and Belarusian Railways' Head, Anatoly Sivak, tell us how they are to be used. Six of the trains are to service urban lines, with the remaining four connecting regional cities. Four have already arrived in Belarus (three servicing city lines and one connecting the regions).

The conductors tell us about some of the advantages of these new passenger carriages: one is equipped with a multi-functional zone for disabled passengers and those travelling with children's prams, bicycles and large-size luggage. Moreover, the train offers special conditions for changing babies' nappies. No smoking is allowed; smoke activates an emergency break and video cameras are installed throughout, able to catch anyone in the act of lighting up.

## Marina Sinitsa, from Vitebsk's university, acknowledged best student of the year

**Vitebsk State Technological University fifth year student wins 1st Republican Student of the Year Contest**

After much competition for the title of the most successful student in science, studies, sport and artistry, the jury chose fifth year Marina Sinitsa, from the Vitebsk State Technological University's Economic Department.

She wins the contest's major prize: an 8 inch Prestigio Tablet.

Marina is actively taking part in scientific-research work and often speaks about youth issues at sci-tech conferences. One of her scientific papers was entitled *Leadership in an Informal Youth Group* and she believes that the winner of the *Student of the Year* should possess serious leader-



Marina Sinitsa

ship qualities. Of course, she also thinks they should have an open soul and pure heart. Marina loves to take part in university concerts and festivals.

## In city with Europe's second largest sea port

**Belarus opens Honorary Consulate in Hamburg**

The solemn ceremony was attended by the Chairman of the Land Parliament, Carola Veit, an official representative of the Senate Chancery, members of the diplomatic and consular corps accredited in Hamburg, and representatives of the economic and cultural elite of the city. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Germany, H.E. Mr. Andrei Giro, also took part, introducing the new Honorary Consul, Rene Schroder, and explaining the major

avenues of the work of the Consulate.

Mr. Giro later held a number of meetings with Hamburg businessmen.

The Consular District of the Honorary Consulate in Hamburg comprises two federal states: Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Hamburg is the second largest German city (with a population of around 1.8m) and has the second largest sea port in Europe. Around 40 thousand trading companies operate in Hamburg, making the city the main trading place in Germany.