

# Programmers top the ratings

National Statistical Committee notes that July's average salary reached Br5.5 million countrywide (\$610 equivalent)

By Yuri Pinchuk

The Belarusian Statistical Committee states that programmers and aviators continue to lead on the earnings front. Those working in IT are taking home about Br12.5 million per month (almost \$1,400) while those connected with air transport earn approximately Br11.5 million (about \$1,300). Employees of the oil industry are in third place, earning Br10.5 million per month (over \$1,150).

The biggest growth rates in real salaries from January-July this year (compared to last) were seen in the spheres of property management (137.3 percent), construction (137.1 percent), the manufacture of assembly ferro-concrete and concrete constructions and items (135.5 percent), and water transport (135.1 percent). The least growth was noted in social services, the activity connected with computing technique and education. In total, real salaries from January-July this year (compared to last year) rose by 19.1 percent in industry and 19.8 percent among workers and public servants.

The rapid increase in salaries across Belarus has brought incomes more in line



Experts working in IT paid to the highest standard

with those seen in Russia: in May 2013, they comprised 60 percent of rates in Russia (up from 50.7 percent in May 2012 and 46.7 percent in December 2012). These data are

provided in the analytical review of the National Bank — *Basic Trends in the Spheres of Economy, Finance and Credit in Belarus* — covering January-June, 2013.

In comparison to Kazakh Tenge incomes, those in Belarus this May reached 93.9 percent of those in Kazakhstan (against 72 percent in May 2012 and 74.4 percent in

December 2012).

Salary growth in Belarus in Dollar equivalent shows that the average salary of Belarusian workers in July 2013 stood at about Br5.5 million

(approximately \$610): up from \$590.5 in June 2013 and \$450 in June 2012. In just one year, salaries grew approximately \$160 — more than a third.

## Converting waste products into income: or new life for the country's plastic bottles

By Yuri Chernyakevich

**Kobrin District of Brest Region separating waste materials for recycling, thanks to funding from the EU and the United Nations Development Programme**

Even the most useful items eventually become redundant, creating rubbish. As our consumption increases, so does the volume of rubbish generated. Every city is plagued by mountains of waste; it's a global problem and Belarus is no exception. However, recent projects to recycle waste have been launched, with many city courtyards now boasting separate containers for gathering different types of rubbish: glass, paper and plastic. Some can be burnt to generate electricity while others can be recycled for reuse.

Belarus declared 2013 to be the year of economy, embracing innovative projects which save money — at an international level as well as domestic. Kobrin, in the Brest Region, has begun collecting waste under various categories, under a project funded by the EU and UNDP. Local housing and utilities services have received about a million Euros,

which is no insignificant sum. Over the past two years, the money has been spent on purchasing hundreds of containers for the separate gathering of rubbish, as well as seven rubbish trucks, a container loader and bulldozer. Moreover, a sorting station has been built. The project is now bearing fruit, with some plastic, paper and glass recycled, explains Sergey Yelets, the Director of Kobrin housing and utilities services. He notes that the volume of rubbish being taken to landfill sites has fallen, reducing fuel being used by rubbish trucks and saving approximately Br70 million per year.

The sum may seem modest, but it's just the beginning. Kobrin is only gathering about 7 percent of domestic waste for recycling but aims to increase this to 25 percent. "We're educating urbanites and explaining the importance of separating waste, reminding everyone that it takes decades for plastic and glass to decay. Kobrin residents are welcoming and strongly supporting our initiatives," notes Mr. Yelets.

Needless to say, such projects are vital for Belarus in today's world. As to why the average Belarusian is yet to embrace the idea of separat-



Containers for separate gathering of rubbish established in Kobrin

ing their rubbish, it's likely that most lack clear understanding of the benefits. Their ecological literacy is low and there is little information about existing programmes. These gaps should be eliminated as soon as possible.

I remember seeing a form of recycling in a supermarket in a small Polish town: near the entrance was a big cardboard box into which people could throw old batteries. Customers were using the box out of habit and understood that it could only benefit their environment. This is a recipe for survival rather than a

'green fad'.

In fact, many European countries underwent an eco-transition years before Belarus. Of course, it took time — and information dissemination is at the heart of this change. We need to explain why it is important to collect rubbish separately and how waste can be turned into income, while showing people how they can individually make a difference. Eco-campaigns will improve Belarusian citizens' understanding; the success of many 'green' projects relies on this.

Since 2011, Kobrin has been

campaigning to teach residents how they can support this eco-movement: holding meetings with local housing and utility services, and organising events at schools and at trade unions. Supported by the EU and UNDP, articles have been published in local newspapers, while district and regional TV channels have broadcast programmes filmed locally. Even city posters have explained what to do.

Old and young alike in Kobrin know that plastic bottles need to be thrown in special containers rather than into any ordinary bin. As we might expect, schoolchildren are the most active when it comes to eco-implementation. Children have been taken to the sorting station to see waste recycling with their own eyes.

A similar project is underway in Mosty, in the Grodno Region, where the EU and UNDP are working with the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus to promote public awareness. The cities have been chosen as being typical for the country, so that success can be gauged fairly and used as a model for others across Belarus. The future is in our hands.