

Internet in Belarus



Belarus follows the global trend of moving from an industrial society towards the information one with a rapid growth of telecommunications and interactive technologies in the recent years. Today even remote villages and agritourism facilities may have access to the Internet.

According to the International Telecommunication Union Report "Measuring the Information Society 2011", Belarus is in the "upper" group of countries on the ICT development index ranking 52nd in the list of countries.

INTERNET IN BELARUS

In order to accelerate the development of information society and increase the use of information technologies in 2003-2010 Belarus implemented a special program "Electronic Belarus". The implementation of this program advanced the use of ICTs both by citizens in their everyday life and in the activities of government and business entities. Nowadays the Internet is widely used by people and organizations for paying taxes, various utility bills, obtaining information, etc.

By the end of 2015 Belarus aspires to enter the list of the top 30 most developed countries in information and communication technologies. The National Program of accelerated development of ICT services for 2011-2015 was adopted to help in achieving this ambitious goal. Its main directions are the development of ICT infrastructure, telecommunication network modernization, introduction of modern IT-technologies, development of information services market, the formation of national content by expansion of state, business, social organization and media representation in the world wide web.

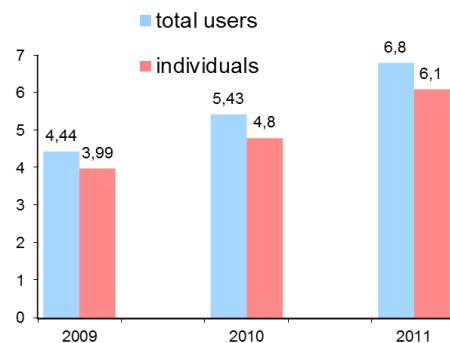
STATISTICS

At the beginning of 2012 the total number of subscribers and Internet users in Belarus amounted to 6.8 million, of them 6.1 million are private persons¹.

According to Gemius international research agency, 79.66 percent of Belorussian Internet subscribers use the net daily. Gender distribution of the Belarusian Internet audience is as follows: 49.65 percent of users are males, 50.35 percent are females.

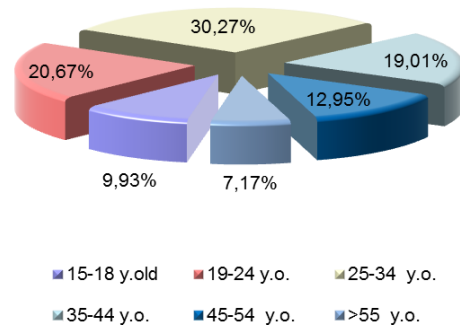
¹ Data of the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

*Subscriber Growth Dynamics
(million)*



Number of subscribers to wireless Internet access increased by 34.2 percent in 2011 up to 4.5 million. About 1.8 million people use wireless broadband access with 3G packet data technology.

*Distribution of Internet Users by
their Age*



Age group of 16–24 has the largest share of people using the internet with 81.5 percent. Among the 25-54-year olds there are 48.9 percent of users, and only 16.2 percent of people older than 55 use the net.

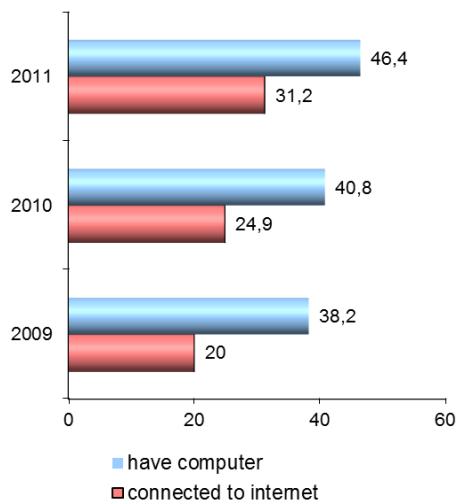
The number of Internet subscribers and users reached 719 per 1 000 of population, increasing by 25.5 percent compared to the previ-

ous year by (2010 – 573, 2009 – 467)².

Frequency of Internet Use by Age Groups

| | daily | less than once in a week | from time to time |
|-------|-------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 16-24 | 77,1 | 10,9 | 12,0 |
| 25-54 | 55,9 | 17,9 | 26,2 |
| 55-64 | 47,5 | 20,2 | 32,3 |
| 65+ | 35,4 | 28 | 36,6 |

About 46.4 percent of households in Belarus have personal computers³.



There are 1,624 public internet access facilities offering 3,488 posts with internet connection (2009 – 1 468, 2010 – 1 625)⁴.

The use of mobile internet skyrocketed after the introduction of 3G in Belarus. In line with international trend this growth was fueled

² As of January 1, 2012. Data of the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

by wide penetration of smartphones and tablets that offer access to the Internet without a computer.

Today all GSM operators provide 2G and 3G Internet access on the territory of Belarus. This access is provided by 14,6 thousand base stations, with 4100 of them supporting 3G.

Mobile broadband connection is offered in Belarus at very reasonable prices (starting from around € 1 per month).

Following the worldwide trend the network of Wi-Fi access points is growing in Belarus. Wi-Fi “hot-spots” are available throughout the country. Some entities and organizations offer such service for their customers for free. At the beginning of 2012 there are about 1150 functioning Wi-Fi hot-spots in Belarus (including over 550 hot-spots in Minsk alone).

Some 94.6 percent of business entities studied during the research had access to Internet. Fixed broadband Internet access is the most common type of connection for this category of users (84 percent).

There are 57 internet service providers and 32 hosting providers in Belarus.

CONTENT

As of May 5, 2012 there were about 55 thousand domains registered in BY domain zone. In total in the Belarusian segment of the Internet (so-called “bynet”) there are about 80 000 sites (including other domain zones), with 30,000 of them registered as Belorussian in internet catalogues. They include the web-sites of mass-media and

news agencies, online media, blogs, forums, thematic resources, commercial companies and online stores, national social networks and electronic auctions. There is a number of Internet-radio channels and private Internet-TV. Virtually all trends of the global Internet are promptly transferred and adapted by the Belarusian Internet.

At the same time, the largest part of the web content consumed in Belarus is of foreign origin. The government and society have the task to develop national Internet content.

In this regard the Government of Belarus makes coordinated efforts to stimulate activity in this direction.

For example, The National Program of accelerated development of ICT services for 2011-2015 envisages the creation of the National Digital Library of Belarus by integrating electronic resources, full-text databases of digitized documents and multimedia resources with modern search engines and unified metadata.

LEGISLATION

All **individuals** in Belarus have free access to national and foreign Internet resources.

Citizens have the right to request their ISP to set a filter, restricting access to the web-sites that promote violence and brutality, extremist activity, pornography, etc. It should be mentioned that many popular browsers and search engines also have such

Private persons in Belarus have unrestricted access to all content available on Internet without censorship of limitations

functionality. Thus, voluntary limitation of access to questionable resources represents common practice and is widely used throughout the world.

Regulation of the activities of the **business entities** in the internet is based on Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No.60, dated 01.02.2010.

The Decree requires government bodies and organizations (including commercial organizations fully or partly owned by the state) to post on their websites specific information that enables citizens to locate the data they are looking for more efficiently. In this way, the regulation stimulates the development of e-government and transparency of governmental agencies' activities on the Internet.

At the same time the Decree contains provisions requiring Belarusian business entities to use exclusively national information networks, systems and resources while selling goods, offering services on the territory of Belarus.

Decree № 60 introduces compulsory registration of information systems (including web sites) in Belarus. In practice, while creating a site in any country the user fills in a registration form with the data that are stored then at his/her hosting service provider. Belarusian legislation also establishes a list of mandatory data to be provided by the users, and also requires the transfer of this information (in a declarative manner) into a single database.

According to the Decree, starting from July 1, 2010 all Internet service providers, including Wi-Fi, are required to store data about their users and online services offered to them. Thus, the Internet service providers are obliged to identify users of Internet services when subscriber access device is used independently, and during the access from the collective points of access (Internet cafe).

In Belarus as well as in foreign countries, the Internet access services are provided on the basis of a contract between the provider and the user, where the user is clearly identified. In this regard, authentication of a user is not something extraordinary and is used throughout the world, helping to effectively fight against illegal activities in the cyberspace.

The Decree also obliges internet service providers to satisfy voluntary request from the side of a user to limit his/her access to "unreliable" sites that promote violence, spread pornography, are engaged in the illicit arms trafficking, extremist activities, etc. Such a restriction of the access is implemented only on the basis of the user request by signing additional agreement with the service provider.