Although as we reported in R 4/08, p. 9, deliveries of the 64 **FLIRT** EMUs to Algerian state operator **SNTF** are now under way, the very first of the batch, 101, is staying behind in Switzerland until the end of 2008 to complete testing and for driver training purposes. Stadler thus decided to exhibit this particular train at InnoTrans. By late September 2008 eight FLIRTs had crossed the Mediterranean, shipped out in pairs, and deliveries are now running slightly ahead of schedule. Electrification of the Thenia to Alger line, being realised by ALSTOM, is expected to be completed and officially operational by the end of October.

Since work on the new 22,000 m² depot and works which will be the FLIRTs' eventual home will not be finished until April 2009, a much older depot at Agha is being refurbished by SNTF as a temporary measure, to be handed over temporarily to Stadler Algeria by the end of 2008 at the latest and to stay in use until about 20 trains have been delivered. Services on the 55 km route from Agha (Alger city centre) to Thenia (about 55 km to the east of Alger) are scheduled to start early in 2009, initially with twelve FLIRTs, running in pairs. This will completely eliminate the use of diesel-powered local trains on this busy suburban section of the main line to Constantine.

At a later stage the operation of up to four FLIRTs in multiple is envisaged - trainset capacity thus being an impressive 3,500 passengers (each unit only has 144 seats, but designed standee crush density is ten passengers per square metre!). This will be very useful indeed when football matches are held in the district. The line to Thenia passes fairly close to the capital's Houari Boumediene airport, and a branch is now being built to the latter.

For the purposes of the exhibition, a mobile **driving simulator** was installed in 101. It was developed by Berner Fachhochschule (Institute of Technology) together with Stadler Rail, and is connected to the train's control system. This enables almost all on-board hardware and software to respond when trainee drivers are using it, the only exceptions being the traction converter, the spring-loaded parking brake and functions such as sanders and flange lubricators, which would, if activated, cause unnecessary contamination. The windscreen is blocked off, and a screen shows pre-recorded driver's eye video footage of a railway journey. The simulator is very easy to install, requiring a display screen, a working place for the instructor, consisting of a PC and two monitor screens, and connection between the computer and vehicle's control system. A different type of simulator has been supplied to SNTF as part of the FLIRT contract, the manufacturer being TRANSURB of Belgium, and this will be installed in a new building housing other SNTF simulators as well.

There was actually a second FLIRT in Berlin during InnoTrans, too. This was one of the 25 being built at Stadler's Pankow works for use from December 2008 on Keolis's eurobahn services on the Hellwegnetz in Westfalen. A further 18 will subsequently be built for eurobahn's Maas-Rhein-Lippe-Netz, in readiness for the start-up of services in December 2009. This particular train was used by Stadler during the fair for a series of tours for guests taking in various parts of the German capital's extensive suburban rail network.

Readers are referred to TransUrban 5/08 for an overview of the Tango and Variobahn trams which were exhibited by Stadler at InnoTrans 2008.