EDITORIAL

The cheerful buzzing of Nordic voices

After years of preparation, we were excited to welcome our colleagues to the 17th Nordic Congress of General Practice in Tromsø 14–17 June 2011. 371 Danes, 297 Norwegians, 245 Swedes, 59 Finns, 9 Icelanders and 51 participants from other countries, altogether 1033 persons, were awaited. As Tromsø has no big venue, the congress had to be shared between two neighbouring hotels, quayside in the city centre. In the sunny spring weather, this location felt perfect. The summing and humming of many tongues, mingling and networking out in the open, accompanied by seagulls, was for us the signature tune of the congress.

This engaged participation started many months earlier with early registrations and a large number of submitted abstracts. To our knowledge, the whole scientific programme took place as planned. Choosing between the many interesting parallel sessions was not easy. In many of the contributions we could recognize a reference to our vision for the congress: 'Caring for people where they are'. We also had an idea of a relation between the scientific and the cultural programme, which materialized beyond our expectations. The opening with songs of Mari Boine and the premiere of a film about professor Anders Forsdahl connected the audience to the people living in the High North, but also had a universal appeal.

Which were the highlights of the congress? More than half of the participants responded to our QuestBack evaluation. The highest scores were given to the congress surroundings, the opening ceremony, and the overall opinion of the congress. The plenary speakers were also highly ranked. Our interpretation is that the blending of it all was successful: The place, the people, the programme and what happened in-between. We hope that the congress in this meaning was an inspiration for our daily work as doctors, researchers and leaders. The high attendance from young participants at this congress felt

like a promise that 'The Diamonds of General Practice' will shine on.

This congress followed up on themes from Copenhagen 2009, like the relation between human biology and human biography. We also drew on their idea of long coffee breaks to allow discussions to continue informally. Tampere has to find their own way, but we learned some lessons. Both oral presentations and posters were well visited. They are important meeting places for the young, and should have been given more space in the programme and better locations. We took some risks by organizing a large conference in a city without optimal facilities. On a rainy day, the premises would have been cramped. Transmitting plenary sessions between two conference halls was done for the first and probably last time. And we dared to take urban people out for the most rustic and chaotic conference dinner ever. Anyway, the music was swinging and midnight sun shining; thanks for trusting us and see you all for tango in Tampere 2013!

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