
CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES ON SELF-CARE IN HEALTH POLICY

Invitation to the 36th AESGP Annual Meeting in Helsinki, Finland, 17-20 May 2000

Mr Jarmo Lehtonen, Managing Director, Pharma Industry Finland (PIF)

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In the 12th century, the Crusades were in vogue in Europe but as the distance between Sweden and the Holy Land was considerable – just imagine the quality of communications at the time! – the Swedes thought it would be useful to embark upon a “crusade” of their own against Finland and to convert the Finns to Christianity. However, while the Swedes were busy converting the Finns, they also managed at the same time to annex Finland to the Swedish Kingdom for almost 700 years.

Over the centuries, Finland as the eastern backbone of Sweden was the forum for numerous wars between the east and the west. Finally, as a result of a war appropriately called the “War of Finland”, Sweden was forced to surrender Finland to Russia. After that, our country remained an autonomous Grand Duchy of Tsarist Russia for more than a hundred years until it gained independence on 6 December 1917, thus combining the various sovereign states to form the Republic of Finland.

An essential feature of the Russian era was that our country retained the Swedish judicial system – the laws of

the Russian Empire never becoming valid legislation in Finland. This has been a fundamental reason why Finland has always been part of Western Europe, and the Finnish people have always considered themselves to be part of and have always looked towards the West.

Today Finland is a modern nation with a sophisticated infrastructure, committed to developing its high-tech industries. I am sure you are all familiar with Nokia and its mobile phones. We have the highest per capita density of mobile phones, personal computers and Internet connections in the world. Finland is also eminently suitable as a location for pharmaceutical industry and medical research.

Considering the size of our population – a mere 5.1 million people – we have managed to produce a surprisingly large number of talented individuals, from classical conductors, opera singers and composers to our world-famous Formula 1 and rally drivers.

It is our sincere wish that next year, in connection with our meeting, you will have the opportunity of enjoying the unique experience of Finland and Helsinki, taking advantage of our cultural and tourist attractions seen at their best in a country where social security is of world class, as is, unfortunately, its taxation!

Once again: we wish you a warm welcome to Finland and Helsinki, and look forward to seeing you in May 2000.