

EFSUMB Newsletter meets Latvia.

Facts:

- ▶ Area: 64,589 km²
- ▶ Capital (and largest city): Riga
- ▶ Member state of European Union



Dr Ilze Sedleniece,
President of the Latvian Society

since 2004

Dr Ilze Sedleniece (IS) President and Delegate of the Latvian Society is interviewed by Michael Bachmann Nielsen (MBN), Editor of the EFSUMB Newsletter

- ▶ MBN: Could you start by telling your current position and how you use ultrasound in daily practice?
- ▶ IS: Yes I am a radiologist. Recently I moved from the Riga to a regional hospital 100 km from the capital, the city is called Valmiera. I work within all fields of diagnostic imaging also CT, MRI and mammography, but of course also a lot of ultrasound examinations.
- ▶ MBN: The Latvian Society joined EFSUMB in 2004. Could you tell us a little bit of your Society and the number of members you have?
- ▶ IS: I think we now have approximately 180 official members, which is the number of members that are also part of EFSUMB. We have some unofficial additional members who are only associated with our national Society, this sum up to approximately 300 members in total.
- ▶ MBN: Do you think that is the correct number of doctors using ultrasound or could it be larger?
- ▶ IS: Probably several more doctors use ultrasound and we hope that they will eventually join our Society. There are officially 2.3 million citizens in Latvia, when I say officially, it is because approximately 10% have moved to another country for economical reasons, a large number are in Ireland. Perhaps you

have noticed that during the Eurovision song contest Ireland always give points to Latvia.

- ▶ MBN: I know you have an official language, Latvian, but I would think that Russian is also spoken in your country?
- ▶ IS: The official language is Latvian. However, with one out of every 10 patients I see, I have to speak Russian. Doctors who work in the capital Riga meet more Russian patients - up to 40%.
- ▶ MBN: So you speak several languages Razna Lake, the second largest in Latvia
- ▶ IS: Yes, personally I speak Latvian, Russian and English. I also speak a little of Swedish. I can read Swedish without problems and I have often translated from Swedish to Latvian.
- ▶ MBN: Which medical specialities are represented within the Latvian ultrasound Society?
- ▶ IS: Approximately half of them are radiologists and the rest are clinicians within different specialities.
- ▶ MBN: Do you have any certification for performing ultrasound in Latvia or do you hold any courses?
- ▶ IS: There are two centres that can provide certification for performing ultrasound in Latvia. There is a postgraduate course of either two or four months with a mix of lecture and supervised hands-on. After that you can go for a certificate after two years of clinical practice, where you have to pass an exam and afterwards you are approved by the government and by the radiological Society.
- ▶ MBN: How about annual meetings and postgraduate courses?
- ▶ IS: We have two annual meetings, each of one day and we have postgraduate courses, e.g., in Doppler.
- ▶ MBN: How is the health care system in Latvia? Is it private or state financed?
- ▶ IS: It is mostly provided by the state, there is a compulsory health insurance involving access to primary health care doctors and hospital for a standard patient payment which has been kept to a minimum. There are private health care clinics also, and they have contract with private insurance companies, but due to financial situation most of the patients goes through state clinics.

- ▶ MBN: Do you have a web site for your Society or a newsletter?
- ▶ IS: Currently we don't have a web site. We have a newsletter we send out approximately four times a year to our members and, of course, we have the bulk subscription for *Ultraschall in der Medizin/European Journal of Ultrasound*
- ▶ MBN: How do you think the future is for ultrasound in Latvia?
- ▶ IS: It is looking good, treatment is getting better, level of equipment bought by health care companies increase, and doctors really care about education. Unfortunately there is a dramatically inflation rate of now 20% and the increase in salaries are of course lower.
- ▶ MBN: It has been very nice talking to you and thank you very much for volunteering to give this interview and I am sure all the other EFSUMB countries will appreciate reading about your country and your Society.



Vidzemes slimnīca - the Hospital in Valmiera



The Latvian delegation in Geneva during EUROSON 2005



Geneva is with an initial capital