

## Nordic/Baltic Regional ESTH Hub e-Letter

Welcome to the latest e-Letter, our *unclassified* electronic publication sharing regional information, news and events. We encourage you to visit the websites of our Embassies throughout the Hub. Feel free to disseminate to your contacts!

### AROUND THE REGION.....

#### DENMARK



**Joint Committee Meets.** On February 7<sup>th</sup>, Embassy Copenhagen hosted the biannual Joint Committee meeting, led by Ambassador Laurie S. Fulton, Danish State Secretary Michael Zilmer-Johns and Greenland's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Inuuteq Holm Olsen. The Joint Committee, containing Priority, Status and Science working groups, serves as an expanded forum to promote cooperation between the United States, Denmark and Greenland. The Science Group chair noted a wide range of activities, including significant climate research collaboration, innovative educational programs and creative outreach initiatives. (Photo: State Secretary Zilmer-Johns and Ambassador Fulton) [Want to know more about the Joint Committee?](#)

**Experts Seek Arctic Climate Early Warning System.** Scientists seeking to pin down triggers for abrupt climate shifts in the Arctic, such as a feared runaway melt of Greenland's ice sheet, to create an early warning system for governments. [Read more](#)

**Cancer Capital of the World?** Denmark has the highest rate of cancer in the world. New World Health Organization data shows that 326 people out of every one hundred thousand are diagnosed with cancer every, mainly due to heavy smoking and drinking. [Read more](#)

**Skiing on Garbage?** Copenhagen residents will soon have the option of heading to the local incineration plant—to ski. The roof of a new waste-to-energy plant will be designed to enable winter recreation. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the architect behind the project stated that "The city has the weather for winter sports, we just don't have the landscape for it." [Photo gallery](#)



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## ESTONIA

**Kudos to Estonian Surgeon.** Dr. Tanel Laisaar was recently lauded for his contributions to Estonian medicine and world health. Under his leadership, the first ever lung transplant in Estonia was conducted last fall. The successful surgery took place at Tartu University Hospital. Dr. Laisaar also created a medical transplant system in Estonia. [Read more](#)



**Tallinn Hosting HIV Conference.** The conference *HIV in European Region - Unity and Diversity*, scheduled for May 25-27, is organized by the National Institute for Health Development in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the UN program on HIV/AIDS and other international organizations. The conference focuses on HIV prevention and treatment challenges in Eastern European countries. The event, convening more than 500 health specialists from 53 countries, is expected to produce recommendations to the European Commission, European governments and international organizations. Participants from a wide spectrum, including political leaders, HIV program managers/researchers, journalists and people living with HIV are encouraged to attend. Keep posted for more details, or reach out directly to

Embassy Tallinn's Taimi Alas ([AlasT@state.gov](mailto:AlasT@state.gov)).

HIV infection remains one of the most serious health hazards in Europe. Incidence numbers suggest that HIV infection increased by a third in 2000-2008, to an average of 57 cases per one million population. Eastern European countries have the highest number of new cases, with 2008 data suggesting 179 cases per million—more than twice that of Western Europe. Estonia was hardest hit (410 cases per million), followed by Latvia with 160 cases. Studies note that nearly 30 percent of Europeans do not know whether they are infected with HIV. [Read more](#)

## FINLAND



**Nokia Innovations.** Nokia, the world's largest mobile phone manufacturer, will launch smartphones using Near Field Communication (NFC) technology. With NFC, customers could use their phones to pay for purchases in stores or pay a bus fare. Nokia must engage a large a network of contracting parties to make the new technology viable. [Read more](#)

**Finland's Nordic Council Presidency: Coping with climate change.** Finland assumed the Nordic Council Presidency for 2011 and will make "Coping with



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Climate Change” its main theme. Finland plans to promote and reinforce the Nordic countries’ leading role in climate change efforts. [Read more](#)

**Green Origins.** An excerpt of a interview with Bruce J. Oreck, U.S. Ambassador to Finland and Michael M. Wood, former U.S. Ambassador to Sweden, discussing how the League of Green Embassies originated. [How did the League of Green Embassies originate?](#)

## GERMANY

### **Linking Germany to Denmark: Environmental Concerns Transform**

**Project** Danish lawmakers approved plans for another road-and-rail link, opting for an underwater tunnel purportedly safer and more environmentally friendly than a previously-planned bridge. Both countries agreed in 2008 to connect the northern German island of Fehmarn with the Danish island of Lolland via a road-and-rail bridge. The Danish firm

Femern A/S presented modified plans for an 18-kilometer (11.6 mile) underwater tunnel. The revised project budget is approximately 5.1 billion Euros (\$7 billion). [Read more](#)



**Security Council Must Tackle Climate Change.** Leading up to Germany’s UN Security Council ascension, the German UN ambassador stated that the Council should deal with climate change as a potential global threat. Peter Wittig told an audience at a think-tank in Berlin that global warming was an urgent security issue. [Read more](#)



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## ICELAND

**U.S. Supports Geothermal Energy Development.** African Development Bank (AfDB) representatives and utility companies from Djibouti,



Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda attended a seminar in Reykjavik January 13th – 16th to support the development of clean energy along East Africa’s Rift Valley. The seminar was sponsored by the United States Executive Director’s Office to the AfDB, the U.S. Commercial Service, Ambata Capital Partners, Reykjavik Geothermal, the AfDB and the World Bank. The seminar provided on-site technical awareness and assisted AfDB staff and East African utility company representatives in building capacity for geothermal project development. (Photo: President Olafur Grimsson and U.S. Ambassador Luis Arreaga welcomed participants from five African countries to a geothermal seminar in Reykjavik)

**Circumpolar Conference.** The seventh International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS VII) will take place in Akureyri, Iceland on June 22nd-26th. The Congress topic is Circumpolar Perspectives in Global Dialogue: Social Sciences beyond the International Polar Year. ICASS is held every three years and is a congress of the International Arctic Social Sciences put on by IASSA (International Arctic Social Sciences Association). The Congress will be hosted by the University of Akureyri, the town of Akureyri and the Stefansson Arctic Institute. The conference is expected to attract nearly 500 Arctic experts including 40-50 speakers. Conference organizers have emphasized inclusion of indigenous peoples and young researchers. This conference will receive significant USG support, with U.S. Geological Services contributing significant funding. The U.S. Arctic Research Commission plans to send a delegation and contribute a travel grant. The Embassy has submitted a funding request to sponsor one of the U.S. keynote speakers and other indigenous and young researchers. [For more information](#)



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## LATVIA



**First Ever Liver Transplant Operation; Surgeons Worried about Funds for More.** Riga Stradins Hospital recently conducted a successful liver transplant. While another patient awaits a transplant, it is uncertain whether the hospital can afford a similar operation—even if a donor appears. (Image: The Riga Stradins Hospital)

## LITHUANIA

**Lithuania Lodges Appeal Against Russia's Gazprom.** Lithuania lodged a gas pricing complaint with the European Commission against Gazprom, over alleged dominant market position abuse. The allegations involve Gazprom failing to supply natural gas under transparent, reasonable and non-discriminatory rules. [Read more](#)



## NORWAY



**Maritime Delimitation Treaty Approved.** The maritime delimitation treaty establishing the maritime boundary between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean has been approved by the Norwegian Parliament (Storting). [Read more](#)

**Norwegian Natural Gas For Europe.** Norwegian energy producer Statoil kicked off a marketing campaign arguing for natural gas to be part of Europe's energy mix for the long term. Statoil is the second largest supplier of gas to Europe, actively developing the Norwegian Continental Shelf, in addition to developing international gas value chains in the Caspian region, North-Africa and the U.S.

[Read more](#)



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**Record Norwegian Seafood Export.** The export of Norwegian seafood in 2010 reached NOK 53.8 billion (\$9.4bn USD), and set a new record in export value for seafood for the seventh year running. Demand for salmon and trout has been strong, with an increase in export value of 29 per cent. Fish farming represents 62 per cent of the total Norwegian seafood exports. France and Russia are the largest markets for Norwegian seafood. However, China, including Hong Kong, was the fastest growing market in 2010. [Read more](#)

## POLAND



**Polish Shale Gas Regulators Visit the United States** Polish officials have been scheduled to meet with U.S. federal, state, and city government officials, federal and university research institutions, private companies and industry associations during a January 23 –February 2 shale gas study tour in the United States. The goal of the State Department-hosted visit is to learn more about the U.S. experiences and approaches to developing and regulating shale gas as a new and secure source of energy. (Image: Bright Angel Shale Slope) [Read more](#)

## RUSSIA

**Russia, Finland Break the Ice.** Russia and Finland set up a joint shipbuilding company producing vessels that can navigate the High Arctic. The two first icebreakers have been ordered from that new entity. [Read more](#)



### U.S. and Russia Partner for Global Polio Eradication.

On January 27 in Geneva, the U.S. and Russian Federation governments signed a protocol of intent for the global eradication of polio, building on the foundation of partnership in President Obama's reset with Russia. (Image: USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and Deputy Minister of Health Veronica Skvortsova after the signing.) [Read more.](#) [YouTube.](#)

**Arctic Tourism.** A delegation from Russia's Arctic Yamal Peninsula visited Finland to discuss plans for active tourism cooperation. The plan would create an Arctic tourism center in the city of Salekhard, the capital of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region. [Read more](#)



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## SWEDEN

**Volvo to Enter the EV Market.** Volvo is set to enter the electric vehicle (EV) market with the production of an all-electric version of their C30 three-door compact. Volvo announced plans to begin EV production with the first ten cars off the production line heading to Swedish energy provider Göteborg Energi. [Read more](#)



**Sweden Turns Human Body Heat Into Energy.** Engineers in Stockholm discovered a new way to trap and use human body heat. At Stockholm's busy Central Station, engineers use heating exchangers to convert body heat into hot water and then pump that water to an adjacent office building--providing it with environmentally friendly and cost effective heating. The process can reduce energy costs by up to 25% (Photo: Stockholm Central Station) [Read more](#)  
[Youtube](#)

**Sustainable Coexistence.** Sweden's reindeer and wind power industries strive to coexist. [Read more](#)

## EUROPEAN UNION

**EU Acts to Stop Sweden's Wolf Hunt.** The European Commission launched legal action against Sweden for allowing hunters to shoot 20 wolves this year, even though the species is threatened with extinction. Read more [here](#) and [here](#)

**MEPs Warn Governments Not To Cut Health Spending.** Members of the European Parliament's public health committee warned that cuts in health budgets due to the economic crisis could worsen disparities across the European Union. MEPs said member states must make better use of resources and take measures to limit the negative impact of the crisis on the healthcare sector. A recent study by the Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed large disparities in certain health areas across the EU. For women, life expectancy varies for men from 78.8 years in Sweden to 65.1 years in Lithuania.



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## UNITED STATES



**U.S. Toughens Offshore Drilling Rules.** The U.S. Department of the Interior is creating two new independent agencies, one to approve oil and gas leases and the other to enforce worker safety and environmental regulations. A third function, collection of royalties from oil and gas companies, had already been separated into an independent agency. A new advisory board of leading scientists, engineers and technical experts

will give the government input on offshore drilling safety and spill response. Regulations for drillers have also been tightened to ensure oil and gas companies have adequate safety plans and are subject to independent inspections before and during production. (Image: A bird covered by oil from the BP oil spill.) [Read more](#)

### **U.S. Plans 20% Increase in Buildings' Energy Efficiency by 2020**

The U.S. should increase energy efficiency in commercial buildings by 20 percent by 2020 according to President Barack Obama's Better Buildings Initiative. [Read more](#)

**Major Offshore Wind Opportunities Announced.** Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Secretary of Energy Steven Chu announced major steps forward in support of offshore wind energy in the United States, including new funding opportunities for up to \$50.5 million for projects that support offshore wind energy deployment and several high priority Wind Energy Areas in the mid-Atlantic that will spur rapid, responsible development of this renewable resource. DOE is pursuing a scenario that includes deployment of 10 GW of offshore wind generating capacity by 2020 and 54 GW by 2030. [Read more](#)

**2035 Clean Electricity Target Set.** U.S. President Barack Obama set a target for power plants to produce mostly clean electricity by 2035 -- including power from sources like clean coal and natural gas -- in his State of the Union address. [Read more](#)

**E.P.A. and Chrysler Ally to Develop Hydraulic Hybrid Technology.** The EPA and Chrysler will adapt a hydraulic hybrid technology that could potentially increase overall fuel efficiency by up to 35 percent, and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent. The research partnership will focus on adapting and applying the agency's patented hydraulic hybrid system to a Chrysler Town and Country minivan. [Read more](#)

**Recovery Act Milestone.** Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced that more than 300,000 low-income homes have been weatherized under the Recovery Act, a major milestone in the Department's efforts to reduce home energy bills for families. States are now more than 50 percent



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of the way toward meeting President Obama's goal of weatherizing approximately 600,000 homes under the Recovery Act. [Read more](#)

**DOE to Provide Over \$1.2 Billion for Clean Energy Projects.** The Department of Energy plans to provide a total of \$1.208 billion in loan guarantees to support the construction of two major renewable energy projects in the country. The department will provide \$967 million for a solar project in Arizona and \$ 241 million for a biodiesel facility in Louisiana. [Read more](#)

**Energy Innovation Portal Connects Innovation to Marketplace.** EERE/DOE The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) [Energy Innovation Portal](#) now has more than 300 business-friendly marketing summaries available to help investors and companies identify and license leading-edge energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. The Portal is an online tool that links available DOE innovations to the entrepreneurs who can successfully license and commercialize them. By helping to move these innovations from the laboratory to the market, the Portal facilitates an integral step in supporting growing America's clean energy industries and meeting the Administration's clean energy goals. [Read more](#)

**Massachusetts Announces Clean Energy and Climate Plan** Massachusetts recently set the statewide greenhouse gas emissions limit for 2020 required by the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 at 25 percent below 1990 levels, the maximum authorized by the Act. [Read more](#)

### **Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2020**



### **EPA Awards \$25 Million to Improve Air Quality**

Over five years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will award \$25 million to the Health Effects Institute (HEI) to help address the latest challenges to improving air quality and protecting health. With the funding, HEI will develop the next generation of tools and scientific information to examine the combined effects of air pollution exposures on people's health and the relationship between air quality and climate change. [Read more](#), or for [more information on HEI](#).

### **"We Can Learn from U.S. Mayors on Climate," says EU's Bresso**

The President of the EU Committee of the Regions, Mercedes Bresso, was in Washington DC, on 20 January, talking about climate change at the U.S. Conference of Mayors. During the organization's winter plenary, 230 American mayors were gathered. Bresso expressed her goal to foster more exchanges between European and American mayors—allowing learning from one another's best practices in addressing climate change. [YouTube](#).



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## EVENTS



**GLOBE Training in Estonia.** From March 10<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>, GLOBE Estonia and Estonian Physical Society in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Estonia will conduct training in Võru, Estonia. The training includes atmosphere and plant phenology protocols, related learning activities, best teaching practices and the GLOBE Model for Student Scientific Research and Earth. More about the GLOBE Seasons and Biomes project [here](#). The training is conducted by Dr. Elena Bautista Sparrow and Ms. Martha R. Kopplin of the Seasons and Biomes Project and the Alaska GLOBE Partnership, located at the International Arctic Research Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Training will be in English. For registration, please contact Ketlin Piir ([ketlin@lobe.ee](mailto:ketlin@lobe.ee)) or fill the registration form [here](#). **Registration deadline is 15th February 2011**

**Conference: The Arctic as a Messenger for Global Processes - Climate Change and Pollution.** Copenhagen, May 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Topics covered include the Arctic Cryosphere, Arctic pollution, Global and Arctic systems, Arctic Ecosystems, Human Aspects of Climate Change and Pollution, Science and Policy-Making. Hosts: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), University of Copenhagen, and University of Aarhus. Read more [here](#) and [here](#)

**Symposium on Protein Chemistry, three Nobel laureates participating.** The Danish Friends of the University of Haifa, the Danish Weizmann Society and the University of Copenhagen are co-sponsoring a symposium, *Protein Chemistry: Applications to Combat Diseases*. The symposium, held at the University from May 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, will feature three recent Israeli Nobel laureates in chemistry. American scientists/researchers from Harvard Medical School, the University of Chicago, Rockefeller University and NIH/National Cancer Institute are anticipated to attend. Additional information may be found [here](#).



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## FEATURED STORY

### **Tracking Telemedicine: The Future of Medicine?**



Telemedicine involves the transfer of medical information through interactive media, which includes the Internet, telephones and email. Telemedicine uses technology to overcome physical distances, allowing medical professionals to consult with patients, and even perform remote medical examinations or procedures from afar. This developing field in clinical medicine serves many functions. “Store and forward” telemedicine focuses on the acquisition and transmission of medical data, such as medical images, to a medical professional for assessment. Software can allow multi-dimensional images of the human body, which can be controlled by a doctor. Electronic records also provide clinicians with instant access. Under remote monitoring telemedicine, medical professionals monitor patients remotely using various technological devices. Finally, interactive telemedicine allows real-time interactions among patients and providers, removing the need for face-to-face visits for physical examinations or assessments.

### **Healthy Benefits**

Telemedicine provides patients with multiple benefits, including preserving patient dignity. Patients are no longer forced to spend undue amounts of time in hospitals for assessments. Rather, patients may be treated while remaining within the familiarity and comfort of their homes. By actively participating in their own monitoring/treatment, such as allowing their own electronic pulse to be reviewed, patients feel a sense of “buy-in” in their personal treatment. Further, hospital patients often face unpredictability as to when their next test/monitoring will occur—a situation removed when telemedicine patients participate in controlling their own care.

### **Telemedicine Saves Costs, Promotes Efficiencies**

Recent estimates indicate that electronic record-keeping has saved the Danish health system as much as \$120 million a year. The Danish information system, identified as the most efficient in the world, saves doctors an average of 50 minutes daily in administrative work. In Denmark, any pharmacy can pull up an electronic prescription—and nearly half of Danish hospitals use electronic records. Telemedicine may be estimated to treat about 10% of all Danish hospital admissions—patients suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Real cost savings result as cheaper telemedicine technologies emerge, including less needed hospital space and fewer costly on-site patient visits.



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## **Telemedicine in the U.S.: A Bitter Pill, or Sound Medicine?**

Scandinavian countries, with national patient registration systems, may have neither the cultural, nor legal, privacy obstructions found in the U.S. Electronic health records are found in about 10 percent of American hospitals—with only 17 percent of American doctors using electronic medical records. Despite smaller populated countries with a strong centralized government, the U.S. faces a larger population with multiple state (and federal) privacy legal regimes. Nevertheless, the trend in the U.S. may be shifting. For example, the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs and Kaiser Permanente, two of the nation's largest users of electronic health records, now can share records between their systems.

### **Good Connections**

In the end, telemedicine allows health care to follow the patient. Primary care physicians in rural areas can contact urban specialists from great distances. Patients may be discharged earlier, returning to the comfort of their homes versus an impersonal hospital ward. Centers of excellence could be established globally, each being a hub focusing on a medical specialty. Telemedicine's many benefits thus continue to be explored. (Photo from [Telemedicineinsider.com](http://Telemedicineinsider.com))

### **Read more:**

[NYT: Denmark Leads the Way in Digital Care](#)

[Time Magazine: Health Lessons from Europe](#)

[Youtube clip #1 from Danish telemedicine project, cutting costs and providing better service \(transcripts available\)](#)

[Youtube clip #2 from Danish telemedicine project, cutting costs and providing better service](#)

[Danish telemedicine project - background](#)



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