

# Newsletter No. 1

June 2012



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and European Neighbourhood and  
Partnership Instrument)

## Dear Reader,



Welcome to the first issue of the PrimCareIT newsletter. We're glad you are reading it and hope that you will find it interesting.

PrimCareIT is a health technology flagship project within the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-13. Our goal is to make remote primary health care more attractive to health professionals. By using information and communication technology (ICT), we aim to counteract brain drain and professional isolation and to secure more equal access to health services for all citizens.

In this newsletter, you will find project news, partner profiles and recent activities. In future, project newsletters will be issued every six months during the project period. We hope that you will refer back to previous issues as well.

*Sami Penälä*

Lead Partner

## Project in a nutshell

**PrimCare IT - Counteracting brain drain and professional isolation of health professionals in remote primary health care through tele-consultation and tele-mentoring to strengthen social conditions in remote BSR**

Partnership	Health care professionals, medical doctors associations, hospitals, planning and financing authorities, regional development administrations and eHealth research organisations.
Number of partners	16
Partner countries	Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden
Lead Partner	South Ostrobothnia Health Care District, Finland
Total budget	2,5 million €
Duration	33 months (September 2011 – June 2014)

# ICT to raise the attractiveness of remote primary health care



As our population ages, society faces new challenges. Demand for primary health care services is rising: with the retirement of older professionals and an unwillingness amongst younger professionals to re-locate to remote areas, there is a shortage of physicians, especially in rural areas.

It was to meet these challenges that the project "PrimCare IT – Counteracting brain drain and professional isolation of health professionals in remote primary health care through tele-consultation and tele-mentoring to strengthen social conditions in remote BSR", was originally initiated within the "eHealth for Regions" network. This flagship project follows in the

footsteps of the projects "ImPrim" and "ICT for Health", and is part-financed by the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-13. The project brings together 16 institutions from seven countries: Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden.

The overall aim of the PrimCareIT project is to enhance the attractiveness of remote primary health care for medical professionals by the means of tele-consultation and tele-mentoring. We believe that a better deployment of ICT solutions has great potential for reducing professional isolation as well as for providing professional opportunities in remote areas. By counteracting brain drain and professional isolation, it is possible to secure more equal access to health services for all citizens.

The project is aiming to achieve results from pilots in six countries, testing tele-consultation and tele-mentoring solutions in primary health care. At the same time, existing practices are being researched and evaluated. By creating a transnational strategy which joins PrimCareIT findings to those of the two other projects, we hope eventually to support better health care services in remote regions.

Ingrida Jaselskytė,  
Lithuania:

**"I am participating in PrimCareIT because European projects allow the creation of infrastructure and sustainability of services. There are long-term investment benefits in linking medical facilities to a telecommunications infrastructure designed to address some of the health disparity challenges."**



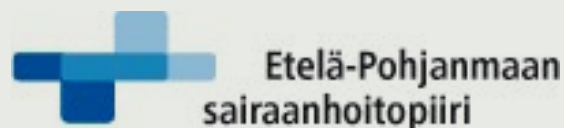
## South Ostrobothnia Health Care District (SOHCD)

*Country: Finland*

*Number of staff: 2987*

*(2758 permanent, 229 temporary)*

*Function: Secondary healthcare*



SOHCD consists of 20 municipalities and covers an area of nearly 200,000 inhabitants. It has two hospitals and several psychiatric outpatient care units. Its main tasks are to enhance the health of the population, to provide regional specialist health care services, and to administrate research, development and educational services in the health care field.

SOHCD participates at PrimCareIT as a lead partner. The organization has long experience of using ICT in health care, and it has positive experience of international cooperation through its membership of the eHealth for Regions network and the ICT for Health project. We believe that cooperation in developing and exchanging eHealth strategies is vital for securing health care services in remote regions.

## Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH)

*Country: Sweden*

*Number of staff: 579*

*Function: Higher Education Institute*

BTH is a recognized university under government control. It is the most distinctively profiled institute in Sweden, thanks to its strong emphasis on applied information technology, IT and sustainable development in industry and society. At BTH, the humanities, social sciences, management and health sciences are all integrated into an applied IT profile that enables technology and the humanities to develop in exciting new directions. The institute was established in 1989 and its main campus is in Karlskrona, in the county of Blekinge in south-east Sweden.

As a partner in PrimCareIT, BTH is building on the tradition of close collaboration with the health care sector to provide efficient solutions for improving the health care systems of tomorrow via ICT and work practices.



## Flensburg University of Applied Sciences (FLUAS)

*Country: Germany*

*Number of students: 4,000*

*Function: University of Applied Sciences*

FLUAS covers a wide competency range in engineering and business sciences with around 4,000 students in thirteen bachelor's and six master's degree courses. In the field of health care, FLUAS has offered a bachelor's programme specialization in hospital management since 1990 and a master's programme in eHealth since 2007. The eHealth master's programme is the only one of its kind in Germany, with seven permanent researchers working in national and international eHealth projects.

FLUAS is lead partner of the ICT for Health project, and the management secretariat of eHealth for Regions is situated at the Flensburg University of Applied Sciences. In PrimCareIT, FLUAS is leader of work package three.





## Interview with Raimo Rintala, Kauhava Primary Health Care District, Leading Physician

*PrimeCareIT: What interested the Kauhava Primary Health Care District in participating in the project?*

Raimo Rintala: We want to be at the forefront of basic security in the region and throughout the whole country. Whether developing operations, services, quality or anything else, we cannot work in isolation. By working with others, we automatically learn good methods and practices which lead to innovation. Through comparing and benchmarking, we can continuously develop activities within our own organization.

Our project partners include the Blekinge Institute of Technology and the University of Linneus, both of which are among Sweden's leading IT technology developers in primary health care. At the beginning of this year, they also organized a two-day seminar on Swedish primary health care IT technology development. Another project partner, Estonia, is the leading EU country in this area. There is a lot to learn from such countries, and we are de-



lighted to be working with them in this project. A recent survey focused to the special management skills needed in organizations. These days, we need to learn how to work in an international atmosphere, alongside colleagues from all over Europe. We constantly need to adapt and adjust to new situations and networks. Circumstances are ever-changing, so it is important to maintain confidence in a climate where feelings of inadequacy and incompetence can rise dramatically. Changes in traditional hierarchies have brought about that information technology and social media are success factors.

*PCIT: What kind of benefits do doctors and patients derive from the project?*

RR: We have six health stations which will be interconnected at different levels, through video links. Central hospitals may offer virtual seminars, conferences or training, in such a way that everyone from the region can actively participate. No time is wasted on travel. If

The Finnish project partner Raimo Rintala commends the opportunities of tele-consultation.

no physician is available in a particular health centre, for example, a nurse on duty can consult instead with a physician from the central hospital. Physicians are able to see patients and talk with them remotely, and to assess their cases via video links. The same opportunities are also available to specialized health care and to university hospitals. Through this wider access to advice and support by professionals, patients receive better care overall.

*PCIT: Give us a few practical examples*

RR: For example, young doctors working in health care centres in rural areas need guidance. In their training phase, doctoral students have weekly two-hour guidance, which can be performed virtually. Similarly, students can take part in interesting seminars organized by the University of Tampere, transmitted directly to the health care centre.

Nurses and doctors can easily consult professionals at other hospitals when necessary (doctor by call), and the project also allows for the organization of regular virtual meetings, in which professionals in different locations can come together to discuss individual patients' cases.

30 September 2011

## **PrimCareIT approved by the Monitoring Committee – and flagship of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

The Monitoring Committee of the Baltic Sea Region Programme agreed to grant support to the PrimCareIT project, amongst others, at its meeting in Berlin on 27-28 September 2011. The project, which will raise the attractiveness of remote primary health care for medical professionals, is also part of flagship projects of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Jointly developed tele-consultation and tele-mentoring solutions will be implemented in pilot sites in Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and Belarus.

Source: [www.eu.baltic.net](http://www.eu.baltic.net)

10 Feb 2012

## **Kicking off to a good start**

More than 40 project partners met on 6 – 8 February 2012 in Seinäjoki, Finland, to initiate the Interreg IVB project. Host of this kick-off meeting was Project Director Sami Perälä from South Ostrobothnia Health Care District – the lead partner of the project. Such a diverse group of countries and cultures needs a clear view on the objectives, milestones and activities, as well as agreed rules for decision-making.

24 Apr 2012

## **Logo decided**

Tobias Larsson, Professor Product Innovation at the Swedish Blekinge Institute of Technology, was delighted to welcome so many research scientists, health care professionals and IT specialists from the PrimCareIT project to his institute. eHealth experts from seven Baltic Sea Region countries came together on 24 - 26 April 2012 for the second joint project meeting.

25 June 2012

## **Report on transnational literature review finalized**

The report gives an overview of the state of the art in the seven partner countries regarding their respective health care systems, definitions of primary health care, professional isolation and brain drain, as well as the prevalence of tele-consultation and tele-mentoring. As part of the theoretical background, the report forms the basis for further research in the PrimCareIT project.

26 June 2012

## **Website online**

The internet presence of the PrimCareIT project is now online! Go to [www.primcareit.net](http://www.primcareit.net) and find all information about the project aims, pilots as well as interim results.



Kristjan Krass, Estonia:  
**"I am participating in PrimCareIT because it brings a new quality to the tele-mentoring environment by sharing experiences. I feel like a pioneer. The project gives unique opportunities to make a difference in the primary care setting – in attitude and also in the ways we do things."**

# The Project Partners

*Click for more information.*

- South Ostrobothnia Health Care District
- Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences
- Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia
- Kauhava Primary Health Care District
- eHealth Institute, Linnaeus University
- Blekinge Institute of Technology
- County Council of Västerbotten
- Flensburg University of Applied Sciences
- The Estonian Society of Family Doctors
- Institute of Clinical Medicine of the Technomedicum of the Tallinn Technical University
- Vilnius University Hospital Santariškių Klinikos
- Kaunas University of Technology
- Lithuanian University of Health Sciences
- State Educational Institution Belarusian Medical Academy of Post-Graduate Education
- Ostrovec Central Regional Hospital
- National Health Service

## The Work packages

No.	Work packages name	Project partner	Leader
1	Project Management and Administration	South Ostrobothnia Health Care District	Sami Perälä
2	Communication and Information	Vilnius University Hospital Santariškių Klinikos	Domantas Stundys
3	Needs and strategies to counteract brain drain and professional isolation in remote primary health care through tele-consultation and tele-mentoring	Flensburg University of Applied Sciences	Bosco Lehr
4	Implementation of tele-consultation for improved professional cooperation and quality in remote primary health care (pilots)	Blekinge Institute of Technology	Tobias Larsson
5	Implementation of tele-mentoring for career development of health professionals in remote primary health care (pilots)	The Estonian Society of Family Doctors	Kristjan Krass
6	Political awareness of strategies to ensure high quality and accessible services in remote primary health care by the means of eHealth	Blekinge Institute of Technology	Johan Berglund

## Lead Partner of PrimCareIT

### Project Director

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### Project Communication Team

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Klinikos, Lithuania

Elina Koivulahti,  
Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia,  
Finland

Gesine Stück,  
dsn – project management, Germany

### Design

b+c computergraphik GmbH

Aigars Miežitis, Latvia:  
“I am participating in PrimCareIT not only to diminish the professional isolation of health professionals in Latvia but also to strength the cooperation of the Baltic Sea Region countries or, in other words, to diminish differences in the use of IT technologies between Latvia and the EU.”



For more information please go to

**[www.primcareit.net](http://www.primcareit.net)**