



# INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

## NEWSLETTER

August 2021  
Issue No. 466



### Event of the Month:

August 26 at 11:45 (for 12:00)

**Nicole Eisenman:** *Giant Without A Body*  
at the Astrup Fearnley Museum

### Special Events:

September 21 at 11:00

**Walking Tour from Grønland to Bjørvika:**

Discover the contrasts between the  
historical old Oslo and modern  
urbanization.





## **INTERNATIONAL FORUM**

P.O. Box 1505 Vika, 0117 Oslo, Norway

Website: [www.iforum.no](http://www.iforum.no)

Email: [int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no)

<b>Visiting address:</b>	<b>Kronprinsens gate 3, Victoria Passasjen</b>
<b>Board 2020 – 2021:</b>	<b>Anita Pratap</b> (President), Sissel Lindeman, Yan Donko, Gulhan Çorman, Heidi von Weltzien Høivik, Wenche Mohr, Elizabeth Rasmussen, Elizabeth Groth Kolby (Deputy) Patricia Leon de la Barra (Deputy), Jessie Sandosham (Deputy), Patricia Blackwell (Advisor)
<b>Office Coordinator:</b>	Dorota Steensland
<b>Office Team:</b>	Patricia Blackwell, Karin Skoglund
<b>Office hours:</b>	Please send any queries by email
<b>Editor:</b>	Elizabeth S. Rasmussen
<b>Editorial Team:</b>	Elspeth Walseth, Josephine Kamsvåg
<b>Secretary:</b>	Elspeth Walseth
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Anne-Lise Fasteland
<b>Auditor:</b>	Verena Krienke
<b>Committee Leaders:</b>	
Monthly Meetings	Laila Hægh Berit Lindstrøm
Special Events	Mona B. Reinboth
Art	Jane Steenbuch
Activities	Anita Solheim



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE/EVENTS	DATE	PAGE
<b>President's Page</b>		4
<b>From the Office</b>		
Membership Fee 2021-2022		5
Associate Member Status		5
<b>Coming Events</b>		
<b>Arendalsuka</b>		
Global Outlook Norway	August 17	6
Ambassadors' Round Table	August 18	6
Ambassadors' Briefing	August 18	6
<b>Monthly Meeting</b>		
Photo Exhibition by Sidsel J. Semb	September 6	7
<b>Special Events</b>		
Walking Tour of Bjørvika	September 21	8
<b>Art</b>		
<i>Giant without a Body</i> Astrup-Fernley	August 26	9
<b>Member of the Year – Anita Solheim</b>		10
<b>Minutes of the AGM</b>		17
<b>Activity groups and courses Autumn 2021</b>		20
<b>Impressions of Norway</b> H.E. Eszter Sándorfi		25
<b>A Farewell to Norway</b> H.E. Judite Dobeles		28

### DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

For the September *Newsletter* is Thursday, **August 27**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen [elizabeth.s.rasmussen@iaunet.no](mailto:elizabeth.s.rasmussen@iaunet.no) and to [int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no). Please visit our website [www.iforum.no](http://www.iforum.no) for updates and the latest information.



## **From the President**

Dear Members,

Welcome back from what has hopefully been a relaxed and restful summer with plenty of sun, sea and sand or hills, hikes and 'hytter'. We sure are spoilt constantly for choice!

The Wheel of Time is turning and another Forum season has begun. Time is both absolute and relative. It goes so fast when you are enjoying yourself, slowly when bored. Time also plays tricks on us. 'We do not always succeed in changing things in accordance with our desires, but gradually our desires change,' wrote Marcel Proust in *In Search of Lost Time*.

The pandemic has given Time a new meaning and altered perspectives. Once considered so boring as to require escape, 'Normal Life' is now a national status symbol of good governance and peak achievement. And rightly so.

Covid has also brought changes, large and small, to many aspects of our lives. It has aggravated inequalities at individual and national levels. We expect to see a widening gap in economic growth between vaccinated rich countries and unvaccinated poor countries. On the positive side, there are strengthened campaigns, smart innovations and new opportunities.

We look forward to understanding these large and small issues of our Time, even as we enjoy each other's company at our forthcoming events, get-togethers and tours. We appreciate physical interaction so much more now that we know what it is like to be without face-to-face encounters. As American author Robert Brault advised: 'Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.'

Looking very much forward to seeing you again in person!

Regards,

Anita Pratap

President

## FROM THE OFFICE

### **Renewing Your Membership for 2021 – 2022**

You will receive information about renewing your membership in an invoice, which will be sent out by email on August 23. The Membership Fee is the same as last year, NOK **500,-** for full members and NOK 250,- for overseas or associate members. Payment should be made as soon as possible to:

International Forum

P.O. Box 1505 Vika

0117 Oslo

Bank account no.: 1600 40 36631

The deadline has been set to **September 30**, 2021.

Members with no email address will be sent the invoice by post.

### **Notice for Associate Members**

There seems to be some confusion about the terms for Associate membership. These are as follows:

Associate members are former full members of IF who wish to keep in contact. They are sent the IF Newsletter and may participate in Forum meetings and events as guests, if there is room. They are not entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting, take part in Activities and Courses nor are they eligible to hold any function. Associate members wishing to become full members again, must meet the criteria for membership.

### **Additional Information**

- If you are moving abroad, and would like to keep in contact with us by becoming an Overseas Member, please inform us by email.
- If you have thought of giving up your membership because you are no longer taking part in any of the Forum activities, but would still like to keep in contact with IF, you may choose to become an Associate member. If so, please inform us by email.
- If you no longer wish to continue your membership, please inform us by email and we will remove your name from our register and no longer send you the *Newsletter*.

Please send all information re change of membership status to:

[int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no) **before August 31.**

We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

## **Charges for no-shows or no cancellations**

We would like to remind all members that anyone who signs up for an event and later fails to turn up or to cancel will be charged the admission fee. Please send the cancellation notice to the Office and the person in charge of the event. This helps with planning and a possible waiting list.

## **COMING EVENTS**

### **ARENDALSUKA**



You are cordially invited with family and friends to attend

### **GLOBAL OUTLOOK NORWAY**

**August 17 at 13:00 -15:00**

**‘Recovery after Covid-19’**

### **AMBASSADORS’ ROUNDTABLE**

**Are we Headed for a World Defined by Strategic Capitalism?**

**August 18, 2021**

09:00 am – 10:15

Ballsalen, Gamle Rådhus

### **AMBASSADORS’ BRIEFING**

**August 18 at 10:20 – 11:00**

Ballsalen, Gamle Rådhus

Leading Norwegian analyst and political editor of *Dagens Næringsliv*  
**Frithjof Jacobsen** discusses key trends and what to expect in the September elections

Read more at: <https://arendalsuka.no/event/user-view/15539>

or see the June *Newsletter*

## AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING

Photo Exhibition by Sidsel J. Semb

Monday, September 6



As a follow-up to her presentation on Zoom in March this year, the Monthly Meeting Committee is very happy to invite you to an exhibition and talk by Sidsel Jakheln Semb, Forum member and renowned photographer. This will be our first in-person monthly meeting since September last year! We are truly looking forward to it!

DATE/TIME: **Monday, September 6** at 18:45 for (19:00)

SIGN UP: By email to [int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no) no later than Wednesday, **September 1.**

PLACE: Vinderen Seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo

PRICE: NOK 100.- by payment to bank account 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS to **591747.**

No money will be handled.

TRANSPORT: T-Bane 1 to Vinderen. Pay parking until 20:00 in the adjoining area.

GUESTS: Guests are welcome if there is room.

**Members have priority.**

Please bring your membership card.

No-shows will be charged.

For last minute cancellations, please call Laila Haegh,



## SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

### Guided walking tour from Grønland to Bjørvika

September 21



The topic of this tour is the current rapid urban development taking place in Oslo. We meet up in front of Meny Supermarket at Grønland Torg, close to where the first industrial development started. The guide will explain the difficult life of the workers at the time. We will discover how the city blends new buildings with old ones, and – crossing the bridge to the Barcode – we will discern the contrasts: In Bjørvika, we will see the newest architecture and learn about the new Munch Museum, the New Deichman Library, the Opera House, and of course the concept behind the city development in Bjørvika.



The tour lasts for **90 minutes**, starting at Grønland Torg and finishing at the New Deichman Library. Lunch may be had in one of the cafés in the Library or in the vicinity. **NB:** Please remember comfortable walking shoes!

**DATE / TIME:** Tuesday September 21 at **10.45** (for 11.00)

**SIGN-UP:** To the Office by email: [int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no) by Monday, September 13

**PRICE:** NOK 170,- to be \*paid into Forum account: **1600 40 36631**.

**\*NB:** Please do not pay until you have been notified that you have a place on this tour.

**PLACE:** Grønland Torg in front of Meny



**TRANSPORT:**     **T-bane** (Metro) is the most practical. Most subway lines stop at Grønland T-bane station. Leave the station using the Grønland Torg EXIT. You will immediately see the Meny supermarket on your right hand on the square.

**Bus nr. 37** stops near Grønland Torg.

Maximum number of participants is 15. Guests welcome if room.

Last minute cancellations to Rosemary Hauge:

### **ART COMMITTEE**

Guided Tour at the Astrup Fearnley Museum

**Nicole Eisenman: *Giant Without A Body***

Thursday, **August 26**, 11:45 (for 12:00)



For more information, see the June *Newsletter*.

**Member of the Year Award 2020-2021**

## A tribute to Gunnel Anita Solheim



A talented person can't help but be noticed, and so, in the context of International Forum (IF), Anita was discovered at her friend's Christmas party in Oslo in 2003. This is where she met a long-term IF member, Kari Marie Semb Norby, who encouraged Anita to apply for the IF membership. After some time of reflection and with a hint of apprehension Anita did. These were the times when one of the resourceful IF founding mothers, Inger Malterud, ran our Office and handled the approval of Anita's heart-warming application. Here comes a small excerpt:

*'One of my concerns has been whether I had the time for serving on a committee. I have been working as an associate professor at the Department of Nursing Education, Oslo University College, and at the same time been pursuing a Master in French at the University of Oslo.*

*If I were to run a course or demonstrate some craft, it would be sewing or some kind of introductory computer course, as I am fairly proficient in both these areas.*

*I have for instance used Power Point in my work as a teacher and I use digital photo in my presentations. One problem though, if I should run a course, is that I have only one sewing machine and one computer available at home.*

*Here you can see three examples of outfits that I have sewn for my grandchildren. I can also sew dresses, wedding dresses, and even suits and coats for ladies. When sewing, I use purchased patterns as I am not a professional tailor. I just love sewing.'*



There is no doubt in my mind that the experienced Inger Malterud perceived Anita as a valuable 'Christmas gift' to our organisation; a genuine, professional woman with a rare combination of technical and creative skills, thoughtful, considerate, and generous with sharing her knowledge.

During all those years Anita has managed many tasks for IF in different capacities. She was a Leader of Monthly Meetings, worked in the Office and initiated a new Cooking Group and Book Group. She is now Leader of Activities and Courses and Leader of the Photo Group which she also initiated herself. Her latest contribution was an introductory Video about IF, made for the first Diplomatic Charity Event in 2019 and managing the IF's current website since it was published in 2020.

To achieve her goals, Anita has shown dedication and passion to resolve challenges, always looking for the smallest details, always full of energy but never losing her inner peace. She is open-minded and has the ability to listen to others. These two important attributes evoke inspiration and facilitate good communication in a teamwork.

Anita comes from Brunskog in Värmland, a picturesque Swedish County bordering Norway. She was born in 1937 and raised on a family farm with cropland and animals.



Life on the farm was busy through every season and there was much to learn. As a curious little girl, Anita hung around the smithery and carpenter workshop, took part in sheep shearing, made fishing nets, spun flax and learned weaving. Already at the age of eleven, she learned sewing at the next-door farm and made her first self-tailored riding pants!

Sewing became her passion and Anita planned to become a fashion designer, tailoring her own models. And yet, under her mother's influence she followed another vocation, which also became close to her heart. Nursing. As a child she suffered from allergies and was frequently treated in the local hospital, where she observed and admired the work of the nurses.

Soon after Anita finished Nursing School in Karlstad in 1958, destiny brought her one day to a concert followed by a dance party in a lovely, local park. It turned out to be the luckiest day of her life. She met Oddvar, a young Norwegian chemical engineer who was temporarily working in Sweden. Their harmonious dance steps put them on a path to the altar and to Oslo. Happy ever after, Anita and Oddvar have recently celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary and have three children, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren!



Anita had a smooth transformation to life in Norway. She found Norwegians less formal than Swedes; and since the Värmlandic dialect is similar to standard eastern Norwegian, she picked it up very quickly. She got a job at Rikshospitalet and soon became aware of what young nurses did *not* learn during their training, but which would have been very helpful to have learned. The idea of becoming a nurse educator had taken root in her mind.



The settling-down period was suspended when Oddvar received an offer to become Head of Norsk Hydro's Sales Operations in New York. The family, with their two- year-old son, left for America. After a while, Anita applied for an American nursing license, which she got, and started working in a general hospital in New Jersey. The idea was to gain experience and learn how hospital staff work in the US.

It was in New York that Anita got her first opportunity to 'act' as a nursing instructor. Not exactly in an ideal setting... in a car, instructing Oddvar how to deliver their second baby Eva, whom she gave birth to before they arrived at the hospital.

Her will to become a nurse educator only increased over the years. Long after returning from the States, and when the children became more independent, the time was finally right for Anita to make her educational ambitions a reality. She enrolled in two nursing faculties, one in Oslo and one in Bergen, as she was determined to get the best out of both these excellent institutions. She overcame the practical obstacles and carried on for a few years, combining home duties and work while studying and taking frequent train trips to lectures in Bergen. She also enrolled in a French Master's programme at the UiO, another deep-rooted dream.



At the same time, Anita's family life was sporty and active. They travelled extensively, bought a home in the South of France, and crossed the Atlantic in their 42-foot Hallberg-Rassy sailboat, not just once, but three times!

The first time they sailed back and forth across the Atlantic was in 1989. Westbound, from Norway by Las Palmas to Barbados and eastbound from Bermuda via the Azores back to Norway.

Oddvar was an experienced seafarer but as Anita needed to improve her skills, he gave her a useful paperback to study, *The Sea Wife's Handbook*. So, she packed her baking recipes and a sewing machine...



But above all, Anita had to learn to navigate the sea. To my surprise, she did not only manage to master her new 'craft'; but when they crossed the Atlantic for the third time in 1995, she felt so at home onboard the yacht, that she wrote her thesis for Master of Science in Nursing, 'Coping with Chronic Illness for Youth' there and also had fun, by imitating Ursula Andress' iconic scene from *Dr. No*.



The voyages across the Atlantic were the greatest adventures in Anita's life. One of her 'sea-wife' tasks was keeping the log, and I have transcribed a few lines from it to show what Anita considers to be the most beautiful twenty-four hours of her life. It was during their second crossing in 1990, sailing eastbound with Oddvar and their son Harald. Anita was keeping watch:

*" 5/6 04 o'clock. Our position is 37°10' north and 35°27' west and we have 329 nautical miles left. The entire stretch from Bermuda to the Azores is 1820 nm. The wind stands still. The night is pitch black but the moon and the stars shine and reflect in the calm, mirror-like ocean. It looks unreal, as if the horizon is folding up and one is floating in the middle of the sky."*

*06 o'clock. The day starts like a big shiny and clear soap bubble with glitter of blue, purple and golden yellow. An absolutely magnificent sunrise. Along the boat those dangerous but beautiful jellyfish called Portuguese man-of-war drift in a row, transparent with hues of blue and purple. Flocks of northern storm petrels are soaring above the surface of the water. I also spot a sea turtle.*

*I am back on deck after a short nap. The dolphins are spinning around us, swimming in formation at the bow. They zigzag across the water, breathing through a round hole on the top of their heads. They dive deep down, then come back up and flip. They make noises and we whistle to entice them. They lie for a while on the side as if to listen; we think they talk to us.*

*Evening is approaching, and we sit in the cockpit celebrating the day singing and playing guitar. The sun sets, shining like a blood orange, the horizon turns purple, and the ocean in front of us glows in gold and red. Yes, I took a picture of it."*



Among her many hobbies, photography has become Anita's greatest passion, with flowers being the recurring theme. Roses are best-loved. And it is through photography that I was fortunate enough to get to know Anita closer. I joined her Forum Photo Group to learn about taking and processing digital photography and have been amazed at how much painstaking attention she gives in analysing our pictures, and how much desire she has to show us new techniques. No doubt, Anita is a passionate and devoted teacher at heart.



Accomplishments often come at a cost of other things. Anita misses more time for cinema and theatre. She would like to travel to the parts of Eastern Europe that she knows too little about. But she admits that she feels most alive when she launches and develops a new project. Her latest one is the transformation of one of the rooms in her house into a proper studio where she can scan and



digitalise her vast collection of photos. She has bought an advanced photo-scanner for paper, as well as for negative and positive film, and already keeps on dusting the room!

In fact, Anita has two homes in which she feels truly at home: at Nesbru, Norway, and in Nice, France. But there is also Värmland, which she likes to visit in spring, if not for real, at least in her memory. The green landscape of gentle hills and calm lakes feels safe and always welcoming. This is where she developed her passion for discovering and learning new things, on the busy farm of her parents, and this love of knowledge has remained Anita's driving force in life.



Anita's Childhood Home in Sweden

I told Anita that we are fortunate that her countless paths of life crossed with ours, so that we can enjoy her pleasant company and benefit from her many skills and commitment. 'And the other way round,' Anita said, feeling glad to be part of our Forum.

Elizabeth Groth Kolby

## ACTIVITY GROUPS AND COURSES – AUTUMN 2021

*All activities and courses will be organized in compliance with the applicable Corona restrictions. This means that all groups must ensure that the rules for social distancing and other Corona restrictions are followed. Leaders may limit the number of participants for certain groups and activities.*

### Activities:

International Forum Activity Groups are formed when one member or a group of members get together and organise an activity. No payment is required, and the activities are open to all members depending on availability. Are you interested? See the contact information below.

If you are interested in an activity that is full, sign up anyway, as there may be cancellations. If you have problems joining an activity because it is full, please contact Gunnel Anita Solheim, as we might consider forming new groups.

**Contact:** Gunnel Anita Solheim.

## ACTIVITY GROUPS

**The Norwegian Conversation Group** (norsk samtalegruppe).

**Because of the pandemic, there are no Norwegian Conversation gatherings for the time being.**

This is a group of twenty ladies from India, Colombia, Indonesia, Russia, Peru, Germany, Canada, China, Taiwan, Hungary and Norway. We meet once a month in each other's homes. The intention of the group is to practise speaking Norwegian in an informal setting and to share experiences and interests in our daily life. We have all levels of proficiency.

There is no homework, since the main point is to come together and have fun. The hostess decides if she wants to serve a light lunch or just coffee and biscuits (or cake) after the practice session. We usually meet on Fridays at 11:00. You are very welcome to join us once the restrictions to gatherings are eased!

**We await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet again.**

**Contact:** Eva Øglænd or Mona Bækkelund Reinboth,

## **DRAMA READING GROUP**

**In the year 2020-2021 gatherings have not been possible due to the pandemic. We await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet again.**

The drama readings are held once a month in a member's home. The plays chosen are both old and new. The dates for the readings are flexible and usually decided a month in advance depending on how many can attend on a certain date. A light lunch will be served between acts.

**Contact:** Suzanne Garman-Vik,

## **INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB I**

**In the year 2020-2021 gatherings have not been possible more than three times due to the pandemic. For the rest, the discussions have been on Zoom.**

The gatherings are held on the third Wednesday of the month, either on Zoom or, Corona permitting, in members' homes, in which case the hostess serves a light lunch. We read and discuss books, usually a novel from worldwide literature, chosen by the group. For the autumn, we await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet in members' homes again.

**Contact:** Dorota Steensland, e-mail: [dorotasteensland@gmail.com](mailto:dorotasteensland@gmail.com) or  
mob.: 991 57 006

## **INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB II**

The same objectives as those of the International Book Club I.

The gatherings take place once a month, and, for the time being, we meet on Zoom due to the Corona restrictions. Heidi Høivik is the Zoom organizer.

**Contact:** Signe Lise Howell,

## **COOKING GROUP I**

We meet once a month and meetings are held at the home of one of the participants on a rotation basis. The hostess decides on the menu and buys the ingredients and beverages, and the cost of the ingredients is shared between the participants. We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Liss Laan,

## **COOKING GROUP II**

Cooking Group II is a smaller group of maximum eight persons. We meet once a month, preferably on a Wednesday, at 13:30. Meetings are held at the home of one of the participants on a rotation basis. The hostess decides on the menu and buys the ingredients and beverages, and the cost of the ingredients is shared between the participants.

We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Gerd Berit Lavik,

## **MONDAY DUPLICATE BRIDGE**

Ris Church is closed due to the pandemic, and we cannot play Monday Duplicate Bridge there for the time being. We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings and information from Ris Church on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Kirsten Whist,

## **MONTHLY WEDNESDAY BRIDGE GROUP**

We generally meet on the second or third Wednesday of the month, depending on the holidays. We are usually 8 or 12 players, on occasion 16. We play duplicate bridge and enjoy a light lunch afterwards.

We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Ida Tschudi Heilemann,

## **PHOTO GROUP**

This is a group for amateur photographers. No special qualifications are required, just an interest in learning about digital photography. We organise 6-8 workshops annually. For the time being, we have the workshops online, on Zoom. Outdoor 'Photo Safari' to nice places in the vicinity of Oslo, is also a Covid-19-safe option. Once social gatherings again are allowed, the workshops will be held at Gunnel Anita's home, from 13:00 – 15:00.

**Contact:** Anita Solheim,

The theme in April was "Photographing food".

## **WALKING GROUP**

Kerstin Pettersen will send an e-mail to the group members and inform them of the first walk of autumn 2021. Walking is great exercise and fun for those who like the outdoors. If you are interested, please send Kerstin your mobile number and email address.

**Contact:** Kerstin Petersen.

## **SWIMMING AT LYSEBU**

**The Danish Cultural Centre at Voksenkollen is for the time being closed due to the pandemic.**



Later, when the Cultural Centre opens again, members of the International Forum will be most welcome to swim at Lysebu Hotel and will only have to show their IF membership card at the front desk. The fee is NOK 100.- per visit. This is not a group activity as such, but IF members can use this great, newly renovated facility as a group or individually. Any questions?

**Contact:** Anita Solheim.

## COURSES

The courses are activities for which the participants pay a **fee** to the teacher.

### ENGLISH

Individual courses tailored to your needs. Refresher courses for conversation – all levels. There is no charge for the preliminary test to determine your level of proficiency in English conversation or grammar before taking a course.

**Contact:** Soo Lan Höegh Henrichsen M.C.S.D (Graduate of Liverpool University, Teachers College),

### TRADITIONAL NORWEGIAN ROSE PAINTING



Rose painting (‘rosemaling’) is a traditional Norwegian folk art which dates back to the 1700s and which is still alive in many parts of the country. Morning and evening courses can be organized for large or small groups.

**Contact:** Vivian Grieg Teisner,



# IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

## A Newcomer in the Time of Covid

By H. E. Eszter Sándorfi, Ambassador of Hungary to Norway

One of my favourite writers is Gabriel Garcia Márquez. I read *Hundred Years of Solitude* three times, and *Love in the Time of Cholera* left a great impression on me. My adventure as a newcomer to Oslo in the time of Covid-19 was by far not as romantic as the latter novel. However, despite the difficulties, it certainly enriched me with a lot of memorable experiences.



I arrived to assume my new responsibilities at the Hungarian Embassy at the beginning of March. My son was at university and my daughter was studying for her high school diploma, and I left my family behind to start my new assignment just as the pandemic was at its worst in Hungary. After the required quarantine, I plunged into work and started organising my first official visits. On one of the first weekends, as a slow yet enthusiastic skier, I met up with some of my younger colleagues at Holmenkollen. My photos of the fantastic view of the harbour of Oslo from the sunny and snow-covered hills provoked some enthusiastic, but also envious, comments from my friends in Budapest.

So, the start was fine but I missed my family a lot. I was looking forward to taking a short break back home for Easter. Then after a long, brisk Sunday walk, I received a worrying message from someone I had met the week before, informing me that he possibly had contracted Covid-19. I hoped for the best and counted on my robust immune system. However, out of caution I cancelled all my appointments. Unfortunately, some days later, I started having a sore throat, resorting to all the magic home cures that I knew of trying to stop it: talking

vitamin C, D, drinking hot tea with lemon, inhaling steam with eucalyptus, and gargling with salty water. To no avail: my test result was positive. Naturally, we took all the necessary steps at the Embassy, testing everyone and imposing home office. Luckily, no one else got infected.



Finally, I don't know if it was the virus that made me feel really ill or the realisation that I could not make it home for Easter. I was devastated. I did not remember ever spending Easter without my family. I developed a fever and felt pressure on my lungs. I regularly received calls from Helse Norge to check up on me, but I was utterly alone in a new country in an almost unknown house where I still struggled in the mornings to find my clothes. I just felt terribly sorry for myself, missing the fragrance of the early spring flowers in my hometown, the sound of the church bells, the preparation of our traditional Easter, but above all being with my loved ones.

Then surprises came. One morning I received a message from very good Norwegian friends that breakfast awaited me on the doorstep. I crawled to the front door and found warm coffee, fresh orange juice, cinnamon rolls and jam, enough for at least three days. My colleagues brought vitamins and warm soup. In the meantime, my medicine arrived from Hungary, which made me feel more at ease. I was able to consult both a Hungarian and Norwegian doctor by phone, organised by friends. I started to feel better and often talked to my loved ones back home, but I still faced a long and lonely Easter weekend in a very quiet Oslo.

During sunny hours, I sat on the balcony admiring the hard work of a woodpecker couple building their nest. Then just at the beginning of the holidays, the doorbell rang. First came Roland, the owner of a Hungarian delicatessen and butcher shop. He had heard about my being ill and brought me



a box full of our traditional Easter food: smoked ham, sausages, and vegetable spreads. Later, a colleague brought some tulips, and a friend's wife sent me homemade cakes.



By Sunday morning, a huge basket arrived with chocolate rabbits and eggs sent by my husband, just as in my childhood 😊. In the end, I enjoyed an abundant and festive Easter table. Modern technology connected me visually with my family, who had gathered at my mother's apartment in Budapest.

We had a glass of champagne together. It was a beautiful feast after all.



Still in quarantine, I continued my introductory talks with colleagues by phone or online. This practice was not unusual in the particular circumstances. Everybody was very open and helpful.

When we finally could meet personally, it seemed as if we had known each other for a long time.

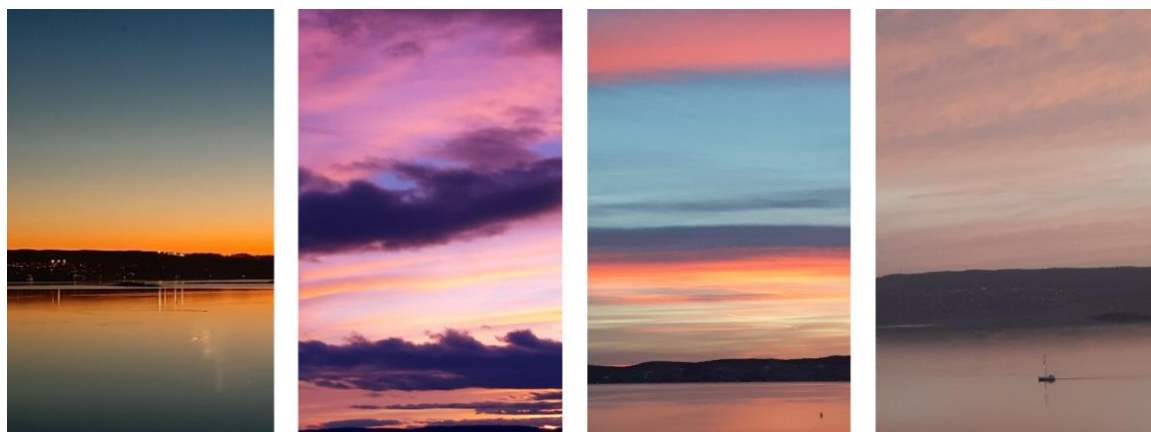
By the time I had the honour to hand over my Letter of Credence to His Majesty King Harald V on May 6, I had recovered all my strength and, as they say in Norwegian, I was 'frisk som en fisk'. All the support and kindness I received gave me a unique and heart-warming experience as a newcomer in the time of the Corona virus. It demonstrated once again how critical human contact is and how much we need and rely on each other – not only in the time of Covid-19.

## A Farewell to Norway

By H. E. Judīte Dobeļe, the Ambassador of Latvia to Norway

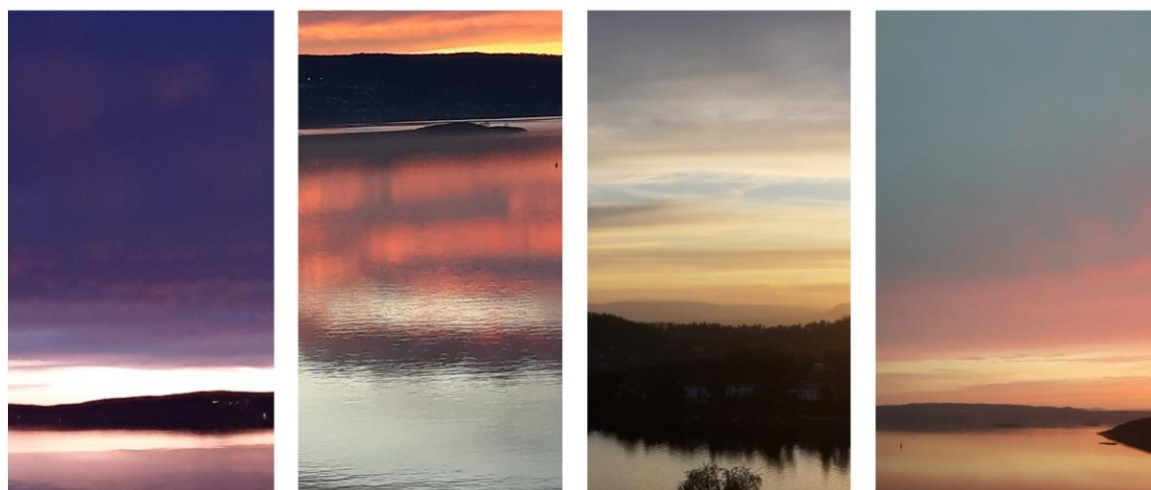
Arriving in a new country with several years of service ahead, we are excited and overwhelmed with the possibilities to explore, experience and discover.

Today when I look at the past years in Norway, I am pleased to note that buried deep in my memory stays the richness of Norwegian nature, customs and traditions as well as the hospitality of the people. I have discovered and enjoyed wonderful similarities and cherished discovering many new things.



*- These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession.*

Claude Monet

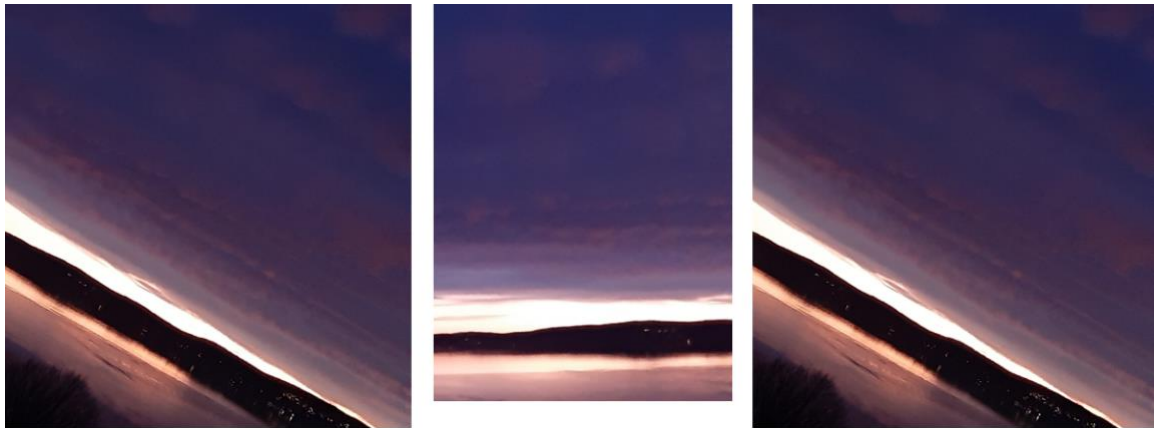


Latvia and Norway both have a rich and turbulent history, a living and diverse cultural heritage, customs and traditions reaching far beyond the existence of our nations. Our stories are inscribed in music, myths and heroic tales; today celebrated with the proud use of folk costumes or *bunads*.



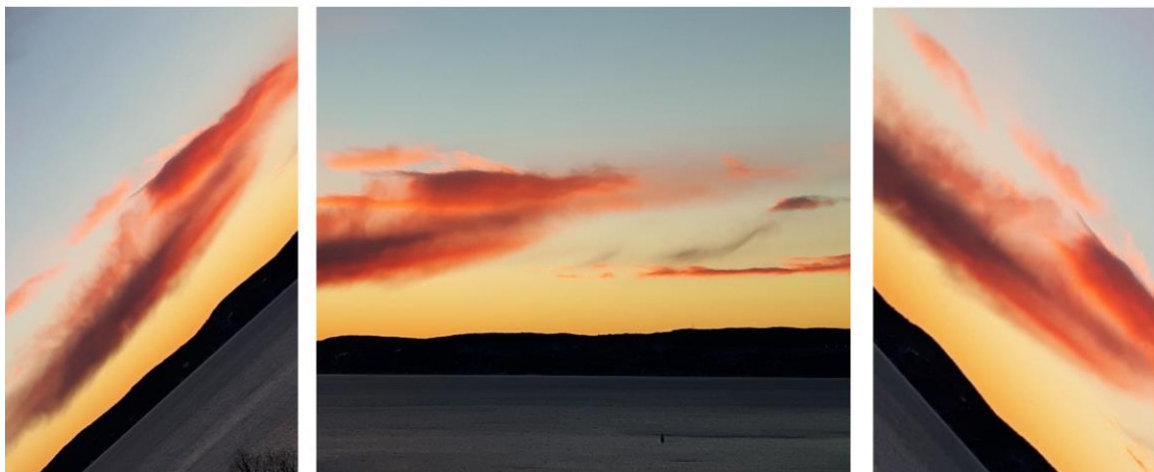
In 2021, Latvia and Norway celebrate a centenary of diplomatic relations. The national awakening of Norway and Latvia, imbued with socio-economic demands and a wish for cultural emancipation, resulted in the establishment of independent states. Norway in 1905 and Latvia in 1918. This was achieved through determination and relentless work and hope of these proud peoples, willing to decide their own fate.

We are small nations, but our people reach far.



*- The light constantly changes, and that alters the atmosphere and beauty of things every minute.*

Claude Monet



From 1889 until 1918, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was the most popular author in Latvia. Alongside Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Knut Hamsun, and Edvard Munch, Ibsen left a significant imprint on Latvia. Almost 100 years later, Mariss Jansons – a Latvian who was one of the world's leading conductors – *conquered* Norway by leading the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra to international fame.

But apart from the celebrities, I would commend the inestimable, yet at times unnoticed, individual relationships creating strong bonds and friendship between our countries.

Norwegians and Latvians are close to nature. We are looking for ways to protect both flora and fauna in order to preserve biological diversity for generations to come. There is a genuine interest for the European Green Shift, as our minds are more open to and aware of the damage done to the environment and the consequences of not doing what needs to be done.

Norway is a great neighbour and partner for Latvia. Our shared values and interests are extensive, diverse and bridging the waters between us. I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to serve this important and diverse relationship.

Using this opportunity, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the experience and cooperation with the International Forum and Diplomatic Spouses Association. We joined our hands for a noble cause to assist those in need by organising the Diplomatic Charity Event in December 2019. The revenues collected were donated to a water project in Burundi. I would commend the cause and goal we attained, and hope that this excellent initiative will be continued. Let us remember a saying: 'A friend in need, is a friend indeed.'

So I wish all of you who are staying on a good and beneficial future cooperation!





## INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Org.no: 994 566 806

**President**

Anita Pratap

**Editor and Layout:**

Elizabeth Rasmussen and Editorial Team

**Dispatch Team:**

Susan Hahla, Kerstin Petersen, Mona Reinboth, Mette Svadberg, Wenche Undrum, Elspeth Walseth and Patricia Blackwell

The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit **all** material.

Date: August 12, 2021