

Friday, February 10, 2012
Helsinki, Finland

SUBJECT: Letter from Finland

Dear Friends: Greetings.

Having wrapped up work here in Finland during the last several days with members of the organizing committee of ICEE-2012, I am now looking forward to coming back to Finland in late July -- and to seeing you here.

Each of the ICEE conferences reflects the history, culture, the land and the people of the host country, so ICEE-2012 WILL be different from past ICEE conferences. The organizing team here is striving to bring you a world-class technical program, and a social and tours program that is uniquely Finland. You will have a lot to learn, to see and to do. The people in charge of the conference here are faculty from several neighboring universities who are themselves top-notch researchers and educators actively doing work at the forefront of teaching and learning. You will enjoy sharing experiences with them and with other participants from about 50 countries who have submitted close to 250 abstracts with a few more hours to go until the deadline. You will also enjoy the friendly Finnish people, their culture, and their hospitality. When you stop someone on the street to ask for direction in Finland, more likely than not, that stranger will take you to where you want to go!

In the last day or so, the organizing committee has posted on the conference website updates on the technical, social, and tours programs; please be sure check these out. Then, come July/August, if you have a few extra days before or after the conference, it will be worth your while to get around a bit in Finland. It should be easy to do: the intra- and inter-city rail and bus transportation system in this country is among the best that I have seen. The archipelago system around Turku itself is something that I myself plan to explore this summer. Learning about Finnish history, its land and its people will be a memorable experience. In this small, bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) country, how do you imagine they deal with the education issue? They solve it by introducing a third language: English! So, if you speak English, you will have no problem in Finland. If you know the State of Minnesota in the U.S., with its famously cold winter weather, and you come to Finland in the middle of winter, then you will know why Minnesota have so many citizens of Finnish origin. I have always observed that, when people choose a place to retire, they look for warm climate, but when it comes to choosing a place to emigrate to, more likely than not, if they have a choice, they choose a place very similar to where they are now, at least in terms of weather.

ICEE-2011 in Belfast last year was quite an experience for me as I am sure for some of you too, with so many reminders of the "troubles". Yet, with so many memorable presentations and keynote speeches and unforgettable touristic spots, ICEE-Belfast was one of the best and personally satisfying conferences for me. ICEE-Finland has the potential to surpass that.

Sincerely,

Win Aung, Ph.D., Dr.h.c.
International Network for Engineering Education and Research

Potomac, MD 20854, USA
waung@ineer.org
www.ineer.org
(Sent from Helsinki, Finland)