

Ulf Lindblom describes the origins of the European Federation of IASP Chapters (EFIC)

Oral History Interview with Ulf Lindblom, 18 August 1996 (Ms. Coll. no. 127.22), John C. Liebeskind History of Pain Collection, History & Special Collections Division, Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library, University of California, Los Angeles

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JOHN LIEBESKIND: Yeah, tell me about this organization now, this new Federation [European Federation of IASP Chapters (EFIC)]. You started that? You were the person responsible for that?

ULF LINDBLOM: Yes. Yes, it was me, and no one else. Well, during the '70s and '80s, there was this dichotomy between the United States and Europe, not so much in clinical life as in scientific life. And there was that rivalry. And there was also -- which was both false and right, I think -- As I see this, it was [that] in the academic orientation [in the US] by and large stemmed from Europe with the [universities], and followed with the emigrants. But we feel now in Europe that we have lost the good academic traditions and social structures, we have thrown it out, not actively, of course, but we suffer now from lack of respect for knowledge as such and structured knowledge of language, mathematics, technology, et cetera. So in our school systems, unfortunately, we have traded, well, used our money for social temporary support, rather than solid academic-type education. That's my sense of the situation.

Having said that, I would say that we have in -- so there is -- the conditions for interaction in the pain field, education, research, et cetera, are different in the United States, which are wonderfully organized. The federal system versus the state system is functioning in a way, and it's wonderful. I mean, I know that because, working with IASP, it was easy to work with fifty states in North America. You are organized in, what you call it, you call it chapter now, you have different chapters, regional chapters, from the beginning, and then you merged to one big chapter, which used to be half of IASP; now it is one-third of IASP. So it's better balanced now. But in Europe, we don't profit from such a joint venture, and it's no question that we are a bit envious for your effectiveness and your orderly way of organizing meetings. You have always people who are willing to spend their free time to help to organize things, and in Europe, we don't have that. We have smaller units which are egocentric and perhaps in rivalry between themselves. But resources, and with the cultural differences, language barriers, so on, so there are --

LIEBESKIND: So it's kind of an EEC [European Economic Community] view. [he laughs]

LINDBLOM: Yes, on the one hand, and on the other hand you can't expect IASP to consider the needs that the European diversities create. And that is why I mean that we need a European forum -- it's not because we have the EEC, because that is for political futures, and that is a

benefit, hopefully preventing more wars -- which is the reason number one, I think. But there are needs for education and organization and forums in Europe which IASP will not meet. And therefore we need a European forum.

And this, I also picked up during the '70s and '80s, that others felt that, the same, and I'm pretty sure that a European society, a pain society, would have appeared one day outside IASP, so to say. So my idea was that here we have, in this diversified assemblage of states in Europe, who sometimes fight each other and are very different, here we have, thanks to IASP, one common thing in each country, and that is the chapter organization. And to set up a separate pain society in Europe with fees, individual membership and fees, et cetera, it would be troublesome, it would take a long time, it might not be happy, and there could be several conquering initiatives, as I have experienced in neurology, because we have a European society of neurology and we have a European -- we have two different [groups], and they are still fighting each other. And they have difficulty in establishing good-quality meetings, et cetera, both of them. So here we have this to start with one unitary organization. It's wonderful, it's for free, it's --

LIEBESKIND: Well, it is a Federation, though, that you have.

LINDBLOM: It is a Federation.

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