



**MAARIT WIRKKALA**

*From Sweden to France*



Project: **The FINA Award**

Research topic: **Medecine & Health**

Swedish Institution: **Institute Français, University of Gävle**

French Institution: **Sciences Po Rennes, UNICAEN, CHU Caen, INSERM, François Baclesse Center, ARS Paris, PePR and The Brain Institute, Paris.**

Dates of mobility: *23/09/2024 to 29/09/2024*

Program: **The FINA mobility scholarship 2024.**

## PRESENTATION

My professional background is in medicine. I started med. school in 1996 and graduated in 2001. I attained my medical license in 2004 and my specialist degree in 2011, within child- and adolescent psychiatry. After that I have worked as a specialist, a supervisor, a director of studies and head of the child- and adolescent clinic in the county of Gävleborg, Sweden. During 2016 – 2020 I was appointed Chief Medical Officer, in charge of patient safety for all healthcare fields in the county. In 2020 I changed my career path and started my doctoral studies at the University of Gävle, in Caring Science and Occupational Health Science. My research involves care quality, patient safety and work environment for healthcare staff when traditional care transforms into digital care. ]

## ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

I arrived in Paris on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. The next morning, I joined the other two laureates (from Estonia and Finland) on the train to Caen. We had a busy schedule in Caen, first visiting The Caen Campus of Science Po Rennes where The Directeur Nicolas Escach showed us around campus and told us about the different research areas of the Caen part of ScPR. I could see possible future collaborations with this Campus and my neighboring faculty at Gävle University, the Faculty of Engineering and Sustainable Development.

The next day, the program continued with a visit to the University of Caen (UNICAEN) in the morning, where we were warmly welcomed by the VP for international affairs, Christophe Rochais, and Senior manager Julie Quesnel. They told us about the generous exchange possibilities between UNICAEN and foreign research faculties and encouraged us to form future collaborations with researchers at UNICAEN. We visited the CIREVE (interdisciplinary center for virtual reality) which was amazing and very “front-edge” of using VR and digital tools in medical research. After my return home, I contacted a professor at the faculty of Informatics and Human-Computer Interaction at Uppsala University, with whom I have started a

collaboration in developing a VR-mediated treatment for PTSD. We have applied for a grant and if we get this grant, we hope to be able to collaborate with CIREVE. The tour of UNICAEN continued with a visit to the Madeleine-Brès Library, where they showed us their modern study rooms and a digital anatomy tool, where medical and nursing students could train their anatomy skills digitally. We visited the NORSIMS (healthcare simulation center) and the GreyC digital sciences laboratory. After I got home to Sweden, I put the Swedish SIM counterpart in touch with Professor Bellot at NORSIMS, hoping that they might find collaboration opportunities in the future.

On the next and final day in Caen, we visited François Baclesse Center and their PET beam machine – and we also got a preview of the new Carbon beam machine, which was incredibly impressive! No visit to Caen would be complete without some local specialties and sights, and we concluded our stay with a guided tour through l'Abbaye-aux-Hommes, including the tomb of William the Conqueror, and some galette and cider before taking the train back to Paris.

Our fourth and fifth days in the mobility program were spent in Paris. We visited the ARS and PEPR, gaining a broader understanding of research and healthcare in France, and the possibilities for collaborations through Inserm. We also visited the Brain Institute at Pitié-Salpêtrière, which seems to have many exciting ongoing projects and a welcoming atmosphere where we got many new connections. Even though I didn't find any direct counterpart in France within my area of Caring Sciences and Occupational Health Sciences, I hope I have contributed to future collaborations with some of my research colleagues in other fields. I also hope my application for a grant for further studies on VR therapy might lead to collaborations with the CIREVE in UNICAEN. My trip connected me to people in key positions, at UNICAEN, The Brain Institute, and CIREVE. We now follow each other on LinkedIn and through there, we can also reach out to one another when and if one of us posts about new projects where collaboration might be possible. A bonus for me from this trip is that I found a counterpart in Finland; the laureate Saija Simola. It turned out, that our doctoral projects are very similar, but where she studies the human-computer interaction between patients and healthcare portals, I study the other side of the portal, the effects of the patient interaction on the healthcare work environment and the consequences for care quality and safety. Saija Simola and I, will continue to collaborate now and in the future. ]