



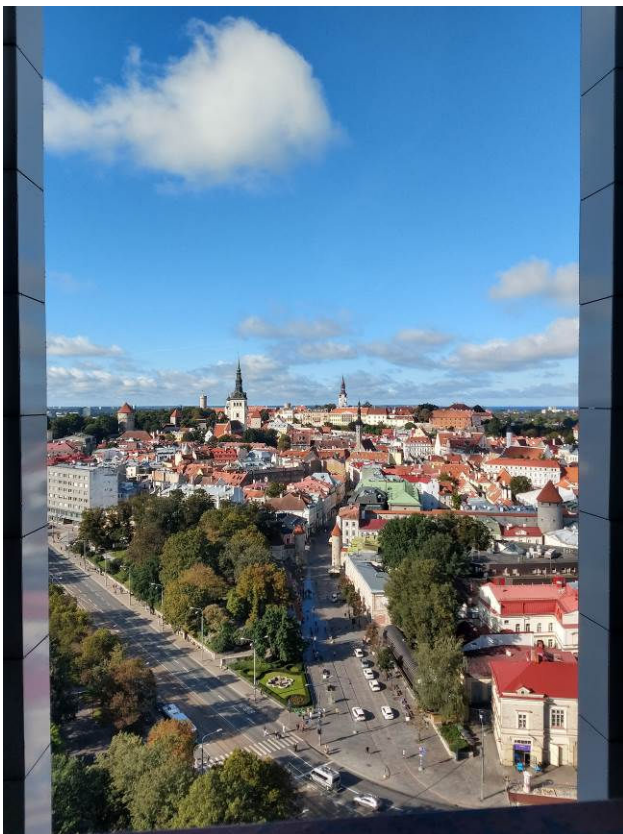
EDXC conference in Tartu

Alan Pennington
reports from Estonia



This year's European DX Council (EDXC) conference was held in **Tartu, Estonia** over the weekend of 20-22 September. Tartu is Estonia's second largest city and sits on the Emajõgi river in the east of the country, around 90km from the border with Russia. Tartu is where Estonia's oldest university was founded in 1632 and in 2024 it is one of three European Capitals of Culture.

The venue for the conference was **Hotel Tartu** in the centre of the city, a short walk to the old part of the city of Tartu. Although based in Estonia, the conference was organised by Risto Vähäkainu and others from the Finnish DX Association. Helsinki is just an 80km ferry ride across the Gulf of Finland from the Estonian capital Tallinn, where many delegates met on Friday morning ahead of the 180km journey to Tartu on the coach Risto had arranged.



But whilst in Tallinn, some took the opportunity to visit the **KGB Museum at the Hotel Viru**. We had stayed in this 23-storey tower block following the 2002 EDXC conference in Finland (*page 6 October 2002 'Communication'*). Our pre-booked tour was guided by an Estonian lady who had worked at the hotel and who told the story of the hotel's past in excellent English. Built in 1972 during the Soviet era, the hotel was exclusively for foreign visitors to the Estonian SSR and infamous in that some rooms were bugged to enable eavesdropping on guests by the KGB who were resident on the 23rd floor. Back then, the hotel gave a rose-tinted impression of life as part of the USSR which differed greatly from the reality for Estonians living outside. The hotel was also used during the 1980 Olympics when the sailing events were held in Tallinn. Ahead of Estonia's independence in August 1991, the KGB had abandoned some of their monitoring equipment on the 23rd floor, which is now preserved, together with photos and ephemera from the Soviet era. And the 23rd floor hotel balcony gave us great

views of the Estonian capital!

The coach from Tallinn to the conference venue in Tartu stopped at the small town of Türi where we enjoyed lunch at a traditional restaurant 'Ajatu' before visiting the impressive **Estonian Broadcasting Museum**: <https://rhmuuseum.ee/en/>. Türi was briefly the site of a MW transmitter for state broadcasting with a 196m high mast broadcasting from December 1937 but this was destroyed by retreating Soviet forces in July 1941 ahead of the advancing German troops.

The museum opened at its present location on December 18th 2001, the 75th anniversary of the Estonian National Broadcasting. The exhibits are well presented in three sections: the early years 1926-1944, the Soviet era 1944-1991 and a Television section. They include a fine collection of radio receivers, some imported, others Estonian produced in the RET factory in Tallinn with dials marked with stations such as Tallinn, Tartu and the short-lived Türi station. Many English translations feature on the displays so the museum is a great place to visit for overseas visitors!

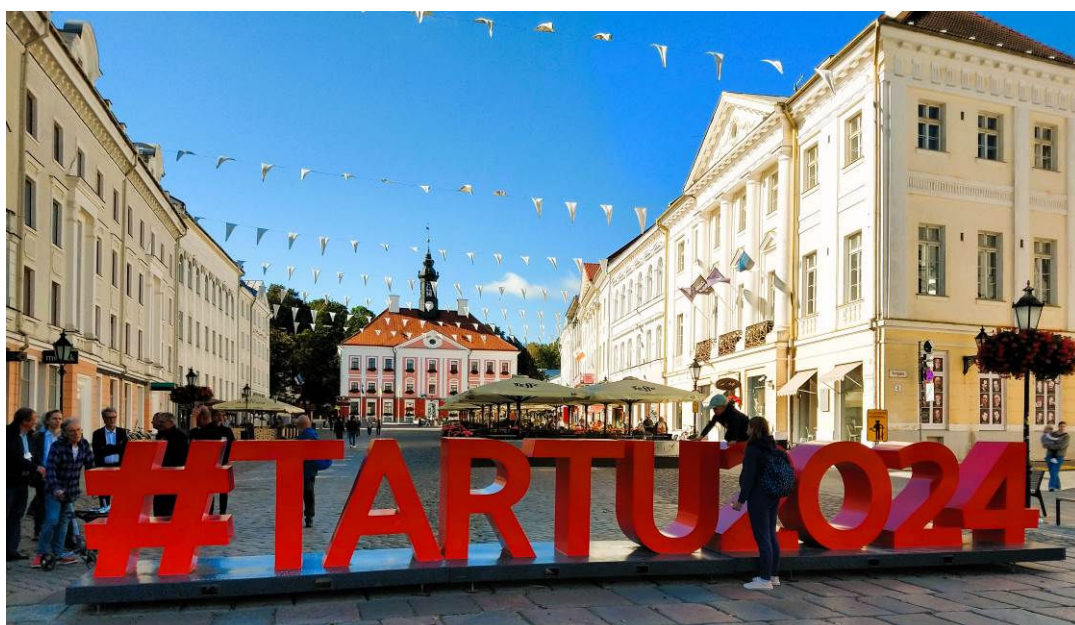


One notable exhibit was a letter from Baird Television in London in May 1935 to someone in Tallinn about his success in receiving their Low Definition Television transmission.

Vikerraadio <https://vikerraadio.err.ee/> were recording an episode of "Eesti Lugu" (Estonian Story) in front of an audience at the museum during our visit. There's also a Türi history museum upstairs in the same building.

On Friday evening the conference began at Hotel Tartu - Risto welcomed the **42 participants**, the majority (30) of whom travelled from Finland. There were also 5 from Denmark, 4 from the UK and one each from France, the Netherlands and Sweden. It was great to meet two station operators amongst the participants – Stig Hartvig Nielsen (WMR, Radio208) from Denmark and 17-year-old Joakim Weckström (Realmix Radio) from Finland.

We were warmly welcomed to Tartu by Saile Mägi, the marketing manager for **Tartu 2024**, their European Capital of Culture project. Interesting factoids she told us: the highest peak in the Baltic States is the 318 metre Suur Munamägi in the far south east of Estonia, and Tartu is the oldest recorded city in the Baltic States, first mentioned in 1030!



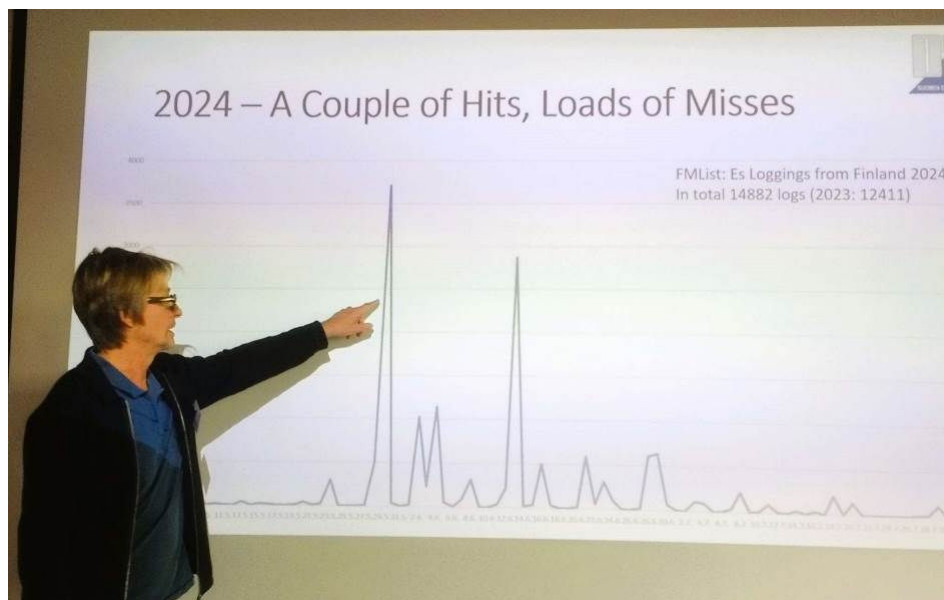
One art project shown during Tartu 2024 was the **World Wind Radio** (artist Jeanne Harignordoquy), a sound installation where a wind sock plays radio stations from around the world, varying with the wind's speed & direction. <https://jeanneharignordoquy.com/World-Wind-Radio>

Next, Professor Jopi Nyman presented more about **Pirate Radio in Film & Television**. He had entertained us at the EDXC conference in Manchester in 2016 in a similar vein and his varied selection of film and TV clips here were equally enjoyable:

Big Ben Calling – 1935 musical about pirate radio station - watch on Talking Pictures TV Encore.
The Young Ones – 1961 film starring Cliff Richard, broadcasting songs on a pirate radio station.
Dateline Diamonds – 1965 film features the Radio London ship, the Small Faces, Chantelles and DJ Kenny Everett. (also on Talking Pictures TV Encore <https://www.tptvencore.co.uk/>)
Heartbeat “Sitting on the Dock of the Bay” (TV 1995 Season 5 Ep. 14) with offshore Radio North.
Inspector Morse “Cherubim & Seraphim” (TV 1992) – including pirate radio, illegal dance parties.
Hamish Macbeth “Radio Lochdubh” (TV 1996 Season 2 Ep. 4) – Hamish asked to close down a popular local pirate station (on BBC iPlayer)
People Just do Nothing – (BBC TV 2014, Series 1, Ep. 1) – mockumentary on west London pirate station, Kuruft FM (on BBC iPlayer).

Finally on Friday evening, **Risto Vähäkainu** gave an illustrated talk on all the DX and shortwave meetings he had attended around the world over the years, beginning in 1968 and visiting 33 countries in the process to date! A difficult achievement to beat we think!

After breakfast on Saturday, Jukka Kotovirta presented his illustrated report on **FM DXing Today**, a regular feature at EDXC conferences, looking at the FM season from a Finnish viewpoint.



Looking back at the 2024 Sporadic E (Es) season, his graph of the number of Es logs from Finland by month titled “2024 – A Couple of Hits, Loads of Misses” included two stand out dates: May 29th “What a day that was” (37,000 logs) and June 13th.

Some sobering reception on 29th May were Air Raid warnings being broadcast by Ukrainian stations near the Ukrainian / Russian border. Catches on June 13th from UK included a brief

clip of Eden FM (Cumbria) and Smooth North East, both on 107.5.

Comparing 2024 to previous seasons (“every season is different”) it was ranked 2.5. (average of all years is 2.93 with 2010 ranking the highest at 4.5).

Jukka looked back at the DXpedition to the Finnish island of Utö (off SW Finland) in June and also mentioned that the Finnish distance record for DAB DX is 1715km, but only the previous day (Sept 19 2024) 1699km DAB reception was achieved in Turku (see FMList DAB logbook).

Equipment used by Jukka: an ELAD FDM-S3 (which features a 24MHz recording bandwidth), also an SDRplay RSPdx (upto 9MHz). Uses with SDR-Console software and a 14-ele antenna.

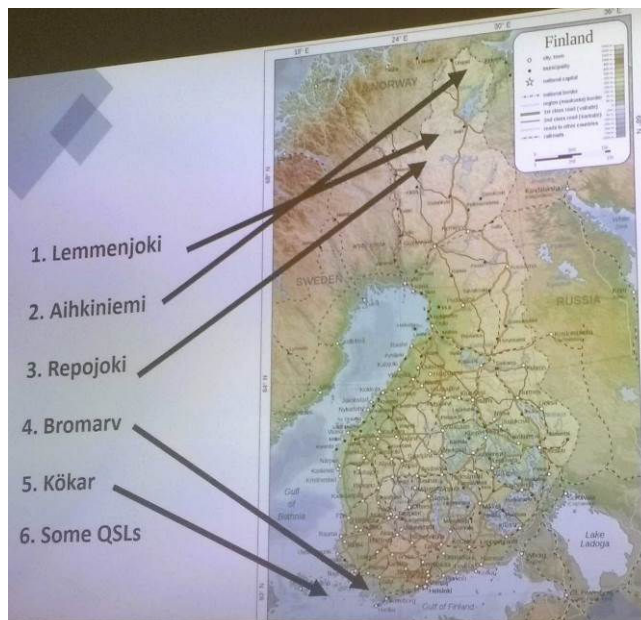
In closing his talk, Jukka asked us to “dream on”, remembering e.g. that Big FM Gujarat, India had been heard in August 2013 at a distance of 5380 km on 92.7 (nearest tx Rajkot). And the tentative North Americans heard: St John’s 92.3 (Aug 1986) and CBC St John 91.3 (Oct 2006), both Canadians a distance of >5000 km away.

With the sun shining, next on the agenda was a walking tour of **Tartu old town** with participants split into an English and a Finnish speaking group and ending for lunch, and a chance to sample the beer, at the Püssirohukelder (Gunpowder Cellar) pub which is credited by the Guinness Book of Records as having the highest pub ceiling in the world (10.2m).



Back at the hotel, top Finnish DXer Jim Solatie named **“My Top 5 DX locations in Finland”**. Jim had recently received a special award at the Finnish DX Association summer meeting for passing 10,000 verified stations – currently he has received verifications from 10,515 stations, 40% on FM and 60% AM! Jim’s top 5 Finnish DX locations are:

- Lemmenjoki – the original permanent Dxpediton site in northern Finland visited since 1981.
- Aihkiniemi – the other permanent Dxpediton site in Finnish Lapland with 14 antennas.
More than 100 Australian AM stations have been logged here. 70 New Zealand AM stations heard on one day here – 13 October 2018.
- Repojoki – a new remote site since August 2023 with online access in northern Finland operating 24/7/365 with just one 1000m antenna at 298 degrees for DXing North America.
- Bromarv – Jim’s summer cottage site is southern Finland
- Kökar - an island in the Baltic sea, south east of the Aland archipelago.



And Jim’s Top 5 QSLs in descending order (from the 10,000 verifications he now has!):

5. BBC London – his first QSL in 1981 picturing Tower Bridge.
4. WQBR256 1620 kHz Lindenhurst, Illinois, USA – a 10 watt Highways Advisory Station.
3. Jan Mayen Island in Arctic received on FM at Aikeniemmi in 2022.
2. 60 North Radio 87.7 Mhz – a tourist information station at Eshaness lighthouse, Shetland with less than half a watt heard in July 2020!
1. Highway Radio, Meishin Expressway, Japan – 1620 khz 10 watts Highway Advisory station.

Saturday afternoon continued with news on Shortwave Activities in Finland - licenced SW stations on air recently have been:

- 1) Realmix Radio – 6195 kHz from Raasepori, southern Finland at weekends – check the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/p/RealMix-Radio-61556704123570/>
- 2) Radio Blacksmoth Knoll – 6120 kHz Fri/Sat evenings from July. Awaiting licence renewal. (hopes to be back October re <https://blacksmith-knoll.blogspot.com/>)
- 3) Radio Piko – operated 25 May-11 Aug with pre-1950 music on 3990, 5980 or 9770. Check website for updates: <https://radiopiko.fi/>
- 4) Scandinavian Weekend Radio (SWR) <http://www.swradio.net/> 5980/6170, 11690/11720, 1602 MW and 94.9 MHz FM from Virrat since the year 2000. [see feature in 2021 WRTH].



We were fortunate to have Joakim Weckström, the 17-year old operator of Realmix Radio at the conference who told us about his station, assisted with English translation by David Mawby. David is part of SLART ry which can provide assistance to Finns starting their own shortwave hobby stations, helping with licence applications, music licences, transmitter purchase etc – see their website: <https://www.slart.fi/>



Joakim told us he uses a 9G Electronics transmitter from the UK – cost around £600 – see slart.fi website. Other costs are €25-30 per month to both music copyright bodies and a short-term 3-month licence (3.9-26 MHz) costs €18. Transmitter is at his grandparents house in Raasepori but studio is now 200km to the north where he studys. He uses a RadioDJ software mixer and relays some other programmes e.g. David Mawby’s DeltaMike on air and DJ Mac. Initial power was 15 watts – now 100 watts since June 2024. The 6195 carrier has been seen in New Zealand. When considering MW, 3 frequencies were offered by the Finnish Traficom: 648 (!), 963 and 1485 kHz.

David Mawby then told us about his “**Life and Radio**“. Born in North London in 1951, he moved to Finland in the 1970s. He has been a Finnish citizen since 1982. His interest in radio began with listening to his father’s home-built radio as a boy, including listening to Radio Australia as they were planning to emigrate to Australia. After moving to Hertfordshire, he was given his first receiver, an Eddystone EC10. His first QSL was from Radio Nederland on 6020 kHz in 1965 when aged 14. His interest in DXing resulted in a feature in the Hertfordshire Advertiser newspaper. And after writing to the new BBC World Service World Radio Club programme at Bush House in 1968, he started monthly DX reports on the programme (alongside Henry Hatch who had worked on 2LO in the 1920s).



Right: David Mawby at Tūri museum. (photo: Jarmo Salmi)

In his QSLs, David has a rare BBC Daventry QSL and one from Eesti Radio (Estonia) heard on 247m at 0258 GMT 8/1/71 (after BBC R1 had closed for the night).

His love for Finland began when, as member No 20 in the Finland’s-DX-Club he visited the country for the club’s summer camp in 1969, getting there aboard a Soviet cargo ship. He joined the BBC as a News Assistant in the News and Current Affairs department.

David moved to Finland in 1972 as an English teacher and learnt Finnish, settling permanently in the country in 1974. He has also worked a freelancer for YLE’s foreign service and from 1976 for a Finnish paper company. Local radio began in Finland in 1985 and David worked for some local stations, including 12 years for Radio Jyväskylä. In the late 1990s David worked as a reporter and newsreader for YLE’s English language news section. He retired in 2013 and now lives in Turku, Finland where he makes music programmes as “Delta Mike” (aired on Realmix radio).



On Saturday evening the traditional **EDXC Banquet** was held in Hotel Tartu's restaurant. After the meal the Finnish DX Association made special awards to **Ydun Ritz** (right) from Denmark for her MW news website: <https://mediumwave.info/> and to Christian Ghibaudo, the retiring EDXC Assistant Secretary-General. Also, Jim Solatie's achievement of 10,000+ QSLs was rewarded.

Left: Ydun receives award from Risto.

On Sunday morning David Mawby gave a presentation on **Numbers Stations**, including some recordings such as the Lincolnshire Poacher and the yodelling, Radio Free Tyrol. David mentioned the Conet Project triple CD and the UK based

Enigma Project: <http://www.signalshed.com/>

The 2024 conference concluded with a presentation by Risto on the **history of the European DX Council (EDXC)** which had been founded at Anker Petersen's home in Denmark in 1967. The full history is online here: <https://edxcnews.wordpress.com/history/>. Currently the EDXC has no Secretary-General appointed and a panel discussion reached no conclusion as to its future. A couple of possible venues for a conference in 2025 were mooted though – to be confirmed.

The formal conference sessions at the Hotel Tartu had ended. In proposing this venue, Risto had hoped that a trip to the MW transmitter site of **Radio Eli** near the village of Pajukurmu, 25kms east of Tartu could be arranged, but sadly no reply from the station was received. However, of course, the MW signal on **1035 kHz** was good in Tartu! It carries Russian programmes from Radio Liberty, Trans World Radio and Radio Eli. MWList indicates power as 50/100 kW (200kW during TWR programmes).



On Sunday afternoon, most of the participants enjoyed a coach trip to the Estonian town of **Valga** on the border with Latvia. En route we stopped at the winter sports resort village of **Otepää** which is also where the anniversary of the Estonian blue, black and white flag has been celebrated every year since its dedication in Otepää in 1884.

A further 50km south west we reached the border town of **Valga** - the twin-town on the Latvian side of the border is **Valka**. However, the Shengen Agreement means visitors can wander across the border and have a photograph with one foot in Valga, Estonia, the other in Valka, Latvia! Those with a radio could also hear strong Latvian as well as Estonian radio stations on FM!

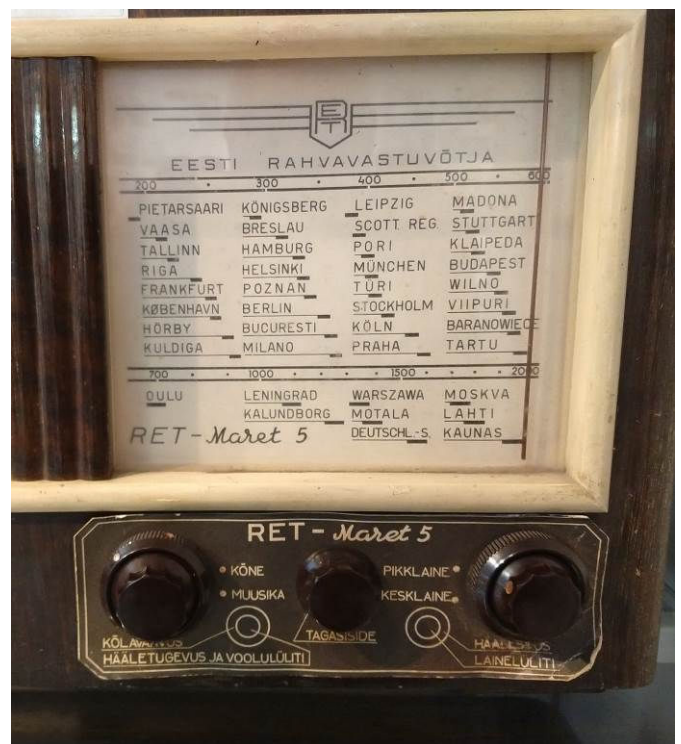
Left: Dave Kenny at the (now disused) border post at Valga.

Many thanks to Risto and his colleagues at FDXA for arranging such an enjoyable conference! (AP)





Above: most of the 2024 conference participants on the steps of Hotel Tartu (photo: Jyri Rauhala)



above: dial of a 1939 RET Maret 5 set made in Tallinn by Raadio-Elektrotehnika Tehas with Tallinn, Tartu and Turi marked on MW. On show at the Estonian Broadcasting Museum, Turi.

Left, Joakim Weckström, operator of Realmix Radio (Finland) and right, Stig Hartvig Nielsen, operator of World Music Radio and Radio208 (Denmark) tune into each others' stations (Realmix 6195kHz and Radio 208 5970 kHz) (photo by Jim Solatie taken in Estonian winter sports resort of Otepää)

(‘EDXC Conference in Tartu’ text and photos © British DX Club 2024)