

OIL SPILL PROJECT 2019–2021

ENHANCING OIL SPILL RESPONSE CAPABILITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photo: Lauri Ojala

VELLAMO TABLETOP EXERCISE PROVED TO BE A SUCCESS FOR OSR TRAINING

Vellamo oil spill response (OSR) exercise was organized by the **Southwest Finland Emergency Services (SWFES)** in Finland between 3 and 8 May 2021. Initially, it was supposed to be a large-scale live exercise at sea in 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the plans.

With careful preparations, **Vellamo** was eventually organized as a hybrid event of three extensive projects – **OIL SPILL**, **Host Nation Support** and **SAAME** – this year. The exercise week consisted of three separate training sessions focusing on the response procedures, requesting international assistance, and the collaboration between authorities and voluntary actors in the event of a large-scale oil spill. The activities included tabletop sessions, an international webinar, and a small-scale exercise at sea.

According to **Miikka Toivonen (SWFES)**, the chief planner of **Vellamo**, having the main focus on the tabletop exercise enabled new features: "Although many important aspects were missing when compared to a field exercise, now we had the opportunity to think through the situations, interrupt our work, discuss, and change the approach if needed. It enabled a different kind of learning and collaboration."

During the exercise, **SWFES** received a better understanding of the potential and resources the third sector can offer in OSR. Similarly, the voluntary actors became more familiar with the procedures of the rescue department. For instance, it became clear that the presence of a liaison officer from the volunteer organization is unquestioning in this kind of operation. As an overall result, the joint training improved the collaboration between rescue officers and volunteers, and other rescue departments in Finland have already shown interest in the training model.

ACCESS OIL SPILL WEBINARS AND PRESENTATIONS ONLINE

The OIL SPILL Project Partners and Associated organizations arranged three international webinars and participated in the **#BAOIL21 Twitter conference** in spring 2021:

14 Jan 2021	#BAOIL21 Twitter conference, Oil Spill Response in the Northern Baltic and Arctic Areas
2 Feb 2021	Real experiences – Volunteer Management in Oil Spill Response
9 Mar 2021	Incident Management and Communication in Oil Spill Response
31 Mar 2021	Oiled Wildlife Response – Methods and Opportunities

Access the presentations and webinar recordings on the **OIL SPILL website**: blogit.utu.fi/oilspill/presentations/

Further information available from the project website:

Follow OIL SPILL on Twitter:

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KOPOS2021 BROUGHT LITHUANIAN OSR ACTORS AROUND THE SAME VIRTUAL TABLE



Photos: FRD & KOPOS2021

The Fire and Rescue Department of Lithuania (FRD) organized the **KOPOS2021** oil spill response exercise on 26–27 May 2021. It was an interactive tabletop exercise online that simulated an oil spill disaster at the Lithuanian coastline. **KOPOS2021** focused on the coordination of all actors involved in the management of such a disaster, and overall 17 institutions – from the rescue departments to NGOs and municipalities – participated in it. Guests were invited to observe the activity, and a simultaneous translation from Lithuanian into English was offered.

Vaidas Masiliauskas (FRD) says that the main aim to establish a shared understanding of each actor's responsibilities and capacities was reached, and the collaboration certainly improved between them. **Emilija Unė Sakalauskaitė** from the **Lithuanian Red Cross** adds that **KOPOS2021** was an excellent opportunity to constructively discuss action plans and possible obstacles. The established understanding will result in effective action in a real situation.

An international webinar concluded the event. In addition to the first conclusions from the exercise, the audience got to learn a variety of topical issues about the oil spill response capability in the BSR.

VOLUNTARY OIL SPILL RESPONSE EDUCATION ONLINE

It was crucial that voluntary actors were involved in the **Vellamo** and **KOPOS2021** exercises. Coastal oil spill response (OSR) is an arduous long-term operation for which the authorities do not have enough human resources. However, the voluntary OSR capability varies across the BSR. In **OIL SPILL**, the operational knowledge, best practices and available educational materials are surveyed and shared among the relevant non-governmental organizations (NGO) in the region. Moreover, in the pilot area, Southwest Finland, a collaboration model of the authorities and NGOs is being developed.

Because the pandemic prevented most live events, much of the training and other exchange between and among the Project Partners, volunteers and rescue officers was transferred online. The two international webinars on voluntary oil spill response were organized successfully, and the voluntary sector of the Project established monthly e-meetings to enhance interaction.

Moreover, some of the first online courses for the OSR volunteers and voluntary team leaders were planned and performed in the pilot area. Project officer **Heta Hyvärinen** from the **Finnish Red Cross** is content with this progress: "We received some excellent feedback after the training sessions. In addition, more people may attend this way as the participation is not dependent on their location." However, she also reminds that online training cannot substitute real field training, which is crucial for attaining practical skills in oil spill response work.

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Coming up:

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FANOE CONFERENCE & EXERCISE

The **Danish Civil Protection League, Southwest Jutland Fire & Rescue Service** and **Fanoe Municipality** are planning an oil spill response conference and live exercise for 23–25 September 2021. The event focuses on international cooperation and voluntariness and takes place at Fanoe in Denmark. The number of participants is limited, but few places may become available by the end of August, depending on the enrolment. Follow the **OIL SPILL website** for further information.

EUSBSR ANNUAL FORUM 2021

The **Annual Forum 2021 of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)** is held between 27 September and 1 October 2021. **OIL SPILL** organizes a virtual seminar and workshop about the procedures and practicalities for receiving international assistance during emergencies and disasters (Host Nation Support, HNS). Local, regional and national authorities, ministries and other relevant stakeholders are invited. More information is published by the **EUSBSR** and on the **OIL SPILL website**.

POPCORN WILL STRENGTHEN THE PROJECT RESULTS

A clustering project **POPCORN, Preventing Oil and Plastics Contamination of Ocean Regions of the North**, started in summer 2021. **POPCORN** brings together four projects (OIL SPILL, APP4SEA, Circular Ocean, and Blue Circular Economy) and takes the best practices and tools to new regions and stakeholders. It is a one-year project led from the **University of Oulu** and co-funded by the **Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme of the European Union**.



POPCORN

Preventing Oil and Plastics
Contamination of Ocean
Regions of the North

Visit the website:

<https://popcorn.interreg-npa.eu/>

Follow on Twitter: @APP4SEA_NPA



Northern Periphery and
Arctic Programme
2014–2020



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MARITIME SIMULATOR EXERCISE

Simulation is a cost-effective and risk-free method for oil spill response training. It enables easy modifications to exercises and instant play-through of different scenarios in a controlled environment. However, only a few facilities in the BSR utilize advanced maritime simulators with a dedicated oil spill module. One of them is the **Estonian Maritime Academy of Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech)**.

With the rapid digital advancements and new cooperation initiatives, simulator exercises – and joint exercises between several centres – may become a standard in oil spill response training in the near future. To promote this development, **TalTech** and **Klaipeda University** organize training events and compile a roadmap for the future oil spill response simulator exercises during the **OIL SPILL Project**.

COUNTRY-WIDE REVIEW: OPERATIONAL OSR PROCEDURES

The operational oil spill response procedures, practicalities and legal issues regarding shallow waters vary across the BSR. For instance, regulation concerning transformation from marine to shoreline response, the involvement of NGOs, and funding of the recovery and restoration of wildlife differ between the countries.

One of the main aims of the **OIL SPILL Project** is to identify the procedures and practices where institutional and organizational cooperation could be improved and clarified. The **Ministry of Environment of Estonia** leads this work in the Project and has already collected responses to a comprehensive questionnaire.

Now, the existing situation is mapped and OSR procedures identified. The report – including recommendations with examples of the best practices – will be published by the end of 2021.

Further information available from the project website:

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