

OIL SPILL PROJECT 2019–2021

ENHANCING OIL SPILL RESPONSE CAPABILITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photo: Mariikka Whiteman

OIL SPILL PARTICIPATION IN HELCOM BALEX DELTA EXERCISE 2021

This year, the annual **HELCOM BALEX DELTA** oil spill response exercise was organized by the **Finnish Border Guard** in Kotka, Finland, on 24-25 August 2021. BALEX DELTA promotes preparedness for large-scale marine accidents and environmental disasters on the Baltic Sea.

The scenario in 2021 concerned two tankers colliding in the Gulf Of Finland, resulting in oil and hazardous materials being released into the sea. In addition to the **Border Guard**, the **Finnish Navy**, Rescue Departments, other Finnish and international authorities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the exercise.

The **OIL SPILL Project** supported the NGO activities during the exercise. The participating NGOs were coordinated by the **Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service network Vapepa**. The **Finnish Red Cross (FRC)** organized the volunteers' Command Centre, first aid training and service, and radiophone training. **FRC** actors from the OIL SPILL pilot area were involved in these activities. The OIL SPILL Associated Organization **WWF Finland** was responsible for the training pool, bird hospital, and reconnaissance activities.

The exercise was beneficial for the actors involved as the collaboration procedures and response capability were tested in action. **OIL SPILL Project Director Lauri Ojala** got a chance to visit the event, and he was impressed, especially by the operation of the volunteers' Command Centre: "The activity at the Command Centre managed by the Finnish volunteer organisations' network **Vapepa** under the leadership of **Mr. Tommi Virtanen** from the Turku region of the **Finnish Red Cross** was very professional. It was also impressive to see the dedication of the Management Team members in their work."



Photos: Hyvärinen & Ojala

FINNISH RED CROSS' ACTIVITY REPORT & THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW BRANCH GROUP

In **OIL SPILL**, the **Finnish Red Cross** led the work dealing with educational activities of non-governmental organizations in cooperation with competent authorities. A report on these activities written by **Project Officer Heta Hyvärinen** is now published! [Access it here.](#)

In the pilot area in Southwest Finland, the work focused much on developing the roles and practices of the Management Team of **the Voluntary Rescue Service Vapepa**. Based on the experiences during **OIL SPILL**, a suggestion to establish a branch group for environmental accidents under the steering committee of **Vapepa** was approved in December 2021. This group will ensure that the skills and knowledge on environmental disaster response will be maintained and improved in the Finnish voluntary sector.

FANOE OIL SPILL CONFERENCE AND SURVEY ON VOLUNTARY OSR IN DENMARK

The Danish Civil Protection League, Southwest Jutland Fire & Rescue Service and Fanoe Municipality held an oil spill response (OSR) conference and live exercise on 23–25 September 2021 in Denmark.

The event focused on international cooperation and voluntariness in OSR as well as improving knowledge sharing and interaction between the response actors in Denmark and internationally. The expert presentations were followed by good discussions on the barriers and opportunities raised.

The potential the volunteers have for OSR operations was highlighted. A special focus was on including and managing spontaneous volunteers, such as tourists, as part of the preparedness in islands and other remote places. To practice and show how to handle an oil spill, a tabletop and small-scale live exercise were organized for the international participants, professionals, and citizens at the port of Fanoe.

Previously this year, **the Danish Civil Protection League** also investigated volunteers' participation in oil spill response on shores and shallow waters in Denmark. All fire brigades and volunteer units were asked to participate in the survey. Read about [the results here](#).



Photo: Carsten Iversen

WEBINAR ON BALTIC SEA DAY

To raise awareness and celebrate **the Baltic Sea Day**, **University of Turku** organized a webinar on ocean pollution.

The panel discussion focused on **the OIL SPILL Project** developments in the pilot area in Southwest Finland. **Chief of Rescue Services Juha Virto (Southwest Finland Emergency Services)**, **Head of Preparedness Tommi Virtanen (Finnish Red Cross)**, and an experienced **WWF volunteer Petri Jaarto** shared their views on the cooperation between volunteers and authorities in oil spill response. At the end, the new **POPCORN** clustering project was introduced by **Niko Hänninen**. Read more [here](#).

EUSBSR ANNUAL FORUM: SESSION ON SPILLS AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The Annual Forum 2021 of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was held virtually in September 2021. **OIL SPILL** and **EUSBSR Policy Area on Maritime Safety and Security** organized a session on chemical spills and international assistance.

The 2-hour webinar comprised a short introduction, expert presentations by esteemed guests, and a concluding panel discussion. First, **DG ECHO and ERCC representative Gian Marco Desogus** introduced the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. **HELCOM Executive Secretary Rüdiger Stempel** presented the HELCOM cooperation in spill response. **Markku Mylly, from DG of European Maritime Safety Agency**, focused on regional collaboration regarding marine pollution in Europe. Finally, **Planning Officer Mikael Mattila (Southwest Finland Emergency Services)** provided insights into the **Host Nation Support** mechanism.

Download [the slides here](#).

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SEA ALARM: OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE TRAINING IN ESTONIA

The Estonian Ministry of Environment invited **Sea Alarm** to deliver an oiled wildlife response course for the Estonian authorities and the Estonian Fund for Nature in October 2021.

The 2-day training provided an overview of the effects of oil on wildlife and introduced experiences and objectives of oiled wildlife response. The participants also learned more about their respective roles in an emergency situation impacting wildlife. An interactive tabletop exercise allowed them to set up response strategies for different scenarios along the Estonian coastline.

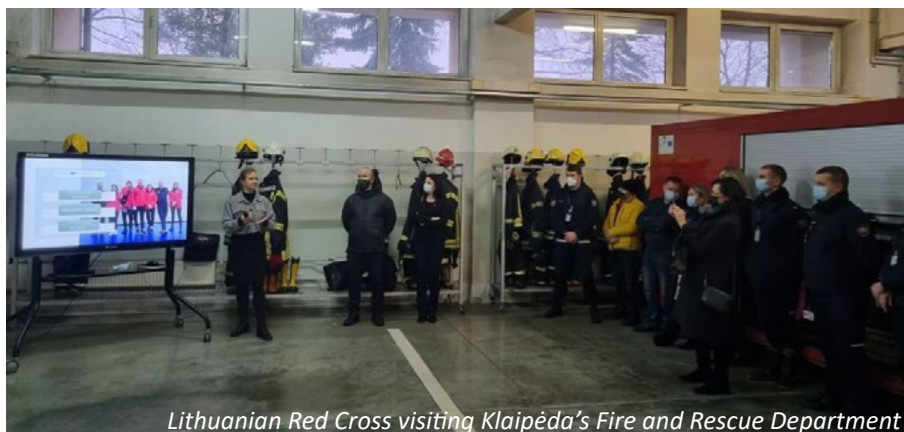
The training stressed the importance of integrating wildlife better in the overall emergency system management. In addition, **the EUROWA network** and its services to governments in Europe were presented. After the training, the participants were equipped with improved knowledge and tools to build up preparedness and update the national oiled wildlife response plan. Source: **Christophe Blazy, Sea Alarm**

IMPROVED VOLUNTARY OSR CAPABILITY IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

There has been remarkable development in engaging and managing volunteers in oil spill response (OSR) and disaster preparedness in Latvia and Lithuania. In both countries, knowledge about OSR and the number of volunteers has increased notably. In addition, international networks and the interaction between the local authorities and volunteers have improved.

The **Latvian Maritime Academy** put an effort in strengthening the operational collaboration between the actors related to OSR and supporting **WWF Latvia** as a new stakeholder in the field. It has resulted in close cooperation, practical exercises, and material support between **the Academy, WWF Latvia, Coast Guard, Fire Service**, and seaports. [Read more here.](#)

In Lithuania, **the Lithuanian Red Cross** has enhanced its connections to **the Fire and Rescue Department in Klaipėda** as well as other national institutions. The team has actively attended various **OIL SPILL** events and trained the Lithuanian staff and volunteers accordingly. Participation in the Project has certainly improved volunteer management capacity and response mechanisms. [Read more here.](#)



Lithuanian Red Cross visiting Klaipėda's Fire and Rescue Department

WEBINAR: STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGIES AND OSR IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

In November 2021, **the Klaipėda division of the Fire and Rescue Department of Lithuania** organized an international webinar on state-of-the-art technologies in oil spill response in the Baltic Sea Region. In this event, the audience heard several expert presentations covering the latest developments in fighting oil spills and other hazards.

Igor Kuzmenko (OIL SPILL and the Lithuanian Navy) started by sharing experiences from the recent **EMSA Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems** mission in Lithuania. **James Storey** introduced the modern response technologies in **Oil Spill Response Limited**. **Kristine Fedotova** from **the Civil Protection Department in Latvia** provided insights on how drones can be used in fire and rescue work. **Viktors Bikovs (Atlas Services Group Latvia)** continued with the theme by presenting fully autonomous drone systems. **Andrejs Zelenkovs** from **Delta Green Line EU** shared topical environmental solutions and modern technologies. **Jorma Rytkönen (OIL SPILL and Enroco)** concluded the event by presenting the challenges in oil spill countermeasures onshore in the Baltic.

Further information available from the project website:

Follow OIL SPILL on Twitter:

blogit.utu.fi/oilspill

[@oilspillproject](https://twitter.com/oilspillproject)

OIL SPILL FINAL CONFERENCE SHOWCASED PROGRESS ACROSS THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photos: Minna-Liina Ojala

The OIL SPILL Project is coming to its end. During the past three years, a lot has been achieved across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). To present and celebrate these achievements, the Project Office at **the University of Turku** organized the OIL SPILL Final Conference on 24 November. The event was held in a hybrid form: it took place in Helsinki and was live-streamed online. The day started with a Finnish session focusing on developments in the pilot area, and the afternoon session in English covered the whole Project area in the BSR.

The Project Partners showcased the results and addressed the identified needs for further development, and the guest experts provided the audience with additional information related to oil spill response. **Project Manager Jarmo Malmsten** reflects on the importance of the event:

“This conference was a good and valuable mixture of the results and achievements of the Project and topical presentations by our guest speakers. The event was also a grand finale for our consortium. Due to the pandemic, we have met face-to-face only a few times, and, fortunately, the timing allowed the traveling from several countries to the venue in Finland. What became obvious – again – is that the main contribution of the **INTERREG** projects is about connecting people with similar aims and making them interact. These encounters yield fruit after a single project as the connections and networks enable new ideas and endeavors. It will be interesting to follow, for instance, how the inter-regional collaboration of the volunteers evolves further.”

Watch the conference [video recording here](#), and download or view the presentation [slides online here](#).

See more [photos from the event here](#).

THANK YOU AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Project Office at **the University of Turku** can conclude that **OIL SPILL** has succeeded well in its aims. Now it is time to say a big thank you to the Project Partners, Associated Organizations, **Interreg BSR Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat**, and all other actors **OIL SPILL** collaborated with during 2019–2021.

May you have a happy, healthy New Year 2022!

The POPCORN clustering project (Preventing Oil and Plastics Contamination of the Ocean Regions of the North) directed from **the University of Oulu** will disseminate the **OIL SPILL** results further to new actors and regions. Follow the [@APP4SEA](#) Twitter account and [visit the website](#) for further information.



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