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# ENHANCING OIL SPILL RESPONSE CAPABILITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION (OIL SPILL) PROJECT 2019-2021

GoA3.3 FINAL REPORT

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21 December 2021

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Onshore oil spill response operations are often more challenging and complicated than offshore oil spill response operations. Oil spill response operations last a long time and involve various operators. The authorities' own resources are not always enough to combat an environmental emergency and the assistance of volunteers is required. However, the allocation of roles between authorities and other operators, such as non-governmental organisations, is often unclear. It is important that no further damage is caused in the oil spill area and that the operators do not injure themselves. Good preparedness to combat oil disasters and efficient response in the actual emergency situation are achieved through joint discussion, induction, training, and exercises. The same applies to other large-scale and long-term emergency situations.

[The Enhancing Oil Spill Response Capability in the Baltic Sea Region \(OIL SPILL\) 2019–2021 project](#) was coordinated by [the University of Turku](#) and funded by the European Union's [Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme](#). The project involved 13 project partners from six Baltic Sea countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The project had seven associate partners from Finland, Latvia, Germany, Norway and Estonia. This group of operators included universities, ministries, rescue authorities, and non-governmental organisations. In addition to the Finnish Red Cross and the University of Turku, Finland was represented by partners [Southwest Finland Emergency Services](#), [Neste Oyj](#) and [Finnish Environment Institute SYKE](#) and associate partners [WWF Finland](#) and [the Finnish Association of Fire Officers](#).

The project's objective was to enhance oil spill response capability in the Baltic Sea Region by improving the cooperation structures, methods and competencies of the operators involved (universities, authorities, ministries and

non-governmental organisations). The main focus was on creating protocols between authorities and volunteers and for different operators' internal allocation of duties. The project aimed to support and promote cooperation in oil spill response operations.

Countries surrounding the delicate and very crowded Baltic Sea are prepared for a 30,000-tonne oil disaster. Should a disaster of this scale happen, the response would require a great deal of human and material resources as well as international cooperation. It is therefore crucial to learn from each other, adopt best practices, and train and exercise together to increase both national and international preparedness for a widespread oil spill disaster. The OIL SPILL project offered great opportunities and support to reinforce such cooperative activities, despite the coronavirus pandemic. Naturally, efforts had already been made towards these goals before the launch of the project, and they will continue to be made after its conclusion.

This final report discusses the goals, execution, results and conclusions of the OIL SPILL project from one project partner's, [the Finnish Red Cross](#) (hereinafter "FRC"), point of view. The recommendations are the author's personal recommendations.

I want to thank all project partners, colleagues, members of the project expert group, and volunteers for successful cooperation during the project.

Helsinki, 21 December 2021

Heta Hyvärinen,  
Project Officer  
Finnish Red Cross

## 2 PROJECT GOALS AND PROJECT PARTNER ROLES

### 2.1 PROJECT GOALS

The general objective of the project was to improve preparedness for oil disasters in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). This objective was pursued by reinforcing cooperation and clarifying different operators' roles in oil spill response operations in the region. The project was piloted in Southwest Finland.

FRC's project objectives in the pilot area were recorded in the project plan as follows:

Building up (inter)national training schemes at all levels and organizing relevant training events and educational activities: A series of exercises combined with the shared goals and interests between competent authorities and NGO's will be conducted. Detailed timetable will be created together with other partners in the first period of the project. Under GoA 3.3., the OIL SPILL Partners will participate in the exercises as either active participants or observers and experts in their own fields and regions. The benchmarking between partners' countries will be conducted around the BSR.

In addition, the following goals were included in the project plan:

- increase the number of volunteers suitable for shoreline cleanup or support activities
- establish a functional volunteers' management group where participants are aware of roles and policies of the partners
- staff of NGO's, who include in their work management of shoreline cleanup, has been trained and passed practical exercises in leading and starting a shoreline operation; and eventually beyond the pilot area
- distribute the experiences and best practices achieved during the work under GoA 3.3 in the pilot area to other areas around the BSR and disseminate and introduce the model and training schemes to relevant stakeholders (ministries, -CAs, NGOs) around the BSR

The realisation of these goals will be discussed in chapter 4 of this report.

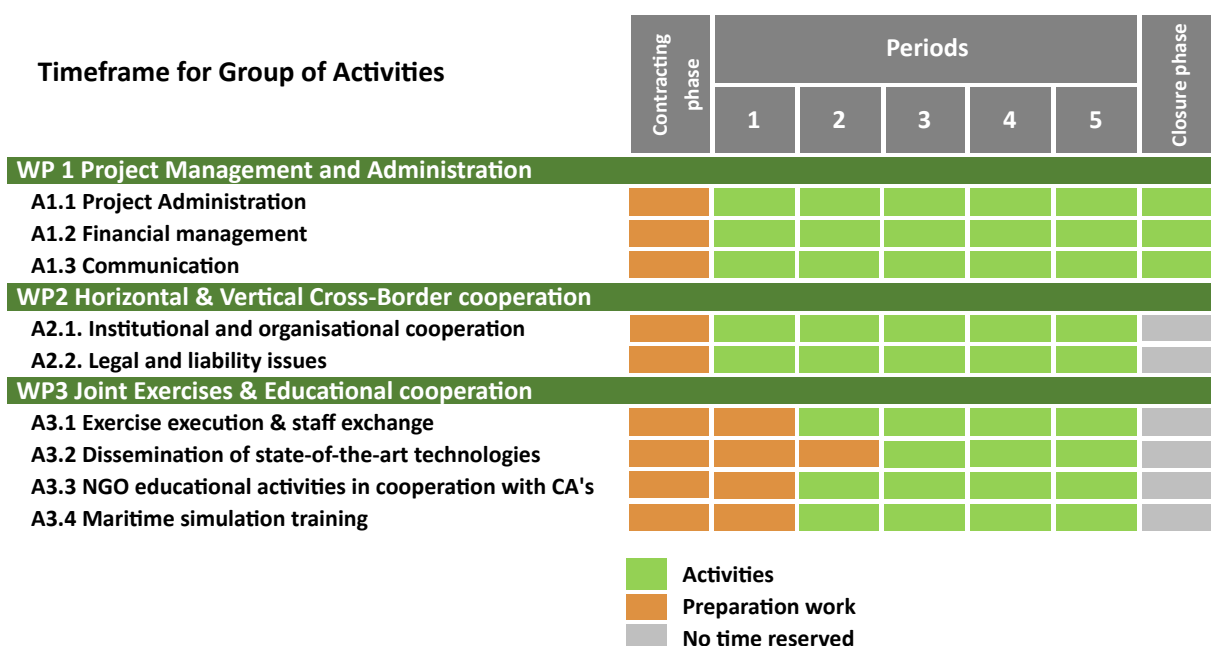


Figure 1. Distribution of duties between project partners.

## 2.2 PROJECT PARTNER ROLES

The project consisted of three work packages (figure 1). The University of Turku was responsible for project administration and financial management (WP 1), [the Estonian Ministry of the Environment](#) for cross-border cooperation (WP 2) and the Southwest Finland Emergency Services for training and educational activities (WP 3).

FRC coordinated GoA 3.3 activities (included in WP 3), i.e. third-sector training and educational activities, in cooperation with authorities. FRC's aim was to reinforce onshore oil spill response cooperation between authorities and non-governmental organisations in countries participating in the project. The organisation's key project partners were the Southwest Finland Emergency Services, Danish Civil Protection League (DCPL), Lithuanian Red Cross, WWF Finland and Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF).

An oil spill response cooperation group operates in the pilot area under the FRC-coordinated [Voluntary Rescue Service Vapepa](#). The purpose

of this group was to implement the cooperation protocol established for authorities and volunteers. The protocol has been explained in the [Management and Organisation of Volunteers in Oil Spill Response Operations guide](#) and it is briefly described in chapter 3.3.3 of this report.

The stages of protocol implementation have been described in the project plan as follows:

- 1.) Non-governmental organisations and authorities determine together the roles and duties of each operator and how to achieve the objectives of the project.
- 2.) The volunteer management levels and skill requirements are specified for onshore oil spill response operations.
- 3.) Training courses are held on voluntary activities (volunteers), onshore oil spill response and volunteer management (NGOs staff), and the protocol (authorities).



*Figure 2. The target groups of the project are volunteers, NGOs staff, and authorities, who were expected to be actively involved in the project activities and their planning.*

## 3 OIL SPILL RESPONSE IN FINLAND

### 3.1 ORGANISATION OF OIL SPILL RESPONSE OPERATIONS IN FINLAND

Approximately 2,000 oil spill incidents occur in Finland every year. In most cases, a very small amount of oil reaches the shore. However, the risk of a large-scale oil disaster is real, especially in sea areas but also in inland waters. At worst, a large-scale disaster can soil hundreds of kilometres of shoreline and affect thousands, or even tens of thousands, of birds and other animals.

Many operators are involved in environmental emergency response at sea. The number of authorities involved in response operations varies depending on the location and scale of the incident. In Finland, [the Ministry of the Interior](#) is responsible for the management, monitoring and development of oil and chemical spill response operations. In practice, [the Finnish Border Guard](#) is responsible for the procurement and maintenance of response resources as well as for providing professional advanced and supplementary training.

If an environmental emergency takes place on the open sea in the Finnish economic region or territorial waters, the Finnish Border Guard manages the response operations. If an emergency takes place closer to the shore, or the source of the incident is an onshore building, the regional rescue service leads the response operations. The operation management responsibilities have been specified in the coast guards' and the regional rescue services' joint plans. In Åland, [Åland's Government and Administrative Board](#) is responsible for environmental emergency response.

Other operators participating in environmental emergency response operations include [the Finnish Defence Forces](#), SYKE, [Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom](#), [Metsähallitus](#), [Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment \(ELY Centres\)](#), and private companies with whom the Finnish Border Guard has a service agreement. Volunteers also play a key role in emergency re-

sponse operations. Response to a large-scale oil or vessel chemical spill requires international cooperation. International treaties have been made regarding such cooperation.

An area that has been affected by an environmental emergency might require long-term restoration. Municipalities are responsible for these post-response operations. If the operations impact several municipalities, the regional ELY Centre will manage and coordinate the post-response operations.

An oil spill response advisory committee appointed by the Ministry of the Environment was active between 1 November 2014 and 31 December 2018. In early 2019, the Ministry of the Interior took over the high command, management and monitoring of oil and vessel chemical spill response operations as well as the organisation of national response operations. On 15 January 2021, the Ministry of the Interior appointed a national oil and vessel chemical spill advisory committee with representatives from 20 non-governmental organisations, including FRC and WWF Finland. The term of the advisory committee ends at the end of 2023. [The Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government](#) states that the responsibility for organising rescue services will be passed from municipalities to the (regional) wellbeing services counties at the beginning of 2023. The reformed Rescue Act will enter into force at the beginning of 2024. Both the advisory committee and the reform will govern the organisation of oil spill response operations in the future.

### 3.2 VOLUNTEERS IN OIL SPILL RESPONSE PROJECTS IN 2014-2018

The Volunteers in Oil Spill Response projects organised in 2014–2018, funded by the Reijo Rautauoma Foundation (Reijo Rautauoman



säätiö), prepared national volunteer protocols, training and cooperation in Finland. The Volunteers' Participation in Oil Spill Response development project (phase 1) was executed in 2014–2015 in cooperation with various authorities and non-governmental organisations, and it was coordinated by [the Finnish National Rescue Association SPEK](#). The project's starting point was the observation that, although the assistance of volunteers in large-scale oil spill incidents is needed, the authorities have often prepared for the cooperation with volunteers very poorly. Thus, the project's objective was to improve volunteers' opportunities to participate in oil spill response operations.

The first phase of the project resulted in six (6) guidelines describing and governing volunteers' preparedness for oil spill response operations. These guidelines are available on [SPEK's website \(in Finnish\)](#) and on [the Volunteers in Oil Spill Response website \(in Finnish\)](#) created as part of the project. *The establishment of shared protocols and initiation of the improvement of volunteers' preparedness for oil spill response operations* can be seen as the most significant results of the first phase of the project. Even at the international level, the material generated through the project was pioneering.

The follow-up project (phase 2) took place in 2016–2018, and it was coordinated by FRC. The idea behind the follow-up project was to have Vapepa adopt the materials and protocol produced by the first project and use them to support authorities in oil spill response operations and other environmental emergencies requiring voluntary forces.

### 3.3 OPERATIONAL MODELS RELATED TO VOLUNTARY ONSHORE OIL SPILL RESPONSE OPERATIONS

#### 3.3.1 (Voluntary) organisation responsible for onshore clean-ups and handling oiled wildlife

WWF Finland has created an onshore clean-up protocol (oil spill response troops), through



*Figure 3. The Volunteers in Oil Spill Response project included an exercise in Syndalen, Hanko, in 2018.*

*Photo: Joonas Brandt / FRC*

which trained volunteers are called to help authorities clean oil-stained shores. This protocol lays the foundation for engaging non-governmental organisations in emergency response operations. Thus, it is recommended to be utilised in countries where authorities need non-governmental organisations' assistance for onshore clean-ups. WWF provides basic and group leader training for volunteers and organises supplementary leadership and communication training. These courses include practical training on the shore, and the volunteers are given the opportunity to join both WWF's own exercises and exercises organised in cooperation with authorities and other non-governmental organisations (figure 3).

Before the OIL SPILL project, WWF's oil spill response protocol and materials had already been adopted in Estonia (ELF). Reliable and safe assistance cannot be offered to authorities unless the volunteers have received sufficient training. If authorities wish to utilise the assistance of volunteers in onshore oil spill response operations, a competent environmental organisation

or authority will train, practise with and equip the volunteers and take care of their remuneration, management and support services during exercises and in real-life situations. The main point is that a competent operator assumes responsibility for the volunteers. Otherwise, there is a risk of chaos and further damage caused by incompetent helpers in the emergency area.

### 3.3.2 Coordination of organisational activities (Vapepa's protocol)

The Voluntary Rescue Service (Vapepa) is a network of 54 non-governmental organisations and other partners whose emergency teams support authorities when accidents or other crises occur in Finland. WWF Finland is part of the network. In most cases, Vapepa is called in to search for a missing person, but volunteers are also needed to provide emotional support, control traffic, or assist with evacuations. The helpers operate on the ground, in water areas, or up in the air.

Vapepa's operations are:

- Voluntary
- Intended to support the authorities
- Altruistic
- Organised
- Trained civic activity

The Vapepa non-governmental organisations work together so that the competencies of each organisation can be utilised in an emergency to help the person in need. During an emergency, volunteers lead their respective operations.

Everyone who wants to help in a practical manner is welcome to join Vapepa. The Vapepa member non-governmental organisations organise training for all volunteers. The non-governmental organisations also supply their respective volunteers. Vapepa, established in 1964, has approximately 11,000 volunteers working in more than 1,000 emergency teams.

The Finnish Red Cross is the main coordinating organisation for Vapepa and it coordinates the operations of the network related to general rescue service. [The Finnish Lifeboat Institution](#)

coordinates the voluntary maritime rescue operations and [the Finnish Air Rescue Society](#) coordinates the voluntary air rescue operations. In FRC districts (12 pcs), Vapepa's preparedness to respond is maintained by preparedness managers whose participation and initiative have played a key role in both this project and previous projects.

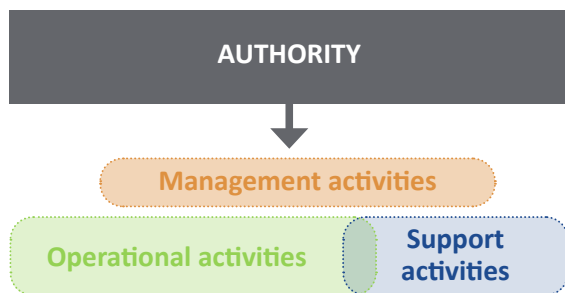
The Vapepa non-governmental organisations' cooperation network is a functional environment for the development of inter-organisational cooperation. The Vapepa network, originally established for search and rescue activities, has gradually expanded its operations into other areas. The Volunteers in Oil Spill Response project succeeded in the adoption of cooperative oil spill response activities and protocols as part of the network's preparedness to provide assistance.

During the first phase of the Volunteers in Oil Spill Response project, it was observed that inter-organisational coordination must be developed and that the improvement of local preparedness requires the support of regional and national inter-organisational cooperation. The prevention of environmental damage had already been an activity of Vapepa, and during the first phase of the Volunteers in oil spill response project this entry was specified by Vapepa's steering committee. The Vapepa operating model is unique and enables bringing volunteers with different expertise together in emergency situations.

### 3.3.3 Management and organisation of voluntary activities in oil spill response operations

[The Management and Organisation of Volunteers in Oil Spill Response Operations guide](#) describes how volunteers are utilised and managed by the relevant authorities in oil spill response operations. In brief, the main message of the guide is that volunteers may be assigned the following duties by authorities: operational activities, support services and managerial duties. Following the model of voluntary activity management, the responsible authority is





*Figure 4. The model of voluntary activity management.*

always the leader of all operations, but a voluntary organisation may lead its respective operational activities and support services independently (figure 4).

The model is scalable. In other words, the number of volunteers required for each task depends on the scale of the situation. Volunteers are called and directed to the emergency location according to Vapepa's standard procedure. In addition to oil spill response operations, the model can thus be applied to other large-scale and long-term emergencies that require a high number of volunteers. Everyone can familiarise themselves with the model by reading the guide (made available during the project), which is why the model is not described in detail in this final report.

### 3.3.4 Regional cooperation process

It has proven to be a necessity to establish a regularly meeting group or committee that represents both authorities and non-governmental organisations. In Finland, it was observed during the second phase of the Volunteers in Oil Spill Response project that regional oil spill response groups must be established.

Cooperation models differ slightly between regions but they all share the same main principle. Vapepa's regional oil spill response cooperation groups form the foundation for cooperation, and FRC's preparedness managers act as contact persons between rescue de-

partments and volunteers. The OIL SPILL project focused on a cooperation group working in the pilot area in Southwest Finland. The group had already been established during the previous project. Vapepa's oil spill response cooperation group in Northern Ostrobothnia and Kainuu was also actively involved in the project, and a new regional group was launched in Satakunta. The projects provide a great deal of support to these groups, but group activities should also continue after the conclusion of emergency response projects.

## 4 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

Appendix 1 lists all the activities planned and realised by FRC or in which FRC participated during the project and the number of participants by target group. Basic oil spill response and group leader courses, supplementary deep leadership courses or communication courses organised by WWF have not been included in the report. The report also does not include events organised by other project partners, even though FRC's project officer attended these events.

During the project, FRC organised or was involved in the organisation of 11 courses, 4 exercises, 32 meetings and 14 international webinars or conferences related to oil spill response. These activities improved general understanding between non-governmental organisations and authorities or increased the number of the project's target groups and their capability to act in large-scale and long-term emergencies. These objectives were achieved according to the project plan by sharing the oil spill response protocol nationally and making it better known at the international level.

Common learning outcomes and awareness of Vapepa's activities make cooperation easier, which supports the clarification of different operators' roles pursuant to the project's objectives. A Vapepa group leader course was created to ensure that different non-governmental organisations' group leaders share the same skills and knowledge and to improve co-operation. The introduction of leadership skills

in large-scale and long-term emergencies to courses offered by Vapepa linked the project better to Vapepa's training activities, which, in turn, helps ensure that the work will continue after the conclusion of the project. FRC's experience and contacts were useful in the planning of WWF's trainer course. Best practices were shared nationally with other project partners.

### 4.1 TRAININGS

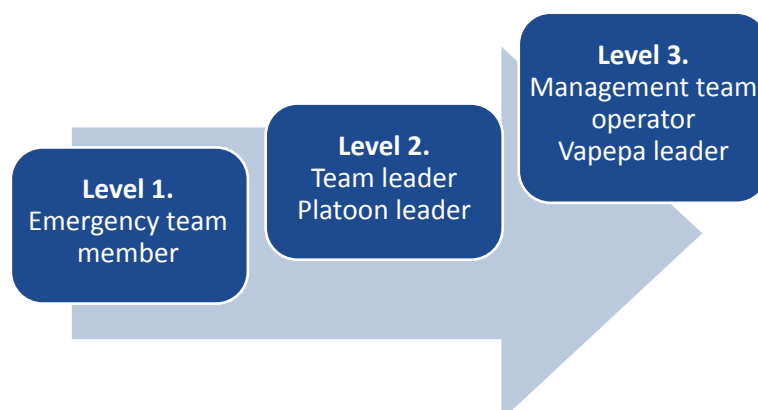
#### 4.1.1 Vapepa's training system

Vapepa's training system reform created an excellent opportunity to implement the new protocol. Vapepa's steering committee approved a *training activity guideline* in autumn 2020 as part of the reform. The training activity guideline directs the Vapepa network's joint training system. The guideline was prepared to establish uniform protocols and practices to assist authorities in emergencies and ensure the availability of high-quality volunteer training.

The training system of the Voluntary Rescue Service Vapepa consists of three levels (figure 5):

- 1.) local and regional basic and advanced training.
- 2.) regional group leader and platoon leader training.
- 3.) national management team operator and Vapepa leader training.

Figure 5. Vapepa's training system levels.



FRC coordinates and provides the course material and trainers for Vapepa's courses. FRC produces the course material together with expert non-governmental organisations.

The Finnish Air Rescue Society is responsible for the coordination of air rescue training. Training concerning maritime and freshwater rescue missions is the responsibility of the Finnish Lifeboat Institution. The Finnish Divers' Federation has defined the skill requirements for underwater search training.

Courses for volunteers working at all levels were planned, developed and organised as part of the OIL SPILL project.

The following have been or will be provided for each course introduced in Vapepa's emergency team training activity guideline:

- A course model that includes the basic details of the course (in line with the Sivilis Study Centre's model).
- Trainer's instructions; a uniform model for the implementation of training activities.
- Course presentation or exercise materials, which the trainer can modify as they see fit.

#### 4.1.2 Trainings for volunteers

The following courses were organised for volunteers as part of the project: one Vapepa basic course, two Vapepa group leader courses, two Vapepa [platoon leader courses](#), one supplementary course for Vapepa leaders, and training of trainers for Vapepa group leader course. A separate [trainer course](#), Teams course and Vapepa basic course were planned and organised for WWF Finland's volunteers. In other words, ten out of 11 courses were intended for volunteers. In addition, WWF Finland organised basic and group leader courses on onshore oil spill response, the development of which FRC was involved in.

All the aforementioned courses were held online, apart from the courses organised in the first project year (2019), when WWF Finland's oil spill response training courses and one of the platoon leader courses were provided normal-

ly as face-to-face training. After a long break, WWF's group leader course for onshore oil spill response operations was held in autumn 2021: the reformed theoretical section of the course was available online and the exercise day was held in Helsinki.

*Vapepa's group leader course* was piloted with WWF Finland and Suomen Palveluskoiraliitto (Finnish Working Dog Association) in early spring 2021 and a related training of trainers was piloted in autumn 2021. Both courses, as well as WWF Finland's training for trainers, are new additions to the course selection. The courses prepared volunteer trainers for facilitating courses online. The trainers needed and received extra support for using online tools: WWF's volunteers were offered a separate course on how to use Teams as a training platform, and the participants of the training of trainers of Vapepa's group leader training had the opportunity to test the ItsLearning online learning platform piloted by FRC.

The leader of voluntary activities may also be a volunteer themselves, which is why two day-long *supplementary courses* were organised for *Vapepa leaders* in February and March 2021. These courses focused on large-scale and long-term emergencies, in particular on oil spill response operations (figure 6).

#### 4.1.3 Trainings for non-governmental organisations staff

In December 2020, a half-day-long *oil spill response course* was held online for **NGOs staff**. The course was intended for persons who are responsible for the operational emergency response activities at FRC and other rescue service non-governmental organisations. These persons must be able to launch their organisation's voluntary activities in response to oil spill response operations in their own region at the request of a competent authority.

In the event of a large-scale regional oil spill, the leader of voluntary activities is FRC's preparedness manager or Vapepa leader, who is experienced in the launch and management of re-

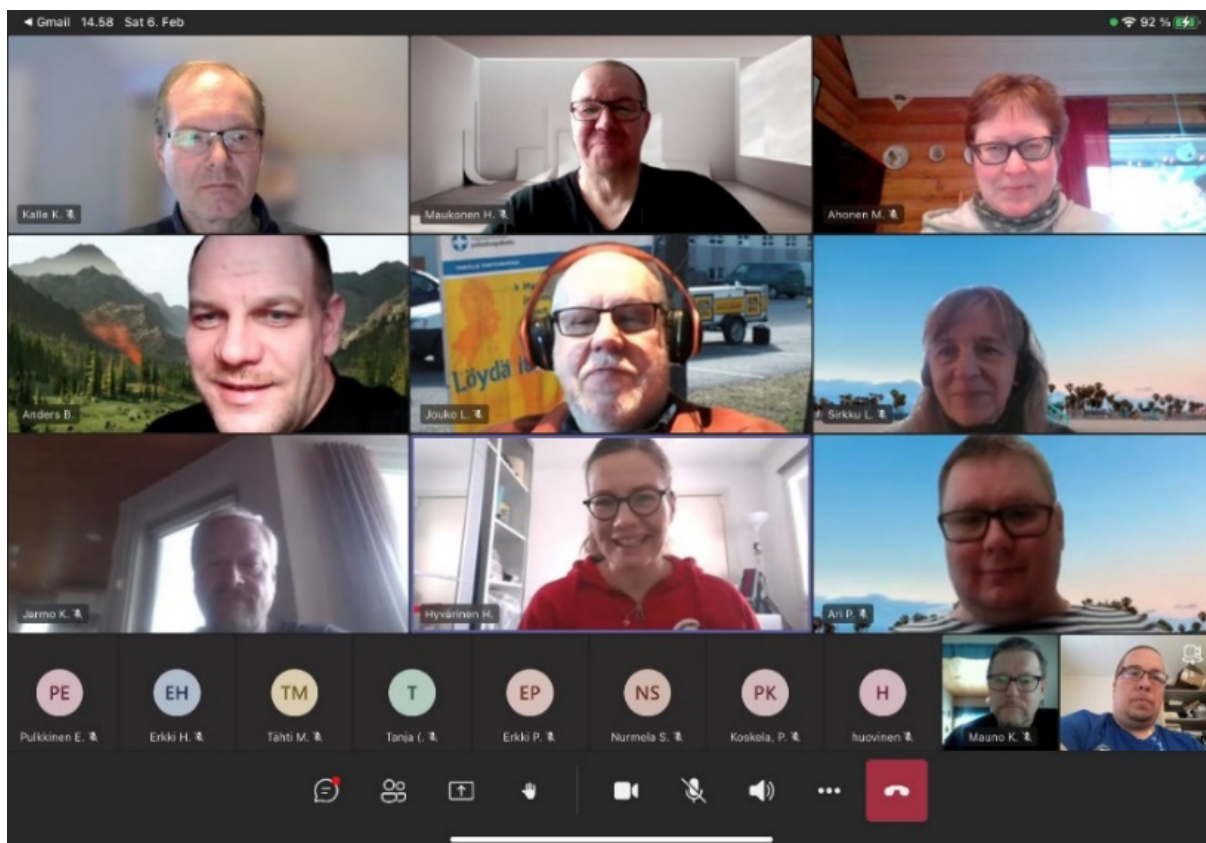


Figure 6. Supplementary training for Vapepa leaders was held on Teams in 2021.  
Photo: Mikko Koljander.

gional or local aid operations. If the leader of voluntary activities does not have expertise in oil spill response, they must have an expert available.

#### 4.1.4 Trainings for authorities

In 2021, **authorities** could participate in *FRC and Vapepa's introduction course* and a *workshop on volunteers' capabilities in environmental emergency response operations*. Both events were intended for rescue authorities in the pilot area. These events were organized by the Southwest Finland Emergency Services, which is why they have not been reported on in Appendix 1.

In addition, authorities were given the opportunity to learn more about third-sector opera-

tions at discussion events, cooperation group meetings, exercise planning meetings and the project expert group's meetings in 2019. These events are discussed in chapter 4.3.

## 4.2 EXERCISES

### 4.2.1 M/S Haveri, 2020

The first exercise organised by the Finnish Red Cross was a day-long tabletop exercise in the pilot area of project M/S Haveri in Southwest Finland in March 2020 (figure 7). The exercise focused on the management of volunteers from the command centre.

The aim of this exercise was to train and test Vapepa's command centre work in a situation



where WWF's onshore cleaning forces are required. Vapepa's task was to organise the establishment centre and command centre, which can include the registration of volunteers, organisation of transportation, catering, accommodation and other services, assessment of the affected area, establishment of a signal system, monitoring of the situation, and ensuring smooth cooperation between different non-governmental organisations. The participants practised these tasks through imaginary scenarios: the participants had to react appropriately to various messages sent to the command centre.

The exercise was performed entirely in Finnish. A separate English programme was organised for the international guests, in which they learned about different non-governmental organisations and Vapepa and observed the exercise. There were three guests: two volunteers from the Lithuanian Red Cross and one employee from the Danish Civil Protection League.

The goal to train and test the operations management skills of Vapepa volunteers was achieved successfully. The exercise was a great learning

opportunity and many development areas were identified. The international guests also found the exercise rewarding and thought-provoking, and they were happy with the programme.

#### 4.2.2 FRC Oulu district's preparedness exercise

FRC's Oulu district held its own *preparedness exercise* online in March 2021. The objective of the exercise was to increase the participants' understanding of the volunteer organisation's role in multisectoral (evacuation and oil spill response) aid operations. The exercise also provided an opportunity to test the Zello communications system in operation management and increase the number of volunteers who know how to use the system, identify the pros and cons of online exercises, and provide interesting and rewarding training in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

The event was very successful: based on participant feedback, all the goals were achieved. Numerous development areas were identified during the exercise. This information will be useful at future exercises and in real-life emergency



Figure 7. The participants of the tabletop exercise in Naantali, 8 March 2020, right before the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions.



operations. These development areas also help develop the management of volunteers in oil spill response operations. The most crucial development areas highlighted were the distribution of roles and responsibility between organisational operators, establishment of ground rules for communications, and the adequacy of operations management resources in multisectoral aid operations.

#### 4.2.3 Vellamo 2021 exercise

In early 2021, FRC and Vapepa prepared for a exercise called Vellamo in the pilot area: authorities and non-governmental organisations attended a joint meeting regarding exercise communications, authorities were introduced to FRC's and Vapepa's operations in the pilot area, and Vapepa's oil spill response cooperation group in Southwest Finland polished its own exercise plan.

As part of the preparation for Vellamo, non-governmental organisations had a unique opportunity to participate in an *External Emergency Plan exercise* organised by authorities in the pilot area. This exercise increased the non-governmental organisations' understanding of authorities' capability to respond to oil spill emergencies.

[The Vellamo exercise](#) consisted of three separate exercises held in Southwest Finland, which focused on oil spill response, host nation support (HNS), and cooperation with international and voluntary operators in a large-scale oil spill emergency.

In the end, the exercise was organised entirely online on 3–8 May 2021, apart from the command centre exercise and the marine SAAME exercise. On 4–5 May, there was an online tabletop exercise on Trasim. An international webinar was held on 6 May and a separate exercise for volunteers on 8 May. In addition, volunteers practised command centre work together with authorities. The volunteer command centre exercise (figure 8) concentrated on the development areas identified at the previous exercise, M/S Haveri.



Figure 8. The volunteer command centre at the Vellamo exercise in May 2021.

The third sector's objectives for the exercise were:

- 1.) Deployment and utilisation of external resources (third sector and experts): alerting, organisation and reception of volunteers (establishment centre)
- 2.) Establishment, maintenance and sharing of a common situational picture
- 3.) Volunteer management: coordination and cooperation with authorities (command centre)

These objectives were achieved relatively successfully, and the exercise highlighted specific development areas concerning, in particular, the management of the volunteers' command centre. The pilot area's oil spill response cooperation group addressed these development areas at the Balex Delta exercise in August. In conclusion, a series of exercises was organised to develop voluntary emergency response operations.

#### 4.2.4 Balex Delta exercise

The Finnish Border Guard and its partners organised an international [Balex Delta exercise](#) near Kotka, Finland, in August 2021. The exercise was carried out under the Baltic Marine En-

vironment Protection Commission ([HELCOM](#)). Balex Delta is an annual exercise testing the readiness of the Baltic Sea countries to respond to environmental emergencies. It is the most extensive exercise held in the region, and the countries take turns organising the event. The main objective of the exercise is to practise the reception of international aid and efficient co-operation in an environmental emergency.

A large number of international units, experts and observers from the Baltic Sea Region participated in the exercise. Originally, the exercise was supposed to include an observer programme for 25 OIL SPILL representatives, but it had to be cancelled due to the deteriorated coronavirus pandemic situation.

The third sector played a significant role at the exercise. WWF's oil spill response forces practised onshore cleaning (figure 9), reconnaissance and cleaning oil-stained animals in three locations.

FRC was responsible for command centre management and first aid services and training. The

pilot area's oil spill response cooperation group (seven representatives) supported the local third-sector operators. Two of the cooperation group representatives acted as trainers at FRC's first aid training, where they went through the first aid and oil spill response package prepared during the project. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, training in pairs was replaced by example scenarios demonstrated by the trainers to avoid close contact with other participants.

FRC's objectives for the exercise were:

- 1.) Smooth management of volunteers in a large-scale oil spill emergency
- 2.) High safety level at the event and successful work at the first aid training
- 3.) Best practices established in the OIL SPILL pilot area in Southwest Finland are shared with operators from Southeast Finland

FRC achieved objectives 2 and 3 successfully, but objective 1 turned out to be challenging. The exercise brought forward numerous detailed observations and recommendations, the



*Figure 9. WWF's volunteers at the Balex Delta exercise in Kotka in August 2021.*

*Photo: Heta Hyvärinen, SPR.*



most common of which will be shared with other areas of operations. These conclusions and recommendations are reviewed in chapter 6 of this report.

### 4.3 COOPERATION GROUPS AND MEETINGS

During the project, FRC organised 32 national events related to oil spill response operations. In Finland, the role of an OIL SPILL expert group established to support FRC's project work was to promote the achievement of FRC's goals and networking as well as offer their expert knowledge to the project. The group pointed out needs for improvement and more specifics in the project plans and addressed the implementation of the project. The expert group represented people with relevant experience and key interest groups who also formed the project's target group: [Tommi Virtanen](#) / FRC Southwest Finland (Expert Group Chair), [Miikka Toivonen](#) / Southwest Finland Emergency Services, [Ari Dalen](#) / Southwest Finland Emergency Services, [Jori Nordström](#) / Finnish Lifeboat Institution, [Sami Kinnunen](#) / Finnish Air Rescue Society, [Teemu Niinimäki](#) / WWF Finland, [Arsi Veikko-](#)

[lainen](#) / FRC (Vapepa coordination) and [Heta Hyvärinen](#) / FRC (Project Officer, Expert Group Secretary). In 2020, [Project Assistant Risto Pauku](#) joined the expert group. Pauku worked half-time in FRC's Southwest Finland district during the second project year. In 2021, [Arto Kupiainen](#) from the Finnish Air Rescue Society joined the group for the rest of the project period. The expert group met four (4) times face to face and 15 times online during the project.

In addition to the expert group, Vapepa's oil spill response cooperation groups in Southwest Finland, Northern Ostrobothnia and Kainuu were actively involved in the project. The group in Southwest Finland met six (6) times and the group representing Northern Ostrobothnia and Kainuu met twice during the project. In 2019, three (3) discussion events were organised for authorities and non-governmental organisations in cooperation with the aforementioned groups: [in Southwest Finland](#), [Oulu](#) and [Helsinki](#). The events in Southwest Finland and Oulu focused on *tasks suitable for volunteers*. The topic of the event held in Helsinki, organised in cooperation with the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, was *alerting volunteers* (figure 10). These events were deemed



*Figure 10. Helsinki, December 2019: A discussion event held with the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences reached a large number of authorities and NGOs staff involved in oil spill response operations. Photo: Heta Hyvärinen, SPR.*



Figure 11. The project kick-off event in Turku, 13–14 February 2019. Photo: Esko Keski-Oja.

very useful and they form the basis for further cooperation with authorities and non-governmental organisations.

#### 4.4 INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND MEETINGS

The project Management Team held four (4) online meetings coordinated by the University of Turku during the project. At these meetings, the Management Team reviewed the current situation and plans of major project partners in particular and discussed the University of Turku and the project funder's wishes regarding the project partners. The following project partners were represented in the Management Team: the University of Turku, Southwest Fin-

land Emergency Services, Estonian Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, and FRC. In addition to the Management Team, FRC was involved in project partners' on-line meetings and casual "coffee breaks" coordinated by the University of Turku.

Face-to-face meetings held in the first year of the project (2019) laid the foundation for cooperation: FRC's role and Vapepa's operations in oil spill emergencies were presented at [the project kick-off event](#) in Turku (figure 11).

[At a meeting organised by the Estonian Ministry of the Environment](#) in Tallinn, an FRC representative had the opportunity to meet WP2 operators and plans, and [at a tabletop exercise held in Latvia](#), an FRC representative discussed poten-

tial cooperation opportunities with a representative of WWF Latvia.

The years 2020 and 2021 were dominated by online meetings also internationally. As a result of organisation cooperation coordinated by FRC, WWF Finland introduced its [voluntary oil spill response forces](#) to WWF Latvia and other non-governmental organisations interested in the topic at an online event held in December 2020. FRC introduced the operations of Vapepa to Lithuanian authorities and representatives of Lithuanian non-governmental organisations at an online event in January 2021. Represent-

tatives of the Lithuanian Red Cross and Danish Civil Protection League visited FRC's headquarters in connection with the project's final seminar to learn about FRC's readiness to respond to environmental emergencies and Vapepa's operations. FRC reached nearly 40 representatives of the project's target groups through these events.

In autumn 2020, it was decided that the non-governmental organisations involved in the monthly meetings would meet on a monthly basis. FRC organised 12 monthly meetings between 2 October 2020 and 15 November 2021.

**VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT.**

**REAL EXPERIENCES.**

A Webinar on volunteer management in Oil Spills

Managing and organizing volunteers in oil spill  
*Finnish Red Cross*

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Estonian oil spill response case from 2006: lessons learned  
*Estonian Fund for Nature*

---

The use of spontaneous volunteers  
*Danish Red Cross*

**FEB 3 • 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM (EET)**

**REGISTRATION WILL START IN JANUARY!**

**MORE INFORMATION - HETA.HYVARINEN@REDCROSS.FI**

Interreg Baltic Sea Region European Union OIL SPILL

Figure 12. Advertisement for a webinar on volunteer management.



The following non-governmental organisations were involved in the project in 2020: Lithuanian Red Cross, Danish Civil Protection League (DCPL), Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) and FRC.

At the monthly meetings, the participants discussed the current situation of each organisation and potential opportunities for cooperation. These meetings also sparked the idea to host international webinars in spring 2021, and the preparation for these webinars began. The Danish Red Cross, PRO Bird (Germany) and WWF Finland were invited to speak at these webinars and thus participated in the online meetings held in spring 2021.

A webinar on [volunteer management](#) was held in February 2021 (figure 12) and a webinar on [the handling of oil-stained animals](#) was held in March 2021.

A webinar was held in March on the topic of [operations management and communication](#), but it is not included in this report because FRC was not responsible for its planning or coordination. Webinar recordings and slides are available on the [project website](#), apart from the Vellamo exercise webinar. In addition to the aforementioned activities, Vapepa's preparedness coordinator gave a speech at the international Vellamo webinar on 6 May.

The project officer participated in the online [BALTPREP](#) exercise coordinated by FRC in autumn 2020: here, the connecting factor was the Lithuanian Red Cross which was involved in both projects and which has improved its readiness to respond to emergencies substantially thanks to these two projects. The project officer discussed synergies with a colleague who had worked on both the BALTPREP project and the Red Cross Arctic Disaster Management project (I and II).

## 4.5 ACHIEVING GOALS AND SUB-GOALS

The project outcomes are examined here by comparing them to the objectives and target groups set in the project plan and for individual exercises.

### Goal 1. Building up (inter)national training schemes at all levels and organizing relevant training events and educational activities.

In the pilot area, in SW Finland, a series of exercises combined with the shared goals and interests between competent authorities and NGO's will be conducted. Detailed timetable will be created together with other partners in the first period of the project.

Under GoA 3.3., the OIL SPILL Partners will participate in the exercises as either active participants or observers and experts in their own fields and regions. The benchmarking between partners' countries will be conducted around the BSR.

**Attainment of the goal:** The training model mentioned in the goal was created as part of Vapepa's training system reform and a series of exercises was organised in the pilot area. Any development areas identified were always addressed at the next exercise. The plans were adjusted and meetings, courses and exercises were postponed as far as possible due to the coronavirus pandemic.

FRC was actively involved in all exercises organised by the Southwest Finland Emergency Services in the project pilot area in 2021.

Best practices were shared by project partners at exercises, online meetings, webinars, and meetings, by email, and through blog posts.

### Goal 2. Sub-goals specified in the project plan:

A.) Number of volunteers suitable for shoreline cleanup or support activities has increased;

The number of volunteers participating in courses organised as part of the project was used as the indicator of this goal's success (Appendix 1). FRC-organised courses reached 242, exercises 165, cooperation groups and meetings 67, and international webinars and meetings 77 volunteers. In total, FRC reached **550 volunteers** through its courses, exercises, cooperation groups and meetings during the project. One could say that the goal to increase the number of volunteers was achieved. However, it must be noted that, in some cases, the same volunteers attended several events.

The number of volunteers reached through project communications and marketing has not been included in these numbers, because it is more complex to measure. Communications certainly increased awareness of the project and will increase the number of involved volunteers in the long run, when events can once again be held normally. During the project, some hesitated to participate due to the coronavirus pandemic.

B.) There is functional volunteers' management group where participants are aware of roles and policies of the partners;

The oil spill response cooperation group operating in the project pilot area in Southwest Finland undertook to clarify the roles and duties of volunteers at the command centre. Substantial improvement was achieved, and cooperation between Vapepa's oil spill response cooperation group and the Southwest Finland Emergency Services deepened further. Thus, it can be stated that this objective was also attained.

The three discussion events held in 2019 laid the foundation for increasing awareness of the topic at the national level. The approach was developed further at joint exercises in 2020 and 2021. As a result of addressing which tasks can be assigned to volunteers, Vapepa designed an environmental emergency response capacity card (Appendix 2).

C.) Staff of NGO's, who include in their work management of shoreline cleanup, has been trained and passed practical exercises in leading and starting a shoreline operation; and eventually beyond the pilot area

In 2020, a national online course was organised for NGOs staff belonging to the Vapepa network. 32 employees from five (5) non-governmental organisations attended the training. Not all 53 member non-governmental organisations are invited to the event. Instead, the focus was on operators who were deemed most crucial to onshore oil spill response operations. All the invited non-governmental organisations sent a representative to the event.

The event demonstrated a clear need for more training and discussion on the topic. NGOs staff also need related exercises. Persons working for non-governmental organisations assisting in emergencies were used to working with authorities, but not all participants were familiar with the principles or practicalities of oil spill response operations. In addition, not everyone attended the oil spill response exercises. In other words, this objective was only partially attained and requires more work.

D.) The experiences and best practices achieved during the work under GoA 3.3 in the pilot area will be distributed to other areas around the BSR and the model and training schemes will be disseminated and introduced to relevant stakeholders (ministries, CAs, NGOs) around the BSR.

Project partners always shared their experiences and best practices, whether they met remotely or face to face. The Finnish model inspired Latvian and Lithuanian non-governmental organisations and authorities to launch their own cooperation projects. In Latvia, all guides produced by the Finnish National Rescue Association SPEK were translated into Latvian. The OIL SPILL and BALTPREP projects supported each other successfully in Lithuania. There was always one person who worked on both projects simultaneously. In both countries, the first volunteers have been trained for oil spill response operations thanks to the project.

Monthly meetings provided an excellent framework for sharing information between project partners and planning webinars together. At the final monthly meeting of spring 2021, the participants discussed what they had gained from the project: FRC brought forward better training opportunities, improved cooperation between non-governmental organisations and authorities in the project pilot area, and the opportunity to increase awareness of the topic at the national and international level. ELF emphasised the continuation of oil spill response work and improved cooperation. According to the representative of the Lithuanian Red Cross, cooper-

ation with authorities had increased in many ways and in other areas as well. DCPL highlighted the increase in information and cooperation with e.g. the Danish Red Cross, which was invited to speak at an OIL SPILL webinar and join the Fanoe exercise in autumn 2021. The Danish Red Cross' project focusing on spontaneous volunteers, which was presented at the webinar, was also interesting from FRC's and oil spill response operations' point of view.

All parties found the meeting after the final conference very enlightening. In addition to the Finnish and Lithuanian Red Cross' capacity to respond to emergencies, the new EvRe project was discussed at the event. The project will be launched in early 2022 and the Red Cross non-governmental organisations of both Finland and Lithuania will be involved in the project to improve their response capacity.

## 4.6 REACHING TARGET GROUPS

The methods of reaching the project's target groups have been listed by target group and event in Appendix 1. It must be noted that, in some cases, the same persons attended several events, and that Basic oil spill response and group leader courses, supplementary deep leadership courses or communication courses coordinated by WWF or the Balex Delta planning meetings have not been included in Appendix 1. Events organised by other project partners, which FRC representatives attended, have also been excluded from Appendix 1.

### Target group 1: Volunteers

- i.) Participation in training: The project enabled the organisation of 11 courses which reached **242 volunteers** in Finland.
- ii.) Participation in the planning and implementation of cooperation exercises: The project enabled the organisation of four (4) exercises in Finland. **165 volunteers** participated in the planning and implementation of these exercises.
- iii.) Participation in cooperation groups and meetings: The project enabled the organ-

isation of 10 regional cooperation group meetings and three (3) discussion events in Finland, which reached 67 volunteers. In addition, Finnish voluntary activities were presented to Latvian and Lithuanian authorities and non-governmental organisations. Two (2) international webinars and 12 monthly meetings, reaching 77 volunteers, were also organised. In total, **144 volunteers** were reached through cooperation groups and meetings.

**A total of 551 volunteers were reached during the project.**

### Target group 2: NGOs staff

- i.) Participation in planning, volunteer management and cooperation with authorities: Particular measures were not taken, because these are included in the daily affairs of non-governmental organisations working with authorities.
- ii.) Participation in training: Courses organised in Finland during the project reached **62 NGOs staff**.
- iii.) Participation in the planning and implementation of cooperation exercises: Exercises organised in Finland during the project reached **29 NGOs staff**.
- iv.) Participation in cooperation groups and meetings: Cooperation groups and meetings organised in Finland during the project reached 178 NGOs staff. International webinars and meetings reached 96 NGOs staff. In total, **274 NGOs staff** were reached through cooperation groups and meetings.

**A total of 365 NGOs staff were reached during the project.**

### Target group 3: Authorities

- i.) Participation in planning, volunteer management and cooperation with non-governmental organisations: This was achieved as part of the other activities mentioned below.
- ii.) Training related to the volunteer management, organisation and cooperation with non-governmental organisations:

The courses organised during the project were primarily intended for non-governmental organisations, which is why only **four (4) authorities** attended them. Authorities attending courses coordinated by WWF have not been included in this report. Authorities were better reached through exercises and cooperation groups and meetings.

iii.) Participation in cooperation exercises: Exercises organised in Finland during the project reached **491 authorities**.

iv.) Participation in cooperation groups and meetings: Cooperation groups and meetings organised in Finland during the project reached 58 authorities. International webinars and meetings reached 14 authorities. In total, **72 authorities** were reached through cooperation groups and meetings.

A total of 567 authorities were reached during the project.

Through the project, FRC reached nearly 1,500 representatives of its target groups (volunteers, NGOs staff, and authorities) both in Finland and internationally. This can be viewed as a good result, considering the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

## 5 MATERIALS AND COMMUNICATION

In autumn 2019, volunteers operating in Vapepa's member non-governmental organisations in the pilot area were invited to respond to a Lyyti survey on their availability to participate in onshore oil spill response operations. **141 persons from 18 non-governmental organisations** responded to the survey. Nearly 40% of the respondents named FRC or WWF Finland as their primary organisation.

The majority of the respondents were eager to assist in operational tasks (shore clean-ups and related management tasks, bird handling, and reconnaissance), but some respondents were also interested in all support services and command centre tasks. The survey revealed that the most popular voluntary activities were shore clean-ups, first aid, waterway transport services, and general staff tasks (keeping the situational picture up to date).

The survey created a comprehensive image of the existing capacity of non-governmental organisations in the pilot area. Non-governmental organisations are interested in the topic and it would be reasonable to invest in organising oil spill response training and exercises as well as increasing resources related to voluntary activities.

In the first year of the project, FRC's project officer kept in touch with the project's partner non-governmental organisations by phone and email. The project officer sent materials produced during the previous national project to the project partners. In Latvia, these materials were translated into Latvian. The Finnish National Rescue Association SPEK updated the Finnish materials in late 2019, but the English materials were not updated and ended up removed from SPEK's website. The Management and Organisation of Volunteers in Oil Spill Response Operations guide had been translated and it was printed in autumn 2021. The physical publication of the guide was paid from FRC's project budget. A print run of 620 Finnish copies and 60 English copies was produced and the

guide was distributed at the project's final seminar. The protocol described in the guide played a key role in the project.

In addition to blog posts and other websites, online meetings and conferences as well as webinars became an integral part of project communications during the coronavirus pandemic. FRC wrote about the progress of the project in its blog posts [on the project website](#), which was hoped to motivate the project partners and increase awareness of the importance of cooperation between non-governmental organisations and authorities and the Finnish operational model in countries involved in the project. Some of the blog posts were also published in Finnish at [vapaiehtoisetoljyntorjunnassa.fi](#). Finnish project news were published at [vapepa.fi](#), and the project was created its [own page](#) on FRC's website. A joint article discussing the OIL SPILL, BALTPREP and Red Cross Arctic Disaster Management (I and II) projects was published in the [Tuovi portal](#) in 2019. The project was also mentioned in a [blog post](#) on the environmental impact of war written by FRC's legal advisor.

A first aid and oil spill response package was also created as part of the project. The package includes going over the content of the first aid backpacks and reviewing the six most common accident factors in onshore oil spill response operations and which first aid measures to use in each scenario. The package was tested at the Balex Delta exercise and it received positive feedback from volunteers.

A Project Officer from the FRC served as the administrator of the 'Öljyntorjunta' (oil response) Facebook page during the project. Towards the end of December 2021, the page had 627 likes and 659 followers. In addition to the page, news related to the project and oil response in general were shared in the private 'Öljyntorjujat' (oil spill responders) Facebook group maintained by WWF volunteers, which has 184 members. The Twitter account of the project was maintained by the University of Turku, and its statistics will not be reported here.



Another important outcome in terms of communications was the decision to establish a national environmental accident branch group to continue the work of the expert group of the project, made by Vapepa's steering committee in December 2021. This decision is in line with the recommendation in the final report of the Volunteers in oil spill response project, which proposed that a national oil response monitoring group be established under Vapepa's steering committee in order to keep operating methods uniform and to utilise good practices in other areas, as well.

## 6 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 IDENTIFICATION OF AUTHORITIES' NEEDS AND CORRESPONDING OPERATORS

**OBSERVATION:** The project highlighted authorities' difficulties to identify and communicate to non-governmental organisations the duties they do not have adequate resources for and which volunteers would be required to take on in a real-life emergency. Created in 2015 and updated in 2019, [the Oil Spill Response Tasks Suitable for Volunteers guide](#) defines the tasks in which volunteers are allowed to assist authorities. According to the guide, rescue departments should always be up to date on which voluntary non-governmental organisations operate in their area and assign them suitable emergency response tasks. In Finland, voluntary non-governmental organisations have formed national, regional and local committees under the Vapepa network. Information on active non-governmental organisations and their competencies is available.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Authorities should consider carefully which (oil spill response) tasks they can handle themselves and which tasks must be assigned to third-sector operators. By participating in the activities of Vapepa committees, authorities have the opportunity to network with various non-governmental organisations and conclude cooperation agreements. Above all, each organisation should always perform its basic duty, for which the organisation was originally founded. This also applies to environmental emergency response operations. In order to get the most out of volunteers and organisation personnel and to keep them motivated and committed, they must be allowed to focus on what they do best and perform tasks they originally signed up for. Non-governmental organisations should go over the competency requirements for each task with authorities.

### 6.2 INCREASING AWARENESS OF ORGANISATIONAL AID

**OBSERVATION:** It was observed that authorities are still not fully aware of all the forms of

aid that non-governmental organisations could provide them. This makes the previous observation of poor identification of suitable operators and relying on the assistance of voluntary non-governmental organisations difficult. Authorities' resources are also not adequate enough to seek out suitable non-governmental organisations and find more information online. The only way to form a relationship of trust between operators and understand each other's roles is to get to know each other better. Cooperation between different non-governmental organisations requires active maintenance of personal relationships. Operators must listen to each other and feel heard in order to establish mutual understanding.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Non-governmental organisations should be proactive and express their desire to be included in fora addressing emergency response capacity and operations. In these fora, non-governmental organisations and authorities could learn more about each other's activities. For example, in Finland regional preparedness committees and Vapepa's regional committees provide authorities and non-governmental organisations a forum for debate, where the parties can also discuss their preparedness and capacity to respond to onshore oil spill emergencies. At the planning stage of joint cooperation exercises, enough time should be reserved for operator introductions.

### 6.3 COORDINATION OF ORGANISATIONAL AID

**OBSERVATION:** It was observed that the Finnish operational model is unique and it makes the work of authorities significantly easier in comparison to a situation where non-governmental organisations work independently. In fact, the strength of the Voluntary Rescue Service Vapepa is that it brings different sectors together. Voluntary activities coordinated by an umbrella

organisation or a network like Vapepa should be introduced thoroughly to authorities. If voluntary non-governmental organisations could be alerted as a so-called one-stop service, authorities would not have to waste time contacting each organisation separately.

Coordination also allows for the non-governmental organisations to lead themselves in emergency situations, albeit under authorities. The operational model enables the provision of reliable and skilled help to authorities even before an accident, as opposed to spontaneous cooperation with non-governmental organisations coordinated during an emergency. Both the Vapepa protocol and the management model for large-scale and long-term emergencies were widely discussed during the project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Outside Finland, non-governmental organisations should organise under an umbrella organisation or network assisting authorities, if such an umbrella organisation or network does not yet exist. Individual non-governmental organisations can be useful to authorities in minor incidents, but in large-scale and long-term emergencies, coordinated voluntary activities benefit both the non-governmental organisations and authorities involved and, ultimately, the recipients of the assistance (in the case of oil spill incidents, the environment).

## 6.4 ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY CAPACITY AND TASK CARDS

**OBSERVATION:** It was observed that non-governmental organisations are often excluded from authorities' protocol cards. This observation is directly linked to the previous points: when the resources required for different tasks and the competencies of non-governmental organisations have not been identified, it is natural to leave the third sector out of official instructions. The organisation capacity card keeps authorities up to date on what kind of assistance non-governmental organisations can offer them in an environmental emergency. Task cards help authorities recruit volunteers and clarify the distribution of responsibility.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Non-governmental organisations should work together to create an organisation capacity card for environmental emergency response (Appendix 2). They could also draft task cards for individual tasks that non-governmental organisations can help with. These cards and their content should be discussed, modified and communicated about in national fora. An organisation network or umbrella organisation could coordinate this work, depending on how the third sector and authorities are cooperating.

## 6.5 PREPARATION OF A JOINT TRAINING AND EXERCISE PLAN

**OBSERVATION:** Traditionally, authorities and non-governmental organisations have held their own training courses and exercises without any co-planning. Unlearning these familiar practices might require innovative thinking. A joint training and exercise plan means not only a shared training and exercise schedule but also the planning of individual training courses and exercises.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Once the needs of the authorities and the response (activity) generated by non-governmental organisations have been identified, a joint training and exercise plan can be drafted. It is crucial to determine early on where, when and by whom the joint training and exercise plan will be prepared and who will approve it.

Non-governmental organisations expect authorities to lead this part of the process, because volunteers are activated at the request of authorities. Authorities and non-governmental organisations should consider organising a course, especially one related to command centre activities, where both operators would participate in. This would help establish uniform terminology, theoretical framework and understanding of activities.

The leader of a course or exercise can be decided on a case-by-case basis. Non-governmental organisations may also continue to take responsibility for organising training courses and,

if necessary, authorities can facilitate specific course sections, as they do at the moment.

If no joint training and exercise plan is prepared, third-sector operators must ensure that their volunteers have received sufficient training, if authorities wish to utilise their help and expertise in oil spill response operations.

## 6.6 SECURING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE THIRD SECTOR IN EXERCISES

**OBSERVATION:** Non-governmental organisations' need to train more with authorities was raised a number of times during the project. Third-sector operators are more likely to commit to assisting authorities in emergencies if they are given the opportunity to participate in course and exercise planning. This applies to both NGOs staff and volunteers. They must experience the feeling of active "ownership" of the activities (active involvement in activity planning vs participation in activities).

**RECOMMENDATION:** The authority responsible for an exercise is responsible for coordinating the planning and should express clearly which third-sector operators it expects to participate in the exercise and which role these operators should assume. It is important to define the common objectives at the exercise planning stage: naturally, the involved non-governmental organisations may have their own objectives, but they must tie in with the exercise's overall objectives. The cost of participating in the exercise should be discussed openly and the parties should agree which organisation will cover which costs. The authority should prepare a communication and safety plan in good time before the exercise and go over the plan with the non-governmental organisations and have them approve it.

## 6.7 PROVIDING A REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

**OBSERVATION:** The objective of increasing the number of volunteers gives rise to the follow-

ing question: which factors ensure a good learning experience and help increase the number of volunteers? It is important that a volunteer feels comfortable and useful: the feeling of doing something important, learning new things, being well-equipped for the task on hand, and being heard and seen, and the general feeling of enjoying oneself. These are very simple factors that should not be taken for granted.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Communications and safety are emphasised in successful volunteer experiences. Prior to the exercise, the organiser of the event must communicate to the participants what to expect, which expenses will be reimbursed and how, which equipment they need and how the safety of the exercise has been ensured. Safety is the responsibility of the organiser, but each participant must also understand their own responsibility. The volunteers must also be explained beforehand that they will be issued orders, and their leader will ask whether the volunteers have understood their orders. At the start of the exercise, the participants must be welcomed and they must be told what the exercise is about and what volunteers are expected to do. Safety issues must also be reviewed and the participants must be given the opportunity to ask questions. The success of the two-way communications between leaders on different levels, in particular, will be emphasised during the exercise. The organisers should plan some activities for times when the participants need to wait to avoid any frustration. It is important to thank the participants after the exercise and stress the importance of volunteers.

This way the volunteers will not be disappointed or become passive. They will gain positive experiences and encourage new volunteers to join the activities. Exercises can also be fun!

## 6.8 STREAMLINING THE MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

**OBSERVATION:** At the national level, the project's greatest achievements related to streamlining the co-management of volunteers. This was a key objective in the project pilot area in Southwest Finland. Management includes lead-

ing the volunteer activity and the staff functions facilitating management, such as communications, maintaining situation awareness and public information. Management comprises the administration of the activity and other support services. In addition, it includes the formation of units.

A separate command centre and establishment centre are established for volunteer management activities. Volunteer manager is the contact person between the volunteers' command centre and authorities' command centre, be it a exercise or a real-life emergency.

A number of detailed notes were taken concerning command centre management, but these are not discussed in detail in this report. A couple of general issues must, however, be addressed, because they were significant development areas tackled during the project.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.) The physical location of the command centre and establishment centre and the criteria set for the facilities should be determined beforehand with the authority responsible for the exercise, depending on the operations practised at the exercise (command centre management, reception of volunteers, reporting or all of the aforementioned activities). The locations of rehabilitation centres for oiled birds and requirements for facilities should be reviewed in advance in cooperation with the organisation in charge of the care of animals exposed to oil.
- 2.) In order to maintain communication and keep the situation picture up to date, the leader of voluntary activities must have access to the authorities' command centre and/or there should be a person who has access to the volunteers' command centre.
- 3.) In addition to the volunteer manager, the volunteers' command centre should have a deputy leader, person responsible for reporting, person responsible for updating the situational picture, and persons responsible for communications, administra-

tion and other support services. Depending on the situation, an expert in the area of operations (e.g. oil spill response) should also be present at the command centre.

- 4.) Special attention should be paid to the transfer of the situational picture and any related equipment during shift changes at the command centre. In addition to the volunteer command centre, representatives of non-governmental organisations operating in the field may need access to situational picture tools to be able to plan operations. These needs must be discussed in advance.
- 5.) A separate training course should be organised for those interested in working at the command centre, preferably before the exercise.
- 6.) If command centre task cards are in use, they should be reviewed on a command centre training and at the start of the exercise.



## 7 SUMMARY: WHAT COMES NEXT?

Taking into account the unusual circumstances, FRC achieved the project objectives successfully: the number of volunteers increased, a volunteer management group was established in the pilot area, training was organised for volunteers, NGOs staff and authorities, and best practices were shared at the national and international level. The streamlining of cooperation between authorities and non-governmental organisations in the pilot area and Vapepa's steering committee's decision to establish a national environmental accident department group are among the highlights of our achievements.

The diversity of project partners posed a challenge, because each operator's starting level and activities were very different. All the project partners also had different expectations for the project, even at the national level. At the same time, this diversity offered an opportunity to see things from new perspectives. An example of this was the Lithuanian Red Cross' interest in training its own volunteers to participate in onshore clean-up operations as part of the organisation's preparation to respond to oil spill emergencies. It was particularly pleasing to witness how the Lithuanian Red Cross' national preparedness improved during the project: volunteers were trained and a preparedness team was established. Cooperation between FRC and the Lithuanian Red Cross will continue through another EU project. Hopefully, cooperation between WWF Finland and WWF Latvia will also continue and deepen after the project.

Emergency response procedures differ regionally in Finland, because the 22 Finnish rescue departments operate independently under the Ministry of the Interior. The same applies to the third sector: practices vary between FRC's 12 districts, depending on the authority and inter-operator relationships. The oil and vessel chemical spill response advisory committee, which started its operation in 2021, is an upper level strategic advisory body, in which different operators represent the viewpoints of their respective sectors in discussions. The advisory committee supports competent authori-

ties, which are the Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish Border Guard in Finland.

In addition to the advisory committee, Finland needs another national operator to perform the practical coordination of the related training and exercises. Some training courses and exercises, especially concerning volunteer management, could target both third-sector operators and authorities. Vapepa's capacity and task cards help clarify the response generated by non-governmental organisations from the point of view of the authorities and the volunteers themselves. The distribution and implementation of existing materials will continue.

Regarding utilising the results of the project after its conclusion, the project plan states that the operational model developed in the pilot area will be implemented in other regions, non-governmental organisations' task-specific training courses will continue, the operational model and best practices will be included in the Vapepa network's training system, and the model will also be utilised in other large-scale and long-term emergencies. These actions have already been taken and the work will continue as part of each operator's normal duties. Everyone can consider how they can promote the recommendations given in this report through their own work. For example, the first aid and oil spill response package created during the project will be implemented at the national level by pilot area trainers at FRC's trainer event in early 2022. In future, WWF will be able to request these trainers to organise first aid training for WWF volunteers at exercises.

In order to motivate third-sector employees and volunteers to participate in training and exercises, local rescue authorities must have adequate resources and genuine interest in utilising the expertise of non-governmental organisations and express their needs clearly. Non-governmental organisations must also be proactive and market their services to authorities. If authorities are unaware of the availability of assistance, they will not ask for it. The positive expe-

riences gained in the pilot area encourage both parties to be active.

As a result of the project, authorities and non-governmental organisations operating in the Baltic Sea Region have learned that volunteers' assistance is necessary in a variety of tasks in large-scale oil spill response emergencies. Clear role distribution and well-defined and organised training ensure better response and performance in a real-life situation. Everyone's help and contribution are important!

## APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1. REACHING THE TARGET GROUPS OF THE OIL SPILL PROJECT 2019–2021

Training	Location	Date	Volunteers	Organisation employees	Authorities	Total
Vapepa basic course	Teams	15.12.2020	30	4	0	34
Vapepa group leader course	Teams	02/02/2021 and 04/02/2021	27	2	0	29
Vapepa group leader course	Teams	13/04/2021 and 15/04/2021	23	2	0	25
Vapepa squad leader course	Oulu, FI	16–17/11/2019	11	5	2	18
Vapepa squad leader course	Teams	06/05/2020 and 12/05/2020	33	4	0	37
Oil spill control course for organisation employees	Teams	1.12.2020	0	30	2	32
Supplementary training for Vapepa leaders	Teams	6.2.2021	28	3	0	31
Supplementary training for Vapepa leaders	Teams	13.3.2021	29	3	0	32
WWF trainer course parts I and II	Teams	05–06/09/2021 and 08–22/10/2020	13	4	0	17
Teams training for volunteers	Teams	19.10.2020	9	3	0	12
Vapepa group leader and trainer course	Teams	09/11/2020 and 16/11/2020	39	2	0	41
<b>Total</b>			<b>242</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>308</b>

Drills	Location	Date	Volunteers	Organisation employees	Authorities	Total
Operation management base map manoeuvres	Naantali, FI	8.3.2020	17	4	3	24
FRC Oulu district's preparedness drill	Teams	27.3.2021	52	13	0	65
Vellamo drill	Turku, FI	03–08/05/2021	17	5	36	58
Balex Delta drill	Kotka, FI	24–25/08/2021	79	7	9	95
<b>Total</b>			<b>165</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>242</b>

Cooperation groups and meetings	Location	Date	Volunteers	Organisation employees	Authorities	Total
OIL SPILL project expert team	Turku, FI	6.3.2019	0	7	1	8
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Oulu, FI	14.3.2019	6	3	4	13
OIL SPILL project expert team	Helsinki, FI	14.5.2019	0	8	1	9
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Oulu, FI	6.6.2019	7	2	2	11
OIL SPILL project expert team	Turku, FI	28.8.2019	0	4	2	6
Discussion	Oulu, FI	9.10.2019	7	3	4	14
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Turku, FI	6.3.2019	6	3	1	10
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Turku, FI	18.6.2019	6	3	1	10
Discussion	Turku, FI	28.5.2019	0	11	8	19
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Turku, FI	28.8.2019	8	3	1	12
OIL SPILL project expert team	Helsinki, FI	25.11.2019	0	6	1	7
Discussion	Helsinki, FI	26.11.2019	0	5	14	19
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Turku, FI	27.11.2019	6	2	0	8
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	17.12.2019	0	6	1	7
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	27.1.2020	0	6	1	7
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Turku, FI	29.1.2020	3	4	0	7
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	16.3.2020	0	6	2	8
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	22.4.2020	0	6	1	7
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	19.5.2020	0	6	2	8
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	25.8.2020	0	6	0	6
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	1.10.2020	0	7	1	8
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	19.11.2020	0	8	1	9
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Teams	4.1.2021	8	5	0	13
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	14.1.2021	0	5	1	6
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Teams	9.3.2021	5	5	0	10
Vapepa oil spill response cooperation group	Teams	7.4.2021	5	5	0	10
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	20.4.2021	0	6	1	7
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	18.5.2021	0	8	1	9
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	2.9.2021	0	7	2	9
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	20.9.2021	0	8	1	9
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	25.10.2021	0	7	2	9
OIL SPILL project expert team	Teams	7.12.2021	0	7	1	8
<b>Total</b>			<b>67</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>303</b>

International webinars and meetings	Location	Date	Volunteers	Organisation employees	Authorities	Total
Introducing Latvian volunteers to WWF Finland	Teams	15.12.2020	22	2	1	25
Introducing Lithuanian authorities to Vapepa	Teams	22.1.2021	0	3	2	5
Volunteer management in oil spills	Teams	3.2.2021	34	16	7	57
Oiled wildlife response	Teams	31.3.2021	18	16	4	38
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	2.10.2020	0	3	0	3
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	6.11.2020	0	4	0	4
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	4.12.2020	0	4	0	4
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	18.12.2020	0	3	0	3
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	8.1.2021	0	5	0	5
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	26.1.2021	0	6	0	6
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	4.3.2021	0	7	0	7
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	12.4.2021	0	5	0	5
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	10.5.2021	0	5	0	5
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	14.6.2021	0	3	0	3
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	6.9.2021	0	3	0	3
GoA3.3 Monthly meeting	Teams	4.10.2021	0	4	0	4
Lithuanian and Danish representatives' visit	Helsinki	25.11.2021	3	7	0	10
<b>Total</b>			<b>77</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>187</b>



## PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

RESPONSE TIME 3 HOURS – 2 DAYS

### PLANNED AVAILABILITY

Volunteers are available for e.g. oil spill response operations on shores and in shallow waters:

- The volunteers can help assess the oil level on shores and the number of oil-stained animals.
- Oil-stained birds can be caught and cleaned as necessary.
- Stranded oil can be cleaned.

### CAPACITY IN THE BEGINNING

Task	Response delay
Shore assessment Public service information	3 h, at least 2 teams (6 persons in total)
Onshore oil spill response	12 h, at least 1 team (10 persons) 24 h, 1 team (31 persons in 3 groups)
Bird handling and cleaning	12 h, at least 1 bird handling team (10 persons) 24–48 h, cleaning station depending on the location (10 persons)

Volunteer operations can be continued for 16 hours a day for no more than 7 days.

*The Vapepa network manages its operations and provides its own supplies, if necessary.*

*The network takes care of continuity management according to the table above.*

### CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Appointing the meeting place (assembly facilities and parking facilities)**
- **Appointing the establishment centre (assembly, storage and parking facilities)**
- **Transport between the meeting place, establishment centre and area of operation**
- **Contact person + communication principles**
- Appointing the place for operation management (meeting room for 10–15 persons, internet connection, at least mobile network reception)
- Covering direct expenses (incl. personal protective equipment, catering, transport)
- Organising sanitary services and internal transports in the operation area
- Appointing the accommodation site

### ISSUES TO BE SOLVED

- Procurement of equipment and supplies
- Volunteer insurance
- Employment status if the situation is prolonged

### PERSONNEL (OVERALL)

Shore assessment team (in total 25 persons in 4 groups), typically 1–4 teams  
Onshore oil spill response team (in total 51 persons in 4 groups), typically 1–4 teams  
Bird handling and cleaning team (in total 21 persons in 2 groups)

*Operation management base, establishment, supplies and equipment maintenance depending on the scope of the operation*

### EQUIPMENT

- Personal protective equipment in onshore operations, first 3 days
- Oil recovery equipment, first day

### CAPACITY AVAILABLE

In Southwest Finland



This document is published under the OIL SPILL project that is co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme of the European Union.

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