

The Everyone Outdoors project



Parks & Wildlife Finland, a unit of Metsähallitus, is in charge of nature conservation as well as hiking, hunting and fishing services on state-owned land, and also manages all of Finland's national parks. There are a total of 7,000 km of hiking trails maintained by Parks & Wildlife Finland. Metsähallitus's easy access trails, well-designed signs, web services and customer service staff at nature centres make it easy for hikers to head outdoors.

The Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity is a national physical activity organisation. The objective of the Federation is to improve the opportunities of disabled and chronically ill people to take part in health-enhancing physical activity and adapted physical activity and to adopt an active lifestyle.

The Everyone Outdoors project (4/2015–6/2016)

- The objective is to take advantage of the effects of nature on health and well-being and to encourage everyone to enjoy Finland's magnificent nature; diseases and disabilities are not an obstacle to green exercise
- Implemented by Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, with the Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity as the main partner
- A nationwide project
- Budget: €106,000
- The project has received a grant from the Ministry of Education and Culture for promoting an active lifestyle

A million Finns require adapted physical activity and special expertise related to physical activity. With regard to disabled and chronically ill people, this need is permanent. The Everyone Outdoors project aims to contribute to the creation of equal opportunities for green exercise. The idea is to encourage everyone to enjoy Finland's magnificent nature; diseases and disabilities are not an obstacle to green exercise. Studies have proved that nature and spending time in natural environments have an impact on our health and well-being. Out of all places for physical activity, Finns prefer natural environments.

Get outside for exercise and well-being! The Everyone Outdoors project aims to:

- Make it possible for all Finns to experience nature and encourage them to engage in health-enhancing physical activity in the great outdoors.
- Intensify collaboration between the sports sector and those who maintain nature destinations. Combine expertise related to applied and health-enhancing physical activity on the one hand and the natural world and green exercise destinations on the other.
- Expand the understanding of various organisations of accessibility, health-enhancing physical activity, applied physical activity, the health and well-being effects of nature, green exercise opportunities and cooperation opportunities.
- Plan future green exercise destinations together from the perspective of different types of people.
- Ensure the continuity of collaboration well into the future.



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Summary of the key measures and results of the project

- **Revising the information on green exercise destinations in the outdoors.fi web service**

The objective of revising the information is to make it easier for customers to assess the suitability of green exercise destinations, motivate them to spend time in the great outdoors and facilitate communication about green exercise destinations.

As part of this work, photos and symbols are added to the pages of green exercise destinations. Additionally, the text is simplified and restructured so as to make it easy to browse and read, and the information on customer services and partner companies is clearly highlighted on the pages.

- **Developing a model for on-site inspection to support participatory planning**

The objective of on-site inspection is to assess the functioning and communications of a destination, increase cooperation, establish regional networks and generate ideas for the development of the green exercise destination from the perspectives of health enhancement and applied physical activity. Local representatives of sports, public health and disability organisations, professionals of health-enhancing physical activity and those who maintain nature destinations participated in the piloting of the model for on-site inspection. The model can be used in participatory planning, and it can be applied to different types of green exercise destinations.

- **Creating a training model for applied green exercise**

The objective of the training model developed as part of the project is to increase knowledge of the health and well-being effects of nature, applied physical activity in natural environments, the importance of the natural world to disabled and chronically ill hikers, and health-enhancing physical activity. The training model brings together regional sports, public health and disability organisations, those who maintain green exercise destinations, customer service staff of nature centres, partner businesses, and experts of health-enhancing physical activity and green exercise.

The training model can be used in and applied to different types of green exercise destinations.



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Observations made along the way:

- Nature is a huge resource. Spending even a little time in a forest or marsh or near water is calming and empowering.
- Sensations, experiencing the natural world and being together are an important part of being outdoors. In planning green exercise destinations, the importance of these aspects to experiences and well-being could be taken even better into account.
- In addition to the route, the key basic elements of a well-designed accessible green exercise destination include easy access toilet facilities and a campfire site. Green exercise destinations should be designed together with customers.
- People experience accessibility in different ways and have different needs, which is why special attention should be paid to the online descriptions of routes and green exercise destinations. When a thorough description of the destination and photos and videos, for example, are available, customers can themselves assess whether the destination is suitable for them.
- Investing in low-threshold green exercise destinations pays off. Accessible, easy routes benefit everyone and enable, for example, families and other communities to spend time in natural environments.
- Training sessions and other events at green exercise destinations bring together those who maintain nature destinations, customers, entrepreneurs and professionals of health-enhancing physical activity. The cooperation models created as part of the project can be used and applied both nationally and internationally.
- Collaboration between experts has increased the multidirectional sharing of information and the exchange of know-how.

Member organisations of the Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity

- Brain Association
- Allergy and Asthma Federation
- Finnish Epilepsy Association
- Breathing Association
- Muscular Disease Association
- Finnish Central Association for Mental Health
- The Finnish Psoriasis Association
- The Finnish CP Association
- The Finnish Diabetes Association
- The Finnish Osteoporosis Association
- The Finnish Association for Mental Health
- Finnish Neuro Society
- The Finnish Arthritis Association
- The Finnish Kidney and Liver Association
- Finnish Parkinson Association
- The Finnish Rheumatism Association
- The Finnish Back Association
- Finnish Heart Association



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Research shows that nature has an impact on our health and well-being

- When we spend time outdoors, we can enjoy the health and well-being effects of both the natural environment and physical activity
- Physical activity increases in natural environments, and nature drives us to be active
- Nature revitalises us and helps us to recover from stress
- Nature and physical activity in natural environments improve our social well-being and sense of community

Further information:

The Everyone Outdoors project www.metsa.fi/rohkeastiluontoon

Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife www.metsa.fi

The Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity www.soveli.fi

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