

Final report

on the Community Action Programme
in the field of Civil Protection

SAFELY IN NATURE

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FINNISH RED CROSS
OULU AND LAPPI DISTRICTS

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9. SUMMARY

1. Introduction

After having recovered from a deep economical slump mid 90's, the Finns' possibilities to travel and take an interest in different sports and hobbies increased considerably, especially the supply of nature travel and different adventure trips. Safety thinking did not, however, develop in the same way, and it still today varies and is based on presumptions. Legislation is versatile, but lacks implementation guides and tools to facilitate control.

In a development seminar of the Finnish Red Cross' Oulu and Lappi Districts in 1997 it was decided to clarify the special features of the Nordic area of Finland together with the local rescue and police authorities. The end result was that nature travel had increased, travel services had become multifarious and the resources of the authorities had diminished. The fast growth of travel programmes on offer had affected the quality and skills of the entrepreneurs in the nature travel field. The conclusion was that cooperation between the authorities, entrepreneurs and nature travellers was necessary as well as safety guides in order to control the safety risks involved.

The Finnish Red Cross (later FRC) has traditionally had a central role in domestic safety issues, whether in prevention or in response. The FRC is the leading first aid trainer in Finland, and it coordinates the national Voluntary Rescue Service, which is a search and rescue organisation on land, auxiliary to the authorities.

As a result of the studies the Domestic Preparedness Team in the HQ of the FRC together with the Oulu and Lappi Districts' Preparedness Committees decided to start a project Safely in Nature to prepare common safety standards for nature travel. The preliminary mapping work started 1998, when the pilot districts were decided upon, as well as the personnel to be trained. The starting point for the choices of the personnel was that one would be able to draw comparisons re. basic training and commitment. The pilot areas chosen were Mountain Lapland in the Lappi district and Iso-Syöte in the Oulu district. The aim was to get nature entrepreneurs involved in the training. Hiking Center Harriniva in Mountain Lapland and Villi Pohjola in Iso-Syöte promised to join the project with FRC.

The transnational partners were German Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross.

2. Goals

The objective of the project was to increase safety in nature tourism:

1. To develop a high quality esteemed safety standard aimed at preventing accidents and safeguarding efficient rescue service.
2. To establish, train, equip and drill high quality, multiprofessional and –skilled rescue teams from the personnel/volunteers of the FRC, Voluntary Rescue Service and entrepreneurs.
3. To create safety guidelines for tourists in the area in order to prevent accidents.
4. To increase awareness of the public re. safety in nature tourism.

The target group in the goals stated above was Finnish and foreign tourists in Northern Finland.

The concrete activities planned in order to achieve the above was to create a draft standard for nature tourism entrepreneurs, establish two rescue teams from voluntary rescuers and staff of the enterprises, print a leaflet about preventing accidents for the nature tourists, and dissemination about the same through the media and events. One goal was to create a large network to improve the safety aspects in nature tourism, which would also serve to guarantee the development of rescue service and training of the same in the future as well.

3. Resources

The human resources in the project in the beginning were Steering Group members Lauri Ratava from FRC Oulu District as the Chairman and as members Matti Konttinen FRC HQ Domestic Preparedness Team, Pakka Koivukangas and Erkki Rannapää from FRC Lappi District, and Markku Grip from FRC Oulu District. Matti Konttinen was moved elsewhere, and Tom Hanén took his place. The Steering Group planned the goals and timetable for the project spring 1998.

The FRC granted 300 000 FIM for the first preliminary mapping and self-financing. An insurance company Lähivakuutus granted 20 000 FIM for equipping the Rescue Teams. Spring 2000 the Steering Group decided to apply for EU funding in order to start the project. The application was issued through and with the backing of the Ministry of Interior's rescue department. The European Commission granted the project 300 000 FIM (50 000 euros) 15.12.2000, when the project started. As further self financing FRC Oulu and Lappi Districts granted both 15 000 FIM beg. 2002.

With the backing of both EU and the Ministry of Labour a project secretary was employed for the time period 8.1.2001 – 7.5.2002.

An action group was established for the project. Its task was to issue the safety standard for nature tourism. Mr. Kari Tittonen from Haapavesi Institute was nominated chairman, and as members representatives from authorities controlling the safety of nature tourism, tourist entrepreneurs as well as representatives from organisations of the sector in order to safeguard a wide representation from the authorities, entrepreneurs and volunteer rescuers.

The members of the group:

Mr. Kari Tittonen, Haapavesi Institute, NORA (chairman)
Mr. Lauri Ratava, FRC, Oulu District (the leader of the project)
Mr. Erkki Rannapää, FRC, Lappi District, Volunteer
Mr. Pekka Koivukangas, FRC, Lappi District, Team leader, Disaster Preparedness
Mr. Jorma Ojala, Kittilä, Rescue Service
Mr. Kari Puranen, Oulu, Police
Mr. Matti Mattas, Lappi district authority, Health dep.
Mr. Paavo Nevalainen, Ivalo, Field Training
Mr. Risto Pikkupeura, Koillis-Sanomat (newspaper)
Mr. Pertti Kalsi, Suomen Latu (Finnish Skiing org.)
Mr. Pasi Karinkangas, Paliskuntien yhdistys (the Lappish reindeer owners' org.)
Mr. Kyösti Pietikäinen, Harriniva Leisure Center, entrepreneur
Ms. Anneli Skrökki, project secretary

4. Progress of the project step by step

In the spring 1998 a steering group was established to plan the project. It made a preliminary plan and asked for comments from the authorities. After their encouraging comments the group chose two pilot areas, Iso-Syöte and Tunturi-Lappi, and Rescue Teams for these (the fire fighting team of Iso-Syöte and the staff team of Harriniva Leisure Center). The planning was continued in the autumn in Levi and the project plan was presented in a national rescue service seminar in Saariselkä. Towards the end of the year a preliminary plan was made to issue a grant application to the European Commission.

Early spring 2000 training sessions were held in Iso-Syöte and Heta in order to establish the training needs for rescue teams planned. The needs were in searching lost people, safety in snowmobile usage, rescue leadership and primary care activities. In the training in Heta also the Swedish Red Cross was represented. During the spring a logo for the project was designed. The grant application to the European Commission was issued and delivered in May. During the summer the formal establishing of the rescue teams took place and later in the autumn a planning seminar was held in connection with a rescue service seminar in Saariselkä. Special clothing made for the rescue teams was also tested during this seminar. The acceptance of the project came from the European Commission end November and the project started 15.12.2000. At the same time the preparatory actions were finished. Training sessions for both rescue teams were still held end of the year. The topics were terrain search, management and the safety of snowmobile tracks.

A project secretary was employed beginning of the year, and a seminar on creating a safety standard was held early spring in Iso-Syöte. An Action Group and a Group for Commenting the standard were established (standard, see para 5). The visit to Germany, as planned in the project plan, did not materialise due to timetable difficulties. A planning meeting was held in Iso-Syöte in the summer in order to get the entrepreneurs to commit themselves better to the project.

The draft standard was ready early autumn and was sent to all the parties involved for comments. The training of the Iso-Syöte rescue team continued, this time concentrating on rescue and primary care. In order to safeguard own funding, applications were made to the FRC Oulu and Lappi Districts. They granted 15 000 FIM each. An international seminar was held in Saariselkä in November in connection with a national Rescue Service Seminar. Representatives of the project partners from Germany and Sweden attended together with the Finnish Red Cross representatives. They presented papers on the problems in nature tourism in their countries and were active participants in creating the draft standard during the seminar. All in all both the project and the draft safety standard created a lot of interest amongst the domestic and foreign participants. A final draft, based on the work and the comments received, was sent to the Finnish Standards Association SFS, which is responsible for all standardisation in Finland.

A training session on snowmobile safety was held in Muonio end February 2002. As part of the project also training in safety for snowmobile safari entrepreneurs was arranged. Part of the Steering Group visited the Norwegian Red Cross beginning March and studied rescue service and training on the fjelds in northern Norway. The purpose of the visit was also to pave way to future co-operation in rescue and

training activities. As the visit to Norway was not in the original project plan, permission was asked for and granted by the European Commission.

During the last part of the project, a safety leaflet for nature tourists was printed and special rescue clothing was given to the rescue team of Iso-Syöte. The process of approving the safety standard was not finished before the project ended formally, but it was decided to continue the process even after the project. It was decided to hand the results of the project, innovations and ideas over to a coalition consisting of 42 different civil organisations; the Voluntary Rescue Service of Finland, which has a defined role in developing the safety concept in the country.

5. Creation of the Safety Standard

The Action Group started the creation of the safety standard for nature tourism after the seminar in Iso-Syöte late spring 2001. In the seminar a sc. Group for Comments was also planned.

The Action Group or parts of it held six meetings. It mapped all the laws and regulations, guides and advice connected with safety in nature, and clarified the terminology of the same. The group made the standard simple and understandable so that the safety guides would be easy to adhere to by all nature tourism entrepreneurs, whatever the service or activity may be. **The main requirement in the draft standard for the entrepreneur is a safety and rescue plan based on his own risk assessment.** Late summer 2001 the group finalised a draft standard which was sent to a large number of experts and authorities for comments. The group co-operated closely with Mono, a norm project by the Tourism Program Services.

The comment round produced good and comprehensive comments on how to develop the safety of nature tourism. It was supported almost without exception. The modified draft standard was also translated into English, and was presented in a national Rescue Service Seminar in Saariselkä in November 2001. The draft standard is enclosed (enclosure 1 in Finnish).

After the before mentioned seminar the draft standard was given to the Finnish Standards Association SFS, which started the standardisation procedure by sending it to different authorities and experts for comments. The main part of the comments were positive, but some important parties like the Consumer Office, Ministry of Trade and Commerce and the Tourism Office were against it. The reason for opposing the standard seems to be its inadequacy to act as a tool for the authorities' control.

Simultaneously with the Safely in Nature there has been a large project called Mono, Tourism Program Services' Norms, funded by the European Social Fund. It has concentrated on clarifying themes, definitions, skills required and amongst others, safety issues for different recreation and sport program services. It was mutually established in April, before the end of the project Safely in Nature, that the safety issues gathered and handled in the Mono project cover the provisions of the new standard, and that the project Safely in Nature supports the continuation of the Mono project in furthering its work for better safety in nature tourism and development of training in the same.

6. Recruitment, training and use of rescue teams.

Recruitment of rescue personnel and defining rescue teams consisting of volunteers, due to support the authorities, took place on both pilot areas Iso-Syöte and Tunturi-Lappi. The nature tourism entrepreneurs, communal rescue authorities, local police, Border Guard, Forest Office and organisations belonging to the Voluntary Rescue Service were invited by invitation letters to the recruitment meetings. The interest shown was good, even if representation of nature tourism entrepreneurs was not satisfactory.

It was decided in the meetings to increase the number of members in the Voluntary Fire Brigade teams (Pudasjärvi Rescue Service's Iso-Syöte Fire Fighting team's staff plus Villi Pohjola Forest Park's two officers, totally 10 persons). It was also decided to aim the training also towards land rescue activities as well as to found a local committee of the Voluntary Rescue Service.

With regard to total preparedness it was not found necessary to support the Voluntary Fire Brigade teams in the Tunturi-Lappi area. Instead it was decided to support the training of Voluntary Rescue Service and FRC local teams and to found a rescue team consisting of Harriniva Leisure Center staff (10 nature guides).

It was arranged preparedness training to both pilot areas, based on the local needs, as follows:

- risk assessment of snowmobile tracks, making of rescue plans, assessment of danger points
- search of lost people (e.g. the use of the map, GPS and rescue equipment as well as action training in the terrain)
- leadership
- primary care

The rescue teams of the pilot areas were also furnished with special clothing for rescue work. The training and equipping finished, the pilot groups have been ready to act in rescue situations in the target areas.

7. Impacts on general thinking about safety both in the target area and in Europe

The project Safely in Nature has had an impact on the discussion about tourism safety in our country. The information plan was made in such a way that safety in nature would be in the media with regular intervals, always connected with one of the project's activities. The interest of the media has been good; the project was reported about five times in the national press, television as well as on the radio, both local and national. The largest daily national newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, had one full-page story about safety in nature, immediately after the press release re. the international seminar autumn 2002, under the title "Rules for Adventure". The article also presented the FRC Safely in Nature project. One of the most effective outcomes of the project has been a lively national discussion on the subject. As an example a member of the Finnish Parliament, today the Minister of Foreign Trade, presented a question to the Finnish Government re. its endeavours to improve the safety of tourism services in Finland.

During the preparation work of the draft safety standard for nature tourism, it has been interesting to notice that the Finnish safety authorities (the Police, Rescue Service as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare) have been in favour of the standard and regard it as an important one, but e.g. the Consumer Agency, The Ministry of Trade and Commerce and e.g. the Finnish Tourism Center oppose the standard. as a reason they say that the standard will not act as a tool for the authorities and that it is too general (the summary of the comment round by the Finnish Standards Association SFS 7.3.2002). This kind of a controversy has been a boost to the critical discussion about the issue).

In the International Seminar arranged by the project Safely in Nature, the draft standard was also introduced to the international partners, the Swedish and the German Red Cross representatives. They appreciated the minimum safety requirements and decided to introduce them in their own countries. The German representative Frank Kuhnel wrote to the European Commission stating that he supported the project (enclosure 3). The draft standard was also given to the Norwegian Red Cross for comments and for future reference.

The International Seminar was arranged in connection with the annual Rescue Service Seminar, which had its emphasis on the Safely in Nature project two consecutive years. The Rescue Service Seminar was attended by volunteers and authorities from the whole country (the list of participants in enclosure 5).

As stated earlier, the development of the standard will continue even after the project is finished. In discussions with the Consumer Agency (which has the responsibility of product safety in Finland) on the 31. May 2002 it has become clear that there is a strong need for a safety standard, even if the task is difficult and vast. In the opinion of the Consumer Agency one should involve more experts in the development work than there were in the Safely in Nature project. Even if certain clashes of interest between the parties involved would prevent the final creation of a safety standard, there will be a Finnish Red Cross recommendation re. minimum requirements for safety in the nature, based on the draft standard. This will be translated into English and spread to all European Red Cross National Societies for information and use. All addressees will be asked to raise the issue to open discussion in their respective countries. The discussion on the draft standard will certainly in the future be an indicative factor when developing laws and regulations on the safety of nature tourism or when building tools to control the same.

8. Results and Conclusions

8.1. Realisation of the planned goals

Goal 1: To develop a high quality and well appreciated safety standard system for nature tourism, aimed at preventing accidents and guaranteeing efficient rescue service.

The goal was not fully reached. The project did create a draft safety standard, but the project period was too short to see it becoming approved. In the draft (enclosure 1) the nature tourism entrepreneurs are requested to issue a risk assessment on their services, as well as safety and rescue plans for the same. The draft has its supporters and opponents and the future work in order to get it approved will be done by the Voluntary Rescue Service, consisting of 42 civic organisations. The Voluntary

Rescue Service will thus be the spokesman of nature tourism and will amongst its other tasks develop the training of volunteer preparedness in Finland.

Goal 2: To establish, train and equip high quality, multiprofessional and multiskilled rescue teams from the staff and volunteers of the Finnish Red Cross, Voluntary Rescue Service and tourism entrepreneurs.

The goal was reached in the pilot areas; two rescue teams were established and equipped. They were trained based on the training needs assessment. The teams will act as models for other areas, where e.g. through the Voluntary Rescue Service work more comprehensive rescue activities, based on voluntary work, will be planned in order to increase the safety of nature tourists.

Goal 3: To create safety guidelines for nature tourists.

The goal was reached; the nature tourists will get a small size leaflet on safety in the nature. The leaflet (enclosure 2) will be distributed to nature tourism centres.

Goal 4: To increase the knowledge of the general public re. safety in nature tourism.

The goal was reached in many different ways; through various media channels (enclosed newspaper cuttings), in the meetings arranged (e.g. the Rescue Service Seminar) and through the leaflet mentioned before.

8.2. Conclusions

The creation of a nature safety standard is a very difficult task. In order to issue a standard covering all the necessary aspects and without dissidence, the work should be done by the authorities or at least with their full support. The project revealed many different interest parties; firstly the tourism entrepreneurs, who do want to offer safe services but also want to avoid extra costs, volunteer rescuers, who want to live in a safe environment and therefore are willing to assist the authorities, but who cannot take part in the surveillance activity; safety authorities, the resources of whom in the northern areas are limited, and who thus are interested in projects which improve the self-created safety; and finally the consumer authorities, who look positively upon improving the safety of services, but at the same time want to see control mechanisms and tools created. On top of the aforementioned one must name the schools and institutes with a connection to nature tourism as well as tens of civic organisations with an interest in the same. The creation of a nature safety standard - especially the approval procedure - takes years, and this was not well enough envisaged when planning the timetable of the project. The group of people involved in the work should have included more expertise and should also have covered the whole country better than it now did.

The project safely in Nature aimed from the very beginning at developing community based disaster/emergency preparedness, as it has become obvious especially in northern Finland that more and more rescue activities (e.g. search for lost persons, fjeld rescue) are carried out by volunteers. It is thus wise to develop the safety in such a way that the ones offering services do their bit in preventing accidents (safety plans), in the rescue work itself (rescue teams consisting of the staff of the entrepreneurs), and that the tourists as well as the local inhabitants recognise the risks (the safety leaflet and information given). The idea was to improve each part of the preparedness (prevention of accidents, rescue action itself and service given after the accident/rescue) thus improving safety.

The above mentioned thinking has proved to be correct, but the co-ordination is difficult. On top of this the entrepreneurs do not have time for anything outside their core business. Even if sc. common responsibility is widely recognised in Finland, the final responsibility is in the end left with the ones it belongs to; the authorities. The development of community based preparedness takes time, and it is being done continuously in the Finnish Red Cross. Safely in Nature project gave a lot of good experiences to this development work.

The time period for the project was too short with regard to the goals. One would have needed much more time for both developing the draft standard, training the teams and disseminating the message. As stated before, the work will be continued by the Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service. It has a leading role in the voluntary rescue field, large representation (30 000 active members) and good resources for continuing the work started by the project and developing community based disaster preparedness nation wide. Based on a motion by the steering group of the Safely in Nature project in the autumn 2001, the Central Committee of the Voluntary Rescue Service approved the development of nature safety as one of its main themes in the future.

One of the project's teachings was that it is in fact rather simple to develop safety in the nature with local co-operation. The dissemination will be continued in the future through the co-operation network, which was developed during the project. The Finnish Red Cross will develop special first aid training for nature tourists and add the safety in the nature aspect to its preparedness training.

During the project contacts to EU countries Germany and Sweden were created, as well as outside the EU to Norway in order to add the northern aspect to the work. The interest towards the project has been great especially in Germany, where the problems connected to nature tourism seem to be similar to those in Finland. The draft standard as well as Finnish Red Cross' recommendations re. minimum requirements for nature tourism will be sent in English to all European Red Cross National Societies in order to disseminate and mainstream the safety in the nature aspect and its development in the whole European Community.

At the end of the project the Finnish discussion and work on safety in the nature is developing strongly. The aforementioned Mono project is issuing different sports and recreation activities' regulations and guides to entrepreneurs. The safety aspects they contain have been developed together with the Safely in Nature project, and the regulations and guides will add a lot to the safety in nature tourism when ready. On top of this the Finnish Rescue Institute published a survey on the safety of the tourist services in Lapland during the last week of the Safely in Nature project. Based on the deficiencies found during the survey, the Rescue Department of the Ministry of Interior has started a program to improve the situation.

9. Summary

Tourism services and recreational outdoor activities have increased. The safety has not developed to the same extent, and its quality still varies a lot and is often based on assumptions instead of knowledge. The laws do cover much, but guides re. application and tools for an easy supervision and control are lacking.

The Finnish Red Cross undertook a project Safely in Nature, based on a needs assessment, supported by the European Commission 15.12.2000 - 15.4.2002. The

aim of the project was to improve the safety of nature tourism nationally and wider within the EU with the help of a specific safety standard, volunteer rescue teams and dissemination.

During the project a draft safety standard was developed, and it was sent to the Finnish Standards Association SFS to be processed. The safety authorities supported the draft standard, but the Consumer Agency and e.g. the Finnish Tourist Board opposed it due to the too general nature of it. The Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service will continue the work started by the project. The draft standard will be sent in English to the European Red Cross Societies for information and use.

The project trained and equipped two pilot rescue teams to Iso-Syöte and Tunturi-Lappi areas. The teams consist of volunteer rescuers and staff of tourist enterprises in the area. The teams serve as models for other sc. community based preparedness teams in the future.

The project published a pocket size leaflet on risks in the nature meant for campers and nature tourists in general. The leaflet will be available and distributed in the tourist centres. Additionally thousands of citizens were told about safety in the nature in various seminars and in the mass media during the project.

As partners in the project were the Red Cross National Societies of Germany and Sweden. The co-operation established that the problems re. safety in the nature are common also elsewhere in Europe. The network created during the project can and will exchange experiences and plan the development of safety on a large area in future.

The discussion and activities on safety will continue in the Finnish Red Cross and the Finnish Voluntary Rescue Service co-ordinated by it. The experiences from the project prove that good co-operation between the authorities, proper dissemination and development of community based preparedness have the best possible input in improving safety in the nature in our country.

More information on the project or on publications mentioned in this report can be ordered from: Finnish Red Cross, Oulu District, Safely in Nature, Uusikatu 22, 90100 Oulu, Finland.

Signed by:

FRC Oulu District

FRC Lappi District

Enclosures: 1. Draft standard for safety in the nature
2. Leaflet for tourists
3. Letter by Frank Kuhnel
4. Newspaper cuttings on the project
5. List of participants in the International Seminars and training sessions of the rescue teams