

NATUREACH

Nature Reachable for all

Joint Nordic Research Conference

3-4 December 2025
Vaasa, Finland

Program Wednesday 3 December 2025

Place: Vaasa University Campus, Auditorium Wolff (Tervahovi-building, Wolffintie 34, Vaasa)

8.30 *Morning coffee and registration*

9.15 **Opening of the conference**
Martin Meyer, Vice Rector, University of Vaasa

9.30 **NATUREACH in a nutshell – Main outputs and outcomes**
Martta Ylilauri, Project manager, University of Vaasa

10.00 **Leveraging health benefits of nature for public health in Finland**
Liisa Tyrväinen, Research Professor, Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)

10.45 **Optimizing environmental qualities and restorative components in nature-based VR interventions**
Anna María Palsdóttir, Associate professor; Ann Dolling, Researcher and Elisabet Bohlin, Researcher, SLU

11.30 *Lunch in Restaurant Mathilda (Tervahovi)*

12.30 **Collecting and analyzing physiological data to understand the effects of nature interventions – promises and challenges**
Minna Huotilainen, Professor, University of Helsinki

13.15 **What are Digital Scents?**
Veikko Surakka, Professor, Tampere University

14.00 *Coffee break*

14.30

Main results and key findings in NATUREACH Client pilots

15 min presentations by WP leaders and respective research groups

- **Virtual nature interventions for clients with disabilities in Eskoo's Support and Care units in Seinäjoki, Wellbeing Services County of South Ostrobothnia, Finland**
Minna Huotilainen, Professor, University of Helsinki, Johanna Mäki-Rautila, Supervising counsellor, Wellbeing Services County of South Ostrobothnia et al.
- **Virtual nature interventions at Eating Disorders Outpatient clinic in Vaasa central hospital, Wellbeing Services County of Ostrobothnia, Finland**
Martta Ylilauri, Project manager, University of Vaasa et al.
- **Virtual nature interventions at Palliative Medicine in Umeå, Sweden**
Lisbeth Slunga Järvholm, Professor, Umeå university et al.
- **Experiences of nature exposure through immersive virtual reality among people with Diabetes Mellitus type 2 in Lifestyle support services Österåsen, Region Västernorrland, Sweden**
Kristina Lämås, Associate professor, Umeå university et al.
- **Virtual nature exposures in elderly care at Nursing home in Övertorneå and a sheltered accommodation in Luleå, Sweden**
Päivi Juuso, Associate Professor, Luleå University of Technology et al.

15.45

Discussion

16.00

Closing of the conference

Until 17.00 possibility to test virtual nature environments produced in NATUREACH project with VR headsets.

18.00–

Dinner with Cultural treats

at Original Sokos Hotel Royal Vaasa, Hovioikeudenpuistikko 18, Vaasa

Registrations by 18 November 2025

<https://link.webropol.com/s/natureach>

Project website:

<https://www.slu.se/en/Natureach>



More information:

The program is not streamed online, recordings are available afterwards.

Conference program: martta.ylilauri@uwasa.fi

Accommodation, dinner, travelling and site visits:

(in English): Vaiva.Stanisauskaite@uwasa.fi

(in Finnish): Miia-Maria.Kuusisto@uwasa.fi

Conference Speakers

Liisa Tyrväinen

Liisa Tyrväinen is a Research Professor at the Natural Resources Institute Finland. Her work focuses on the health and social benefits of nature, outdoor recreation, and nature-based tourism. She has led and contributed to international reviews on the health effects of nature, and assessment its economic potential for public health. Her research also explores how forest management practices influence the restorative qualities of forest environments and the overall quality of outdoor recreation environments. In addition to studying real-world environments, her team has investigated the health and well-being impacts of virtual nature experiences. Professor Tyrväinen currently serves as Chair of the Finnish Society of Forest Science and is a member of both the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters and the National Science Panel for Forest Bioeconomy.



Minna Huotilainen

Minna Huotilainen is a professor of educational sciences at University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research focuses on learning and wellbeing, and since her background is in neuroscience, she is interested in developing physiological methods to quantify effects of artistic and nature-related interventions.

Photo: Uzi Varon

Veikko Surakka

Veikko Surakka is a professor of interactive technology and the head of the Research Group for Emotions, Sociality, and Computing at Tampere university (<https://research.tuni.fi/esc/>). His and the group's research focuses particularly on emotion, cognition, human-human and human-technology interaction, as well as the development of new interaction technologies. Our research is mainly multi- and cross-disciplinary consisting of expertise from human-technology interaction, computer science, psychology, mathematics, engineering, biomedical engineering (sensors and microfluidics), medicine, and for example facial plastic surgery. With them we develop and study new visionary interaction and rehabilitation technologies. For more than ten years he and his team have studied technologies that can digitize scents in terms of electronic noses and olfactory displays that can synthesize scents and print them for human sensing. One of the central goals has been to bring scents into the multisensory world of VR and to create visionary methods for researching both the functioning of the sense of smell and the connections between memory and the sense of smell.



Conference Speakers



Ann Dolling

Ann Dolling is a researcher in forest ecology and management at SLU, specializing in the interdisciplinary study of how forest environments affect human health. The work focuses on understanding the physical and psychological effects of spending time in forests and translating this knowledge into practical applications for nature- and health-based businesses, lifestyle interventions, and forest management strategies.

Elisabet Bohlin

Elisabet Bohlin is a teacher and researcher at the Department of Forest Ecology and Management at SLU. She has a particular interest in interdisciplinary research on the relationships between forest environments and human health. She also teaches about nature's health-promoting effects and works with science communication through the Nordic Nature Health Hub, aiming to make this research accessible to researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the public.

Anna María Palsdóttir

Anna María Palsdóttir is an Associate Professor at SLU and a leading expert in nature-based interventions, focusing on how outdoor environments, especially forests, support health, well-being, and rehabilitation. Her research integrates scientific evidence with practical design, influencing healthcare and therapeutic environments in Sweden. She leads pioneering studies on forest therapy, including a feasibility study for women with gynecological cancer and an EU-funded randomized controlled trial (GreenMe project) on guided forest bathing in Stockholm. Collaborating with government agencies, municipalities, and healthcare organizations, she translates research into practice through therapeutic gardens, vocational rehabilitation programs, and social inclusion initiatives. Her work also establishes quality standards for outdoor healthcare settings and informs evidence-based design for environments such as prisons. Combining quantitative, qualitative, and sensory methods, she develops sustainable, evidence-based models demonstrating how nature enhances mental health, work ability, and social integration.



Martta Ylilauri

Martta Ylilauri is a project manager at University of Vaasa. Since 2014, she has developed nature-based service models, conducted applied research and worked as a trainer in complementary education courses within regional and joint Nordic Green Care projects. Her areas of interest include assessing the qualities of nature areas and the well-being effects of nature-based interventions, incorporating nature-based methods into social and health services, and examine nature-based service models from the perspective of planetary health and well-being. She works as a consortium leader in NATUREACH project and contributes the client pilot studies as a researcher.

Conference Speakers



Johanna Mäki-Rautila

Johanna Mäki-Rautila works as a supervising counsellor and coordinator of the NATUREACH project's client pilot at the Eskoo Support and Competence Centre in Wellbeing Services County of South Ostrobothnia. She is a trained practical nurse, Bachelor of Social Sciences and Green Care expert. Her extensive work experience in services for people with developmental disabilities and in management has provided her with a solid foundation for development work. The NATUREACH project was originally initiated by Mäki-Rautila, who set out to develop a virtual nature service model for the clients of Esko's developmental disability services.

Lisbeth Slunga Järvholm

Lisbeth Slunga Järvholm is a professor in occupational medicine at the Department of Epidemiology and global health, Umeå University. She is also a Senior consultant and specialist in occupational and environmental medicine at Region Västerbotten.



Kristina Lämås

Kristina Lämås is an Associate professor in Department of Nursing at Umeå university. Her research has focused on increased health and wellbeing through non-pharmacological methods primarily among older adults. The work has for example explored approaches such as therapeutic massage and person-centered care to promote holistic and individualized support. She has used quantitative, qualitative and health economic methods in her research.

Päivi Juuso

Päivi Juuso is an Associate professor in Nursing, working at the Division of Nursing and Medical Technology at the Department of Health Science, Luleå University of Technology (LTU). In her research the main focus is on health-promotion and illness prevention for people of different ages. In different research groups, she also works with new innovations to promote health for people in the Arctic regions. She has extensive teaching and education experience, in the development of education and programs, as well as research cooperation, nationally and internationally.



Site visits on Thursday 4 December

Note that all transports leave from Vaasa at 8.30. Program in site visits end by 14.30 and transports are arranged to Vaasa harbour/Vaasa or Seinäjoki railway station/Vaasa airport.

Detailed information sends to registered participants. All site visits and meals are free of charge.

Group 1/ Site visit 1: Therapeutic stables of Toiska in Ilmajoki

<https://terapeuttinentalli.fi/> Toiska is a home and a farm with a 7-bed child protection unit operating under institutional license, welfare services, and a therapeutic stable, being the first social and health care stable in Finland. At Toiska, everyone's wellbeing is a key, from the clients to the staff and animals, which is why all the farm's resources are dedicated to providing wellbeing services. Toiska has a multidisciplinary team of instructors and other staff members with psychiatric expertise and extensive experience in child protection, attachment-based work, a systemic operating model, and social pedagogical horse and animal activities in a unique farm environment.



Group 1/ Site visit 2: VR dome studio at Eskoo in Seinäjoki

[Natureach/Eskoo](#) Support and Competence centre Eskoo in The Wellbeing Services County of South Ostrobothnia is one of the national pioneers in its field in applying nature-based methods in their services. A virtual nature service model has been created in NATUREACH project, based on the impact of nature-based interventions to clients with reduced mobility and demanding round-a-clock care. In addition, the clients need high psychosocial support, and support for challenging behavior and communication. The aim is to reinforce the client's recovery, positive experiences and sense of inclusion through environments and natural elements that are relevant to the client's well-being.

Group 2/ Site visit 1: Arctic outdoor activities at Kvarken World Heritage nature area in Villa Meribjörkö, Mustasaari

<https://www.meribjorko.fi/en/homepage> Villa Meribjörkö is a venue for many types of events. Jukka Viita-aho organizes also nature experiences including boat trips, kayaking, photography, snowshoeing, ice fishing, on the rocks -floating and nature hikes, or clients can just enjoy the scenery, experience nature, and identify plants, birds, and fish species. Through these experiences, Viita-aho wants to inspire people to listen to, look at, and feel nature. Nature offers something for all the senses. *Photo: Jukka Viita-aho*



Group 2/ Site visit 2: Aava Kertun kotitila -homefarm in Mustasaari

<https://www.aavakertunkotitila.fi/home/> Anna Salmi's farm has a variety of people-friendly domestic animals. Visitors to the farm include individuals, groups, and special groups. In addition, the animals visit clients at elderly care units, residential homes for people with developmental disabilities, and daycare centers. Aava Kertun Kotitila also organizes alpaca walks in the forest and urban areas. Anna Salmi hopes that these activities will help people relax and feel a sense of connection with nature and animals. In addition to relaxation, the aim of the activities is to provide an experience of living in the moment. *Photo: Maria Yli-Valkama*

Accommodation Options for Conference Guests in Vaasa

Conference guests can book rooms at two hotels in Vaasa at a discounted rate.

Both hotels offer the discount with the booking code: **BNATURE**.

To get the discount, the booking should be made by 11 November.

- the quota at Hotel Royal is valid until 22 November, but with lower number of rooms available.

To ensure availability, please contact the hotel and make your reservation early.

Original Sokos Hotel Royal

- Hovioikeudenpuistikko 18, 65100 Vaasa,
- royal.vaasa@sokoshotels.fi
- + 358 20 1234 619

Original Sokos Hotel Royal in Vaasa offers a fully renovated city-like hotel experience with rooftop sauna views, dynamic social spaces and seamless access to urban life, shopping and entertainment. The Conference dinner is served at the same premises.

Room rates:

- Single room: €116 per night
- Double room: €136 per night

Book online:

<https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/hotels/vaasa/original-sokos-hotel-royal-vaasa>

Use the code BNATURE by 22 November 2025.

- Note: 50% of the room quota will be released on 11 November, so early booking is recommended.
- Reservations must be confirmed with a credit card or paid at the time of booking.
- The last date for free cancellation of a reservation is 7 days before the arrival date. Booking via the hotel's website is recommended.

Booking deadline: 22 November 2025. Discount rates are not available for bookings made after 22 November, when the best available daily rate will be offered for new reservations.

Hotel Astor

- Asemakatu 4, 65100 Vaasa
- astor@astorvaasa.fi
- + 358 (0)6 3269 111

Charming Hotel Astor in central Vaasa offers a unique, high-standard stay in individually decorated rooms. Guests enjoy locally sourced breakfast and brunch in a Gustavian-style dining room, with homemade pastries and a peaceful atmosphere at this family-run hotel. Hotel Astor is only about 100 meters away from the place where the Conference dinner is served.

Room rates:

- Single room: €119 per night
- Double room: €131 per night

Book directly with the hotel:

- Phone: +358 6 326 9111
- Email: astor@astorvaasa.fi

Use the code BNATURE by 11 November 2025.

- Payment is made directly to the hotel.
- You can find more information about Hotel Astor on their official website: [Hotel Astor](https://www.astorvaasa.fi).

Booking deadline: 11 November 2025. Discount rates and the offer are valid until 11 November 2025. Early reservation is recommended by contacting the hotel directly.

More information about accommodation, travelling, dinner and site visits:

Vaiva.Stanisauskaite@uwasa.fi (in English) and Miia-Maria.Kuusisto@uwasa.fi (in Finnish)