



INSPECT Final seminar 21.9.2022

**Presentation: Finvasive (VieKas) LIFE-project and
Soolotalkoot - IAS campaign**

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Finvasive-LIFE (LIFE17 NAT/FI/000528)

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation FANC (SLL)

- Founded 1938
- 30 000+ members and growing
- 160+ local associations and 15 regional organisations, Nature League of Finland is part of FANC association
- Advocate for nature conservation and environmental affairs from grassroots level to EU/international forums.
- Diverse local action and strong headquarters office (Helsinki) support one another
- Publications: Luonnonsuojelija (membership newspaper)

Suomen luonto (magazine)





Finvasive LIFE + -project

- The largest, most ambitious – and the most humble – IAS awareness building project in Finland
- Focus on IAS plant species, especially EU IAS species *Impatiens glandulifera*, *Heracleum persicum* –group and *Lysichiton americanus*.
- Coordinated by FANC (Finnish Association For Nature Conservation)
- Total budget 2,47 mil €, of which 60% funded by EU Life -programme
- Project duration 5,5 years (2018–2023)

webpage: www.sll.fi/viekas-life (FI/SE/ENG)





Finvasive LIFE – project goals

- 1. Reduce the unintentional spread** of IAS through communication and education efforts.
- 2. Actively promote and build volunteer citizen science** activities as a resource to control IAS in Finland.
- 3. Organise IAS school visits** where pupils receive information on IAS, their impact and on ways to participate in IAS work
- 4. Construct a "tool box" with cost-effective IAS solutions** for municipalities to help them successfully manage IAS in their region.
- 5. Research and develop environmentally friendly IAS control methods** as an alternative to synthetic herbicides.
- 6. Remove from the wild significant amount of EU-list IAS invasive Hogweeds and Himalayan balsam** and a % of all known **Yellow skunk cabbage** sites in Finland.



Finvasive LIFE Partner Actions

FANC (Finnish Association For Nature

Controlling focus IAS plant species

- 60–80 IAS info events or Himalayan balsam weeding events (total of 50 sites) organised yearly by 4 regional coordinators. 2021 total 733 volunteer work hours (= 5 months of work)
- Invasive Hogweed (2 x *Heracleum* species) controlled in Southwest Finland (\approx 270 sites) by two semi-pro teams of 2 seasonal workers. Only mechanical work, no herbicides in use. 2021 15,6 ha *Heracleum* sites controlled
- Eradication of American Skunk Cabbage by project staff on 5 sites (total number of sites estimated about 30 in Finland).
- Also monitoring the success of IAS control and volunteer citizen actions





Finvasive LIFE Partner Actions

FANC (Finnish Association for Nature Conservation)

Helping stakeholders, communication & awareness building

- Workshops and questionnaire to municipalities ->> Finvasive is developing IAS "toolbox" for Finnish municipalities (guide and tips for surveying, controlling and preventing spread of IAS, communication, awareness building, waste management...)
- IAS course package for second level vocational students, eg. future gardeners & green infrastructure professionals
- Traditional and social media communication efforts
 - Press releases, library exhibition, lectures and other presentations, guide material for gardeners



Finvasive LIFE Partner Actions

Natural History Museum (Luonnontieteellinen keskusmuseo)

- Project IAS portal → 2021 moved to Finnish IAS portal www.vieraslajit.fi
- Finvasive IAS reporting tool (form) for smartphones
- Imported iNaturalist -application to Finland – good and fun tool to use in IAS reporting

Martha organisation, NGO (Martat, home economics guidance)

- Local associations have nation-wide coverage
- IAS education of Garden Martha → IAS guidance to Martha members
- IAS lectures, communication efforts, online chat guidance and online course aimed for home gardeners

The Finnish Nature League (Luonto-Liitto)

- IAS school visitors (grades 7–9 and second level vocational schools)
- Visit contains a lecture + group activities, 90 min visits
- Goal is to reach 7 000 students by end of project.



Finvasive LIFE Partner Actions

Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)

- Research & Development: effective control methods for plant IAS – as a viable alternative for eg. glyphosate-based herbicides
- Have had some success with biodegradable peat-based mulch infused with wood pyrolysis liquids against *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.
- Produced also several awareness building videos on IAS identification and control methods
- Recently (September 2022) published a guide on IAS control methods: <https://jukuri.luke.fi/handle/10024/552236>

City of Jyväskylä

- Testing control of Himalayan balsam with sheep grazing
- Also Himalayan balsam weeding events for local volunteers

City of Riihimäki

- Team of local long-term unemployed control Himalayan balsam with trimmers
- Also Himalayan balsam weeding events for local volunteers



Case: Soolotalkoot -pilot campaign 2021

The premise/problem: people are interested in combating IAS species in their area, but are unable to attend organised weeding events (unsuitable location or time, even fear of Covid-infection)

The solution: invite people to do IAS reporting and weeding solo or in small groups in the place and time of their choosing. Landowners permission needed.

Municipalities were invited to choose IAS control sites from their area and communicate locally and regionally the locations, what control methods to use and how to handle the IAS waste.

Work is independently but also as a part of Soolotalkoot-community (dedicated Facebook-group + iNaturalist-project page).

Tools: iNaturalist-application, Campaign web page + tradit. & social media platforms





Kiitos osallistumisesta
soolotalkoiin
Suomen luonnon
monimuotoisuuden
puolesta!

Onneksi olkoon, olet löytänyt soolotalkoiden jättipalsamin kitkentäpaikalle

Jättipalsami on haitallinen vieraskasvilaji.
Voit osallistua kasvin torjuntaan kitkemällä
sen maasta juurineen. Tärkeintä on estää
uusien siementen syntyminen.



Ilmoittautuminen ja torjuntaohjeet:
vieraslajit.fi > soolotalkoot

DIAS
KARELIA

CBC // Yhteistyöhanke



Eturajien arvioinnin, Suomen ja
Venäjän rahoittama hanke

VieKas
LIFE



Luke
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LUONNONVARAINKASVUS

Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto

Case: Soolotalkoot -pilot campaign 2021

The results: iNaturalist used as the reporting tool for IAS sightings and weeding effort data -> about 220 users (from 70 municipalities) registered as users and submitted sightings and info of their IAS control work .

Municipalities were invited to choose IAS sites as easy examples for locals to try out weeding. -> 31 (out of 309) municipalities attended with over a 100 preselected sites.

Results: nearly 5 ha area of IAS sites were controlled, mostly Himalayan balsam, Garden lupine, Spanish slug and Rugosa rose.

- Over 440 members joined to Soolotalkoot Facebook group.
- 100 % attendees (!) (feedback survey) told us they would like to continue.



SOOLOTALKOOT-campaign: Lessons learned

- ❖ Soolotalkoot came about as a collaboration between a handful of IAS experts – work done *in addition to own work*
 - If Soolotalkoot were to grow bigger and more established – more municipalities and NGOs as long-term partners

- ❖ Participants are more likely to just do the removal work and not report about it (reporting feels difficult or of little value. **Vital information lost!**)
 - Increase communication efforts to underline importance of reporting IAS control and species sighting information.
 - Find new ways to lower the threshold for reporting IAS information.

Why is it – crucially – important to activate citizens to take part in IAS work?

- Public acceptance and volunteer help often needed to successfully execute IAS control programs
- Building IAS awareness in the population fewer new cases of intentional and unintentional release of IAS.
- Important resource to municipalities and regional authorities to help survey and control the IAS situation.
- Essential for early detection of new (harmful) alien species – more eyes on the ground ALSO: Citizen science as a resource in IAS work
- Important as a (volunteer) resource to assist officials in rapid removal action of new IAS from the wild



Lowering the citizens' threshold to report IAS sightings

Finnish IAS Portal (www.vieraslajit.fi)

- Possible to report all IAS species sightings, without the need to register as a user & sign in

VieKas (Finvasive) smartphone-optimized reporting form: (registration as laji.fi -user)

- Link to form in IAS portals Finvasive/VieKas -page

iNaturalist -app (Android, iPhone and browser UI)

- Requires registration (iNaturalist –account)

All reported data is gathered into **laji.fi** /FinBIF database

-> **GBIF** (Global Biodiversity Information Facility)

