

# **Indicators for sustainable recreational use of forests and other natural resources– experiences from Northern Europe**

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## *Introduction*

The sustainability concept is based upon the principle that current resource uses need to be in balance so that future uses are not threatened, and that future generations have the same opportunities to use and benefit from natural resources as the present generations have. The state of balance should be known and possible to define, and when agreed upon, development and changes over time should be monitored. When monitoring is required, there is a need for efficient measures (indicators) to describe the state of sustainability, the phenomena in question and associated changes. Among nine North European countries, a project ‘Social indicators in forestry –further development in the North European context’ (SOSIN) was conducted in 2012-2013 in order to assess suitable indicators for sustainable recreational use of forests and other natural resources. The project produced a state of art report of used and proposed further development of recreation indicators, and recreation monitoring (Sievänen et al. 2013).

## *Results of reviewing state of art of recreation indicators and monitoring in North Europe*

The first topic was to report how nature-based recreation and tourism is represented in policy documents, and whether any statements exist, which support use of indicators and monitoring for the purpose of sustainable recreational use of natural resources or land use. The results show that most countries have policies for (i) sustainable forestry, (ii) preserving biodiversity, and/or (iii) sustainable tourism. Most countries were able to put forward policy documents, which are related to natural resources, tourism, land use planning or health sector, and in which nature-based recreation and/or tourism are mentioned as having a role in the sector. The most typical type of document was a national forest program or strategy. Only four countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) have a specifically focused strategy or program for outdoor recreation and/or nature-based tourism.

The second topic was to collect lists of indicators presented in official documents or in other literature such