

## Nordic Green Care co-operation

*Arja Jääskeläinen, PhD, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Services, Health and Sports,  
Lapland University of Applied Sciences*

Keywords: green care, Nordic countries, co-operation, research and development

Nature is meaningful in many ways to the people living in the north. The forests, fells, bogs and their animals are still familiar to most of the people of the north, and a part of their everyday life. Many have a strong relationship with nature, which is a source of refreshment and strength in their lives. Many trades in the northern areas of the Nordic countries are connected to the natural environment in one way or another. Especially in the north, nature is easily accessible, and services and activities relying on nature that support people's well-being are produced and developed in the tourism, agriculture and education fields as well as social and healthcare. In recent years, a need has emerged to develop especially Green Care type of services through mutual co-operation of these fields in order to leverage the competence and opportunities of the different fields effectively and in a way that benefits the customer.

Lapland University of Applied Sciences has been developing Green Care activities in a multidisciplinary fashion through several projects since 2011. At the beginning, a preliminary survey was conducted of Lapland's Green Care activities, and then the focus moved to developing trades, distributing information and Green Care rehabilitation. Current activities include mapping the development needs of Green Care businesses, supporting immigrant integration through Green Care activities, and having a strong presence on a national level in the development of uniform Green Care training and coordination of Green Care activities. In late August 2017, the ongoing projects organised a national Green Care event in co-operation with Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish Association of Landscape Industries, Green Care Finland, Levi Tourist Office and Kideve Kittilä Development. The Green Care Days provided excellent opportunities for networking across business sectors, organisations and even national borders.

In Norway and Sweden, Green Care activities are mainly organised at farms and gardens. The customers are people in need of support for reasons related to mental health and stress symptoms. Norway's Green Care activities are called "Inn på tunet" or "In the farmyard", and Sweden's activities are referred to as "Grön Omsorg" ("Green Care") or "Grön Rehabilitering" ("Green Rehabilitation"). The Green Care concept used in Finland covers a wide range of nature-based activities from rehabilitation to tourism.

The Nordic Green Care co-operation is just beginning. In recent years, several Finnish projects have organised study trips to other Nordic countries with the aim of exploring their Green Care activities, which are more established and long-standing than the activities in Finland. The Nordic researcher network has been active for a few years. Through study trips and participation in Green Care events in other countries, connections have been made with higher education institutions, research institutes and Green Care entrepreneurs in Sweden and Norway in particular.

Recently, it has been considered necessary to achieve closer co-operation, especially in Sweden, Norway and Finland, and learn from each other regarding the practices of activities relying on nature and research on the subject. The entrepreneurs are interested in the challenges and opportunities of Green Care entrepreneurship in different countries as well as gaining new ideas and information. The research institutes are especially interested in research connected to Green Care activities and how research could support actors and services in practice. Project and teaching personnel from the natural resources and wellness sector of Lapland University of Applied Sciences are currently involved in planning and organising project activities to support Nordic co-operation with Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian partners.

In late November 2017, the Nordic Green Care researcher network project coordinated by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences will organise the first Nordic conference in Green Care and nature-based interventions in Kristiansand in Southern Norway. The main aim of the conference is to consider especially the quality of research and how to collaborate in ways that enable high-quality research to support nature-based health promotion as well as the rehabilitation of the participants. Staff of Lapland University of Applied Sciences will attend the conference with the aim of strengthening international co-operation through networking and gaining the latest information in the Green Care sector.