

# Open access of the proficiency test reports – useful or not?

Prof test SYKE and its predecessors have been publishing the reports of the proficiency tests (PT) in different public report series of the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) and its preceding organizations since early 1990s. Nowadays the reports are available via both the Digital Repository of the University of Helsinki (HELDA, [helda.helsinki.fi](http://helda.helsinki.fi)) and the Prof test SYKE homepage ([www.syke.fi/proftest/en](http://www.syke.fi/proftest/en)).

The publicly available reports are found to be important not only for the participants of the PTs but for a much wider audience. Different authorities responsible of e.g. monitoring data on the area of environmental health, accreditation bodies and various researchers exploit the open access of the reports.

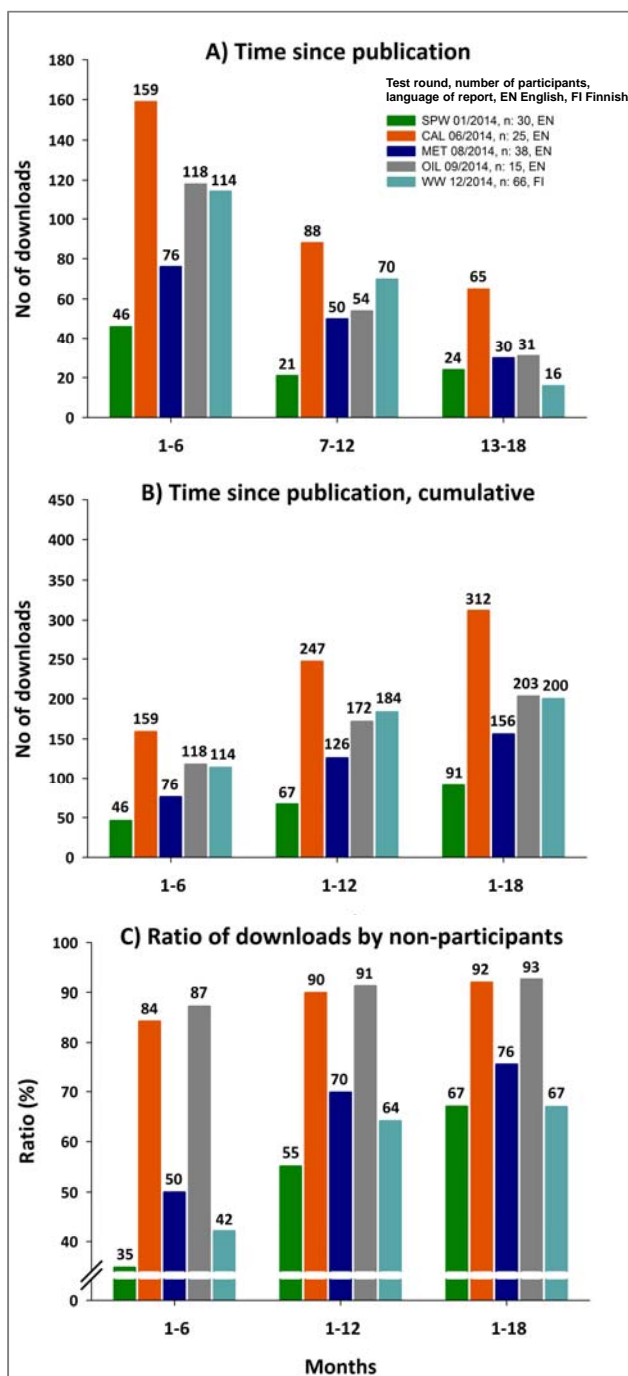
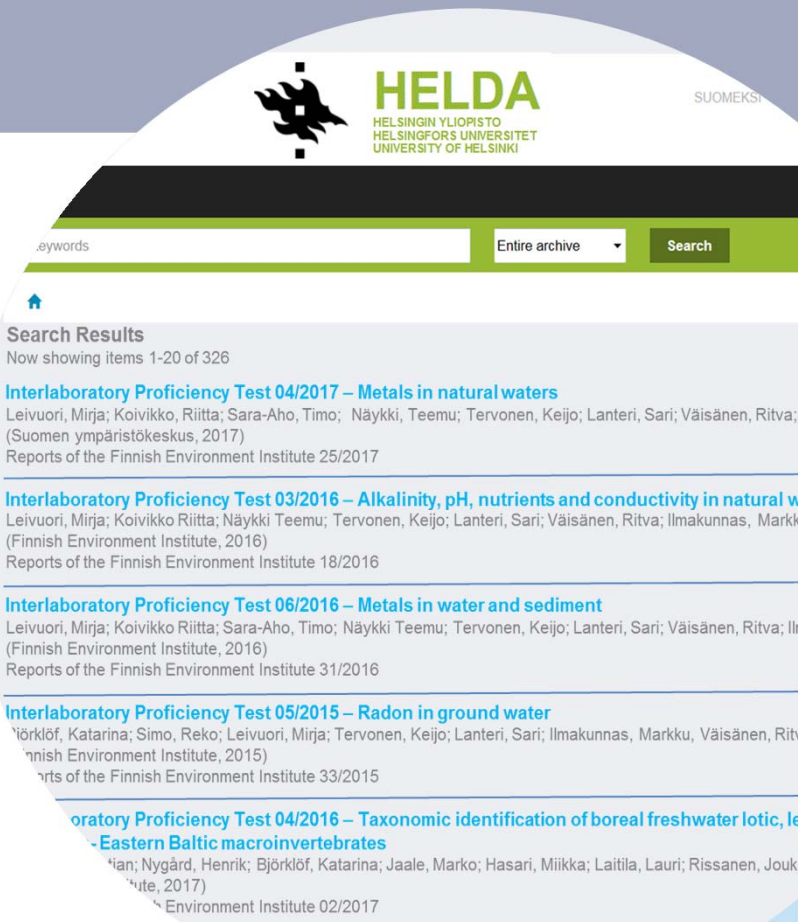


Fig. 1. Number of downloads since publication of selected reports of PTs for 6 months periods from HELDA (A, B) and share of downloads by non-participants (C) in 2014.

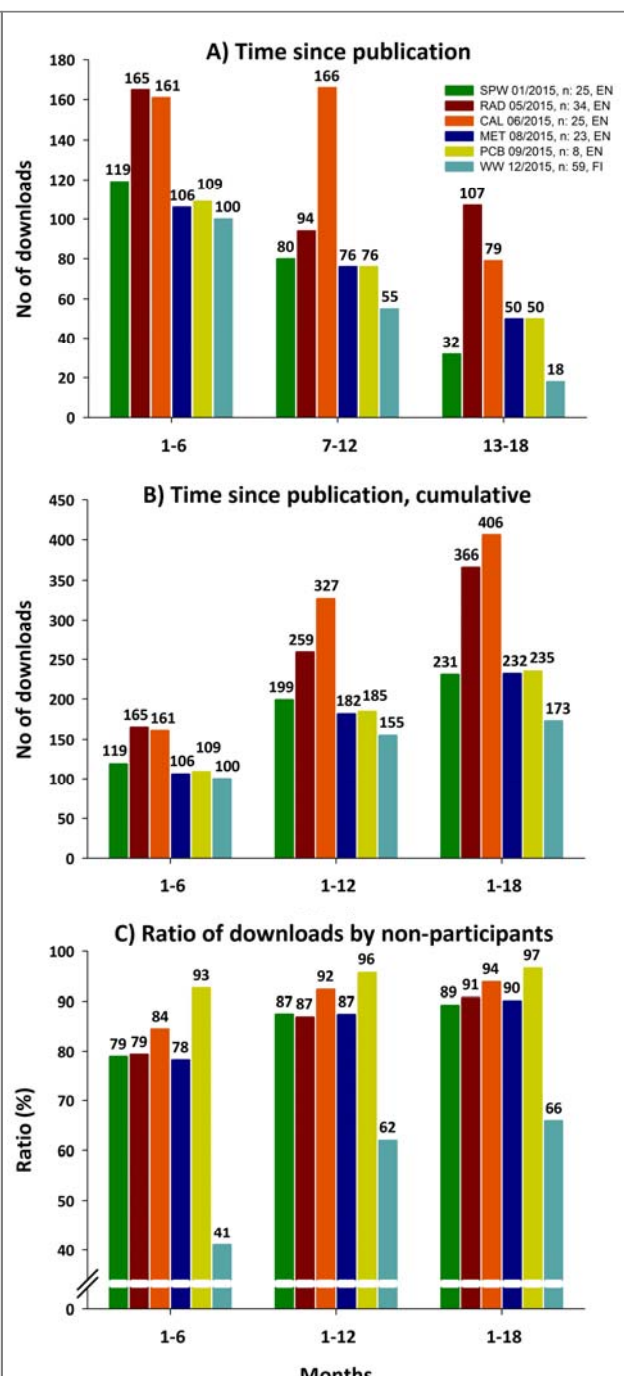


Fig. 2. Number of downloads since publication of selected reports of PTs for 6 months periods from HELDA (A, B) and share of downloads by non-participants (C) in 2015.

Calorific value, CAL, in fuels; Waste water, WW, measurements; Radon, RAD, in ground water; Swimming pool water, SPW, measurements, PCB compounds in soil; Metals, MET, in waters and solid matter; Oil hydrocarbons, OIL, in water and soil

## OBSERVATIONS

- The reports are downloaded mostly during the first six months after the publication, but for some reports (e.g. CAL) the number of downloads remain high over one-and-half years (Figs. 1A, 2A).
- The cumulative numbers of downloads indicate the high use of the reports over the first one-and-half years after publication (e.g. RAD and CAL, Figs. 1B, 2B).
- The reports are downloaded much wider than solely by the participants; in general 35-97 % of the downloads could be estimated to be done by non-participants (Figs. 1C, 2C).
- This is noted especially in the PTs with low number of participants, where the reports are downloaded nearly tenfold, even twentyfold compared to the number of participants (e.g. CAL, OIL, PCB, Figs 1, 2).
- The international usefulness of the published reports is observed as the reports published in English are downloaded more widely than those published in Finnish (e.g. WW, Figs 1, 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

- The open access of the PT reports is highly supported as the reports are evidently used much wider than only by the participants, indicating the high impact of the information.
- The download information is noticed to be useful both for long term monitoring of the impact of the report as well as for short term impact monitoring when e.g. novel PTs are provided.
- The open access of PT reports:
  - Enables quick overview of the participants' performances on the tested analytical field
  - Validation of specific participant performance by downstream users. This, evidently, only after the participation code has been requested from the participant.