



## **Real World Learning Network**

Progress

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

The Real World Learning Network has been established to explore and share successful approaches to Real World Learning through the outdoor classroom that leads to action for sustainable development. It is a consortium of seven partners from six countries across Europe. Already the membership of the network has expanded to twenty members from eleven countries.

The first 18 months of the network has focused on researching the status of outdoor learning in the partner countries and establishing the terms of reference for the four Working groups. The status report into outdoor learning found that there is a wide variety in the quality and quantity of provision for outdoor science. In some partner countries there is a strong tradition of outdoor science whereas in other countries it is weak or largely absent. In some countries science is delivered as part of wider education for sustainable development programmes, whereas in others science is taught outdoors as a standalone subject. Two issues came out clearly from the status reports: assessment of outdoor learning is weak or non-existent in many countries and the consideration of career competencies does not really exist. The Real World Learning Network will seek to redress this.

Based on the country status reports, the terms of reference for each Working Group have been established. These reflect the needs identified in the country status reports. Each of the Working Groups have met once and are now conducting research and consultations with outdoor learning providers and educators.

The first Real World Learning Network Conference successfully took place in the Czech Republic. Fifty-six people gathered from ten countries to explore effective approaches to outdoor learning. Participants took part in workshops around the two key conference themes of: developing competencies for sustainable change; and understanding fundamental concepts of science and sustainability through outdoor learning. Keynote speakers added external views to challenge and inspire, and also to raise key questions during the workshop sessions. The workshops were delivered by the Real World Learning Network Working Groups on Science and on Green Careers.

Overall the Network has made a successful start in defining its parameters, researching the subject and starting to engage with the outdoor learning community. In the second half of the project the partners will have to work hard to engage widely with the outdoor learning community to ensure the Network results have credibility and are widely accepted.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The overall aim of the network is to explore and share successful approaches to Real World Learning through the outdoor classroom that leads to action for sustainable development. The network is investigating different approaches to outdoor learning across Europe, understanding why they are effective and how they can be shared with others. The network has a particular focus on how outdoor science contributes to sustainability. The network is providing support for organisations delivering outdoor learning through discussion groups, research, news and events.

Seven outdoor learning providers from six countries have come together to start the network, however, we hope it will grow many times over the coming years. The Real World Learning Network is providing opportunities for organisations and practitioners to explore and share how outdoor learning is delivered and what makes it effective.

We are:

- Reviewing good practice across Europe.
- Developing criteria for successful learning outside the classroom.
- Providing model lessons and case studies that promote a first-hand experience of the natural world linked to action for sustainable development.
- Exploring how to ensure science appeals to a wide cross-section of learners, especially addressing the gender imbalance.
- Exploring how outdoor learning promotes competencies for the green economy.
- Providing easy access to information, knowledge, expertise, guidance and resources.
- Develop a network of good practice amongst educators to continually share ideas and resources.
- Increasing the profile of outdoor sciences across the partner countries and the EU.

As a result of the RWL Network we have planned that:

- More education organisations throughout the EU with access to a range of approaches to outdoor learning that promotes a first-hand experience of sustainable development.
- Resources with clear links between school based learning and the key skills to build a green economy.
- Shared pedagogical approaches to the teaching of sustainable development linked to developing key competencies for employment.
- Shared criteria for delivering high quality outdoor learning.
- Enhanced access to high quality and targeted information for practitioners.
- Increased sharing of good practice between teachers, schools and education organisations.
- Increased understanding of the benefits of Real World Learning to the development of the EU economy.
- More effective advocacy to national governments to improve provision and standards in Real World Learning.

## 2. Project Approach

Our project approach seeks to explore key issues in outdoor science and engage outdoor learning providers in rethinking what successful outdoor learning looks like and how it can be delivered. The proposed duration of the project is 36 months. The project is divided into three phases: 1) set up and development, 2) implementation 3) evaluation, wrap-up and sustainability.

The project approach is one of common ownership and shared responsibility. Considerable time was spent at the beginning of the project to define and confirm the goals of the project and ensure they have benefits for the partners involved and the wider outdoor education sector.

Establishing a clear purpose for the network from the start was a challenge given the diverse nature of the partners and diverse views on what outdoor learning is. The partners spent considerable time discussing that networks, unlike traditional projects, carry a higher level of risk. They are not focused around the development of a single agreed product; they depend on the cooperation of all partners to share their ideas and opinions. As such they can be less controllable in a traditional management sense, and less certain in their direction. Having confidence in the process a network agrees to, and the uncertainty that brings, is challenging.

We reviewed the different types of network and debated what goals we had for the RWL Network. The different types of network are:

- The Debate Function – provide a common platform, forum or reference point for discussion, reflection, policy and research.
- The Dissemination Function – disseminate information and best practice generated by the partners.
- The Research Function – provide an overview of the network topic through comparative analysis and contribute to shared development.
- The Forecast Function – identify present, emergent and future needs.
- The Advocacy Function – promote the implementation of innovative results, insights and best practices.
- The Support Function – assist in the networking of projects which are related to the theme of the network.

It was agreed that the main functions of the RWL Network is to promote the debate, dissemination and research functions. Through these three functions we aim to forecast future changes and trends in outdoor learning. It is hoped that where appropriate this will lead to advocacy. It was noted that the advocacy function should be part of the Exploitation Plan.

The RWL Network will create opportunities for partners to share and discuss relevant ideas, engage in debate and learn from others. We will publish recommendations and good practice case studies. Through this we will develop our understanding of outdoor learning, and hopefully meet the needs of our own organisations and others to deliver high quality outdoor learning.

Project management and delivery is supported by face-to-face meetings between Country Co-ordinators and Working Group meetings. The RWL Conferences are used as additional opportunities to meet. The project uses Huddle project management software to keep track of tasks, work plans and files. In addition, some of the Working Groups are using Google Drive to enable real-time working on shared documents. Within the financial restrictions of the project it is not possible, nor

environmentally desirable, to have frequent face-to-face meetings. The Working Groups are making active use of Skype to meet online and discuss progress.

### **Stage 1 - Set up and development**

Project partners met in January 2012 to clarify the aims of the project, analyse the project environment, confirm project roles and responsibilities, and plan the initial baseline research.

The project uses the term Real World Learning, considerable time was spent reflecting on what the term means within each country. Partners brainstormed RWL concepts and grouped these into themes. There was considerable discussion on what could be included as RWL – a very broad term – and what needs to be included in the project to create clear boundaries and ensure project delivery is realistic. Concepts encompassed by RWL include:

- The importance of connecting learner and location.
- RWL should be solution orientated, addressing the urgency of environmental problems.
- Behaviour change is a key goal.
- There is a focus on science and the outdoors.
- Developing competencies matter.
- Outdoor learning helps understand systems and connections between learners and their world.
- Aiming for a high quality of learning experience.
- RWL addresses the natural and human influenced world.
- RWL addresses economics and livelihood.
- RWL addresses future and sustainability.

There was strong agreement that RWL needs to connect the location and learning through hands-on learning that connects to the learners own experience. Rather than discrete themes, patterns emerged as to what constitutes good RWL which are being explored further in the Working Groups. There was also a discussion about the focus of outdoor learning being solution based, creating a sense of urgency in relation to the scale of environmental problems we face. Finally, there was a discussion about outdoor learning having a distinct goal of behaviour change in the target groups (and the providers?).

There was some discussion on the definition of the term science. It was agreed to use the EU definition of science taken from 'Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning' (EU 2006) as follows:

*Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in science involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.*

### **Carrying out Country Status Reports**

Partners planned and carried out country status research amongst outdoor learning providers. The research was based on a series of driving questions as follows:

- Are there quality criteria for success and assessment for learning in each partner country? If yes – what?
- How can outdoor learning contribute to science and sustainability?
- What are the pedagogical approaches to outdoor learning in each partner country?
- Are there career competencies for 'green' careers? Can RWL contribute to them?

The research was carried out through a series of questionnaires, interviews and desk-top research.

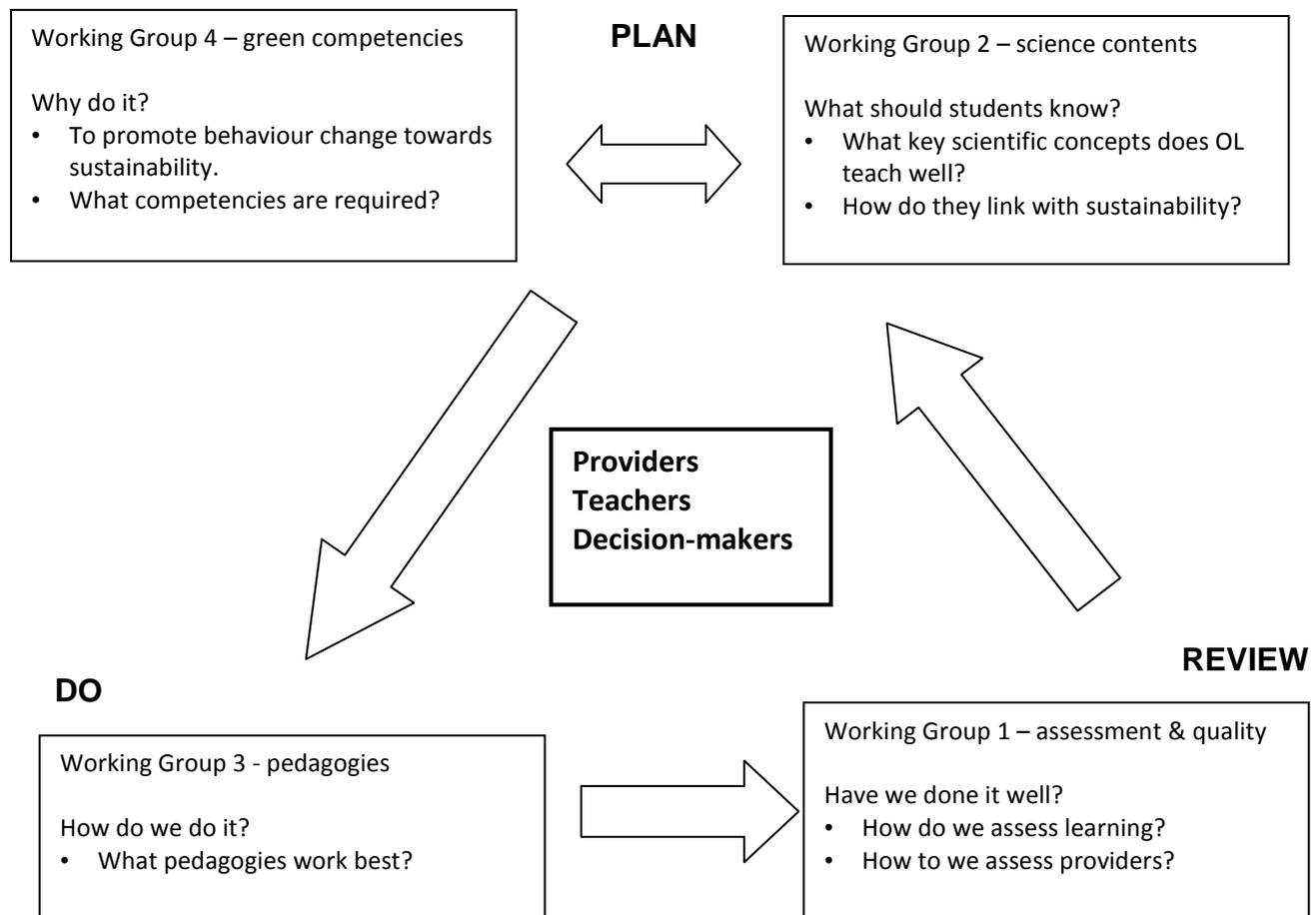
### *Defining Terms of Reference for Working Groups*

Following on from the baseline research, the partners met to define the Terms of Reference for the working groups. This was done during a project meeting in Germany in July, 2012. The role of the WGs is to provide a forum for discussion, debate and research about key issues in outdoor learning, as a result of which the network will produce recommendations and guidelines for others. The recommendations and guidelines will be illustrated with good practice case studies.

In establishing the Terms of Reference for the working groups, partners reviewed the original proposal and reviewed the terms of reference against key questions:

- Do they have European value?
- Are they unique?
- Do the WGs investigate relevant topics: for providers, teachers and decision-makers?
- Can the WGs make a difference?
- Are the WGs interlinked? Supporting and building each other's work?
- Do they futurize? (provide results for now and the future).

Using the results from the baseline research and ideas from partners provided pre-meeting, we developed guiding questions, tasks and deliverables for each WG. In developing the details for each WG, synergies between each WG became clear and are shown in the diagram below.



It was agreed that WG4 and WG2 need to start their work before WG3 and WG1 can start theirs. In simple terms, WG4 and WG2 are the planning phase for outdoor learning in that they explore why it is important, and what are the competences and content. WG3 is the doing phase where learning is delivered, and WG1 is the review phase.

### *Project Website*

The project website provides a focal point for all project activities. It is a public space to share and disseminate results, also providing private working spaces for the working groups.

### **Stage 2 - Implementation**

Four working groups have been established as described above. Each working group will meet twice during the project and have one RWL conference dedicated to their themes. Each working group uses Huddle, Skype and Google Drive to continue working between meetings.

The working groups act as representatives for outdoor learning providers, whilst at the same time consulting with external partners and encouraging wide debate and discussion.

This phase is ongoing.

### **Stage 3 – Evaluation, wrap-up and sustainability**

#### *Dissemination & Exploitation*

Dissemination work has commenced with partners actively promoting project activities through their own networks and events. Exploitation events will commence in the final year of the project.

The partner's dissemination plans are based on the table below.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Information</b>
Target groups / beneficiaries	Which groups are you aiming to reach? Why? What will they gain? How will they benefit?
Opportunities	What opportunities are there to reach your target groups (new and existing)? What should be disseminated/exploited and to whom (hard and soft outcomes)?
Tools/methods	What is the best way to reach and influence your target groups? How will you do this?
Actions & timetable	How will you reach your target groups? When? What will you need to do to be successful?
Resources	What resources will you need to achieve this? (people, travel, etc)
Measuring success	How will you know if you have been successful?

#### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Monitoring is through the Country Coordinator meeting and 6-monthly reports to the Project Manager. All project documents and tasks are shared on Huddle so progress can be assessed on a regular basis. An evaluation plan has been developed (see below).

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

<i>Level</i>	<i>Subjects and questions</i>	<i>Results M&amp;E, example indicator</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Input Societal context and issues; the means	Current trends in sustainable development such as climate change, biodiversity loss, renewable energy and green jobs whilst improving are not changing fast enough to prevent huge environmental problems affecting lives across Europe. There is a clear need to share new approaches to addressing sustainable development.	-	-	-
Throughput Processes	Project activities, cooperation between partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do project team members co-create a common vision?</li> <li>▪ How do project team members deal with identified challenges?</li> <li>▪ Are project team members inspired and challenged?</li> </ul>	<b>Result:</b> Description how project team members deal with identified challenges.	Review at Partner Meetings.  Review at Working Group meetings and CoCo meetings through common checklist	Richard WG Coordinators
Output Deliverables : the products and direct effects of the project	<b>Quality indicators:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A wide range of quality criteria are available?</li> <li>▪ A narrow set of quality criteria are agreed?</li> <li>▪ New partners are interested in implementing quality criteria?</li> <li>▪ A European-wide system for quality accreditation for outdoor learning providers.</li> </ul>	<b>Overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ List of criteria agreed.</li> <li>▪ Enquiries from new partners to use criteria.</li> <li>▪ Agreed European system (additional result not part of project).</li> </ul>	List of criteria available – wide and narrow.  Evidence of interest from new partners – keep lists of distribution, etc.  Debate on WG forum  European accreditation system (additional result not part of	WG1 – supported by Country Coordinators.

			project).	
	<p><b>Science and sustainability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are key science concepts identified?</li> <li>▪ Has the relationship between science and sustainability been made?</li> <li>▪ Are there guidelines to integrate science into outdoor learning?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance for schools and outdoor centres on integrating science into outdoor learning.</li> <li>▪ Framework of key science concepts that underpin sustainability.</li> <li>▪ Case studies</li> </ul>	<p>Documents available on project website.</p> <p>Debate on WG forum</p> <p>Evaluation from educators</p>	<p>WG2 – supported by Country Coordinators.</p>
	<p><b>Pedagogy, outdoor learning and behavioural change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have effective pedagogies been identified?</li> <li>▪ Do they support content (WG2) and competencies (WG4)?</li> <li>▪ Has assessment been considered?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of pedagogies.</li> <li>▪ Recommended pedagogies and framework for selection, including reasoning behind choices.</li> <li>▪ Case studies</li> </ul>	<p>Documents available on project website</p> <p>Debate on WG forum</p> <p>Evaluation from educators</p>	<p>WG3 – supported by Country Coordinators.</p>
	<p><b>Competencies for a green economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What models work?</li> <li>▪ How does outdoor learning link with careers?</li> <li>▪ Which competencies are best supported through outdoor learning?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of available models, recommendation for outdoor learning.</li> <li>▪ List of recommended competencies for outdoor learning linked to green careers.</li> <li>▪ Case studies</li> </ul>	<p>Documents available on project website</p> <p>Debate on WG forum</p> <p>Evaluation from educators</p>	<p>WG4 – supported by Country Coordinators.</p>
	<p><b>Align outdoor learning with ESD</b></p>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Synopsis/diagram of competencies of outdoor learning and ESD.</li> </ul>	<p>Synopsis made available.</p> <p>Synopsis peer reviewed.</p>	<p>Thorsten/Angelika (Germany requested this)</p>
	<p><b>Do partners use the materials we produce?</b></p>	<p><b>Result:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partners use materials produced e.g. case studies, good practice recommendations.</li> <li>▪ Seminars, conferences, events presenting and discussing materials.</li> <li>▪ Downloads from the website.</li> <li>▪ Number of comments, resource ratings, user feedback.</li> <li>▪ Number of users using results.</li> </ul>	<p>Questionnaires.</p> <p>User feedback.</p> <p>Website statistics.</p>	<p>CoCo’s supported by WGs.</p>

	<p><b>Network and partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Part of an alive network connecting outdoor learning providers.</li> <li>▪ Partners working together.</li> <li>▪ New partners joining.</li> <li>▪ Support available for network members.</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to share resources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of partners in each country.</li> <li>▪ New ideas and partnerships generated.</li> <li>▪ Ideas shared on website.</li> <li>▪ News, events and case studies promoted to support partners/network members.</li> </ul>	<p>Lists of partners.</p> <p>Active discussion forums, news, events and case studies.</p> <p>New project ideas.</p>	<p>CoCo's and Richard supported by WGs.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes</b> Short term results of the output</p>	<p><b>Change of behaviour of individual teachers/OLC staff:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are learners/providers doing something different?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment of learning outcomes and learning objectives which are related to sustainable thinking and action.</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Career competencies</li> <li>▪ Etc related to WG aims.</li> </ul>	<p>Learning observation leading to a report.</p> <p>Questionnaire/interview w How many people? – questionnaire to all people involved in project; interviews sufficient to get consistent results.</p>	<p>CoCo's and Richard supported by WGs.</p>
	<p><b>Raise awareness of outdoor learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Raise awareness of the purpose of outdoor learning and make it real.</li> <li>▪ Awareness of connection between science, outdoor learning, careers, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of articles in specialist press.</li> <li>▪ Distribution of leaflets, posters, exhibitions, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>List of dissemination results.</p>	<p>CoCo's and Richard supported by WGs.</p>
	<p><b>Improved understanding of what good outdoor learning looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear idea on what good outdoor learning is.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quality criteria are used.</li> </ul>	<p>Questionnaires and interviews with providers (network members)</p>	<p>CoCo's supported by WGs.</p>
<p><b>Impact</b> Results on the long term,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have conditions for impact been created?</li> <li>▪ Will project partners continue their cooperation?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results:</b> Example indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Other teachers, countries are enthusiastic and want to teach RWL: phone calls, questions.</li> </ul>		<p>Final meeting</p>

<b>related to societal issue which is addressed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Are there indicators that the results contribute to the societal issue at stake?</b></li><li>▪ <b>Are there indicators that the results contribute to a societal change</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Social media attention continues or grows.</b></li><li>▪ <b>New projects</b></li><li>▪ <b>To see more students outside and less in the classroom</b></li></ul>		
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### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The Real World Learning Network has been actively working with outdoor learning providers across Europe. Although the project is only at its half way stage, significant results have already been achieved.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Contribution of Activities to Date</b>
Review good practice across Europe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country status reports produced.</li> <li>• Working Groups starting to collect good practice examples.</li> </ul>
Develop criteria for successful learning outside the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four Working Groups established with Terms of Reference for each.</li> <li>• WG 1 exploring success criteria met and reviewing appropriate criteria.</li> </ul>
Provide model lessons and case studies that promote a first-hand experience of the natural world linked to action for sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Groups developing template to collect case studies.</li> <li>• Online case studies area created on RWL website.</li> </ul>
Explore how to ensure science appeals to a wide cross-section of learners, especially addressing the gender imbalance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not yet addressed.</li> </ul>
Explore how outdoor learning promotes competencies for the green economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of values in developing green competencies explored at RWL Conference in Czech Republic.</li> <li>• Survey of green competency models in Europe completed.</li> <li>• Draft short list of green competencies developed and reviewed by experts.</li> </ul>
Provide easy access to information, knowledge, expertise, guidance and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RWL website and facebook page created.</li> <li>• Partner websites promoting project in each country.</li> </ul>
Develop a network of good practice amongst educators to continually share ideas and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners developing links with influencers.</li> <li>• Twelve new organisations joined network.</li> </ul>
Increase the profile of outdoor sciences across the partner countries and the EU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First RWL conference attracted 56 participants and 70 people applied to attend second conference.</li> <li>• Promotional materials received by 33,028 people/organisations across Europe.</li> <li>• RWL Network to present at the World Environmental Education Congress in June.</li> </ul>

## Country Status Reports

The aim of country reports (status reports) was to examine the current provision of outdoor science and sustainable development in each partner country. They focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to outdoor learning. The research was carried out on the basis of guidelines agreed between all partner countries, co-ordinated by the Czech Republic. The research involved SWOT interviews with selected educators to establish support needs as well as desk research into recent outdoor science and sustainable development learning. The research took approximately three months, including the preparation of country reports. The research focused on four areas: use and assessment of quality criteria in outdoor learning, the relationship between outdoor learning and sustainability, pedagogical approaches to outdoor learning, and the situation concerning the development of career and green skills. The results are summarised below

- Outdoor education is widely provided in the United Kingdom and Germany (very heterogeneous), less in Slovenia (although supported by government), the Czech Republic and Hungary and almost not at all in Italy.
- The experience with outdoor education in the countries reflects the situation of existing/non-existing quality criteria for outdoor learning and its assessment. There is an existing and highly recognised system in the United Kingdom (though it was mentioned that there is a need to work on the assessment of learning in a holistic and accessible way). In Germany there are more heterogeneous lists of criteria and methods of assessment, some in the process of preparation. In the Czech Republic there are some existing criteria lists for whole environmental education and some forms of assessment. In Hungary and Slovenia there are not any commonly known and shared criteria for outdoor education, although there are some forms of evaluation. In Italy the process of using criteria for the assessment of the teaching of environmental education has just started. All countries believe in the importance of a useful quality criteria system and form of assessment, although some are afraid of the obstacles involved in the creation of a good set of widely accepted criteria.
- There was agreement among all the countries that there is a strict relationship between outdoor learning and sustainability. According to the UK, more work needs to be done to integrate big scientific issues and concepts such as climate change and ecosystem services, and also to show how outdoor science can link with national and international issues of current importance and how outdoor learning can support social change.
- There are various pedagogical approaches to outdoor learning in all the countries, including for example wilderness education (in National Parks and Free Wilderness Schools) and forest education in Germany. We believe that it would be beneficial to share examples of good practice from individual countries during the project.
- In the majority of the countries there are no unique career and green skills lists defined (excluding Germany and United Kingdom). However, all the countries believe that such definitions are vital for their further work at environmental centres and schools.
- Shared threats concerning outdoor education are lack of funding (from parents, grants, governments etc.), lack of political support (excluding Slovenia), strict health and safety rules and a traditional approach to education. Furthermore, the Hungarian government has recently introduced a new law restricting the individual initiatives of schools and teachers. In Italy there is a crisis in the education system in general at the moment.

The full report can be downloaded from <http://www.rwlnetwork.org/news/what-should-the-network-explore.aspx>.

## Working Groups

Four working groups have been established:

1. Assessment and Quality Criteria – coordinated by ANU.
2. Science and Sustainability – coordinated by the FSC.
3. Pedagogical Approaches to Outdoor Learning – coordinated by Slunakov.
4. Developing Career Competencies – coordinated by CSOD.

### WG1 – Assessment and Quality Criteria

This WG started their work in early 2013 and held their first meeting in April 2013. They have reviewed assessment and quality criteria in each of the partner countries and clarified key definitions.

They have three key questions:

1. What quality criteria and assessment tools/processes do already exist for educational programmes, learning (including assessment of competencies for behavioural change), teaching and centres? How are they to be applied and who does it?
2. Which of these criteria and assessment tools are important for RWL/OL and strengthen its meaning in education for sustainable development (ESD)? Which of these are useful to assess competencies for behavioural change?
3. Which competencies are best or even only developed in RWL/OL and what do teachers expect from RWL-providers?

### WG2 – Science and Sustainability

This WG looks at which scientific concepts are best taught in an outdoor environment and how these concepts could be useful to support sustainable thinking and behaviours.

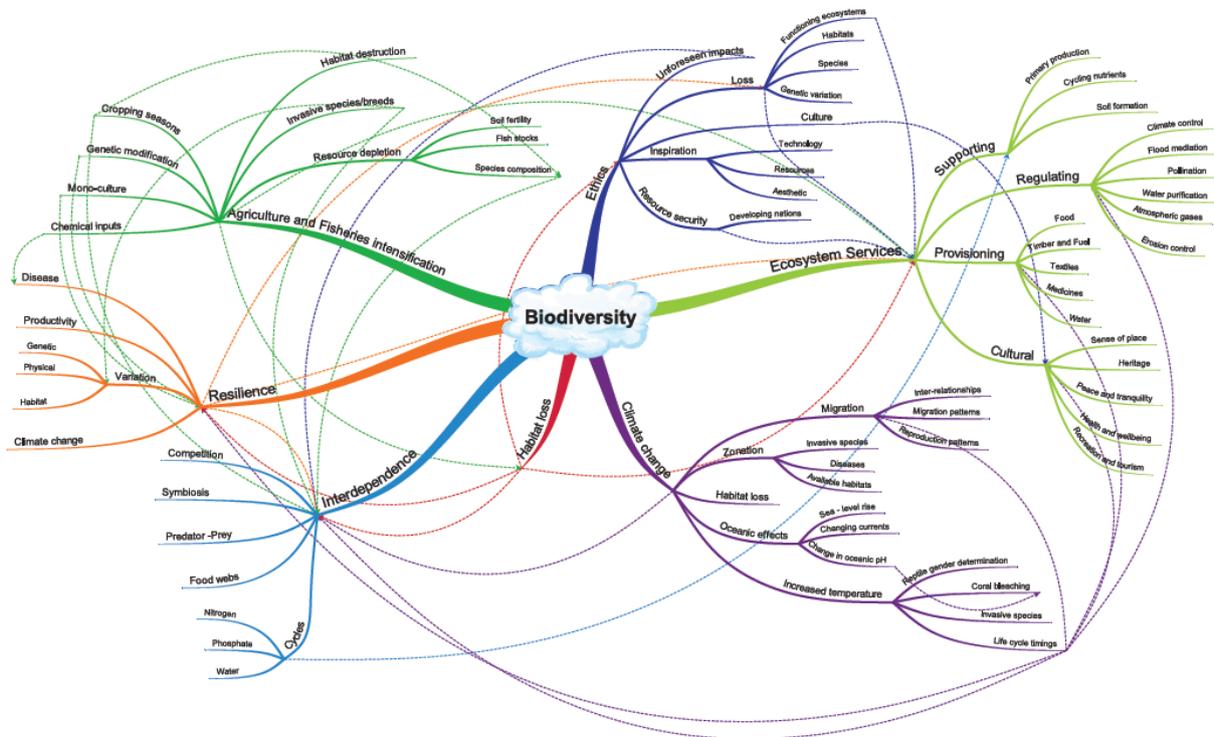
They have three key questions:

1. How could scientific concepts support sustainable thinking, behaviours and competencies?
2. What are the key scientific concepts, which if understood, would support sustainable thinking, behaviours and competencies?
3. Which of the key scientific concepts can the outdoor environment enhance the understanding of?

This WG started their working in 2012 with their first meeting in November 2012, and played a key role in the first RWL conference in the Czech Republic. They have selected key science issues that impact sustainability by reviewing relevant literature. It was decided to use the planetary boundaries identified by Johnan Rockstrom et al. 'A safe operating space for humanity' *Nature* 461, 472-475 (24 September 2009). These are:

- Climate change.
- Ozone depletion.
- Atmospheric aerosol loading.
- Ocean acidification.
- Freshwater use.
- Chemical pollution.
- Land system change.
- Biodiversity loss.
- Biogeochemical loading (nitrogen and phosphate cycles).

For each of the planetary boundaries the partners have identified the key science concepts that underpin them and need to be understood. A sample is shown below. The next step will be to agree the final mind maps which are being shared with WG3.



### WG3 – Pedagogical Approaches to Outdoor Learning

The working group 3 deals with pedagogical approaches to RWL and outdoor science with a focus on linking learning to behavioural change promoting action for sustainability. To fulfil the objectives of the project, the methods should enable the delivery of the big issues of outdoor science and sustainability (WG2) and the improve life and career competences (WG4) leading to behavioural change. Furthermore, the models of education should be analysed as well in the perspective to get to better understanding of behavioural change.

WG3 first met in April 2013. They have commenced their work by exploring different outdoor pedagogies across Europe.

### WG4 – Developing Career Competencies

This WG is exploring four key questions:

- How to identify sustainable thinking / development for all people?
- What exists already?
- What are the green career competencies for sustainable thinking?
- How can RWL help deliver the competencies for sustainable thinking?

They held their first meeting in November 2012, and played a key role in the first RWL conference in the Czech Republic. Their work has focused on reviewing lists of key competencies across Europe and producing a composite list. They are now consulting widely on this list.

### [Project Website](#)

The project website was launched in November 2012 and further developed and re-launched in April 2013. The website can be found at [www.rwlnetwork.org](http://www.rwlnetwork.org). The website will be in six languages (English, German, Czech, Italian, Slovenian and Hungarian).

The website contains:

- Information about RWL Network project and members.
- News section about outdoor learning
- Events section highlighting the RWL conferences and other major events in Europe.
- Membership area for existing members and new members to join the network.
- Working groups are where they can explore different outdoor learning themes.

The website also contains two additional areas that will grow as the project produces more results:

- Good practice case studies and model lessons subdivided by working group themes.
- A share zone to share non-project resources.

### **Facebook Site**

A facebook site has been set-up at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Real-World-Learning-Network/172915856189923>.

### **First Real World Learning Conference**

The first Real World Learning Network conference took place at Slunakov in the Czech Republic, November 2013. Fifty-six people gathered from ten countries to explore effective approaches to outdoor learning.

Outdoor learning is widespread across Europe, taking the form of science through to sensory based learning. The conference explored how to create successful outdoor learners. Through keynote speakers, workshops and forums the following questions were debated, discussed and investigated:

- What is the relationship between real world learning and sustainable development?
- What is the role of science in sustainability?
- Which competencies are necessary for a sustainable future?
- How can we make a difference?

Participants took part in workshops around the two key conference themes of: developing competencies for sustainable change; and understanding fundamental concepts of science and sustainability through outdoor learning. Keynote speakers added external views to challenge and inspire, and also to raise key questions during the workshop sessions. The workshops were delivered by the RWL Working Groups on Science and on Green Careers.

Conference participants were also encouraged to present their own workshops.

The full conference report can be found at [www.rwlnetwork.org/events/exploring-effective-approaches-to-outdoor-learning.aspx](http://www.rwlnetwork.org/events/exploring-effective-approaches-to-outdoor-learning.aspx).

### **Second Real World Learning Conference**

The second RWL conference will take place in Slovenia in November, 2013. The conference will explore how to deliver successful outdoor education. Through keynote speakers, workshops and

discussion we will explore two key areas in outdoor education: effective teaching approaches and how to assess learning. In doing so we will be asking ourselves:

- Which teaching approaches are most effective?
- How can we provide better outdoor education?
- How do we know if we are being successful?
- What criteria should we measure ourselves by?
- Is assessment relevant?

Over 70 people have applied for funding through the Comenius In-Service Training Grant programme. More details can be found at [www.rwlnetwork.org/events/science-and-sustainability-through-outdoor-learning.aspx](http://www.rwlnetwork.org/events/science-and-sustainability-through-outdoor-learning.aspx).

### ***New Partnerships and Network Members***

A key goal of the network is to engage new organisations to become members of the network. We set a target of 10 new members per year from the second year of the project. Half way through the second year of the project we already have 12 new members:

- Bioteka (Croatia).
- University of Vechta (Germany).
- COL'OR (Italy).
- Children Friendly (Latvia).
- Veldwerk (Netherlands).
- Zenith Travels & Tours (Nigeria).
- Vita21 (Spain).
- Bishops Wood Environment Centre (UK).
- St Josephs Specialist School and College (UK).
- Dunkirk Primary School (UK).
- Sunrise Outdoor Academy Ltd and Sunrise Bushcraft Ltd (UK).
- Outdoor Learning Consultancy (UK).

## 4. Partnerships

The RWL Network is a partnership between seven outdoor learning and environmental organisations. Each partner is either a network in itself or connected to a strong network. For example, Slunakov is an environmental education centre and member of the Pavicuina network of 36 centres in the Czech Republic. ANU is affiliated to the German League for Nature and Environment (DNR), which is the umbrella organization of German conservation and environmental protection organizations. It currently has 98 member organizations which together represent over five million individual members.

The partnership brings a number of strengths and some difficulties. With partners across the breadth of Europe the network truly represents outdoor learning providers from a range of educational perspectives. For example, the FSC has a strong focus on outdoor science whereas CSOD have a strong adventure element. This ensures that partners can learn from each other and share their experiences. This benefit also creates difficulties with partners situated in different educational systems and funding methods. This can create challenges in finding common points of view.

The RWL Network aims to explore how outdoor learning can effectively support behaviour change for a sustainable future. Such changes are best explored at a European level, in fact for change to be successful it will need to take place at a European scale as well as at a national, local and personal level. Outdoor learning providers need to work together and share positive European-wide approaches to the learning and action required for real sustainable development. The result can be a shared collective response, and the feeling that people are not alone in tackling sustainability issues. Sharing best practice in how to achieve this is essential.

All the RWL Network partners have worked hard to engage a wider community of educators in the project: outdoor centres, environment centres, teachers, universities. With the network still developing and creating its first outputs, it can be challenging to engage new providers. Despite this, we have been successful in engaging with a wide range of educators. For example, the country status reports consulted more than 300 people. Fifty-six people attended the first RWL Conference in the Czech Republic and over seventy people have applied to attend the second RWL Conference in Slovenia. The Network set a target of achieving 10 new members during the second year of the project, with only five months gone we already have 12 new members.

Through other activities we have reached 33,028 people through media activities, 658 people through events.

## 5. Plans for the Future

As the network continues its work, there are four main themes for future plans:

### *Working Groups*

The working groups will be continuing their work, moving from internal consultation to more external engagement with outdoor learning providers across Europe. WG1 and WG3 will both play major roles in the second RWL Conference to take place in Slovenia in November 2013. All the working groups will meet in February 2014 to finalise their outputs prior to producing their final recommendations and publications.

### *Conferences*

The second RWL Conference will take place 27-30<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The conference will explore how to deliver successful outdoor education. Through keynote speakers, workshops and discussion we will explore two key areas in outdoor education: effective teaching approaches and how to assess learning. In doing so we will be asking ourselves:

- Which teaching approaches are most effective?
- How can we provide better outdoor education?
- How do we know if we are being successful?
- What criteria should we measure ourselves by?
- Is assessment relevant?

Already over 70 people have applied for funding to attend the conference in addition to the 32 funding places within the project budget.

The third and final RWL Conference will take place in the UK in November 2014. The theme will be 'The Future of Outdoor Learning in a World of Change.'

### *Publications*

There are several publications planned for the final year of the project. The working groups will decide the final nature of the publications during their meeting in February 2014. The publications will focus on:

- Agreed assessment framework and quality criteria for of outdoor science.
- Guidance for schools on delivering outdoor science and sustainability.
- Recommended pedagogical approaches to delivering outdoor science.
- Competencies for a green economy and responsible citizenship.

To support these publications exemplar case studies will be developed. All publications and case studies will be available for free download on the project website.

### *Exploitation*

The key exploitation activity will be to decide the future of the network once EU funding has ceased. This will be discussed by the project partners during the second RWL Conference and finalised at the final Conference in November 2014.

The Network is planning to deliver several Comenius Training Courses, however, this will be dependent on such funding continuing into the new Erasmus for All programme.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

RWL supports the delivery of key international, European and national strategies. The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development has been a key driver globally to increase the quantity and quality of learning and has developed some quality criteria. The 2009 review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy identifies links with the Lisbon Strategy to ensure long term growth through learning. There is a call for a rapid shift towards a more sustainable economy with learning a key tool in achieving this. This learning is supported by the European Key Competences for Lifelong Learning including competences in science, learning to learn, civics and a sense of initiative. RWL addresses all these.

RWL contributes to a number of key EU policies. The Europe 2020 Strategy places a strong emphasis on sustainable growth. In meeting the goals of a competitive low-carbon economy and protecting the environment, there is a need for employees with an understanding of science and sustainability. RWL helps outdoor learning providers consider how they can integrate green career competencies into their programmes and meet the need for green skills for employment identified by CEDEFOP in Skills for Green Jobs.

Science is a cornerstone for meeting the challenges of sustainable development. PISA reports that across the EU the average achievement in science has fallen from 2006 to 2009, and only four countries are meeting their target to reduce low achievers in science to significantly below 15% (Eurydice 2011). Without a strong scientific base Europe will not be able to meet its Europe2020 goals of smart and sustainable growth. RWL has a focus on teaching science that will provide the understanding and competencies to contribute to sustainable development both socially and economically.

The Council of Europe Conclusions of Education for Sustainable Development (2010) highlights the eight key competencies adapted by the European Parliament and the Council. RWL supports the key competencies for lifelong learning outlined and is mutually supportive of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, initiative taking and decision making, all of which are essential for achieving the objectives of sustainable development.

Understanding of science practices and processes is essential to engage with many of the issues confronting society. Even for pupils not considering science as a choice in higher education, the ability to reach evidence based decisions is important in all areas of life. Yet in recent times fewer young people have opted to study science subjects (High Level Group on Science Education). There is a clear need for new ways to re-imagine science education. The 2008 report by the Nuffield Foundation called Science Education in Europe stressed that 'more attempts at innovative curricula and ways of organising the teaching of science that addresses the issue of low student motivation are required.' The recent report produced for the EU Directorate General on Research, Science, Economy and Society argued that a 'reversal of school science teaching pedagogy from mainly deductive to inquiry based methods was more likely to increase pupils interest and attainment while at the same time stimulating teacher motivation.' RWL supports new and innovative ways of teaching science, and promoting these to outdoor learning centres. As such, RWL contributes to encouraging more pupils to study science and reach EU targets on science literacy (EU target of reducing low achievement in science to significantly under 15%).

Finally, RWL addresses elements of the Comenius policy context, namely 'education for respect of the environment and of intercultural competencies should be enhanced as well.' It also supports 'finding ways to enhance the teaching and learning of transversal key competencies that foster

initiative and entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation and adaption to the rapidly changing world of work.'

## 7. Extra Heading/Section

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