Real World Learning Network

Inception Meeting Minutes

16th to 20th January 2012

Participants:

- Richard Dawson (FSC)
- Claire Fowler (FSC)
- Thorsten Ludwig (ANU)
- Daniela Conti (CREDA)
- Romana Palkova (Slunakov)
- Markéta Dvořáková (Slunakov)
- Irena Opršalová (Slunakov)
- Ida Kavcic (CSOE)
- Zsuzsa Mondok (HSEE)

The objectives of the meeting were:

- Getting to know each of the partners and team members.
- Review and refine project objectives and delivery
- Analysis project environment – partners, target groups, stakeholders, barriers, influences.
- Confirm project roles, tasks and leads for each work package
- Set up project systems – communication, M&E, etc
- Review budget
- Develop project ownership amongst partners

1. Getting to know each other

Participants met the evening before the meeting, sharing dinner together. The partners briefly shared their background and reasons for attending the meeting. In the evening some partners shared information about their organisations and current activities.

2. RWL, You and Your Organisation

We undertook an activity to explore how the project team members and their organisation will benefit from the project. The purpose was to ensure that the project was meeting personal and organisational goals, and to ensure the project will inspire those involved. Participants were asked to reflect on how the project and the partnerships will benefit them personally and their organisation.

The results were:

	Project benefits	Partnership benefits
Organisational benefits	Developing an international perspective for national organisation	New partners, new avenues (UK). To know organisations in different countries

	(DE) Get into contact with environmental education organisations in other countries/networking (DE) Ways to justify outdoor learning (UK) Assessing outdoor learning (UK) New approached for teaching outdoors (CZ) New experience with European projects (preparation, leading, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, finances (CZ) Core work, new ideas, quality standards – PEF (UK) Developing common quality criteria for teaching in the outdoors (SL) Prepare teaching materials (SL) Experience exchange (SL) Educational methods to 'catch' sustainable development (IT) How to involve teachers in outdoor learning (IT) How to make science alive for students/family (IT) To create Italian network for outdoor learning (IT) Learn more about different approaches to environmental education in different countries (CZ) Inspiration (CZ) Criteria worked out (HU) Information from 6 countries (HU) Good practice (HU) Development of new methods (HU) 'Survival' (HU) Sharing experiences (?) Inspiration – different organisations, different approaches (?) New contacts (?) Visiting other centres in Europe to be inspired (CZ) Pedagogical approaches, techniques and equipment (CZ) Raise the value of first-hand experience with sites/objects for environmental education and ESD (DE)	(CZ). Inspiration for our centre (CZ). How learning is organised and promoted (UK) Where the funding comes from in other countries (UK) Exchange good practice (SL) Contacts (?) Opportunity to cooperate with different countries (?) To create relationships that could develop other projects or exchanges to share experience and learn from others (IT) International cooperation, contacts, outlook and experience (HU) Developing an international perspective for national organisation (DE) Get into contact with environmental education organisations in other countries/networking (DE)
Personal benefits	Raise the value of first-hand experience with sites/objects for environmental education and ESD (DE)	Traditional food, mountains, skiing (UK) New people, new ways of working, new ideas, new inspirations (IT) New people, places, ideas (UK)

	How to inspire FSC staff to think outside the box (UK) Time to reflect (UK) Keep going and say yes (UK) How to manage an EU project (IT) I'm interested in evaluation (IT) Learning a new role and project coordinator (CZ) To learn about different approaches to environmental education and apply to my new job (CZ) Learn learn learn (?) Move into environmental education in Europe (HU) Experience in EU projects (HU) Getting to know EE centres (HU) Obtaining new knowledge, aspects, experience, making new contacts (SL) Having an opportunity to take part in a survey of outdoor learning at European level (SL)	Meeting other people from European countries (CZ) Practice English, meet new people (CZ) Meeting people dealing with similar subjects (DE) Refresh English, meet interesting new people (SL) Curiosity (UK) Learning new skills – communication, language, projects (?) Sharing experience (?) New people, new ideas, new places (HU)

See flipchart images on Huddle (Partner Meetings – PM1 folder).

3. What is Real World Learning?

The project uses the term Real World Learning, we spent time reflecting on what the term means within each country. We brainstormed RWL concepts and grouped these into themes. There was then 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. Participants worked in groups to clarify and prioritise the results of the discussion, these can be seen in the table below.

Themes	**Notes**
Location • Urban • Rural • Museum • Gallery • Centre • School	Museums and Galleries to be excluded as direct targets; location to include school grounds, centres and protected areas where outdoor activities take place.
Competencies	Seen as important; what competencies are important? Which can RWL best develop?
Systems and connections	
Curriculum linked	
Qualities of the experience	Are standards and criteria a good thing? What to standardise and what not?
Natural world; human influenced environment	Both seen as essential themes and locations for RWL.

Economy and livelihood	
Connects with learners own experience	
Future and sustainability	
Methods – how the learning takes place	Discussion on learning that includes head, heart and hands. Must be first-hand learning.
School age	Upper limit of 18 but what is the lower limit?

There was not a clear prioritisation of themes at this stage. However, there was some discussion on how the different themes complemented each other. For example, 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; to be 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?).

Finally, we reviewed the results of our discussions with the stated objectives in the project proposal. We agreed that the objectives are still valid and broadly consistent with our own understanding of RWL and the projects target groups. Richard clarified for the group that the proposal, and the EU funding goals, state:

- A strong focus on science and the outdoors.
- The target groups do not include museums and galleries.

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.

During the discussions a number of questions emerged which could become part of the baseline research or part of the Terms of Reference for the Working groups. The questions were:

- Openness vs certainty – what is the right balance in learning?
- When does participation start – how much instruction vs how much self/student centred learning?
- How to include aspects of the economy and society, and future aspirations, into RWL?
- What is high quality RWL?

4. Understanding the project

Considerable time was spent reviewing the project structure and planning how the project will be delivered. Richard pointed out that a Network project is different from most other projects which have a clear product. A network project has a core focus on sharing best practice and exchanging new ideas, as such the process can be agreed but the results are more emergent.

The project structure was discussed in some detail. In particular there were questions about:

- The overall flow of the project activities.
- How the Working Groups will operate?

- Who can take part in the Working Groups?
- How the RWL European Seminars will be structured with the Working Groups activities?
- Who will coordinate the working groups?

Answers to these questions below and in the annexes to these minutes.

The overall flow of the project activities.
See annexe 1 for a diagram of the project activities. See also the project Gantt chart on Huddle (Project Management file)

How the Working Groups will operate? Who can take part in the Working Groups? Who will coordinate the Working Groups?
Each WG will have one coordinator (DE, UK, SL, CZ). Each partner has an equal number of days (180 days) to allocate to the three WGs. Each WG will meet twice and there is budget for one person from each partner to attend the WG meetings. It is expected that each partner will bring other experts into the WG to contribute locally via the partner or virtually via the project website. It is the responsibility of each partner to ensure that there are opportunities for contributions to each WG from a wide range of people, and to manage their own salary budget accordingly.

The same person can contribute to more than one WG, however, be aware that WGs may meet at the same time. To be effective it is recommended that different people focus on different WGs.

See annexe 2 for diagram.

How the RWL European Seminars will be structured with the Working Groups activities?
There are three European Seminars throughout the project. The final seminar will be in the UK to disseminate the final results of the project. The first seminar will be in the Czech Republic and the second in Slovenia. The first and second seminars will be an opportunity for the WGs to share their ideas with a wider audience as well as listen to the opinions of others. It was agreed that the first seminar will focus on the themes from WG1 and WG2, with the second seminar focusing on the themes from WG3 and WG4.

See annexe 3 for a diagram.

When with the European Seminars take place? Are the dates fixed?
The dates are not fixed, and timing of the seminars 1 & 2 need to be appropriate for the Working Groups and potential participants. We need to consider what months are most appropriate for participants to attend, and how the dates meet the needs of the Working Groups.

The first European Seminar will be in the Czech Republic and planning for this needs to start early – Slunakov and Richard to discuss.

See http://www.comenius-codes.eu/Conference/ for an example of an upcoming Network conference from the CoDeS project, and http://support-edu.org/conference_materials for examples of past Network conferences from the SUPPORT project.

5. Baseline Research

The first main task of the project is to carry out baseline research into (a) current delivery of outdoor science and sustainable development; and (b) current approaches and resources for teaching outdoor science and sustainable development in the real world. Richard explained that the research was not to research these areas in detail, rather to develop a status report that will help guide the development of the Terms of Reference for the Working Groups.

We worked in groups to discuss who the research should be aimed at, the methodology, outcomes anticipated and themes/questions. It was agreed that the research needs to focus in the subject of each of the four Working Groups, to explore current status and identify particular concerns that the Working Groups can address.

It was agreed that the research needs to target outdoor learning providers, teachers/students using outdoor centres, local education departments and national decision makers.

This work package is being led by Slunakov. The following timetable for the work was agreed:

- First draft of research brief by 3rd February (Slunakov).
- Comments on draft to Slunakov by 17th February (all).
- Final draft of research brief by 29th February (Slunakov).
- Baseline research carried out March/April (all).
- Baseline research country reports sent to Slunakov by 18th May (all).
- Compiled report sent to partners by 10th June (Slunakov).
- Prepare questions for Working Groups and share by 7th July (all)

6. Dissemination and Exploitation

We had a brief session on dissemination and exploitation. Richard explained the difference between dissemination and exploitation.

> *Dissemination – providing information about effectiveness and relevance of project results. Dissemination happens throughout the project.*
>
> *Exploitation – making use of and deriving benefit from the project results. Exploitation happens once results are achieved. Based on:*
>
> - *Mainstreaming: transferring results to appropriate decision-makers and systems e.g. curricula.*
> - *Multiplication: ensuring more people use the project results.*

Richard briefly showed the dissemination and exploitation template used in previous projects for the partners to consider (see Huddle Dissemination and Exploitation folder). He also mentioned the LLP (lifelong learning programme) Handbook for projects, this includes a section on dissemination and exploitation (see Huddle Project Management folder). And he mentioned Survival Kit which is a guide to managing multilateral projects (see Huddle Project Management folder).

The dissemination and exploitation work packages are lead by ANU and CSOE.

Actions:

- Thorsten and Ida to review information provided and prepare recommendations for Partner Meeting 2.

7. Project Website

This was discussed in brief. Initially a sub-contract within the budget it was agreed that the FSC will develop the website internally. This will enable more to be achieved with the budget available and avoid paying excessive fees.

There were concerns raised about the amount of translation required. The website should not contain large amounts of text, most of the project outputs will be translated and available on the website. The website will be content managed enabling partners to add their own text. There was a discussion about whether each language version of the site has to be the same; there was a missed opinion about this and this issue needs further discussion.

There was some confusion about whether we are developing a new site or just adding project information to our own organisations web pages. We will be developing our own site specifically for the project.

The help design an attractive website it will be very helpful if partners can send 3-4 examples of website designs that they find attractive and easy to use.

Actions:

- Confirm change with EU, moving budget from sub-contact to staff costs (Richard).
- Develop Terms of Reference for partners to comment on (Richard).
- Send examples of 'good looking' sites to start design process (all).

8. Project Inception Document

We reviewed this document together. Time was spent reviewing how international projects are delivered effectively, with particular attention given to the roles and expectations of the Project Coordinator and Country Coordinators. Each part of the document was reviewed together. All partners are urged to read the document carefully, and pay particular attention to the narrative and financial reporting guidelines. Richard stressed the need to keep detailed and systematic records of project activities.

9. Narrative and Financial Reporting

The internal narrative and financial reporting form were introduced. The narrative form is based on each of the work packages and the milestones on the project proposal. Richard stressed the need for detailed reporting and encouraged partners to raise issues of concern as soon as they arise. The narrative form can be found on Huddle (Monitoring folder) and now includes all the reporting dates – first report due end May 2012.

The financial reporting form was reviewed in detail; notes can be found in the form. The form is available on Huddle (Project Management folder). The financial reporting dates are the same as the narrative reporting dates:

- end May 2012.
- end November 2012 (to match first EU Interim Report)
- end May 2013

- end November 2013 (to match second EU Interim Report)
- end May 2014
- end November 2014 (to match EU Final Report)

The finance forms can be a little complicated at first, but experience has shown that they work well. They will be reviewed again at Partner Meeting 2 once partners have submitted their first reports.

10. Huddle

Huddle is an online project management tool. It has a number of useful features that were demonstrated: file storage, task list, calendar, discussion board. We will use these during the project, in particular the file storage area will contain all key project documents.

Please have a go using Huddle and contact Richard with any questions.

11. Any Other Questions

There were some additional queries during the meeting dealt with below.

Where can we find the official EU exchange rates?
They are available from http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/.

Where can we find the EU logo and disclaimer?
The EU logo and disclaimer must be used on all public documents. They can be found at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/eacea_logos_en.php. Disclaimer from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/graphics/agencies/use-translation.pdf.

What are Transversal and Comenius Study Visits?
These are study visits, usually one week long, which enable education providers to see best practice in other European countries. Anyone can apply to their national EU agency to host a visit by completing a simple application form. Depending on the country there might be a grant for hosts to cover costs (£2000 in the UK). Anyone can apply to attend a study visit by applying to their national EU agency, costs cover travel and subsistence (not salary time). For more information visit http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/. We have included applying to host study visits in our project proposal. They are a great opportunity to show off the best educational practices in your country. Ask Richard if you are interested in being a host.

12. Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be addressed at the next project meeting. In preparation we did establish our personal and organisational motivation to taking part in the project (see RWL, You and Your Organisation above). We also wrote personal ambition statements of what a successful RWL project will look like. We will work with these at Partner Meeting 2 and explore what needs to happen for these ambition statements to become a reality.

The personal ambition statements were:

- Locally to give/see that our networking has a sign of life, rising of networking. A coloured box full of tools, especially quality criteria (Daniela).

- Part of huge alive website in Europe about outdoor education with connections between teachers and ourselves who have quality criteria about what is good outdoor education. (Irena)
- Our recommendations, quality criteria, guidelines, etc are highly commented on by stakeholders, they are dealing with them/react to them. It will be know in all EE centres and most schools in Hungary. (Zsuzsa)
- Huddle will be awash with information, that new partners are asking to join in and we have come up with new questions for more. (Claire)
- Will find Czech partners interested in this project. Change the topics in outdoor centres to be sure they are real outdoor education. Use inspiration from other countries to help us. (Markéta)
- Offer quality criteria and find lots of associations to be interested in quality criteria and establish a new group to implement quality criteria. Make outdoor learning a continuous part of learning in schools and part of reality in schools. Align outdoor learning with ESD. (Thorsten)
- Process of developing criteria and guidance (a guide not a gun). Raise awareness of purpose and goals of outdoor learning and make it reality. (Romana)
- To see everyone wanting more. Partners inundated with requests and offers. What we do influences and creates change. (Richard)

13. Date of Next Meeting

We agreed that the next meeting will take place in Germany 16-20 July 2012. The 16th and 20th will be travel days, the meeting days will be 17-19th July 2012.

Action:

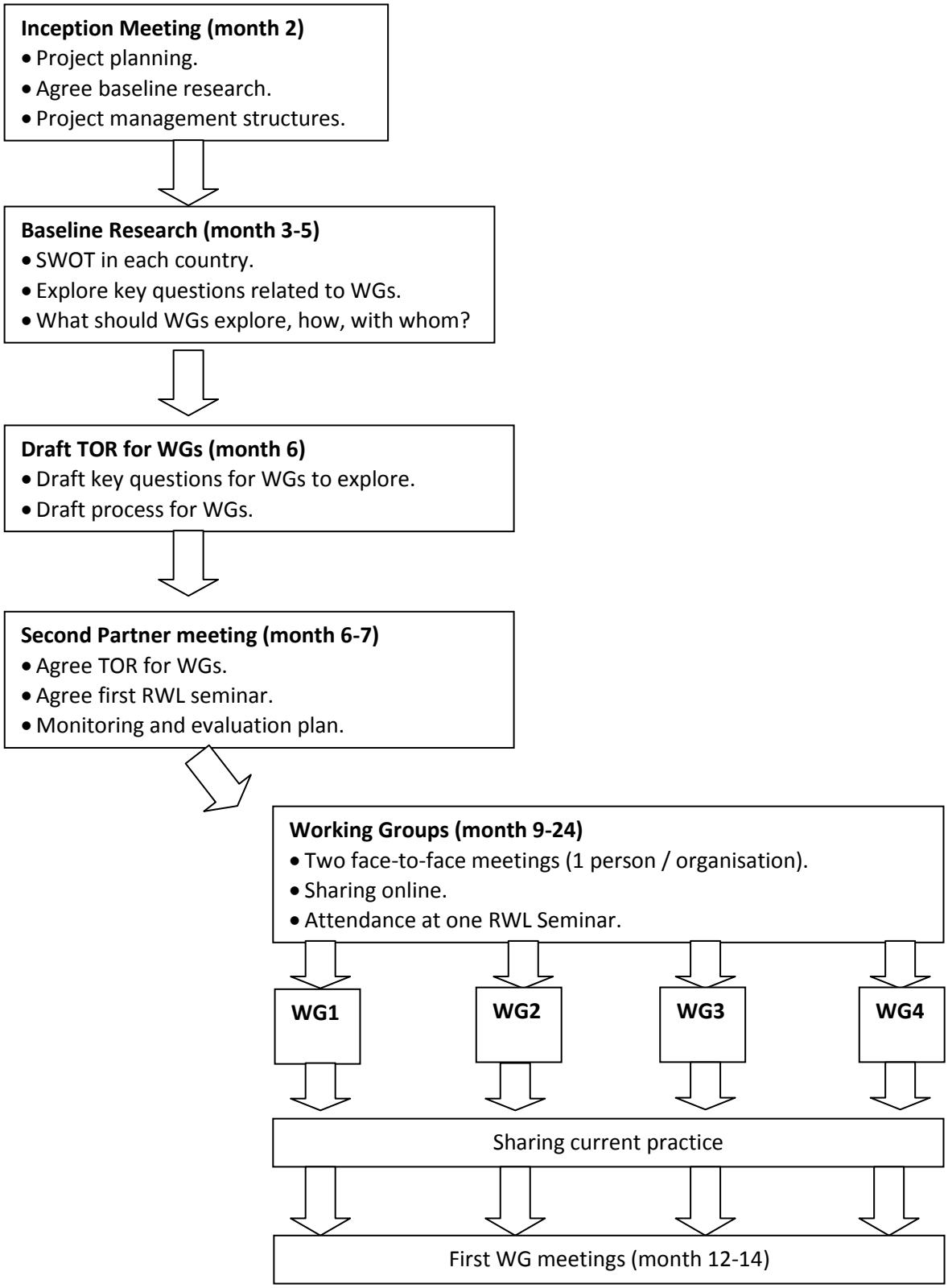
- Thorsten to find suitable venue and report to Richard by end March.

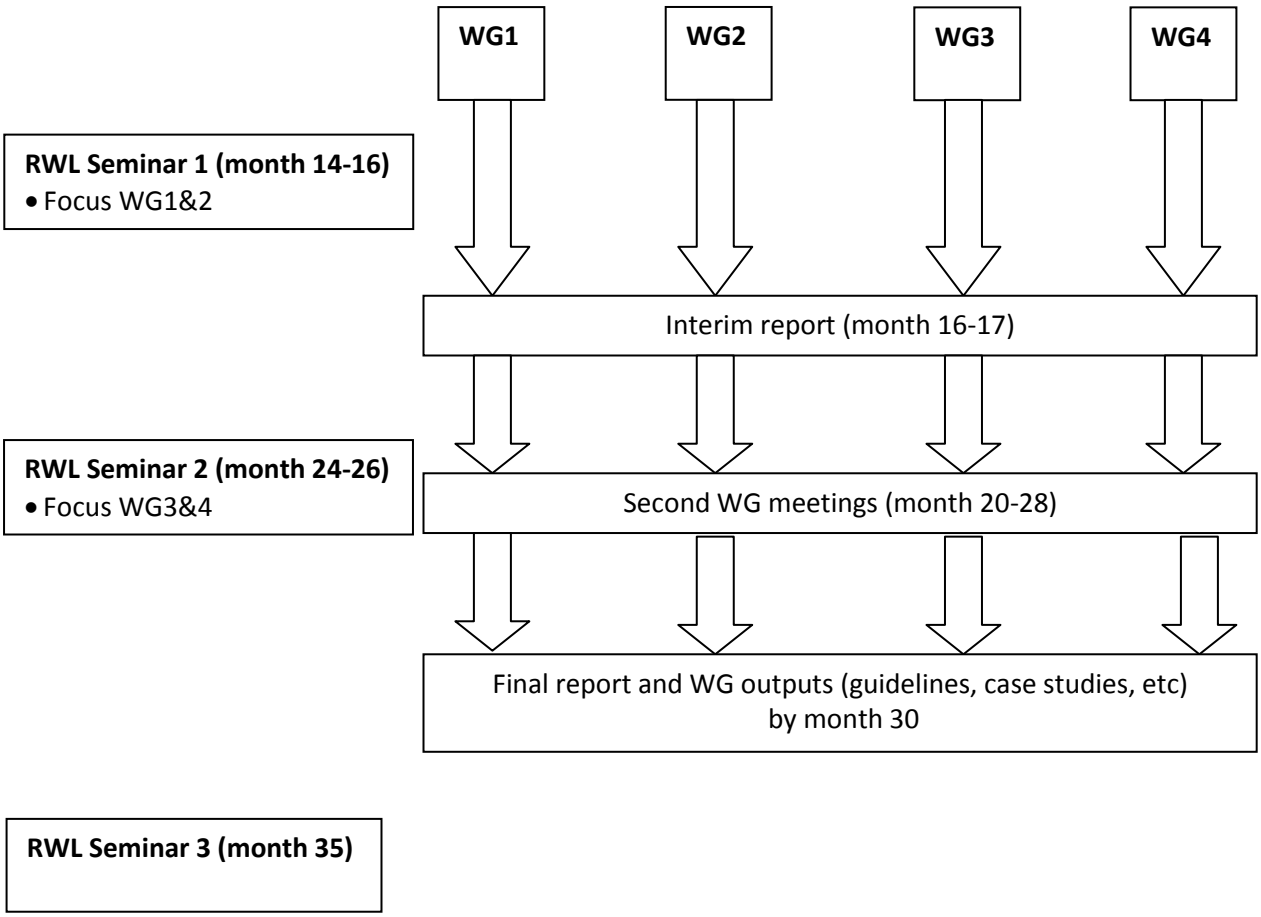
14. Summary of Actions until Partner Meeting 2

Work Package	Action	Who	When
WP 1 - management	Ensure all contracts are signed, send invoice to FSC for pre-financing payment	All	Now
	Project Inception Document – please read and ask Richard if any questions	All	Now
	Read the meeting minutes and especially the annexes. Review your understanding of how the project will work across Europe and in your own country	All	Now
	Appoint project staff as required	All	As required for tasks
WP2 – baseline research	First draft of research brief	Slunakov	03/02/12
	Comments on draft sent to Skunakov	All	17/02/12

	Final draft	Slunakov	29/02/12
	Carry out baseline research	All	March/April 2012
	Prepare and send country report to Slunakov	All	18/05/2012
	Compile group report	Slunakov	10/06/12
	Prepare questions for Working Groups and share	All	07/07/12
	Partner Meeting 2 – Thorsten to find suitable venue and report to Richard	ANU	End March 2012
WP4 – quality assurance	Complete first narrative and financial monitoring report – send to Richard	All	End May 2012
WP5 - dissemination	Develop recommendations for project dissemination plans	CSOE	Present at Partner Meeting 2
	Website – develop Terms of Reference and share with partners	Richard	End March 2012
	Start planning for first RWL European Seminar; apply to register on EU Transversal and Grundtvig database	Slunakov & Richard	Ongoing
WP6 - exploitation	Develop recommendations for project exploitation plans	ANU	Present at Partner Meeting 2

Annexe 1 – Overall flow of project activities

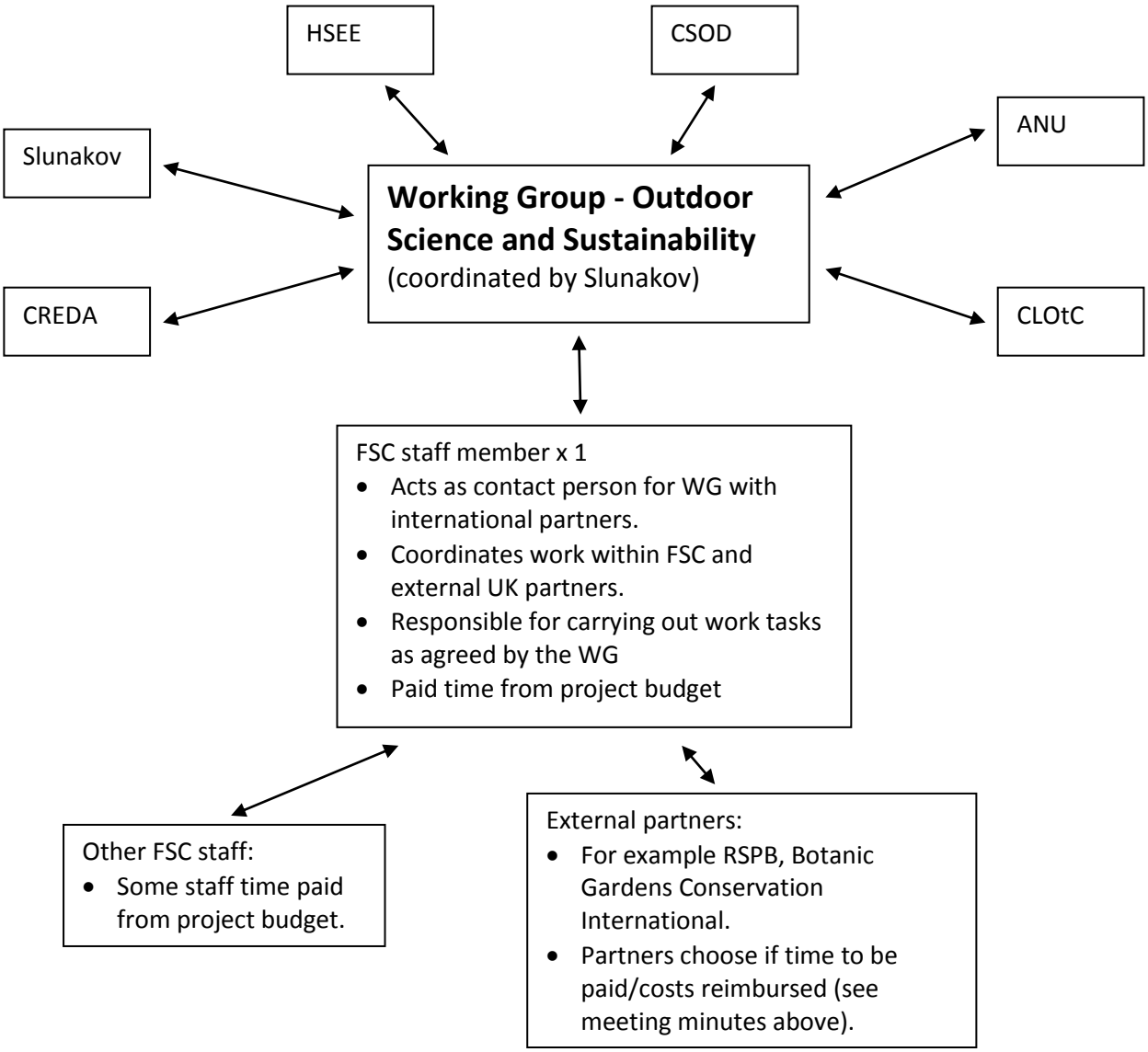
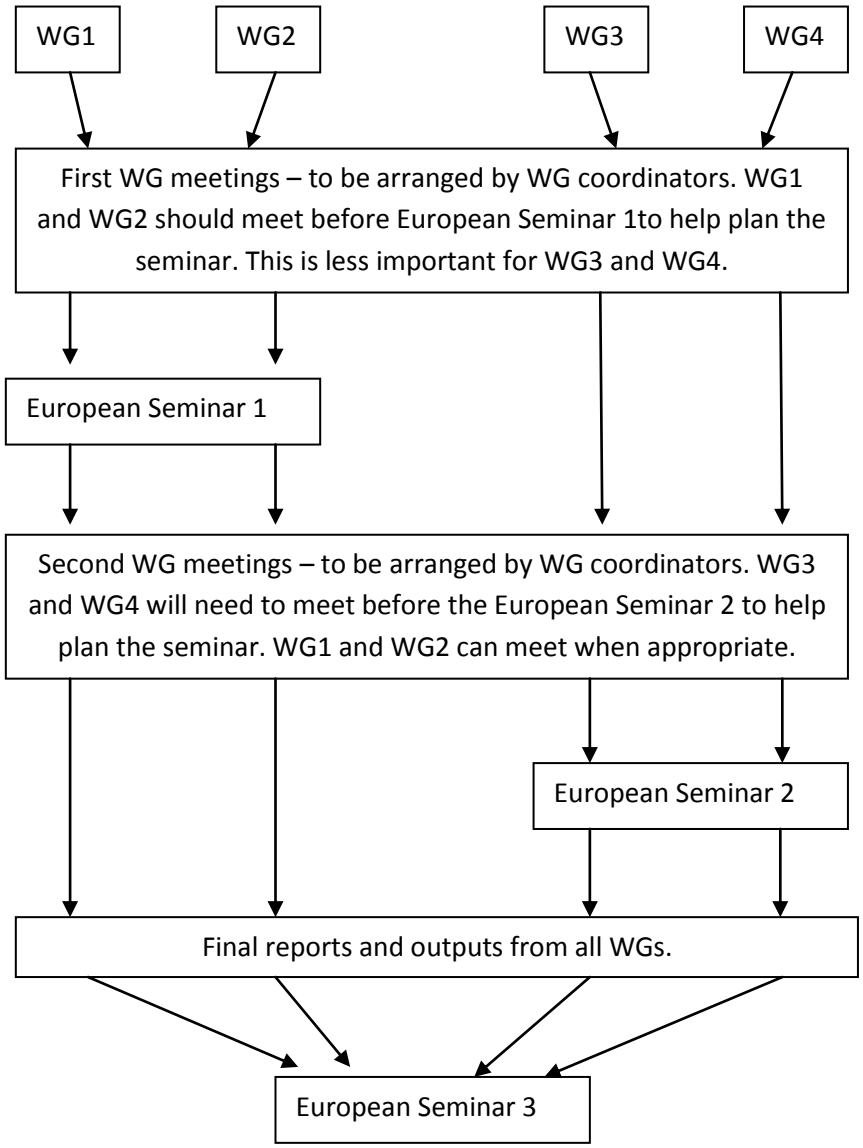




Partner management meetings will take place as required, with a final meeting after the third RWL Seminar to review and evaluate the project.

Annexe 2 – Working Groups

The diagram below shows how a WG can be structured. It shows the detail for one partner, the FSC.



Annexe 3 – Working Groups and European Seminars