

Outdoor Play and Learning Special Interest Group

EECERA

SIG convenors: (names and e-mails)

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SIG members: (names and e-mails)

We currently have 165 members on our mailing list.

1. Aim of the SIG:

The Outdoor Play and Learning SIG provides an academic and rigorous forum at European and international level to develop and disseminate high quality research on outdoor play and learning. It aims to coordinate and disseminate international research on the international discourse in this emerging field. It intends to create a space for shared thinking and for creating synergies between participants from a wide range of professional and scientific contexts to encourage a clearer articulation and understanding of early childhood pedagogy, policy and practice in relation to outdoor play and learning.

2. Activities 2024-2025:

Publications, meetings, networking, cross-national collaboration, symposiums etc.

- 2.1 Each year the SIG organizes face to face meetings at the EECERA conference and an online meeting just before, usually at the beginning of August. At each EECERA conference the Outdoor Play and Learning SIG organize symposiums, grouping relevant papers for members to share their research and interests.

- 2.2 SIG members are also part of other organizations, committees and research networks. These include the German Ethics Network, Children's Research Centre UK, Outdoor Play Networks, Participatory Methods Network, Play, Learning and Development Network, Adventure Play Group, Network of Nature Space Pedagogy in Rhineland-Palatinate Germany, BARNkunne -Centre for Kindergarten Research, to name a few.
- 2.3 The SIG held an online seminar for members on the 20th May 2026 showcasing the research of Dr. Charlotte Emma Louise Whitham (Horáková), from the Department of Social Processes and Sustainability, The Czech Academy of Sciences, Global Change Research Institute. Her presentation entitled '*Human–nature connection in the early years: Foundations for transformative change*' provoked a rich and lively discussion. It is hoped that this will become a regular feature of the SIG.
- 2.4 Two SIG symposiums are planned for EECERA 2026. The symposiums are:
- 'Between Aspiration and Constraint: Teachers and Parents on Children's Outdoor and Nature-Based Engagement in Early Childhood'
- and
- 'Learning in and with Nature: Wisdom, Wellbeing and Sustainable Pedagogy in Early Childhood'

3. Future activities:

Publications, meetings, networking, cross-national collaboration, symposiums etc.

- 3.1 The SIG will continue to organize face to face (pre conference meeting in Madeira 25.08.26) and online meetings (11.08.26) around the EECERA 2026 conference. At least one member of the convenors will attend the EECERA conference each year and facilitate the self-organized symposium research and subsequent discussion.
- 3.2 The SIG is open to any members suggestions for further discussion and research into Outdoor Play and Learning in 2026/27.
- 3.3 The SIG convenors have submitted a proposal to EECERJ for a Special Issue Journal entitled " Nurturing Slowness through Sustaining Time and Relationality within Outdoor Play and Learning"

Rationale:

This special issue responds to the increasing pressures on early childhood education by advocating for a pedagogical shift that prioritizes quality of engagement over the speed of curriculum delivery. While outdoor learning is widely recognized for its developmental benefits, it is frequently subjected to rigid schedules and predetermined outcomes that can fragment the child's experience. By centralizing "slow pedagogy," this publication seeks to explore how decelerating the pace of outdoor activities allows for deeper relational attainment, more meaningful pedagogical documentation, and a heightened sense of presence between children, educators, and the natural environment.

The convenors will put a call out for papers once the proposal has been approved.

- 3.4 The SIG convenors are planning to invite members to write a blog article about their own research or perspective for the LinkedIn group or if possible, the SIG website. This will be discussed at the EECERA SIG meeting in August/September 2026 and could become a regular feature of the SIG to engage members.
- 3.5 A revamp of the OPL newsletter is planned in 2026/7 to engage members and to encourage sharing of research and global perspectives on outdoor play and learning.

4. Networks established with other institutions and organisations

As above in 2.2.

5. How do SIG's activities fit with the aims and ethos of EECERA:

- 5.1 The SIG aligns with EECERA's ethos to promote and disseminate multidisciplinary research on early childhood education and its applications to policy and practice. In this case the SIG focuses on all aspects of children's Outdoor Play and Learning. In the same way as EECERA, the SIG also fosters international collaboration, cross-national networking, and themed publications.