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## Introduction

This poster reviews the progress made in developing and extending the European Pond Conservation Network (EPCN) since its inception in 2004. In particular it will focus on the three workshops which have been held in Geneva (2004), Toulouse (2006) and Valencia (2008). From these three events, consideration will be given to:

- levels of participation;
- the growth of the network;
- geographical reach; and,
- research focus of participants.

All data for this analysis has been obtained from the workshop abstracts contained within the pack provided to delegates at each of the three meetings. From this, progress will be reviewed and consideration given to ways in which the network may be further enhanced and extended.

## Participation

In order to assess the levels of participation, authors names attached to oral and poster presentations were counted. The number of individual names associated with the three workshops has risen from 87 in 2004 to 368 in 2008, representing an increase in excess of 300% over the four year period. Similarly, the first workshop in Geneva (2004) witnessed the delivery of 45 oral and poster presentations, whilst the current workshop in Valencia (2008) has seen the number of submissions rise steeply to 120 oral and poster presentations. In Valencia, 185 authors had their names attached to 120 oral and poster presentations. These figures represent a significant and sustained growth of the network.

## Geographical Reach

The first two workshops attracted delegates from 15 European countries together with colleagues working in Botswana, Morocco and South Africa. In terms of European representation, the Valencia workshop saw the number of delegates from European countries rise to 20 of whom 18 were located in the European Union. Of particular note were representatives from Iceland. Inevitably, wherever a workshop is held, it attracts a disproportionate share of participants from the host country. In 2008, 126 authors (34% of the total) were from Spain. A similar, but smaller figure was recorded for host nation participants at previous workshops in Switzerland (2004) and France (2006). Representation from northern Europe is still very low in comparison, the number of participants from Germany, for example, is dependent on the work being undertaken by a single organisation (ZALF) in the north of the country. Similarly, representatives from the Netherlands made their first appearance at the Valencia workshop, with representatives from that country being absent from both previous meetings. Finally, despite considerable work being undertaken, representatives from the Baltic States and Norway are grossly under represented. Similarly, with the exception of Greece, the network has had little impact in attracting participants from the Balkans and south eastern Europe.



## Research Focus

Having established the growing influence of the EPCN across Europe, the next step was to consider the main focus of research activity as presented in 2008 and to try and identify changing trends. This has been achieved by analysing the variety of keywords attached to the abstracts provided by authors for the oral and poster presentations at the Valencia meeting. Comparisons will be made with the results from the Toulouse workshop in 2006 - keywords were not listed at the first workshop meeting in Geneva in 2004. In 2008, approximately 160 key words were noted and of these a few appeared with regularity including 'macroinvertebrates', 'amphibians', 'biodiversity', 'conservation', 'temporary ponds', and, 'species richness'. From this, it can be assumed that these areas represent a significant research focus of network members. Of these six key words, the first five were also identified in the top six in the 2006 analysis (see table 1).

Keywords 2008	Keywords 2006
temporary ponds (27)	temporary ponds (16)
macroinvertebrates (20)	macroinvertebrates (11)
biodiversity (18)	amphibians (8)
conservation (17)	conservation (6)
species richness (16)	zooplankton (6)
amphibians (15)	macrophytes (5)
pond management (10)	biodiversity (4)

table 1: Keyword analysis 2008; 2006 (Number of mentions in brackets)

Clearly the ongoing focus upon temporary ponds, macroinvertebrates and amphibians currently defines the network. With both the 2006 and 2008 workshops held in countries bordering the Mediterranean, temporary ponds have also been a key area of interest. In contrast, the interest shown in *macroinvertebrates* and *amphibians* attracts researchers from across Europe.

What is more revealing, and was noted in 2006, are the keywords that are seldom mentioned and, importantly, those which do not appear at all. *Landscape* once again only receives a single mention as does *Natura 2000* whilst *network* does not appear at all in 2008 (a single mention in 2006). Other words which do not appear are shown in table 2 below.

2008	2006
stakeholders	stakeholders
education	education
planning	planning
networks	local community
legislation	legislation
policy	water framework directive
volunteers	volunteers
	Life programme

table 2: Keywords not appearing in the analysis 2006; 2008 (number of mentions in brackets)



## Keyword analysis

The keyword analysis tells us that the current research focus of the EPCN is strongly biased towards pond ecology almost to the exclusion of what might be termed 'human aspects' of pond conservation. This was a similar characteristic at the previous meeting in Toulouse. However, the term 'management' appears with some regularity in 2008 and its inclusion as seventh most popular keyword is encouraging. On the negative side, the absence of key terms such as 'stakeholders', 'education' and 'planning' are still serious omissions and, if the network is to reach its full potential, ways must be found to encourage delegates involved in these aspects of pond conservation to attend future meetings..

## Reviewing the network

Clearly, the EPCN still remains a dedicated 'research network' and this is characterised by the presence of many university researchers from across Europe presenting their findings. Undeniably, this is perhaps the greatest strength of the network and without this significant effort; many statements in *The Pond Manifesto* could not be supported. However, to become a pond *conservation* network, there is a need to develop different strategies in order to attract a wider range of delegates, practitioners, consultants, statutory agencies, conservation bodies etc. In so doing, the transfer of knowledge from research into practice will be facilitated and the EPCN will be starting to achieve its primary objective.