



Developing metrics and instruments to evaluate citizen science impacts on the environment and society

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1 Executive summary

This deliverable describes the initial communication strategy of MICS, which is, according to the *description of the action* (DoA) made of two parts:

- (1) A regular, quarterly newsletter will inform stakeholders about news, events and recent publications. This will be a publication that is focused on a particular theme (often lead by the researchers and experts of a work package), offering both editorials and opinion articles, as well as short research info sheets. This part of the deliverable consists of multiple newsletters, which will be produced quarterly from M03 to M33. On an annual basis, at M12, M24 and M36, the newsletter will include information (title, date, location, content) on significant events (conferences, seminars, workshops) which will be organised by MICS. Also, at M12, M24 and M36, this deliverable will be updated and redelivered to the EC.
- (2) Posts and updates on various social-media channels, aimed at reaching out to wider public and getting them interested in the project and its results, as well as keeping stakeholders up-to-date with the progress of the project. This part of the deliverable consists of multiple posts and updates, which will be produced from M01 to M36.



2 Introduction

This report aims to summarise part of the communication strategy that will be adopted in the MICS project. It will be complemented by deliverable D5.1 “Strategic plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results (PEDR)”.

Communication is here intended as the diffusion of the progresses and outcomes of MICS across potential stakeholders and interested public, as well as the support of citizen science. In particular, this report focuses on the communication strategy concerning quarterly newsletters, and social media activity. The lead partner of the deliverable is AAWA, while Earthwatch is responsible for WP5 overall.

The communication strategy is built on the following key aspects:

- **Scope:** One major task of MICS is to quantitatively assess the benefits that community-based environmental citizen-science can bring to a more effective and inclusive decision-making process at higher levels. The communication strategy therefore will focus on the following:
 - to inform a wide public on the concept of citizen science;
 - to communicate about MICS’s objectives ;
 - to inform on the progresses of the project;
 - to disseminate relevant outcomes and results of the project;
 - to communicate about activities, workshops, conferences, publications relevant or related to MICS.
- **Target audiences:** stakeholders that have a direct relation to environmental citizen science. In MICS these stakeholders include:
 - civic educators, scientists and practitioners;
 - citizens/publics;
 - user groups;
 - policy makers;
 - conservation bodies;
 - landowners;
 - farmers;
 - land managers.

Targets of the communication will also include people that are merely interested and curious on the project and on the citizen-science concept.

- **Dissemination platforms:**
 - a newsletter delivered via email and accessible online;
 - posts on common social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, initially).

3 Communication objectives

The below communication objectives guide the considerations and proposals of MICS’s communication strategy:

1. To raise awareness about MICS as *a partnership for developing metrics and instruments to evaluate citizen-science impacts on the environment and society*; stimulate the use of MICS tools, the MICS website and participation in MICS events.
2. To fill some of the main knowledge needs on citizen science among the main target audiences in the different regions where MICS operates to facilitate improved planning, decision making and implementation of NBSs. (These knowledge gaps differ per region and per Member State within the



different regions. Specific objectives will be identified by each regional partner and will be used as a basis for regional communication strategies.)

3. To stimulate target audiences to share information and their views about citizen science.
4. To stimulate target audiences to become part of citizen-science networks.

Achievement of the communication objectives will help to stimulate and support pilot-testing the MICS approaches.

4 Target audiences

The MICS project defines target audiences at a very general level, namely: civic educators, scientists and practitioners; citizens/publics; user groups; policy makers; conservation bodies; landowners; farmers; land managers. To be a target audience for MICS, these actors need to be involved in the definition or implementation of citizen-science actions, or of nature-based solutions.

For MICS it is not realistic and therefore not effective to target all of these audiences. Therefore effort will be put in to selecting the most important target audiences and identifying the main challenges for each target audience in order to define how MICS can best engage with them for improved planning, decision-making and implementation of citizen-science in Europe. The information on the selection of target audiences for MICS will be found in deliverable 5.1. The criteria for the selection of the main target audiences are below:

1. Key challenges and opportunities for society:

- identification of the main challenges and opportunities for society that MICS wants to address in the different regions and Member States;
- selection, from broad groups of target audiences, of the key groups and key individuals (related to the main challenges and opportunities that MICS wants to address in the different regions).

2. Geographical focus: MICS's capacity is not the same for every country that is listed as having test and validation sites. The regional partners are able to communicate more intensively in certain regions and less in other Member States. This depends on staff capacity of MICS partners, connections with partner organisations that can access the target groups in the different countries, language constraints and existing networks that can be used (see point 3). For the Member States for which the regional partners lack capacity to communicate, WP4 "Test-site development and tool validation" will provide further guidance.

3. Using existing networks: Using existing networks is essential for raising awareness of MICS and sharing knowledge and updates. It makes it much easier to reach target audiences where networks already exist. WP5 will carry out a review of existing citizen-science networks to provide MICS with information about:

- the presence of existing or emerging networks in Member States;
- an indication of which target audiences can be reached by these networks;
- instruments these networks provide which can be used by MICS, such as events, trade magazines, websites.



- 4. Opportunities to enhance networks:** The network review will also indicate where networks are still rare and MICS could invest in facilitating enhanced networks. Based on this, target audiences can be identified and selected per region as well.

5 Strategies to achieve the communication objectives

5.1 Strategies

This section sets out in a concise way what the strategies and proposed communication instruments are to realise the communication objectives.

Communication objective 1:

To raise awareness about MICS as *a partnership for developing metrics and instruments to evaluate citizen-science impacts on the environment and society*; stimulate the use of MICS tools, the MICS website and participation in MICS events.

Strategy:

- Enable the *main target audience* (MTA) to find the MICS website.
- Explain how they can use MICS (tools, events).
- Keep MTA informed of the MICS activities, news, products on an ongoing basis.
- Invite MTA to events.

Communication instruments that can be used to implement this strategy:

- Blogs, news, articles, posts
- Communication instruments of existing networks
- Communication instruments of MICS partners (e.g. newsletter, website, social media)
- Promote significant MICS outcomes in the media
- Events through presentations, panel discussions, networking
- Direct communication with key stakeholders, supported with materials
- Outreach materials about MICS to support events (presentations, “about MICS” leaflet)

Communication objective 2:

To fill some of the main knowledge needs on citizen science among the main target audiences in the different regions where MICS operates to facilitate improved planning, decision making and implementation of NBSs. (These knowledge gaps differ per region and per Member State within the different regions. Specific objectives will be identified by each regional partner and will be used as a basis for regional communication strategies.)

Strategy:

- Catch the interest of some of the key target audiences and trigger dialogue by addressing the main challenges and opportunities for citizen science in the different regions.
- Identify and fill main knowledge needs to facilitate improved planning, decision making and implementation of NBSs.
- Communication of information that fills the knowledge needs of the main target audiences.



Communication instruments that can be used to implement this strategy:

- Reports, factsheets, information leaflets, policy briefs
- MICS website content
- Face to face meetings, presentations, personal emails to allow feedback and discussion and build up personal contacts
- Specific presentations at meetings or events
- Events
- Trainings and presentations during engagement events
- Field visits
- Media coverage (through news agencies, internet wires, trade press)
- Blogs, news, articles, posts (share through partner website, newsletters, existing networks and mailing lists, social media (e.g. MICS Twitter and LinkedIn)
- Video(s) on YouTube

Communication objective 3:

To stimulate target audiences to share information and their views about citizen science.

Strategy:

- Create discussion about citizen science and river restoration between key players.
- Involve target audiences in knowledge development.
- Involve target audiences in knowledge transfer.

Communication instruments that can be used to implement this strategy:

- Engagement events, international conferences
- Face to face meetings
- Media coverage
- Social media tools, e.g. Twitter and MICS LinkedIn and “share with a friend” techniques

Communication objective 4:

To stimulate target audiences to become part of citizen-science networks.

Strategy:

- Show available citizen-science networks where people can participate.
- Encourage key players to become a member of citizen-science networks.
- Support the development of new projects.

Communication instruments that can be used to implement this strategy:

- Network overview on MICS website
- Involvement of citizen-science networks in regional events



Specific regional/country communication instruments

Besides the above communication instruments, the regional partners might have specific challenges and opportunities in their region and Member State, which will be addressed with specific communication instruments. These will be reflected in their regional communications strategies.

5.2 Next actions needed for implementation of communications strategy

A list of next steps is formulated for the implementation of the MICS communication strategy (see below). This list will be updated regularly.

Action	Responsibility
1. Assessment of status quo of knowledge of the MTA in thematic areas and identification of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o existing information and materials we can share; o new information and materials we could develop. 	All regions
2. Identification of list of trade press, newspapers and news wires and the media contacts within the partnership	All regions
3. Identification of issues for news items	All regions
4. List relevant citizen-science events through existing networks (international / regional / national) and other relevant events to promote MICS	All regions

6 Themes to communicate

Across the different Member States in Europe, MICS's partners face a number of different challenges and opportunities. In addition, within each challenge and opportunity there are different key target audiences with their own, specific knowledge needs. Some face for instance opposition to river restoration fuelled by doubts about the costs, or economical loss of an area. Others just need information on the 'how to' question of citizen science or river restoration.

MICS, however, cannot target all these different themes in its work and its communications, so selection is necessary. MICS has therefore decided to identify the main joint themes to address through MICS communication. These main themes (see Table below), will be used in the main joint communication (e.g. on the website, newsletters, in the media, technical inputs, non-professionals' reports, and possibly for key joint information leaflets, posters, and videos). More specific themes that are only relevant to a specific region or Member State can be supported by communications on the regional or national level. The precise content of each newsletter and the lead institution will be designated along the project.

MICS main themes for communications (*titles of themes to be finalised still, and lead organisation to be confirmed*):

Theme	Lead organisation
Overview of the project and first steps	Earthwatch
Citizen science, especially in relation to nature-based solutions (This theme is related to the deliverable concerning the literature review.)	Earthwatch, GEO
Citizen empowerment	Earthwatch
Planning	RRC



UK test and validation site	RRC
Flood risk management	AAWA
Italy test and validation site	AAWA
How to do river restoration, incl. monitoring, hydro-morphology, water quality	RRC
Hungary test and validation site	GEO
Romania test and validation site	GeoEcoMar
Impact of citizen science on society	IHE Delft
Impact of citizen science on democracy	GEO
Impact of citizen science on the economy	IHE Delft
Impact of citizen science on the science related to NBSs	RRC
Impact of citizen science on citizen-science projects themselves	Earthwatch
Impact of citizen science on the individual citizen scientists involved in the activities	Earthwatch

7 Communication instruments

This section provides guidance to the communication tools and instruments that will be used jointly by all partners in MICS. MICS partners will assess, within their own regions and Member States, whether additional instruments will be used to meet specific communication objectives.

7.1 Distribution through existing communication instruments of MICS partners

MICS will make use of the existing communication instruments of MICS partners. Instruments from MICS partners include:

- Websites
- Newsletters
- Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)

Aim for this tool: the audiences that can be reached through these instruments of the MICS partners are overall very relevant for MICS and this distribution will enhance MICS outreach among the MTA. These instruments will therefore be used for the promotion of MICS as a source of knowledge and impact-assessment tools.

Content: news, event announcements, new publications, flyers, videos, and links to parts of the MICS website (e.g. toolbox)

Responsibility: All partners

7.2 Use of existing outreach materials of MICS partners

As a consortium of specialists, MICS brings together a wealth of knowledge, which is often reflected, in highly relevant, well-developed outreach products. In particular, when these materials are reflecting best available knowledge and are a helpful source of knowledge transfer on the key MICS themes, these will be used by MICS. They will be used for the MICS website and be used as a reference in MICS materials.

Aim for this tool: to transfer relevant knowledge to MICS target audiences; to empower additional people to join the debate about the impact of citizen science.



Content: reports, publications, videos, animations, pictures, leaflets, presentations

Responsibility: All partners

7.3 Making use of existing networks and contact database

Partners will approach contacts in existing citizen-science associations, platforms and other relevant networks. The communication instruments of these networks should be as much as possible used to promote and discuss the services that MICS provides. This is a very effective way of reaching MICS target audiences. These networks include:

- existing citizen-science associations and networks;
- other existing networks on NBSs, relevant policy areas (like flood risk management, navigation, water quality, fisheries, conservation, energy generation) and river-basin planners and practitioners;
- new and emerging networks.

Furthermore, MICS will reach out to target audiences through its contact database. This contact database will be continuously filled with new contacts after events, other meetings and upon request and will therefore be a growing tool for outreach. It will be GDPR compliant.

Aim for using this tool: to promote MICS work, events, publications, news, results, and traffic to the MICS website.

Content: news, event announcements, new publications, flyers, policy submissions, videos, links to parts of the MICS website

Responsibility: All partners

7.4 Media

MICS will be promoted through the environmental press and international news sites. The project will produce press releases to be distributed in different languages and modified to the different regional situations. In the 24 months that are left, this MICS aims for 3 to 4 press releases per month, generated by the Regions (so per Region 1 per month) or on initiative of Wetlands International for overall MICS outreach.

Aim for using this tool: Coverage in the media will be used to give citizen science more attention, and catch the interest of some of the key target audiences and in addition some of the stakeholders which also form the target audience of MICS, and trigger dialogue. By aiming to get recognition for MICS in such outreach, this will also serve the promotion of MICS as a source of knowledge and impact-assessment tools.

Content: main themes, significant MICS results and conclusions from events, major citizen-science happenings and developments

Responsibility:

- All regional partners should distribute news to their own media contacts. It is essential that we use all relevant contacts available in the partnership.
- Prior to each meeting, each partner to circulate about two possible news items for the following period, which can then be decided on during the meeting along with corresponding deadlines.
- All press releases will be uploaded on the MICS website and all regional partners should upload relevant press releases on their website and distribute it to through their other communication instruments, like social media, mailing lists.

7.5 Website [mics.tools]

The website [mics.tools] is one of the main communication instruments to reach and engage with the MICS target audiences.



Aim for using this tool: The website serves as a knowledge platform to our target audiences and as a place to provide access to publications, case studies, tools, MICS news, and citizen-science networks. The website should also enable users to easily share information with others, and empower additional people to join the debate about the impact of citizen science.

Content: See deliverable on the content of the MICS website.

There will be clear links between the EU-Citizen.Science website and the MICS website. After MICS's project closure, project outputs will likely be integrated into EU-Citizen.Science.

Responsibility:

- The website needs to be kept up-to-date with the latest news and latest MICS materials and publications including relevant publications on citizen science and river restoration from MICS partners. This is the responsibility of all partners.
- All partners will promote the MICS website on their own individual websites and link to the MICS website.
- All partners to include the URL to the MICS website in all outreach materials.
- All partners to encourage other existing networks to link to the MICS website.

7.6 Promotional events, seminar, conferences

MICS will use a selection of relevant events (international, European, regional, national or local levels) to:

- give presentations and participate in panel discussions;
- network;
- show and distribute outreach materials such as MICS's information leaflet, pull-up banners, posters and specific information leaflets on main themes.

Aim for using this tool: to promote discussion on citizen-science impact and the work of MICS and to trigger dialogue on the main themes.

Content: the main themes that MICS will use to communicate

Responsibility: All partners. All MICS partners identify relevant events. Some relevant events are identified already, in which MICS will consider to cooperate. Partners have the responsibility to update other MICS partners of events throughout the project.

7.7 Engagement events and field visits

MICS will organise engagement events throughout the EU Member States where test and validation sites are located:

- engagement events targeted at existing citizen-science networks;
- a series of engagement events aimed at civic educators, scientists, and relevant policy makers;
- a series of specific events in the form of field visits targeted predominantly at civic educators, scientists, relevant policy makers and practitioners.

Aim for using these tools: Engagement events should be used to strengthen the networks, empower additional people to join the debate about the impact of citizen science, share relevant knowledge to the MTA, and promote MICS as a source of knowledge and impact-assessment tools. Target audiences should be stimulated to exchange views and knowledge with each other about the impact of citizen science and river restoration.

Content: It is important that the topics of the different planned engagement events and field visits focus on the key challenges and opportunities identified by the regions. This means that both the topics and participants need to be carefully selected. The content will also be informed by the selection of the main



MICS communication themes. Engagement events can include trainings, presentations, discussions, excursions.

Responsibility: All partners

7.8 Social media

MICS will use a number of web-based social media instruments. This part of the communication strategy refers to the dissemination activities carried out online on social-media platforms, namely Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, initially. Partners will furthermore make use of social media that their organisations are already using, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Aim for using this tool: Not only can the use of social media enhance our coverage in the target audiences, but also our target audiences and stakeholders are, through social media, enabled to easily share news, publications and other information with others. MICS will use social media to promote MICS as a source of knowledge and impact-assessment tools, to empower additional people to join the debate about the impact of citizen science, to distribute knowledge and to encourage target audiences to share their knowledge and views.

Content: news and updates, content such as new publications, leaflets, videos, pictures, online discussions on the main themes (e.g. through internet articles and posts), significant milestones and results of the project; external activities, information in the fields of citizen science and NBSs, conferences and workshops on citizen science

The content shared on social media by the MICS consortium will relate to all activities that are significant for the project itself and for promoting citizen science among a wide public.

This can be encouraged through:

- website: ‘share with a friend option’;
- cross-sharing news and publications through social media such as YouTube, SlideShare, LinkedIn, Facebook.

Responsibility: All partners. AAWA will be the responsible for the task, but posts will be published online by all partners.

The possible strategies on how to manage the social networks are the following:

1. Each partner provides AAWA a set of posts (previously scheduled). AAWA will then publish them in various social media.
2. Each partner publishes (or links) autonomously its own posts on the social media.

The first option better guarantees a steady provision of posts to the social media throughout the project and a balanced contribution from the partners. On the other hand, the second option allows a more dynamic interaction with the public and takes full advantage of the nature of the social media. The second option will also ensure that the partners that want to be more active will have the chance to disseminate more posts.

Status of social media in January 2019:

A Twitter account named “MICS project” (@MICSproject) was created and is active (see figure below):
[<https://twitter.com/MICSproject>]

The first two posts have already been delivered about the kick-off of the project that took place at IHE Delft in mid-January.



A Facebook page named “MICS Project” was created and is available (see figure below):
[<https://www.facebook.com/MICS-Project-1165673216930391/>]

Depending on social media, we will use different approaches to communication. Twitter is mostly for “right here, right now” happening, using tags (The hashtag #MICSproject will be used for the project.), and publishing to wider EU. Facebook will be used for scheduling posts, articles that are not so much time-bound. All partners will provide such posts.

LinkedIn is an additional platform, which will be activated during the first year.

Sharing/retweeting each other’s posts on the MICS project will favour the diffusion of content.

In deliverable D5.1, this social media section will be described in more detail, with specific sub-sections dedicated to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn as they all need a different approach. A strategy and useful guidelines for the partners will be created.

In any case, project social-media channels might evolve during the course of the project, depending also on how we actively engage our stakeholders.



7.9 Newsletter

MICS will create a newsletter in the following formats:

- An online newsletter in the form of a blog. Partners can copy the content of different news-items and distribute this using their existing communication materials such as their own newsletters and their websites.
- Distribution of a MICS newsletter four times per year. The content will be similar to the one used as the MICS news items on the blog. This newsletter will be sent to the contacts in the database plus additional contacts obtained by MICS, which for some reason are not in the database.

The newsletters will be delivered every three months, starting from Month 3. Overall, at least 11 newsletters will be produced throughout the duration of the project (three years). Each newsletter will be assigned an editorial partner from within the Consortium. The editorial partner of the newsletter will have to identify the other contributing partners and coordinate their input to the newsletter.



Content: event announcements, internet articles related to themes or events, event reports and presentations, new publications and outreach products, best practice case studies. More specifically, the newsletter will include (but will not be limited to):

1. An editorial piece, which will be written by the editorial partner of the newsletter. This will focus, for example, on a specific aspect of the project or on key aspects of citizen science (especially in relation with nature-based solutions).
2. Progress updates of the MICS project. This section will briefly summarise the status of the project and recent updates.
3. Description of the results of the project and of key features of citizen science. This section will present relevant results of the project as well as a more in-depth discussion on a specific aspect related to citizen science, especially in relation with nature-based solutions.
4. Promotion of citizen-science events (e.g. workshops, conferences). The newsletter will serve as a reference for stakeholders and people interested in citizen science to be updated with the upcoming events in the field.
5. External references and links to various topics related to citizen science and nature-based solutions. Throughout the newsletter (or in a dedicated section) relevant links and information will be provided as additional references of interest.

Aim for using this tool: to promote MICS work, events, publications, news, results and traffic to the MICS website.

Responsibilities:

- AAWA will be in charge of supervising the delivery of a newsletter about the project. Earthwatch, as the leader of the work package (WP5), will support AAWA as necessary.
- Earthwatch is responsible for uploading the news items on [mics.tools].
- All partners are responsible of putting blocks of content into their own newsletters and send them out themselves. Adapting the content for the specific formats of newsletters by the partners is the responsibility of each partner as well.
- AAWA creates the stand-alone MICS newsletter.

The newsletter will be emailed to all of those who subscribe via a subscription management system on the MICS website. It will be publicly available in suitable formats on the MICS website: i) as news stories; and ii) as a pdf file. Google analytics will be used to monitor readership levels. The newsletter will also be sent out to relevant Consortium contacts, with the option to unsubscribe. The Consortium will advertise the subscription webpage to other potential interested parties via their own communications channels.

7.10 Leaflets and factsheets

See deliverable D1.3 “Project factsheet”.

7.11 Other communication tools and instruments

Other communication tools and instruments will be used and described in detail in deliverable D5.1, specifically:

- Face to face meetings
- Poster and information boards
- Best practice documentation
- Workshop: MS4 Workshop with practitioners and researchers from NBSs and other areas to validate the workflow for impact evaluation (M05) (Task 2.7)
- Non-professionals’ reports