EU-US collaboration on NGI

NGI Explorers Program

Deliverable 4.5

Report on Ecosystem building, Dissemination and Communication – Call #3

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Abstract
This report includes all the information concerning the ecosystem building, dissemination and communication activities carried out during period 1 of NGI Explorers.

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DISCLAIMER

The NGI Explorers Consortium is the following:

Participant number	Participant organisation name	Short name	Country
01	F6S Network Limited	F6S	UK
02	Zabala Innovation Consulting S.A.	ZAB	ES
03	AUSTRALO Interinnov Marketing Lab SL	AUS	ES

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825183

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825183

LIST OF FIGURES

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825183

LIST OF TABLES

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825183

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main scope of this deliverable is to outline the actions implemented, and the outcomes achieved with them, in the second period of the project (M24-M38) in terms of the engagement strategy, dissemination and communication strategies.

The project has gained traction in Europe as one of the frontrunners in the NGI ecosystem. Some key results that underlie such positions of NGI Explorers are:

1. In terms of **ENGAGEMENT**, NGI Explorers reached out to a total of **5000 American organizations**, signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **59**, and actively collaborated with **29** hosting the European Explorers. With regards to the European ecosystem, the project interacted with more than **1000 organisations in Europe** while promoting the third Open Call (OC3).
2. In terms of **DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**, the main results can be summarised as follows:
    - Updated the project website with the information related to OC3;
    - Updated the "Meet the Explorers" page, with the profiles of the Explorers selected in OC3;
    - Organise two webinars to promote OC3;
    - Implemented our presence on social media, thanks to some ad hoc strategies implemented during the third year of the project;
    - Organised the third Immersion Bootcamp and two Oscars events;
    - Created various multimedia and PR elements;
    - Prepared the hoodies and distributed them to our Explorers;
    - Implemented the "Success stories' ' miniseries to promote the Explorers' achievements and organised ad hoc promotional campaigns on social media to celebrate the Explorers' achievements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

RELATION TO THE DESCRIPTION OF WORK (DoW)

The efforts described in this deliverable are directly linked to the execution of WP4 - Ecosystem Building, Exploitation of Knowledge and Outreach, as described in the DoW.

This document details the activities on ecosystem building, communication and dissemination carried out during the last year of NGI Explorers as part of the master plan to maximise the impact of the project, outlining the plan for the third year (Y3).

- **Agile Stakeholder Management Framework** is the methodology designed to continuously develop and strengthen relationships with significant target audiences. This strategy has a special focus on the development of partnerships with US organisations, as well as reaching a critical mass among different European research and innovation ecosystems.
- **Dissemination and Communication** activities, to implement the outreach activities of the NGI Explorers Programme to create awareness about the initiative and its results while reinforcing the global dimension of the Next Generation Internet.

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2. ECOSYSTEM BUILDING ACTIVITIES – PERIOD 3

As previously outlined in *D4.1 - Ecosystem Building, Exploitation and Outreach Plans*[1], and reported in *D4.2 - Report on Ecosystem Building, Dissemination and Communication - Call#1*[2] and *D4.4 - Report on Ecosystem building, Dissemination and Communication - Call #2*, building the ecosystem around NGI Explorers is one of the pivotal activities for (i) the success and impact of the open calls launched by the programme, and (ii) creating European and international awareness about the NGI initiative. Unlike other Horizon projects, including those under the NGI flagship, NGI Explorers must implement tailored strategies for two different regions, both the United States and Europe, which demand different objectives, narrative and engagement.

This section reports the strategy designed and delivered by the project in the scope of OC3 of the programme.

2.1. UNITED STATES

American institutions (i.e. the US Nodes) act as the hosts for the beneficiaries of the programme (i.e. the Explorers), so their excellence, reputation, willingness to support and working conditions represent significant factors when onboarding them. They must comply with specific terms and obligations.

Taking into consideration the participation modes of OC3, two different types of nodes can be classified:

1. **US institutions that executed an agreement with the programme before or during the Open Call.** These entities benefit from the opportunity to promote themselves as potential hosting partners for applicants, publishing their interests in **OPEN IDEAS** and/or posting specific **CHALLENGES**. This type of partnership does not ensure access to candidates in the evaluation process, because this must be handled according to matchmaking criteria and compatibility. NGI Explorers must commit to providing a significant number of wide-ranging options for the candidates when applying. The programme understands that not all applicants have access to a network of US organisations.

   The process for onboarding these entities consists of 2 steps: **(1)** full execution of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the lowest administrative entity that acts as 'US Node' and NGI Explorers (legally represented by F6S). The MoU states the responsibilities for both parties, indicating the commitment from the US Node to support the evaluation phase if required, and introducing the points the US Node shall undertake if an Explorer is accepted

[1] [NGI Explorers] Ecosystem Building, Exploitation and Outreach Plans. https://zenodo.org/record/4036270
[2] [NGI Explorers] Report on Ecosystem Building, Dissemination and Communication - Call#1. https://zenodo.org/record/4036283

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- the formal agreement between parties is executed before the mission takes place; **(2)** contribution to **an online form** where the main contact point at the US Node provides information about (i) the technology domains they are interested to collaborate with; (ii) capabilities and infrastructure they can provide during the mission; (iii) capacity to host Explorers; (iv) target applications domains. With these details, a profile is generated and made publicly available for the applicants.

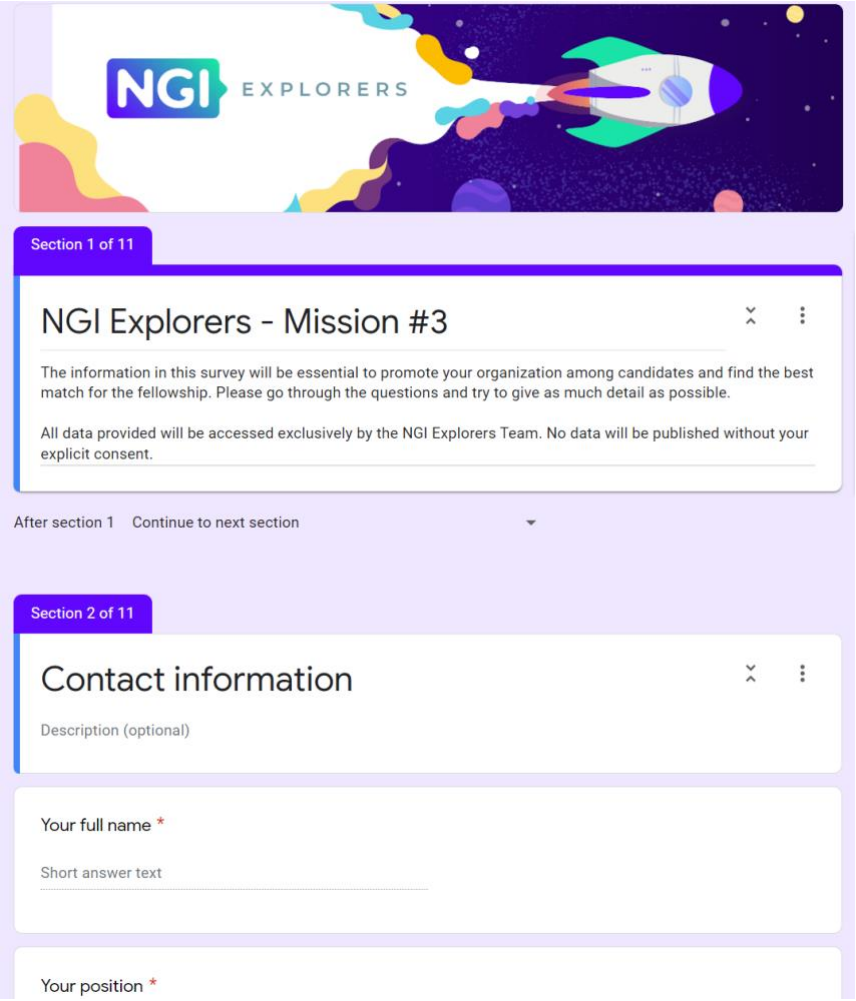

Figure 1 Screenshot of the online form to collect information about the US Nodes

NGI Explorer made use of this information to implement individual profiles for each US Node, making them publicly available through the website within the section **APPLY NOW**.

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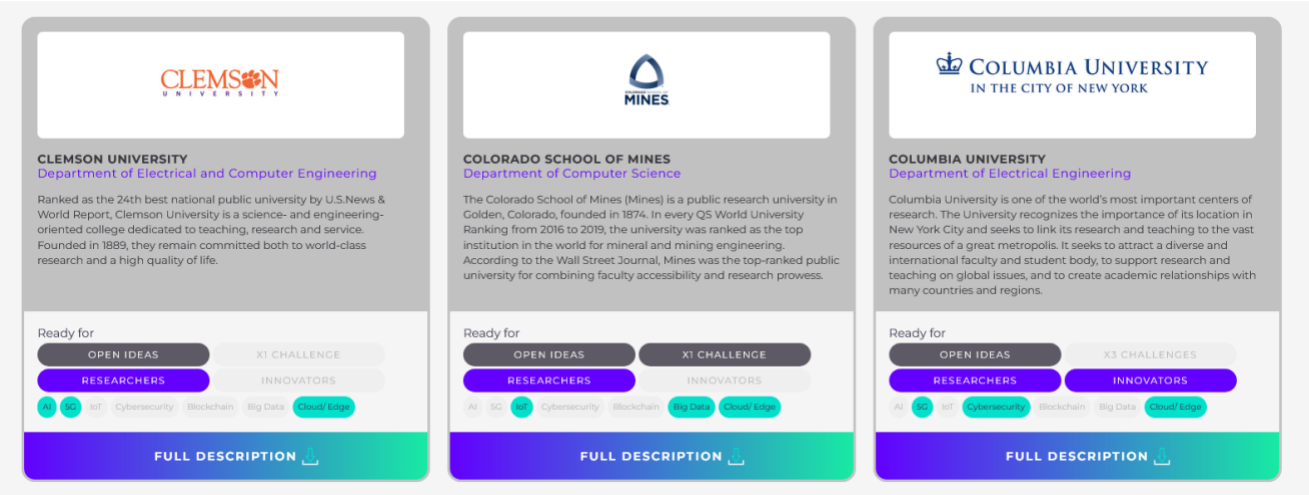

Figure 2 US Nodes description on website

By clicking on 'Full Description', detailed information about the US Node were accessed. A sample of these profiles can be seen below.

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Figure 3 Example of full description of US node

2. **US institutions participating in the Open Call are brought by an applicant**. These organisations form the **PAIRED TEAMS** in collaboration with applicants in the Open Call. NGI Explorer offers this option if European candidates are interested in working directly with a specific American institution not listed in the ecosystem of the US Nodes offer prepared by the project, whom they may know or have worked with in the past or attracted for the purpose of the Open Call opportunity. These American institutions were exempt from signing any agreement if the candidate they are associated with was not selected; on the other hand, they were bound to the specific application and could not be widely promoted among other candidates. **For the 3rd Open Call, 3 US Nodes were onboarded in this mode**, and a total of 14 throughout the programme lifetime, which proved a successful mechanism to attract and engage with additional institutions.

RESULTS

Throughout the operation of NGI Explorers, the programme has accomplished the following metrics:

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- **Reached out to over 5,000 contact points in the United States**, targeting professors, assistant professors, post-doctoral researchers, CEOs, international partnership managers, business managers and community builders. The project designed and executed critical mass email campaigns to accomplish such coverage, leveraging public databases of interest, such as NSF's Computer and Network Systems (CNS) Active Awards.
- **Conducted over 500 interviews** with contact points who expressed interest to know more. The objective of such meetings was to pitch the opportunity to onboard them as a US Node, but also served to raise awareness about the programme, the Next Generation Internet, and research instruments for Transatlantic collaboration.
- **An ecosystem interested in a potential collaboration spanning around 150 institutions**, expressing a solid willingness about the possibility of joining as a US Node and hosting Explorers. For a significant share of these interested parties, administrative burden and close-to-deadline timing became a bottleneck for not joining finally.
- **A network of 59[3] US Nodes from public and private institutions across the whole country, where 39 of them were enrolled in OC3**. Many of these profiles had prior experience with NSF grants, but for some others, it was the first time collaborating with an international partner and/or a public grant. This indicator includes both the nodes brought by the consortium prior to the Open Calls and the Paired Teams that were selected as beneficiaries.

[3] 57 unique US nodes, 59 including two diverse departments involved.

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Figure 4 NGI Explorers' US Nodes Network Map

Table 1 List of US nodes

LIST OF US NODES	
Arizona State University	Recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the country's most innovative school, Arizona State University is where students and faculty work with NASA to develop, advance and lead innovations in space exploration. The School of Computing, Informatics, and Decision Systems Engineering (CIDSE) envisions a society where secure, accurate, and current information is ubiquitously available and data is seamlessly collected, managed, and converted into information that entertains individuals, empowers businesses and guides the decisions of both, in their daily affairs.
Binghamton University State University of New York	Binghamton University is a premier public university dedicated to enriching the lives of its people and to being enriched by partnerships with different communities. The Department of Systems Science and Industrial Engineering strives to improve complex systems, simplifying and enhancing efficiency, working with federal and industry sponsors to conduct innovative industry-based research. The Department of Computer Science emphasises experimental research to design and engineer a wide variety of computer and information systems. The department's research funding continues to grow and includes Federal Agencies (NSF, AFOSR, NIH, & DOE) as well as industry.

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Boston University is a leading private academic research institution that was founded in 1839 and located in the heart of Boston, Massachusetts (USA) with a total undergraduate enrollment of 17,983 and a campus size of 169 acres. Boston University is an intellectual incubator with 17 schools and colleges, over 100 institutes and centres, more than 300 programs of study, 3,000 full-time faculty members, and 7,000 dedicated staff—a place where collaborations, discoveries, and advances take place every day.

The Department of Computer Science at Boston University is widely regarded to be among the top computer science programs in the nation, and this is reflected in the quality and commitment of our faculty.

Carnegie Mellon University is a world-renowned centre for technology and innovation shaping our world. CMU is ranked number one for computer science, artificial intelligence, and robotics within the US. It launched the first academic department in robotics, the first Ph.D. in robotics, and is the world's largest university robotics research group. CMU partners with government and industry on all aspects of robotics and AI research (e.g. basic research to applied research to full commercialization).

CMU's Robotics Institute is home to the National Robotics Engineering Center and arguably the most critical US government artificial intelligence centre. Begun in 1979 with a small government-industry investment in 1979, CMU's Robotics Institute is now a generator of economic growth and innovation (from billion-dollar spinoffs in autonomous vehicles to artificial intelligence driving situational awareness).

Case Western Reserve University is the Top 1 research university in Ohio, with 17 Nobel laureates affiliated, ranked 32nd most innovative among national universities and 13th for commercialization of research.

The Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Case Western Reserve University is motivated by synergetic research thrusts exploring the intersections of bio-micro-info in the ever-changing world of technology. They bring together a spectrum of degree programs and research thrusts that ultimately lead to the enhancement of life. We strive for distinction through excellence, productivity, and innovation.

Ranked as the 24th best national public university by U.S.News & World Report, Clemson University is a science- and engineering-oriented college dedicated to teaching, research and service. Founded in 1889, they remain committed both to world-class research and high quality of life.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is one of the largest and most active at Clemson, with over 50 faculty members who teach and perform research in a broad range of topics in Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering.

Colorado School of Mines (Mines) is a public research university in Golden, Colorado, founded in 1874. In every QS World University Ranking from 2016 to 2019, the university was ranked as the top institution in the world for mineral and mining engineering. According to the Wall Street Journal, Mines was the top-ranked public university for combining faculty accessibility and research prowess.

The Department of Computer Science has a strong emphasis on research, both within the department and collaboratively with other departments, universities, government organisations and industry partners.

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Columbia University is one of the world's most important centres of research. The University recognizes the importance of its location in New York City and seeks to link its research and teaching to the vast resources of a great metropolis. It seeks to attract a diverse and international faculty and student body, to support research and teaching on global issues, and to create academic relationships with many countries and regions. It expects all areas of the University to advance knowledge and learning at the highest level and to convey the products of its efforts to the world.

The Department of Electrical Engineering was a consequence of Thomas Edison's establishment of his first central electric station in Manhattan, in 1882. This soon led to the need for a Department of Electrical Engineering, which flourished over the years and it is now renowned for its research and excellent faculty worldwide.

Dew Mobility is a California State corporation -with partners like Microsoft, Samsung, Nokia, Orange, Sensoplex and Vuzix- with 4 business units: Internet of Things, AI, Machine Learning and cyber security applications.

Coordinated by a team of leaders from various Fortune companies, Dew is poised to meet the demands of a rapidly growing industry. Their experienced development team designs and creates applications for all major platforms.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University is the world's largest and most respected university specialising in aviation and aerospace, with over 130,000 graduates around the globe.

The Department of Electrical, Computer, Software, and Systems Engineering (ECSSE) work on —and even develop— the technologies that make air and space flight possible. From navigation and control systems to the electroluminescent dimming of the windows in a 787 airliner, these technologies involve embedded computers like those found in mobile phone and flight control systems.

East Carolina University (ECU) is a public research university in Greenville, North Carolina. It is the fourth largest university in North Carolina. The vision for ECU directs the institution to achieve leadership in a selected number of strategic directions while delivering excellent undergraduate and graduate degree programs and making significant contributions to the economic vitality of eastern North Carolina and beyond.

The College of Engineering and Technology offers state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment, including a thermal and fluids lab, acoustics and vibrations lab, biomedical and bioprocessing labs, a construction management high bay lab, a wind tunnel, various 3-D printing areas and more.

George Mason University is Virginia's largest public research university established by the Commonwealth of Virginia in the National Capital Region. It is an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world.

The Centre for Spatial Information Science and Systems (CSISS) has conducted a series of funded studies in automation of decision making which combines artificial intelligence/machine learning, sensor web, and big data technologies under the support of cloud-enabled cyberinfrastructure. The centre also develops architecture, algorithms, infrastructure, and standards in the above technical areas.

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

George Washington University is a research university consistently ranked as one of the most prestigious universities in the US, and one of the wealthiest in the world. GWU provides access to leading international institutions and multinational corporations.

GW's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) work together to explore solutions that will help: develop photonic computing; create state-of-the-art advances in high-performance computing; improve the reliability of cloud computing; create better sensors to detect harmful biological and chemical agents; create and develop energy-efficient and environmentally friendly magnetic refrigeration systems, among many other efforts.

Georgia State University

With six campuses throughout metro Atlanta, Georgia State University provides its world-class faculty and more than 54,000 students with unsurpassed connections to the opportunities available in one of the 21st century's great global cities. It was ranked #3 most Innovative University in the USA and the fastest-growing research portfolio In the USA.

Since it was created in 1999, the Department of Computer Science has made tremendous strides, including hiring a first-class faculty, creating a successful Ph.D. program, and building collaborative research and education programs with other science departments. Six faculty members (including two now at Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia) have won awards from the National Science Foundation's Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program.

GLOBAL CYBER ALLIANCE

Global Cyber Alliance is an international, cross-sector nonprofit dedicated to confronting cyber risks and improving our connected world. They unite global communities, by implementing concrete solutions, and by measuring the effects of our actions.

GCA focuses on the most prevalent cyber risks individuals and businesses face. They develop and deploy practical, real-world solutions that measurably improve the security of our cyber ecosystem. They make them vendor agnostic and freely available to the global community. In addition to promoting the widespread adoption of our existing solutions, next on the horizon we are investing our resources to secure Internet of Things (IoT) devices and technologies.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Iowa State University is a public flagship classified as a Research University with very high research activity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, receiving nearly US$300 million in research grants each year.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECpE) focuses on five high-impact interdisciplinary areas: bioengineering, cyber infrastructure, distributed sensing and decision making, energy infrastructure, and small-scale technologies.

LSU

Louisiana State University is a public land-grant research university founded in 1853. LSU is the flagship school of the state of Louisiana. Designated as a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant institution, LSU is also noted for its extensive research facilities, operating some 800 sponsored research projects funded by agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

mit media lab

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a private land-grant research university that has played a key role in the development of modern technology and science, ranking it among the top academic institutions in the world.

The MIT Media Lab is one of the world's leading research and academic organisations. Unconstrained by traditional disciplines, Media Lab designers,

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engineers, artists, and scientists strive to create technologies and experiences that enable people to understand and transform their lives, communities, and environments.

NSF ranks Mississippi State University among the nation's Top 100 research institutions and Magnolia State's leading research university. As a global, diversified research institution, the university is providing limitless possibilities for students to put new technologies to work, find new ways to feed the world, plan better ways to boost the nation's economy, and prepare for the energy needs of tomorrow. At the heart of this success is a forward-thinking mission that integrates three defining components of student life and personal development: learning, research, service.

Most research in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is supported by government agencies or industries, with more than $12 million per year. The mission of the research units at Mississippi State University is to provide an interdisciplinary research and learning environment.

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is a physical sciences laboratory and non-regulatory agency of the United States Department of Commerce. Its mission is to promote American innovation and industrial competitiveness. NIST's activities are organised into laboratory programs that include nanoscale science and technology, engineering, information technology, neutron research, material measurement, and physical measurement.

New Jersey Institute of Technology is ranked #1 nationally by Forbes for the upward economic mobility of its lowest-income students and is among the top 2% of public colleges and universities in return on educational investment.

NJIT is one of only three R1 research universities in New Jersey. The Advanced Networking Laboratory (ANL) at NJIT engages in research to improve the performance, dependability, and trustworthiness of telecommunications networks. ANL's goals are to identify, model, simulate, and demonstrate next-generation networking technologies, and to add to the knowledge base for next generation networks; to train tomorrow's network engineering innovators; and to foster industrial collaboration and international partnerships.

New Mexico State University is a comprehensive research land-grant university excelling in teaching, research and public service. NMSU is truly a reflection of the region's vibrant communities – an exciting place to tackle challenges, find answers to important issues and prepare for the future.

The Department of Computer offers specific expertise in several research areas, such as bioinformatics, artificial intelligence and knowledge representation, software engineering and programming languages, computer and wireless networks, data mining and machine learning, game design and human-computer interaction, high performance computing, theory of computing, computer architectures, and assistive technologies. A number of laboratories have been established to coordinate research activities, preparing this Institution to be internationally recognized.

Northwestern University is a private research university and the oldest chartered university in Illinois and is ranked among the most prestigious academic institutions in the world. Northwestern has an endowment of $16.1 billion, one of the largest university endowments in the world, as well as an annual budget of around $2.5 billion.

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Orange Silicon Valley

Orange Silicon Valley is a US subsidiary of Orange, one of the world's leading telecommunications operators, serving more than 253 million customers across 27 countries. Orange Silicon Valley is a passionate, forward-thinking team of experts who thrive by connecting ecosystems and making innovation and technology visible, accessible, and actionable for a responsible digital world. For more than 20 years, Orange Silicon Valley has been providing strategic insights to the Orange Group worldwide leveraging a unique understanding of the US market. Orange Silicon Valley is headquartered in San Francisco with a regional office in New York.

PennState

Pennsylvania State University is a top-ranked research university and Pennsylvania's sole land-grant institution, founded with a mission of high-quality teaching, expert research, and global service.

Research in the College of Information Sciences and Technology is transformative. The work focuses on systems-level thinking, the higher conceptualization of global problems, and interdisciplinary connectivity.

RIT Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is the tenth largest private university in the United States in terms of full-time students. It is internationally known for its science, computer, engineering, and art programs, as well as for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a leading deaf-education institution that provides educational opportunities to more than 1000 deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Santa Clara University

Santa Clara University blends high-tech innovation with a social consciousness. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, SCU pursues new technology, encourages creativity, engages with their communities, and shares an entrepreneurial mindset.

The SCU IoT Research Lab from the Department of Computer Engineering focuses on the design and development of low-power wireless communication protocols, edge and fog computing, and software-defined networking. They are primarily interested in mission-critical IoT applications such as medical monitoring and industrial control. The research lab is collaborating with various companies in Silicon Valley including Intel, Cisco, Cypress, and Broadcom.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Saint Louis University is a Jesuit, Catholic university ranked among the top research institutions in the nation. Founded in 1818, it is the oldest university west of the Mississippi and the second oldest Jesuit university in the United States.

The Department of Computer Science is engaged in cutting-edge research, both to advance fundamental algorithms and computing technologies, and to apply those technologies in innovative ways that improve people's lives and advance knowledge and understanding of our world. It presents work at national and international conferences and publishes results in renowned journals. Currently, it is leading projects funded by more than $1.7M in awards.

Simmons UNIVERSITY

Simmons University utilises the combination of education for leadership in high-demand professional fields with the intellectual foundation of the liberal arts. The result is a Simmons graduate prepared not only to work, but to lead in professional, civic, and personal life — a vision of empowerment that Simmons calls preparation for life's work. Since its founding in 1899, Simmons' raison d'etre has been to expand opportunities for women, forging fields that advance equity and justice locally and globally.

NGI

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Stevens Institute of Technology belongs to an exclusive list of the top 25 "Most Innovative Schools" in the US, ranked #69 overall, the second fastest-rising college in the nation among the top 100 national universities. It scores Top 25 for Internships.

Funded by the NSF, Stevens Institute of Technology leads the Institute for Cognitive Networking to promote and sustain cognitive wireless networking related research and education collaborations. A major emphasis is on the investigation of the fundamental challenges related to low cost, reliable wireless broadband access technologies for traditionally underserved areas using dynamic spectrum access/sharing/management techniques that exploit spectrum (e.g., T.V.) white spaces (WS).

Sonoma State University is a public university part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system. Regularly named a “Best Regional University”, it has also been named one of the “most wired” campuses in the nation.

The Engineering Department is distinguished by its state-of-the art laboratories and strong ties to the local high-tech industries. The Department focuses on hands-on and project-based learning and it offers exciting paid research and training opportunities to all engineering students. Many of our alums work for big names, including Keysight, Parker Hannifin, Xilinx, Broadcom, Disney, Fitbit, PG&E, Google, Tesla, and Apple.

State University of New York at Albany is ranked among the top universities in Forbes’ “America’s Best Public Colleges” and is a premier public research University in the Capital Region of the State of New York.

The Department of Computer Science is part of a Tier 1 research university located in the heart of Tech Valley in New York and benefits from a world-class faculty engaged In cutting-edge research. Their first-rate programs attract students and faculty from across the globe, who together comprise a rich and vibrant community of scholars making their mark in the ever-evolving high tech computer industry. While mastering computer science theory and practice, students also have the opportunity to work with world-class faculty on cutting-edge research.

Temple University is a public state-related research university and among the world's largest providers of professional education. Temple University has evolved into an international powerhouse in higher education and a top-tier research institution with roughly 40,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students.

The Catholic University of America is a National Research University in the Heart of the Nation’s Capital in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

The Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science is in the business of challenging the impossible. Here are some of the world’s biggest problems under the guidance of faculty who are recognized as global leaders in biomedical, civil, electrical and mechanical engineering. Research is conducted here at the highest level with the opportunity to collaborate with researchers at U.S. Navy facilities working on artificial intelligence and robotics, advance discoveries in tissue remodelling alongside faculty at the National Institutes of Health and design new systems in aerospace engineering with experts at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Centre.

The Providence Group helps organisations navigate the complexity of cybersecurity and privacy risk in order to thrive in today’s uncertain environment.

Their cybersecurity and privacy experience is in Congress, the executive branch, regulatory agencies, the intelligence community, and in law firms,

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management consulting and public relations. We have deep international cybersecurity and privacy relationships in government, trade associations, law firms, cybersecurity software developers, communications and industries across business sectors. They participate in government and private sector cybersecurity and privacy workshops, leading international conferences, and publish frequently on pressing cybersecurity and privacy issues.

The University of Iowa

[The University of Iowa](#) is one of the nation's premier public research universities with 32,535 students from 114 countries and all 50 states with 11 graduate programs ranked among the top 10 in the country.

At the University of Iowa Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, research programmes and classroom instruction are headed by an outstanding faculty. They are proud to have among our faculty a NSF Presidential Faculty Fellow, a NSF National Young Investigator, and several Fellows of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Optical Society of America, and a Fellow of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering.

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

[The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) is the nation's first public university at the heart of what's next, preparing a diverse student body to become creators, explorers, innovators and leaders in North Carolina and throughout the world. Carolina's nationally recognized, innovative teaching, campus-wide spirit of inquiry and dedication to public service continue the legacy that began in 1795 when the University first opened its doors to students.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA

[The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga](#) (UTC) is a community-engaged institution that collaborates with regional partners to provide an experiential learning environment and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Chattanooga, known as "Gig City," was the first city in the U.S. to deploy fiber optic gigabit internet. The network currently is capable of 10-gigabit speed, making UTC an ideal partner for researchers and innovators focused on next-generation internet technologies.

The Centre for Urban Informatics and Progress is a smart city and urbanisation research centre that uses the power of big data, artificial intelligence, statistical modelling, and machine learning to study how cities can ensure that our future is safer, smarter, and healthier for all.

UCF

[University of Central Florida](#) is an emerging preeminent research university in Florida & one of the best colleges for quality, access, impact & value.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering delivers research-based education and facilitates technology transfers. The ECE faculty continue their research endeavours that generate new knowledge and support technology advances as well as economic growth. ECE research is categorised into the following four focus groups: Computer Systems and VLSI, Cyber-Physical Systems, Micro and Nano-Systems and Electromagnetics and Optics.

University of Colorado Boulder

[University of Colorado Boulder](#) is the flagship of the University of Colorado system, ranked 32nd best among all universities globally (U.S. News & World Report, 2017), #18 most entrepreneurial universities and #2 in the most innovative tech hubs in the US (Forbes, 2015).

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is a tier-one professional school that focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship. Through the college's dynamic engagement with strong, global industry partners, CU Boulder grads are actively involved in hundreds of life-changing programmes.

NGI

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University of Colorado Colorado Springs, founded in 1965, is a residential academic and research mainstay in southern Colorado based at the foot of Pikes Peak. UCCS partners with major corporations and federal agencies to provide leading-edge, high-tech education ranging from business to theatre to nursing outreach programs for rural areas. It is among the fastest growing universities.

The Computer Science Department is active in many research areas. The department is supported by external funding from both public and private sources, including the National Science Foundation and the Department of Defense. Faculty publish in top-tier academic conferences and journals. Our high-quality research program is driven by graduate students pursuing PhD and Masters degrees as well as undergraduate researchers.

University of Houston is ranked among the best colleges in America, UH is home to award-winning faculty, innovative research centres, alumni who have become international leaders and one of the most diverse student populations in the nation.

The Building Reliable Advances and Innovation in Neurotechnology (BRAIN) Center is an Industry/University Collaborative Research Center at Arizona State University (ASU) and the University of Houston (UH). This partnership will allow rigorous testing of efficacy, safety and long-term reliability of neurotechnology that would not be otherwise possible within the traditional 'silos' of academic, industry, regulatory and clinical communities.

UMass Amherst is the flagship public university in Massachusetts, ranking #24 among public universities nationally. UMass is distinguished by the excellence and breadth of academic, research, and community outreach programs.

The College of Information and Computer Sciences (CICS) is internationally recognized for its research activities and has one of the highest ranked and most competitive graduate programs in the nation. CICS also consistently ranks among the 25 computer science graduate programs on CS Rankings.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth distinguishes itself as a vibrant, public research university dedicated to engaged learning and innovative research resulting in personal and lifelong student success. The University serves as an intellectual catalyst for economic, social, and cultural transformation on a global, national, and regional scale.

The level of externally funded research in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering has increased dramatically in recent years. The principal research thrusts in the ECE Department are categorised in Technology Domains and Application Domains. U.S. News & World Report ranks the College of Engineering in the top 150 engineering schools among doctorate granting universities, and UMass Dartmouth as a national research university.

University of Minnesota is one of the most comprehensive public universities in the United States and ranks among the most prestigious. It is both the state land-grant university, with a strong tradition of education and public service, and the state's primary research university, with faculty of international reputation.

The Department of Computer Science & Engineering at the University of Minnesota has come a long way in the past 50 years. They have made tremendous progress and have become one of the most vibrant and interdisciplinary departments within the College of Science and Engineering, the University of Minnesota, and the computer science field at large.

University of Oregon is renowned for its research prowess and commitment to teaching. The UO is one of just two Pacific Northwest members of the

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prestigious Association of American Universities, a consortium of 62 leading public and private research institutions in the United States and Canada.

The Department of Computer and Information Science (CIS) faculty are international leaders in their fields, including informatics, networking, security, software engineering, assistive technologies, theory, scientific visualization, and high performance computing. Recent interdisciplinary research initiatives with biologists, physicists, neuroscientists, and networking engineers have resulted in prominent research grants from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the National Institutes of Health.

One of the world's leading research universities, **University of Rochester** has a long tradition of breaking boundaries—always pushing and questioning, learning and unlearning. It is located in Rochester, a high-tech powerhouse with a thriving art scene. With more than 12 000 students and excellent faculty, Rochester helps the innovators of the future grow.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering provides leadership for University-level initiatives ranging from nanotechnology and audio research to communications and engineering research. The university continues to play a prominent role in ongoing programs such as the Center for Emerging & Innovative Sciences, the Music Research Lab, the Rochester Center for Biomedical Ultrasound, and the Laboratory for Laser Energetics (LLE).

University of South Carolina is the state's flagship university with more than 50,000 students at the system's eight campuses. It is the only university in South Carolina and one of just 62 nationwide designated as a centre of very high research activity by the Carnegie Foundation.

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering conducts research and development in a variety of fundamental areas, including agent-based computing, decision making and analysis, database mining and warehousing, multimedia system design and implementation, parallel computer architecture and security. This research finds applications in bioinformatics, e-commerce, education, information systems and computer forensics.

University of Southern California is one of the world's leading private research universities. In its comprehensive 2021 ranking, The Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education ranked USC 19th among more than 1,000 public and private universities. USC's distinguished faculty of 4,000 innovative scholars, researchers, teachers and mentors include five Nobel laureates and dozens of recipients of prestigious national honours including the MacArthur "Genius" Award.

The Viterbi School of Engineering is a pioneer in restoring sight to the blind; restoring memory to sufferers of Alzheimer's, and socially assistive robots to aid seniors with stroke or children with autism. It is the home of the first operational quantum computing centre in academia.

University of South Florida is Florida's leading metropolitan research university. In 2018, USF skyrocketed into the top 25 public universities for research expenditure, becoming at the forefront of cutting-edge research in science and engineering.

The Florida Center for Cybersecurity (Cyber Florida) is a state-funded organisation dedicated to positioning Florida as a national leader in cybersecurity through education and workforce development; innovative, interdisciplinary research; and community outreach. Hosted at the University of South Florida, Cyber Florida works with all 12 State University System of Florida (SUS) institutions as well as industry, government and defence to build partnerships and develop programs that grow and strengthen Florida's cybersecurity industry.

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URBAN.SYSTEMS is a trusted "incubator" for local, state and federal governments in how to upgrade smart technology to support the needs, desires and expectations of their citizens, helping "scale" interoperable components through partnerships.

Its team accounts for long experience in Intel, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, IBM, Accenture, Philips Medical Systems and DaimlerChrysler.

University of Washington is one of the world's preeminent public universities. Ranked No. 14 in the world on the 2018 Academic Ranking of World Universities, the UW educates more than 54,000 students annually.

Veoci is the leader in collaboration, continuity, and response software. Through rapid development, depth of knowledge, innovative thinking, and commitment to diversity, we help save time, money, and lives.

Having worked side-by-side for nearly 20 years, the founders prioritise support and community, and have built Veoci around those principles. We are innovators who realise that the best way we can help ensure organisational resilience and successful crisis management is to create software that everyone can use.

Virginia Tech is the commonwealth's most comprehensive university and a leading research institution, with more than 34,000 students and a research portfolio of more than $531 million, the largest of any university in Virginia.

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering has programs that are among the nation's largest and strongest in computer vision, power electronics, power systems, wireless communications and networking, space science and engineering, remote sensing, embedded systems, fiber optics and photonics, and computational biology, with external research expenditures exceeding $34 million annually. The department is the beneficiary of the Bradley Endowment which provides scholarships, fellowships, professorships, and other support.

Washington University at St. Louis is positioned to meet national and global imperatives in energy, environment security, health and economic prosperity. Through innovative research, they are committed to creating the new knowledge necessary to achieve a bright and sustainable future. The university sees around 3000 research projects each year, financed by privates and the Federation reaching around 800 USD Million.

The Preston M. Green Department of Electrical & Systems Engineering has a unique and long tradition of excellence in advancing basic science and solving engineering problems relevant to society. The department is dedicated to providing high-quality education and research. 4.6 UDS were spent in Research in FY20.

Western Michigan University (WMU) offers more than 120 advanced degree programs, including nationally recognized health, business and engineering programs. WMU shapes academic programs so that graduates are attractive job applicants and can immediately add value to their workplaces and community. The Department of Computer Science has as its primary mission the advancement of the field of computer science through teaching, research and service.

The Department of Computer Science has as its primary mission the advancement of the field of computer science through teaching, research and service. Above all, it conducts research in the field of computer science and encourages collaborative research with other disciplines within the University.

LESSONS LEARNT

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The North American network of nodes hosting the Explorers are a fundamental element in the success of the programme, but at the same time, they imply some particularities worth noticing:

- The profile of these institutions (or at least the research team directly involved) must be highly technical to meet the expectations and profile of the Explorers. Prior to the involvement in the programme, the consortium requires the evaluation of the eligibility and suitability of each profile.
- Often referred to as 'partners', the US Nodes were not formal members of the consortium, i.e. not bound by the Consortium Agreement. Therefore, the programme requires formalising the collaboration with them by reaching a legal agreement before they can participate in the different activities. Such an agreement was in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- To fast-track the collaboration, the programme focused on collaborating with grassroots legal units (e.g. a research group rather than the whole school or department). The legal agreement with high-level spheres is highly time-consuming and would jeopardise the agile operation of the programme. The administrative burden is a critical factor to make these collaborations possible, so there must be the main contact point (likely the person working directly with the Explorer) that shall bridge the divide between the project and the legal units.
- The US Nodes could not perceive any financial support from the programme, which entails that their motivation cannot be monetary but driven by the enthusiasm and willingness to work with European counterparts.
- Specific language and interpersonal skills must be adapted when communicating with them to avoid unnecessary barriers and obstacles. There are some cultural differences between the terminology used in European projects and North American entities.
- The majority of these partners are academic organisations belonging to universities. There are two main reasons for this:
    - Universities are institutions highly used to collaborating with global mobility programmes. In particular, US universities often welcome students and scholars from all over the world, so they have dedicated admin teams working with partnerships similar to NGI Explorers. This is an important factor to streamline the execution of the MoU, as well as facilitating the opportunity;
    - Business partners, on the contrary, are much more reluctant to join initiatives like this. From the representatives that expressed preliminary interest in the first and second calls, most of them were only inclined to participate if they knew the specific candidate upfront, which collides with the workflow of the selection process.

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2.2. EUROPE

The engagement plan of NGI Explorers with stakeholders in Europe in year 3 (Y3) follows the same objectives of year 1 (Y1) and year 2 (Y2): i) Promote OC3 among multiple research and innovation ecosystems to reach a critical mass of participants, while ii) amplifying the visibility of the Next Generation Internet vision outside the inner NGI community.

Starting from the database of contacts identified in Y1 and Y2 (and reported in D4.2 and D4.3), we redefined the stakeholders to be contacted, to make the emailing campaign more effective and to gather a significant number of applications despite the COVID-19 pandemic.
Thanks to this emailing campaign, we promoted OC3 to:

A. **20 Tech associations** (e.g. FIWARE, 5G IA, BDVA, etc.)
B. **80 Hubs** (e.g. IoT Alliance, 5G Observatory, etc.)
C. **140 Tech partners**
D. **20 organisations working on tech innovation**;
E. **143 EU projects**
F. **80 RTOs;**
G. **120 Universities;**
H. **20 Publishing platforms** (e.g. Funding box, Marie Curie Alumni, EC Funding and Tenders Opportunities etc.)
I. **+120 NCPs**
J. **74 Enterprises European Networks**
K. **+30 associations focusing on Women in Technology** (e.g. GirlsInTech; GirlsInWeb; Weconnect, UN Empower Women, etc.)

In each email we attached an explanatory one-pager or a two-page flyer, depending on the stakeholder contacted. The flyers and one-pager used for OC3 emailing campaign are available in the NGI Explorers Library on **Zenodo**.
This email campaign has been quite successful: The Open Call was published on prestigious platforms and newsletters (such as 5G IA, FIWARE, BDVA, Marie Curie Alumni, EU research, COSMOS, etc. – some examples in the chapters below) and gathered interest from several NCPs, Universities, RTOs and Enterprises European Networks.

We can say that during the three emailing campaigns that ran during the three Open Calls, we contacted more than 1000 unique stakeholders each, with a total of **+ 3000 emails sent**.

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3. DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES – PERIOD 3

The **objectives** of the dissemination strategy for the third period of the project were the following:

- To maintain and grow a community around NGI Explorers in coordination with the stakeholder management framework;
- To widely disseminate the OC3;
- To create tailored promotional campaigns to i) reach the right stakeholders ii) onboard more female candidates in our programme; and iii) disseminate our Explorers activities and achievements to the widest possible community through various channels and instruments.

3.1. CHANNELS AND MEASURES

To cope with these objectives, the project leveraged an effective and comprehensive set of channels and measures, presenting its key results at M38. Results from M1 to M12 are reported in D4.2, while results from M12 to M24 are available in D4.4.

Table 2 NGI Explorers dissemination measures

Measure	Target Audience	Status M24
Material		
Project Documentation	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Policy Makers	Public deliverables, OC3 submission kit, and US Nodes description are made publicly available through references to the NGI Explorers Library (see below). Other generic information about the project is available through the website and social media.
Scientific & Technical Publications	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	Scientific and technical publications prepared by the OC1, OC2 and OC3 Explorers are reported in D4.3, D4.6, D4.7 and in the NGI Explorers Library.
Articles & Blog Posts	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Society	NGI Explorers Success Stories Series (published on LinkedIn, more information in the chapters below) Short blog posts to promote OC3 opportunity and OC3 – related activities.
Online Channels		

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Open Calls	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	The OC3 was launched through the F6S Platform: https://www.f6s.com/ngiexplorersprogramopencall3 and highly promoted through different channels.
NGI Explorers Library	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Policy Makers	As explained in D4.4, the project makes use of Zenodo, open-access repository developed under the European OpenAIRE, to allow EU Explorers to share their experience, best practices, articles, and non-confidential material and references for general interest. https://www.zenodo.net/communities/ngi_explorers/search?page=1&size=20 The Library has been kept updated during the project lifetime. At the time of writing the deliverable, the number of downloads is approximately 300.
Webinars	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	Two webinars organised: **Webinar 1 A step by step guide** (January 28th,2021 @ 11:00 am – 12:00 pm): During this webinar, the NGI Explorers team explained how to submit a successful proposal, what applicants need to know about eligibility criteria and procedures to follow and the difference between the 3 tracks to apply to NGI Explorers. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAVZAjpsmNs&feature=youtu.be **Webinar 2 From application to Evaluation** (12 February, 2021, 11:00 CEST) During this webinar, the NGI Explorers team explained how to submit a successful proposal and what to expect after the application process, what type of free services the project provides, and which track of application to choose: Open Ideas, Challenge, Paired Teams. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4c0VNf3UIY&feature=youtu.be
Events		
Organization of events	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	**1 Immersion Bootcamp** organised online, on 28th of June 2021. **1 Workshop organised**. On the 18th May 2021, the **NGI Explorer** team took part in the **NGI Forum 2021**, co-organizing a workshop with two renowned NGI projects: **NGI Atlantic** and **Think NEXUS**. These three projects have a common main objective, that of bridging, expanding, and sustaining a cross-continent Research and Innovation collaboration.

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		 *Figure 5 NGI Forum workshop banner* **2 Oscars – Award Ceremonies** organised The first one on May 18th, 2021 (more information in the chapters below) https://www.ngi.eu/event/final-ngi-explorers-award-cerimony/ The second one on February 2nd, 2021 https://explorers.ngi.eu/agenda-oscars https://www.ngi.eu/news/2022/01/28/final-ngi-explorers-award-cerimony/
Conferences/ Trade Fairs/ Workshops	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Ecosystem Brokers Policy Makers	Due to the COVID pandemic and the limitation to travel, the NGI Explorers team did not participate in any physical event during Y2 of the project. The Consortium participated in the following online events: **NGI Communication webinars 2021:** • Running your website in 2021 • SEO 101 • The Art of pitching • Engagement strategies • Engagement tactics • Digital Advertising **NGI Forum 2021** Participation in the NGI Forum 2021. Our Project Coordinator, Iwa Stefanik, moderated the NGI International Plenary Session.  *Figure 6 Screenshot of the participation in the NGI Forum* The Explorers participated in the INNOVATORS PITCHES contest.

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3.2. IMMERSION BOOTCAMP

On June 28, 2021, the NGI Explorers Team organised the third NGI Explorers Immersion Bootcamp, held online.

The Immersion Bootcamp aimed to (i) foster community connection, exchange and collaboration and (ii) engage in NGI discussions/vision; while discovering who is behind the programme. Our team drove the 22 Explorers in a one day of immersion in the NGI Explorers ecosystem, to brief and support them on their first expedition to the US.

The agenda of the Immersion Bootcamp was composed of different "training modules", as follows:

A. **LEARN:** training to advance knowledge on topics like the NGI vision, communication guidelines and tips, American mindset etc...
B. **SUPPORT:** "we have your back" – administrative support on monitoring procedure during US expedition, and individual support through an assigned mentor.
C. **GROW:** fire pitch session. Explorers delivered a three-minute pitch to outline their US technology expedition.

The agenda is available in Annex 1 in this deliverable.

The Event has been displayed on the NGI Explorers website. Since our project is coming to an end, to avoid confusion, we decided to hide the page. In addition to the dedicated page on the NGI Explorers website, the event was published on the NGI website under the NGI Event webpage and it was widely promoted through Twitter (both in the NGI Explorers and NGI accounts).

For this event, our team prepared the "NGI Explorers Immersion Bootcamp" toolkit, a 90-page booklet full of useful information for the Explorers and the Bootcamp presentations. This booklet is composed of 2 main parts:

PART 1: WHO is WHO

- What is NGI Explorers
- Overview of Explorers OC3
- NGI Vision
- NGI USA Mission
- Demo sessions
- TETRA services

PART 2: EXPECTATIONS AND OPERATION

- Communication guidelines

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- Everything about your grant
- Set the Pace
- Meet our alumni Explorers

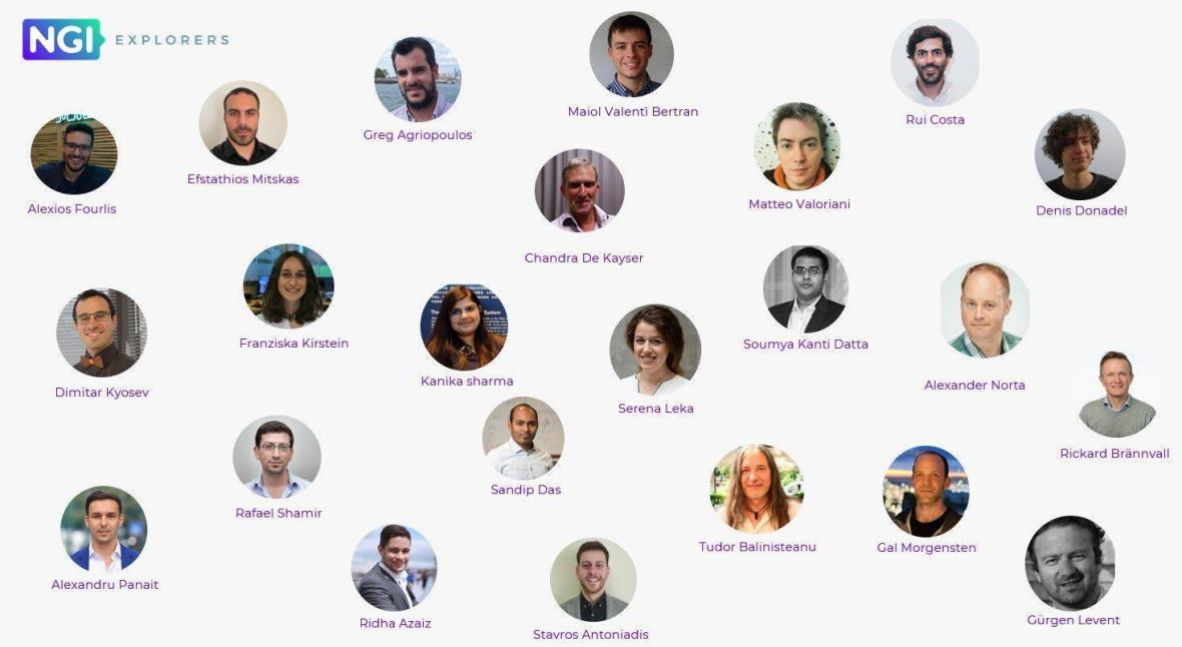

Figure 7 OC#3 Explorers participating in the Bootcamp

3.3. OSCARS: NGI EXPLORERS CEREMONY AWARD

First Oscars Organised – 18 May 2021

Figure 8 NGI Oscars#1 banner

On the 18th May 2021, the **NGI Explorer** team took part in the **NGI Forum 2021**, co-organizing a workshop with two renowned NGI projects: **NGI Atlantic** and **Think NEXUS**. During this

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workshop, the NGI Explorers community was treated to a unique event, meant to celebrate the results achieved by the Explorers who finished their expeditions, the NGI Explorers Oscars.

The Explorers who participated in this first Oscars are:

- Khulan BATBAYAR;
- Ioannis CHATZIGIANNAKIS
- Iñaki EGUIA
- Aurora GONZÁLEZ-VIDAL
- Michal KEDZIORA
- Christian KUDERA
- Ido LEVY
- Cristina MARQUEZ
- Erma PERENDA
- Selvakumar RAMACHANDRAN
- Martin SERRANO
- Zlatko ZAHARIEV

Each of the 12 nominees was asked to pitch their project, briefly showcasing their results and project highlights. These projects have been carried out by European Researchers and Innovators directly working with US interdisciplinary, tech-driven collaborative groups in the following domains: AI, Cybersecurity, Cloud/Edge Computing, IoT, 5G; and verticals: health, smart cities and buildings, network security and connectivity, smart transport, and tourism.

The contestants were then evaluated by a top-notch and well-rounded jury panel with solid knowledge and skill in technology and business against these categories and selection criteria:

- BEST PROJECT EXCELLENCE

This category reviews what the project idea aims to achieve. The evaluation will consider the motivation for the mission, the project's objectives & concept, and the ambition. An important aspect of being assessed is the novelty and the knowledge gap in the field of interest.

- BEST NGI EXPLORERS IMPACT

This category judges the outcomes achieved by the project at the end of the mission in the form of tangible results, including sustainability indicators with the US partner. Examples may include: peer-reviewed papers, technical specifications, software bundles, new services, business/commercial agreements, etc.

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- BRIGHTEST EU EXPLORER

This category evaluates the individual achievement seized out of the project, looking into how the Explorers' careers benefited from the missions. Examples may include: higher professional status, awards/prizes, new job opportunities/positions.

- BEST SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPACT

This category is aligned with the Next Generation Internet vision, analyzing which idea contributed the most to have a positive social impact.

The jury who selected the winners was composed of:

- **Jose Gonzalez**, *NGI Explorers, Jury Lead*
- **Miguel Garcia**, *Innovation Director at Bosonit*
- **Alexandra Garatzogianni**, *Head of Knowledge & Technology Transfer at Leibniz Information Center for Science & Technology*
- **Jim Clarke**, *Project Coordinator at NGIAtlantic*

THE AWARDED INNOVATORS

After the pitch session, the jury reunited in a different meeting room, discussing the pitches and to decide the winners.

During the jury session, the discussion was led by the Jury Lead, Jose Gonzalez and notes were taken by Giulia Pastor from the NGI Explorers team. A shared document was used and it is available upon request.

Despite the high-quality of the results of all our NGI Explorers, in the end, only five were awarded prizes for their outstanding performances.

- **BEST PROJECT EXCELLENCE** – Erma Perenda
- **BEST NGI EXPLORERS IMPACT –** Martin Serrano
- **BRIGHTEST EU EXPLORER –** Iñaki Eguia
- **BEST SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPACT-** Selvakumar Ramachandran
- **THE BEST EU-US COLLABORATION TEAM –** Michal Kedziora (prize selected by the NGI Explorers team, not the external jury)

The Jury reached a consensus and the justification of each award is provided in this table:

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Second Oscars Organised – February 2nd, 2022

Figure 9 NGI Oscars#2 banner

The programme was coming to an end and organised celebration of the community's achievements with a unique event: the NGI Explorers Oscars. 35 Explorers pitched their project in a brief demo session, to showcase their results and project highlights, divided by core technology cluster. These projects have been carried out by European Researchers and Innovators directly working with US interdisciplinary, tech-driven collaborative groups in the following domains: AI, Cybersecurity, Cloud/Edge Computing, IoT, 5G; and verticals: health, smart cities and buildings, network security and connectivity, smart transport, and tourism. The event hosted a Masterclass "Greening the NGI ", offered by the TETRA project and conducted by Robert Miskuf & Susanna Albertini.

The contestants were evaluated by a top-notch and well-rounded jury panel with solid knowledge and skill in technology and business. The following awards were given:

- Best Project Excellence
- Best NGI Explorers Impact
- Brightest EU Explorer
- Best Social Innovation Impact
- The Best US Node (prize selected by the NGI Explorers team, not the external jury)

The Jury who selected the winners was composed of:

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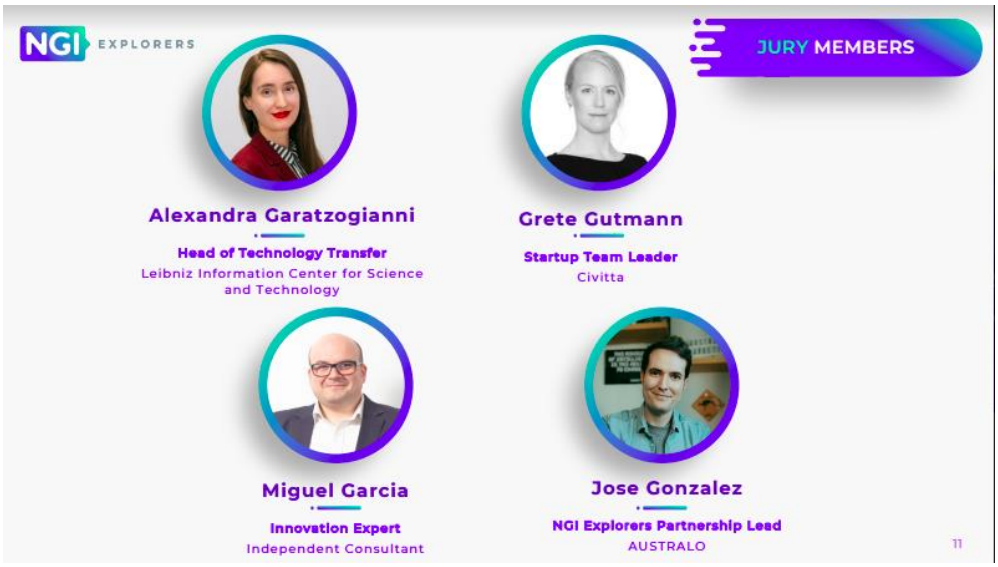

Figure 10 Jury members

- **BEST PROJECT EXCELLENCE –** Bruna Fonseca & Gregory Agriopoulos
- **BEST NGI EXPLORERS IMPACT –** Serena Leka & Luis de la Torre
- **BRIGHTEST EU EXPLORER –** Roberto Medina & Lukasz Porwol
- **BEST SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPACT-** Rui Costa & Franziska Kristein

The NGI Explorers programme would not be possible without the US nodes. These institutions and companies of distinguished importance worldwide, offered their contribution to the programme's purpose by participating in this adventure of technological and scientific nature, demonstrating great collaborative spirit and support towards the solid and sustainable pan-European vision that the NGI community stands for.

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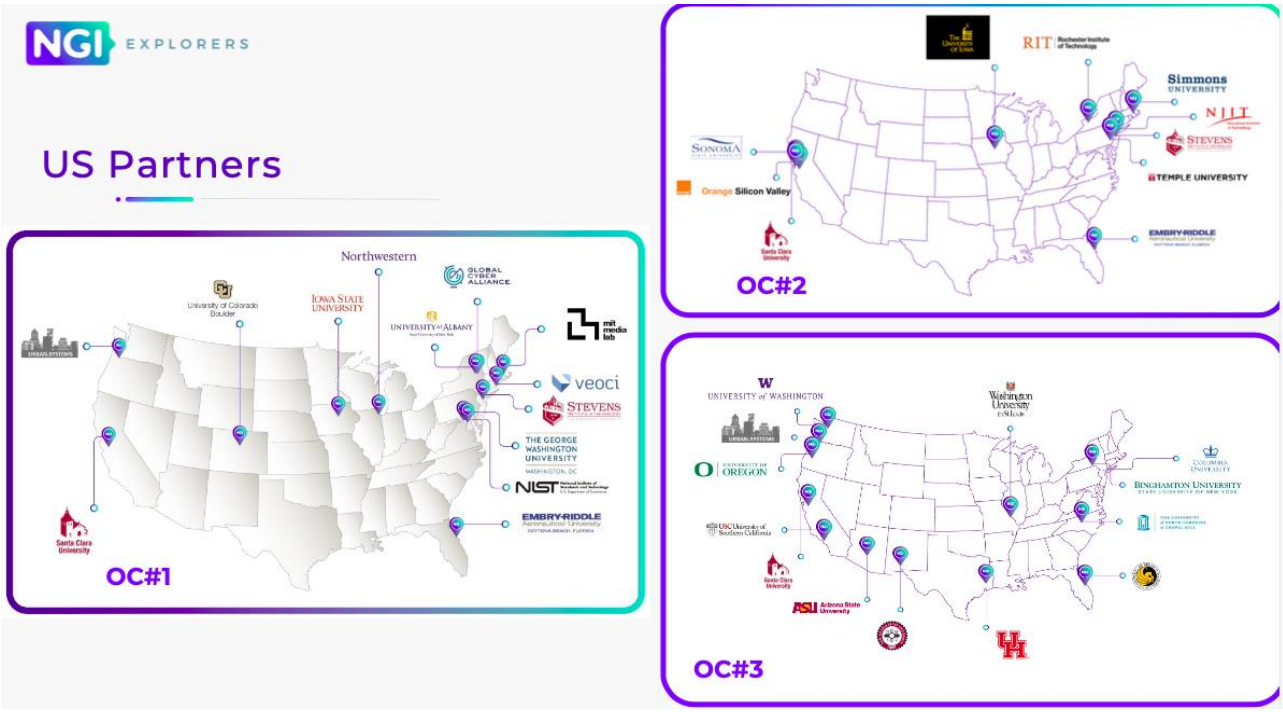

Figure 11 NGI Explorers hosting US nodes

In addition to these categories, the NGI Explorers team awarded the University of Santa Clara and the Arizona State University as **THE BEST COLLABORATIVE PARTNER**.

Figure 12 NGI Explorers best US nodes winners

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4. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES – PERIOD 3

Communication activities consist of a set of specific tools and measures used strategically together to promote the project and its results. This begins with the development of a communication strategy that sets out the mission and vision of the project and how these will be passed to the broader audience, therefore potentially interested individuals outside of the NGI community. This was especially important for the NGI Explorers programme both for the Open Calls phase and after. In fact, our Explorers have demonstrated on many occasions how they benefited during and after the expedition from the visibility brought by these communication activities organized by the programme.

The **objectives** of the communication strategy were as follows:

- Set up internal communication mechanisms among the partners of the consortium;
- Support the external promotion of NGI Explorers and its outcomes, managing the branding;
- Improve visibility and promote the work done by the Explorers during and after their expeditions;
- Deliver top level messages about the project to all identified and relevant stakeholders;
- Raise awareness to non-specialised audiences of the added value of NGI Explorers;
- Attract professional women in the different fields of emerging technology to the programme, achieving a better gender balance;
- Increase awareness and interest in NGI Explorers, highlighting the success of the programme as it comes to an end.

4.1. CHANNELS AND MEASURES

The following communication measures have been put in place in the second period of the project. Measures put in place from M1 to M12 are reported in D4.2 and for M13 to M24 in D4.4.

Table 5 NGI Explorers communication measures

Measure	Target Audience	Status M38
	Material	
Brochures/ Flyers	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Policy Makers	One brochure designed to promote the project and OC3. Another brochure to recognize the achievements of our OC1 and OC2 Explorers at "NGI Oscars".

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Graphic Material	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	Various PR elements have been produced for the launch of the OC3, the third Immersion Bootcamp and the promotion of the Explorers. In addition, a set of graphical material for social media was developed to heavily promote the 3rd and final Open Call of the programme.
Hoodies	NGI Explorers Team OC1, OC2, OC3 Explorers	The NGI Explorers team sent to all Explorers an NGI-designed hoodie, as a gift to celebrate the programme.
Multimedia Material	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Society	• 2 videos for the NGI Oscars 1 • 2 videos for the NGI Oscars 2 • 13 OC2 video interviews published • 22 OC3 video interviews published
Online Channels		
Project website	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems	• Operational since M2 • 8.5K views from M2 to M37, • 5.8 Unique Visitors from M2 to M37
Social Media	NGI Community Academic/ Innovation Ecosystems Policy Makers	• 1 Twitter account, with +700 followers and +720 tweets • 1 LinkedIn account, with approximately 1050 visitors in the last year and 270 followers.

4.2. WEBSITE

The NGI Explorers website is available at the following address https://explorers.ngi.eu. The website is one of the most relevant entry points of the project as it contains basic information about the programme, such as objectives and focus areas, Open Calls and registration information, consortium, US Nodes, selected Explorers, news, Bootcamp organization and contact information.

Since its publication in M2, the website analytics has registered a total number of 8.5K views with 5.800 unique visitors.

Website statistics: Figures below show some relevant statistics registered from the performance of the website during Y3 of the project. They reflect

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a) **THE MONTH WITH THE HIGHEST ACTIVITY** was noticed in January 2021, prior to the 3rd Open Call with almost 2000 (Figure 13);

b) **THE BROAD GEOGRAPHICAL SPECTRUM OF THE AUDIENCE**, covering Europe but also the United States (Figure 14);

c) **THE MOST POPULAR PAGES** are the home, the apply and the Explorers page (Figure 15).

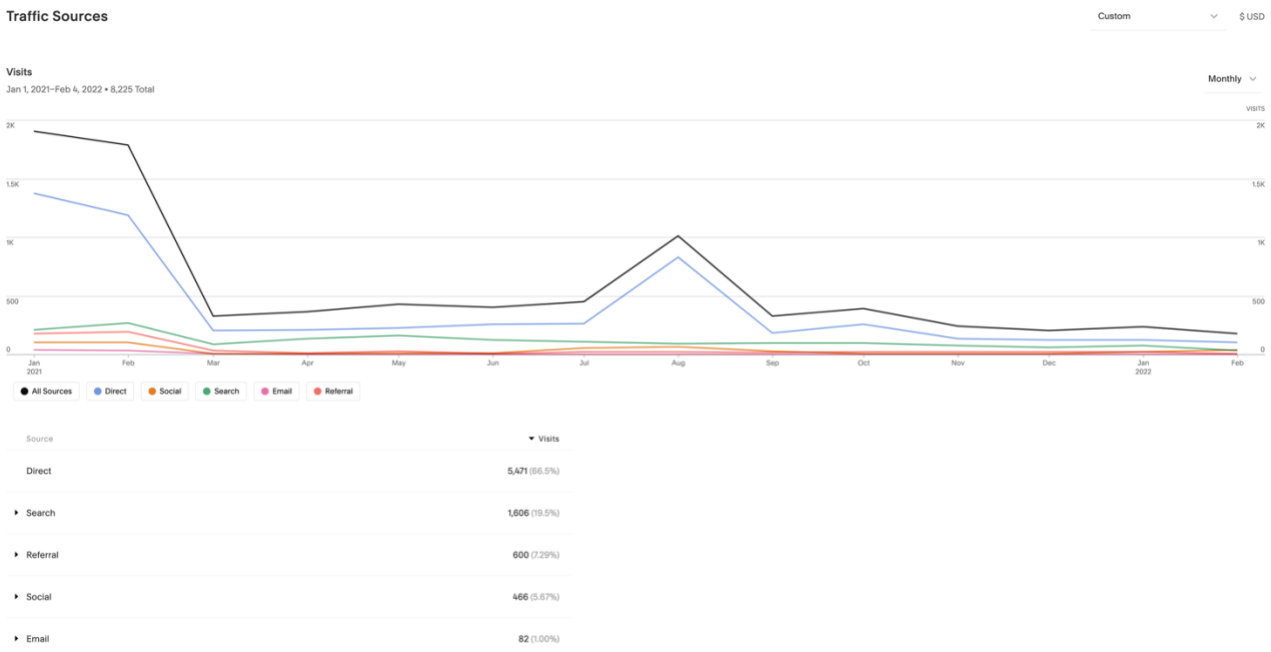

Figure 13 The month with the highest activity

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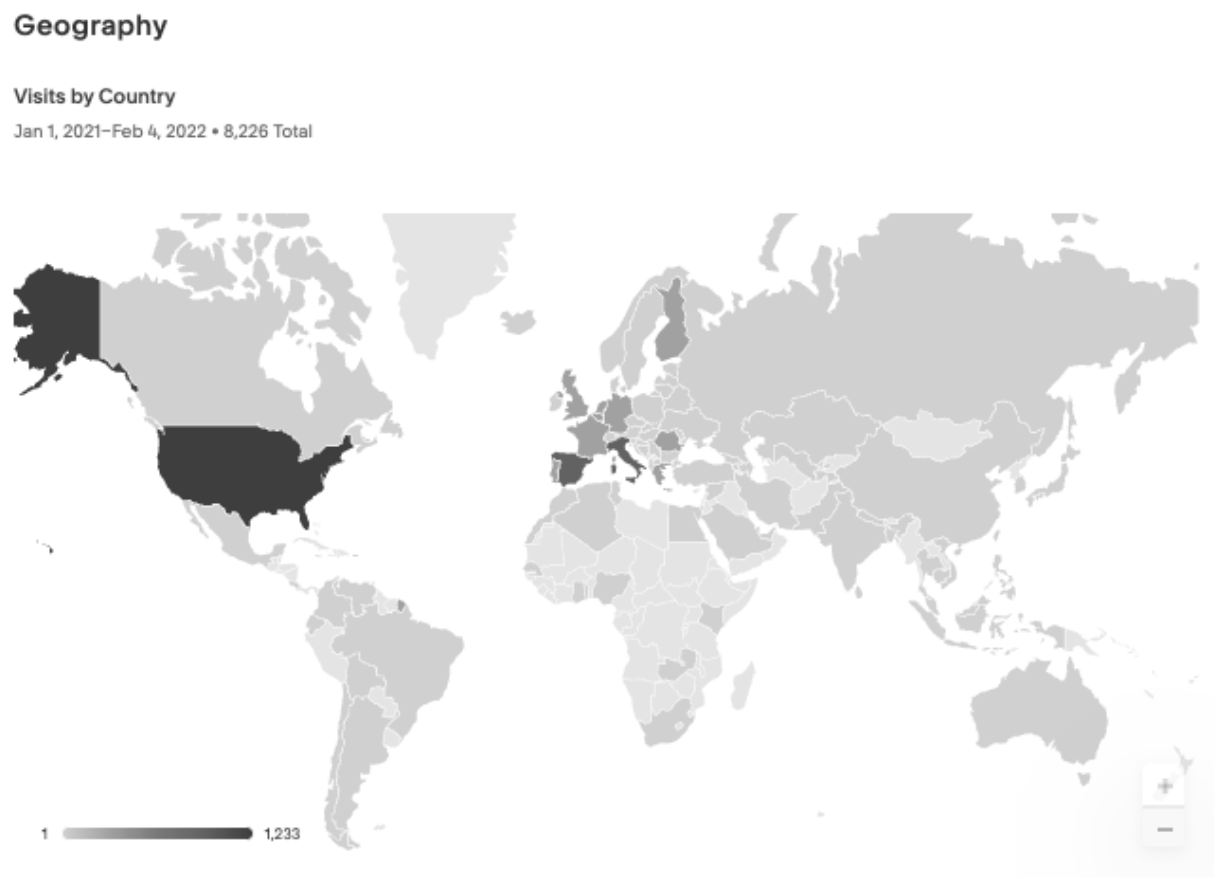

Figure 14 Visit per Country

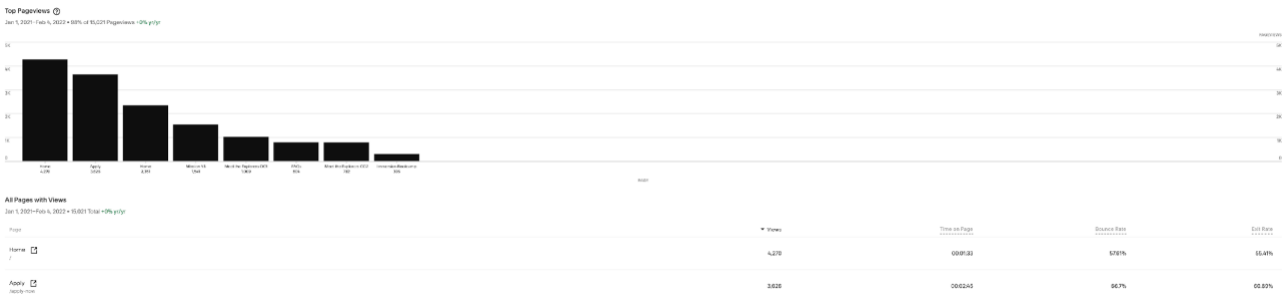

Figure 15 The most popular pages

- **Meet the Explorers page**: a dedicated sub-section of the “Meet the Explorers" page has been created. In this subsection, OC3 Explorers are presented, with the same format as the “Meet the OC1 and OC2 Explorers”, already presented in D4.2 and D4.4

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Figure 16 Extract of OC#3 Meet the Explorers page

- **US NODES presentation**: Under the "Apply Now" page, we simplified the description of each US node, making it more user-friendly. The applicant could directly see for each Node the type of application, Explorers' profile (Researchers or Innovators) recommended and the Focus Area. By clicking on "Full Description", the applicant was redirected to a pdf explaining more requirements about the application to that US Node.

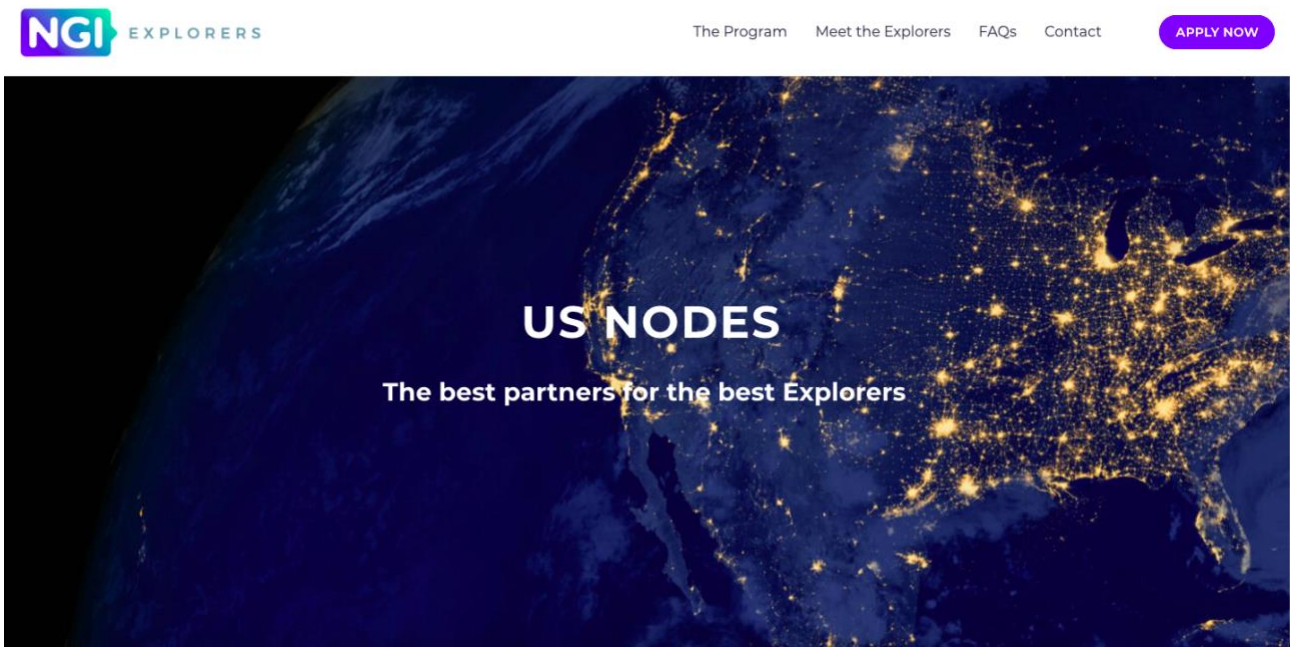

Figure 17 US Nodes presentation

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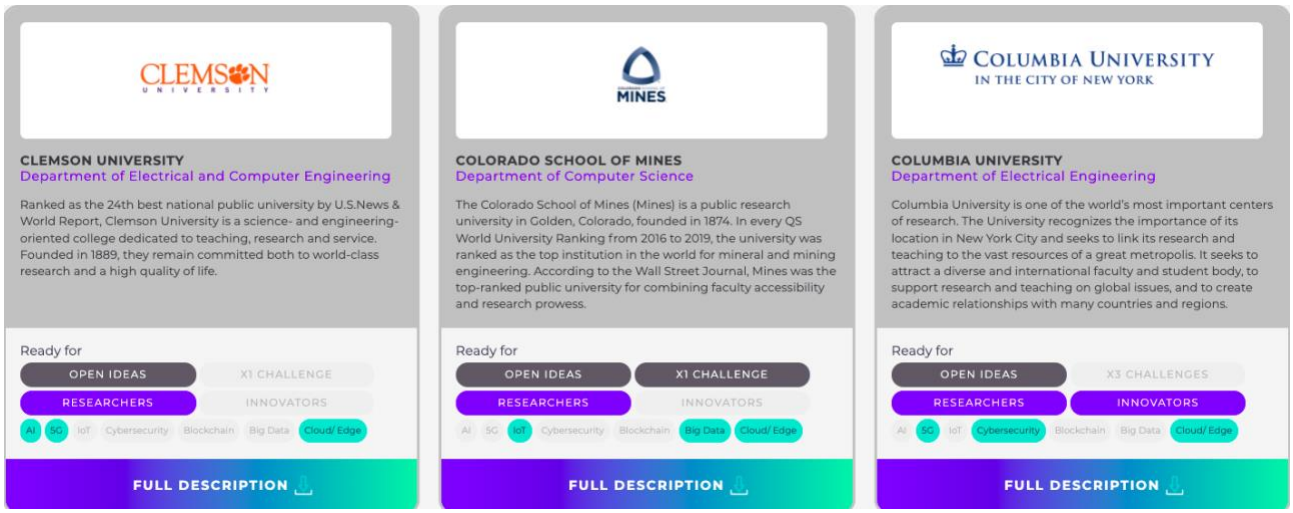

Figure 18 US Nodes presentation under the "Apply now" page

4.3. PR & MULTIMEDIA MATERIAL

Flyer and banners: NGI Explorers produced one flyer to promote OC3, together with a set of social media banners, namely LinkedIn and Twitter that also invited potentially interested individuals to participate in the explanatory webinars before or during their applications.

The PR material produced for OC#3 is available here: **https://zenodo.org/record/4812764**

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Figure 19 OC#3 social media banner

Figure 20 OC#3 webinars announcements

For the Oscars #1 and #2, the project prepared two brochures for the Jury with the following information each:

- Awards categories and Evaluation criteria
- Presentation of the Nominees

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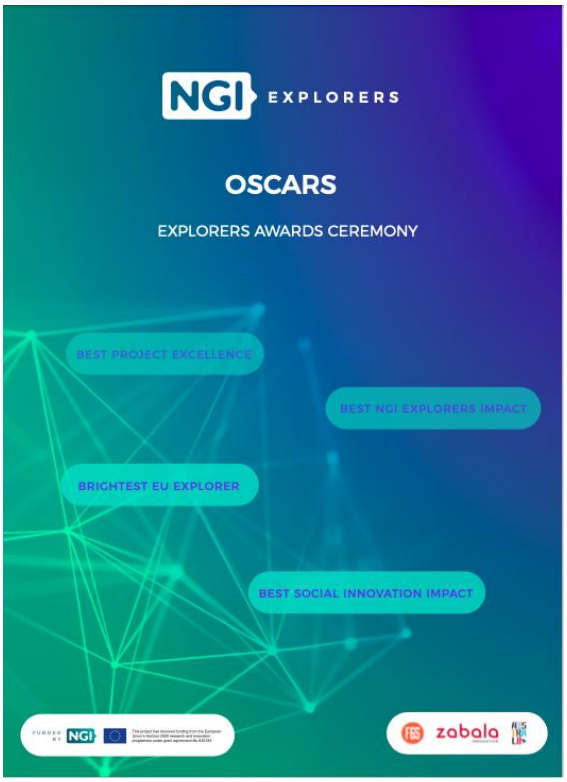
NGI EXPLORERS
OSCARS
EXPLORERS AWARDS CEREMONY
BEST PROJECT EXCELLENCE
BEST NGI EXPLORERS IMPACT
BRIGHTEST EU EXPLORER
BEST SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPACT
zabala

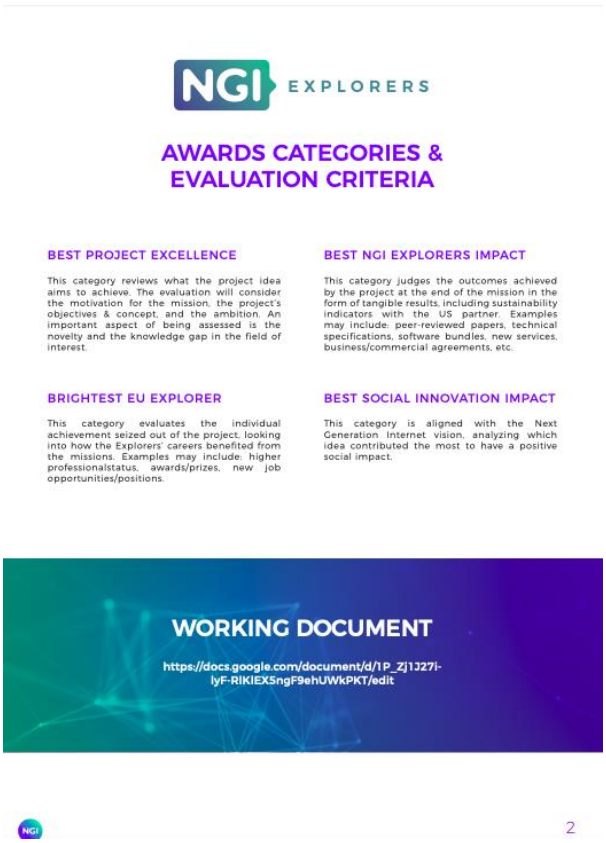
NGI EXPLORERS
AWARDS CATEGORIES & EVALUATION CRITERIA
BEST PROJECT EXCELLENCE
This category reviews what the project idea aims to achieve. The evaluation will consider the motivation for the mission, the project's objectives & concept, and the ambition. An important aspect of being assessed is the novelty and the knowledge gap in the field of interest.
BEST NGI EXPLORERS IMPACT
This category judges the outcomes achieved by the project at the end of the mission in the form of tangible results, including sustainability indicators with the US partner. Examples may include: peer-reviewed papers, technical specifications, software bundles, new services, business/commercial agreements, etc.
BRIGHTEST EU EXPLORER
This category evaluates the individual achievement seized out of the project, looking into how the Explorers' careers benefited from the missions. Examples may include: higher professionalstatus, awards/prizes, new job opportunities/positions.
BEST SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPACT
This category is aligned with the Next Generation Internet vision, analyzing which idea contributed the most to have a positive social impact.
WORKING DOCUMENT
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P_Zj1327i-lyF-RIKIEXSngF9ehUWkPKT/edit
2

Figure 21 NGI Explorers Oscars brochure - example

The full brochure Oscars #1 is available here, while the Oscars #2 brochure is available at NGI Explorers Oscars#2: leaflet.

Certificates:

WP4 prepared:

- Certificates for the Explorers awarded during the Oscars available here
- Certificates for each Explorer who finished his/her expedition.

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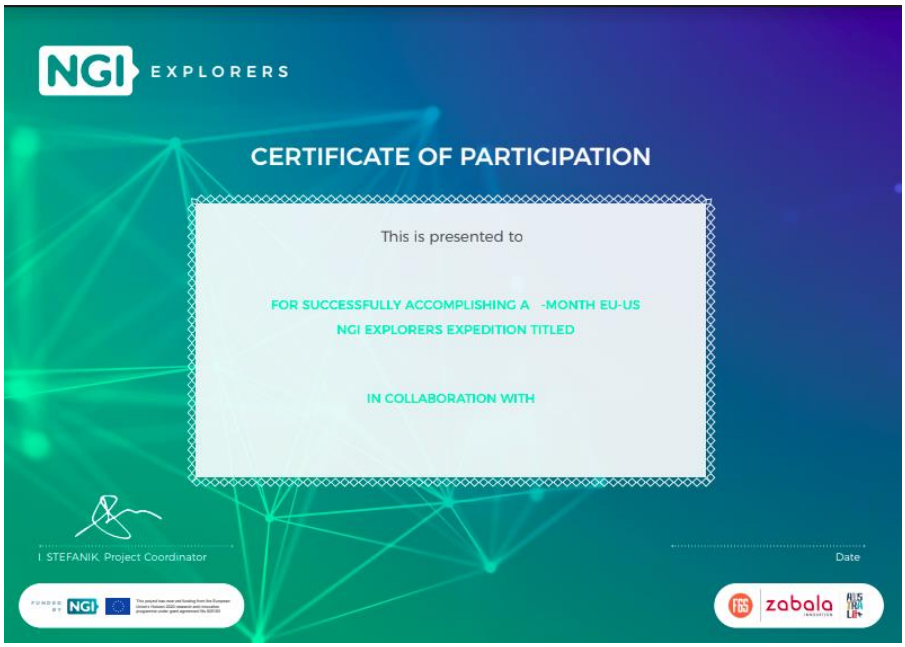

Figure 22 NGI Explorers certificate of participation

Multimedia material:

The last period of the programme began with a celebratory online conference for our OC1 and OC2 NGI Explorers, as part of the NGI Forum – Oscars #1. This event was meticulously organized and promoted by our team to make sure that the achievements and the impact of our Explorers was highlighted, adding value to their research and our programme.

1. An intro video was promoted on social media channels around a month before the Forum, meant to build a participating audience interested in the core elements of the NGI community, and therefore emerging technologies.

2. Before the date of the event, a video portraying the award nominees was promoted on all NGI Explorers channels, displaying the name of the Explorers, name of their project, institution they belong to and their respective US Node.

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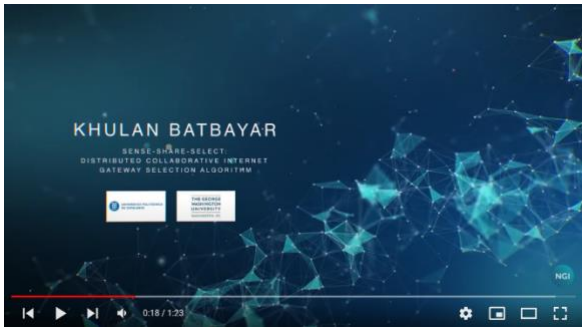

- The intro video can be watched here
- The Nominees video is available here

For the Oscars#2, we updated the videos realised for the Oscars#1.

Download available on Zenodo: NGI Explorers Oscars#2 videos and on the **NGI YouTube channel**.

After the selection of the OC3 Explorers, a request was sent to participants along with a set of questions for a self-recorded video interview, where each participant introduced his/her profile, expertise, the project and the motivation to participate in the transatlantic programme.

The modality of recording was switched to this format due to COVID restrictions that prevented an in-person Immersion Bootcamp.

The following questions were asked:

A. *Talk to us about you...what brought you this far?*
B. *What is your project and its purpose?*
C. *What was your motivation to become an NGI Explorer and why the USA?*
D. *In what way do you think your project/product will impact society? OR What are your future hopes for this project?*

As a result of this activity, 22 Videos (one for each OC3 Explorer) were published in the NGI YouTube channels and widely promoted on our social media. The video interviews are available **here**.

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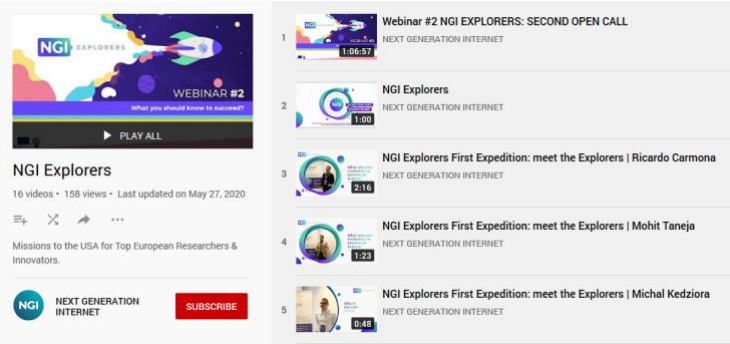

Figure 23 NGI YouTube page dedicated to NGI Explorers

Hoodies: On the occasion of the NGI Explorers Oscars event awarding the best Explorers, the project has produced hoodies. Since the event was held online due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, a hoodie was shipped to each Explorer as a project souvenir for successfully completing the expeditions.

4.4. PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Promotional campaigns: In order to achieve our KPIs in terms of dissemination and communication, for any major event planned by the project (i.e. open calls, webinars, Immersion, Oscars etc) we put in place an ad hoc promotional campaign, to better schedule our activities and reach a larger community. In addition, in this last period, we focused much effort on bringing more women in the realms of emerging technology into the programme. For this reason, we designed and implemented a specific social media strategy, meant to target women in STEM.

NGI Explorers OC3: it has been intensively promoted through several channels, and dedicated effort has been put in place to reach selected women in STEM stakeholders.

The promotional campaign of OC3 was composed of the following activities:

- **Websites and portals**. OC3 was announced in several websites and institutional or company portals/mailing lists, and also promoted on third party social media channels, such as *F6S, NGI, BDVA, FIWARE, IP4, WeGate EU,* many Universities and RTOs. Some examples below:

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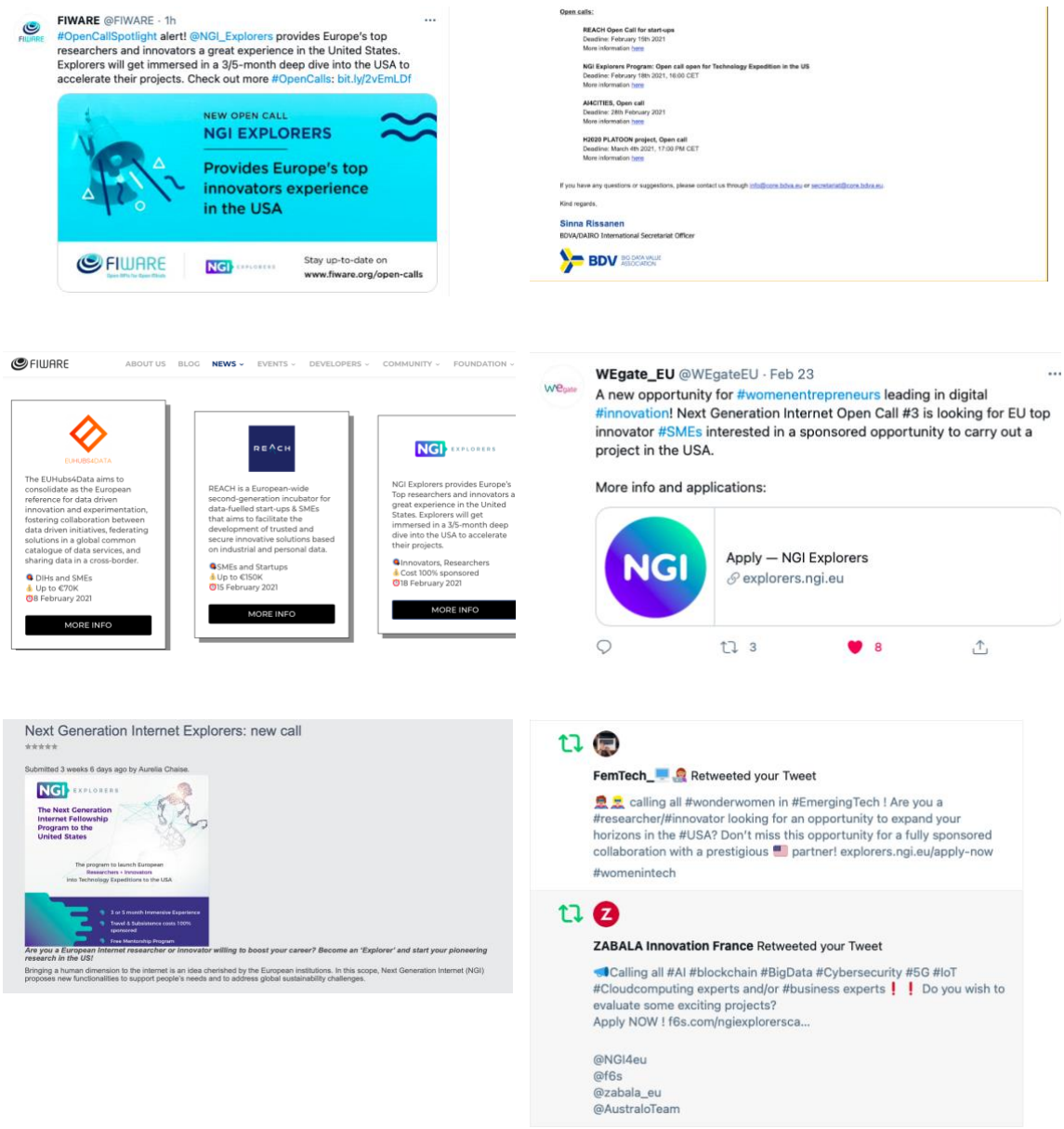

Figure 24 Examples of OC#3 promotion

Scouting and targeting: In addition to this, an intensive scouting campaign on F6S has been put in place. It included 3 stages:

1. Individual scouting - individual profiles were identified to match the requirements of the programme.
2. Targeted mailing - identified individuals and teams were contacted with a designed promoting message.

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3. General newsletter - a designed profile of the candidate was promoted in the official F6S newsletter.

F6S was scouting the applicants considering (1) Target Location - list of geographic locations (EU and H2020 countries), and (2) Key Markets - a few markets that summarise the desired tech category. As a result, 189 accounts were selected and invited to apply to OC3.

Focused strategy - female Researchers and Innovators: AUSTRALO and F6S have conducted a mass email campaign targeted to women in STEM and women in STEM-related associations. This consisted in extensive scouting, bookkeeping and mass email campaigns accompanied by LinkedIn direct messaging, following a specific template. In addition, the team allocated time in participating to women-centred events related to industries of interest, mostly virtually, due to COVID restrictions Europe-wide. Our participation in these events resulted in further scouting and engagement with potential women who already take an active stand in their career and were looking for opportunities such as the NGI Explorers Programme. These actions were aided by a strong social media campaign that will be discussed in the Social Media section that follows.

Promotional campaign – our Explorers: during the third period of the project, WP4 put in place some dedicated activities to promote the achievements of the Explorers who successfully finished their expeditions to highlight the potential of the programme and attract adequate candidates for the final Open Call. This was done through a series of activities including two main factors:

a. Dedicated posts related to the achievements of the OC1 and OC2 Explorers on Twitter and LinkedIn
b. Reposting news of the continued activities and great achievements that our past Explorers bring to our attention by tagging NGI Explorers on LinkedIn. This has shown a very treasured contribution, that brought across the core of the message that NGI Explorers stands for, collaboration is key.

In addition to this, once the OC3 Explorers were selected, the project started promoting their projects and achievements on Twitter and LinkedIn. This promotional campaign run in a threefold way:

1. Introduce the Explorers and their projects to the community
2. Promote their video interviews
3. Promote their achievements in the “Success stories” miniseries (cf. details in the paragraphs below)

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Figure 25 Examples of OC#3 promo campaigns

Promotional campaign – NGI Forum and Oscars #1 and Oscars#2: To promote the participation of our project in the workshop co-organised during the NGI Forum and the co-related event, the Oscars #1, we planned the following activities:

a. Twitter campaign, before, during and after the workshop and the Oscars;
b. Promote it through partners' personal LinkedIn and Twitter accounts;
c. Prepare and promote the blog post after the event: https://www.ngi.eu/news/2021/05/25/ngi-explorers-awards-ceremony/

For the Oscars#2, the same strategy has been followed:

d. Twitter campaign, before, during and after the workshop and the Oscars;
e. Promote it through partners' personal LinkedIn and Twitter accounts and increase the engagement on LinkedIn thanks to the reports, comments and posts of our Explorers;
f. Publication of an article in the NGI portal: https://www.ngi.eu/news/2022/01/28/final-ngi-explorers-award-cerimony/
g. Prepare and promote the blog post after the event (in progress).

4.5. SOCIAL MEDIA

The activities carried out on social media channels have been planned according to a social media strategy, developed to deliver certain goals during the final sprint of the project. For example, we worked to improve gender balance in our selected Explorers and advocated for higher women representation in the industries of emerging technology widely disseminating the opportunity that our programme offered.

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The following summarizes this strategy:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:00	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags	/	Items related to women in our target industries with appropriate hashtags
12:00	Post to promote our Open call with hashtags related to women in the industry		Post to promote our Open call with hashtags related to women in the industry		Post to promote our Open call with hashtags related to women in the industry		
18:00	News with action call	News with action call	News with action call	News with action call	News with action call	News with action call	/

Figure 26 Open call social media strategy

As can be seen in the table above, the strategy was based on key elements of social media engagement, using all available variables to our advantage in reaching a broad audience and bringing our message across the many communities in the emerging technologies.

a. **Posted regularly-** three key day times were selected according to careful research and observations. These are the times of the day that most traffic on Twitter and LinkedIn occurs for our target audience. Posts were made with a careful consistency to maintain engagement.
b. **Used references and keywords in the posts**. We linked our tweets to other accounts and trending hashtags, especially from the NGI community and the European Commission. This helped us to provide a wider outreach, leveraging the existing audience from their accounts.
c. **Shared actively content from the community**. We shared news and information not just related to our project, but also relevant to our community, to attract more followers and gain more traction.
d. **Focus on women**. For our final Open Call, one of our top goals was to bring in more female innovators and researchers. For this reason a number of specific actions in terms of social media were taken. In fact, the social media strategy was designed to include messages specific to this target group by leveraging on designated hashtags, such as #womeninstem or #womeninbusiness and tagging the accounts of communities that already built a large network in the female entrepreneurial and tech/science domain. In addition, the team has collected and promoted the many achievements of past female Explorers, highlighting how the NGI helped them in their careers.

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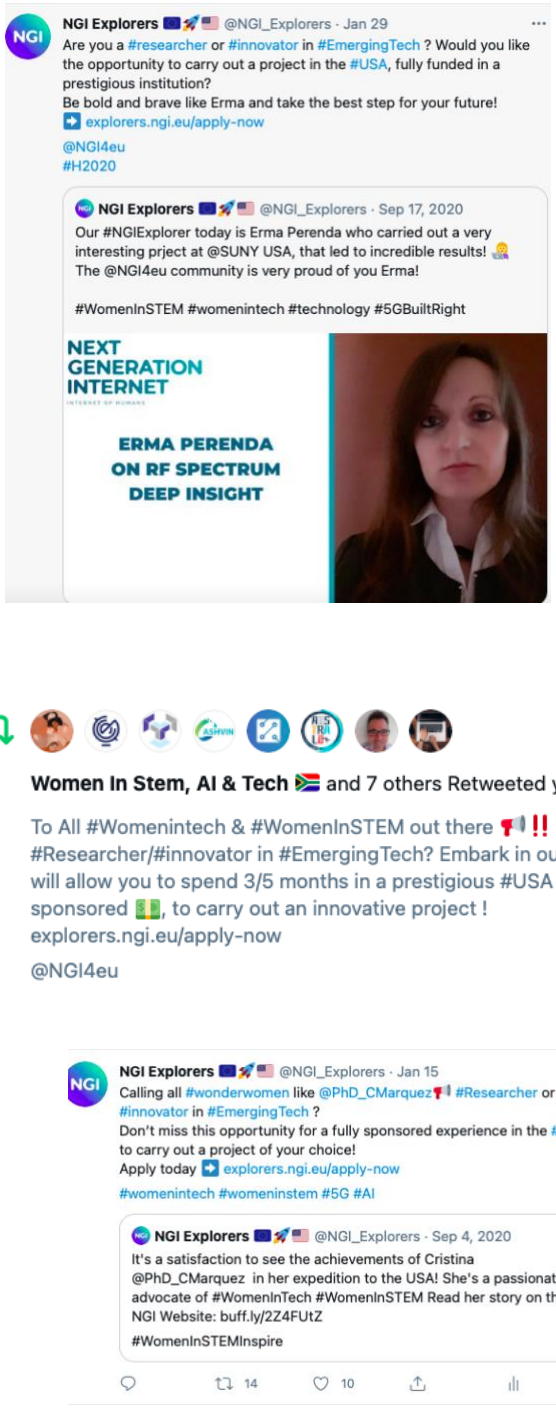

Figure 27 Targeted women campaigns

Great support was given by WE GATE (**https://wegate.eu**), which is an online platform that aims to help women entrepreneurs to start and build up their business with the help of our engaging community and knowledge sharing.

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Figure 28 WeGATE Twitter post about NGI Explorers

In addition, the NGI Explorers team has invested time in creating Twitter Lists, to make it easier to define and work on the target audience we wanted to reach.

The following actions were taken in this regard:

1. Brainstorm on terms and professions related to the potential profiles for the NGI Explorers programme.
2. Create a list, tapping into already existing communities such as “Women in STEM”, “Women in Business”, “Women for science” and so on.
3. Engage in an organized scouting while adding potential candidates on the list for future direct marketing and immediate engagement.

Twitter (**@NGI_Explorers**) is used as one of the main communication channels of the project.

Throughout the program our audience has grown impressively and especially in this last period. We have **745 followers**, increasing over time and have posted 720 tweets during the program.

In view of the third call, the team put in place an *ad hoc* promotional campaign on Twitter, in order to better promote the open call in selected communities and gather more applications.

To achieve this objective, we started the same Twitter ADS campaign carried out for the first and second open call, which helped us to promote some dedicated tweets in order to increase awareness by getting as many people to see our Tweets as possible and promote it in dedicated communities.

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The Twitter Awareness campaign allowed us to:

- Select the Tweets we wanted to promote;
- Select the audience we wanted to reach;
- Select the keywords our audience followed (e.g. 5G, cybersecurity, fellowship, big data, IoT, Future Internet, researchers, research, startups, entrepreneurs, women In tech, women in stem, etc.);
- Select the budget.

Thanks to this campaign we reached 195.549 impressions in less than 3 weeks and we were able to push the promotion of the call through its end (from February 2nd to February 16th, 2021).

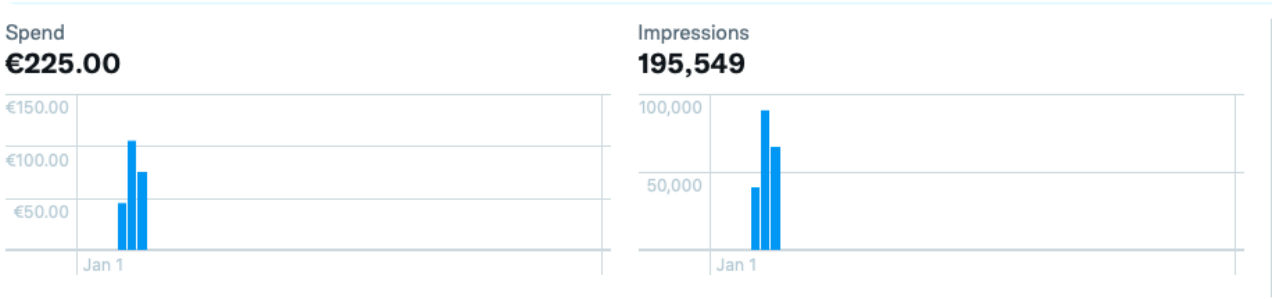

Figure 29 Twitter ads campaign

The implementation of this strategy has led to an increase in the impressions generated by our activities on Twitter, as shown in the screenshot below.

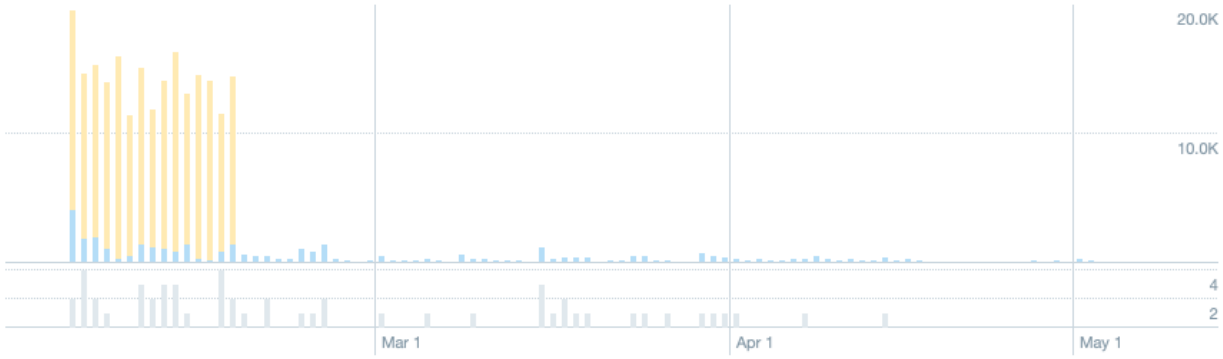

Figure 30 increase of Twitter activity for OC#3

Regarding **LinkedIn**, the usage of this channel has been reinforced during the last period of the project. Over time, our past and present Explorers shared many of their achievements and news on this channel rather than Twitter, which the NGI Explorers was always ready to share with the

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NGI community and the broader audience. These continuous actions made our KPIs steadily grow over time.

Figure 31 NGI Explorers LinkedIn page

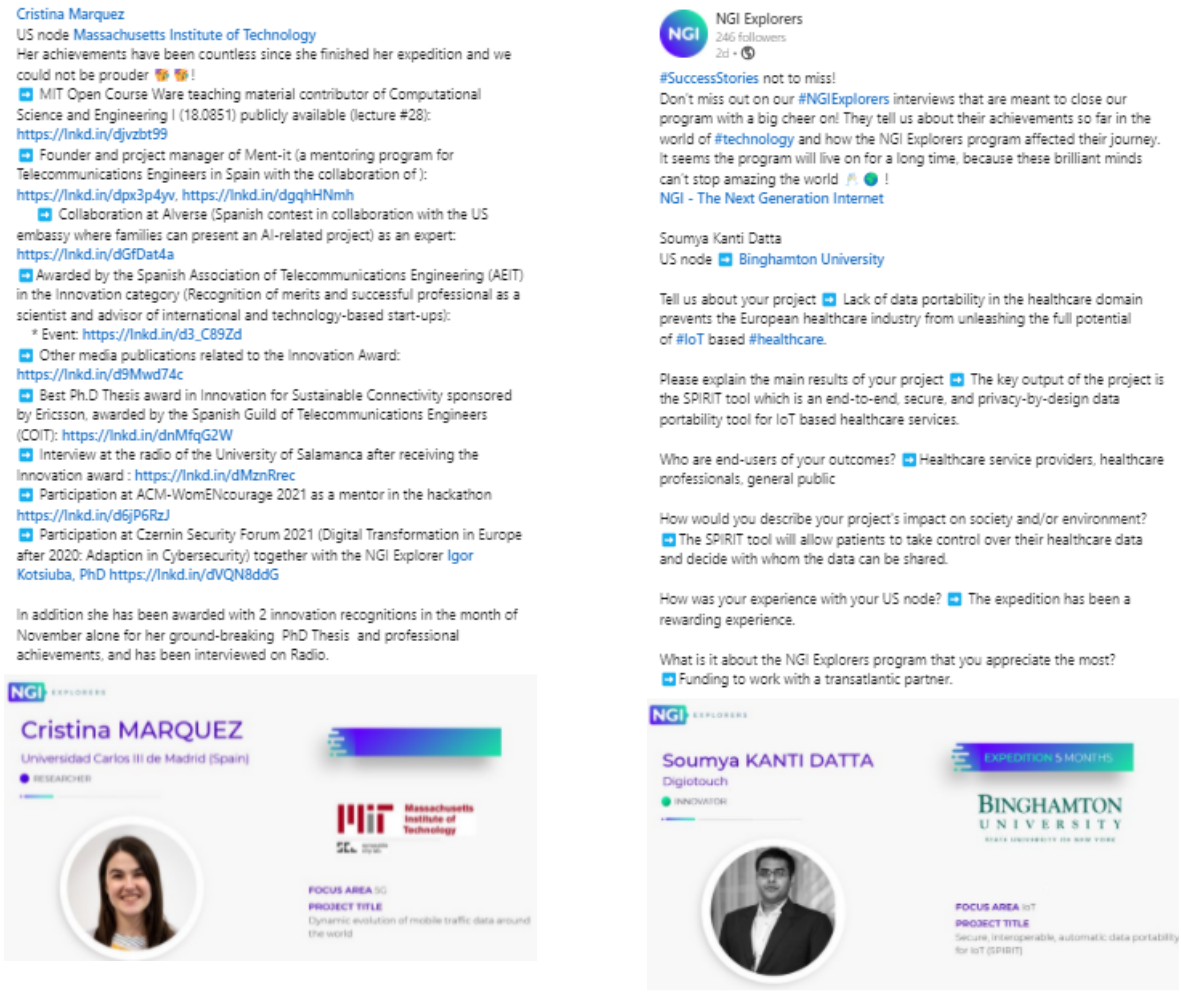

Figure 32 Examples of interviews

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At the end of the programme, we designed a social media campaign to celebrate the achievements of all our NGI Explorers over time. A google questionnaire was sent to them with a few questions to help them summarize a few facts about themselves, about their project and their experience with their respective US node and the NGI Explorers program. We have called the campaign "**Success Stories**" miniseries and posted these once a day on LinkedIn, around 1 PM CET, in short interview format, together with a summarizing banner for each Explorer that decided to contribute.

It is important to highlight how this channel has proved essential not just for the programme's outreach efforts but for the continued exemplary careers of our Explorers. In fact, many of them have demonstrated that NGI Explorers brought them towards new opportunities, activities, achievements, and important networking even after the end of the programme. Many of them have participated in events and collaborated in new projects based on knowledge and connections gained throughout their expeditions and they have been recognizing it through social media, adding much value to the programme. Some examples:

Figure 37 Examples of interviews

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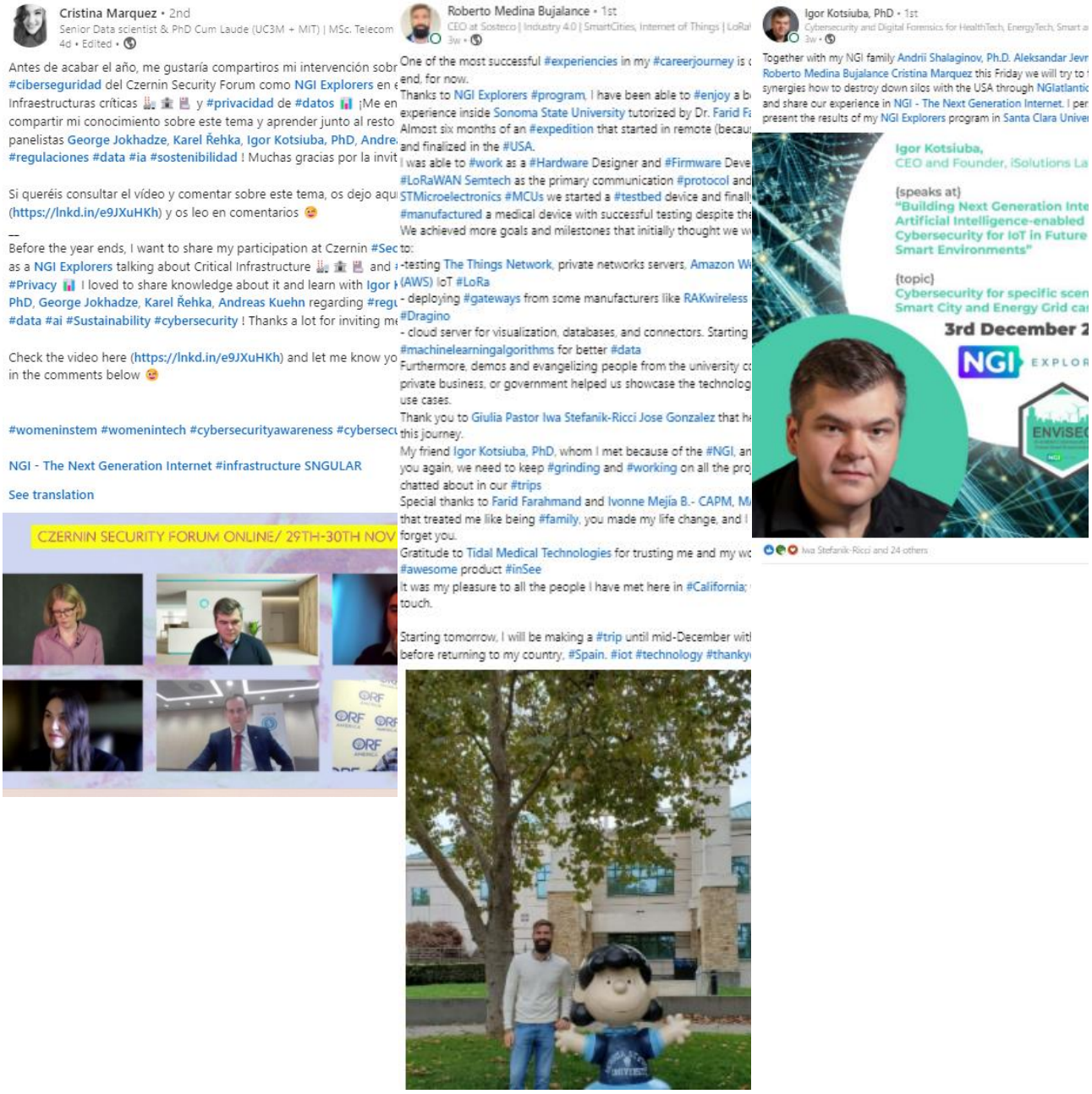

Figure 33 Examples of posts from our Explorers

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5. CONCLUSIONS

As detailed in this deliverable, the NGI Explorers team focused its dissemination and communication efforts primarily on promoting the outstanding achievements reached by the Explorers. Some activities (such as the Success Stories and the video series) were not foreseen in the GA. We decided to invest more effort in these activities to give more relevance to what is essential for our project and the NGI Community: our Researchers and Innovators, their technological advancements, their achievements and their medium-long terms relationships with the US nodes.

Regarding the promotion of OC3, we refined the strategy behind, to make sure we reached more Researchers/Innovators with a better gender balance. The project appointed a social media manager from AUSTRALO who was able to study a plan of action to increase the number of followers and the right targeted communities.

Last but not least, WP4 was able to bring on board during the OC3 40 US nodes (+3 US nodes that participated as Paired Teams), with 59 unique US nodes during the entire programme duration. This has been possible thanks to the engagement strategy put in place by WP4, as explained in section 2.

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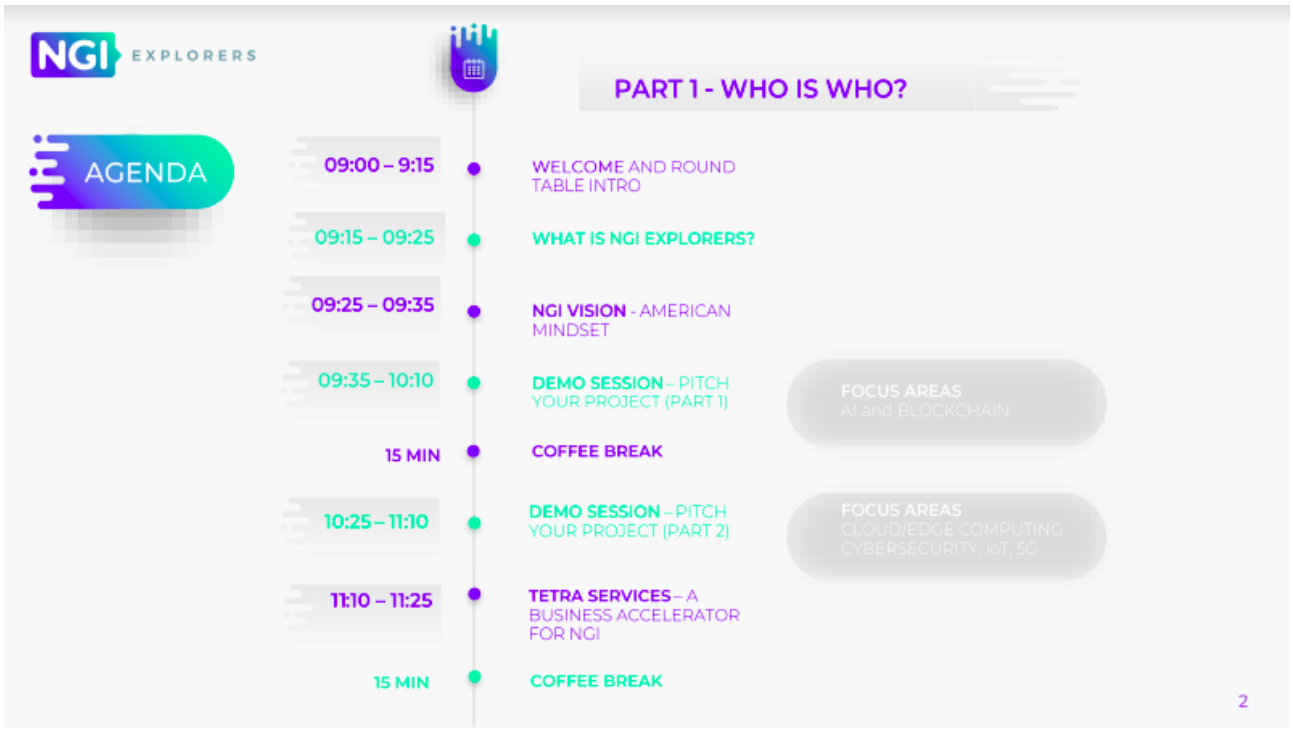
ANNEX 1 - IMMERSION BOOTCAMP AGENDA



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