

Deliverable 1.3 - Communication Plan, identifying relevant stakeholders, communication channels and tools, and timeline for related actions

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1. Introduction

ITINERIS (Italian Integrated Environmental Research Infrastructures System) will build the Italian Hub of Research Infrastructures in the environmental scientific domain for the observation and study of environmental processes in the atmosphere, marine domain, terrestrial biosphere, and geosphere. ITINERIS coordinates a network of national nodes from 22 RIs (18 from the environmental domain, 2 from agri-food with strong link with the environment and 2 from the PSE domain, supporting services for the marine domain).

The main goal is to develop cross-disciplinary research in environmental sciences through the use and re-use of existing (or preoperational) data and services and new observations, to address scientifically and societally relevant issues such as sustainable use of natural resources, implementation of Nature-Based Solutions, Green and Blue Economy, pollution reduction, critical zone and ecosystem management and restoration, carbon cycle, mitigation of the downstream effects of climate and environmental change.

The project is coordinated by CNR (The National Research Council) with the participation of other beneficiaries INFN (National Institute for Nuclear Physics), INGV (National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology), ISPRA (Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), OGS (National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics), UNIFI (The University of Florence), UNIVE (Ca' Foscari University of Venice).

The project is articulated in eight work packages (WP), dealing with the vertical activities related to the four main environmental subdomains and with the connected general and transversal activities. In particular, specific activities are planned in the *WPI – Coordination and Management* to set the project communication strategy, establish the operational ground and coordinate the day-to-day communication activities.

The aim of this deliverable is to outline the ITINERIS communication plan that set out the objectives, tools and channels to be exploited to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of the relevant project information and results to the identified multitude of target audiences. The communication plan supports the implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives and ensures that visibility and communication requirements are met.

2. The ITINERIS communication strategy

The ITINERIS communication strategy is aimed at promoting the project and its results to the multitude of target audiences, highlighting the impacts and benefits of ITINERIS and demonstrating how EU funding helps addressing societal challenges and issues.

Specific actions will be carried out to give visibility and advertise the ITINERIS HUB, the single point of access allowing users to access the collection of knowledge, services, data, analytic tools and compute platforms provided by the different RIs.

Compliance with the conditionalities and all further requirements related to the NRRP must also be fulfilled through the communication. In particular, to comply with the obligations regarding communication and information provided for by art. 34 of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, all beneficiaries of EU funds have a general obligation to recognize the origin of EU funding and ensure adequate visibility of the results of the investments financed by EU through the dissemination of coherent, effective and proportionate information, aimed at different audiences including the media and the general public. The gender equality shall also be explicitly addressed as one of the project's objectives, to make ITINERIS more attractive for high-quality female researchers in the fields of research, innovation and management.

To facilitate the exchange and dissemination of the relevant project information and results, key messages must be delivered through clear procedures and dedicated tools to each specific target audience, giving rise to a set of internal and external communication activities which are both necessary and complimentary to each other.

3. Internal communication

Internal communication is intended towards the groups involved to some extent in the realization of the project, such as: staff at the operating units (OU) that are responsible for the realization of the activities, representatives of the project's beneficiaries, members of boards or advisory bodies.

The main goal of internal communication is to:

- provide a constant flow of information to keep the project participants informed and connected
- make sure that a common understanding of the project objectives and results is shared and adopted to be effectively exploited in external communication
- pursue engagement at all levels of the participating institutions, facilitate the commitment towards the realization of the project and develop a sense of ownership and brand identity.

Internal communication is a day-to-day process. Specific tools and channels to collect and distribute key information from and to internal target groups will be developed and managed by the Coordination Office. In particular, a Project Information Management System has been developed to enable efficient workflows and project delivery, and specific distribution lists will be used to regularly inform on project progresses and expected duties.

4. Target groups

Drawing on the prominent positioning in the RIs audience, and thanks to the connections with the scientific and private sector, the project could target and reach a broad network of target groups.

In particular, the following target groups have been identified as they could be affected by or could affect in any way the ITINERIS strategies. A specific communication focus and aim is described in relation to each group.

Environmental Research infrastructures - Environmental RIs participating in ITINERIS are essential for providing the systematic and coherent information needed for the high-level research addressing societal needs such as climate mitigation and adaptation, natural resource conservation, health, food security, biodiversity and sustainable use of the sea, freshwater and land, or indirectly through training and education, as well as the transfer of knowledge and technology.

The 22 participating RIs are the Italian nodes of the ESFRI Landmarks ACTRIS, EMSO, Euro-Argo, ICOS and LIFEWATCH (ENV domain) and ANAEE (H&F domain closely linked to the ENV domain); the Italian nodes of the ESFRI projects DANUBIUS, DISSCO, e-LTER (ENV domain), and EMPHASIS and EUIBISBA (H&F domain and also relevant for ENV); the EU RIs ECORD, EUFAR, Eurofleets, JERICO and SIOS (ENV domain); and the national RIs ATLAS, CeTRA, Laura Bassi, and SMINO (ENV domain), and Geosciences and LNS (PSE domain, that in ITINERIS support services in the marine domain).

Focus: Communication to this group should focus on strengthening awareness and pursuing engagement at all the levels of the participating RIs. In particular, keeping the participating RIs informed and connected ensures that proper measures will be implemented to have the new data products and services developed in the project compliant with the scientific plan of each RI/ERIC (in case of Pan European RIs).

Specific actions shall be also carried out to increase the uptake of the ITINERIS HUB as mean to build the community of National Environmental RIs. The great work made by the RIs will be more visible and accessible for users from the broader communities of practice through the provision of the single-entry point. Moreover, new research and training opportunities can also be provided to RIs human capital through the HUB.

Research/academia - ITINERIS will offer new research and training opportunities to the wider international scientific community (from fields directly related to environmental sciences and from

other fields) working to obtain the required information and answer specific questions in the marine, atmospheric, terrestrial biosphere and geosphere subdomains.

Focus: Communication to this group should focus on the promotion the ITINERIS HUB as the valuable unified entry and gateway allowing users to access the collection of knowledge, services, data, analytic tools and compute platforms provided by the different RIs involved in ITINERIS and on the engagement of new potential users.

National and international organizations and networks - The ITINERIS large-scale knowledge system will become a reference framework for international organizations including but not limited to Copernicus, ESA, EUMETSAT, NASA, JAXA, GAW, GCOS, GEO GEOSS, GOOS, WMO, EuroGOOS, the Belmont Forum, WMO, WCRP, and many others. Similarly, ITINERIS will develop synergies with the newly-formed European Partnerships in specific fields, such as the Nature-Based Solutions Workpackage of BIODIVERSA+, and will strengthen participation and leadership of Italian scientists in European Research Infrastructure activities. Relevant synergies can also be anticipated with other NRRP initiatives such as the National Center for Biodiversity and the National Center for Technologies in Agriculture (AgriTech).

Focus: Communication to this group should focus on increasing the level of networking, promoting access to the ITINERIS HUB and engaging new potential users, improving cooperation and exchange of good practices, sharing information on technical implementation.

Private sector - Companies from the private sector can access data, products, expertise and scientific services for innovative research and for the development of novel technologies and products, and as a test bed for new methodologies and instruments, and development of quality assurance standards to support the technological development.

Focus: Specific actions will be carried out to focus the communication with this target group, for example to promote upcoming events, project results and services related to innovation in environmental sciences.

Other stakeholders and general public - The ITINERIS multi-disciplinary approach at Earth System level is paramount for providing relevant information to different interested stakeholders besides the general public: media, policy and or governance-making bodies, public authorities, funding institutions, innovation support agencies, etc.

Focus: Communication to this group should focus on increasing the level of awareness on the scientific and socio-economic benefit that ITINERIS can offer to face the critical environmental challenges expected to worsen in coming years: pollution, land use and climate change, and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem integrity need to be urgently addressed, providing quantitative knowledge to be transformed into actionable strategies.

5. Communication plan

In line with the communication strategy described above, the communication plan outlines the appropriate tools, approach and actions to carry out for addressing the relevant messages to the identified internal and external target groups.

5.1. Tools and channels

Different channels (digital, traditional media, events) and tools will be used to achieve the communication goals and improve the adoption of the ITINERIS value by the different target groups.

- **Website.** The Coordination Office is responsible for implementing and managing the project website (www.itineris.cnr.it). It represents the central platform for both internal and external communication, enabling exchange of information with all the target groups. The website will provide general information on the project, report on ongoing activities and inform on up-coming events and disseminate project results. It will incorporate the ITINERIS HUB that will act as the unified access point to the collection of knowledge, services, data, analytic tools and compute platforms provided by the RIs within ITINERIS.

- **Project Information Management System.** The project management system (<https://cnrsc.sharepoint.com/sites/CNR-IMAAITINERISprj/>) is implemented and maintained by the Coordination Office as the main tool supporting the internal communication. It is a collaborative platform to collect and share project information with the relevant internal target groups, enabling efficient workflows and project delivery. It also guarantees the reliable collection and organization of all the information necessary to monitor the project and to accomplish the procedures required by the MUR. It is intended as a reserved area accessible from the website; different levels of authorizations can be granted to manage access to the centralized libraries containing project documents, deliverables, dissemination material, workshop material, reports, etc.

- **Social media.** The ITINERIS social media profiles will be created and maintained by the Coordination Office. Regular posting will be realized on social media to increase the visibility and raise awareness of the importance of ITINERIS, engage with partners and users, promote events, calls and opportunities from the HUB, promoting opportunities in the network of participating RIs, etc. . Specific type of content will be defined together with the list of common hashtags, images and video to effectively promote the ITINERIS results engage the target audiences and followers. All partners will be encouraged to engage with ITINERIS social media profiles (follows, re-tweets- tags, etc.)

- **Mailing lists.** Mailing list used to promote news, events and opportunities and to raise awareness about project highlights and results towards the interested general public and stakeholders. The mailing list are created and managed by the Coordination Office and will be open and subscription will be available from the website.
- **Audio-visuals.** Videos and image galleries produced to present ITINERIS to the wider general public without any specific scientific knowledge. Multimedia content are published on the website and the social media profiles and, where appropriate, through the traditional media (press, TV, radio).
- **Scientific articles and other publications.** Providers and users of data and services are encouraged to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals and other publications to disseminate the results and impact of RI's activities. Publications will be promoted in the ITINERIS HUB and through the other relevant communication tools. In these publications it should be acknowledged that ITINERIS provided the data, or the data should be cited with a data DOI number.

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- **Communication kit.** A communication kit is developed for internal use to share information on how ITINERIS should be communicated for the different purposes and occasions. The kit includes the different materials to be used in the digital and printed format: presentations, leaflets, reports, infographics, banners, roll-ups, labels, etc.
- **Meeting, conferences, events.** Online and offline events (e.g. conferences, workshops, networking events etc.) organized to promote the project and its results. Project participants are also encouraged and invited to participate and present ITINERIS to other national and international events.

5.2. Visual identity

A style guide has been developed to document the ITINERIS brand identity elements and how to use them consistently across tools and channels. The style guide will ensure a clean and consistent visual identity of the project.

In particular, a simple, distinctive and scalable logo has been designed at the beginning of the project as a clear recall to the project structure and objectives.

The color palette, typography style and other graphics have been derived from the guidelines and templates provided by MUR to ensure compliance to obligations and requirements.

To ensure consistency, different templates have been developed and shared with project participants as reference from which to prepare any internal or external communication action (e.g. presentations, deliverables, call for tender, etc.).

5.3. Task division

The essential commitment to the realization of communication actions from of all the project participants has been already planned since the preparatory phase of the project proposal.

In fact, as outlined in the introduction, all the beneficiaries must comply to the obligations envisaged in NRRP to recognize the origin of EU funding and ensure adequate visibility of the results of the investments financed by EU through the dissemination of coherent, effective and proportionate information, aimed at different audiences including the media and the general public.

However, the effective and successful implementation of the communication plan necessitates a clear definition of workflows and clarifications of the expected contributions and responsibilities.

The ITINERIS communication is organized by the Coordination Office and carried out following an open and multi-actor approach to ensure the close interaction and the beneficial involvement of all the project participants. As a rule of thumb:

- the Coordination Office sets the communication strategy and plans, establishes the operational ground and coordinate the day-to-day communication activities;
- all the project participants contribute as relevant in providing content, promoting and disseminating the project results, notifying and keeping track of communication actions and participated key events.

Such a coordinated definition and sharing of tasks should reduce the potential risks that may arise because of the complex organizational structure of the project, avoid misunderstandings or

misaligned communication actions. Moreover, a coordinated synergy is advisable to overcome the lack of resources that could be specifically dedicated to the communication.

5.4. Action plan

Tailor-made communication activities will be carried out to effectively deliver key messages to each specific target group through the relevant tools and channels.

The action plan in the following Table 2 outlines the *who*, *what*, *when*, *why*, and *how* of the planned activities.

Table. 1 Plan of the communication actions

Tool	Channel	Target group 1) Internal communication 2) Environmental RIs 3) Research/academia 4) National and international organizations and networks 5) Private sector 6) Other stakeholders and general public	Avg. frequency	Task division		Performance indicators
				Coordination office	All partners	
Website	General content	All target groups	When needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and maintains the website Provides regular content updates in the day-to-day communication activities Promote relevant partners initiatives and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest & write specific content Promote the project and disseminate the results of the activities in their own networks and through their own channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website analytics: number of users, new users, page views, unique page views, avg. session duration, downloads Hub statistics: number of access requests, training resources, data downloaded
	ITINERIS HUB - Data portal - Catalogue of services - Calls for access - Training Centre - VRE	2), 3), 4)	Quarterly			
	Project highlights					
	News	All target groups	When needed			
	Events	2), 3), 4)	When needed			
Mailing lists	Newsletter	2), 3), 4), 5)	When needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and maintain lists Suggest & write content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest & write content Disseminate in own networks Promote subscription in own networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of contacts Opening rate
Scientific articles and other publications	Journal	2), 3), 4)	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote relevant publications on main website, ITINERIS HUB, and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep track and notify the Coordination office about any contribution and action Ensure acknowledging of ITINERIS in articles/publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bibliometrics: number of publications, number of citations, journal impact factor

Tool	Channel	Target group <i>1) Internal communication 2) Environmental RIs 3) Research/academia 4) National and international organizations and networks 5) Private sector 6) Other stakeholders and general public</i>	Avg. frequency	Task division		Performance indicators
				Coordination office	All partners	
Meetings, conference, events	Project meeting	1), 2)	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Partners initiatives via relevant channels (website, newsletter, social media etc.) Promote and ensure representation at key national/international events Collect contributions from partners and keep track of the communication actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the project and disseminate the results in their own networks and through their own channels Suggest and contribute in producing communication contents Engage with social media profiles (follows, re-tweets- tags, etc.) Inform the Coordination office and ensure participation and presentation of ITINERIS at key events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants Number of visitors Participants of the events and Events organized, number and hour
	Workshops and conferences	1), 2), 3), 4)	Biennially			
	Scientific events oral and poster presentations sessions		Biannually			
Communication kit	presentations, leaflets, infographics, banners, roll-ups, etc.	1)	When needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares templates Disseminate material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the ITINERIS visual identity Keep track and notify the Coordination office about any contribution and action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of download Call to action taken after key events
Social media	Twitter, Youtube	All target groups	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and maintain social media profiles Regular posts Promote relevant partners initiatives and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with social media profiles (follows, re-tweets- tags) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter/Youtube analytics; Profile visits, total number and number of new followers (per period), mentions and interactions
Audio-visuals	Video Image gallery	All target groups	When needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest & edit content Disseminate material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute as relevant Promote in their own networks and through their own channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of visitors

6. Evaluation

The communication plan will be assessed on annual basis to evaluate the effectiveness of interactions with the different target groups.

The identified tools will be continuously developed to follow the specific requirements of each target groups over the time and to optimize progresses towards objectives through changes in inputs and activities. A regular review will also be carried out to understand which tools are the most used and effective in the communication between ITINERIS and each different group and which are those impacting more in raising awareness and strengthening engagement.

In this sense, the identified set of performance indicators (KPIs) will provide objective evidences of the quantitative and qualitative performance of the communication efforts. The analytics tools usually provided for websites and social media will also be used to get a more comprehensive overview of the communication results.

7. Conclusions

The communication plan is living document. This first release is written at the beginning of the project to identify the significant elements for planning and ensuring the effective implementation of communication activities. It will be updated to follow the progresses of the activities and to provide more precise formulation of the communication actions as soon as the projects will start delivering and spreading its results. In particular, updates of the communication plan are expected to be delivered in correspondence of the relevant Intermediate Objectives of WP1: IO1.5 (bimester 5), IO1.7 (bimester 7), IO1.9 (bimester 9), IO1.11 (bimester 11), IO1.13 (bimester 13).

8. References

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