



IMP.act

D 4.1

Communication and Dissemination Strategy

2018-2020



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1. Executive Summary

As mentioned in the previous version of this report, *Managing for Microplastics: A Baseline to Inform Policy Stakeholders* (IMP.act) is a research project divided into 5 work packages (WP) that is focused on developing a long-term management plan for microplastic pollution for Galway Bay and its environs.

The IMP.act WP4 is dedicated to “Outreach and Dissemination Activities” aiming at promoting and disseminating project results and outputs through strategic and targeted measures. The current *D4.1 Communication and Dissemination Strategy* is an improved document of the previous version, where strategies on how to improve communication with internal and external stakeholders to the project is mentioned. Similarly, to the previous version, this document will evolve over time along with the project.

The IMP.act Communication and Dissemination Strategy document outlines a systematic approach to reaching out and communicating to its target audience through specific actions, events and on-line channels. The communication actions are specifically tailored to reach a wide range of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders.

The communication and dissemination activities, part of WP4, and will run from month 1 to month 24 of the project.

2. IMP.act Communication context and challenges

The overall goal of the IMP.act project is to provide baseline data about microplastic inputs, sources and distribution in Galway Bay and its environs, focused in three environmental compartments, namely water, sediment and biota. The baseline data collected will enable the development a long-term management framework targeted at monitoring, assessing, mitigating and reducing microplastic pollution in this geographical area. Although the project is focused on a local scale, the scope and goals go beyond the projects’ case study area.

While reaching other domains of society, the main communication challenge will be to have a coherent message which can be easily explained to all relevant stakeholders, regardless of their background. This message will need to resonate with local and national environmental commitments with the European Commission, namely the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly through the Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, the IMP.act project will primarily focus its communication at a local and national level but will also aim to reach international platforms of dissemination.



3. Communication Goals

The communication goals are aligned with the overall aims of the IMP.act project, which are to:

1. Identify the main sources, inputs, hotspots of accumulation and distribution patterns of microplastics (MPs) in Galway bay and its environs;
2. Assess quantitative and qualitative analysis of MPs retrieved from environmental samples;
3. Assess MP ingestion in characteristic marine species in this geographic area;
4. Provide a spatial-temporal basis for statistical and distribution models;
5. Create educational outreach and awareness materials
6. Develop a management tool to inform policy makers.

As such, the communication goals are the following:

1. Measure the impact of the dissemination of results from this project through information and engagement;
2. Engage all relevant stakeholders in the outputs of the project, both at a local and national level;
3. Highlight the importance of baseline data on microplastics for long-term monitoring frameworks in Ireland;
4. Inspire and encourage the general public to change behaviour through on-line surveys and outreach and awareness campaigns about marine anthropogenic litter and microplastic pollution;
5. Increase ocean literacy in marine anthropogenic litter and microplastics pollution in Ireland.

4. Target Audiences

The target audiences were identified by a process of systemically collecting and analysing qualitative information to determine whose interests should be considered when developing and/or implementing a framework (Schmeer, 2009). This process, also known as stakeholder analysis, identified the key stakeholders in Ireland that will benefit directly and indirectly from the results of the project. Because stakeholders have different needs, communication aims had to be targeted according to each stakeholder group. A list of communication aims specifically designed for each target audience is available in table 1.



Table 1 – IMP.act target audience and communication aims

Target audiences	Communication aims	Communication strategy
Policy Stakeholders		
Policy markers – local level	To integrate information and translate project findings to policy stakeholders to enable them to incorporate the provided information into local or national policy strategies and national and international commitments.	Peer-reviewed publications; reports and white papers; on-line surveys; meetings; newsletters; project website
Policy makers – national level		
Academia Stakeholders		
Universities and Research Centres	To disseminate cutting edge research results to individual scientists and research networks on integrated strategies for marine anthropogenic litter and microplastic pollution baseline data.	Peer-reviewed publications; reports and white papers; on-line surveys; newsletters; twitter presence; project website
Higher education students		
Research-driven science and nature institutions, networks and hubs		
Other research projects		
Private Sector Stakeholders		
Public business supporting agencies, e.g. Enterprise Ireland	To inform stakeholders on the project results of the baseline levels of microplastics in Galway Bay and its environs.	Reports and white papers; on-line surveys; twitter presence; newsletters; project website
SMEs		
Trade Associations		
Other local business		
Mass Media		
Civil Society Stakeholders		
NGOs	To support knowledge sharing and awareness raising among general public and citizens' organisations concerning marine anthropogenic litter and microplastic impacts and mitigation strategies.	Education materials; on-line surveys; twitter presence; project website
General public		
Citizen-drive innovation labs dealing with urban sustainability, climate change, plastic pollution and environmental conservation		



5. Strategies

To effectively communicate with key stakeholder groups, in a manner that is relevant to them, several strategic approaches to communication will be followed which include project identity, branding, on-line presence, networking and presentations at local, national and international events.

5.1 Creating visual identity, brand, and strapline

As mentioned in the previous version of this document, maintaining a clear brand identity of the project enhances stakeholder engagement, as people will associate the outputs of the project to a clear and appealing image. When such image is shared throughout all its communication and dissemination activities, either through reporting or on-line presence, stakeholders will naturally and actively look for the main results of the project.

One way to provide such image is by using a logo or using a logo with a project strapline. As such, in figure 1, it is possible to see both options.

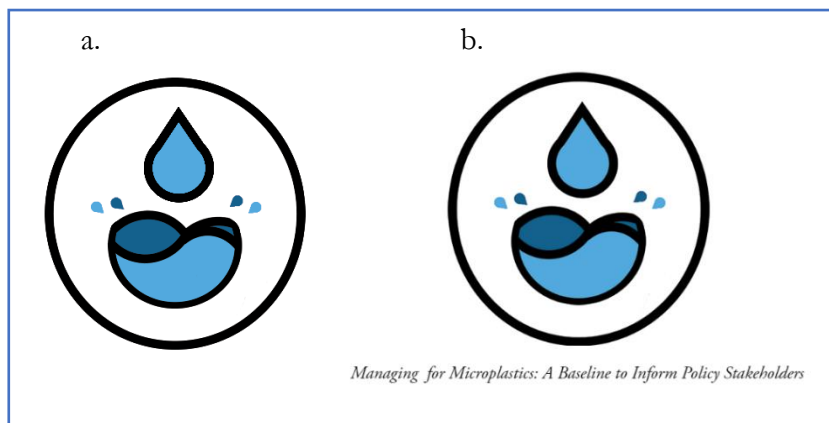


Figure 1- a. IMP.act logo and b. IMP.act logo plus strapline

In terms of illustration, the logo shows a big drop of water falling into the ocean and some splash of water droplets. This logo intends to represent that even small events such as a drop of water can cause several effects in the ocean (e.g. ripple effects, splashes, etc.). As such, this is intended to be a metaphor for the effects that synthetic plastics of man-made origin have in the environment.

5.2 Establishing and creating on-line presence

In modern society, on-line presence plays a relevant role and with aims of pursuing and developing a visual identity and branding of the IMP.act project, parts of the dissemination of results will be conducted via on-line presence in social media platforms and personal websites.

The main online platforms where information about IMP.act project can be seen are:

- (1) project website, available at <https://www.joaofrias.com/impact-project/>;



- (2) ResearchGate project page, available at <https://www.researchgate.net/project/IMPact-Managing-for-microplastics-a-baseline-to-inform-policy-stakeholders> and
- (3) Twitter account and handler of the project principal investigator (P.I): <https://twitter.com/jpglfrias> and [@jpglfrias](https://twitter.com/jpglfrias).

In order to ensure that information is successfully shared with target audiences, tags associated with the research topic will be used. The most relevant for this project are the following:

Microplastics, plastic pollution, IMPact, MFRC, GMIT, Ireland.

Nonetheless, other tags might be used, particularly associated to conferences or similar events, in order to ensure that project dissemination reaches more relevant stakeholders in Ireland or elsewhere.

5.3 Other approaches to engage local and national communities

Apart from the on-line presence, the IMP.act project aims to engage with local communities through (1) perception and behaviour change surveys, (2) outreach and awareness materials, (3) presentations in local and national events; (4) on-line surveys to assess perceptions on marine anthropogenic litter and microplastic pollution.



6. Monitoring and evaluation

The results of the communication and dissemination strategy will be constantly monitored in order to assess its effectiveness and its progresses and to formulate change requirements where necessary. A mid-term evaluation of the strategy will be carried out and an appropriate realignment will be implemented for the second half of the project. During the final quarter of the project a final evaluation will be implemented, which will feed into the final report.

7. Results (updated)

So far, the project has had several dissemination activities and scientific articles published. Table 2 shows the most relevant activities.

Table 2 – Examples of dissemination activities and publications until January 2019

Dissemination and publications	
Dissemination activities	
IMP.act sea I – CV19003 Assessment of microplastic hotspots in Galway Bay	Sampling cruise on board of the RV Celtic Voyager from the Marine Institute to collect surface water, benthic sediment and biota samples from Galway Bay, (2-6 th February, 2019).
IMP.act website statistics update	So far, the website has had 1,507 visitors, mostly accessing the website in Ireland (42.2%), followed by Portugal (18.6%) and the United States of America (5.36%). Within Ireland, 55% of the visitors are from Galway, followed by Dublin (29%) and Cork (1.2%).
Publications	
Microplastics: Finding a consensus on the definition	Published in Marine Pollution Bulletin, Volume 138, January 2019, pages 145-147. So far, this publication has had a minimum of 50 readers, according to the Elsevier website. The manuscript acknowledges the Irish Research Council by stating: “The authors acknowledge the Irish Research Council (IRC) for their financial support to J. Frias, under the framework of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions COFUND Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe (CAROLINE) scheme (fellowship reference CLNE/2018/524).”



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