CSI-COP

Citizen Scientists Investigating Cookies and App GDPR compliance

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Deliverable D3.1 [D13]

Citizen Science Community

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LEAD Partner for deliverable: UPAT

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Summary

This document reports on the citizen science engagement activities in work package 3 in the CSI-COP project performed by the relevant project partners starting towards the end of the project's Period 1 (Month 10- October 2020), to the end of Period 2 (Month 30-June 2022). Citizen science involvement was launched from CSI-COP's framework developed in the research phase of the project in work package 2. The CSI-COP project gained a twelve-month extension to the project following an Amendment that included the termination of one partner and redistribution of effort. Despite COVID-19 severely affecting engagement of the general public, CSI-COP have reached thousands across Europe and the world raising awareness of the extent of online tracking by third-parties in websites and apps. This work, with the objective of assisting the EU with monitoring compliance of the general data protection regulation (GDPR), will continue in work package 6 tasks. CSI-COP's effort will be updated in deliverables for tasks T6.4 (exploitation: citizen science stakeholder cafes), and T6.5 (parent-teacher roundtables). However, at the time of this deliverable (D3.1 /D13] almost 300 people have completed CSI-COP's free informal education course, '**Your Right to Privacy Online**'. Additionally, **more than fifty** members of the general public have **joined** the project and are part of **CSI-COP'**s community of **citizen scientists**. The delay in submission of this deliverable is due to the lead author contracting a variant of COVID-19 in May 2022.

Keywords: citizen science; citizen science engagement; general public; informal education course.

Introduction

Work package three (WP3) in the CSI-COP project entailed engaging with the general public to help them become aware of how to better protect their data online. Though experienced in outreach and public engagement, CSI-COP as a consortium were novices in 'citizen science'. As explained in CSI-COP website's [FAQ page](#), citizen science is a particular way for interested members of the general public to volunteer as part of a scientific team contributing to the advancement of science. To understand how to enlist members of the public, CSI-COP partners conducted research in WP2 producing a framework document detailing the methodology for ethical recruitment of citizen scientists in the project (deliverable D2.3: Stepankova et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the partner countries and 2020 saw lockdowns across the world restricting people to their homes. This meant CSI-COP could not conduct any face-to-face interactions with members of the public for many months. However, in task 3.1 in WP3, partners were able to apply CSI-COP's framework, which included tapping into a **dataset** (Stepankova et al. 2020; Shah & Winter, 2022). CSI-COP's dataset is a **list of appropriate European and international organisations**, **libraries**, **museums**, **associations**, **civil groups** and **NGOs**, discovered by Stepankova et al. (2020) as part of the partners' research in WP2. This dataset is available on **Zenodo** platform. A varied approach was determined to engage the general public during COVID-19 country lockdowns:

a) Use electronic means to approach organisations in the dataset (Shah & Winter, 2022);
b) Use social media to raise awareness of the project;
c) Directly contact people in partner's own networks;
d) Create an informal education course that can be completed in a learner's own time in their own home.

As part of a) and b) above, calls for citizen science engagement in CSI-COP were placed across a variety of channels including the partner networks, CSI-COP project website and social media platforms (Twitter;), online citizen science engagement platforms such as SciStarter and Zooniverse, citizen science associations (European Citizen Science Association-ECSA; CSA). As part of c) direct messages were sent to contacts listed in the dataset (Stepankova et al. 2020; Shah & Winter, 2022). Personal approaches were also made to family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

Due to the character of Facebook (Rushe & Milmo, 2022), this social media platform, its messaging application (WhatsApp), and multimedia sharing application (Instagram) were not used by CSI-COP. Similarly with YouTube owned by Google (Swartz, 2022) the decision was made to protect CSI-COP volunteers as much as possible by limiting the use of big tech in the project.

As the general public were being made aware of the CSI-COP project and its objectives in 2021, Coventry University and its sub-contractor, Privacy Matters, co-created a **free informal education course** (Fig 1).
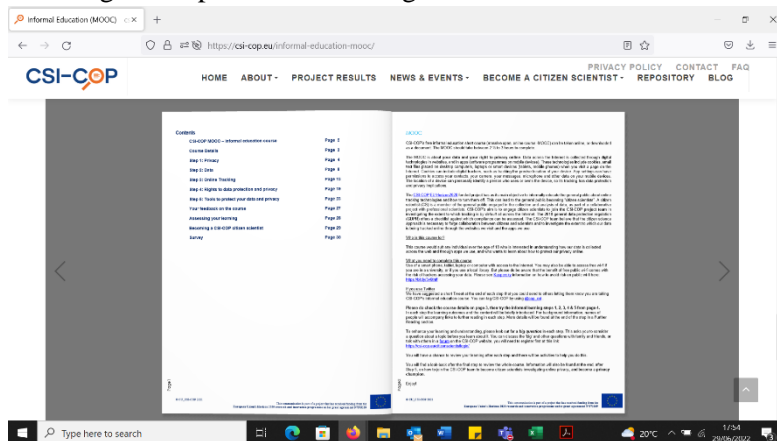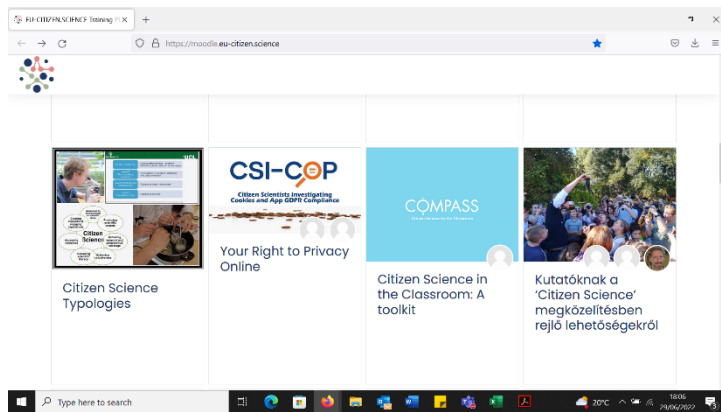

Figure 1: CSI-COP MOOC

On the suggestion of the External Reviewer of CSI-COP's Period 1, the course title was changed to '**Your Right to Privacy Online**' (MOOC 2021).

Once the course creation in English, and its evaluation internally and externally was completed at the end of month 16 (April 2021), it was first made available as a download document from a page on the CSI-COP website: https://csi-cop.eu/informal-education-mooc/

The course was then adapted for the EU-Citizen.Science project platform. Once evaluated and approved there, 'Your Right to Privacy online' was accessible to complete online (Fig 2). The course remains in English on the EU-Citizen.Science MOOC online site, since English only is the language of this platform.

Figure 2: EU-Citizen. Science platform MOOC page

Following the advice of the External Reviewer at Period 1, to translate the course by using-up unused travel costs due to COVID-19 related unrestricted travel. CSI-COP partners translated the 'Your Right to Privacy Online' course into their national languages.

The course is currently available in twelve languages from the CSI-COP website (Fig 3). On the suggestion of UAB partner, for people to identify a language more easily, a thumbnail image of each country-language flag was placed next to the text-word of a language (Fig 3).

Figure 3: CSI-COP MOOC language availability.

Despite COVID-19 affecting CSI-COP efforts across 2021 and into 2022, as a result of the virus evolving leading to variants of greater transmissibility, the partners recruitment and engagement activities have reached thousands through communication, dissemination and exploitation actions.

The recruitment and engagement actions have seen over **280** people **complete** the **free informal education course** in seven of the language translations. This has so far produced **52 members of the public** who make up **CSI-COP's citizen science community**. More than half of CSI-COP's citizen scientists (28 of 52), were engaged by the University of Patras completing CSI-COP's course in Greek. Course completions and the number of citizen scientists engaged in CSI-COP is expected to increase. This is because members of the public are still working on completing the course and have expressed interest to join the project as citizen scientists.

In the next deliverable, a report will be presented on the outcome of the online, hybrid and some face-to-face workshops that were organised by partners in Period 2, as part of WP3 task T3.2. Work package

3 concludes at the end of Period 2 – Month 30, June 2022. However, the content of the free informal education course will be leveraged in activities in work package 6: stakeholder cafés (Task 6.4) and parent-teacher roundtables (Task 6.5). In this way CSI-COP aim to reach further and engage more of the general public, raise awareness of the data protection issues in websites and apps, and contribute to transforming the internet's surveillance ecosystem.

Concluding

CSI-COP's free informal education course, to investigate GDPR compliance by investigating third-party trackers in cookies and Android apps, has proved to be "very useful" by members of the general public who have completed it. CSI-COP have faced serious challenges in its project lifetime so far. This has included one partner termination and redistribution of work. The effects of COVID-19 reduced the number of interested learners due to ill-health following contraction of the virus. Home-working continuing in the second year of the project in 2021 limited volunteering time, especially by parents providing home schooling during lockdowns, even if concern, appreciation and intention was present to forge change in the way the internet's surveillance eco-system works. The full effect of COVID-19 on CSI-COP partners is in preparation for a forthcoming article expected for submission in the journal 'Citizen Science; Practice and Theory'. Nonetheless, **CSI-COP's community of citizen scientists host 52 general public members**. This number is expected to increase with WP6 activities. The final CSI-COP project report, task T6.6 (M42-June 2023), will present the effect of the decision to protect citizen scientists' data by limiting the deployment of big tech web platforms and applications (e.g., Facebook).

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Appendix 1: CSI-COP dataset

An extract from CSI-COP's D2.3 dataset is shown in the screenshot below. The complete dataset is available to download from **Zenodo**: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6780048

CSI-COP Framework (Deliverable D2.3)
Identified Organisations of Interest for Citizen Science Projects

This dataset was created during the actions of CSI-COP project task T2.3, producing the deliverable D2.3 (D12): the framework for citizen science engagement in CSI-COP. The list of organisations in this dataset are the varied European and international societies that the CSI-COP consortium partners discovered as appropriate to CSI-COP's objectives. The purpose of gathering these organisations is to raise awareness among their members of CSI-COP's objectives, including the opportunity to join CSI-COP as citizen scientists to co-investigate the extent of online tracking and data collection in websites and apps. D2.3 framework document is available for download from Zenodo: https://zenodo.org/record/4066515#.Yrw5JezMLb0

For enquiries on this dataset, please do contact:
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Citizen Science Projects		
Name	**Link**	**Geographical Coverage**
Barcelona Culture Institute	https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelonacultura/en/icub	Catalunya
Belgium CS platform	https://www.iedereenwetenschapper.be/	Belgium
Center for Citizen Science	https://www.zentrumfuercitizenscience.at/	Austria
Citizen Science Association (CSA)	https://www.citizenscience.org/	USA
Citizen Science in the Czech Republic	http://www.citizenscience.cz/	Czech Republic
Environmental Social Science Group (ESSRG)	http://www.essrg.hu/en	Hungary
EU-Citizen Science	https://eu-citizen.science/	Europe
IDEAS Science	https://www.ideas-science.com/citizen-science	Hungary
Österreich forscht	https://www.citizen-science.at/	Austria
Participatory Science Academy	https://www.pwa.uzh.ch/en.html	Switzerland
SciStarter	https://scistarter.org/	International
Swedish Citizen Science platform	https://medborgarforskning.se	Sweden
Taking Citizen Science to School	https://www.tcss.center/home-en	Israel
The Danish Citizen Science platform	https://citizenscience.dk	Denmark
The European Citizen Science Association	https://ecsa.citizen-science.net/	Europe
The German Citizen Science platform	https://www.buergerschaffenwissen.de/	Germany
The Switzerland Citizen science platform	https://www.schweiz-forscht.ch/de/	Switzerland
Zooniverse	https://www.zooniverse.org	International