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ACTION

D5.9 FINAL WEBINAR TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract	This deliverable describes the goals and the content of the second ACTION webinar on sustainability: an online event carried out on the 14 th of July 2021.
Keywords	Sustainability challenges, sustainability instruments for CS projects, fund raising.

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List of abbreviations

CS	Citizen Science
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
D	Deliverable
WP	Work Package

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the structure and the content of the second ACTION webinar dedicated to financial sustainability.

This second webinar build on the first one, carried out in November 2020 and on Passani, A., Thuermer, G., Gonzalez, E. (2020). While the first webinar was a public event, this second webinar was open only to ACTION pilots as a space for learning, but also for exchanging experiences, difficulties, and opportunities.

The final sustainability webinar started with a collaborative mapping exercise on CS sustainability' challenges. It continued exploring different paths towards financial sustainability and then zoomed on fundraising that emerged as one of the most interesting topics for participants. The last part of the webinar was dedicated to open discussions and experience sharing and to the presentation of a matrix for sustainable fundraising planning.

1. Introduction

In D7.4 “Sustainability plan” different, non-self-excluding, approaches supporting the financial sustainability of citizen science (CS) projects have been described. Those were:

- Access to public funding
- Access to private funding
- Crowdfunding
- Self-funding through memberships, merchandising and donations
- Service/product-based sustainability models.

For each model its level of novelty, its potential impact on sustainability and the support provided by ACTION was described.

The first webinar to support CS sustainability, built on this work and was on accession for talking with experts on these and other sustainability approaches. The first webinar was planned to be titled “CS sustainability: finding the right mix” (See D5.8) but then it was renamed “Let’s talk about money. Citizen science and financial sustainability” for making it more appealing to a wider audience. It took place on November the 19th as an online event (Figure 1), it was open not only to ACTION pilots (as initially planned) but also to pilots of the other SwafS projects in the field of CS and to any other organisation interested in the topic. In total 25 persons participated.



Figure 1 Digital postcard used for promoting the first sustainability webinar

The agenda and list of speakers was as follows:

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- 10.00 Welcome and introduction - Dr. Antonella Passani (T6 Ecosystems, ACTION project)
- 10.15 CS sustainability: the experience of the Stars4all foundation - *Dr. Oscar Corcho* (Professor at Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and partner in ACTION project)
- 10.25 The value of sustainability for Accor - *Enrica Tomei* (HR & CSR Project Manager Accor Italy, Greece, Malta)
- 10.35 How can a company build value for a local community? - *Norman Larocca* (CSR Director at Acqua dell'Elba)
- 10.45 Funding innovation: the role of impact investing - *Dr. Marco Sebastianelli* (Senior associate at Plusvalue)
- 11.00 Creating a start-up: our path towards sustainability of CS projects - *MSc Rosa Arias*, CEO & Founder at Science for Change
- 11.10 Goteo.org: a digital platform facilitating financial support from individuals for citizens science initiatives through crowdfunding and match-funding campaigns - *Chiara Rutolo* (European Project Manager and Fundraiser at Fundación Goteo)
- 11.20 Round table
- 11.40 Open discussion with participants
- 11.55 Closing remarks.

The main topics covered by experts were: membership/supporters fees, including merchandising and tax-related options, crowdfunding, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), impact investing and service/training provision. After the experts' presentations participants got the opportunity to ask questions and a vivid open discussion emerged among experts and the audience.

The video of this first sustainability webinar is available at on the ACTION YouTube channel at the following link: https://youtu.be/u6a_3kVqTko and it is also included in the ACTION toolkit.

2. Final sustainability webinar: goal, content, and results

The second and final sustainability webinar took place on July the 14th. It lasted one hour and was carried out online. All ACTION pilots were invited and five of them participated.

The goal of the webinar was to offer to the ACTION pilots a space for learning more about different sustainability paths and for sharing difficulties, experience and plans toward sustainability. To provide a safe space for sharing information on their sustainability experience and practices (that can be perceived as sensitive) the webinar was open only to ACTION pilots and it was not recorded.

From dedicated interviews with the ACTION second cohort of pilots, it emerged their interests in knowing more about fundraising. Consequently, a dedicated session was dedicated to this topic.

The agenda of the webinar was as follows:

- The challenges of CS sustainability
- Different paths towards financial sustainability
- A zoom on fundraising
- How to develop a sustainable fundraising plan

After a quick round of introduction among participants and initial map of challenges for CS sustainability was presented to the audience. It was discussed and integrated using the collaborative tool Mural, generating the map in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Challenges for CS sustainability

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The main challenges for CS sustainability emerged are the following:

- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of human resources (personnel to be dedicated to sustainability-related tasks)
- Lack of competences
- Lack of time
- Language issues (the use of English as vehicular language in EC programs represent an obstacle for some organisations. The fact that national call for proposals in the EU are only available in local languages also represented an obstacle to participation)
- Lack of financial resources that support the maintenance of project as most funds are for new CS projects, instead that for maintaining on-going projects
- In some cases, public funds are “used” in a non-strategical way, adapting the organisation activities and goals to the request of open calls with the aim of covering ongoing costs but this bring the risk of losing the centrality of the mission of the organisation
- Lack of partnerships and networks that are often needed to access funds, especially public ones
- In some cases, the eligibility criteria are too strict, while in other cases the size of the funding is too big for small organisations
- Finally, some of the public funding opportunity ask for co-funding or for costs’ anticipation which is often not sustainable for small organisations.

It is important to mention that most participants were from small third sector organisations that represent a good portion of the CS community but that have different difficulties from other organisations such as research organisation and universities.

Then the sustainability tools described in the first sustainability webinar were shortly described and contextualised for those who that didn’t have the time to see the recording of that session before the webinar (as suggested).

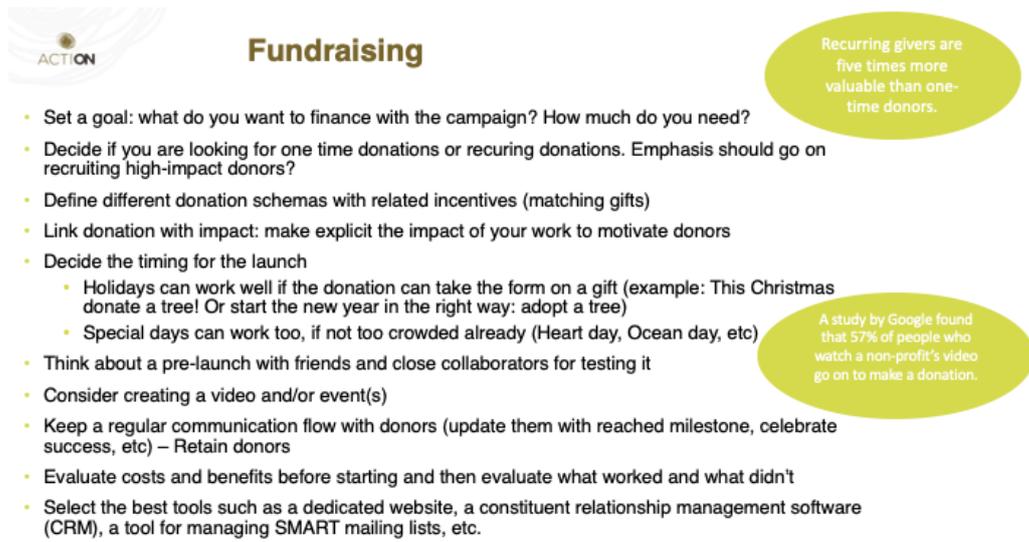
More specifically the following tools were described:

- Public funds (European, national, local)
- Membership/supporters fees, including merchandising
- Donations and tax-related tools
- Crowdfunding
- Private funds
 - Foundations/charities/bank foundations
 - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
 - Impact investing (urban impact funds, impact bonds, etc)
- Service/training provision
- Selling of products (for example sensors)
- Volunteers and in-kind donations

The core of the webinar focused on fundraising. This tool for financial sustainability, that was not explored in the first sustainability webinar, was described in its main characteristic, pros, and cons. The presentation provided practical advice on how to design, carry out and evaluate a fundraising campaign (Figure 3 and Figure 4).



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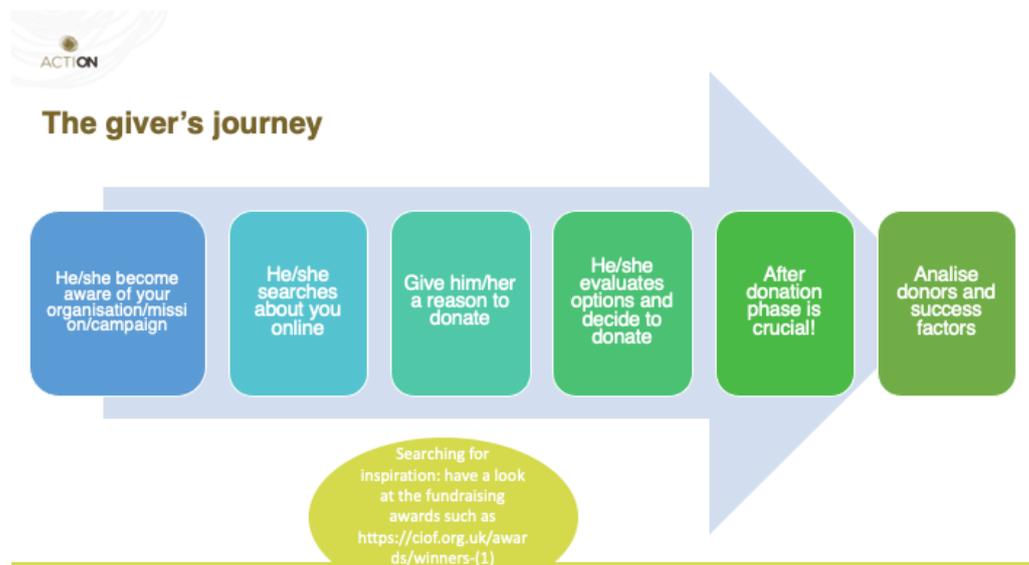
Fundraising

- Set a goal: what do you want to finance with the campaign? How much do you need?
- Decide if you are looking for one time donations or recurring donations. Emphasis should go on recruiting high-impact donors?
- Define different donation schemas with related incentives (matching gifts)
- Link donation with impact: make explicit the impact of your work to motivate donors
- Decide the timing for the launch
 - Holidays can work well if the donation can take the form on a gift (example: This Christmas donate a tree! Or start the new year in the right way: adopt a tree)
 - Special days can work too, if not too crowded already (Heart day, Ocean day, etc)
- Think about a pre-launch with friends and close collaborators for testing it
- Consider creating a video and/or event(s)
- Keep a regular communication flow with donors (update them with reached milestone, celebrate success, etc) – Retain donors
- Evaluate costs and benefits before starting and then evaluate what worked and what didn't
- Select the best tools such as a dedicated website, a constituent relationship management software (CRM), a tool for managing SMART mailing lists, etc.

Recurring givers are five times more valuable than one-time donors.

A study by Google found that 57% of people who watch a non-profit's video go on to make a donation.

Figure 3 Slide used for presenting the main characteristics of fundraising activities



The giver's journey

He/she become aware of your organisation/mission/campaign

He/she searches about you online

Give him/her a reason to donate

He/she evaluates options and decide to donate

After donation phase is crucial!

Analyse donors and success factors

Searching for inspiration: have a look at the fundraising awards such as [https://ciof.org.uk/awards/winners-\(1\)](https://ciof.org.uk/awards/winners-(1))

Figure 4 Presenting the main elements of a fundraising campaign from the point of view of donors

After this, participants were supported in sharing their experiences with the different tools described and especially on fundraising. It emerged that all participants are interested in diversifying their financial streams and that are making their first steps in the fundraising world. The first experiments with fundraising were not successfully and participants shared their difficulties, mostly related to the specific competences needed and the relatively high costs of the initial investment. Some of them experimented crowdfunding for specific projects, while other reported a lack of suitable crowdfunding platforms in their countries.

Finally, participants were presented with a matrix that could be used by CS project's teams for developing a sustainable fundraising plan (Figure 5). A brief introduction on how to use was proposed but more time would have been necessary for going more into details. The matrix



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presented has been elaborated from the online courses of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency¹ and adapted for the purposes of the sustainability webinar. The opportunity to further work on this matrix and include it in the final version of the ACTION toolbox is under analysis at the time of writing.

What do you want to make sustainable?	How much do you need? (GOAL). Consider both direct and indirect costs	Strategy (mix) to reach the goal	Action steps	Person(s)/team in charge	Timing (start and end)

Figure 5 Sustainable fundraising planning matrix

¹ Available at: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/watertrain/pdf/modules/sustainablefinance.pdf>

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