

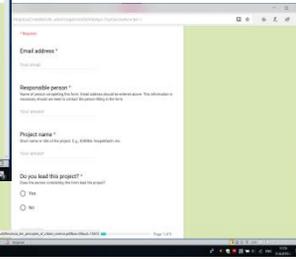


Contribution of the project “State and perspectives of citizen science for invasive alien species in Bulgaria” to implementation of COST Action CA 17122 (Alien CSI)



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Introduction

Preventing introduction of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is generally more cost-effective than measures taken following their introduction and establishment in a new location. The good awareness about the negative impact and early detection of IAS are crucial for prevention of their introduction and spread.

Citizen science (CS) projects actively involve citizens in scientific endeavour that generates new knowledge or understanding. Citizens may act as contributors, collaborators, or as project leader and have a meaningful role in the project. Citizen science play important role for involvement of wide range of stakeholders and societal engagement with the issue of IAS.

In 2018 started implementation of COST Action CA 17122 “Increasing understanding of alien species (AS) through citizen science” (Alien CSI) addressing multidisciplinary research questions in relation to developing and implementing CS on Alien species (AS).

Methods

Questionnaire surveys were conducted to assess the initiatives/projects related to IAS Citizen science available and the level of IAS awareness of nonprofessionals in Bulgaria.

Information was collected by two questionnaires:

- questionnaire for Alien CS initiatives, developed by WG1 leaders of COST Action Alien-CSI available on-line (<https://forms.gle/StGZHk4Lb1mL3zq9>)
- questionnaire for IAS awareness of nonprofessionals developed by the team of the project.

The project

In 2019 we launched the project “State and perspectives of citizen science for invasive alien species in Bulgaria” contributing to implementation of tasks of two working groups of the Action. The main goal of the project is to study the state of the CS on IAS in Bulgaria and integrate the results obtained in the analysis at European level, within the framework of the COST action Alien SCI.

The specific objectives are:

- (1) Inventory and analysis of the existing initiatives, activities and strategies implemented in Bulgaria to engage citizens in the problem related to alien species;
- (2) Assessment of the level of IAS awareness of different groups of society and their motivation to participate in the early detection of AS, and identification the most appropriate approaches for engaging them with citizen science;
- (3) IAS awareness raising of different groups of society;
- (4) Increase the capacity of stakeholders involved in the study, awareness raising and management of invasive alien species in Bulgaria.

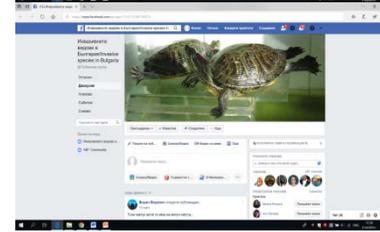
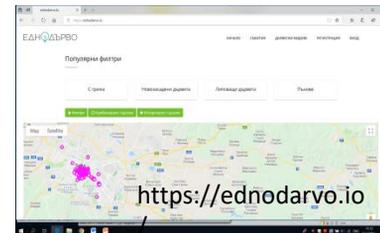
Preliminary results and discussion

Our preliminary results suggest that very few initiatives/projects related to Citizen science have a sole focus on alien species in Bulgaria

- “Pilot-study (data collection) on invasive alien species in the Danube Region with a smartphone application developed by the JRC (Danube-IASapp)”
- “State and perspectives of citizen science for invasive alien species in Bulgaria”
- “Increasing understanding of alien species through citizen science (Alien-CSI): Approaches to citizen science, data management and standards (Bulgaria)”

The on-line formats available in Bulgaria have a partial focus on alien species (Smartbirds, Ednodurvo, databases collecting data about flora, hunting and fishing activities).

The results of the questionnaire survey conducted showed that the awareness of the risk (negative impact, pathways etc.) of invasive alien species of the majority of the respondents questioned was at an unsatisfactory level.



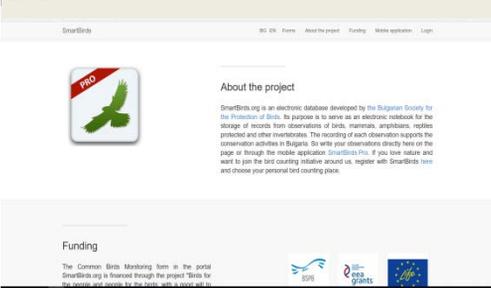
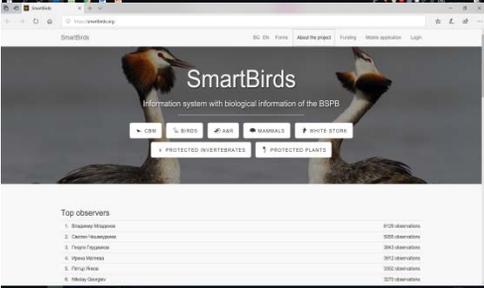
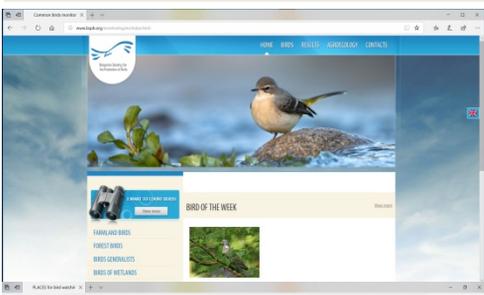
Expected results

The implementation of the planned activities will contribute to the fulfillment of the following deliverables of COST action CA17122:

- Database of AS-related CS,
- Review of needs, motivations and attitudes towards AS and CS..

Deliverables:

- Database on civil science initiatives for IAS in Bulgaria completed and data integrated in the database of the COST Action;
- Analytical report on the state of civil science for invasive alien species in Bulgaria prepared;
- Analytical report on the motivation of different stakeholders to participate in civil science initiatives, as well as on the most appropriate approaches for their implementation prepared;
- An electronic platform for invasive alien species in Bulgaria prepared.



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