



Communicating the importance of greenhouse gas observations to a non-scientific audience through the ICOScapes campaign

Katri Ahlgren, Magdalena Brus, and Mari Keski-Nisula

Integrated Carbon Observation System, Helsinki, Finland (comms@icos-ri.eu)

Communicating scientific topics to a broad non-peer audience can be challenging for several reasons. It requires a conviction, specific skills, time and money to popularise scientific topics so they sound interesting, can be understood by anyone, but still being factually correct. Social media channels offer a two-way communication with broad range of stakeholders almost unlike any other traditional or online channel. The challenge, however, is to make the content stand out to reach the largest audience possible among all the thousands of science communicators out there.

ICOS (Integrated Carbon Observation System) initiated a communication campaign called ICOScapes in July 2017. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about climate change and greenhouse gas measurements in Europe. The main output of this campaign are beautiful nature photographs and short videos including station crew interviews, which are then published on several social media channels together with ICOS key messages about the work being done at the stations and the overall network. A professional photographer, which was already well known in social media (e.g. over 1 million followers on Instagram), was hired to travel around the stations and take photographs for this purpose, while the videos were taken and produced by in-house staff.

The campaign has been really successful. It has connected ICOS with the audience outside the science. People are actively commenting and asking questions about climate change, the stations and the measurements done. So, we can consider this as a real two-way communication. Moreover, the campaign also improved the engagement and coherence of ICOS' internal science community. To conclude, social media can work well as a communications channel, engaging audience – provided that the organization is willing and able to use resources for the campaign, and adapt to as well as utilise the conventions of social media channels to reach its aim. That in turn, requires that the organisation's management understands the importance, and the strategic role of communication, and is willing to resource it sufficiently.