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Copernicus Evolution – Research for harmonised and Transitional-water Observation (CERTO)

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Author(s):	Dawn Ashby, PML, Vanda Brotas, FCUL and Federico Ienna, FCUL		
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1 Executive Summary

During the first year of CERTO most communication activities have continued as planned, despite worldwide disruption to working practises due to COVID-19. Some future activities may be dependent on the availability of results from other work packages, which may be delayed due to the difficulties in undertaking fieldwork under current travel restriction.

Progress against each of the WP10 objectives is outlined below:

Objective 1: Ensure effective and productive communication **within the project** through the establishment of a defined participant network with clear involvement levels, so that the communication of results, events, news and opportunities can be targeted as required.

- We have adjusted well to changes in working practises during 2020. Internal communication has been effective and facilitated using email lists, online meetings, the Alfresco content management system and electronic newsletter.

Objective 2: **External promotion** of the CERTO objectives and its aims at the start of the project to raise awareness and generate interest in its findings and products as these become available, as well as fostering an on-going relationship with stakeholders, encouraging multidirectional communication and developing contact networks.

- External promotion of CERTO objectives has taken place through the CERTO website, twitter feed, e-newsletter and leaflet distribution. Presentations have also been made at several on-line events.

Objective 3: **Identification of external contacts** and development of a GDPR-compliant database of relevant stakeholders interested in the project and its findings as well as the outcomes. The database will be tailored so that contacts only receive communications that are deemed to be of specific interest to them, with a focus on identifying stakeholders who have an interest in the geographic regions of each case study.

- A GDPR-compliant database has been produced which identifies geographic areas of interest for each individual. A sign-up form is available on the website.

Objective 4: **Communicate** the project findings and achievements to the contacts database, participant network and beyond, using products and tools, such as the project website. This will include locally tailored communication to parties interested in specific case studies.

- The project's early findings have been communicated through the website, e-newsletter and social media. Due to difficulties in undertaking fieldwork, there has been a limited amount of local information to impart.

Objective 5: Promote the **products** of the project to relevant groups, to ensure optimal uptake of the project's findings.

- This objective pertains to the latter part of the communications plan and is planned to be addressed later in the project as resulting products become available.

2 External communication tools and materials

CERTO has developed infrastructure to engage stakeholders, end-users and network communities throughout the project in order to demonstrate the benefits of the project. The primary communications channels are the:

- CERTO project website,
- social media,
- overview leaflet, and
- electronic newsletter.

During the first year of the project, CERTO communication activities have continued in accordance with the initial timeline set out in the initial Communications Plan D10.1 (Fig. 1). Further details are outlined below.

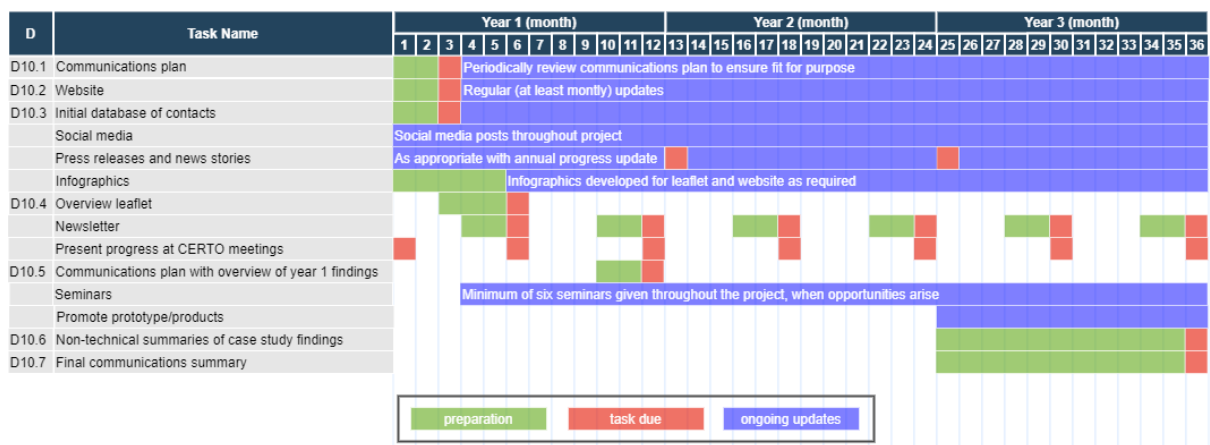


Figure 1. Gantt chart of the WP10 communication activities and deliverables.

2.1 Project logo and branding

The project logo and branding were developed early in the project and have guided the development of all communications channels. The logo is available to download from the website and a PowerPoint template (Fig. 2) is available for project participants from the Alfresco site.



Figure 2. Title and content slide from CERTO presentation template.

2.2 Website

The website went live in March 2020 <http://www.certo-project.org> and regular updates have been made, including news stories and details of CERTO case studies.

The domain will be live until at least five years after the completion of the project (2028). Over 700 people have accessed the site, with over 2000 page views since the site was launched.

The CERTO website is continually being developed throughout the project and will continue to be updated and enhanced as required. It will be a repository for open access project information and resources as well as serving as a 'shop-front' for the project, including highlights of the research and promoting the products of the project.

See D10.2 Website for further details.

2.3 Use of social media

CERTO is using social media to tap into existing contact networks, create new groups and encourage followers. This enables the project to capitalise on these current and active communication channels to keep stakeholders up to date.

A CERTO twitter account (Fig. 3) was established before the kick-off meeting, which gained 50 followers and resulted in 214 engagements during the meeting. Since then the number of followers has grown to 86. The account will continue to keep interested parties informed on developments in the project.

Other social media channels may be considered during the project if found to be more appropriate to specific stakeholder groups.

Figure 3. CERTO twitter feed: @CERTO_project



2.4 Infographics

An illustration has been produced to highlight some of the elements of the project and this was used as part of the CERTO leaflet. As the project progresses, we will expand upon this design and use it to illustrate different elements or outcomes of the project in an engaging and visual way.

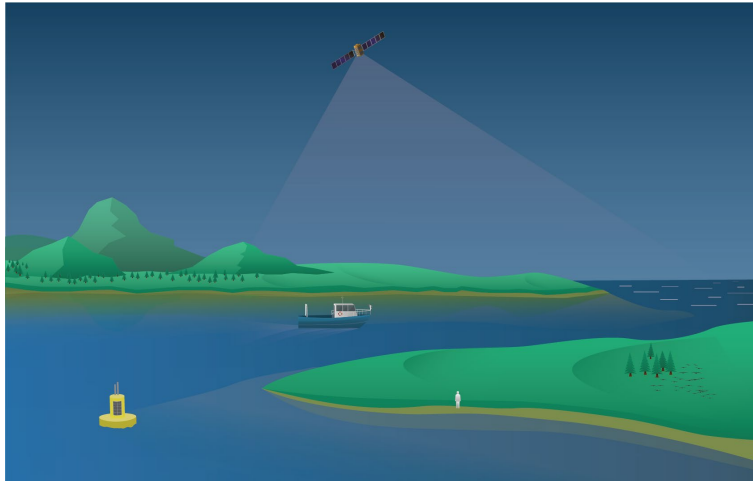


Figure 4. CERTO illustration showing key sampling methods – satellites, in situ and autonomous measurements.

2.5 Project leaflet

An overview leaflet (Fig. 5) was produced early in the project to provide an overview and outline the objectives of CERTO. The leaflet gives background on the need to harmonise water quality measurements and identifies the Case Study areas that being studied to address this issue. It also provides signposts to the website, social media and contact details.

Due to restrictions on in person meetings the leaflet has been distributed primarily in electronic format and is available to download from the website.

Harmonising Water Quality

Water quality is a key worldwide issue relevant to human consumption, food production, industry, and environment.

The European Copernicus programme includes satellite sensors designed to observe water quality - however, water quality data production is split across three services with different approaches, and with some areas, notably transitional waters, not supported by any service.

The aim of CERTO is to *harmonise* between the variety of Copernicus services to produce water quality data for the continuum from oceans to lakes, adding capabilities for near coastal waters, estuaries, lagoons, bays and river systems.

Monitoring and maintaining good water quality is pivotal to fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals and is enshrined in European policy through the *Water Framework Directive* and the *Marine Strategy Framework Directive*.



Contact

Steve Groom - Coordinator
sbg@pml.ac.uk

Kim Hockley - Project Manager
khock@pml.ac.uk

Project Office
Plymouth Marine Laboratory
Prospect Place
Plymouth
PL1 3DH
+44 (0)1752 633100

comms.certo@pml.ac.uk

www.certo-project.org

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CERTO

Copernicus Evolution – Research for harmonised and Transitional water Observation

About the project

Transitional, inland and near-shore waters are challenging for satellite-based Earth Observation because of the heterogeneity and variety of water conditions, impact of nearby land, and bottom visibility.

Satellites offer a cost-effective solution to monitor water quality at a global scale. A variety of methods and approaches are currently used for different water bodies such as oceans and lakes.

CERTO will provide a harmonised capability to monitor water quality from lakes, through deltas, coastal waters and to the open ocean.

Case study areas

The project has six European case-study regions which will be used as test sites for the CERTO prototype.

- Elbe estuary, Germany
- Curonian lagoon, Russia/Lithuania
- Tamar estuary, UK
- Razelm-Sinoe lagoon, Romania
- Tagus estuary, Portugal
- Venice lagoon, Italy

In-situ observations will be taken and combined with existing data records to characterise and validate each site. Direct interaction with local entities in coastal industry and monitoring will help to define the product requirements, and validate the prototype system.

Objectives

- Harmonise between the different Copernicus services approaches.
- Develop indicators relevant to management, policy and science users operating in transitional waters.
- Develop specific in-water and atmospheric correction methods for water quality in transitional waters.
- Interact and consult with commercial, industrial, scientific, policy and monitoring stakeholders.
- Provide a prototype system for use by the Copernicus Services.

In-situ data collection in the Venice Lagoon

Figure 5 a. The CERTO project overview leaflet (front/back); b. The CERTO project overview leaflet (inside).

2.6 Stakeholders/contact database

In order to disseminate communication materials to relevant audiences, CERTO is identifying contacts interested in the project and its findings.

The stakeholder and contact database was created in the first few months of the project and initially was populated with details of early supporters of CERTO, the Advisory Board and existing contacts in industry and policy areas.

The data are stored at PML according to the UK's Data Protection Act and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR; Regulation (EU) 2016/679). The database is tailored so that contacts only receive communications that are deemed to be of specific interest to them, with a focus on identifying stakeholders who have an interest in the geographic regions of each case study. The database is available through Alfresco to project participants only.

There is a form in the footer to register for updates and since March 2020 an additional eight people have registered their interest via the website, we anticipate this will increase as more fieldwork takes place in the regional areas.

See deliverable D10.3 "Initial database of contacts" for further details.

Register for updates

Enter your details below to receive updates on the CERTO project. We will use your data for this purpose only and it will not be shared with any third parties. Please read our [Privacy Notice](#) for further information.

Title:

Full name:

Email:

Organisation:

Which geographical area are you interested in?:

- Curonian Lagoon, Russian Federation/Lithuania
- Elbe estuary/German Bight, Germany
- Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon, Romania
- Tagus estuary, Portugal
- Tamar estuary, UK
- Venice Lagoon/North Adriatic Sea, Italy

Enter security code:

Figure 6. Register for updates form

2.7 Electronic newsletter



Figure 7. Screenshot of the first e-newsletter that was distributed in August 2020.

The first edition of the CERTO newsletter was distributed in August 2020, shortly after the six-month progress meeting. This is an email-based, biannual update which is distributed to all members of the contact database to keep them informed of project progress and highlights.

The first edition saw good rates of interaction with 40% of messages opened, and 65% of these people accessing further information by clicking links in the message.

The CERTO electronic newsletter focuses on facilitating internal communication, while remaining appropriate for external audiences, so that it can keep project participants informed and engaged in activities that they may not be directly involved in or aware of.

The bulletin provides accessible and succinct headlines with links to the full information on the project website. This helps to keep the newsletters accessible and focused but also generates traffic to the website where other information is available. It also provides a regular process for making sure the website is kept up-to-date and fresh with new items and materials that are then also available to non-subscribers.

The next edition of the newsletter will be produced in early 2020 in conjunction with the CERTO Annual meeting.

2.8 Press releases and news stories

During 2020 we have produced four news stories for the CERTO website, <https://certo-project.org/News>:

- CERTO kick-off meeting
- Adriatic Field Campaign
- CERTO progress meeting
- CERTO's first year

When appropriate, press releases will be sent to generate media interest and reach a wider general audience, thus contributing to the increase of Literacy of the Ocean from the general public. As there has been limited fieldwork during 2020, we have not considered there to be any stories with a more general appeal and have not produced any press releases. We anticipate greater distribution of timely press releases as field work progresses and important developments are made within the project.

Towards the end of the project, one press release will be produced for each of the six case studies highlighting issues local to the case study area. Where press releases relate to a specific geographical area these will be translated into the local language, if appropriate, and distributed to local press contacts.

2.9 Non-technical summaries of case study findings

Summaries from each of the regional case studies will be created towards the end of the project. These summaries will be used to demonstrate issues in local, coastal/transitional areas presenting information to agencies, GEO Initiatives, and relevant Copernicus services, Space agencies, local policy makers and environmental management authorities. The case study examples will also show the project relevance to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Information on each of the case studies is being collected by WP10 that will contribute to the summaries. Preliminary information is available on the CERTO website at https://certo-project.org/Case_study_areas (Fig. 8) which will continue to be updated as the project progresses. On this page there is also a form to register for updates, specific to the case study area on the webpage.

Case study areas

CERTO is using six case study areas spread across European coastal waters to provide a range of transitional environments to ensure a full range of Optical Water Types and associated algorithms are fully characterised and validated.

Curonian lagoon, Russia/Lithuania
 The Curonian Lagoon is a transboundary water shared between Russia and Lithuania and separated from the Baltic Sea by the Curonian Spit. With a surface area of 1,584 km², it is the largest lagoon in Europe. The lagoon is shallow (mean depth 3.8 m) with a mainly freshwater ecosystem. The main tributary is the... [Read more >](#)

Elbe estuary, Germany
 The German Bight is a large, temperate, relatively flat coastal wetland environment, formed by the intricate interactions between physical and biological factors that have given rise to a multitude of transitional habitats with tidal channels, sandy shoals, sea-grass meadows, mussel beds, sandbars, mudflats, salt marshes... [Read more >](#)

Razelm-Sinoe lagoon, Romania
 The lagoon system is divided in two units (Razelm and Sinoe) formed by semi-independent lakes. Razelm has an area of 415km² and a maximum depth of 3.2m and Sinoe has 171km² and a maximum depth of 2.2m. The lagoon shares its southern, western and eastern limits with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve boundaries, the... [Read more >](#)

Tagus estuary, Portugal
 This estuary is one of the largest in Europe, with a broad shallow bay covering an area of about 320 km². It is mesotidal with semi-diurnal tides. The Tagus river is the main source of freshwater to the estuary. An in situ monitoring program with monthly sampling at four sites has been running since 1999. This measures... [Read more >](#)

Tamar estuary, UK
 Plymouth Sound is part of the Western Channel Observatory (WCO) situated on the north-west European Shelf that straddles several biogeographical provinces. The marine laboratories in Plymouth have sampled at several sites within the western English Channel for over a century in open shelf (e.g. station E1) and coastal (e.g. station... [Read more >](#)

Venice lagoon, Italy
 The lagoon maintains a connection to the northern Adriatic Sea through the inlets of Lido, Malamocco, and Chioggia, and the exchange of water through the inlets in each tidal cycle is about a third of the total volume of the lagoon. The northern Adriatic Sea is a shallow and semi-enclosed regional sea, influenced by the plumes of... [Read more >](#)

Register for updates

Enter your details below to receive updates on the CERTO project and the relevant case study areas. We will use your data for this purpose only and it will not be shared with any third parties. Please read our [Privacy Notice](#) for further information.

Title:

Full name:

Email:

Organisation:

Which geographical area are you interested in?:

- Curonian Lagoon, Russian Federation/Lithuania
- Elbe estuary/German Bight, Germany
- Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon, Romania
- Tagus estuary, Portugal
- Tamar estuary, UK
- Venice Lagoon/North Adriatic Sea, Italy

Enter security code:

Figure 8. Case study page on CERTO website, with form to register for updates by geographic area of interest.

2.10 Seminars and open days

CERTO activities have been presented at several online conferences and events during 2020; however, due to restrictions posed by COVID-19, it has not been possible to hold any seminars in person this year. If the situation improves, we will hold seminars at some of the partner institutes during 2021 or find suitable online alternatives.

3 Internal project communications tools

The Communication work package aims to ensure effective and productive communication within the project through the establishment of a defined participant network with clear involvement levels, so that the communication of results, events, news and opportunities can be targeted as required.

An email address for WP10 has been set up that is accessible to all participants in the project to ensure all effective communication within and to/from the work package (comms.certo@pml.ac.uk). Customised e-mail lists have also been created, such as the *Work Package Leaders* e-mail list and the *Innovation Team* e-mail list to ensure that everyone working on the project receives communications relevant to them with clear protocols and guidance on usage.

CERTO has been using the Alfresco content management system (Fig. 9) effectively to store and manage documents within the project and for group discussions. This is a secure password-protected hosting service that is being used for sharing confidential and/or draft documents that are not appropriate to make open access on the project website.

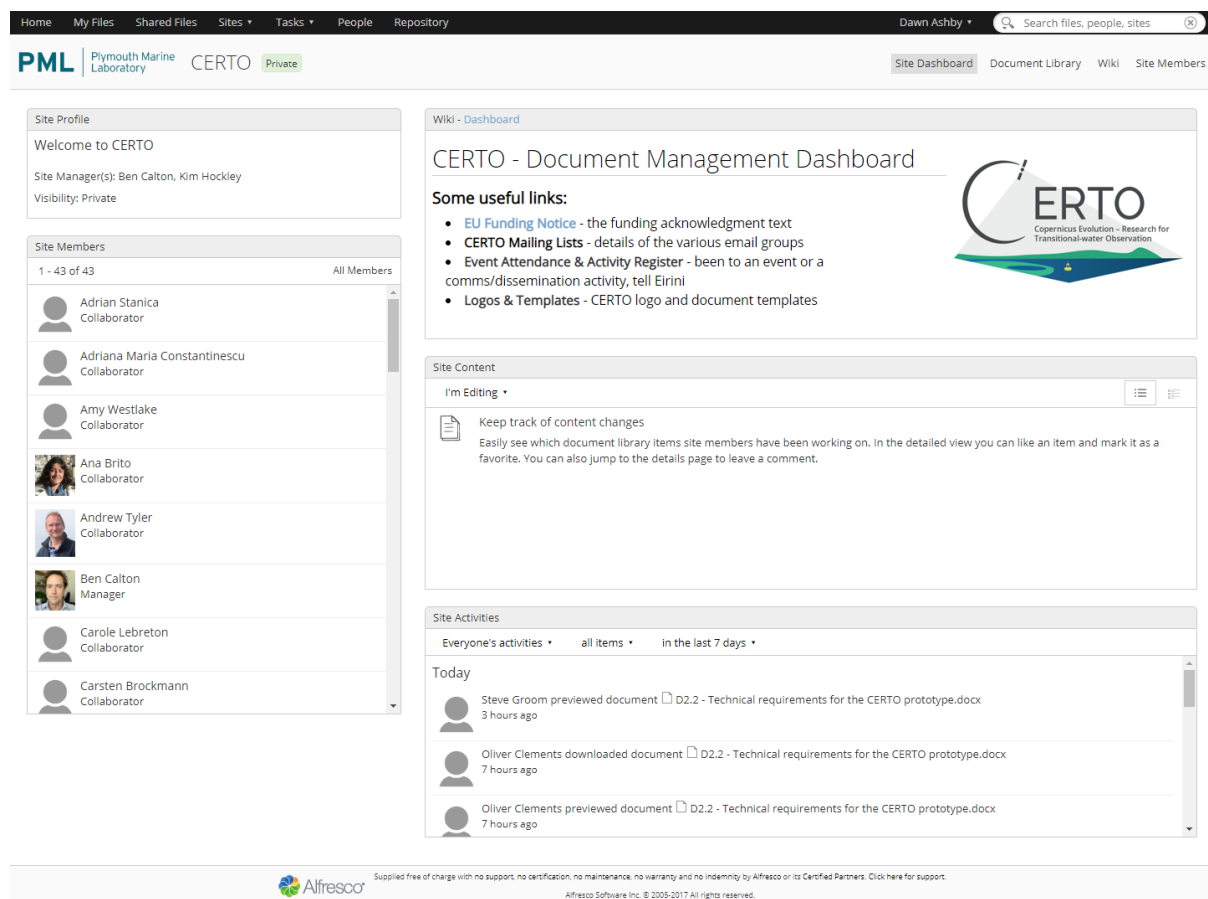


Figure 9. The Alfresco content management system, showing useful links, site members, site activities and link to the document library.

The electronic newsletter, although suitable for an external audience, is also key for facilitating internal communication, keeping project participants informed and engaged in activities that they may not be directly involved in.

Effective communication within the project has also been facilitated by a series of online meetings (Fig. 10). These include 6 monthly progress meetings which involve all participants, bi-monthly meetings of partners and WP leads, and meetings of individual work packages. Details of all meetings are available on the Alfresco site and open to any CERTO participants. The move to online meetings has meant that more participants were able to attend the meetings as the cost and time commitment of travelling to the meeting was removed, making it more accessible to all parties.

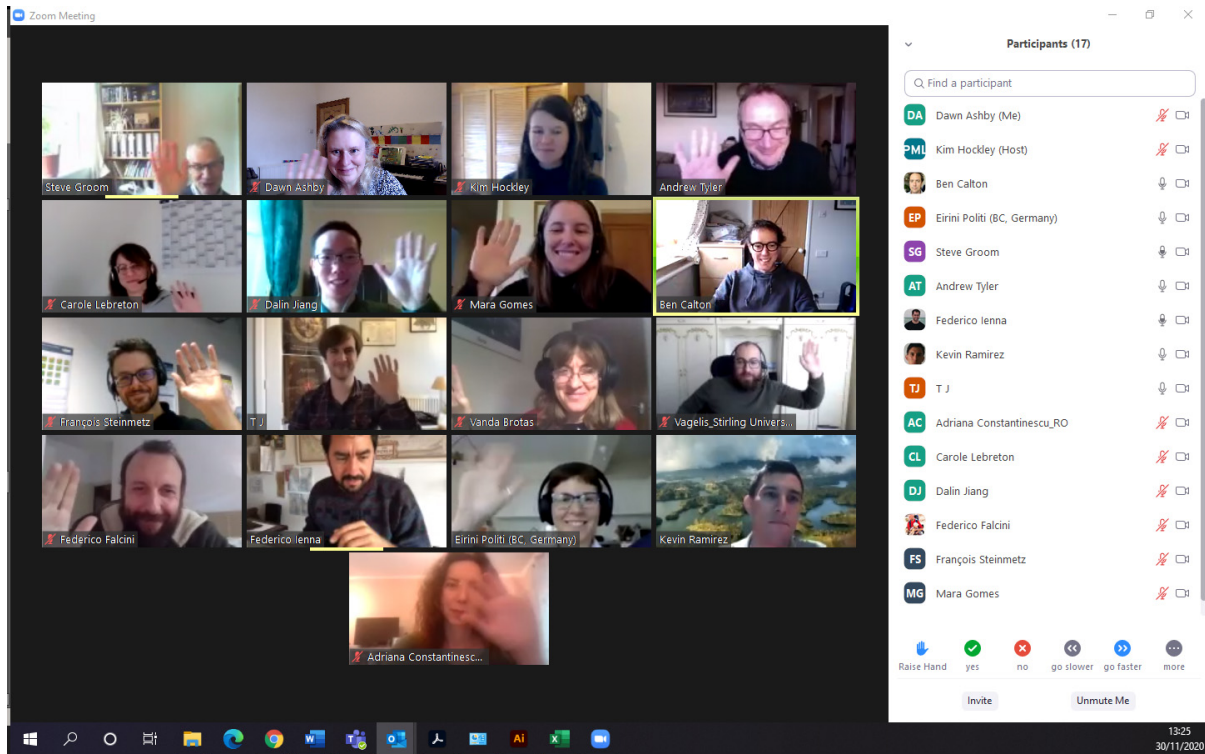


Figure 10. Screenshot from the CERTO bi-monthly progress meeting, November 2020.

4 Evaluation

Good progress has been made towards the object of WP10 during the first year of the project, despite major disruption to working practises worldwide throughout the year. There is a clear plan to continue and expand upon this work as the project progresses and as more results and products become available.

WP10 will continue to ensure effective communication within the project and develop its network of external contacts. The focus of the coming year will be to expand information on the Case Study areas and develop good working relationships with stakeholders with an interest in these areas. A projected increase in field work and data gathering activities throughout the remainder of the project is expected to increase production of press releases and publication of progress within the project throughout its platforms.

As products become available towards the end of the project, we will promote these to relevant groups to ensure optimal uptake of the project's findings.