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Conference Abstract

Public perceptions of invasive alien species and acceptance of management options: a cross-country survey with embedded framing experiment across five European countries

Tamara Kovács[‡], Agnes Zolyomi[‡], Katharina Dehnen-Schmutz[§], Helen Bayliss[§], Alex Franklin[§], Miia Jauni[|], Anna Poimala[|], Heidi Blom[¶], Cristina Preda[#], Carla Gavrilescu[#], Laurentiu Rozylowicz[#], Ana Novoa[¤,«], Sofie Meeus[»], Simon Reynaert[»], Laura Abraham[»], Quentin Groom[»], Tim Adriaens[^], Joana Vicente[˅,¦,?], Cândida G. Vale[ˢ], Eva Malta-Pinto[˅,¦,?]

‡ GreenFormation Kft., Budapest, Hungary
§ Coventry University, Coventry, United Kingdom
| Natural Resources Institute Finland, Helsinki, Finland
¶ Natural Resources Institute Finland, Helsinki, United Kingdom
# Ovidius University of Constanta, Constanta, Romania
¤ Estación Experimental de Zonas Áridas (EEZA-CSIC), Almería, Spain
« Czech Academy of Sciences, Průhonice, Czech Republic
» Meise Botanic Garden, Meise, Belgium
^ Research Inst. for Nature and Forest (INBO), Brussels, Belgium
˅ CIBIO, Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos, InBIO Laboratório Associado, Vairão, Portugal
¦ Departamento de Biologia, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal
? BIOPOLIS Program in Genomics, Biodiversity and Land Planning, CIBIO, Vairão, Portugal
ˢ CIBIO - BIOPOLIS, Vairão, Portugal

Corresponding author: Tamara Kovács (tamara.kovacs@greenformation.net)

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Abstract

Public perceptions of invasive alien species are critical for the societal acceptance of management measures. However, there is limited comparative cross-country evidence

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regarding the combined influence of awareness, values, emotions, and communication framings on these perceptions.

This study, conducted within the EU Horizon Europe project OneSTOP, presents findings from representative surveys of the general public (aged 18+) in Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom (~500 respondents per country). Each country survey follows a shared structure but features two locally relevant invasive alien species—one plant and one animal—selected based on EU Union list status, public visibility, perceived charisma, and management controversy. To examine the influence of communication on attitudes, the survey included an embedded framing experiment: respondents were randomly assigned to one of three information treatments—a control providing general invasive alien species information, and two treatments presenting the same species framed through different justifications for management, such as biodiversity impact, environmental or cultural loss, economic cost, human health risks and social norm.

Based on approximately 2,500 responses, we expect to provide insights into how awareness and knowledge influence public perceptions of invasive alien species across the five countries, and how these perceptions are further shaped by emotional responses associated with species charisma, perceived ecological and economic impacts, cultural significance, personal experience, and proximity. The findings are anticipated to show how these factors, together with socio-economic characteristics, influence public attitudes toward different management options, including support for eradication, control, or tolerance. The analysis aims to offer evidence on whether and how different framings shift attitudes toward management options, and which types of arguments most effectively increase support for action across countries and socio-demographic groups. The results will inform the development of targeted communication and citizen engagement strategies within and beyond the OneSTOP project.

Keywords

invasive alien species, public perception, management acceptance, framing experiment, cross-country survey, OneSTOP

Presenting author

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Ethics and security

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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