Positionality statement

The MICS team of researchers were from six EU countries and Iran, spanning different native languages and cultures; four were native English speakers. The native language skills of the team matched the languages of the five case studies, allowing the IPAs interactions to take place in the respective local language. In terms of backgrounds and roles of the MICS researchers, social scientists led the development of the IJ approach and guided its implementation in the cases by researchers that had mixed backgrounds in distinct natural science disciplines, diverse STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and citizen science. The cases in the UK were facilitated by early career researchers, the cases in Italy and Romania by mid-career researchers with more substantial facilitation experience, and the case in Hungary was facilitated by an experienced facilitator from a national NGO. The nature of the study as a collaborative approach to evaluation (Cousins and Whitmore, 1998) entailed a dual role for the research team as both, observer and co-creator of knowledge in the cases. In the three cases setting up new citizen science initiatives (Italy, Hungary and Romania), the MICS research team possessed extensive contextual knowledge, established relationships with key IPAs, and prior experience with interventions in these areas. The team's expertise in citizen science and participatory research informed the development and facilitation of the IJ approach, while our active role in the interventions inevitably shaped IPAs' interactions and the knowledge generated. To mitigate these influences, the lead facilitators in each case and the social scientists engaged in regular reflexive discussions within and across the case studies, compared interpretations, and critically examined how prior relationships, disciplinary perspectives, and facilitation decisions influenced data collection and analysis.