



## D7.1 ICOS Community

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## List of Acronyms

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Abbreviation / acronym	Description
AIOTI	Alliance for the Internet of the Things Innovation
D7.1	Deliverable number 1 belonging to WP 7
EC	European Commission
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GA	Grant Agreement
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IoT	Internet of the Things
Q&A	Questions and Answers
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
WP	Work Package

## Executive Summary

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This document constitutes ICOS the deliverable 7.1 and reports on the creation and deployment of ICOS Community, a virtual communication group designed to support the success of the ICOS project through collaboration, dissemination and outreach. The Community, created under Task 7.4 has been activated on FBC's proprietary platform, i.e. Spaces, to target the main audience which include the Scientific Community, Early Adopters, Standardization Bodies and Other Initiatives, and Open Source Communities. The ICOS Community features two main tools: Spaces and Marketplaces, and it provides a varied selection of types of content, including: news (also regarding FSTP Open Calls from WP6), articles, forums for discussion, events information, an FAQ section and others, which can all be adapted to the needs of a particular Community.

The ICOS Community will also be a part of a larger IoT Community on the platform. The strategic entry points to the Community are the ICOS project website (with link to register on Community), ambassadors and supportive partners, social media and other promotional activities as per the dissemination strategy (D7.2). FBC will keep track of the key analytics to track performance of the Community, which include numbers of users, comments, reaction, etc. The success of the ICOS Community will depend on the synergies between its functioning and other ICOS activities, and dynamic engagement of all Consortium Members.

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose of the document

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This document constitutes the report on the WP7 Task 7.4 of ICOS Community Building, and more specifically its creation and deployment. The document describes the relevance of ICOS Online Community in the ICOS project, as well as its purpose and a wide variety of functionalities, that invite users to participate, share content and find new ways to interact with each other. The members of this community will be players and amplifiers of the project, along with the voice of supportive partners and ambassadors.

This deliverable is framed in Task 7.4. ICOS Community Building, reinforcing activities of the Work Package 7, “Dissemination, Exploitation and Communities Engagement”. The communication insight behind is how we can create something tangible and dynamic as a lively and active community of relevant stakeholders. This is why the ICOS Community is the online arena where members can have a dialogue with other peers, sharing knowledge and expertise in one digital platform.

In continuation, the document presents the details of what the ICOS Community is, its purpose, how it was created, the different facets of the community, its plan of performance, governance and monitoring, as well as relation to the overall objectives of the ICOS project and in more detail to those of WP7..

## 1.2 Relation to other project work

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This deliverable, as well as the Community building task itself, are closely linked with other tasks in WP7, and shall be aligned with objectives, audiences and directives described on them and leverage on the activities, materials and communication channels described in this document.

The ICOS Community described here will be actively used also in Work Package 6 relating to the promotion of Open Calls. The relation to other Work Packages, albeit indirect, is also vital in the overall success of the project work. When relevant, references to other Work Packages and tasks are made throughout this document.

## 1.3 Structure of the document

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This document is structured in three major chapters:

- ▶ **Chapter 1** - introduces the purpose of the document, relation to other WPs, structure of the document and the glossary.
- ▶ **Chapter 2** - introduces the ICOS Community, presents its objectives, target audience, features, types of content and entry points.
- ▶ **Chapter 3** - presents the conclusions.

## 1.4 Glossary adopted in this document

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- ▶ **Community.** A group of people who share a common interest (in this context, relevant to the ICOS project, i.e. IoT topics and FSTP funding).
- ▶ **Spaces.** A proprietary on-line tool for communication & community building owned by FundingBox Communities S.L.
- ▶ **Platform.** Used to refer to Spaces.

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## 2 ICOS Community

### 2.1 What is the ICOS Community?

ICOS Community will be built using Spaces (<https://spaces.fundingbox.com>) - a proprietary platform owned and operated by FundingBox Communities. It is a dynamic and interactive web-based platform designed to foster the interaction among stakeholders and to provide information on best practices, trends in the market etc. It offers anyone working in a chosen domain the tools to find partners, to network with peers and specialists, to share ideas and to develop business opportunities by accessing information on best practices, trends in the market, etc. A landing page of the ICOS Community on Spaces is shown in Figure 1, below.

ICOS community is meant to become a virtual meeting point and knowledge sharing agora that addresses the requirements of the project from the target audiences and the project side (Consortium Members). The aim of the ICOS community is to become a gateway for start-ups, helping them land funding through ICOS and for investors to find interesting investment opportunities. In order to meet different types of needs, the ICOS community will include an open forum and specialised, permanent or temporary chat rooms (among others, see sections 2.4 & 2.5).

By creating a dynamic online community that brings together all stakeholders of the Internet of Things (IoT) within an inclusive environment, we expect to support the European IoT ecosystem and provide its members with the ideal framework for exchanges and development of best practices available for all. We also aim to promote a truly European approach to innovation by fostering knowledge sharing, minimizing fragmentation and barriers across the entire value chain, deriving higher efficiency and innovation. The ICOS community will become a key reference point and gathering for everyone interested in IoT in Europe. The aim is to promote a truly European IoT platform.

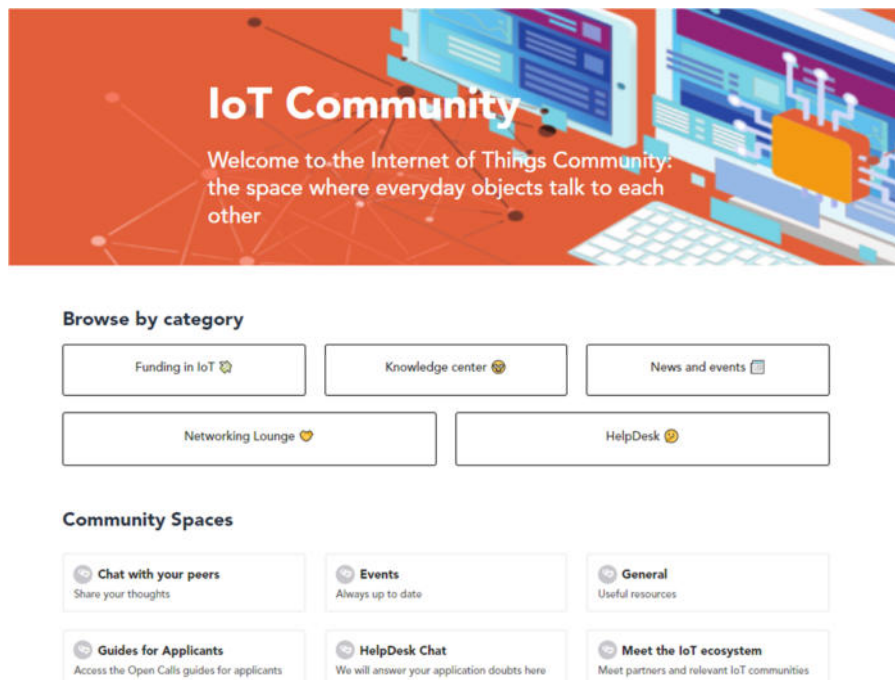


Figure 1: Overview of the ICOS Community of FundingBox Spaces platform

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## 2.2 Objectives of the Community

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The objective of Task 7.4 is to create a dynamic community where synergies are found and where content and tailored information are gathered. The main goal is to convert the deal-flow of Open Call applicants (WP6) into active users within the community even ahead of and beyond the actual Open Calls, which can be achieved by the dissemination of the community content with minimum impact on the project budget. This includes writing posts related to online platforms that are already a reference for the industry, contacting directly key stakeholders in Social Media networks (LinkedIn and Twitter) e.g., a direct message to potential applicants to the Open Call. The strategy also includes user attraction, activation and retaining experience by:

- ▶ **Attracting users:** using other communities (in related topics), projects, and partner networks to share information and to drive online traffic to the community.
- ▶ **Activating users:** using an onboarding process such as customised call-to-action emails upon sign up and featuring the profiles of the most active users and developing Q&As within the community.
- ▶ **Retaining users:** through combined activities related to the Open Calls and other external funding opportunities, matchmaking actions (when relevant) and regular updates.

## 2.3 Target audience and value proposition

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The above-mentioned user strategy will be applied to the different target groups and sets of stakeholders that can benefit from the project results as per the GA, see below. Additionally, the community may include other related target audience that is relevant to the project to give it more viability in the long term (e.g. other Horizon Europe projects, and other initiatives, such as AIOTI).

- ▶ **Scientific Community (SC):** ICOS research outcomes will provide means to address current challenges associated with operations in the continuum, such as limited availability of edge resources or heterogeneity of devices. Although the expected TRL is low, these results can set up the basis for enhanced research on this topic.
- ▶ **Early Adopters (EA):** For ICOS, this category relies on the use cases, as they are the ones who will firstly test project results. But also, participants in the community building activities (such as hackathons or open calls), mainly SMEs. For them, ICOS will provide a layered architecture for managing application lifecycle across the continuum, allowing them to not depend on the type of available resources.
- ▶ **Standardization bodies and other initiatives (SBI):** In such a wide context, from IoT up to the cloud, ICOS will make use of well-known standards not only to ensure the interoperability of results, but also to maximize the industrial uptake. At the same time, ICOS will identify potential gaps in any standard that can be covered by the project and transmit it to the appropriate bodies. Additional liaisons will be established with other initiatives, such as BDVA/DAIRO, 5G PPP or GAIA-X to look for complementarities that can be of mutual benefit.
- ▶ **Open Source communities (OSC):** When possible, ICOS will release its software under open source licensing schemes. This does not mean an immediate benefit to existing communities, but additional efforts will be invested on promoting results on different events and channels where members of these communities participate.

The value proposition for the ICOS Community is to build a unique platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration between stakeholders. Our community is dedicated to the dissemination of innovative IoT applications and solutions across Europe, allowing members to share their knowledge, experiences and expertise in order to create an environment of growth and innovation. From the project's perspective, the community is where stakeholders will be constantly updated about ICOS (e.g. project news) and will be able to interact with like-minded individuals to foster cooperation. By joining our community, members can gain access to a wealth of knowledge, stay up to date on the latest advancements in the field, develop their skills and knowledge, and increase their competitive edge in the market.

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## 2.4 Features of the community

The Spaces platform is mostly a communication tool where knowledge is shared for the sake of the community, with two main features:

- ▶ Its main characteristic is a chat base mode (Spaces, as shown in Figure 2) that serves as a base to communicate and interact among the parties (1 to many users or One-to-One).
- ▶ This is complemented by what we call Collections; content repositories that empower users to build and share knowledge.

Within Communities, the user can interact with others on many different levels. Communities create an ecosystem where players interested in a topic are able to gather, talk, share and network. Spaces enable real-time communication. Collections gather the knowledge and make it accessible to the Users. Communities allow one to connect and chat with other members, to video call them, and to get to know and join other Communities that may be of their interest. Currently, there are more than 150 Tech Communities on the platform, with many that may overlap the interests of potential users, from AI Community to Large-Scale Manufacturing.

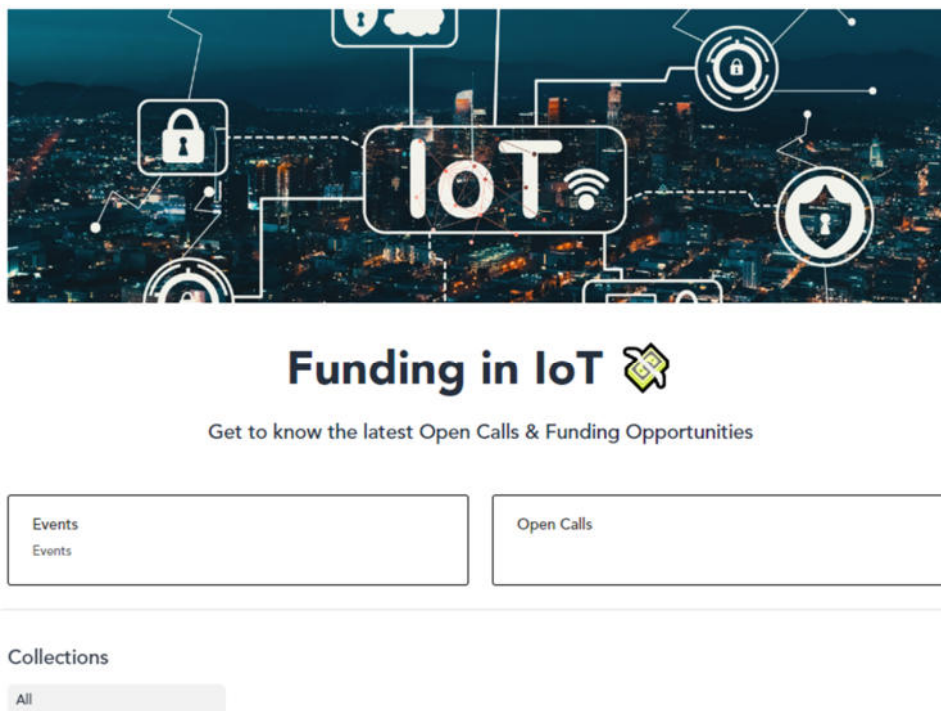


Figure 2: Example of a space in the community.

The different features in Spaces can be activated or hidden according to the needs of each community, and may include:

- ▶ Articles - Each community can publish articles related to their interests. It can be blog posts, articles related to the topic of interest, etc.
- ▶ Announcements/News - Members of the communities have the option to post announcements, questions and events. This increases the interactions within members of the community, creates connections and enhances the relations among them.
- ▶ Events, where one can create a specific events repository for each community, allowing the users to share forthcoming events within a concrete community related topic.
- ▶ Questions - a FAQ section about specific subtopics within the community members can post questions. Questions can be answered by any member and the results can be voted.

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- ▶ Supportive Partners section that includes information about our Supportive Partners.
- ▶ Explore other Communities section, where users can get familiar with other communities and interact with them.
- ▶ Forums, where members can post ideas on different topics related to the community and get feedback from other members, including experts.
- ▶ Discussions and Stories, where members can share insights focused on a single discussion topic or share stories of interest.
- ▶ Marketplaces/Showcases, where each community can decide to have one or more marketplaces to showcase specific companies, products, professionals, services etc. This feature will be activated, once the 1st Open Call kicks off.

Through the interactive social networks, communities and marketplaces, Spaces provides a unique combination of social networking and communities. Spaces offers open-ended community structures that allow members to set their own policies and have a say in shaping their communities. Fixed content can be added to Spaces at the community administrator's discretion (e.g., articles) to help the community thrive.

## 2.5 Types of content

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With a diverse set of stakeholders as potential contributors, the community that will be created under this project will consist of researchers from different scientific fields (such as Software Engineering, Artificial Intelligence), SMEs and disruptive startups. The community content will focus on using cutting edge technologies to provide engagement in Europe and beyond with the aim to support innovative businesses and innovators, facilitate knowledge sharing, enable support for all stakeholders in developments of innovative solutions for the IoT sector.

The Platform will create a gateway for information exchange between our members and foster a knowledge base on pertinent topics in order to educate the public on edge-cloud platforms/meta-operating systems solutions relevant to the sector. Our community allows easy access to ICOS startups, organizations and research groups built around innovative ideas that are shaping the future of the sector. Users will find a full service offering from organizations including business incubation, acceleration and consultancy services for a wide range of related solutions such as orchestration and meta-os.

The community will act as a communication platform to facilitate dialogue between key stakeholders, including:

- ▶ Researchers and software developers in the ICT field who wish to contribute with their expertise and experience to the development of IoT-Cloud Operating System solutions.
- ▶ Technology-oriented companies and SMEs who will be able to share knowledge of their business activity among community members and access solutions developed by other members in order to develop their own ICT business.
- ▶ End consumers interested in following the latest developments in the sector.

The ICOS Community will promote the bridging of ICOS with relevant stakeholders from a broader perspective. It will transform traditional static dissemination and communication actions of a project into something more dynamic and alive, capable of engaging with relevant stakeholders around facilitating knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning among all players, in order to amplify their outreach activities. Moreover, this task will play a major role in contributing to the dissemination of the ICOS message and implementation through successful Open Calls. In fact, the goal of the ICOS Community is to create a rich ecosystem of active members interacting, finding synergies and getting value from different stakeholders of the project.

In order to answer a new need in the ICOS ecosystem, the community team is working on an ICOS Community where community members will have access to a number of different contents helping them in their collaborations, exchanges and deliberations:

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- ▶ News and articles interesting about the IoT industry.
- ▶ ICOS Open Calls and other Funding opportunities information.
- ▶ Multimedia content such as images, videos and infographics.
- ▶ Events organized, but also other relevant events at European level attended by the partners of the project.
- ▶ Other communities' information and access.
- ▶ Info about Supportive partners of the project.
- ▶ Best practices and success stories to inspire innovative SMEs, organizations and researchers to build those solutions within the industry.
- ▶ Q&A sessions with experts who can share their knowledge and expertise with the community members.

The community networks the open-minded people interested in participating in the project stimulating their creativity and enthusiasm for technological innovation of the IoT sector. The community allows to share information and experiences from all over Europe and beyond, offers an opportunity to learn from its colleagues' experience, access funding, enrich project outcomes and disseminate the project's research results.

## 2.6 Community entry points

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The ICOS ecosystem helps its members to interact, communicate, and engage with their peers through the ICOS Community, as a place for exchange and interaction. The community also has three interconnected modules, designed to match the three roles stakeholders play in digital innovation ecosystems – they're innovators, connectors, and clients. To be sure that this communication is effective, it will be systematically done through the stakeholder mapping and following the liaison strategy at the different entry points in the ecosystem and through targeted communication actions at the different entry points. This will be done through tailored communication channels for each vertical interest group and each of the different entry points defined in this document and in accordance with the established ICOS dissemination strategy (see D7.2).

### 2.6.1 Website

The ICOS community will be highly visible on the project website (<https://www.icos-project.eu>), which is ICOS's gateway to the initiative. To achieve this goal, there will be a prominent "Join ICOS" button, banner and other features to link to the ICOS Community on Spaces platform. This site will have an accessible URL under the FundingBox domain, and will be open to everyone. The idea is that people can easily access the content and get involved in activities after joining the community. Visitors to the ICOS website, after pressing the "Join the ICOS Community" button will be redirected to the Spaces home page and invited to either register or log-in. After this step, they will be invited to join the ICOS Community and prompted to engage through the various options available (post on the forum, ask a question, introduce themselves, etc.)

### 2.6.2 Supportive Partners & Ambassadors

ICOS will offer a supportive partner programme to cross-border, web-based communities that aim to create new value in the interconnected and collaborative economy. We will engage with partners who want to develop ICOS applications, provide access to the ICOS platform, and contribute with their users and knowledge.

Ambassadors, on the other hand, are experts, with a clear reputation, strong connections with companies, universities, governments and the start-up ecosystem in Europe and with a proven previous experience in the project sector. Ambassadors are both leaders and drivers in their respective areas. Their role will be to share their expertise through interaction and collaboration with other ambassadors, ICOS Community members which will be the core of the innovation and value creation process.

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### 2.6.3 Promotional activities within ICOS Community

Community engagement to spread the word about ICOS: people contribute to online communities to share information, network, research, and learn. Most people are members of a community because they're passionate about certain topics. Promoting the ICOS project within the community will certainly increase awareness and build excitement around it. Communities can be created around very specific subjects and people interested in them can meet there, share their knowledge and insights. Community marketing is a strategy that involves forming an engaging brand (project) presence in order to interact with a community of existing members and by doing so, finally bring more members to it. In accordance with D7.2 objectives, partners will be actively creating an online presence pointing to the community, throughout the official project website and social media accounts, during the whole project cycle. FundingBox Communities, as the administrator of the platform will reach out to current members - via email, community spaces announcements and/or social media, to let them know about ICOS and other relevant online events. Using existing channels and member's touchpoints is one of the best ways to promote it.

### 2.6.4 Social media and networking strategy

One key way for ICOS to increase its visibility as a European initiative will be through social media networks. Thus, to grow the ICOS network and to convince stakeholders to join, an active promotion of the ICOS Community via existing ICOS initiative social media channels - Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube - will be made. The messages spread in these social media accounts will be news, milestones and activities about the project that are relevant, interactive and engaging. Social media will be key to generate awareness about ICOS as a European initiative and as a community.

## 2.7 Analytics

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FBC observes the impact of communication actions in community building, to track for the project to reach its Key Performance Indicators in terms of dissemination and also to search for potential improvements and implement corrective actions if needed. See Figure 3 for reference.

FBC will measure the following metrics using platform analytics tools that will contribute to measure the attractiveness and dynamics of the community platform:

- ▶ Number of users (sign-ups, new members).
- ▶ Numbers of messages (content) posted in the certain period (posts, announcements, files, articles).
- ▶ Number of reactions to the content in a certain period.
- ▶ Number of comments to the content in a certain period.
- ▶ Other engagement metrics of the community, like percentage of visits during the last 30 days.

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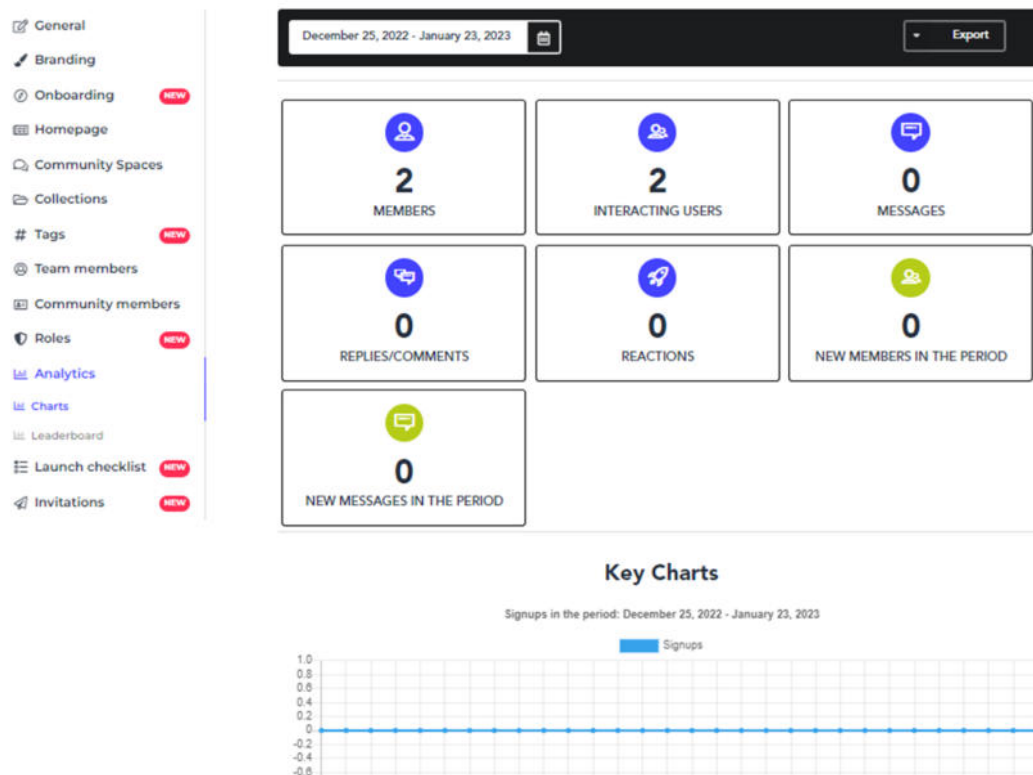


Figure 3: Analytics dashboard overview.

FBC will be in charge of the following actions:

- ▶ Following up on actions taken within different FundingBox communities and owned media, and with the different networked entities, to watch for the project to reach Key Performance Indicators of dissemination, namely 400 members and 20 supportive partners as per the GA.
- ▶ Looking for potential improvements and implementing corrective actions if needed.
- ▶ Measuring the dynamics of the community by correctly using platform analytics tools that contribute to its attractiveness and dynamics.

## 2.8 Next steps

After community launch at M6, the next steps will involve the following activities:

- ▶ **Content creation and content calendar (M7-36):** Content strategy will be coordinated by FBC with the contribution of ATOS, ZSCALE, RHT, WSE, XLAB, CFR, SSEA, SIXQ, FBA who are part of Task 7.4. A content calendar will be created with an agreed posting frequency for each partner. During the project life, different activities will be continuously organized and tracked in the content calendar to keep users engaged with the community, such as posts, articles, events, Q&A, news etc.
- ▶ **Onboarding of users and surveys (M6-36):** Onboarding will take place with a dedicated space in the community containing the community guidelines.
- ▶ **Continued invitations to the community (M6-36):** The community will continue growing targeting IoT-Edge-Cloud and related ecosystems, through organic and, in some occasions, paid ads in different channels, such as the ICOS' social media and webpage, Horizon 2020 projects channels, FundingBox's channels, Spaces platform and Consortium's social media.

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### 3 Conclusions

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In conclusion, the ICOS Community is an essential component of the ICOS project that aims to support the European IoT ecosystem. The platform will provide stakeholders with the tools to find partners, network with peers and specialists, share ideas, and develop business opportunities.

Looking ahead, the next steps for the ICOS project are to ensure the successful implementation and adoption of the ICOS Community. This will involve content creation, onboarding of users and promoting the platform to key stakeholders in the IoT ecosystem. The project team will also need to continuously monitor and evaluate the performance of the community and make any necessary adjustments to ensure its effectiveness.

Additionally, the ICOS Community will be a dynamic platform that will continue to evolve over time. As such, future development will focus on ongoing collaboration with stakeholders to identify emerging trends and best practices and incorporate them into the platform.

Overall, the ICOS Community will promote innovation and collaboration within the European IoT ecosystem.

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