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RiverCare knowledge-base: Online communication strategy for reaching interested practitioners in the Netherlands and abroad

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RiverCare is a 6 year Dutch research program that improves our fundamental understanding of river behavior for integrated flood risk management and collaborative maintenance. During-mid 2014 and December 2019, over 20 researchers from 5 universities have studied the hydro-morphological and ecological consequences of multiple river interventions that aim at reducing flood water levels and improving the spatial quality in Dutch rivers. As part of RiverCare, a multimedia strategy was developed to increase the accessibility of contributions and to get feedback from practitioners about the potential use of RiverCare (scientific) products in the Netherlands and abroad.

The communication strategy is a joint effort between the RiverCare program (https://kbase.ncr-web.org/rivercare/) and the Netherlands Centre for River studies (NCR) (https://ncr-web.org/) to further discuss our work with the scientific and practical community and extend communication efforts after the program ends. The strategy includes an online knowledge-base that gives an overview about how methods and tools contribute towards more sustainable management. We use participatory methods for a user-centered design and carry out systematic evaluation to identify needs for improvement. Usability tests over the iterative design process were carried out with input of students and representatives of the intended audience who helped to improve the navigation and tailor content. The design aims to help users find out the most interesting project for their needs by means of an infographic, videos and an interactive map. For each project, researchers give an overview of their project outputs, innovative aspects and status for day-to-day practice while providing links to the storylines for practice, research outputs details including the supporting datasets. To increase the reach, RiverCare newsletters, blogs and news articles are being distributed through the NCR mailing list and other water platforms, both in the Netherlands as abroad.

Systematic evaluation has been useful to tailor communication efforts and to give advice for other research programs in the field of environmental and risk management. Challenges are to reach a larger but interested audience to prove the effectiveness of our approach, to draw recommendations for improving current practices per main research themes and to explore the possibilities to further apply our results in other locations. Therefore, to hear and discuss the program's outcome, its implications and relevance, we will be inviting interested practitioners to explore our site, give feedback about their interests and register to the final RiverCare symposium.