



Report of the Twelfth Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership

Hybrid Meeting, 06-07 March 2025

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1. Introduction

The twelfth Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership (ESP) was held on 7 March 2025. It was preceded by a workshop on sustainable soil management on 6 March 2025. The format of both meetings was hybrid, conducted at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome and via Zoom. The workshop on “Strengthening bridges between science, policy and practice for sustainable soil management in Europe” was facilitated by Charlotte Dufour (Conscious Food Systems Alliance, CoFSA) with 35 registered participants (24 in-person).

The ESP Plenary Meeting on 7 March was facilitated by the ESP Chair Rainer Baritz (EEA), and was attended by 45 participants (17 in-person).

The meeting was supported by the ESP Secretariat (Nicole Wellbrock and Julia von Guilleaume, Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries) and the GSP Secretariat (Natalia Rodríguez Eugenio and Isabelle Verbeke, FAO).

The presentations shown during the meeting can be accessed through the [FAO website](#).

2. Workshop “Strengthening bridges between science, policy and practice for sustainable soil management in Europe”

2.1 Welcoming and introduction

ESP Chair Rainer Baritz and facilitator Charlotte Dufour welcomed all participants and shortly introduced the meeting format. The Workshop aimed at scoping the challenge for sustainable soil management (SSM) in Europe, building a common understanding of the challenges, opportunities, solutions and obstacles to SSM and to catalyse joint action and networking towards a “European Voluntary Guidelines for SSM”.

As soils around the globe have suffered from unsustainable management, a strong need persists to work towards the SSM. The [Voluntary Guidelines for SSM](#) (VGSSM) (FAO, 2017) provide information on generic non-binding actions related to the major threats to soil functioning.

Claire Chenu (National Institute of Agricultural Research - INRAe, France) presented the findings of the EJP SOIL programme - Towards climate-smart sustainable management of agricultural soils, about the relation between sustainable soil practices and soil functions, including biophysical limitations to apply certain SSM options. Although synergies exist in many aspects, for example between SSM and climate change mitigation and adaptation, SSM in some regions is paired with trade-offs, especially regarding non-CO₂ emissions. For the development of regional or country-specific guidelines, there is a need to go beyond VGSSM principles and to consider different regional and local contexts (e.g., socio-economic conditions, pedoclimatic conditions).

Mirco Barbero (Directorate-General for Environment (DG-ENV) of the European Commission) posed questions about the definition and translation of SSM principles into local land management, and the need to make this knowledge available to practitioners. Translating SSM principles into practice requires context-specific guidance that accounts for local pedoclimatic conditions, land use, and the integration of both qualitative and quantitative scientific knowledge. Clear definitions of sustainability,

goals (maintenance vs. restoration), and performance levels are essential to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with both local needs and broader environmental boundaries.

2.2 Objectives for breakout groups

For in-person participants, a “round robin” was facilitated, with three stations to discuss:

- **Challenges:** Major challenges and threats to soil health, their causes and the reason why (more) SSM is needed;
- **Opportunities:** Sharing information on existing resources, knowledge and opportunities that can be leveraged to accelerate efforts for SSM; and
- **Barriers:** Identification of barriers to the implementation of SSM and potential steps to overcome them.

The in-house groups were facilitated by Mirco Barbero (DG ENV), supported by Raja Murugan, (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences - BOKU, Austria), Claire Chenu (INRAE, FR), supported by Tiina Tormänen (Finnish Environment Institute - SYKE, Finland), and Elena Havlicek (Federal Office for the Environment - FOEN, Switzerland), supported by Irene Criscuoli (Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics - CREA, Italy). Online participants were split into four groups; facilitators were Dragana Vidojević (Environmental Protection Agency, Serbia), Antonio Bispo (INRAE, FR), Lydie Sombié (Bruxelles Environment - Leefmilieu Brussel, Belgium) and Linda Maring (Deltares, the Netherlands).

2.3 Results of breakout discussions

This report summarizes the results of the discussions in seven groups of experts and stakeholders.

➤ Challenges

Considering the vast presence of signs of soil degradation, “challenges” relate to pressures continuing to remain present including soil threats such as erosion, soil sealing, compaction, pollution, acidification, salinization, climate change, forest fires, loss of biodiversity and organic matter. To a large extent, our current knowledge about soil threats is derived from approximations based on samples, less articulated from observations by practitioners. “Challenge” may thus refer to the lack of available knowledge considering that degradation of many soil properties is somewhat hidden from the observer: for example, the response of soils to pressures and how its functions are impacted, are often biochemical processes, or physical processes in the subsoil.

Fundamental knowledge gaps exist, in particular about the impact of pressures and on soil functions and how targeted solutions to protect and restore soils look like. Intensified and more representative soil measuring is needed in order to understand the characteristics and impact of soil degradation. The local and regional soil conditions need to be considered, including pressures such as land management and the local socio-economic conditions. Assuming that much knowledge already exists, its transfer to practitioners must be improved.

Loss of soil health often cannot be observed directly.

Localized impact of soil degradation needs to be known, and site-adapted solutions developed and transferred to practitioners.

“Challenge” regarding data about soils derives from multiple data sources (recent investigation, new analytical tools, legacy data), which require harmonization in order to generate a comparable, large-scale view on soil health (based on the proper error propagation and uncertainty assessment).

The (lack of) political incentive and the economic conditions often disturb the implementation and mainstreaming of SSM.

- lack of a common and binding EU-policy for SSM
- stability within geopolitics, conflicting interests of companies, short-term economic priorities and lack of soil health principles in large enterprises (incl. agrochemicals and food processing)
- land ownership conditions (e.g., conditions for young farmers)
- general trends and habits of agricultural and forest practices

Data about soil health need to be reliable and accurate.

The political and economic (market) conditions can be obstacles to mainstream SSM.

➤ Opportunities

Cross-sectoral cooperation is an important opportunity and may help to understand and draw attention to the interconnection of systems and issues. The **EU’s Soil Mission** offers new knowledge by research and practical sharing through lighthouses and living labs.

Subregional and national soil partnerships can enhance knowledge sharing. (However, public-private aspects of such partnerships shall be enhanced – challenge).

Policies and guidelines or requirements for imported goods can provide economic incentives to improve local production conditions in favor of soil health.

Information about soil dynamics for stakeholders can be developed by different integrative monitoring approaches (soil sampling and analysis, crowd sourcing, soil sensors), and the data and knowledge distributed through interactive and localized information systems. The necessary techniques seem to exist and would support awareness raising, and the distribution of easily accessible and comprehensive information about the value of soil and impact of degradation.

“Opportunity” in one context can be a barrier in another (socio-economic measures, crop and income security, soil health). Much focus has been spent on environmental measures (in forest, agriculture and urban development), implying that solutions are largely known. Opportunities might be missed if subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and carbon farming are falsely targeted and biased, leaving soil health an unintentional side effect. Moreover, financing options generally do exist, however, there are complex challenges for practitioners to access them. Farm advisory services exist, however, current advice does not seem to properly safeguard soil health.

A rich portfolio of policy and research approaches as well as cooperations exist in Europe.

The technical building blocks for integrative and interactive knowledge platforms seem to be available.

Generally, SSM solutions are known, and are somewhat contained in several environmental strategies and policies as well as (farm) advisory.

➤ Barriers

There seem to be barriers in the sharing of knowledge across disciplines, including scientific fields and policy areas. Estimates of costs and risks of soil threats, and the impact of current and changing management practices are often

Limited cross-disciplinary communication and knowledge exchange

inaccurate, and interdependencies between social and economic aspects of land management are insufficiently investigated. If generic solutions cannot be adapted to specific regional and local conditions, resistance to change remains (the perceived risk and uncertainties are too high).

Soil health is still a very specialized field for scientists and highly skilled personnel. Where information is available, it is often difficult to comprehend and difficult to apply at a specific local context.

Despite the availability of knowledge about general SSM solutions (opportunity), there still seems to be a lack of detail about the locally necessary adaptations considering a huge diversity of application conditions. Research, field experiments, best practices, monitoring and information on SSM and comprehensive, systematic soil monitoring need to be intensified.

Policy barriers exist because multi-functional land management seems already over-regulated while aspects of soil fertility preservation and soil health restoration are perceived to have little market and socio-economic value. The full value chain of land management needs to be considered.

prevent anticipation in solutions.

Soil advocates, soil doctors, and demonstration projects are lacking.

More empirical knowledge is needed about specific SSM application conditions and its impact.

Current policy barriers exist while the full value chain of land management is not considered.

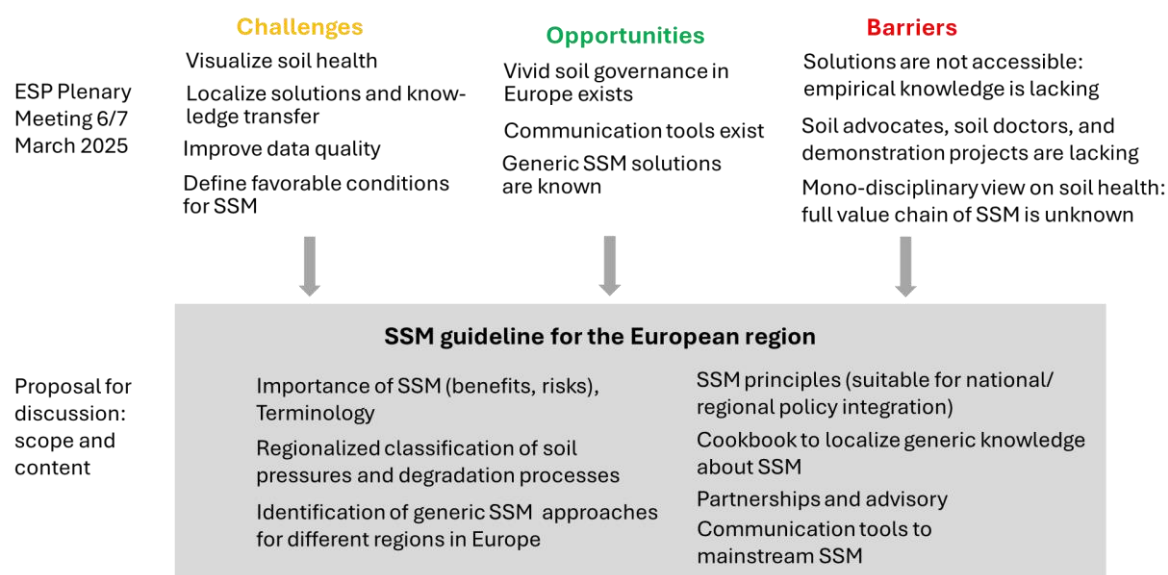
2.4 Conclusions and next steps

The results and discussion of the different groups revealed how closely the challenges, opportunities and barriers are connected. Opportunities are often not sufficiently developed or exploited so that the challenges cannot be fully addressed; barriers counteract directly.

There was broad agreement about the importance of regional and local conditions for defining and implementing specific SSM approaches; there is no one-solution-fits-all.

Any voluntary guideline may be accompanied by information materials; the successful outreach by the GSP was mentioned. An example for an accompanying product is a repository of best practices (WOCAT as an example at global level). There may also be important references and materials from Soil Mission projects, national and regional initiatives.

Participants asked the ESP chair and secretariat to prepare a meeting summary which helps to identify the next steps towards a voluntary guideline for Europe. This meeting report has been designed to fulfill this request. The following figure summarizes the results of the workshop and proposes several items as key elements for a region-specific voluntary guideline.



The next discussion may then conclude details about the scope and content of a regional SSM guideline, and how the writing process can be built. Of great importance to the ESP is that the process is transparent inclusive, and that there is perspective that ESP members in governments support this initiative.

In preparation of this workshop, the ESP has reached out to its stakeholders, including non-ESP members. This process must be intensified: workshop participants to involve medial representation (professional communicators), young generation, farmers and foresters, people outside the “usual soil echo chamber”, spatial planners and partners capable to impact public perception.

The ESP Secretariat will prepare and invite a follow-up workshop (possible in October or November) targeting an agreement about a table of content (ToC), and the organization of an inclusive writing process with specific writing tasks and responsibilities, as well as a road map.

3. Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership

Session I: March 07, 9:00 – 13:15

3.1 Opening (Welcome, agenda)

The participants were welcomed by the ESP Chair Rainer Baritz (EEA) and the new Secretary of the Global Soil Partnership, Thorunn Wolfram-Petursdottir (FAO). Mrs Wolfram-Petursdottir was heartily welcomed by the ESP; she announced the upcoming GSP Plenary Assembly 3-5 June 2025.

With no additional suggestions/comments, the draft agenda was adopted.

3.2 ESP Secretariat

Nicole Wellbrock and Julia von Guilleaume (Thuenen Institute) announced the restructuring and updating of the ESP Website, including the integration of further regional and national information, such as events and projects. ESP members are encouraged to share important national and regional

news, project results, events, so that the website can increasingly serve as an information hub for soils in Europe.

3.3 Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)

3.3.1 Status of the World Soil Resources 2025: key messages about European soils

The ITPS chair, Rosa Poch (Univ. of Lleida), reported about the writing process and results of the Europe-Eurasian Chapter of the 2nd Status of the World's Soil Resources Report (SWSR2025). The Report will likely be published in advance to the World Soil Day on December 5.

The SWRS-2025 reports about the contributions of soils to life on earth, the threats to soil functions, drivers and pressures, and sustainable soil management in support of SDGs. The final document comprises the main report, an executive summary with key messages and research gaps.

Each regional chapter includes an assessment of the status and trend of soil condition, considering soil threats as degradation processes. After the first assessment in 2015, new information has been generated, yet accurate soil data is still missing in many regions. Soil erosion continues to be the main soil threat globally, while for Europe, soil sealing also predominates; for Eurasia, loss of soil organic matter is one of the most important degradations. Overall, there is no clear improvement for any of the soil threats around the globe.

3.4 ESP subregional and national soil partnerships

3.4.1 Pyrenean Subregional Soil Partnership

Rosa Poch (Univ. of Lleida) represents ITPS and the Pyrenean Subregional Soil Partnership (PyrSP). She informed about the 7th Assembly of the PyrSP in November 2024. The PyrSP currently counts 46 partners from 7 regions in Spain, France and Andorra; it contains three working groups on (1) Soil information, (2) Dissemination and awareness and (3) Soil degradation. Mrs Poch confirmed that the project SOLPYR is now granted; it focuses on the vulnerability of mountain soils in relation to climate change and the impact of land use in mountainous landscapes.

3.4.2 Alpine Subregional Soil Partnership

The Alpine Subregional Soil Partnership (AlpSP) was represented by Silvia Stanchi (Univ. of Torino). One of last year's highlights was the celebration of the World Soil Day in the Aosta Valley region, with one event focussing on children and schools, another on practitioners, administrators and decision makers. The Interreg project "SOIL: OurInvisibleAlly" was launched in October 2024; it aims at implementing soil-related aspects in EU legislation in Alpine municipalities, including a cross-sectoral and transnational knowledge development and capacity building. The subregion was active during the IUSS 2024 Centennial Conference, leading a session on mountain soils including a post-conference tour. For 2025 more events are foreseen, including a collaboration with the IPROMO Summer School with a focus on glaciers.

3.4.3 Eurasian Subregional Soil Partnership

Natalia Rodríguez Eugenio (FAO) reported for the Eurasian Subregional Soil Partnership (EASP). The annual meeting will take place after the GSP Plenary 2025. In 2024, the EASP Secretariat (hosted by M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow) organized a series of webinars and a two-week

in-person training for soil experts at the Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. Currently, two RECSOIL projects are ongoing in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan which focus on the adoption of sustainable soil management (SSM). Both countries are currently reviewing their existing soil related legislations.

3.4.4 Western Balkan Subregional Soil Partnership

Dragana Vidojević (EPA, RS) presented the activities of the Western Balkan Subregional Soil Partnership. A report on the status of soil pollution has been recently finalized, while in 2023, a synthesis about national soil classification systems in the region has been produced. Next, a regional soil map of the Western Balkans and evidence-based policy documents are being prepared. These documents aim to support policy measures about climate change adaptation. A project proposal has been developed aiming to create a regional soil database for soil health assessments.

3.4.5 National Partnership of Ukraine

Arkadiy Levin (NSC ISSAR, UA) presented the updated results of an assessment of war-induced damage of agricultural soils: 14.5 million hectares are concerned, including 9.5 million hectares of chernozems. Damages are caused by intensive shelling and thus causing fires, soil compaction from the passing of military vehicles, trenches, destroyed forest shelterbelts and equipment explosions, remains of destroyed military equipment and debris after battles. These damages have caused 10-15 million tons loss of grain production annually.

Soil research is ongoing despite the war: surveys and the restoration of war-affected soils in a focus region are supported by FAO and the World Food Program; the National Research Fund supports surveys and the rehabilitation of Chernozems; similar pilot projects are currently being discussed with Spanish partners. The ideas to create living labs, to develop an infrastructure for field surveys and analytical work, and to monitor soil cover, are being discussed as well.

3.4.6 National Partnership of Portugal

André Trindade (DGADR, PT) gave an overview of the activities of the Portuguese Soil Partnership. During recent years, the Agri-Dem Solo Network was created to develop agriculture and forestry demonstrations on SSM practices and regional living labs LivingSoiLL. The IBERSOILL project was launched. Close collaboration among these observatory soil projects aims to develop a shared data infrastructure. The soil partnership has a website; events on the World Soil Day and technical and scientific advice was produced. Future challenges are to establish the national monitoring system for soil health according to the requirements of the European soil monitoring law after its implementation.

3.4.7 National Partnership of Slovakia

Jaroslava Sobocká (NPPC, SL) highlighted the cooperation with the EJP SOIL project and the establishment of a National Soil Mirror Group. This group consists of four working groups on (1) soil monitoring, (2) living labs, (3) SSM and business models and (4) awareness raising. Moreover, a statute of the national group was created.

3.4.8 National Partnership of Slovenia

Petra Karo-Bešter (Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy, SI) provided an update of the Slovenian Soil Partnership (presentation provided in written). The partnership was established in

2017; it mainly focuses on soil awareness and information exchange. The recent highlight was a scientific national soil conference held on World Soil Day.

3.4.9 National Partnership of Italy

The presentation by Italy will be given at the next ESP meeting.

3.5 Overview of action areas

3.5.1 Action Area 1: Sustainable Soil Management - statistics and reviews

(a) EU's CAP green architecture focusing on SSM

Emmanuel Petel (DG AGRI) shared land use statistics about measures in support of soil quality, as reported under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) green architecture. This architecture includes a compulsory requirement on good agriculture and environmental conditions, voluntary eco-schemes and agro-environment-climate commitments. In total, 47% of EU farmland is considered under interventions supporting soil quality. A further study on the estimation of GHG emissions has been conducted.

(b) European Joint Programming (EJP) Soil

Claire Chenu (INRAe, FR) presented recent EJP SOIL results:

- map of current SSM implementation, considering its biophysical suitability and potential carbon sequestration
- meta-analysis for mineral soils about trade-offs between C-sequestration and nitrogen dioxide for exogenous organic matter (EOM)
- environmental benefits and trade-offs for some measures (e.g., yield and soil health): there are win-win options for increasing root biomass carbon input to soil, while maintaining or even enhancing yield
- open-source metadata set for mid-and long-term agricultural field experiments (view [here](#)).

Next steps are to develop guidelines for country or region-specific SSM options. When considering the implementation of different SSM options, the effects and their consistency, trade-offs and different options and starting positions of SSM are to be considered.

During the discussion the development of synergies for forest soils and the need for harmonization and standardization of terminologies were raised.

(c) Sustainable Soil Management in the EU

Mirco Barbero (DG ENV) informed about an ongoing consultancy through which the Commission prepares an inventory of SSM practices (SSM tool box) which would serve as knowledge repository including a library of relevant scientific literature, a collaborative knowledge database and an interface with users. An earlier inventory of SSM sites conducted by Wageningen Research for ESP Pillar 1, has been utilized. A first prototype of the knowledge repository has been developed and will be consulted with stakeholders soon; this would involve the ESP. Mr. Barbero informed that the role of SSM in the draft SML will be lowered, so that this tool box, as well as the discussion in the ESP towards a regional voluntary guideline, are important elements to promote SSM.

The presentation was followed with an intervention about the role of forest soils, and a connection to the Sustainable Forest Management principles under Forest Europe was recommended. ESP partners raised interest for deepening project collaborations, and stressed the positive connection between SSM and SDG 2.4 (sustainable agriculture).

3.5.2 Action Area 5: Soil data - synergies, data infrastructures and best practices

Rainer Baritz (EEA), Fenny van Egmond (ISRIC, NL), Nicole Wellbrock (Thuenen Institute, DE) and Antonio Bispo (INRAe, FR) reported about policy requirements and solutions about soil data sharing and data infrastructure, including the link to the GSP's Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS). There are many synergies between ongoing projects (EJP Soil, SoilWISE, EEA-ETC), indicators and tools. Political synergies exist between the requirements for soil data exchange under the EU INSPIRE and Open Data Directives, the High Value Data Set Regulation and the EU NEC Directive (Art. 9), and the proposed EU Soil Monitoring Law (SML). It can be expected that project deliverables will be available soon.

The discussion deepened the identification of synergies, and stressed the need to develop comparable soil data, including harmonization of sampling and analysis as well as evaluation methods. Important for the ESP-region is the use of ISO/CEN standards. For forest soils, the experiences of the ICP Forests are important. Also, the role of citizens science to increase the density of soil information was discussed. The Soil Mission project [ECHO](#) focuses – among others - on the potential bias of such data, and immense harmonization effort necessary to utilize it. The EU-Soil strategy's "Test your Soil for free" initiative was emphasized.

Session II: March 07, 14:00 – 16:00

3.5.3 Action Area 2: Governance - soil policy developments and synergies

An overview of soil governance ([ESP website](#)) was presented by Rainer Baritz (EEA), focusing on the EU-Soil Governance, interfaces with member states (EU, ESP, EIONET) and the technical infrastructures for information exchange (through JRC, EEA, EU projects), as well as European soil-related thematic networks, stakeholder networks and European soil research networks. He raised the need to discuss the governance with ESP focal points, and the role of the ESP in this governance.

3.5.4 Action Area 4: Awareness raising - projects and products

Arwyn Jones (JRC) speaks about the necessity to change the narrative from negative statements about soil degradation, towards positive roles by increasing societal engagement and public awareness. The momentum within the discussion of the SML needs to be continued and enhanced. The EU Soil Strategy 2030 contains a series of initiatives, and one of them is about soil literacy, communication and citizen engagement. A group of Soil Mission projects, including ECHO, CURIOSOIL, PREPSOIL, SOILSCAPE, SOILL STARTUP, SOILTRIBES, SOLO and LOESS works towards improving soil literacy.

Regarding World Soil Day (WSD), the activities of many national soil science societies were appreciated. Mr. Jones suggested that the State of World Soils report 2025 could be published in advance to World Soil Day to ensure the availability of information for WSD celebrations. Soil awareness could be much enhanced if more experts would share soil information to the broader public, including direct interventions or performances at public events or education facilities.

13-14 March 2025, JRC hosted a workshop on advancing soil literacy. The infographics, social media templates and video animations by the GSP have a great impact, also in Europe. It was concluded that more stakeholders from non-research organisations and networks must be reached.

3.5.5 Action Area 3: Research projects and status of Living Labs and Lighthouses

The agenda item was kept very short while reference was provided to the [Soil Mission Week](#). The EU Soil Mission now offers a search tool (project repository). Future steps include improving the structure (sorting), enabling access to (selected) results and establishing a link to the European Soil Observatory (EUSO). The [ESP website](#) contains a list of relevant projects linked with the action areas; this list is continuously being updated. There is a lack of knowledge about projects at national level (which often address issues of interest to neighbouring countries of not the whole EU and ESP), and **ESP partners are asked to share and update information** from their countries and institutions.

3.5.6 Action Area 6: International cooperation - FAO projects in the ESP region

Action Area 6 needs to become more clearly developed since it does not relate to any of the former pillars. At the moment an overview of international GSP networks and the participation statistics of ESP members is presented on the [ESP website](#); TOP 3.6.1 updates the statistics.

During the discussion the idea to take this Action Area beyond FAO projects in the region and further include adjacent international activities networks was raised. It also appears that there is little coordination between regional level aspects in the GSP networks, and the discussion of topics for the ESP area. It will be a future discussion item to which extent the ESP can respond to the new structure of GSP action areas, with the aim to better support its focal points and members.

3.6 GSP activities and involvement from ESP partners

3.6.1 Overview: GSP networks – tasks and ESP participants

Natalia Rodríguez (FAO) presented GSP activities and summarized the involvement from ESP partners (link to Action Area 6). At the moment, seven technical networks within the GSP with involvement of European partners exist (INSII, GLOSOLAN, INSAS, INBS, NETSOB, INSOP, INSOILFER). European partners contributed also to the SWSR 2025 assessment.

European partners are involved in the GSP-RECSOIL project that is implemented in France and Belgium under the European Soil Revitalization Programme, managed by South Pole and GaiaGo; there is also discussion about how to apply the RECSOIL Carbon Path. The project on risk assessment and mitigation of cadmium pollution in cocoa plantations in Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago is supported by the NICOLE network; European experts also contributed to the checklist for soil remediation, which included an in-person training on the implementation of this checklist.

FAO also informed about a bilateral support for the Ukraine by the Belgian Soil Laboratory Network and ESP partner VITO: throughout a four-year program, the damage caused to soil health by land warfare is assessed, and technical assistance provided for the clearing of mines from agricultural areas. A training program for Ukrainian experts has been developed and materials are now openly available on the GSP website.

The Global Soil Biodiversity Observatory (GLOBSOB) is supported by the University of Coimbra and the SoilBON network. This project focuses on monitoring and forecasting the condition of soil biodiversity and the impact of human activities and RECSOIL pilot projects will serve to test the GLOSOB indicators

and soil biodiversity monitoring plan. Trainings for soil sampling and analysis will be established in the three pilot countries Costa Rica, Togo and Uzbekistan.

3.6.2 EUROSOLAN 2024/2025

Marija Romić (Univ. of Zagreb, focal point for Croatia, chair of EUROSOLAN) informed about the developments to improve the comparability of soil analysis in the ESP region (presentation in written). EUROSOLAN also strengthens and integrates National Reference Laboratories including National Soil Laboratory Networks (NASOLAN): BESOLAN (Belgium and Luxemburg Soil Laboratory Network) had organized a webinar on the determination of clay content (300 participants), and a training for 25 lab technicians from Ukraine on the analysis of pollutants derived from military activities.

3.6.3 GSP writing processes: Ad-hoc WG on GSP institutional matters

The GSP Secretariat was requested by the Plenary Assembly to review the GSP ToRs (and RoP) according to the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and to prepare an analysis of the possible mandate of a Sub-Committee on Soil under COAG avoiding duplication with the GSP. Therefore, an ad-hoc WG has been established with a first meeting on 26-27 February 2025. Comments were sent to the Secretariat until mid of March. Preliminary discussions comprised the replacement of pillars by Action Areas, clarification of the role of RSPs, including technical networks, the covering of the policy process either by the Sub-committee or through a GSP mechanism and the strengthening of the connection between the GSP and Rio Conventions, 2030 Agenda and other multilateral environmental agreements on soil.

An ad hoc WG was created in January 2025, following an open call in December 2024, addressed to Focal Points, Chairs of the technical networks and all GSP members and partners, including also non-state actors. The selection of authors was conducted by the GSP secretariat, whereas the RSP chairs were not further consulted. The results of this writing process will be made available during the upcoming GSP Plenary Assembly.

As the FAO policy for the newsletter changed to require a registration, GSP members who recently didn't receive the GSP newsletter are asked to register [here](#).

3.6.4 GSP Action Framework, ISAF and SoilSTAT

Yusuf Yigini (FAO) informed about the current discussion about SoilSTAT and its GSP Key performance Indicators (KPI) and Soil Health Indicators (SHI), its reporting, data storage (GLOSIS) and visualization (dashboards), and the future global Soil Health Assessment. A working group for the SoilSTAT design and indicator system (ISAF) has updated the draft report presented in 2024. The ISAF WG consists of the ITPS Chairperson (lead), ITPS Members, Chairs of the Regional Soil Partnerships and GSP Technical Networks, the GSP Secretariat (facilitator) as well as experts nominated by GSP Focal Points.

The GSP Key Performance Indicators comprise 15 KPIs organized under six domains, further 19 SHIs under ten domains. The Global Soil Health Index has been substituted by a general Global Soil Health Assessment and will distinguish degradation processes (domains) as descriptors and proxies to soil health. A global soil health dashboard would be similar to the one prepared by the European Soil Observatory (EUSO). In the case of data gaps, the GSP Secretariat would offer a gap filling strategy upon request and agreement with the countries concerned. The ISAF report (SoilSTAT concept note) was finalized and endorsed by the ITPS, and the GSP Plenary Assembly will be requested to endorse the document at its 13th session in June. Afterwards, the GSP Secretariat would establish a SoilSTAT

WG to finalize the development of technical elements and specifications, fact-sheets and the implementation framework for SoilSTAT (design phase 2025-2026). During the implementation phase (2027-2030), GSP partners deliver the indicators.

3.7 ESP governance

3.7.1 Terms of reference, implementation, priorities

After the introduction of the GSP Action Framework, the ESP terms of reference (ToR) would require update. It was agreed earlier, that the ESP would seek to give a stronger role to focal points (to discuss planning and implementation steps in the ESP region), and re-organise the steering committee (currently dormant). The GSP Action Framework considers regional implementation plans (covering all action areas in one plan). The former implementation plan of the ESP was significantly under-achieved due to the complete lack of funding. In this context, the ESP likely remained behind its potential impact in the EU and global soil governance. A follow up workshop with the focal points in the ESP will discuss these issues further.

3.8 Conclusion and next meetings

The ESP Chair concluded this meeting with his deep appreciation of the interest and participation of ESP members and the GSP and ESP secretariats. Many thanks were addressing FAO for hosting this meeting. Upcoming meetings comprise the Focal Point Workshop in May and the GSP Plenary Assembly on June 3-5.

Annex I. Agenda



12th EUROPEAN SOIL PARTNERSHIP PLENARY MEETING

06 March 2025 14:00 – 17:00 (Pre-meeting workshop)

07 March 2025 09:00 – 16:00 (Plenary meeting)

**Hybrid Meeting
Austria Room (C237) (6th March)
Ethiopia Room (C285) (7th March)
FAO headquarters**

Chair: Rainer Baritz, EEA

Secretariat: Nicole Wellbrock and Julia von Guilleaume (Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries)

Zoom Link

Password: 77831169

Draft AGENDA

06 March 2025: 14:00 – 17:00 (Workshop)

“Strengthening bridges between science, policy and practice for sustainable soil management in Europe”.

The objective is to explore synergies between science, policy and practice in view of accelerating efforts for sustainable soil management in our region.

We will discuss the main challenges affecting soils, the opportunities for enhancing sustainable soil management in Europe, and the obstacles that stand in our way of applying the available knowledge. The meeting will be a “spring board” for deepening collaboration in and around the European Soil Partnership with a view to accelerating efforts for sustainable soil management in our region.

The meeting will be facilitated by Charlotte Dufour, Practice Advisor of the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (hosted by UNDP).

19:00 Aperitivo (self-pay)
Restaurant “Il Pane Di San Saba (Piazza Gian Lorenzo Bernini) (8 min walk from FAO)

07 March 2025: 09:00 – 16:00 (Plenary Meeting)

1. Opening (Welcome, agenda)

2. ESP Secretariat

2.1 Meeting logistics

2.2 ESP website

3. Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)

3.1 Status of the World Soil Resources 2025: key messages about European soils

4. ESP network partners

4.1 Subregional soil partnerships

4.2 National soil partnerships

5. Action areas

5.1 Action Area 1: Sustainable Soil Management - statistics and reviews

5.2 Action Area 5: Soil data - synergies, data infrastructures, best practices

5.3 Action Area 2: Governance - soil policy developments and synergies

5.4 Action Area 4: Awareness raising - projects and products

5.5 Action Area 3: Research projects and status of Living Labs and Lighthouses

5.6 Action Area 6: International cooperation - FAO projects in the ESP region

6. GSP activities and involvement from ESP partners

6.1 Overview: GSP networks - tasks, ESP participants

6.2 EUROSOLAN 2024/2025

6.3 GSP writing processes: Ad hoc WG on GSP institutional matters

6.4 GSP Action Framework, ISAF¹ and SoilSTAT

7. ESP governance

7.1 Terms of reference, implementation, priorities

8. Conclusions and next meetings

¹ Working Group to develop the Indicator System of the GSP Action Framework (ISAF)

Annex II. List of participants

Last name	First name	Organisation
Ágústsdóttir	Anna Maria	Land and Forest Iceland
Barbero	Mirco	DG ENV, European Commission
Baritz	Rainer	ESP Chair, European Environment Agency (EEA)
Bispo	Antonio	INRAe, France
Chenu	Claire	INRAe, France
Correia	Maria Custódia	Direção Geral de Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural
Cruscioli	Irene	CREA, Italy
Dmytruk	Yuriy	SI PSU
Dragović	Marija	Ministry of Environmental Protection Serbia
Dufour	Charlotte	Conscious Food Systems Alliance
Erdogan	Hakki Emrah	EC Joint Research Centre (JRC)
Furenti	Margherita	FAO
Godebert	Euriel	SGAE France
Grandi	Cristina	Representing IFOAM Organics Europe, President FIRAB (Fondazione Italiana per la Ricerca in Agricoltura Biologica e Biodinamica)
Guste	Dace	Ministry of Agriculture Latvia
Hartmann	Christian	IRD/France
Havlicek	Elena	Federal Office for the Environment Switzerland
Heckler	Serena	UNESCO
Heinrich	Barbara	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture Germany
Huber	Sigbert	Environment Agency Austria
Hudec	Matej	Embassy Slovakia
Humara	Maria Chiara	FAO
Iurii	Rozloga	National Institute for Applied Research In Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Republic of Moldova
Jones	Arwyn	DG JRC
Kirill	Antyukhin	FAO
Köster	Tiina	EIP-AGRI
Levin	Arkadiy	Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry Research (NSC ISSAR, Kharkiv, Ukraine)
Lobo	Elena	European Commission
Lo Papa	Giuseppe	European Society for Soil Conservation
Lopez Hernandez	Eva Maria	European Compost Network
Luotto	Isabel	FAO
Madenoglu	Sevinç	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Türkiye, General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM)
Maor	Alon	Soil conservation & sustainable Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture & food security, Israel
Maring	Linda	Deltares, The Netherlands
Marx	Kirstin	German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt - UBA)
Montanarella	Luca	Chair INSII
Mousoulitis	Andreas	Department of Agriculture of Cyprus
Murugan	Rajasekaran	BOKU, Austria
Muscolo	Adele	Mediterranea University Reggio Calabria Italy
Müller-Grabherr	Dietmar	COMMON FORUM on Contaminated Land in Europe

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Nabwami	Janet	FAO
Nippala	Jaakko	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Nyárai	Orsolya	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Oliveira	Maísa	DGADR, Portugal
Olivera Sanchez	Carolina	FAO
Penannen	Taina	Natural Resources Institute Finland
Perdigão	António	SPCS/CERN, Portugal
Petel	Emmanuel	DG AGRI, EU-Commission
Pigiolo	Ambrogio	Member CIC - Consorzio Italiano Compostatori
Poch	Rosa M.	Universitat de Lleida – ITPS
Robb	Cairo	Centre for International Sustainable Development Law
Rodríguez Eugenio	Natalia	GSP Secretariat
Romić	Marija	FAO GSP National Focal Point Croatia, chair EUROSOLAN
Sala	Matteo	FAO
Sánchez García	María	CEBAS-CSIC, Spain
Sastre	Blanca	Madrid Institute for Rural, Agricultural and Food Research and Development (IMIDRA)
Schillaci	Calogero	DG JRC
Slimani	Imane	FAO
Smith	Pete	University of Aberdeen, UK, Scotland
Sobocká	Jaroslava	Soil Science and Conservation Research Institute, Slovakia
Sombré	Lydie	Environnement Brussels
Spanischberger	Andrea	BML Austria
Stanchí	Silvia	Department of Agriculture, Forest & Food Sciences Italy
Steu	Amélie	Agroecology Coalition
Stratemann	Lucas	German Environmental Agency
Terribile	Fabio	University Napoli, Italy
Tong	Yuxin	FAO
Tormänen	Tiina	Finish Environment Institute - SYKE Finland
Tóth	Gergely	Institute of Advanced Studies, Kőszeg, Hungary
Trindade	André	DGADR
Þórsson	Jóhann	Land and Forest Iceland
Van Egmond	Fenny	Wageningen Environmental Research and ISRIC
Vidojević	Dragana	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency
Verbeke	Isabelle	GSP Secretariat
Von Guillaume	Julia	ESP Secretariat
Weckerling	Marie-Luise	Permanent Representative of Federal Republic of Germany
Wellbrock	Nicole	ESP Secretariat
Wolfram Petursdottir	Thorunn	GSP Secretary
Wollschläger	Ute	Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ
Yigini	Yusuf	FAO GSP
Yunta	Felipe	European Commission JRC
Zacharoudi	Stavroula	European Commission