

## *What lives below? The soil is alive!*

**A public awareness event  
organised by the European Commission on the occasion of  
World Biodiversity Day (22nd May 2008)  
at the Ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Forenzelt "Campus", Plaza der Vielfalt (in front of Maritim Hotel), Bonn, Germany

### **Introduction**

The European Commission in September 2006 has adopted a Thematic Strategy for the protection of soil (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index.htm>) with the objective of preventing further soil degradation, preserving soil functions and restoring degraded soils to a level of functionality consistent at least with current and intended use.

The strategy identifies a certain number of soil degradation processes, including the loss of soil biodiversity, that should be prevented and minimised to the extent possible. It also underlines that there is little public awareness of the importance of soil protection.

Therefore, the European Commission intends to profit from the meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bonn to raise the profile of soil biodiversity and increase awareness about it. The message that the European Commission wish to communicate is the amazing world of soil biodiversity, the crucial role played by soil biology in sustaining life on the planet and the need to protect soil biodiversity.

### **Structure of the event**

The event proposed is targeted at the public at large, including families and kids, and is divided into two parts, both taking place on Thursday 22nd May in the Forenzelt "Campus", Plaza der Vielfalt, in front of Maritim Hotel in Bonn where the CBD meeting takes place.

The **first part** will run from 9.30 until 10.30 and will consist of a series of short, lively and interactive presentations of leading experts at European level that will tell us why we should care about little bugs and worms present in our soils.

<i><b>Time</b></i>	<i><b>(Proposed) Title</b></i>	<i><b>(Proposed) Speaker</b></i>
9.30	How many bugs in a square metre of soil? And what are they doing?	Professor Karl Ritz, Cranfield University, United Kingdom
9.45	Life in the dark – 24 hours of a worm	Professor Gabriele Broll, University of Vechta, Germany
10.00	Out of sight, out of mind? How to measure what you don't see	Dr Paul Stegmann, University of Applied Sciences, Osnabrück, Germany
10.15	From science to policy – How to protect soil biodiversity? (in German)	Dr Reinhard Gierse, Bundesverband Boden, Wuppertal, Germany

The **second part** will run from 10.30 until 18.00 and is specifically targeted to families and kids who will be invited to explore the theme "*What lives below? The soil is alive!*" through a series of hands-on exhibits that will allow exploring different aspects of soil biodiversity. These include:

- \* Microscopes and viewsopes to show what really goes on in the soil
- \* 'Creature tanks' showing what can fall into soil traps during the night
- \* How to identify 'invisible' soil microbes by what they breathe out (CO<sub>2</sub> experiment)
- \* Learn how to use earthworms as an indicator of soil quality
- \* Special 'edible earthworms' exhibit
- \* Exchange a painting of life in the soil for a unique EU Soil Biodiversity Tee-shirt.

In addition, a series of explanatory posters and videos explaining life in the soil will be shown.

The objective is to inform the public that soil is not just "dirt" but a medium that thrives with life, from micro-organisms invisible to the naked eye to bigger organisms, thereby raising awareness about the importance of keeping a healthy ecosystem in which soil biodiversity will be able to play its fundamental role.

**Contact persons:**

- For practical aspects:

Mr Arwyn Jones  
European Commission  
Joint Research Centre  
Tel.: +39 0332 78 9162  
Fax.: +39 0332 78 6394  
email: arwyn.jones@jrc.it

Mr Roberto Cenci  
European Commission  
Joint Research Centre  
Tel.: +39 0332 78 9771  
Fax.: +39 0332 78 6394  
email: roberto.cenci@jrc.it

- For general queries:

Mr Luca Marmo  
European Commission  
Environment Directorate-General  
Tel.: +32-2-299 63 61  
Fax.: +32-2-298 88 41  
email: luca.marmo@ec.europa.eu