

ESP Steering Committee meeting: Minutes

2+3 February 2016, FOEN, Ittigen, Switzerland

By Marc Van Liedekerke, 23 February 2017; Reviewed by Elena Havlicek 27 February 2017; Reviewed by ESP-SC members (27/02 – 03/03/2017)

Participants:

ESP SC members:

- Elena Havlicek (Federal Office of the Environment Switzerland, Chair of the ESP),
- Carmelo Dazzi (Palermo University, Vice Chair ESP),
- Hakki Erdogan (Vice Chair and Chair WG-5),
- Josiane Masson (DG ENV, previous chair WG 1),
- Violette Geissen (Wageningen University, new chair of WG1),
- Arwyn Jones (JRC – Chair WG2),
- Coen Ritsema (Wageningen University, Chair WG3),
- Rainer Baritz (GSP Secretariat, Pillars 4 & 5),
- Pavel Krasilnikov (Lomonosov Moscow University, executive secretary EURASIAN sub-regional soil partnership)
- Marc van Liedekerke (JRC, Secretariat of ESP)

Invited:

- Klara Janouskova (JRC trainee)
- Borut Vrscaj (Slovenia, project Links4Soils),
- Pascal Boivin (European Confederation of Soil Science Societies – EUROSOIL 2020)

Excused:

- Allan Lilly (Chair WG 4),
- Luca Montanarella (Representative ITPS)

Background:

The Steering Committee of the European Soil Partnership (ESP-SC) was set up by the ESP Plenary Assembly when the ESP ToR was adopted on XX/XX/XX. The main objective of this ESP SC meeting was to finalise the draft Implementation Plan in view of the next ESP Plenary Assembly later this springtime

(Agenda in ANNEX-A)

Main outcomes:

- **Discussion on the objectives:** all partners agreed on the need to deliver concrete outcomes focusing on specific actions in the next three years (2017-2020) which does not prevent from having more ambitious long-term vision.
- **One approach is to develop a network of networks.** An important effort is needed to contact and establish partnerships with these networks.
- **New partners:** the ESP receives regularly requests from European organisations wishing to become members. The requests have to be sent to the GSP Secretary first; if the request is accepted, the organisation becomes automatically partner of the ESP. The opinion of the

ESP-SC is that no organisation should be refused on the basis of its specific opinions; similarly, requests from companies should be accepted. However, the Secretariat could/will ask candidates why they are interested to become members. The ESP also should seek actively for new members.

- The APAD (a French association on Conservation Agriculture) request for a **letter of support by ESP** to a future Horizon2020 Project: as a matter of principle the SC members do **not** want to provide letters of support for specific applications/projects. There was a discussion on whether projects could become members per se. The SC considers that the project leader organisation should become member rather than the projects which are not legal entities and are temporary. However projects could contribute to some extent to the ESP implementation if relevant.
- **EUROSOIL 2020** –Pascal Boivin (ECSSS chair) presented the state of play at ECSSS and EUROSOIL2020 (see ANNEX-B). EUROSOIL is a European-based scientific symposium on soil organised every 4 years. During the last conference of 2016 in Istanbul (postponed due to a terrorist attack in Istanbul) the next venue was decided: EUROSOIL2020 will be in Geneva. It wants to involve stakeholders beyond the soil science community, users, private companies, public organisations, NGOs etc. Possible synergies and coordination with ESP were discussed: e.g. on training, education, on soil science in the EU (e.g. lack of competence on soil science education in high schools agronomy etc.). Education: many kinds of trainings, university, lifelong education, capacity building for farmers, can be linked to ESP Pillar 2. Research: ECSSS considers itself as best placed to identify research needs because it is a network of soil science societies – it could be linked to pillar 3 of ESP. Josiane Masson stressed that we need a Research Agenda for policy makers that identifies main gaps in soil-research and needs for an integrated approach taking account of political priorities and societal challenges. With ECSSS there could be a good opportunities to present/discuss this research agenda and engage dialogue with the soil science community. Pascal Boivin stated formally that ECSSS and ESP will collaborate.
- **The adoption of the ESP Implementation Plan 2017-2020 is the priority for the next ESP Plenary Assembly** (first scheduled on 16-17 March in FAO, Roma, but now postponed to May). A part of the SC meeting was dedicated to reviewing the draft Implementation Plan (version 6, 23 January 2017) provided by the Secretariat before the meeting, and incorporating comments by SC members on a draft circulated at the end of October 2016. However, due to the lack of preparation by the SC members and the presence of new members (from Wageningen University) there was a lot of discussion on the general objectives and less on specific activities.
- **Chapter 4 of the IP triggered a lot of comments:**
 - All SC members agree that it is necessary to have a number of ‘overarching’ activities to ensure a functional ESP and to promote the ESP. The main channel of communication is through the ESP webpages managed by the JRC (ESDAC), SC members agreed to have a Facebook page for reaching young people.
 - There is also a need to prepare a rationale and leaflets to present the ESP and what it does for to stakeholders. The JRC will prepare the rationale as well as an ESP Facebook; DG ENV would print the leaflets. For the logo the GSP Secretary will be contacted (to create a personalised version of the GSP logo for the European region).
 - The ESP partners should try to promote the ESP in soil-related conferences. In 2017 the SC identified some opportunities: ESCC conference, Global Soil Week GSW 2017 on 8-12 May (this year the theme is ‘Biodiversity Land and science’: Violette and Pavel will attend the GSW and a session on the GSP-ESP should be proposed), Wageningen Soil conference (27-31 August 2017) etc. The list of main conferences

- should be put on ESDAC's ESP webpage. With each conference, it should be indicated who of the SC would attend.
- All members of the SC agreed on the need to engage more partners in the ESP. There should be a specific action on 'Mapping existing European soil institutions, networks and organizations, conferences'. Some SC members said that we should also identify national networks/organisations. The IP encompasses a list of networks (§ 3.5) which should be completed on the basis of this mapping exercise. A meeting with identified existing networks is already planned by Luca Montanarella and Saskia Keesstra (WUR), in August 2017 in Wageningen.
 - **Cooperation with sub-regional activities:** Borut Vrscaj was invited to present the Interreg Alpine Space project Links4Soils (see ANNEX-C). Even if the Alpine Convention has a protocol on soil little has really happened so far. Links4Soils is a new project which will start this year (kick off meeting in Lubjana, 29-30 May 2017) and will run until October 2019. The objective is to set up a partnership on soil in the Alpine region between local authorities, NGOs, local communities. There will be a lot of soil awareness raising and also education for young people. They are looking for a kind of umbrella to nest the Alpine partnership into something bigger; that is why they try to get the support from the ESP. This project is considered by the ESP SC as a very good test bed for setting up the ESP objectives into practice at sub-regional and local level with a series of activities which fit very well with the ESP pillars. The collaboration is welcome, however the SC does not see the need to create a sub-regional partnership in the context of GSP/ESP because it would create additional administrative burden. Borut expressed the wish that after the project finishes, the main outputs would be hosted by ESDAC for the sake of archiving and continuity.
 - The collaboration and synergies with other projects was discussed at length. We would need to have first a mapping of all EU soil (past and present) projects (funded by H2020, FP7-6, LIFE, Interreg...). This can be completed by relevant projects at national level. DG ENV has a list of RTD and LIFE projects, to be completed by other partners. Coen Ritsema committed to take this action on board. Some of these projects or the experience gained in these projects can contribute to the ESP. The idea is also to promote what has been done at EU level so far.
- Draft IP – Pillar 1 "Promote sustainable management of soil resources for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity": Violette Geissen is in favour of activities on the ground at farm level based on the experience gained in many projects. We agreed on the overall objectives of Pillar 1 to promote SSM at European level to focus on a limited number of activities for the period 2017-2020:
 - Mapping existing/past projects dealing with SSM and display their distribution on top of soil threats maps of the JRC.
 - **Establish a Soil Sustainable Management (SSM) network** with farmers and soil scientists involved in past projects, farmer organisations involved in SSM (e.g. organic farming, agro-ecology, permaculture, conservation agriculture): DG ENV will contact European umbrella farmer organisations and NGOs (IFOAM, Slow Food, CEJA, Via Campesina, ECAF etc.) and also farmer associations/groups of farmers which we want to target for extending SSM (e.g. Chambre d'Agriculture in France). There is also an interesting European network on Rural Development (ERDN) that has a group working on soil as well; we should create synergies as much as possible. This should be completed by a bottom-up approach involving local associations willing to contribute to pilots on the ground.
 - Collect information (technical and socio-economic data), good practices and elaborate on SSM practices at European level illustrated by 'success stories' from the SSM network.
 - Organise farm visits with the SSM network dedicated to groups of farmers at regional levels who are interested to know more about SSM, and accompanied by policy makers.

- Adapt the Voluntary Guidelines for Soil Sustainable Management at global level (adopted by FAO in dec-2016) with information collected/elaborated from point 3 – the outcome will be the publication by the ESP of **Voluntary Guidelines for Soil Sustainable Management at European level**, dissemination and promotion.

- **Contribution of the ESP to the Status of the World Soil Resource 2020 report (SWSR2020).** The European chapter of the first 2015 report was led by Pavel Krasilnikov, under the directions by the GSP ITPS. This time the process and structure will be different and until these are known, no decision is taken how ESP will contribute. Action: Pavel to inform ESP SC when there will be clarity. Arwyn noted that the timing of the SWSR2020 coincides with the 2020 State of the Environment report by the EEA. So synergies can be expected.

- **Soil Atlas of Europe:** in 2017 JRC will draft a new version of the Atlas (first edition 2006) led by Arwyn Jones; it was agreed that this new version would be a JRC-ESP production. To this end, we should seek in the ESP Plenary support from the Focal Points for support to the contents.

- **GSOC (Global Soil Organic Carbon) Symposium** on 21-23 March 2017 is co-organised by FAO-GSP, UNCCD-SPI, IPCC and WMO (World Meteorological Organisation). It originates from a request by UNCCD to have a better global soil organic carbon by the end of 2017 (in the context of Sustainable Development Goals and Land Degradation Neutrality). GSOC Guidelines have been published in 2016. The approach is to collect data from countries and then complete gaps with other top-down datasets if needed. In November there was an INSII meeting; participants from Europe were there but there was a very poor feedback from this meeting. We need to mobilize ESP capacities as it will be the first opportunity to deliver something concrete (as part of Pillar 4). The upcoming ESP Plenary meeting should seek the nomination of national experts for this soil carbon mapping project. Various EU-wide datasets already exist in ESDAC (e.g. the maps generated on the basis of the 2009 LUCAS soil sampling campaign).

- **Concerning the ESP Plenary (now postponed to May 2017):** the ESP Secretariat prepared a draft agenda. A message will be sent to ESP focal points with the draft agenda. Elena Havlicek will contact ESP focal points also bilaterally. Josiane will contact AGRIFAO WP for having an agenda point in their next meeting. The main Objective of the plenary is the adoption of the ESP Implementation Plan at the next ESP Plenary. The IP should be revised by all SC members and sent to ESP PA by **17/02/2017**.

- Two concrete **proposals were made for ESP promotion/communication for 2017:**
 - a 'content based meeting', to be organized by Violette
 - a workshop in relation to the World Soil Day, to be organized by Josiane. More visibility to citizens and politicians should be sought.

- A discussion took place on whether we need an update of the **definition of the term 'soil'**; it was agreed that no new definition is needed but one could expand the description by making explicit reference to 'economic' and 'societal' issues. Carmelo and Elena will elaborate this point.

- Concerning the **finalizing of the IP** by the ESP-SC: It was agreed that WG leaders would make an effort **to determine/estimate the needed human and financial resources** for each activity in their pillar work plan. This may prove difficult at this moment as it should be

up to the members of the Partnership to propose actions under the broad guidelines of the IP.

- **Next meetings of the ESP SC:** no decision taken; Josiane proposes a back to back meeting with soil workshop in Brussel in the context a DG ENV contract in support to the Soil Thematic Strategy?

Summary of Action Points and Decisions

Action Points

<i>Description</i>	<i>Who</i>
Add anyone interested in ESP to the mailing list.	Marc VL
When a new ESP member is added, the ESP-secretariat will ask which role he/she wants to play in the ESP	Marc VL
Creation of a list of major soil-related conferences/events and indicate who will attend what. List-of-events: Many events can be taken from the FAO GSP website and from EUGRIS website.	Marc VL with help of SC members
Hold information sessions at major soil-related events	ESP-SC members
Create of a web space in ESDAC only accessible by ESP SC (e.g. to put draft versions of common documents)	Marc VL
Development of an ESP Facebook page and ESP logo, based on GSP logo	Klara Janouskova
WG2: as part of Pillar 2: make website ESP more attractive	Arwyn Jones, Marc VL
Development of a rationale to attract more people to ESP ('why is it good for you to join the ESP'); this rationale would be used for a leaflet that should be distributed in all kinds of soil-related events.	Elena Havlicek, with help of all ESP-SC
Try to have some soil conferences 'branded' as ESP related.	ESP-SC all
The organization of a meeting of soil-networks: (planned already for August 2017 in Wageningen).	Luca Montanarella and Saskia Keesstra (WUR)
Compilation of a list of soil-related EU projects in FP7 and Horizon2020	Coen Ritsema
Add the Links4Soils project activities to the various Pillar activities, as Links4Soils covers all aspects. The Links4Soils project can be seen as implementing the existing European IP.	All WG leaders when revising their Pillar IP
SWSR2020: Inform ESP-SC on the modalities for developing the State of World Soil Resources report for 2020 (SWSR2020). Based on this information, someone from the ESP-SC should take the leadership for follow-up and development of the European chapter of the report.	Pavel Krasilnikov
SWSR2020: Invite national focal points of the ESP for future contribution to the SWSR2020.	Elena Havlicek
Propose a text to send to the European Research Council, in name of the ESP and possibly European soil science societies.	Carmelo Dazzi
Global Soil Organic Carbon map initiative of FAO: ESP to be involved in the European component: have this initiative as an item in the next ESP-plenary; preparation of a text to be sent to ESP national focal points to raise awareness about it and invite them to contribute. Outcome should be that countries commit to implement the GSOC.	Elena/Marc/Rainer

ESP-Plenary: presentation about EASP in the ESP Plenary (10 to 15')	Hakki Erdogan
ESP-plenary: short introductory presentation of where we are with the ESP.	Elena Havlicek
ESP Plenary: make the ESP national focal points aware of the development of the new version of the Soil atlas of Europe, and try to engage them.	Arwyn Jones
IP: collect updates to the ESP IP from all ESP-SC members, but mainly from the working groups chairs, and finalize the IP for sending out to all ESP members. IP for each Pillar: It is desirable to add estimates of the resources needed for each activity; to be provided by WG Chairs for each activity. Resources should be expressed as person-days and/or financial.	Marc VL and ESP-SC
IP: change the term Deliverables in the term Output (on p6)	Marc VL
Communication: organize an ESP content based meeting	Violette Geissen
Communication: organize an ESP related workshop in relation to the World Soil Day 2017	Josiane Masson
Communication: elaboration of an amended definition of 'soil' that adds elements of economy and society (resource limited in space and time), for future use by ESP	Carmelo Dazzi
Communication: Attract new members to the ESP: approach the various soil networks: make a proposal on how to do this.	Carmelo Dazzi

Decisions

Candidate new members of ESP should first register as GSP member; after acceptance by the GSP secretariat, the candidate becomes automatically ESP member.
NO formal support by ESP-SC to candidate EU-projects; Projects should be recommended to join the ESP as partners and should be asked to indicate how/where they could contribute
Formal agreement by the European Confederation of Soil Science Societies (ECSSS), represented by its President Pascal Boivin, to collaborate actively with ESP; Pascal Boivin expects that ESP will suggest to ECSSS how they can co-operate best. ESP will invite ECSSS to ESP related events, and vice versa.
Projects (of any kind) cannot become an ESP partner, only organizations/institutions; it was suggested that the Project Leader organization would register as ESP partner.

ANNEX-A: Meeting Agenda:

European Soil Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
FOEN, Ittigen, Switzerland
2-3 February 2017
Draft Agenda

Chair: Elena Havlicek (FOEN)

Secretary: Marc Van Liedekerke (European Commission - JRC- ESDAC)

Thursday 02.02.17: 2-6pm

- **Adoption of the agenda**
- **Administrative points**
 - SC new members
 - Efficient communication (e-mails, background information, newsletter ?, etc.)
 - Something else?
- **EUROSOIL 2020**
 - Presentation by Pascal Boivin (ECSSS chair)
 - Cooperation between ESP and ECSSS
- **ESP Implementation Plan**
 - Global objectives of the ESP
 - 5 pillars and their concrete outcomes

Friday 03.02.17: 9am-1pm

- **ESP Implementation Plan (cont.)**
 - 5 pillars and concrete outcomes [for the pillar 4: videoconference with Allan*]
- **Information from EASP**
- **Mobilisation of resources:**
 - Human resources (new members)
 - Human resources / voluntary
 - Mobilisation of partners for the implementation through in-kind participation
 - Financial resources
- **Soil Atlas of Europe** (new version)
- **Next ESP plenary** (preparation of the agenda)
- **Annual planning**
- something else?

Notes for the discussion of the implementation plan:

1. The RIP mentions as a deliverable participation in the SWSR2020 report. As this would be cross-cutting pillars, it would need to be discussed by the SC how to tackle this.
2. For the concrete involvement of the various soil networks, it is proposed to refer to them in each specific pillar plan (e.g. ENSA in pillar 2)
3. It is not described how the various Pillar WGs could work together towards common goals, nor how this would be coordinated. This should be discussed by the SC.
4. It is desirable that with each described output, there is at least one name of a person + organization that takes leadership/ownership and drives the activity. Also this is to be discussed at SC level.

ANNEX-B: Presentation Pascal Boivin (ECSSS)

ANNEX-C: Presentation Borut Vrscaj (Links4Soils)