

# Minutes of the European Soil Partnership Steering Committee Meeting

Venue: DG-ENV, Brussels, Belgium

31 January 2018

Chair: Elena Havlicek (FOEN)

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

Minutes written by Marc Van Liedekerke (13/02/2018)

These minutes are written according to the points on the agenda (**Annex-1**, see below). Additional topics that were discussed are interweaved or at the end.

Present in the meeting were:

- Bavo Peeters (replacing Josiane Masson) (DG ENV) (BP)
- Svetlana Chovancova (DG ENV) (SC)
- Luca Montanarella (JRC) (morning only) (LM)
- Marc Van Liedekerke (JRC) (ESP-Sec)(MvL)
- Elena Havlicek (FOEN) (EH)
- Carmelo Dazzi (Univ Palermo) (CD)
- Edoardo Costantini (CREA Italy) (EdC)
- Ronald Vargas (GSP Sec) (RV)
- Borut Vrscaj (Agricultural Inst. of Slovenia) (BV)
- Esther Goidts (Service public de Wallonie) (EG)

By VC:

- Violette Geissen (WUR) (VG)
- Pavel Krasilnikov (Eurasian Center for food Security (ECFS)) (PK)
- Rainer Horn (Christian-Albrechts-Universität., Kiel) (RH)

1	<b>Adoption of the agenda</b>  - on request of EdC a point on the EJP (European Joint Programme on agricultural soil management) was added. See AOB.
2	<b>Overview of the state of the action points of previous meetings</b>
2.1	<b>ESP emailing list</b>  The esp-all mailing list is continuously updated; also the members of the working groups have been added; the steering committee mailing list <i>esp-sc@jrc.ec.europa.eu</i> has been expanded with additional European members of the ITPS (Rainer Horn, Gunay Erpul, Peter de Ruiter)
2.2	<b>Conferences related to the ESP</b>  A list of <b>conferences</b> with ESP-SC member and ESP partner participation was compiled in 2017 by ESP-Sec and circulated, but not continuously updated; <b>Action Point: ESP-Sec to go through this exercise again</b> ; the creation of a wiki by ESP-Sec is technically possible, but efficacy is doubted.  The use of <b>the ESP logo</b> (available from <a href="https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/networkcooperations/european-soil-partnership">https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/networkcooperations/european-soil-partnership</a> (under Communication)) was discussed. All participants were in favour to have it used by ESP partners for various reasons (e.g. to promote a conference) which would spread the visibility of ESP. <b>Action Point: ESP-Sec will check with GSP-Sec if there are certain procedures to be followed.</b> It was suggested that in case of use the ESP-Sec would need to be informed and, in case of doubt, ESP-Sec would consult ESP-SC.  <b>Meeting of Soil Networks.</b> LM raised the question whether the various soil networks would be interested in a coherent approach and suggested that interested networks could mention explicitly in their statutes support to the ESP. This point was well taken, and as a first example, the European Confederation of Soil Science Societies (ECSSS) (Pascal Boivin) would be approached for reciprocal cooperation. LM suggested that ECSSS could even take the lead on Pillar-3 for ESP, given the nature of ECSSS. Other networks could follow through

	<p>bilateral approach on various occasions (for instance conferences). There is no need for an immediate general meeting; maybe once bilateral informal agreements between ESP and networks are in place, a meeting could be organized.</p> <p><b>New Action Point: EH to contact Pascal Boivin for making ESP-ECSSS cooperation explicit.</b>  <b>New Action point: RH will represent ESP at ECSSS meeting at a EGU-2018 in Vienna.</b></p> <p><b>Standard ESP Presentation</b>  When ESP-SC members present the ESP at conferences/meetings, it would be good to have a standard presentation available. <b>Action Point: EH to provide such a presentation.</b></p>
2.3	<p><b>ESP website etc.</b></p> <p><i>ESDAC web space only accessible by ESP SC:</i> this space was created by MvL but not used because not needed really;</p> <p><i>ESP Facebook:</i> FB site was created by JRC and received many followers; however the site is not updated;</p> <p><b>New Action Point: MvL will give update rights to the 5 Pillar chairs in order to boost ESP FB content.</b></p> <p><i>Attractive ESP website:</i> the current ESP site (<a href="https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/networkcooperations/european-soil-partnership">https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/networkcooperations/european-soil-partnership</a>) is still a one page solution that contains all essential information but could be made more attractive; because of limited time, this has not happened yet.</p> <p><i>Updated Focal Point and members table:</i> MvL updates the tables with Focal Points and partners whenever informed by GSP-Sec. EH suggested that new members should be welcomed by the ESP-Sec with a standard welcome mail. It would also be good to have for each country an 'alternate' contact.</p> <p>New Action Points:  - <b>ESP-Sec to check with GSP-Sec if tables with Focal Points is up-to-date.</b>  - <b>ESP-Sec to check for alternate FP contacts</b></p> <p><i>WIKI:</i>  According to requirements from previous ESP-SC meetings, a wiki was set up by ESP-Sec to support the compilation of lists of projects/organizations/networks in the field of soil for Europe, accessible to selected members of the ESP-SC; for various reasons this wiki solution has not been used. EdC was willing to give it a try.</p> <p><b>New Action Point ESP-Sec: give EdC rights to update wiki pages.</b></p>
2.4	<p><b>ESP promotion and communication</b></p> <p>'soil definition' (see <b>Annex-2</b>, see below) as proposed by CD and reviewed by EH/ESP-Sec. EH: this text should not be considered as 'definition' but 'declaration' to be used in ESP promotional material, such as a flyer.</p> <p>ESP-flyer/leaflet: CD made a proposal, and <b>(Action Point) EH will work with a professional communicator to integrate declaration and rationale ('why is it good to join the ESP?') into a flyer.</b></p> <p>Attract new members: this point was skipped.</p>
2.5	<p><b>Diverse topics/information</b></p> <p>Approach European Research Council (ERC): CD had sent out to ESP-SC a letter + petition (see <b>Annex-3</b>, see below) to send to ERC; it was reviewed by EH/ESP-Sec and comments received by Coen Ritsema.  <b>Action Point: CD will take this forward.</b> EH suggested to have also the Chair of ITPS in the letter.</p>
3	<p><b>Involvement of the ITPS in ESP</b></p> <p>LM, as ITPS chair, explained that ITPS members considered that it would be beneficial if regional members could be more involved in the activities of the regional soil partnerships; to this end, the</p>

	<p>European ITPS members will be invited to the ESP-SC meetings. Some of the ESP activities could also get more 'weight' if supported by ITPS members.</p> <p>Some comment from ITPS:</p> <p>The European part of the GSOC map (a global product of ITPS) could be improved with the help with ESP; <b>New Action Point: EdC should consider this in relation to Pillar-4 activities.</b></p> <p>In the upcoming Global Symposium on Soil Pollution (GSSP), organized within the ITPS Plenary, LM suggested that it would be good if regional sessions could be set-up that cover the state and perspective concerning soil pollution for the region. To that end, ESP could prepare a report that documents the current situation on soil pollution in Europe, with as starting point the European chapter of the latest Status of the World's Soil Resources (2015). RV welcomed this suggestion and would propose such a report for each region according to a fixed format. VG mentioned to make a strict division into organic and non-organic pollutants.</p> <p><b>Action Point?</b></p> <p>RV mentioned that FAO is currently performing "Online consultation for developing the Code of Conduct for the Management of Fertilizers", in the context of Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (<a href="http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/CoCoFe">http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/CoCoFe</a>); deadline 11/02/2018.</p> <p>RV also explicitly asked the ESP-SC for suggestions for Keynote speakers at the GSSP and for a possible contribution to the selection of abstracts. Action Point: <b>ESP-Sec to follow up.</b></p> <p>Announcement: The current ITPS mandate expires and many new members need to be elected, including European ones. The ESP-SC members should reflect on this. GSP-Sec is going to launch very soon an open call for experts for the replacement of ITPS members that step down.</p> <p>ITPS launched a study concerning the economic aspects of implementing the VGSSM at global level.</p>
4	<p><b>Soil Atlas of Europe</b></p> <p>LM: the current Soil Atlas for Europe is outdated and will be redone in 2018, led by JRC (Arwyn Jones); it needs updated maps and new WRB classification. It would raise the visibility of ESP if ESP partners could contribute to the update process and have the atlas also ESP branded. A working group will be established.</p> <p>RH suggests involving also ECSSS; <b>Action Point: LM will consult Pascal Boivin on this issue.</b> EH suggests to cover this issue (again) at the ESP Plenary with very specific question(s) on what would be needed from ESP partners.</p>
5	<p><b>Overview of the ESP Pillar Working Group Activities + Planning for 2018</b></p> <p><b>Pillar 1</b> (Violette Geissen)</p> <p>VG made a presentation (see <b>Annex-4</b>) on the work achieved and the outlook for 2018; this will also be presented at the next ESP Plenary.</p> <p>In the context of sending requests for contributions to various parties (beyond the WG-1 members), in order to reach a wide public and receive a maximum response, ESP-Sec offered the possibility to send out such requests to a wide array of known soil networks connected to ESP/JRC (all ESP partners, EIONET NRC Soil, ESNB)</p> <p>When contacting WG-members, it is recommended to keep ESP-Sec in the mailing-loop so that it is known at ESP-SC what is going on.</p> <p><b>Pillar 2</b> (Arwyn Jones)</p> <p>Arwyn Jones (not present) had sent a written report (see <b>Annex-5</b>); this was not discussed.</p>

	<p><b>Pillar 3</b> (Coen Ritsema: compilation of soil related projects FP7 and Horizon 2020)</p> <p>No news from Coen Ritsema on P3 activities.</p> <p><b>Pillar 4</b> (Edoardo Costantini)</p> <p>EdC sent a written report (<b>Annex-6</b>) and made a presentation. An on-line conference was organized in which various possible activities were discussed. The conclusion of the meeting was that the projected activity that likely would receive the best practical contribution is about transnational harmonization, especially in the field of SOC. (Austria/Slovenia; Sweden/Finland; Italy/Greece trans-Adriatic)</p> <p>EH suggested to expand P4 activities with practical work on the update of the Soil Atlas of Europe. ESP-SC offered to help on this will investigate with Arwyn Jones.</p> <p><b>Pillar 5</b> (Hakki Erdogan)</p> <p>Hakki (not present) had sent a written report (see <b>Annex-7</b>)</p> <p><b>Information to Working Group members</b></p> <p>After the 2017 ESP plenary, Partners were asked by the ESP-Sec to nominate working group members for contribution to the Pillar activities; a very good response was received (as documented on <a href="https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/public_path/shared_folder/ESP/overview-ESP-working-groups_2018-02-06.xlsx">https://esdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/public_path/shared_folder/ESP/overview-ESP-working-groups_2018-02-06.xlsx</a>). WG leaders were asked to contact the working group members for welcoming and initiating activities. This was done only for WG-4.</p> <p>EH opined that this way of working is not acceptable; raising high expectations and then no follow-up.</p> <p><b>Action Point: EH + ESP-Sec to draft a letter for sending to Working Group members, to explain why they have not been contacted yet and what the current state of work is.</b></p>
6	<p><b>Overview of the Secretariat and Chair/Vice-Chair Activities + Planning for 2018</b></p> <p>Nothing to report</p>
7	<p><b>Information from the Eurasian Soil Partnership</b></p> <p>PK made a presentation on the status of EASP (see <b>Annex-8</b>) Now that the ESP-Implementation Plan is ready, the EASP is ready to collaborate with the non-EASP ESP partners; especially in the area of Pillar-5 PK sees room for cooperation.</p> <p>EdC invited PK to share EASP experiences in protocols for the exchange of data and trans-border data harmonization. PK will provide more details on data exchange protocols (through EASP competent colleagues). Concerning data harmonization: EASP also faces discrepancy issues at borders, especially with newly collected data. PK opined that the only solution to this problem was to handle at the large-scale (polygon-level).</p>
8	<p><b>Information on the new Alpine Soil Partnership</b></p> <p>BV introduced (see <b>Annex-9</b>) the H20202 project Links4Soils that will have 2 deliverables by the end of 2019: the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP) and the AlpSP Soil Platform. The intention is that data and information from the latter would be transferred to ESDAC (for preservation and continuity) and that the current Links4Soils partners would continue ESP-related activities under the name AlpSP. The question was raised what the relation should be to the formal ESP structure; two options were considered: one as a full sub-regional partnership (under ESP); the other as an ESP-linked 'initiative'. BV also asked if AlpSP could receive a kind of special status in relation ESP.</p> <p>In the discussion, all participants welcomed the initiative and EH opined that a well-working AlpSP would also make ESP more visible. Most were not in favour of an AlpSP formally recognized by GSP/ESP as a sub-regional partnership, neither to give AlpSP a seat in the ESP-SC. EdC suggested that the Pillar chairs liaise with the relevant people in AlpSP to align activities.</p>

	<p>BV concluded that it is important to keep goals and activities between AlpSP and ESP aligned and that in the very near future these issues are to be clarified by AlpSP members. EH proposed to open a debate during the ESP plenary.</p>
9	<b><i>Cooperation with other institutions/projects</i></b>
9.1	<p><b>SNOWMAN</b></p> <p>EG gave a presentation on ERANET/SNOWMAN/INSPIRATION (see <b>Annex-10</b>) as a way of funding soil research. ESP could provide in-kind contribution to the INSPIRATION-based framework, which would give ESP a way to steer a research agenda through the set-up of calls and the selection of projects.</p> <p>EH: if we want ESP to do so, we would need to have the agreement of the ESP Plenary. EdC thought that ESP is at another level than INSPIRATION and should, as a coordinating body, not take part in the activities of INSPIRATION. EG argued that a 'special' role could be found for ESP to interact/cooperate with INSPIRATION. EH concluded that this topic should be discussed at the next ESP Plenary.</p>
	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>EdC raised a topic on possible participation/presence by ESP members or Steering Committee in the European call on " European Joint Programme on agricultural soil management "<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/lc-sfs-20-2019.html">"(https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/lc-sfs-20-2019.html)</a></p> <p>To participants, it was not clear how ESP / ESP-members could play a role in that. ESP-Sec and EdC to find out from relevant officers at the European Commission. EdC to raise the topic at the next Plenary.</p>

# ANNEX-1:

## European Soil Partnership Steering Committee Meeting

### DG-ENV, Brussels, Belgium

(Avenue Beaulieu 1, REGIO ROOM BU-1 00/103 VIDEOCONF)

**31 January 2018**

### Agenda

*Chair: Elena Havlicek (FOEN)*

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

**09:00 – 17:30 (18:00?)**

**Morning 9:00-10:30**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

**2. Overview of the state of the action points of previous meetings (all)**  
*See Annex-A of the minutes ESP SC meeting June 2017*

**2.1 ESP emailing list** (action points 1, 2)

**2.2 Conferences related to the ESP** (action points 3, 4, 9, 10)

- List of conferences/events with ESP participation (3)
- Information sessions at major-related conferences/events (4)
- “ESP branded” conferences (9)
- Meeting of soil-networks (10\*)

**2.3 ESP website** (action points 5, 6, 7, 26, 28)

- ESDAC web space only accessible by ESP SC (5)
- ESP Facebook (6)
- Attractive ESP website (7)
- EASP and AlpSP on ESDAC ESP website (26)
- New: updated FP and members table
- WIKI (28)

**2.4 ESP promotion and communication** (action points 8, 10\*, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 33)

- ESP rationale (8)
- Meeting of soil-networks (10\* > 2.2)
- Organization of an ESP content based meeting (22 > merge with 10?)
- ESP workshop in relation to the WSD 2017 (23)
- Amended soil definition (24)
- Attract new members (25, 31)
- Promotional material/leaflet (32)
- EPS “who is who” (33)

**2.5 Diverse topics/information** (action points 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30)

- European Research Council (15)
- ESP Plenary (17, 18, 19)
- IP (20, 21)
- EU Expert Group meeting minutes (29)
- Participation of non-ESP partners to WG (30)

**Coffee break 10.30-11.00**

**Morning 11:00-12:00**

**3. Involvement of the ITPS in ESP** (ITPS Representative)

**4. Soil Atlas of Europe / SWSR** (Luca Montanarella)

## Morning 12:00-13:00

### 5. *Overview of the ESP Pillar Working Group Activities + Planning for 2018*

- 5.1 **Pillar 1** (Violette Geissen)
- 5.2 **Pillar 2** (Arwyn Jones > written report)
- 5.3 **Pillar 3** (Coen Ritsema, see also [action point 11](#): compilation of soil related projects FP7 and Horizon 2020)
- 5.4 **Pillar 4** (Edoardo Costantini, see also [action points 16, 27](#): ESP based GSOC)
- 5.5 **Pillar 5** (Hakki Erdogan)
- 5.6 **Information to WG members**

## Lunch break 13:00-14:00

Afternoon 14:00-14:30 (time reserve for topic 6)

## Afternoon 14:30-15:30

### 6. *Overview of the Secretariat and Chair/Vice-Chair Activities + Planning for 2018*

### 7. *Information from the Eurasian Soil Partnership* (Pavel Krasilnikov)

### 8. *Information on the new Alpine Soil Partnership* (Borut Vrscaj, see also [action point 12](#))

## Coffee break 15:30-16:00

## Afternoon 16:00-17:00

### 9. *Cooperation with other institutions/projects*

- 9.1 **SNOWMAN** (invited Esther Goidts)
- 9.2 **EUROSOIL 2020** (update)
- 9.3 **Others?**

## Afternoon 17:00-17:30 (18:00?)

### 10. *Next ESP Plenary (preparation of the agenda)*

Special topic for the next plenary?

### 11. *AOB*

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## Venue

DG ENV premises in Brussels, avenue Beaulieu 5, REGIO ROOM BU-1 00/103 VIDEOCONF

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## Participants

Josiane Masson  
Luca Montanarella (morning only)  
Marc Van Liedekerke  
Elena Havlicek  
Carmelo Dazzi  
Edoardo Costantini  
Ronald Vargas  
Borut Vrscaj  
Esther Goidts

### **By VC:**

Violette Geissen, Coen Ritsema  
Pavel Krasilnikov  
Rainer Horn  
Gunay Erpul  
Hakki Erdogan

### **Not attending:**

Arwyn Jones  
Peter de Ruiter

## ANNEX-2:

### ESP Soil definition

*(Carmelo Dazzi, Elena Havlicek, Marc Van Liedekerke) – 21 November 2017*

Up until the 1960s, soil was considered almost exclusively in the context of food production and farm management. In the second half of the past century, the remarkable increase in the global impact of humankind on natural resources has led to a corresponding increase in public awareness of the importance of environmental resources. Soil is no longer considered to be only a domain of agriculture, but is projected onto a broader and more appropriate scale, one that better reflects its environmental importance. This started in the 1950s and coincided with the beginning of the Anthropocene.

Soil scientists have long been talking about the importance of soil in meeting our growing demands for food, water and energy, as well as in providing ecosystem services that affect climate change, human health and biodiversity. The inter-relationships between soils and **social** issues – such as food safety and land tenure rights; between soil and **environmental** issues – such as climate change or conservation of biodiversity; between soil and **economic** issues – such as monetisation of soil functions or ecosystem services – are implicit and fundamental elements of a global concept of soil security. Because of their complex nature, people and politicians fail to grasp the value of soils in a socio-economic framework and their contribution to a sustainable bio-economy.

The functional approach considers the “ecological” (biomass production, elements regulation, biodiversity maintenance) and “socio-economic” functions (carrying surface, archive conservation, raw material provision) of soils. While the three first “ecological” functions are based on natural soil processes, the three “socio-economic” functions emerge from the constructions and material needs.

While these soil functions emerge from interactive soil processes, it is the soil management that determines the functional performances of soils relative to their geo-biophysical potentials. The key for sustainable soil management is to stimulate soil processes such that trade-offs between functions are minimized and their performances and synergies are optimized.

Because of their complex nature, there are no simple and direct means to quantify soil functions as required for any scientific analysis. Instead, a systemic perspective is required to evaluate the impact of agricultural systems on soil functions.

**Sustainable soil management** concerns the maintenance and improvement of the capacity of the world's soil resources to produce food, fibre and freshwater, contribute to energy and climate sustainability, and maintain the biodiversity and the overall protection of the ecosystem. **Therefore**, soil needs to be given a value, one that is aligned with the need for policy to help ensure soil security by encouraging sound soil management and protection against mismanagement.

A new way forward in the field of soil science is to assign an **economic value** to the **ecological services** offered by the soils. This would require that, in changing the present limitations for studying and researching soil degradation processes and in the application of prevention and remediation practices, we change the soil paradigm, providing a new definition of soil:

Hypothesis ( <i>to be discussed</i> )				
1	2	3	4	5
Soil is a natural and economic resource!	Soil is an economic resource!	Soil is a natural and economic resource that deeply influences the social systems.	Soil is a natural resource that deeply influences the economy of the social systems.	Soil is an economic resource that deeply influences the social systems.
It is finite and non-renewable on the human time-scale since it does not regenerate at a significant rate within this time.	It is finite and non-renewable on the human time-scale since it does not regenerate at a significant rate within this time.	It is finite and non-renewable on the human time-scale since it does not regenerate at a significant rate within this time.	It is finite and non-renewable on the human time-scale since it does not regenerate at a significant rate within this time.	It is finite and non-renewable on the human time-scale since it does not regenerate at a significant rate within this time.

Such a revised definition puts the focus on the economic value of the soils, the only aspect that truly attracts the attention of politicians and administrators!

The European Soil Partnership (ESP) is a regional part of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), a global action initiative launched in 2012 by FAO in order to promote sustainable soil management, to avoid fragmentation of efforts, and to halt the increasing rate of misuse, degradation and loss of soils. The mandate of the ESP is to improve governance of the limited soil resources of the European region in order to guarantee healthy and productive soils for a food secure world, as well as support other essential ecosystem services, in accordance with the sovereign right of each State over its natural resources. Being a voluntary endeavor, the ESP should respect existing national or EU competences in particular concerning policy issues or soil-related legislations. The ESP also develops awareness and contributes to the development of capacities, build on best available science, and facilitates/contributes to the exchange of knowledge and technologies among stakeholders for the sustainable management and use of soil resources.

### ANNEX-3:



European Soil Partnership



European Society for  
Soil Conservation



European Confederation  
of Soil Science Societies

**Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon**

**President of the European Research Council**

Distinguished Colleague,

In recent years, the awareness that soil is a key and very complex natural resource has increased at all levels of society. Recently, the 68<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils, with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions. Moreover, to build on this momentum and the extent to which civil society contributes on soil issues, the International Union of Soil Sciences, at the end of 2015, proclaimed 2015-2024 to be the International Decade of Soils.

The Seventh Environment Action Programme, which entered into force on January 2014, recognises that soil degradation is a serious challenge. It aims to ensure that, in the coming years, land is managed sustainably in the European Union, soil is adequately protected and the remediation of contaminated sites is well underway. It also commits the EU and its Member States to increase efforts to reduce soil erosion, increase soil organic matter contents and remediate contaminated sites.

We believe that this is not enough and that such commitments must be followed by effective and positive actions to preserve the multi-functionality of soil and its role in environmental equilibria, and in human health and welfare.

For these reason we believe that one of these actions would be the establishment of an ERC panel specifically dedicated to the field of "Soil Science" in its broad meaning.

With this letter we are sending you a petition expressing the opinion of recognised European soil scientists.

We look forward to hearing from you. Many thanks and kind regards

Elena Havlicek	Carmelo Dazzi	Pascal Boivin
<signature>	<signature>	<signature>
Chair of the European Soil Partnership	President of the European Society for Soil Conservation	President of the European Confederation of Soil Science Societies

**\*\*\* PETITION \*\*\***

**To:**

**Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon**      **President of the European Research Council  
Chair of the ERC Scientific Council**

**Professor Klaus Bock**      **Vice-President of the European Research Council  
(Physical sciences and Engineering)**

**Professor Eva Kondorosi**      **Vice-President of the European Research Council  
(Life Sciences)**

**Professor Martin Stokhof**      **Vice-President of the European Research Council  
(Social Sciences and Humanities)**

**Dear Sir, Dear Madam,**

In recent years, the awareness that soil is a key and very complex natural resource has increased at all levels of society. Recently, the 68<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils, with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions. Moreover, to build on this momentum and the extent to which civil society contributes on these issues, the International Union of Soil Sciences, at the end of 2015, proclaimed 2015-2024 to be the International Decade of Soils.

The Seventh Environment Action Programme, which entered into force on January 2014, recognises that soil degradation is a serious challenge. It aims to ensure that, in the coming years, land is managed sustainably in the European Union, soil is adequately protected and the remediation of contaminated sites is well underway. It also commits the EU and its Member States to increase efforts to reduce soil erosion, increase soil organic matter contents and remediate contaminated sites.

We believe that this is not enough and that such commitments must be followed by effective and positive actions to preserve the multi-functionality of soil and its role in environmental equilibria, and in human health and welfare.

We, the Presidents of the European and National Scientific Societies listed below, representing over 10,000 soil scientists that belong to European universities, research agencies, government bodies, higher education, science, public non-governmental organisations, and business, are submitting to you the petition below. We count on your support to establish an ERC panel specifically dedicated to the field of "Soil Science" in its broad meaning.

## ***PETITION***

The Presidents of the European and national scientific societies listed below, representing over 10,000 soil scientists belonging to European universities, research agencies, government bodies, higher education, scientific research, public non-governmental organisations, and business,

### **given**

that the 68<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly endorsed the request from the Kingdom of Thailand for the proclamation of the ‘International Year of Soils 2015’ to serve as a platform for raising awareness about the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions;

### **stressing**

- the importance of sustainable soil management as the basis for food systems, fuel and fibre production, essential ecosystem functions and better adaptation to climate change for present and future generations;
- the importance of the multi-functionality of soils on environmental equilibria, and human health and welfare all over the world;

### **identified**

that the level of degradation of natural resources, and particularly soils, related to human pressure is becoming increasingly evident in all European countries;

### **considering**

that the issues concerning the field of Soil Science should be considered within the domain of “Life Science” due to their strong links with food security, ecosystem functions and human health,

### **request that**

#### **the European Research Council**

establish a unique and specific ERC panel dedicated to the field of “Soil Science”, under the Life Sciences domain. We put forward the following proposal for your attention:

**LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology:** Agricultural, animal, fishery, forestry food and soil sciences; biotechnology, genetic engineering, synthetic and chemical biology, industrial biosciences; environmental biotechnology and remediation.

#### ***LS9\_x Soil Science***

We are strongly convinced that a panel specifically dedicated to “Soil Science” will give soil the importance that it deserves as a fundamental resource to maintain the total quality of the environment and humankind, and will allow early career soil scientists to have a direct route through which to apply for ERC grants.

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<b>Logo</b>	<b>Society</b>	<b>President</b>
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**European Society for Soil Conservation**

**Prof. Carmelo Dazzi**



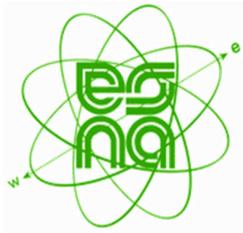
**European Soil Partnership**

**Prof. Elena Havlicek**



**European Confederation of Soil Science Societies**

**Prof. Pascal Boivin**



**European Society for New Methods in Agricultural Research**

**Prof. Vlado Licina**



**European Geoscience Union Division on Soil System Science**

**Prof. Saskia Keesstra**



**Soil Science Society of AUSTRIA**

**Prof. ??????????**



**Soil Science Society of BELGIUM**

**Prof. ??????????**



**Soil Science Society of BULGARIA**

**Prof. Metodi Teoharov**



**Soil Science Society of CROATIA**

**Prof. Milan Poljak**



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**Prof. Josef Kozak**



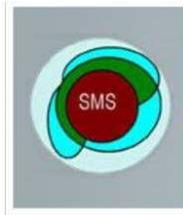
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**Prof. Alar Astover**



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**Prof. Pekka Hänninen**



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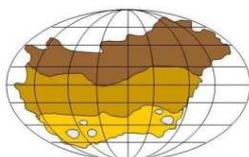
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**Prof. Anna Benedetti**



Latvijas Augsnes zinātnes biedrība  
**Soil Science Society of Latvia**

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**Prof. Raimonds Kasparinskis**



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Society of  
SPAIN

**Prof. ????????**



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Society of  
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KINGDOM

**Prof. ????????**

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Many thanks and kind regards



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**ANNEX-4 to ANNEX-10: as separate files associated to these minutes.**