

EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF FUNDERS TO IMPLEMENT THE INSPIRATION STRATEGIC RESEARCH AGENDA FOR INTEGRATED SPATIAL PLANNING, LAND USE AND SOIL MANAGEMENT

A flexible, self-financed platform of European funders to co-fund and disseminate research on sustainable management of soil and land

Who are we?

We are a group of initiative takers that strongly believe in the need for integrated soil and land research in Europe. We see added value through coordinating, co-funding and disseminating cross-border soil and land management research. We aim to establish a new self-financed platform of funders to implement integrated multidisciplinary research based on the experience of funders involved in SNOWMAN and other networks in order to address the knowledge needs identified by INSPIRATION and other initiatives. We welcome additional partners that share our vision and desire to collaborate.

What do we want?

We are interested in funding activities to implement the INSPIRATION Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) by forming a funders' platform focusing on soil and land management research. We invite partners to join this flexible and self-financed platform that we are currently shaping. Partners of this platform may be public or private institutions that grant funding for research or knowledge dissemination, or other organizations willing to support these actions.

We wish to:

- Fund integrated soil and land research aimed at addressing the knowledge needs identified in the INSPIRATION SRA. We believe that transnational collaboration provides an added-value to the research and its impact.
- Avoid excessive administrative processes and preserve flexibility in research funding coordination.
- Produce implementable research and focus on its uptake by end-users, at all levels from the national to the local.

Why do we need to act now?

There is a growing sense of urgency that unless we improve our use of soil and management of land, societies will suffer and ecosystems will be damaged.

- Soil provides humans with key services related to several of the global Sustainability Development Goals formulated by the United Nations. While many severe threats to this resource have been recognized, soil and land degradation processes go on.
- Stakeholders in Europe have identified many knowledge needs related to soil and land – these were compiled in the Strategic Research Agenda by INSPIRATION and are now calling for action.
- Soil and land research needs coordination across regions, disciplines and stakeholder groups to properly address these knowledge needs. A targeted funders' platform around these issues is a key to leverage cross-country collaboration.

How do we want to act?

Our platform will allow partners to influence the choice of calls for proposals and then to co-fund proposals covering their priority topics while refraining from others. The technical appendix of this note gives further details.



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Contact your INSPIRATION national contact at www.inspiration-agenda.eu for further information on this topic.



What will be gained by gathering into such a platform?

We will fund research in a more coordinated way and benefit from experience and skills from various professional backgrounds while keeping the overall picture provided by our common research agenda. Our platform will enable us to:

- Benefit from larger total budgets.
- Get wider ideas and views through multidisciplinary approaches.
- Complement each countries' expertise through cross-country collaboration.
- Ensure involvement of highly competent and skilled researchers and committed stakeholders from across Europe.
- Produce implementable research results (guidelines, recommendations, decision support tools, new technologies, etc.).
- Exchange experiences between platform members on specific topics.

How can you participate?

Contact your INSPIRATION national contact (listed at www.inspiration-agenda.eu) for further information on this platform. A workshop will be organized in spring 2018 to further discuss the possibilities of getting into action.

Technical appendix - How a joint funder platform could work

The collaboration will be flexible to respect every partner's objectives and domestic regulatory restrictions while leveraging the potential of trans-national collaboration. Details will be discussed and agreed with each potential partner. Based on experience, the following elements are foreseen:

- Ensuring a **self-financed platform** through a membership fee. Costs for a general platform secretariat are shared among "full members".
- Providing the **flexibility** of the platform by allowing for "full" or "affiliate" membership of funders:
 1. "Full members" help define strategy, provide overall direction and coordination of the platform and initiate joint calls. Full members support the joint secretariat. It is expected that costs for a full member will be in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 Euro/year depending on the total number of members in the platform. Members can be also allowed to substitute in-kind contributions (e.g. administrative staff time).
 2. "Affiliate membership" is time-limited and only open for research funds granting organisations or administrations in order to participate in a dedicated call and its associated costs.
 3. Full and affiliate members are free to define the budgets they are willing to assign in each call. Only those with a positive commitment to a call will bear specific associated call costs.
- Setting up a **Platform Steering Committee** with full membership funders and assisted by the joint secretariat in order to pursue 4 strategic objectives:
 1. Funding the implementation of the INSPIRATION Strategic Research Agenda through regular transnational calls for proposals.
 2. Periodically updating the research agenda based on emerging gaps and challenges – seeing the INSPIRATION SRA as a living document open to other inputs.
 3. Transnationally disseminating knowledge acquired.
 4. Developing new funders' partnerships.
- Highlighting the **importance of dissemination**:
 1. Dissemination is a mandatory and important aspect of every funded project (e.g. website, conferences, publications, ...).
 2. A Knowledge Dissemination Task Team within the platform to support projects and enhance dissemination during and after the funded projects.

