

Minutes of the European Soil Partnership Steering Committee Meeting

Venue: WUR Impulse Building, Wageningen, NL

21+22 February 2019

Chair: Elena Havlicek (FOEN)

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

Minutes written by Marc Van Liedekerke (28/02/2019)

Incorporating comments from: Josiane Masson and Gergely Toth.

These minutes are written in correspondence to the points on the agenda, as dealt with chronologically in the meeting (**Annex-1**, see below).

Present in the meeting were:

- Prof Elena Havlicek (FOEN, Switzerland) – chair ESP
- Marc Van Liedekerke (European Commission, JRC) – ESP Secretariat
- Josiane Masson (European Commission, DG ENV) - invited
- Yusuf Yigini (FAO/GSP Secretariat) – representative GSP Secretariat
- Prof Violette Geissen (Wageningen WUR, Netherlands) - ESP P1 Chair
- Dr Arwyn Jones (European Commission, JRC) – ESP P2 Chair
- Prof Coen Ritsema (Wageningen WUR, Netherlands) - ESP P3 co-Chair
- Prof Peter de Ruiter (Wageningen WUR, Netherlands) - ITPS member
- Prof Gergely Toth (University of Pannonia, Hungary) - ESP P3 co-Chair
- Maria Costanza Calzolari (CNR, Italy) - ITPS member
- Dr Maria Konyushkova (Eurasian Center for Food Security of the Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russia)) - ITPS member
- Hakki Erdogan (Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Ankara, Turkey) - ESP P5 Chair and ESP Vice-Chair
- Suhad Saleh (WUR) – invited for presenting P1 work

Excused: Prof Carmelo Dazzi (ESP Vice-Chair) and Dr Edoardo Costantini (ESP P4-Chair)

	<p>This meeting was intended to take stock of what was accomplished during the last year, what will be done during this year, and to prepare the ESP Plenary Meeting (PM) of next month (28+29 March 2019)</p> <p>Preamble by the Chair: All partners in the ESP are active on a voluntary basis; the ESP Implementation Plan is highly ambitious and to cover all planned activities with voluntary resources is quite difficult. Also the relation between activities of GSP and ESP don't seem to be very well defined, and would need some clarification.</p>
GSP	<p>Yusuf Yigini gave an overview of the activities in the GSP, especially on the planned Pillar-4 products, such as GLOSI, SoilStat (FAO product), new GSP global maps on soil erosion, soil salinity, soil carbon sequestration potential (2019) and then soil biodiversity product (2020). It was stressed that the definition of these products is in the hands of GSP and ITPS, with approval in the GSP Plenary. Concerning implementation: the aggregation of data provided by countries (bottom up approach) and other sources will be done centrally by the GSP Secretariat; active contribution of the ESP is not sought apart from facilitation of certain activities such as training and capacity building.</p> <p>Concerning the ESP contribution to GSP maps, Arwyn Jones remarked that there could be a role for ESP in discussing among partners about possible harmonization of data before data</p>

are actually delivered to GSP, in order to eliminate 'border effects'. Josiane Masson remarked that the role of the ESP in such data collection exercises should be the mobilization of resources. The ESP SC members shared the opinion that the GSP Secretary activities are not enough connected with the Regional Soil Partnerships activities. In addition new products are launched before having the time to validate, consolidate and improve the existing ones (e.g. the Global Soil Organic Carbon map) which hampers the quality of products and their potential uptake by the user and scientific community.

It was remarked that there is in general little or no communication between the (chairs of the) GSP Pillars and the (chairs of the) ESP Pillars, and that this issue should be brought to the attention of the GSP Secretariat for improvement, so that global and regional activities are better coordinated. The regional partnerships should contribute to global activities, by specifying also the role of the ESP Focal Points and partners.

It was suggested to create (for regional or global purposes) 'pools of experts' for various topics that are at heart of the GSP/ESP activities (e.g. on erosion, soil biodiversity, soil organic carbon etc), so that if GSP/ESP needs contribution from partners on a certain topic, the ESP SC can already suggest to National Focal Points possible candidates for nomination for further discussion in the ESP Plenary meeting and beyond. This would facilitate the work flow and strengthen some processes.

Note: The GSP Secretariat has appointed an external expert to study various soil data models to recommend one that will be used for all activities under GSP Pillar 4 and 5.

ITPS:

ITPS operates from a scientific point of view (only) and at the global level interacting mainly with the GSP Secretariat with very little direct contacts with the regional partnerships, therefore it is difficult for ITPS to tell where ESP should be involved. In global events such as the symposia (e.g. on erosion this year) there is room for specific regional contribution (e.g. as an ESP side event, as happened last year during the GSOP2018 on soil pollution). In the Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR) reports (next one due in 2025), the regional contributions are also essential..

A general remark from ESP SC to GSP/ITPS was to involve timely (well in advance) and concretely the regions for the various activities such as data collection for new maps, or contributions to symposia (for instance, by organizing a regional specific workshop on soil erosion for Europe). The chair concluded that, even with a timely approach, action depends on the willingness (driving forces) and resources, which are not always available.

Note Arwyn Jones: the JRC + EEA + DG ENV are currently contributing to EEA's State and Outlook for Europe's Environment Report 2020 (aka. SOER 2020), to a 7-page section on Land & Soil. JRC plans, in cooperation with EEA and DG ENV, to expand this work with a new assessment of the State of Soils in Europe (in 2020-2021), the results of which would then feed in the SWSR-2025.

The list of ITPS current and future ITPS tasks was presented by Peter de Ruiter (see [Annex-2](#)).

It was noted that it could be beneficial if, during the preparatory work of the ITPS, and also for implementation activities at the GSP level, regional partnerships could help, e.g. through expert opinion and contribution to the validation of products. To this end, again a pool of experts could be established.

Maria Konyushkova thought that, for the ITPS work, many processes could be slowed down when seeking also the contribution of external experts.

	<p>Josiane Masson opined that involving experts early on could improve the acceptance of the ITPS documents and GSP products by a wide audience and therefore carry more weight. Peter de Ruiter thought that involving external experts could possibly lead to frustration if the contribution by experts or their comments would not be taken fully on board. For Costanza Calzolari, it would be a huge job which would be difficult to achieve with tight deadlines and high quality. Josiane Masson stressed that the quality of products and their recognition by the scientific community is a key and there is a need to establish a strong process for the key products and reports, and lessons should be learnt from IPCC or IPBES processes open to experts willing to contribute.</p> <p>The GSP Secretariat proposed to look into the practicalities of setting up such pool of experts (who to approach, etc.). Arwyn Jones remarked that not only Focal Points of countries should be approached, but also the other partners (such as NGOs, private sector, networks such as Soil Science Societies).</p>
	<p>Pillar-2</p> <p>Arwyn Jones (chair ESP P2) gave an overview of work in Pillar-2.</p> <p>In the context of an arrangement with DG ENV and as a formal ESP contribution, JRC plans to organize this year a workshop to discuss a policy brief on soil education and awareness (for advocating soil issues) including a best practice document. This will be in cooperation with ENSA.</p> <p>There are no formal contacts between GSP and ESP Pillar-2 working groups/chairs.</p> <p>In cooperation with ESP Pillar-1 and INRA France, a summer school on SSM (for around 30 people persons) will be held in 2019, in Dijon France building on the 'Living Labs' implemented there.</p> <p>The future Assessment of the State of Soils in Europe (EEA, JRC, ENV) offers room to ESP partners to contribute and in such case, could carry the ESP label. The Soil Atlas of Europe is still in progress and the target is still to launch it at the EUROSIL2020 conference.</p>
	<p>Pillar-1</p> <p>Violette Geissen (chair ESP P1): There is no active Pillar-1 Working Group; the only work performed is done by the WUR soil group, supported by a contract with the JRC/DG-ENV, for the mapping of SSM projects across Europe. (see presentation by Suhad Saleh (Annex-3)). The work done so far was the collection of information on EU-funded project (to be completed later by national projects if appropriate), building on the list of projects provided by DG ENV. In a list of 220 projects, the WUR team selected 61 projects with 249 case studies, categorised in 12 topics. A map of cases studies overlaying Corine LC and bioclimatic regions was produced by WUR. The project leaders were contacted and 15 replies so far (of a total of 61) representing 75 case studies. However more concrete actions need to be proposed and Violette Geissen said that it is impossible to do anything without money. Josiane Masson said that one concrete action could be the organisation of farm (or in situ) visits to these case studies. For that there is a need to rely as much as possible on existing networks or organisations (e.g. soil conservation or agroecology networks, Rural Development networks, Chambers of Agriculture etc.). DG ENV can provide some contacts.</p> <p>Violette confirmed that there is no contact with the GSP Pillar-1 Chair. It is not known if something similar is happening at GSP level.</p> <p>Note Coen Ritsema: it would be good if the information collected by Violette could be structured according to the templates used for WOCAT.</p> <p>The ESP SC agreed that the ultimate (concrete) objective for Pillar 1 is to elaborate European Guidelines on SSM together with the collection of success stories (from aforementioned case studies and others) culminating with the organisation of a specific session in EUROSIL (see below)</p>
	<p>Pillar-3</p>

	<p>Presentation by Gergely Toth and Coen Ritsema (co-chair ESP-P3) (see Annex-4)</p> <p>Pillar-3 activates in 2018 focused on defining the means of achieving the output targets. It is feasible only with the mobilisation of external resources and networking.</p> <p>A joint PhD project to enhance the results of the INSPIRATION project can deliver outputs for item 1/a of the Implementation Plan, however, with a longer timeframe as originally planned. The doctoral project description was presented.</p> <p>The EJP on ASM includes the work package to explore research need. Cooperation of the ESP with the consortium, which is required by the call of proposal (given the proposal gets funded) can secure the delivery of item 1/b of the Implementation Plan, however, with extended deadline.</p> <p>Item 2. of the Implementation Plan needs to be revisited, and new ideas and involvement is necessary, otherwise proposed to be removed from the plans.</p> <p>Goals of Item 3., which has been rescheduled by the Plenary to the next term can be achieved through cooperation with the corresponding Working Group of the Sino-EU Panel on land and Soil.</p> <p>The European Soil Data Centre is to be contacted to take over the implementation of Item 4. (web-based platform for a structured inventory of soil research partners, facilities, infrastructures, soil research programs and metadata on available soil information across Europe), as no voluntary partner can realistically fulfil this task.</p> <p>Promotion of the ESP (Item 5. of the Implementation Plan) is a common task of all Pillars, ideas for harmonised approaches are welcome.</p> <p>The chairs will present the above plan of activities for the coming year; the ESP Plenary in March.</p> <p>The chairs take also the commitment to follow the work (related to definition of research agenda) in the EJP on ASM (European Joint Programme on agricultural soil management)(once that will take effect; expected start Autumn 2019)</p> <p>Note Costanza Calzolari (member of the GSP Pillar-3 WG): in GSP Pillar-3 there is no activity going on at this moment.</p>
	<p>Pillar-4</p> <p>Edoardo Costantini (chair ESP P4) had sent a report of activities over the last year (see Annex-5). Prominent are the organization of a workshop among various interested ESP partners on comparing SOC data that were delivered for the GSOC map in 2017/2018 (to explain cross-border differences), and the follow-up and promotion among ESP Partners of liaising to country contact points for being included in the EJP-ASM proposal, at least for data matters (for which the deadline was end-January 2019).</p> <p>Note that in the EJP-ASM call for tender, it was specifically mentioned that proposals should link to ESP Activities and ESDAC (which should host the results of the awarded EJ-ASM contract).</p> <p>Peter de Ruyter commented that it would be beneficial if EU soil related programmes/calls would have "requirement to liaise to ESP" in their description.</p>
	<p>Pillar-5</p> <p>Hakki Erdogan (chair ESP P5) made a presentation (see Annex-6).</p> <p>The discussion featured the development of REGOSOLAN, the regional branches of the GLOSOLAN; each region should select one main Reference Laboratory.</p> <p>Concerning planning, it is very difficult to define future activities, as ESP P5 is supposed to follow GSP P5 activities and align the ESP activities accordingly. Also for this Pillar, the communication between GSP and ESP hardly exists.</p>
	<p>EASP (Eurasian Soil Partnership)</p>

	<p>Maria Konyushkova made a presentation on the work done in the EASP that appears to be much more advanced and better structured than the ESP (thanks to resources allocated to EASP). Especially Pillars P4 and P5 have been very active. P2 was active with the organization of World Soil Day events. In P3 there isn't anything going on. (Annex-7)</p>
	<p>Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP)</p> <p>Borut VRŠČAJ had sent an update of the activities in the Link4Soils project, for which the establishment of the AlpSP was one deliverable. (Annex-8)</p>
	<p>ERC Petition</p> <p>Carmelo Dazzi had briefed the Secretariat on the state of the ERC petition. An exchange of emails took place with Mr Bourguignon, president of the ERC; the proposal by ESP will be considered in the near future.</p>
	<p>EUROSOIL2020</p> <p>There is a call going on for possible sessions to be organized.</p> <p>It was the general consensus that ESP should be presented and represented (possibly in conjunction with GSP that definitely will participate in the conference) in a full-day session/workshop on a specific topic; the proposed and agreed topic was SSM.</p> <p>The format should be as interactive as possible and could lay the basis for the development of guidelines on SSM in Europe. Many stakeholders should/could be invited e.g. IFOAM, ECAF, Agroecology Europe, via Campesina, CEJA (Young EU Farmers association) COPA-COGECA etc.)</p> <p>Elena Havlicek will seek help from Swiss organizations for the practicalities of organizing such event. Yusuf Yigini proposed also to involve the GSP's Soil Doctors programme. It was expected that GSP will also present the very concrete products that have been delivered so far.</p> <p>Apart from SSM, it was also proposed to have Soil Biodiversity as an additional topic (2020 being the year of soil biodiversity for the GSP), but from the angle of EU-projects that have dealt /are dealing with that topic.</p>
	<p>DG ENV</p> <p>Josiane Masson reported on relevant soil related activities going on or planned at DG ENV. Organizations should/could use participation in EU funded projects to finance ESP work (e.g. EJP). The EC still supports financially the GSP for 2019/2020 for an amount of 500 K€/yr (3rd phase). After 2020, new funding sources will need to be found. An administrative arrangement is also in place with JRC to fund some of the ESP work (e.g. P1 support through a contract with WUR, summer school ...). DG ENV supports also the work with EIONET NRC Soil (e.g. on soil monitoring). Will also work with EIONET countries, JRC and EEA on an extension of the SOER2020 Land & Soil section for a new assessment of the State of Soils in Europe (2020/2021) that in turn could feed in SWSR2025. DG ENV supports the LUCAS Soil module and promotes soil and land issues at international level (SDGs, UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC, FAO). DG ENV has set up a Soil Expert Group for dealing with EU soil policy aspects, consisting of officially nominated country representatives. DG ENV launched a new contract on soil and land related SDGs in the EU, in particular LDN, and commissioned the Soils4EU project, that will provide two reports on SSM issues (presented at the ESP Plenary Assembly end of March).</p> <p>The new Framework program for EU research post 2020 (HorizonEurope) is under preparation and the topic of soil is present in many places. There is a new "mission" expected on Soil and Land, which means that the importance of the topic is very well recognized.</p>
	<p>ESP Plenary</p>

	<p>The draft agenda was adopted. The EU project LANDSUPPORT will be given a 15' slot for presentation. It was decided that the participants in the Soils4EU side-event (not part of the Plenary) on Friday afternoon will be allowed to attend the ESP Plenary as well.</p>
	<p>Agenda points not covered explicitly during the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Briefing on EEA activities in relation to soil; EIONET NRC Soil- SC, secretariat and chair: post 2020- Cooperation with other institutions- VGSSM adaptation to European context- ESP flyer- Various means of communication

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Agenda

Chair: Elena Havlicek (FOEN - CH)

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

Thursday 21.02.19: 2 pm - 7 pm; Friday 22.02.2019 9 am - 2 pm

Topics (to be organized)

GSP

- briefing on current activities, e.g. new data products as discussed in the INSII meeting

ITPS

- Information on current activities
- How to strengthen collaboration between ITPS-ESP activities?

Pillars

- For each pillar: current state and next activities
- Discussion (all): successes and failures > how to improve ESP efficiency?

Eurasian / Alpine Soil Partnerships

- Information on current and foreseen activities

DG ENV

- Relevant information
- Contributions to the ESP

EEA

- Briefing on EEA activities in relation to soil; EIONET NRC Soil

Reports

- SOER2020
- SWSR 2025
- Soil Atlas of Europe

Global activities/projects

- Petition to the European Research Council
- SC, secretariat and chair: post 2020
- Cooperation with other institutions
- VGSSM adaptation to European context

Communication

- ESP flyer
- Various means of communication

EUROSOIL2020

- Information and discussion on how to effectively/concretely involve the ESP and the ITPS

Preparation of the next ESP Plenary

- Participation
- Agenda
- Back-to-back SOILS4EU workshop

TO BE PROVIDED

- ANNEX-2 - **ITPS**
- ANNEX-3 - **Pillar 1**
- ANNEX-4 - **Pillar 3**
- ANNEX-5 - **Pillar 4**
- ANNEX-6 - **Pillar 5**
- ANNEX-7- **Eurasian Soil Partnership**
- ANNEX-8 -**Alpine Soil Partnership**