

Status and activities the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP) in February 2019

The Alpine Soil Partnership is a regional initiative focused to promote sustainable soil management and protection of the soils in the Alps, a specific region in Europe. In contrast to the European Soil Partnership, the AlpSP extends the ESP/GSP goals to the local/regional level where soil management/protection decisions take place. Also, the extension of the GSP goals and the promotion of the Alpine soils in national languages, focusing on soil topics relevant for specific environments, is the initiation of the Links4Soils group that considered the AlpSP as a promising contribution to the GSP/ESP.

The AlpSP officially started with the confirmation of the Memorandum of understanding in March 2018 in Grenoble. Since then, the AlpSP established its network based on the Links4Soils project partners to new, individual and institutional members. Several presentations of the AlpSP were held in front of international organizations (e.g., at the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention, EUSALP AG6) and within the regional soil protection/management meetings (e.g., Tyrol, Slovenia, Aosta Valley, Bavaria, Département Isère, France). The national Soil Partnership was founded in Slovenia.

As agreed at the last AlpSP meeting in Munich in November 2018, the future activities of the AlpSP will focus on five ESP key areas: (i) sustainable soil management, (ii) soil awareness raising, education and didactics, (iii) soil information and research, (iv) regional cooperation, and (v) harmonisation in of the Alpine regions. In practical terms, the AlpSP will play a significant role at the final conference of the Links4Soils project in October 2019 in Innsbruck, and we, the Links4Soils partners, are preparing a conference on the implementation on the Soil Conservation Protocol of the Alpine Convention (SCP). At the time of writing this report, the AlpSP activities are not yet completed.

The promotion of the needs for sustainable soil management and better implementation of the SCP to local/regional level (municipalities, local and regional administration) is the keystone of the AlpSP activities. Furthermore, the Links4Soils partners will steer the AlpSP until the end of the project - March 2020, to cooperate with the newly (2019) established Working Group on soil protection by the Alpine Convention (WG soil) and intensify our cooperation with the EUSALP AG6 (on best practices). The decision of the Alpine Convention to establish a new WG on soil leads Links4Soils/AlpSP partners to a conclusion that Links4Soils/AlpSP activities in last two years may contribute to the formation of this very much needed working group. In terms of running the AlpSP and financing the very modest but needed AlpSP secretariat, the establishment of the “soil WG” makes the situation quite prosperous. Namely, we will shortly explore the idea to embed the AlpSP within the soil WG and, by this, achieve a strong link to the Alpine Convention and a much more significant impact in the Alpine region.

Besides the focus to a specific region, a closer linkage to the activities of the European Soil Partnership and the FAO Mountain Partnership aspires too. Finally, the establishment of and the linkage to other regional networks (e.g. European Land and Soil Alliance) and institutions as well as recruiting of new AlpSP members will be continued in the next months/years.