



The value of social engagement in Soil Mission



EUROPEAN UNION

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MISSIONS**



Mission Overview

Mission Soil aims primarily at **accelerating the transition towards healthy soils** and **promoting sustainable management practices** in urban and rural areas through the establishment of at least 100 living labs and lighthouses **by 2030**. This goes hand in hand with activities focusing on raising awareness to ensure the long-term health and productivity of soils on all types of land.

Specific objectives

In addition to the main objective, **eight** other **specific objectives** guide the activities of Mission Soils

- Reduce land degradation relating to desertification;
- Conserve and increase soil organic carbon stocks;
- No net soil sealing and increase reuse of urban soils;
- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration;
- Prevent erosion;
- Improve soil structure to enhance soil habitat quality for soil biota and crops;
- Reduce the EU global footprint on soils;
- Increase soil literacy in society across Member States.

How to get involved

- **Living Labs:** Groups of rural and urban areas where various actors coming from different sectors and expertise work together in a co-design perspective to design, test and validate solutions aiming at improving soils health. Living Labs are established at local and regional level. ([link](#)).
- **Lighthouses:** individual sites for demonstration of exemplary solution ([link](#)).
- **Mission Soil Manifesto:** non-legally binding document open for signatory through which regions, municipalities, private or public companies, associations, educational institutes, universities, research institutions and stakeholders become part of the community by contributing to the protection and the restore of soils ([link](#)).

() The EU Commission has analysed the applications from the first Living Lab call for proposals and published its findings and recommendations in a factsheet "Guidelines for living lab proposals". This document summarises the criteria that a project application for a Living Lab in the soil mission should address ([link](#)).*

Useful LINKS

Mission NCPs ([link](#))

Mission Platform ([link](#))



Funding opportunities

To support the achievement of the main goal of creating at least 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses and the related specific objectives, a research and innovation framework programme has been set up. Since 2021 specific Mission Soil work programmes have been launched which include several topics.

Below Mission Soil Work Programme **2024 open calls**:

- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01](#): Co-creating solutions for soil health in Living Labs (*)
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-02](#): Living Labs in urban areas for healthy soils (*)
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-03](#): Towards a dynamic monitoring system to assess status and spatiotemporal changes of soil erosion at European scale
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-04](#): Systems to quantify nitrogen fluxes and uncertainties in European landscapes
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-05](#): Soil health, pollinators and key ecosystem functions
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-06](#): Harnessing the multifunctional potential of soil biodiversity for healthy cropping systems
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-07](#): Development of high spatial-resolution monitoring approaches and geographically-explicit registry for carbon farming
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-08](#): Managing forest peatsoils
- [HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-09](#): Assessment of Soil Health in Africa

Other Funding Opportunities

[Link](#)



The role of social engagement

One of the goals of the Mission is to increase soil literacy and the involvement of citizens across Europe. Therefore, the involvement of social actors is a key element for the success of the Mission. In this context, several activities are carried out, such as **awareness-raising activities** on the societal role of soils to strengthen citizen participation, **communication activities** to bring soil research and innovation closer to citizens' lives thus triggering action and involvement, **education and training** both for citizens and practitioners etc.

More information [here](#).

In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the Soil mission also supports social engagement activities through the funding of projects based on the **co-design of innovative solutions** for soil protection and restoration.

More information [here](#).

Some social engagement insights

Here are some insights on social engagement activities carried out by **LOESS project** (funded under HORIZON-MISS-2022-SOIL-01-07) which aims at providing an overview of the current level of soil related knowledge at different educational levels and to develop educational programmes and materials, including an Atlas of Soil Education.

Social engagement strategies used in the project:

- Online and onsite community building events such as workshops, seminars etc.
- Online and onsite forums and groups
- Designing and sharing educational contents

Target groups involved

Citizens, policy makers, researchers, civil society organizations, end users and practitioners

A particular successful example of Social Engagement activity within the project:

Communities of Practice (CoPs) were established to which members of the target groups were also invited to participate with the aim of establishing an exchange of knowledge and fostering networking. CoPs meetings are held regularly and on request (also by the target groups) to identify gaps in education (missing content, lack of implementation of existing content). This creates a good basis for future activities to reflect on the developed educational material. Further involvement activities will follow later in the project (campaigns to promote soil health in general, but also to promote our results).



What made this initiative so successful

The topic hit the nail. The target audiences are highly motivated to exchange, to network, to receive material to use and advice how to use it and how to address their audience (students, general public, researchers etc.). Furthermore, continuous updates on project progress keeps them connected.

Tangible outcomes resulting from social engagement within the project:

tangible outputs will be case studies of existing teaching materials for all levels of education. In addition, based on interviews, focus groups and a survey a documentation of the gaps, identified and confirmed by the user groups, will be made.

For more information about the project and its activities check the [LOESS website](#).



