

Issue N 2

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The Mission Soil Manifesto

Welcome to the second edition of the Mission Soil newsletter!

From major policy developments to engaging international events – the last few months have been very dynamic for the soil health community. Meanwhile, the Mission Soil has been working hard to lead the transition towards healthy soils in Europe and beyond. Read on to learn about its latest news and future activities!



The list of signatories of the Mission Soil Manifesto is growing longer by the day! More than 1700 businesses, research institutions, non-governmental organisations, universities, individuals, and other stakeholders have signed the non-binding document, becoming part of a vibrant network that cares about soil health.

[Sign the Mission Soil Manifesto](#) and join the Mission Soil community!

Get to know the Mission Soil Board

The Mission Soil Board is a panel of 15 soil experts appointed to provide strategic advice for the implementation of the Mission Soil and to promote its activities, acting as soil health advocates in Europe and beyond. The Board consists of individuals from various fields, including academia, research and businesses, such as farming, selected through a public call. With its expertise, the Mission Board advises on the framework conditions which help to achieve the Mission's objectives, supports communication on the Mission's performance and results, helps to raise public awareness on soil health and, by reaching out to stakeholders, contributes to stimulate actions to improve soil health by public and private actors.

[Learn more about the Mission Soil Board](#)

Mission Soil Projects under the 2022 Work Programme

June 2023 saw the launch of the latest cohort of the Mission Soil projects. Overall, 17 projects have received funding of €90 million from the European Commission under the 2022 Mission Soil call for proposals. Below you can view the project names and their respective topics.

You can also [read this press release to learn more](#).

Topic	Project Name
1. Building the Mission's knowledge repository and advancing the European Soil Observatory	SoilWise
2. Improving food systems sustainability and soil health with food processing residues	DeliSoil Waste4Soil
3. Soil biodiversity and its contribution to ecosystem services	BIOservisES SOB4ES
4. Remediation strategies, methods and financial models for decontamination and reuse of land in urban and rural areas	ARAGORN ISLANDR EDAPHOS

5. Monitoring, reporting and verification of soil carbon and greenhouse gases balance	<u>MARViC</u> <u>MRV4SOC</u>
6. Network on carbon farming for agricultural and forest soils	<u>CREDIBLE</u>
7. Foster soil education across society	<u>LOESS</u>
8. Framework Partnership Agreement for a Living Lab Network Support Structure	<u>SOILL</u>
9. Citizen science for soil health	<u>ECHO</u>
10. Innovations for soil improvement from bio-waste	<u>BIN2BEAN</u> <u>FENIX</u> <u>SOILUTIONS</u>

Project Spotlight - NATI00NS

In this edition of the Mission Soil newsletter, the spotlight is on the [**NATI00NS project**](#). Funded under the Mission Soil's 2021 Work Programme, the project started in November 2022 and is expected to end in October 2024. The aim of NATI00NS, as of all projects funded under this work programme, is to support the Mission Soil in establishing 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030.

We talked to Ulliana Bertelsen, *Quality Coordinator and Project Leader at the Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture* (in the picture below), who told us more about the project's achievements so far.

NATI00NS supports the Mission Soil by offering capacity building to national and regional stakeholders to help them apply for Horizon Europe's soil health Living Lab calls (also called 'topics').



What results has NATI00NS achieved so far?

*Our achievements include organising **[42 national engagement events](#)** across the EU and associated countries from March to June 2023. These events addressed soil health challenges, introduced resilience strategies, and explained the concept of Living Labs.*

*We have successfully launched a **[transnational matchmaking platform](#)** that helps applicants from regional Living Labs to create consortia across Europe in response to the 2023 Mission Soil call for proposals and the topic of Living Labs. We have also developed **training materials** focused on writing competitive Living Lab applications. In June 2023, we held a series of **[webinars](#)** for applicants, covering various aspects of Living Labs, such as 'How to set up a Living Lab' and 'Governance and business models for setting up a Living Lab'.*

*We have also launched a comprehensive **[set of factsheets](#)** about soil health Living Labs.*

*In addition, we offer support to applicants through our **[FAQ and Helpdesk](#)** digital platform.*

In your opinion, why is the Mission Soil's work important for Europe?

The work of the Mission Soil holds significance for Europe as it involves setting up a network of 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses. This network collaboratively generates knowledge by experimenting with solutions and showcasing their efficacy. This effort is crucial for the transition towards healthier soils to revive and safeguard soil health not only in Europe but also on a global scale.

What do you like most about your work on NATI00NS?

It has been very rewarding to be able to engage in all the activities mentioned above and interact with applicants to support their involvement in the first wave of Living Lab calls. It gives me the opportunity to understand stakeholders' challenges, drivers and opportunities, and address these factors in the process of creating Living Labs.

News

Mission Soil Platform

We are thrilled to announce the much-anticipated launch of the Mission Soil Platform! The Mission Soil Platform is your go-to place to find out about the Mission Soil and how you can get involved. It helps spread the Mission's goals and related research activities, encourages teamwork among projects funded by the Mission, and raises awareness about soil's importance, the challenges it faces and the latest solutions.

Learn more about the Mission Soil funded projects and funding opportunities. Stay up to date with the latest news and be the first to know about upcoming events dedicated to soil health. Browse our constantly updated Resource Library to find useful resources related to soil health.

[Explore the Mission Soil Platform.](#)

Are you organising an event related to soil health? Submit your event through the Mission Soil Platform and share it with the largest soil health community in Europe!

[See the interactive event map!](#)

#MissionSoil photo competition has now closed!



Thank you very much for taking part in the Mission Soil photo competition and showing us your passion for soil! We are currently assessing all submissions. The 12 best photos will be displayed at the European Mission Soil Week on 21-23 November 2023 in Madrid and featured in a calendar. The photographers of the three best photos will win a trip to the European Mission Soil Week in Madrid, including transport and a two-night hotel stay. Prizes will also be awarded to the other nine photographers whose photos will be featured in the exhibition.

EU Missions make strides towards a greener and healthier Europe

The European Commission through an official assessment has concluded that the [EU Missions in Horizon Europe](#) are on course to meet their ambitious 2030 targets in areas crucial for Europe's future, including soil health, climate adaptation, cancer patient care, preserving water ecosystems and urban climate neutrality. In a Communication on the EU Missions, the Commission highlights the EU Missions' achievements and addresses the main challenges they are facing. In its assessment, the Commission also proposes an increase in funding to 11% of the Horizon Europe budget, totalling over €3 billion for the period 2024–2027. The Communication also announces the preparations for a new EU Mission on the [New European Bauhaus](#).



The positive assessment says that the Mission Soil is in line with its objectives, including defining strategies for soil decontamination and regeneration and developing new business models for soil-friendly and climate-neutral value chains. Furthermore, the EIB, in cooperation with InvestEU, is developing a large-scale soil investment pipeline to mobilise additional financial resources. By supporting carbon farming, the Mission Soil is also promoting cost-competitive tools for monitoring, reporting and verifying soil carbon removals.

In addition, the first Living Labs under the Mission will start in 2024, leading to more than 200 test sites for local experimentation in urban and rural areas. The Mission has become an important flagship for international cooperation with the Global Soil Partnership, the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate initiative and with international R&I partners such as Japan, the USA, Canada and African countries.

To discover more:

- [Read the press release](#)
- [Explore the full assessment](#)
- [View the Commission Staff Working Document](#)

Land and Soil Management Award 2024 – apply by 15 January 2024!



The Land and Soil Management Award 2024 is now accepting applications! This prestigious award recognises outstanding efforts in land and soil management, focusing on practices that combat soil threats, such as degradation, erosion, contamination and more. Farmers, landowners, land managers and groups of farmers are encouraged to apply on their own or in collaboration with research

institutes, universities and private companies. By participating, you not only stand a chance to win €5 000 but also to showcase your work as a model of excellence at European level. The jury includes a panel of esteemed members, including Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Unit Research and Innovation at DG Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission. Don't miss this opportunity to promote sustainable land and soil protection. Apply now and make a difference!

[Learn more about the Soil and Land Management Award.](#)

Updates from funded projects

New open call of the HuMUS project



HuMUS has launched an open call with the aim of fostering new spaces of dialogue. A total of €600 000 will be allocated to fund 20 pilot projects. The projects should help municipalities and regions across Europe to better share their experiences. Their aim is to create spaces for dialogue on soil health issues and promote the co-implementation of solutions to societal challenges. The call is open to public authorities at local and regional levels, associations of land managers (e.g., farmers associations), civil society organisations and research institutions throughout Europe. In addition to the funding, HuMUS will provide coaching, mentoring and advice to support like-minded initiatives and contribute to raising awareness about the value of soil.

[Learn more about the call for proposals and apply by 29 February 2024.](#)

PREPSOIL realised new guidelines on establishing Soil Health National Hubs



PREPSOIL has published a set of guidelines on how to establish Soil Health National Hubs (SHNH). SHNHs are fora that bring together relevant stakeholders in a Member State to discuss topics related to soil health. Some of the key tasks of the SHNH are defining and expressing a common national position on soil management, contributing to and learning from ongoing soil research, and ensuring that national and regional soil needs are in line with the activities and projects of the Mission Soil.

[Read more about PREPSOIL's guidelines on SHNH.](#)

SOLO project published multilingual collection of articles on soil biodiversity



To translate knowledge on soils to a wider audience, SOLO's project coordinator iDiv has produced a multilingual collection of children's articles on soil biodiversity. This collaborative endeavour brings together the expertise of more than 50 scientists and young reviewers spanning the globe. Augmenting this reach, ecologists have lent their support by translating these insightful articles into different languages. The project is on the lookout for volunteer translators who would help spread the word about the importance of soil biodiversity.

- [Explore the multilingual collection](#)
- [Join the team of volunteer translators](#)

NBSOIL is helping to unleash the potential of soil-sensing using drones



The Institute of Aviation (ILOT) has gathered high-resolution data from bare soil in Żeliszewki, Poland, using a drone. The information will be used to study soil parameters and their relationship with on-site data. Their tasks were done under the soil-sensing and mapping work package of the NBSOIL project. The aim is to develop algorithms for various applications, including fertilisation, flower detection, disease identification and crop variability. The ILOT team also has plans to collect data in other areas of Poland and Austria.

[Learn more about NBSOIL's work packages](#)

BENCHMARKS co-organised three stakeholder workshops on soil health across Europe



The workshops have covered the issue of soil degradation and its impact on sustainable land management. Drawing together participants from diverse backgrounds, including farmers, private and public sector stakeholders, educators and concerned citizens, these events have offered a unique platform for collectively addressing soil health challenges. The workshops have targeted stakeholders in different countries, like Austria, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

[Learn more about the Benchmarks stakeholder workshops.](#)

Open calls

New Horizon Europe Cluster 6 calls for proposals

The calls for proposals under the 2024 Work Programme (Cluster 6) will be open from 17 October 2023 until end of February 2024. Some of the topics of the 2024 Work Programme relate directly to the Mission Soil's objectives and vision for healthy soils. In particular, this cluster aims at:

- reducing environmental degradation;
- halting and reversing the decline of biodiversity on land, inland waters and sea; and
- better managing natural resources through transformative changes of the economy and society in both urban and rural areas.

The 2024 Work Programme includes 75 new topics proposing over €890 million of EU funding to support the best actions.

As part of these calls, the Commission held info days to promote the call and explain its topics under the 2024 work programme.

The Commission has also published the brochure [Funding opportunities under Horizon Europe - calls 2024](#). The publication highlights funding opportunities for agriculture, forestry and rural areas in Cluster 6 and other parts of the 2024 Horizon Work Programme.

[Learn more about the calls for proposals and the info days.](#)

Events

Past events

[EIT Food Annual Event 2023 – Transforming Food Systems](#) (Riga, 27–28 June 2023)

EIT Food held its 2023 Annual Event, uniting stakeholders across the food innovation community. This year's gathering focused on transforming food systems, and featured a special session dedicated to the Mission Soil and its goals, highlighting the essential role of soils in ensuring sustainable food systems. [EIT signed the Mission Soil Manifesto](#), which was welcomed as an opportunity for cooperation in soil protection and restoration. In addition, through a series of interactive sessions, panel discussions and networking

opportunities, participants discussed how innovation can tackle global food and climate challenges.

2023 Wageningen Soil Conference (Wageningen, 28 August–1 September 2023)

Wageningen University & Research and the International Soil Reference and Information Centre hosted the fifth edition of the Wageningen Soil Conference. The lively event covered topics such as: soils for society, advances in measuring and modelling soil processes, mapping and evaluating soil functions across scales, and soils for nature-based solutions.

European Healthy Soils Conference series: 1st edition – Soil Fertility (Muttentz, 13–15 September 2023)

The inaugural edition of the European Healthy Soils Conference series focused on the pivotal theme of healthy soils within the framework of the European Soil Strategy. Peter Wehrheim (Mission Soil Deputy Manager, DG RTD) presented the Mission Soil in the opening session of this three-day conference. The event brought together soil scientists, industry representatives, agricultural professionals and public sector stakeholders to discuss the crucial role of healthy soils and soil fertility in supporting a functional society, environment, economy and climate.

SOILCON – Ground for future cooperation in Europe (Prague, 18 September)

The conference brought together leading European experts to discuss mission-oriented policies, in particular the Mission Soil, their role in the transition towards healthy soils, and synergies between EU Missions and the EEA and Norway Grants and other instruments.

The conference featured keynote speeches by Orsolya Frizon-Somogyi, Deputy Head of Research and Innovation Unit in DG AGRI, and Mission Soil Board Member Anna Krzywoszynska.

The conference covered a broad scope of topics, addressing not just healthy soils but also clean water and forests. During the conference, researchers had the chance to showcase their projects and engage in matchmaking.

Power to the Peatlands (Antwerp, 19–21 September 2023)

The conference emphasised the revaluation of peatlands as key components of national and international strategies for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and water retention. The conference marked a significant juncture, commemorating the culmination of the [Interreg North-West Europe](#) project [Care-Peat](#). It also heralded the continuation and beginning of new cooperative peatland projects across Europe. The Mission was also featured in a session dedicated to factors enabling a Green Deal for European peatlands.

[OpenLivingLab Days](#) (Barcelona, 21–23 September 2023)

The event featured a diverse range of research sessions, interactive workshops and engaging discussions. Attendees were presented with an exclusive opportunity to learn about the most recent trends and advancements within the Living Labs domain.

The event included a dedicated session on soil health titled 'How living labs and human-centric approach can support the transition to soil health and agroecology?'. Esteemed speakers such as Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Research and Innovation Unit in DG AGRI and Teresa Pinto Correia, Vice Chair of the Mission Soil Board took part in the event, who presented the Mission Soil emphasising the need to increase society's soil literacy and the importance of using innovative solutions in soil management. Many other industry specialists delivered presentations, providing attendees with valuable insights into cutting-edge research findings, methodologies and innovative solutions. The conference also included site visits to local innovation spaces and Living Labs.

[International Forum on Agroecosystem Living Labs](#) (4–6 October 2023)

This international forum was held within the framework of the Adaptation Futures Conference (2–6 October 2023). The event included discussion panels and scientific paper sessions that aimed to establish cutting-edge agricultural practices, share valuable insights from case studies and tackle the challenges faced by the global agroecosystem Living Lab community. Additionally, the forum featured networking opportunities and field tours, fostering dialogue among practitioners, promoting the exchange of innovative ideas, and creating a dynamic platform for collaboration and action. The forum was jointly hosted by the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and France's Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement (INRAE).

The Organic Innovation Days 2023 (Brussels, 25–26 October 2023)

The Organic Innovation Days 2023 is the only EU event on organic and agroecological research and innovation. The theme of this year's edition is 'Citizen-driven transformation of European food systems'. On the first day, the focus will be on the Mission Soil and selected projects and Living Labs, showcasing how organic farming and citizen initiatives can contribute to healthy soils. Besides keynote speakers presenting innovative examples, there will be a high-level panel debate with representatives from the European Commission, followed by a discussion with the audience.

ECOMONDO The green technology expo (Rimini, 7–10 November 2023)

Ecomondo is the leading international event in Europe and the Mediterranean basin for technologies, services and industrial solutions in the green economy and circular economy sectors.

It hosts leading companies in environmental services, solutions, and technologies, covering water management, waste disposal, textiles, bioenergy, soil management and protection, transport, agriculture and sustainable cities. It will feature an extensive programme of conferences, seminars and events including:

- **Second edition of the States General for Soil Health – 'Sustainable carbon cycles – Healthy soils for a climate-neutral economy'** (9 November 2023)

The morning session focused on the latest European policy updates and essential elements supporting a successful soil strategy, including carbon farming and soil data monitoring systems. In the afternoon, the event highlighted national-level actions contributing to the Mission Soil and its goals. Among the speakers, Kerstin Rosenow, Head of Unit Research and Innovation at Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (EC), presented the state of play of the Mission Soil.

Upcoming events

2023 Agroecology Europe Forum (Gyöngyös, 16–18 November 2023)

The 2023 Agroecology Europe Forum brings together hundreds of members of Europe's agroecological community, including farmers, researchers, non-

governmental organisations and policymakers. They discuss important European policy matters, share solutions and address challenges in agriculture and food systems. With a rich and inspiring agenda, the 2023 Forum will focus on soil health and one health, among other topics.

European Mission Soil Week: Leading the transition towards healthy soils

(Madrid, 21–23 November 2023)



The event, organised by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (**DG AGRI** in collaboration with **DG Research and Innovation**), the EU-funded project **PREPSOIL** and the Joint Research Centre - **EU Soil Observatory**, is designed as a major European gathering that brings together the European soil community. Researchers, policymakers, farmers, foresters, spatial planners, landowners and managers, businesses and organisations as well as the general interested public will meet to discuss the challenges for healthy soils. The event will be an opportunity to communicate and disseminate solutions based on the latest research results and innovations for healthy soils. It is also the perfect chance for the Mission Soil Ambassadors and the signatories of the Mission Soil Manifesto to network and exchange ideas.

The event, locally hosted by INIA-CSIC at the central facilities of the Spanish National Research Council (**CSIC**), will take place under the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU. The plenary sessions will be livestreamed, allowing everyone to get involved!

Food 2030 Conference: Green and resilient food systems (Brussels, 4–5 December 2023)

Organised by the European Commission in a hybrid format, the Food2030 conference will highlight the results of initiatives relevant to EU food systems

and examine potential directions for future research and innovation towards sustainable and resilient food systems.

EU Agri-Food Days (Brussels, 6–8 December 2023)

The first ever edition of the EU Agri-Food Days will gather farmers, EU policymakers, business representatives, analysts and digital experts to discuss the outlook of agriculture in Europe, market trends, food security, sustainability, digital technologies and data flows. This event will offer the opportunity to look at current and upcoming challenges in the European agri-food sector and assess how the Common Agricultural Policy and the EU Green Deal can contribute to deliver a greener, fairer and more competitive agriculture in Europe.

- **Agricultural Outlook Conference** (6–7 December 2023): Held within the framework of the EU Agri-Food Days, the EU Agricultural Outlook Conference is the annual event that convenes stakeholders to discuss trends, policies, and market developments. It aims to provide a unique platform for a dialogue between policymakers and the agricultural sector. This year's topic is 'Sowing the future of EU Agriculture'. No prior registration is needed for online attendance.

Resources and Readings

- **Activity update of the Mission Board of European Union on soil health and food**, Cees P. Veerman, *Soil and Environmental Health*, Vol. 1, issue 2, June 2023
- **Factsheet on the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'**, European Commission, DG RTD, July 2023
- **Factsheet on Soil Monitoring Tools to help soil resilience**, European Commission, DG ENV, July 2023
- **The 5C's of soil security guiding realization of ecosystem services in line with the UN-SDGs**, Johan Bouma, *Soil Security* Vol. 12, September 2023

- [Mission Soil Board's view on Soil Health Living Labs under Horizon Europe](#), *Mission Board A Soil Deal for Europe, Register of Commission expert groups, October 2023*

Next Issue: Mission Soil's start-of-2024 update

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