

MANDATE OF THE WORKING GROUP *on Soil Protection* for the period 2021-2022 until the XVII Alpine Conference

1. Introductory remarks

The Working Group contributes to the protection and improvement of the condition of Alpine soils, with special emphasis on climate protection and adaptation to climate change. In doing so, the Working Group is oriented towards site-appropriate and sustainable soil management, economical use of soil and avoidance of soil degradation or soil pollution.

Building up on the results of the 2019-2020 mandate, the long-term activities regarding harmonized databases and permanent monitoring areas must be continued and specified.

On the basis of this work plan, concrete results are to be achieved within this mandate period that contribute to the ongoing implementation of the objectives of the Soil Protection Protocol and long-term strategies of relevant cooperation partners. Successful first steps are important but long-term approaches are required for core aspects of soil protection.

2. Objectives

Description of objectives

1. Develop an Alpine wide concept to coordinate, harmonize and simplify data collection within the Alps and facilitate the establishment of permanent monitoring areas in coordination with national and international surveys and bodies.
2. Intensify exchange and awareness raising on soil protection.
3. Develop a long-term action plan for the implementation of provisions and declarations on soil protection in the specific context of the Alpine region. In this context attention will be paid to the interaction of qualitative and quantitative aspects of soil protection and the effects of climate change.

3. Tasks

Description of outputs

1. Data harmonization and monitoring:
Support the process to establish a network between the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC), the Alpine Convention, Alpine Countries and Regions, as well as other relevant bodies which coordinate and harmonize data collection, management, and evaluation in the course of the LUCAS Soil surveys, with the following concrete results:
 - a. Expert meeting.
 - b. Alpine wide concept for the systematic establishment of monitoring sites, taking into account national and pan-European concerns.
2. Exchange and awareness raising:
 - a. Exchange:
 - i. Support the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP) as a structure of cooperation among Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders in the Alps, e.g. through enlargement of the membership base.

- ii. Contribute to the dissemination of the results of Alpine specific projects regarding soil protection, by means of mailings of summarized information about respective projects in the Alpine languages (French, German, Italian, Slovenian) including links to the respective websites and original English documents at least once a year.
 - iii. Support the development and publication of soil function maps in as many Alpine States and Regions as possible.
 - iv. Contribute to the relevant steps of the implementation pathways (S1, S2) of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050.
- b. Awareness raising:
- i. Alpine Soil Film Tour events in the Alpine States.
 - ii. Possibly further awareness raising events in the Alpine States in their national languages.
 - iii. Translation and dissemination of the FAO's "Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management", with emphasis on aspects specific to the Alps.
3. Long-term action plan:
- a. Long-term action plan with a timeline as basis for future activities, which is agreed to by the Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention.

All outputs have to make sure that the Alpine Convention in general and the Working Group on Soil Protection in particular are more visible, e.g. by using the logo of the Alpine Convention.

Work plan

The Working Group plans 2-3 regular meetings per year with additional meetings if necessary. Meetings should be organized in personal or virtual form as appropriate. For reaching the objectives the following is foreseen:

1. Data harmonization and monitoring: expert meeting (end 2021) and Alpine wide concept.
2. Exchange and awareness raising: information mailings about Alpine projects, supporting soil function maps, contributions to the Alpine Climate Target System 2050, Alpine Soil Film Tour and possibly other events, FAO guidelines.
3. Long-term action plan: development of the long-term action plan.

4. Cooperation

Cooperation with other Working Groups/Boards and partners

The Working Group also refers to other Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention (above all the Working Group on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development, the Alpine Climate Board and the Working Group on Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry) and to the relevant Action Groups of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). Other important partners or points of contact are the JRC, the European Expert Group on Soil Protection, the AlpSP and the European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA) as well as the EU Mission "Soil Health and Food", the EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Working Group will contribute to the implementation of outputs of completed and on-going projects relevant for soil protection in the Alps and animate members of the Group to participate in future projects according to the available resources.

5. Communication

Communication activities of the Working Group

- Systematic communication of activities within the Working Group.
- Dissemination of the results by each member within their respective networks, including national and regional administrations and other relevant stakeholders, preferably also using appropriate instruments to reach out to the public.
- Outreach activities to related processes and identification of future cooperation opportunities, including other Alpine Convention bodies and events, Structural Funds, EU cooperation programmes in relation to soil protection, etc.

6. Link to the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference

Contribution to and coherence with the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference 2017-2022 as well as the Convention and its Protocols

The Working Group contributes to the implementation of the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference for the years 2017-2022 and develops activities e.g. regarding priority 2 "Taking action on climate change", priority 3 "Conserving and valuing biodiversity and landscape" and priority 4 "Greening the economy". Furthermore, the Working Group is willing to contribute to the development of the future Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference.

7. Chair

The chair will be held by Austria.