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Chair European Soil Partnership

Towards a Western Balkan Subregional Soil Partnership



Terms of Reference of the European Soil Partnership (ESP)

➤ Launch: 2nd Global Soil Week 2013 (Berlin communiqué)

➤ Objectives

- following the Global Soil Partnership: to promote sustainable soil management
- to improve governance of the limited soil resources of the region
- to develop awareness and build capacities
- to facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing
- to consolidate regional information about the status of soils, their proper management, and the extent of associated threats to good soil health
- To consider the (global) ecological footprint of Europe for food production

➤ Structure: five “Pillars”, Plenary Meeting, Steering Committee Chair, Secretariat, Working Groups

➤ Regional implementation plan, taking account regional-level priorities and conditions

Members

	2016	2021
Country focal points (+EU)	37	55
Other members	88	149

+ interested ESP partners (non-GSP-members)
Networks interested in and observing the ESP: 50



European Subregional Soil Partnerships

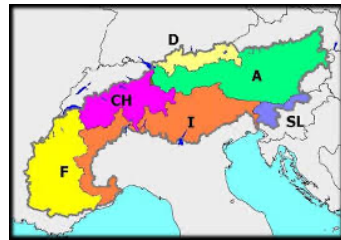
*Biogeographic/
cultural/political
regions*

*Subcontinents/
countries*

EASP



AlpSP



Chair, coordination unit,
5 Pillars with chairs

PyrSP



Chair, vice chair, secretariat
working groups (soil information, soil awareness, soil degradation)

Chair, vice-chair, secretariat,
5 Pillars with chairs

ISP Italian national soil partnership
SPT Slovenian national soil partnership

PSP Portuguese national soil partnership
SSP Slovakian national soil partnership
USP Ukrainian national soil partnership

Products of subregional partnerships

GSP



ESP

EASP

- **Pillar 4:** Sept. 2020: Regional training on national soil Information systems (50 participants)
- **Pillar 1:** Febr. 2021: Webinar “Sustainable Soil Management. Climate Change and Agriculture in the Eurasian Region” (366 participants)
- **Pillar 1:** Book: SSM in the Eurasian Region (Balyuk et al. 2021)
- <https://eurasian-soil-portal.info/>

AlpSP

- **Pillar 1:** Translation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (Slovenian and German)
- **Pillar 2:** Newsletter (200 soil partners)
- **Pillar 2:** Preparation of the portable soil monolith (Climate Alliance Tyrol)
- **Pillar 2:** <https://alpinesoils.eu/> (incl. repository of best practices)
- **Pillar 3:** Aug 2021: Eurosoil 2021/session “Understanding and managing mountain soils, and related ecosystem services”
- **Pillar 2:** Nov. 2021: Alpine SOILutions Congress for university students
- **Pillar 2-5:** 2022: Towards the **Act4Soils proposal** - a new Alpine soil project

PyrSP

- Launched 27 May 2021
- PyrSP as a Pyrenean soil alliance, based on a regionalized World Soil Charter

Current activities and challenges of ESP members

Implementation Plan:

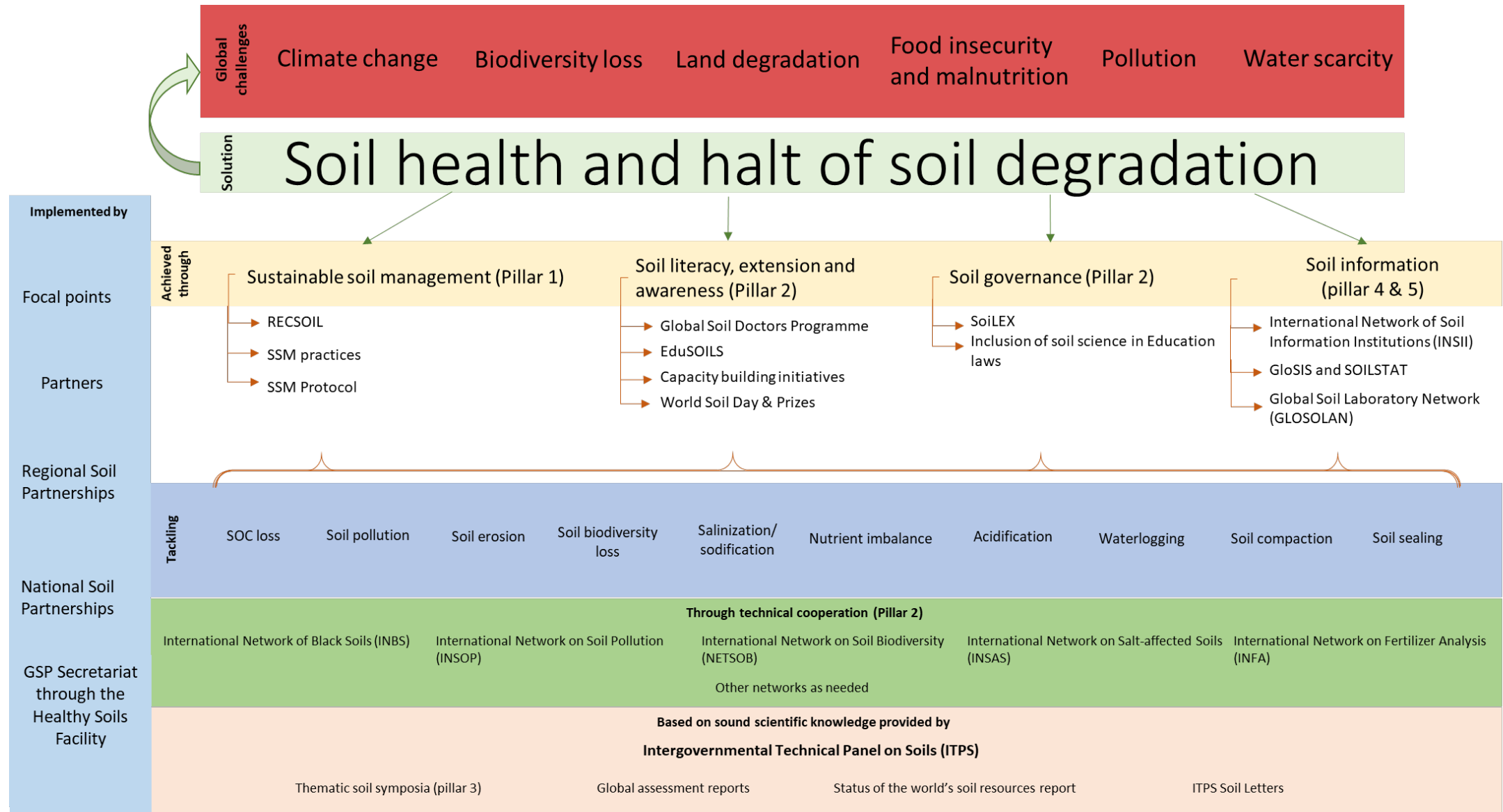
GSP data products:

- Soil **monitoring** (LUCAS-Soil, stock taking of national soil monitoring (EJP Soil project); **indicators and thresholds** (EEA/Eionet))
- **European Soil Condition Assessment**
- **EU Soil Observatory (JRC)**

Policies and research:

- Green Deal (zero pollution, fertilizer and pesticide reductions, ecosystem degradation and restoration, soil protection), LULUCF, agriculture/forest policies (e.g. carbon farming)
- Research consortia (EJP Soil, Holisoil, SIEUSOIL, etc.) and integrated research planning (Mission Board Soil Health and Food)

Global Soil Partnership Action Framework (2022-2030)



Challenges related to soils in the Western Balkans

GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS 2021-2030:

“The main challenge in the Western Balkans is land degradation, mostly occurring due to landslides, erosion, contamination, unsustainable agriculture, land conversion and improper land use. Substandard storage of chemicals from industrial activities is the predominant source of soil contamination in the region, while illegal disposal practices are widespread”.

Soil degradation in the Western Balkans

- Steep erosion-prone terrain
- High natural (lithological) metal content in some soils
- Soil pollution (overuse of fertilizers and pesticides, poor quality of irrigation water, inadequate waste disposal; industrial and mining activities, urban expansion)
- Irregular and inadequate agricultural practices are common; privatization of agricultural land affects its intensification; unplanned and illegal forest clearance and fires

Vidojevic, D. (2021). State of the art of soil management in the western Balkans. Regional assessment.

Technical/products:

- Regional soil information system (“Soils without borders”)
- Soil map 1:250,000
- Indicators/LDN

Building the capacities of the existing institutions (administration and research)

Common challenges:

- lack of professional expertise
- insufficient level of personal and institutional capacities (equipment, procedures)



Context for a SubRSP in the Western Balkans

Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-Eastern Europe (SWG)

Project “Agriculture Policy Dialog Germany – Western Balkan”.



Regional Expert Advisory Working Groups (REAWG) on soil management

EU macro-regional strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

DG NEAR H2020 project “EU4Green”

EEA/DG NEAR “Soil project”

EIONET NFP/Thematic Groups
GSP/ESP Focal Points
WHO Europe (CS and health)

ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOFIA DECLARATION ON THE **GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS 2021-2030**

Action 42 “Integrate soil protection in other policy areas and establish a **regional soil partnership** to improve knowledge exchange and identify examples of best practices for soil protection from pollution and degradation”

Area 3: Depolluting air, water and soil
Area 4: Building sustainable agriculture and food systems
Area 5: Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems



Steps towards a SubRSP in the Western Balkans

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Challenges in the region ✓ |  | Scope, objectives |
| 2. Partnering ✓ |  | Initiative, responsibility, governance (structure) |
| 3. Communique |  | Launch event |
| 4. Network building |  | Cooperation, outreach |
| 5. Projects/products |  | Funding |