

## AquaConSoil Keynote Q&A - Mirco Barbero – DG ENV – February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Question Asked	Answer Given
How interacts the Green Deal with the Biodiversity Strategy?	The Biodiversity Strategy towards 2030 is part of the European Green Deal. Please visit <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en">https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en</a> (especially the action plan). The European Green Deal was communicated by the Commission on 11 December 2019. The new Biodiversity Strategy towards 2030 was adopted by the Commission on 20 May 2020 and announced the update of the Soil Thematic Strategy in 2021.
How will the strategy be translated into legislation?	The new Soil Strategy will be a self-standing communication of the Commission that does not necessarily need to be translated into legislation. A strategy may propose specific actions such as the evaluation or revision of existing legislation or the initiative to propose new legislation. The Soil Thematic Strategy of 2006 was a specific case in which the strategy, the proposal and impact assessment for a Soil Framework Directive were all adopted together at the same day. This is not planned this time.
Do the EU seriously link to LDN	The EU and its Member States have all adopted and approved the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and the target to strive to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030. The EC has committed to the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors <a href="https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_33/SR_DESERTIFICATION_EN.pdf">https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_33/SR_DESERTIFICATION_EN.pdf</a> . The ECA follows up the implementation of the recommendations.
How will you deal with all the differences between countries in the uses of soil (such as some countries that clean soil to reuse it whereas others just dump it somewhere). The differences in the kinds of soil etc.	It is correct that there is a lot of variability between soils and soil types in the EU and between the national regimes and rules that are applied in the Member States. The purpose is not to address all differences in detail but to work on commonalities and to provide an overarching framework
What is your definition of soil biodiversity?	The European Union is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity which defined soil biodiversity as "the variation in soil life, from genes to

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	communities, and the ecological complexes of which they are part, that is from soil micro-habitats to landscapes".
Will the new Soil strategy also support remediation technologies which could help remediate polluted garden soils, since urban gardening and local production of vegetables is a new trend?	At this stage, we can say that one of the proposed objectives of the Soil Strategy is to progress in identifying and remediating contaminated sites and address diffuse contamination, but it is too early to say what it will contain exactly.
will soil in this project been protected also from increasing cementification?	"Cementification" is included in the concept of land take. As said, addressing land take and soil sealing is one of the proposed objectives of the new Soil Strategy.
How do you see the interaction of the new soil strategy with the EJP SOIL programme	As one of the actions in the EU Research Policy, EJP SOIL is also intended to support and contribute to the EU Soil Policy objectives. Research, innovation and knowledge development will continue to be an important enabler in the new Soil Strategy.
The remediation of brownfields is also concern of this project?	Yes, one of the objectives of the new Soil Strategy will be to progress in identifying and remediating contaminated sites and address diffuse contamination.
FAO-GSP VGSSM as well as CAP focus on agricultural soils. How are other sectors involved?	As said, the scope of the Soil Strategy is intended to cover all EU soils and terrestrial land cover types.
The meaning of soil fertility is at the base. The definition given by VGSSM is sufficiently good for us?	For this kind of assessments we rely on expert judgement.
Are there links between the soil strategy objectives and the EU Chemicals Strategy, in terms of limiting harmful pesticides?	The Chemicals Strategy aims to protect human health and the environment from the risks of chemicals by promoting their safe and sustainable production and use. It aims to tackle pollution by chemicals at source in order to move towards a toxic-free and zero pollution environment. Both strategies are linked because despite all prevention measures chemicals sometimes still end up in the environment and the soil. One of the objectives of the Soil Strategy will be to progress in identifying and remediating contaminated sites and address diffuse contamination.
Can you elaborate more on the connection between the CAP and the soil strategy? The new CAP just came out (if I am not mistaken) and once more	The Soil Strategy will cover all terrestrial land use and land cover types and thus also agricultural soils. Therefore, it will take into account the CAP, the

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actions towards soil protections are not mandatory and therefore not really working	results of its evaluations and the outcome of the ongoing co-decision procedure.
Which Nature based solutions will be considered for active soil restoration?	At this stage it is difficult to specifically answer at such level of detail.
How to tackle environmentally damaging subsidies?	At this stage it is difficult to specifically answer at such level of detail.
What was the greatest success of the soil thematic strategy and the greatest shortcoming, and how did these two findings inform the current soil policy	In 2012, the European Commission published a policy report on the implementation of the Strategy and ongoing activities (COM(2012)046, <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0046">https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0046</a> ). The greatest achievement of the Soil Thematic Strategy was the successful integration and mainstreaming of soil protection considerations across all policy sectors. The main shortcoming was the failure to adopt the Soil Framework Directive. The new Soil Strategy will build further on the experiences and lessons learnt from the first Soil Thematic Strategy. However, as explained the update of the Strategy has been triggered by the new ambition of the European Green Deal.
Is one of the pillars in a new EU soil strategy also the possibility to extract critical raw materials? We know that last year the EU Commission announced actions to make EU raw materials supply more secure and sustainable? For example the small-arm military and recreational shooting ranges receive a significant input of Antimuonium one of the elements on the list of Critical Raw Materials in 2020?	Indeed, the extraction of raw materials can have a significant impact on the environment and on soil quality. As explained, the strategy is intended to address 6 main objectives. At this stage it is difficult to go in further details.
Can you please tell again the name of the web platform where polluted sites are listed. Thanks	It was said as an example that Flanders has a GIS system that makes public certain information on (potentially) contaminated sites : <a href="https://services.ovam.be/ovam-geoloketten/#/bodemdossier?x=140410&amp;y=198535&amp;z=10.0000000000000007">https://services.ovam.be/ovam-geoloketten/#/bodemdossier?x=140410&amp;y=198535&amp;z=10.0000000000000007</a> More specific information about soil quality and contamination is also communicated on a soil certificate.
What is your biggest concern for realizing the necessary, but ambitious, goals? And how can our international soil community contribute to it?	One concern, as expressed during the webinar, is that voluntary efforts may be not enough to achieve the objectives. The international soil community can contribute and provide ideas by filling in the open public consultation on the Soil Strategy

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	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/commission-consults-new-eu-soil-strategy-2021-02-02_en">https://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/commission-consults-new-eu-soil-strategy-2021-02-02_en</a>
<p>How ecosystem services of soils are addressed and is it planned to think about financial compensation to keep soil performance?</p>	<p>All the proposed objectives address ecosystem services. A report on soil ecosystem services can be found in <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/index_en.htm">https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/ecosystem_assessment/index_en.htm</a> As said, several options are taken into consideration.</p>
<p>there do exist guidelines on how to deal with excavated soil</p>	<p>Excavated soils are legally covered at EU level under the Waste Framework Directive. It would be great if you could provide for the hyperlink to these guidelines. <i>(we can forward emails to mr Barbero , please mail to <a href="mailto:aquaconsoil@deltares.nl">aquaconsoil@deltares.nl</a>)</i></p>
<p>How do you see the role of societal actors in achieving healthier soils? How could legislation on producer responsibility for example relate to the Soil Thematic Strategy?</p>	<p>At this stage, citizens are called to participate to the definition of the Soil Strategy by participating to the open public consultation <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation">https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation</a>. The definition of the Soil Strategy will take into account those elements. Accelerating the transition towards sustainable soil management and the necessary behavioural change clearly requires the involvement and contribution of all stakeholders.</p>
<p>In the implementations, how do you connect to the society, getting people to own these initiatives in order for them to incorporate the ideals in their daily practice</p>	<p>Public participation and stakeholder consultation are foreseen during the preparatory phase of the Soil Strategy. Accelerating the transition towards sustainable soil management and the necessary behavioral change will be a specific goal of the Soil Strategy and clearly requires the involvement and contribution of all stakeholders.</p>
<p>The EU took legislative steps in the Landfill Directive to ban landfilling and promote recycling. It has been very successful and provided the proper incentive for recycling facilities. What is your opinion regarding a similar legislation banning excavation of contaminated soil in order to promote sustainable in-situ treatment and recycling land?</p>	<p>Banning the excavation of contaminated soil would be very radical. Excavation of soil contamination should remain one of the possible options in the whole gamma of remediation techniques. In some cases, excavation is the only option available to eliminate risks for the environment and human health. Banning the excavation of contaminated soil would also have a significant impact on the construction and building sector (cfr. the PFAS case in the NL).</p>

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a part of soil degradation by Europeans takes place outside of Europe? Is this also addressed in the Soil Strategy?	International cooperation is a cross-cutting element mentioned during the webinar and will be covered in the Soil Strategy, as indicated in the Roadmap.
How does the EU soil observatory plan to work with Member State soil observatories?	The EU Soil Observatory will be co-designed and implemented together with Member States to support the development and maintenance of a single coherent system for monitoring, reporting and verification of soil condition. The EUSO will establish a closer integration between existing pan-European monitoring instruments (e.g. the LUCAS Soil Module) and national programmes in EU countries to improve the population of performance indicators. Member States will be part of the governance structure of the Observatory.
realizing all the ambitions will need cooperation between government agencies, research-institutes/universities and private sector parties. How can this be facilitated and stimulated by EU programmes?.	At this stage it is difficult to say what the Strategy will propose, but development of knowledge, research and innovation, and the provision of sufficient EU funding will continue to be an important enabler in the new Soil Strategy.
could you tell a little bit more about how you see the implementation? which actions are planned?	The implementation will be the realization of the actions that will be defined in the Strategy to achieve the proposed objectives.
How can we contribute when the soil strategy will be launched?	Before the launch we kindly ask to give your input via the consultation on the STS <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation">https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation</a> . After the adoption of the Strategy, the proposed actions will indicate which contributions are sought.
can the questions be used as input for the consultation?	The questionnaire for the public consultation is already defined and available here: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation">https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-New-EU-Soil-Strategy-healthy-soil-for-a-healthy-life/public-consultation</a>