

**ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE
Soil Protection Working Group
FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2024
(BETWEEN THE XVII AND XVIII MEETINGS OF THE ALPINE CONFERENCE)**

1. Overview of the mandate given by the XVII Alpine Conference

Summary of the objectives according to the 2023-2024 mandate

Fostering especially the following activities proposed within the Long-Term Action Plan for the implementation of provisions and declarations on soil protection in the specific context of the Alpine region:

1. Continue to tackle economical and prudent use of soil in the Alps.
2. Underline the importance of moor protection.
3. Continue the efforts regarding comparable soil data.
4. Raise awareness on the importance of soils, soil fertility and on avoiding degradation.
5. Improve soil literacy, awareness and exchange in the Alps.

The Group was chaired by Austria.

2. Meetings

Summary of the meetings held (date, place, main topics and milestones)

The Soil Protection Working Group met eight times during the mandate period. Two meetings took place on site, the others online. In these meetings, all topics foreseen by the mandate were tackled.

- 7 November 2022 online (originally planned in Innsbruck (AT)): the process towards defining the activities for the implementation of every mandate item was started. This included presentations of the new Austrian Soil Strategy and two good practice examples regarding peatland as well as a discussion about LUCAS soil.
- 15 February 2023 online: The meeting included a presentation of the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and continued the joint reflection on advancing all mandate items by presentations, updates and discussions.
- 2-4 May 2023 in Benediktbeuern (DE): the meeting was focused on Alpine moors (significant steps in developing the moor statement, presentations of good moor practices and a moor excursion), furthermore the concept for national workshops “soil protection in spatial planning” was agreed upon. Updates on LUCAS soil, LUCASSA I, the Horizon Europe Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe” and various conferences and events were given. The translation of the LTAP into the Alpine languages was organised.
- 27-28 September 2023 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT): the first draft of the moor statement was discussed. Key messages for the national workshops were shared as well as the invitation for the online preparation meeting for the organising national experts (on 16 October 2023). Updates on a future FAO publication on sustainable soil management in mountain regions and the EU Soil Monitoring Law were given. The handling of soil monitoring after the devastating floods in Slovenia in August 2023 was presented. Various awareness raising events and the possibility of an Alpine Soil of the

Year were discussed. Related events, projects and EUSALP Action Group 6 were presented. The current state of play regarding the “handling of soil during construction processes (planning, excavation, storage, recultivation)” was discussed as an additional topic. Furthermore, an excursion on river renaturation had been organised.

- 16 November 2023, short online meeting: Further steps concerning the moor statement were taken. The preparation workshop for the national events was reported and the planning for 3 national events were presented. Furthermore, seven events/activities for World Soil Day in the Alpine Countries were presented (in Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria).
- 21 February 2024 online: as a new regular agenda item “tour de table on relevant news” was included and various updates were given. The updated moor statement was discussed with focus on the definition of “peatland”. The first national event “Soil protection in spatial planning”-in Slovenia had been a success and the other countries gave updates. Updates were as well given on the EU Directive on Soil Monitoring, the Nature Restoration Law, the soil relevant Interreg Alpine Space project proposals and the ongoing project Forest Eco Value. First ideas for a future mandate were collected.
- 5 June 2024 online (originally planned in the EU JRC in Ispra (IT, EU)): various updates were given by all members including first insights into the future Italian Presidency and developments regarding the EU Soil Monitoring Law. The moor statement was finalised. The national soil protection in spatial planning events in Austria and France had as well been successful, the concretised planning of the German event was presented. The translations of the LTAP into the Alpine languages were finalised. Further ideas for the future mandate were collected and discussed. An exchange about soil biodiversity took place, during which Germany and the EU presented their activities. Lastly, the LIFE project “Future Forest” was presented.
- 22 July 2024, short online meeting: the purpose of this meeting was the discussion of the future mandate for the Working Group.

3. Activities carried out

Activities carried out with their outputs and results, highlighting their contributions to the relevant priorities of the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023-2030](#)

- Presentations and exchanges within the Working Group regarding the provision of statistical data e.g. on land-consumption and soil sealing continued.
- The statement on the importance of moor protection in the Alps was prepared and exchange about best practice examples e. g. on substitution of peat products, rewetting measures was undertaken within the Group.
- The cooperation on data issues with the JRC was continued, especially regarding the development of the EU Soil Monitoring Law, involvement on the future LUCAS was not as relevant, as it will be prepared at a later stage depending on the EU Soil Monitoring Law.
- Coaching events in Alpine Countries for spatial planners about the importance of the soil ecosystem services and the necessity to consider data on soil functions in spatial planning processes took place in Slovenia, Austria, France and Germany. The framework of the event series had been prepared together with the Working Group Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development.
- Participation or active contribution to relevant events and conferences took place as presented under “4. Cooperation”. After the Alpine Soil Newsletter 1/2023 had been sent in April 2023 the Alpine Soil Newsletter could not be continued in this working phase due to the discontinuation of capacities of the Alpine Soil Partnership coordination unit.

- The Long-Term Action Plan for the implementation of provisions and declarations on soil protection in the specific context of the Alpine region was translated into the Alpine languages to ease the active use of it within the Alpine States and to foster the implementation activities of the foreseen actions, which also support the MAP 2023-2023 priorities biodiversity, climate action and quality of life.

4. Cooperation

Cooperation developed with other Alpine Convention bodies and further relevant partners and processes, and resulting benefits

- In cooperation with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group, the national coaching events on soil protection in spatial planning were fostered and implemented in four countries.
- The Working Group contributed to the workshop “Biodiversity and Land Use Planning” in celebration of the World Soil Day which was organised by Italy and the Alpine Biodiversity Board. It took place in a hybrid form (Rome/online) on 4 December 2023.
- The project consortium of the new Interreg Alpine Space project on soil “SOIL:OurInvisibleAlly” cooperated actively with the Working Group during its development phase.
- Together with the Alpine Soil Partnership the Alpine Soil Newsletter 1/2023 has been sent out in April 2023.
- Content contributions for the publication “Manual for the Sustainable Management of Mountain Soils” (not yet published) developed by the Mountain Partnership, FAO and other partners were organised via the Working Group.
- During the 5th meeting of the Pyrenean Soil Partnership on 3 July 2023 the Alpine Convention and activities in scope of soil protection were presented.
- The Alpine Convention was present during the World Soil Day event of the Slovenian Soil Partnership on 5 December 2023.
- An exchange was started with the German Soil of the Year initiative regarding the future, international tendencies and the possibility of an Alpine involvement.

5. Communication

Communication measures and outreach activities carried out, specifying their respective target groups

- Systematic communication of activities within the Working Group during the meetings and individual communication related to certain activities and tasks took place. Over 45 group emails kept the members up to date.
- Sharing relevant activities of the Working Group and dissemination of the results by each member within their respective networks, including national and regional administrations and other relevant stakeholders, was mainly done in scope of the coaching events on soil protection in spatial planning. To enable a better dissemination and use of the document, the LTAP was translated into the Alpine languages. Thus, the dissemination of Working Group products can be fostered even more during the future working phase.
- Outreach activities to related processes was done as outlined above. Furthermore, the Alpine Soil Newsletter 1/2023 was sent in April 2023 and soil awareness raising events were organised around World Soil Day in: Italy (Rome/online and Aosta), Slovenia, Austria (Vienna and Innsbruck) and events/materials in Switzerland.

6. Attachments

List of the documents attached to this report, such as papers proposed for approval by the XVIII Alpine Conference (thematic reports, guidelines, statements etc.) and supporting documents (workshop proceedings, survey reports, communication materials etc.).

- *Statement: Preserving moors in the Alps*
- *Promoting soil protection through spatial planning in the Alpine States – National Workshops: summary and event reports*
- *Long-Term Action Plan for the implementation of provisions and declarations on soil protection in the specific context of the Alpine region in English, French, German, Italian, Slovenian*