

## Preparing the Soil Deal for Europe Mission: the PREPSOIL project kicks-off

**The recently awarded Horizon Europe project “PREPSOIL – Preparing for the Soil Deal for Europe Mission” will raise awareness and knowledge on soil health through the interaction, knowledge sharing and co-learning on the role of healthy soils for our society. Driven by a vibrant consortium of 19 partners at the forefront of European and national initiatives in soil, the project starts on 1st of July aiming at supporting the EU Mission on Soil Health.**

The Mission states that the lack of knowledge and awareness of the importance of long-term soil health for land managers, industries, consumers and society at large is a major driver of soil degradation and affects its capacity to provide the ecosystem services crucial for our planet and society. With a current estimation that between 60 and 70% of the European soils are unhealthy, the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe<sup>1</sup>” introduces a novel approach to the transition towards healthy soils by 2030, based on Open Science and strong stakeholder and citizen engagement.

According to the EU Mission statement, raising awareness and knowledge on soil health is key to the success of the Soil Deal, as i) more people will identify themselves as soil stewards, and ii) managers and authorities will have the necessary knowledge to improve practice and implement effective actions.

The Horizon Europe project **Preparing for the Soil Deal for Europe Mission (PREPSOIL)** is primed to support implementation of the Mission in the first three years (2022– 2025). This will be through (i) the co-creation and roll out of tools and spaces for interaction, knowledge-sharing and co-learning in soil health, and (ii) stocktaking and dialogues to understand how regional ‘soil needs’ assessment, supported by harmonised monitoring mechanisms, can then lead to action in Living Labs (LLs) and Light Houses (LHs) for soil health.

- *“PREPSOIL will act as an important support tool for the implementation of the Soil Mission by providing the adequate tools, knowledge and spaces for its rollout, addressing specific stakeholder needs with activities on the ground across regions and levels of governance” - says the coordinator of PREPSOIL, Niels Halberg from Aarhus University.*

PREPSOIL will support the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Soil Mission and maximise its potential via three key impact pathways:

### **Soil literacy and awareness to citizens/society at large**

Stimulating interest and raising awareness of society-at-large on soil issues can leverage public and private stakeholders to take action on soil health. The wide geographical reach of

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2021) A Soil Deal for Europe: 100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030, Implementation Plan

PREPSOIL and purposefully designed activities in multiple locations will engage stakeholders at a local/regional level, embracing the principle of improved co-learning and communication through mechanisms taking place among peers within a community or among communities.

### **Improving the knowledge base and access to critical information of land managers on soil health**

A robust knowledge base and easy access to soil health information and advisory services are crucial for public and private managers in all land use types to take effective action. PREPSOIL will create a one-stop-shop for soil information as a multi-lingual knowledge hub, providing a single-entry point to soil literacy information linked to national and regional websites and platforms in multiple languages. Co-learning and continuous education mechanisms for soil practitioners will also be explored with case studies, from different regions and sectors. This will help identify the co-learning needs and guide future efforts towards vocational, professional and life-long learning systems.

### **Preparing and supporting effective mission deployment by establishing an overview of soil needs**

Success for the Soil Mission will also depend on interaction and knowledge exchange between many different types of stakeholders (e.g. farmers, landowners, water boards, companies, schools, students, citizens/consumers and more) at the European, national and regional/local levels. PREPSOIL will make a significant contribution to this by establishing structures such as the Stakeholder Innovation Group, the Soil Health National Mission Hubs, the EU network of companies, the European soil Living Labs & Lighthouse coordination network, and municipalities and regions.

Finally, PREPSOIL will address the challenges of multilevel governance envisaged by the Mission. This includes support to innovative science to policy advice approaches contributing to successful implementation and supporting several EU policy and international commitments. These are ranging from land degradation neutrality, food and nutrition security to biodiversity, such as the EU Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Soil Thematic Strategy and several Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030 from United Nations.

### **About the project**

PREPSOIL “Preparing for the ‘Soil Deal for Europe’ Mission” is a Coordination and Support Action funded by the European Commission Horizon Europe programme (HORIZON-MISS-2021-SOIL-01). Coordinated by Aarhus University, PREPSOIL is supported by 18 other partners, including the EC Joint Research Centre, representing 12 EU Member States and Associated Countries. The project officially started on 1st of July 2022 and will run for 36 months.

The PREPSOIL website can be found at [www.prepsoil.eu](http://www.prepsoil.eu)

### **For further information**

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