

Soil monitoring and resilience (Soil Monitoring Law)

2023/0232(COD) - 20/03/2024 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Martin HOJSÍK (Renew, SK) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law).

The committee responsible recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the proposal as follows:

Objective

The objective of the Directive is to put in place a **clear, solid, coherent and flexible framework for soil monitoring** and assessment for all soils across the EU in order to continuously improve soil health in the Union with the view to achieve healthy soils by 2050 and maintain soils in healthy condition and prevent their deterioration.

The proposed Directive, therefore, establishes a framework within which Member States are required to put in place measures that are technically feasible and based on a cost-benefit analysis, with a view to achieving healthy soils by 2050. It lays down measures on monitoring, maintaining, improving, rehabilitating and assessing soil health, based on its ecological status.

Soil districts

The Commission should support Member States in ensuring that their soil districts cooperate on a **cross-border basis** and should facilitate harmonisation of monitoring systems, transfer functions, monitoring design and classification of ecological status at the level of the soil descriptors listed in Annex I.

Soil health and land take monitoring framework

Member States should monitor soil health and land take in each soil district. Member States shall make use of the expertise of national research institutes, existing national monitoring systems and available data. The monitoring activities carried out by the Member States should not result in a financial burden for the land managers.

Assessment of the soil health

Member States shall ensure that assessments of soil ecological status are performed at least every 6 years and that the first assessment is performed by 5 years after date of entry into force of the Directive, accompanied by reports on relative improvement, trends, progress or regression.

Sustainable Soil Management Toolbox

A new article is introduced concerning the establishment, by the Commission, of a sustainable soil management toolbox providing soil managers with practical information on the use of sustainable soil management practices, which includes information provided by the Member States.

The toolbox should be publicly available free of charge and be included in the digital soil health data portal.

Identification of potentially contaminated sites

The amended text stated that when identifying the potentially contaminated sites Member States should take into account the following criteria:

- any areas used for the abstraction of drinking water;
- occurrence of any disease that is presumed to be linked to exposure to contamination via the soil.

Risk assessment and management of contaminated sites

The report stated that potentially contaminated sites located in areas used for the abstraction of water for human consumption should be prioritised for soil investigation.

Union financing

Given the priority inherently attached to the establishment of soil monitoring and sustainable management and regeneration of soils, by 12 months from the entry into force of this Directive, the Commission should submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council evaluating the financial resources available at Union level for the implementation of this Directive.

Members proposed that **additional financial resources** should be put in place for the post-2027 period in order to promote the sustainable management of soils, their permanent regeneration and monitoring activities.

Furthermore, Members wish to engage the European Investment Bank to facilitate the use of innovative mechanisms and the Do No Significant Harm principle to be observed as general rule.

European Union Soil Observatory (EUSO) Forum

The amended text included a new article concerning the EUSO Forum which should facilitate the coordinated implementation of Union law and policies related to soil health monitoring and the improvement of soil health, inter alia by exchange of experience and good practices, including on sustainable soil management and regeneration practices, as well as exchange of experience on soil management practices to be avoided.

Evaluation and review

From eight years from the date of entry into force of this Directive and every five years thereafter, the Commission should report on the implementation of this Directive including the measures necessary to comply with this Directive taken by Member States. The report should include an overall assessment of the progress made towards achieving healthy soils.