



2021/0000(RSP)

3.2.2021

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B9-0123/2021

pursuant to Rule 136(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on Soil protection
(2021/0000(RSP))

Pernille Weiss, Maria Arena, Martin Hojsík, Manuela Ripa, Alexandr Vondra, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz

on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

B9-0000/2021

**European Parliament resolution on Soil protection
(2021/0000(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 191 thereof,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 12 December 2019 on climate change,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 on Biodiversity - the need for urgent action,
- having regard to Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 ‘Living well, within the limits of our planet’ (the ‘7th EAP’) and its vision up to 2050,
- having regard to Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage,
- having regard to Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control),
- having regard to Council Directive 86/278/EEC of 12 June 1986 on the protection of the environment, and in particular of the soil, when sewage sludge is used in agriculture,
- having regard to Directive 2009/128/EC of 21 October 2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides, and its subsequent amendments,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on mercury, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1102/2008,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2018/841 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry in the 2030 climate and energy framework,
- having regard to the Commission’s political guidelines for 2019-2024, in particular to the zero-pollution ambition for Europe,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640),

- having regard to the Commission proposal on General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 (for a 8th Environment Action Programme - EAP) (COM(2020)0652)
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives’ (COM(2020)0380),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system’ (COM(2020)0381),
- having regard to the Commission report on “The implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy and ongoing activities” (COM(2012)0046),
- having regard to the Commission Communication Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (COM(2011)0571),
- having regard to the Commission Communication “A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe” (COM(2020)0098),
- having regard to the Commission Communication “Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability Towards a Toxic-Free Environment” (COM(2020)0667),
- having regard to Commission communication ‘Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection’ (COM(2002)0179),
- having regard to the Guidelines on best practices to limit, mitigate or compensate soil sealing (SWD(2012) 101 final/2),
- having regard to its resolution of 19 November 2003 on the Commission communication ‘Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection’,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 November 2007 on the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection (2006/2293(INI)),
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 November 2019 on Climate and Environment Emergency,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 the European Green Deal ([2019/2956\(RSP\)](#)),
- having regard to its resolution of 13 November 2007 on the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection ([2006/2293\(INI\)](#)),
- having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 19 January 2013 on

‘Implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy’¹,

- having regards to the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the "Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection" (COM(2002)0179)²,
 - having regard to European Court of Auditors special report no. 33/2018 entitled ‘Combating desertification in the EU: a growing threat in need of more action’,
 - having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and particularly Sustainable Development Goal 15 on protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss,
 - having regard to the Agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),
 - having regard to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD),
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD),
 - having regard to the Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration published by the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on 23 March 2018,
 - having regard to the European Environment Agency (EEA) report of 4 December 2019 entitled ‘The European environment - state and outlook 2020’ (SOER 2020),
 - having regard to “the State of Soil in Europe” report by the Commission and the Joint Research Centre (SOER 2010) published in 2012,
 - having regard to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) special report on Climate Change and Land published on 8 August 2019;
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the Oral Questions to the Council and the Commission on the Soil protection³ (O-xxxx – B9-0123/2021),
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
- A. whereas soil is an essential, complex, multifunctional, and living ecosystem of crucial environmental and socio-economic importance which performs many key functions and

¹ OJ C 17, 19.1.2013, p. 37-44

² OJ C 061, 14.3.2003, p. 49-52

³ O [000XXX/YYYY] and O [000XXX/YYYY]

delivers services vital to human activities and ecosystems survival;

- B. whereas soil plays a central role as a habitat and gene pool as it hosts 25% of the world biodiversity, provides key ecosystem services such as the provision of food, provides raw materials, carbon sequestration, water purification, nutrient regulation, pest control, and serves as a platform for human activity and helps preventing floods and droughts;
- C. whereas, both in the EU and globally, land and soil continue to be degraded by a wide range of human activities, such as poor land management, land use change, unsustainable agricultural practices, pollution, forestry practices, construction activities and soil sealing, climate change, often combined with other factors, thus threatening their capacities to provide ecosystem services;
- D. whereas several key threats to the soil have been identified in the EU such as: erosion, floods and landslides, loss of soil organic matter, salinisation, contamination, compaction, sealing, and loss of soil biodiversity, acidification, desertification; whereas most of these threats are not addressed in existing European legislation;
- E. whereas soil protection in Europe is currently derived from the protection of other environmental resources and threats and is fragmented among many policy instruments that lack coordination and which are often non-binding, both at the EU and Member States level;
- F. whereas voluntary national initiatives and existing national measures are important for achieving the objective of greater soil protection, but have proved in the past to be insufficient to prevent its further degradation;
- G. whereas the lack of a comprehensive, adequate, coherent and integrated EU legal framework for protecting Europe's land and soil resources has been identified as a key gap that contributes to the continuous degradation of many soils within the Union, reduces the effectiveness of the existing incentives and measures, and limits Europe's ability to achieve its environmental, sustainable development and climate-related agenda and international commitments;
- H. whereas soil is mostly privately owned in the EU, while at the same time it is a common good that delivers food and essential ecosystem services for the whole society and nature;
- I. whereas soil and land degradation has inherent transboundary aspects linked for example to climate change and pollution that require response at the EU level;
- J. whereas a coherent and adequate EU soil protection policy is a prerequisite in order to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, and in particular, climate neutrality objective, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity strategy and the zero-pollution ambition and other main environmental and societal challenges;
- 1. Emphasizes the importance of protecting soil and promoting healthy soils in the Union, having in view that the degradation of this living organism and non-renewable resource continues, in spite of limited action in some Member States; stresses the costs of

inaction on soil degradation, with estimates in the Union exceeding €50 billion per year⁴;

2. Underlines the multifunctional role of soil (provision of food, carbon pool, platform for human activities, biomass production, biodiversity pool, source of raw materials, pharmaceuticals and generic resources, water and nutrients cycling, storage and filtering, storing geological and archaeological heritage, etc.) and the need to preserve it;
4. Stresses that healthy soils are essential to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal such as climate neutrality, biodiversity restoration, zero pollution, healthy and sustainable food systems and a resilient environment;
5. Welcomes the inclusion of soil protection and restoration within the thematic priority objectives of the 8th Environment Action Programme;
6. Recognizes the variability of soils in the Union and the need for different solutions to ensure their protection through joint efforts at Union and Member States level, taking into consideration the transboundary impacts of soil and land degradation;
7. Stresses that soil, which is a common resource, is unlike air or water not covered by specific legislation; welcomes, consequently, the Commission ambition to propose a coherent and integrated EU soil protection framework;
8. Calls on the Commission to design an EU-wide common legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of soil, addressing all main soil threats, that shall include, inter alia, common definitions of soil and soil functions and criteria for its good status, objectives, indicators, including harmonised indicators to monitor soil quality and reporting, measurable targets to tackle all identified threats and appropriate timelines (based on an impact assessment) taking into consideration "first mover" efforts, while ensuring integration with relevant policy instruments; and provide for training and sharing of best practice as well as adequate control measures;
9. Points out that the common framework shall also consist of provisions regarding the mapping of risk areas and of contaminated sites and brownfield sites, and decontamination of contaminated sites; calls on the Commission and Member states to apply the polluter pays principle and to propose a mechanism for the remediation of orphan sites;
10. Calls on the Commission to include in this common framework measures on prevention and/or minimisation of soil sealing, giving priority to brownfield recycling over use of unsealed soil with the aim to reach no-land degradation objective by 2030 and no net land take by 2050 at the latest and the right to effective public participation and consultation on land use planning;
11. Stresses that soil protection and sustainable use of soil needs to be integrated into and should be made consistent across all relevant EU sectoral policies in order to prevent

⁴ [Caring for soil is caring for life - Ensure 75% of soils are healthy by 2030 for food, people, nature and climate: report of the Mission board for Soil health and food](#)

further degradation, ensure a consistent high level of protection and to avoid overlapping, incoherence, and inconsistencies between EU legislation and policies;

12. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to improve and speed up the collection and the integration of data on the status and threats to soil at the EU level; welcomes in this regard the launch of the EU Soil Observatory;
13. Urges the Commission and Member States to tackle the challenges of governance, coordination, communication, financial, technical and legal nature that hinder improving consistency and interoperability of Union-wide and national soil monitoring and information systems;
14. Acknowledges the important role of healthy soil, as the largest terrestrial carbon sink to capture and store carbon, which must facilitate the achievement of the 2030 climate targets as well as the Union's objective of climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest; calls, therefore, on the Member States to strengthen the sustainable use of soil as a tool for climate policy in their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and in particular in measures applying to the agricultural and LULUCF sectors to enhance carbon sinks;
15. Calls on the Commission and Member States to scale up soil-specific research and funding and to adjust criteria of relevant funding programmes to reflect the specific characteristics of research in soil;
16. Calls on the Commission and Member States to introduce measures for harmonised data collection, exchange of information and best practices on soil protection across the Union;
17. Supports initiatives aiming to improve public awareness and understanding on the positive impact of soil functionalities and protection, including those linked to public health and environmental sustainability;
18. Calls on the Commission to include in the new EU soil strategy the protection and sustainable use of soil in all relevant aspect of its external policy;
19. Calls on the Commission to take measures to address imported soil degradation from third countries;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.