



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



7th Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership

10 September 2020

ESP/20/Report

Report of the 7th Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership

Provided by the GSP Secretariat

Chair of the meeting: Elena Havlicek, FOEN Switzerland

Secretariat of the meeting: Marc Van Liedekerke, European Commission Joint Research Centre

10 September 2020

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Item 1: Opening of the session and adoption of the Agenda

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-1-opening-and-agenda>

The 7th Plenary Meeting of the European Soil Partnership (ESP) was held virtually on 10 September 2020 (the list of participants is attached as Annex II).

Ms Elena Havlicek, Chair of the ESP, welcomed the participants to the virtual Plenary Meeting and recalled the high number of registered participants and the challenges resulting from the virtual format of the meeting, in particular the time constraints, as the event was reduced from a 2-day to a 1-day meeting. She introduced the agenda of the meeting, explaining that items 10 and 11 were items requiring a vote of the participants. The agenda was adopted as presented.

Item 2: Overall ESP report

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-2-overall-esp-report>

Ms Elena Havlicek reported on the activities of the ESP Steering Committee. Although she acknowledged that their activities had come to a halt due to the current pandemic, Ms Elena Havlicek highlighted the many achievements of the ESP and how the Partnership had made a difference on the European soil science scene, thanks to strong partnerships such as the European Commission (EC), the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP), the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP) and the National Soil Partnerships (NSPs). She recalled the many activities of the GSP to which the ESP has contributed directly or indirectly, including the Global Soil Pollution Assessment, the Protocol for Assessment of Sustainable Soil Management and the SoiLEX platform.

However, Ms Elena Havlicek also recalled some of the weaknesses of the ESP. For example, she stressed how the ESP implementation plan for 2017-2020 was too ambitious, which did not allow the objectives set to be achieved. Ms Elena Havlicek also highlighted the lack of coordination and communication between the ESP and the GSP, the lack of financial resources and the limited progress in some of the pillars. All these weaknesses should be taken into account and addressed in the next ESP Implementation Plan.

She indicated that, during the meeting of the Chairs of the Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs), some regions considered the GSP global implementation plans, and that financial restrictions complicated its implementation. Ms Elena Havlicek also highlighted that cooperation between regions is small, and suggests that the GSP improves to sensitize governments for increased cooperation at RSP level.

Finally, Ms Elena Havlicek reported that the ESP was present at the Alpine Soil Forum in October 2019 in Innsbruck (Austria) and contributed to the publication "Soil Ecosystem Services in the Alps - An introduction for decision-makers". The ESP was also invited to join the Soil Advisory Committee of the EJP in order to ensure the flow of information and the identification of knowledge needs and research topics, among other tasks. The ESP is also part of the Eurosoil Organising Committee, which has been postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Item 3: ESP sub-regional SP reports (EASP, AlpSP)

(1) Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-3-progress-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-easp-regional-plan-of-activities> (EASP)

Ms Maria Konyushkova presented the activities of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) between 2019 and 2020. She summarized the outcomes of the last EASP Plenary Assembly in Chisinau, Moldova, held back-to-back with two other meetings, the European Soil Laboratory Network (EUROSLAN) and the International Network of Black Soils.

EASP Pillar 1:

- Translations of the Voluntary Guidelines on Sustainable Soil Management into Ukrainian and Turkish
- Development of a National Action Plan for Sustainable Soil Management in Turkey
- Currently, the EASP is seeking cooperation with universities related to economics, soil science and agronomy to create a programme on sustainable soil management
- Book on Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) in Eurasia (expected to be published in October 2020).

EASP Pillar 2:

- Eurasian Soil Portal developed and launched
- Cooperation with soil museums: (a) Dokuchaev Central Soil Museum, St. Petersburg (Russia): soil exhibitions as part of the International Year of Periodical Table of Elements; (b) Williams Soil-Agrochemical Museum in Moscow (Russia): virtual soil exhibition
- Sub-regional celebration in Sochi (Russia) for the World Soil Day 2019, and other events in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

EASP Pillar 3:

- A collaboration was established with the international research programme CIRCASA (EU "Horizon-2020"). The Russian Foundation for Basic Research has opened a thematic call for research on soil resources. EASP also follows soil research projects supported by FAO, namely projects on soil salinity and soil organic content (SOC).

EASP Pillar 4:

- Establishment of national soil data facilities in Russia, Moldova, Belarus and Azerbaijan, as well as the Soil Information Centre of Ukraine. EASP members profit from GSP capacity-building activities to help prepare national maps on soil salinity and soil organic content.

EASP Pillar 5:

- EUROSLAN (regional Soil Laboratory Network for Europe and Eurasia) was established in October 2019, and a workshop on harmonization of soil research methods in laboratories was conducted. The workshop was supported by the GSP Secretariat to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer in Eurasia.

(2) Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-3-alpine-soil-partnership> (AlpSP)

Mr Borut Vrščaj presented the activities of the AlpSP: the Links4Soils project aims at bridging the gaps between the different Alpine soil stakeholders, in order to improve implementation of the soil conservation protocol of the Alpine Convention. He highlighted the AlpSP website, which will provide access to information on Alpine soils as well as on good soil management. The website will help to strengthen communication and knowledge sharing among Alpine stakeholders. The activities of the AlpSP follow the five GSP/ESP pillars, with a main focus on awareness raising

The AlpSP has increased the number of its partners and now counts 105 partners, mostly from academia; current networking targets local and regional authorities. The AlpSP is coordinated by Klimabündnis Tirol, and is funded by the environment ministries of Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

Mr Luca Montanarella recommended strengthening cooperation between the different partnerships in order to communicate the successes of the sub-regional soil partnerships through websites and newsletters.

Item 4: Overall GSP report

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-3-global-soil-partnership-updates>

Mr Ronald Vargas presented the progress and achievements of the various GSP activities and recalled the importance of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), which will take place in the coming weeks and will focus on key issues such as the institutionalisation of the GSP and the harmonisation of international barriers for the shipment of soil samples for research purposes.

GSP Pillar 1:

- preliminary approval of the third version of the Protocol on Sustainable Soil Management by the GSP Plenary Assembly in June 2020 (final in September 2020)
- promotion of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management and the Fertiliser Code of Conduct
- launch of the "Soil Doctors" programme (Oct 2020) as a farmer-to-farmer training initiative about sustainable soil management (includes implementation manuals, field kits and communication materials in different languages).

GSP Pillar 2:

- upgrading of the GSP website, webinars, increased activity of the GSP Secretariat in social media, World Soil Day awards and prizes
- development of the SoILeX platform (soon publicly available)

GSP Pillar 3:

- ReSOIL: online database of soil science R&D, which will identify all existing soil research partners, facilities and infrastructure in order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between researchers and to facilitate the development of joint projects.

GSP Pillar 4:

- advance the global thematic maps: soil salinity, soil organic carbon sequestration potential, distribution of black soils.

GSP Pillar 5:

- developments of GloSIS data exchange
- growth of the GLOSOLAN network including (a) the development of the GLOSOLAN spectroscopy programme, (b) the creation of the International Network on Fertilizer Quality Assessment (INFA), and (c) the first ever global database on customs control procedures SIMPLE to support imports of soil samples for laboratories.

Mr Vargas concluded his presentation by highlighting the thematic areas of work, particularly activities related to soil pollution, soil organic carbon, soil biodiversity and soil salinity. He presented the progress made under various projects, such as the Global Soil Pollution Assessment, RECSOIL and the Soil Biodiversity Report, among others.

Mr Luca Montanarella pointed out that the EU has strict regulations regarding soil exports and hoped the item that will be presented to COAG concerning harmonizing international barriers for soil sample shipment. Mr Vargas and Ms Lucrezia Caon reaffirmed that the aim is to simplify the shipments between laboratories to participate in ring tests under GLOSOLAN.

Item 5: ITPS report

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-5-activity-report-of-the-itps>

Ms Rosa M Poch reported for the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS). Work between 2018-2019 mainly focussed on the Report of the Status of Knowledge on Soil Biodiversity, to be launched during World Soil Day 2020. ITPS also supported the revisions of the abstracts for the Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity, which has been postponed to February 2021. Issues about soil organic carbon are still the main topics in the ITPS work (e.g. support to RECSOIL). The ITPS also contributed to the report on soil pollution and soil salinity. A new communication tool by ITPS has been established.

Ms Elena Havlicek aimed to gain a better understanding of how the ITPS works with the Regional Soil Partnerships, and in this case, how the ITPS members from Europe work with the European Soil Partnership. Ms Rosa M Poch explained that this collaboration between the ITPS and the Regional Soil Partnerships should be made in the framework of the GSP Pillars and there are currently no direct links between ITPS members and the specific Regional Soil Partnerships.

Mr Edoardo Costantini questioned whether there would be a presentation of the activities of ESDAC. Ms Elena Havlicek clarified that this is not planned as a specific item for today's meeting but that there will be a report from the European Commission and that ESDAC will also be mentioned in the presentation of Mr Montanarella on the European Soil Observatory.

Item 6: European activities: short reports from DG ENV and EEA

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-6-ec-commitments-on-soil-for-eu> (DG ENV)

Mr Mirco Barbero presented the European Union (EU)'s achievements and commitments on soil, focusing on the European "Green Deal"; this includes the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. These policy objectives rely on national implementation, thus there is connection to ESP action. ESP could develop and synthesize knowledge to support the adoption of sustainable soil management practices. The Voluntary Guidelines on Sustainable Soil Management should be available in all European languages, and the GSP Protocol on Sustainable Soil Management should be adapted to European context. Mr Barbero also encouraged the development of best practices with regard to soil organic carbon, soil salinity and soil pollution. Given the objective of achieving 75% healthy soils by 2030, he stressed the importance of research and data harmonisation to be able to speak the same language on soils.

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-6-eu-soil-observatory-euso> Mr Luca Montanarella presented the European Soil Observatory (EUSO) which will support the new European Green Deal and all the implications related to soil. The objective of this observatory is to develop an operational EU-wide soil monitoring system that will support European soil policies, enabling the observatory to provide regular reports on the state of soil at European level. The implementation of this project will build on existing European monitoring systems and initiatives, but will seek to create closer links with member countries.

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-6-activities-of-the-european-environmental-agency> (EEA)

Mr Rainer Baritz informed about soil-related activities by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its national EIONET partners (National Reference Centres (NRC) Soil). He highlighted the European Soil Condition Assessment 2020/21, which is jointly conducted with JRC and DG ENV: the writing process was launched in August 2020, and will compile key facts about soil threats and integrated aspects until the end of 2020, with the publication planned for the World Soil Day 2021. With regard to the ESP, this assessment provides an updated knowledge base as the European contribution for the next Status of the World's Soil Resources report 2025, to be coordinated by ITPS. The assessment is also supported by the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil Systems (EC/ULS), where currently a report on indicator specifications and thresholds is being prepared (link to ESP Pillars 4 and 5).

Item 7: ESP Pillars (current achievements, future programme)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-7-pillar-1> (Pillar 1)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-7-pillar-2> (Pillar 2)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-7-pillar-3> (Pillar 3)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-7-pillar-4> (Pillar 4)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-7-pillar-5> (Pillar 5)

ESP Pillar 1 (Ms Violette Geissen, Chair):

- Financial support was received to identify case studies of successful implementation of sustainable soil management; in this context, information about existing stakeholder networks and projects were identified and collected.
- Pillar 1 working group submitted a new project proposal to monitor the effect of pesticide residues and microplastics in agricultural soils.
- Currently, Pillar 1 activities rely on external funding; a working agenda with inputs by Pillar 1 WG members has not been developed yet. Problem is the lack of coordination between the global and regional Pillar 1 activities.

Ms Elena Havlicek asked for further information on the next steps to be taken for the development of the first pillar of the ESP. Ms Violette Geissen stressed that they are in the process of creating a network of soil actors, but that the next step would be to create a dynamic network and cooperation between these actors. However, this would require more field trips to implement sustainable soil management practices, as well as capacity building meetings and workshops. There is therefore an increasing need to disseminate this information.

ESP Pillar 2 (Mr Arwyn Jones, Chair):

- workshop on "Giving Soils more Voice at Fruittuin Van West Organic Farm in the Netherlands about general issues in raising soil awareness and sharing learning experiences and best practices
- Horizon Europe mission board "Soil Health and Food" (link to ESP Pillar 3): the high level of attention to soils as one of the mission boards (cancer, oceans, climate change and cities) indicates the success of the awareness raising activities and the inclusion of soils in the overall European agenda.
- Mr Jones stressed that further funding for unconventional awareness-raising activities beyond the commonly known activity ranges and projects are necessary to a broader audience beyond soil experts.

ESP Pillar 3 (Mr Gergely Toth, Co-Chair):

- Pillar 3 is currently without funding, which leads to limitations in various activities, in particular the recommendation to create an internet platform for soil research. Despite the voluntary nature of the work carried out under Pillar 3, he recalled the progress made in the evaluation of soil research priorities, which is expected to be finalised by 2021.

ESP Pillar 4 (Ms Maria Fantappie, Chair)

- activities focus around soil property maps as suggested by the global Pillar 4
- Ms Fantappie raised some concerns about (a) how the ESP Pillar 4 working group should be involved in the global map on black soils, and (b) the feasibility and implementation of the fine resolution global grids of soil properties and the national soil type maps.
- offer by the EJP-SOIL project to support Pillar 4 (list of EJP Soil Work package 6 deliverables was provided)
- Mrs Fantappie raised some questions on how to broaden the participation of European countries in the ESP-Pillar 4 activities, especially when European countries do not have a national focal point or a member in the ESP-Pillar 4 working group. She suggested some changes for the future, including merging Pillar 4 and Pillar 5 for activities related to the harmonisation of soil databases and the need to clarify roles and procedures between the many actors of the Global and European Soil Partnerships.

ESP Pillar 5 (Mr Hakki Erdogan, Chair):

- Information was provided about the launch of the Regional Soil Laboratory Network for Europe and Eurasia (EUROSOLAN), which will support the harmonisation of national and international measurement methods. The Terms of reference for EUROSOLAN still need refinement and increased involvement by ESP members.
- Mr Erdogan stressed the importance of synergies between Pillars (e.g. Pillar 5 and Pillar 1 on harmonized soil indicators, but also Pillar 3 and 5).

During the presentations of Pillar 4 and 5 chairs, a vivid chat had been initiated by Belgium, joined by other ESP members, who are concerned with the upcoming deadline on sharing interoperable soil data based on the INSPIRE Directive. The discussion brought up several deficits with the current schema and infrastructure. It was concluded that a webinar could be of interest to exchange experiences and to summarize the existing deficit. Mr Baritz (EEA) informed about a small consultant study which is currently in preparation to collect and hopefully solve remaining issues.

Item 8: NFP/Partner information (if needed)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-8-nfp-information-from-latvia> (Latvia)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-8-activities-related-to-soils-in-germany> (Germany)

Latvia:

Ms Laura Varpina from the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture presented two soil-related activities in Latvia. Firstly, the project "Enhancement of sustainable soil resource management in agriculture" will soon start and will aim to develop a national soil classification system and soil mapping methodology. She stressed the need to map the distribution of peat soils in Latvia, in line with climate policy, because of its high carbon content. She underlined the importance of the project as it will be beneficial to develop the national soil information system, as soil mapping has not been carried out in Latvia for 30 years. The second "Life OrgBalt" project aims to create a GHG inventory for nutrient-rich organic soils and to find climate change mitigation measures for these soils. It highlighted the importance of organic soils as they are distributed over a large part of the Latvian territory. The project partners include Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Germany, all countries with a large part of their territory composed of organic soils.

Building on the many soil-related activities in which Latvia is currently involved, Ms Elena Havlicek asked whether Latvia would work with the ESP. Ms Laura Varpina explained that the University of Latvia is a member of the ESP Pillar 4 working group and its various activities related to the pillar.

Germany:

Ms Nicole Wellbrock from the Thunen-Institute of Forest Ecosystems presented soil-related activities in Germany. She presented the forthcoming national forest and agricultural soil inventories, which will take place from 2021 to 2024. Available reports include the previous surveys, and mainly cover soil carbon, while other indicators such as nitrogen, and in some cases heavy metals, are also addressed. Ms Wellbrock also explained that the work on the national GSP maps has already started (global Pillar 4). Germany is close to finalising a concept on biodiversity and soil monitoring, so that the biodiversity can be included in

the upcoming surveys (this includes soil biodiversity reference values). Later this year, Germany will launch a monitoring programme for peatland, while soil degradation monitoring and remote sensing is also a topic of interest.

France:

Mr. Antonio Bispo presented soil-related activities in France. He highlighted the two test exercises that are currently taking place within the French soil monitoring network, one to measure pesticide levels in the soil, and the other to measure and test soil biodiversity. He explained that the idea is to try to implement these new indicators in the soil monitoring network. He also presented the website of the national geographical portal, which now contains information on soil.

Switzerland:

Ms Elena Havlicek recalled the approval of the Swiss National Soil Strategy (document will be available www.bafu.admin.ch in 3 languages: German, French, English). The main area of action identified by the strategy was to strengthen soil legislation, implementation and communication. She highlighted the creation of a new Soil Competence Centre, which aims to harmonise soil data and procedures and which is already in contact with the GSP and GLOSOLAN. She also highlighted the request from a member of parliament for more information on Switzerland's potential for SOC sequestration, the results of which should be available next year.

Mr Edoardo Antonio Costantini thanked the Plenary Meeting for its support for the creation of a metadata database of the web pages dedicated to soils in Europe. He explained that the project is now with ESDAC and will be made available once it has been approved.

Item 9: ESP Implementation Plan (2017-2020; future IP)

Ms Nicole Wellbrock recalled the important work foreseen in the ESP Implementation Plan 2017-2020. She stressed the importance of creating a clear communication between the GSP and the ESP in order to align the future ESP implementation plan with the GSP implementation plan. She recalled that climate change has started to manifest itself in Central Europe and therefore the future implementation plan should focus on drought and peat soils by highlighting these issues.

Mr Rainer Baritz recalled that the orientation of any revision of regional implementation plans, and the consideration of global-level changes, require careful coordination. For example, the recent GSP stocktaking review suggests the transformation of the pillars into "Outcome Areas for Soil Health". The same review concluded that some global level activities were not sufficiently "translated into regional action", whereas the regional partnerships are perceived to be the main implementers of the globally agreed action. These recommendations will affect the revision processes of implementation plans.

Ms Katrien Oorts stressed the need to increase the interaction between ESP and other European projects. She recalled that Belgium wants to align its carbon sequestration map with other European activities and that the ESP should become a platform where countries can learn from each other.

Ms Maria Fantappie stressed the need to strengthen coordination between the many actors who are now working on the same issues and who have the same objective. She recalled that the EJP SOIL research

programme plans to organise several webinars on soil indicators and INSPIRE harmonisation in order to include and invite all possible actors on these topics.

Ms Fenny van Egmond recalled that the ESP is an excellent opportunity to harmonise and create more coordination between the national, regional and global levels. She stressed the need to strengthen the links between the many levels, which will promote the harmonisation of data and improve communication between the different actors in order to have the same calendar on projects. She suggested establishing a long-term plan and, at the same time, a more practical annual plan to better align and organise the different projects and enable all stakeholders to adapt more effectively.

Ms Elena Havlicek stressed the importance of creating more synergies with the many soil-related projects already underway in Europe and welcomed the proposal of Ms Fenny van Egmond to create an annual work plan to adapt more effectively.

Ms Katrien Oorts pointed out that the GSP documents and guidelines are often produced too late to be integrated into the national agenda and budgets. She encouraged the GSP to provide more details on the different tasks ahead of time in order to allow countries to include them in their agendas, which are usually set months in advance, and to provide sufficient resources for these activities.

Ms Maria Konyushkova stressed the need for the GSP to support other sub-regional partnerships to develop and share their experiences with the partnerships. She underlined that other regional partnerships are very interested in working with the ESP to learn from their experiences.

Ms Nicole Wellbrock welcomed Ms Katrien Oorts' suggestion to share documents and guidelines for the maps in advance. She also suggested that time should be set aside to discuss in Europe the results of the maps produced under the GSP.

Mr Yusuf Yigini, GSP Secretariat, recalled that new global implementation plans for Pillar 4 and 5 are currently in the drafting phase, following the decision of the GSP Plenary Assembly to extend the current implementation plan until 2021. He stressed the need to align the Regional Implementation Plans with the Global Implementation Plan and to follow the same timetable.

Ms Natalia Rodriguez Eugenio, GSP Secretariat, acknowledged the many European responses to the soil pollution report and encouraged further interactions at national level to enable all stakeholders to have a sense of ownership of the GSP documents. She also recalled that although some activities are planned at global and then regional level, the opposite also occurs when the GSP builds on regional successes to extend it to the global level. As such, she pointed out that ESP activities are sometimes used as an example and then extended to the global level.

Ms Zineb Bazza, GSP Secretariat, recalled that most of the work under Pillar 1 is currently focused on the Protocol on Sustainable Soil Management. She acknowledged that Europe is very much involved in the Protocol, through the member countries and European partners. She welcomed Violette Geissen's presentation on the numerous activities on sustainable soil management currently being carried out in Europe and suggested that collaboration should be strengthened to implement Pillar 1 at regional level.

Ms Elena Havlicek summarized that the future ESP implementation plan should be aligned with ongoing initiatives. She stressed the importance of being aware that some countries are not members of the European Union and that adaptation is necessary. She also acknowledged the need to align the future implementation plan with the GSP while understanding Europe's specificities with regard to the implementation of pillars, such as Pillars 1, 2 and 3.

Mr Antonio Manuel Perdigao, from the Portuguese Soil Society, stressed the need to harmonise data and to work in a global way, as these global projects do not only include European countries. However, he stressed the need for the GSP not to oblige countries to provide data when the country's capacity is not able to provide the data in the required criteria. He therefore suggested a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to data.

Mr Edoardo Costantini encouraged all countries to set up a national coordination branch, a National Soil Partnership, which follows the pillars of the European and Global Soil Partnership to provide harmonized efforts and data. He stressed that the establishment of a national soil partnership can also improve bilateral and multilateral coordination in information flow and data collection.

Item 10: ESP steering committee (renewal of the chair, vice-chair, secretariat positions)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-10-and-11-renewal-of-the-esp-steering-committee>

Ms Elena Havlicek, Chair of the ESP, recalled the composition of the current Steering Committee and the need to elect a new Chair, Vice-Chairs and Secretariat. She introduced Mr Rainer Baritz who presented his candidacy for the position of Chair.

Mr Rainer Baritz recalled that the ESP and its network aim to support countries and therefore the voices of the countries are essential to drive this network. In the absence of nominations from other ESP members, and following internal discussions within the European Commission, EEA agreed to a nomination of Mr Baritz, as candidate for the position of Chair of the ESP, with the specific aim to develop further the dynamics of the network.

The ESP Plenary Meeting elected Mr Rainer Baritz as Chair of the ESP; 98 % of all voters were in favour of his nomination. No candidatures for the two vice-Chair positions have been submitted and will remain vacant for the time being. Also, no candidature for the position of Secretariat was submitted. In order to guarantee continuity with regard to the organization and operations of the ESP, the EC Joint Research Centre offered its willingness to continue basic secretariat operations until a new candidate steps forward.

Item 11: ESP Steering Committee members (proposal: NFP representative)

Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/Soils2012/item-10-and-11-renewal-of-the-esp-steering-committee>

Ms Elena Havlicek, Chair of the ESP, recalled the wish raised by ESP members, to increase the number of stakeholders in the Steering Committee. She proposes to include a representative of the national focal points, and a representative of the sub-regional soil partnerships.

Mr Rainer Baritz and Mr Luca Montanarella welcomed the decision to invite the national focal points in the Steering Committee in order to strengthen the dialogue with the countries. However, Mr Luca Montanarella expressed some concerns about the feasibility of this initiative due to the busy schedule of the focal points. Mr Constantini commented on the selection procedure.

The ESP Plenary meeting approved the decision to include a representative of the national focal points and a representative of the sub-regional soil partnerships in the ESP Steering Committee. As a result, changes to the Terms of Reference will be made and submitted for final approval.

Item 12: Conclusions

Ms Elena Havlicek, Chair of the ESP, recalled that she had been elected on the basis of improved cooperation, collaboration and communication and was pleased to see that these topics are still important and of major interest four years later. She acknowledged the trust she had received throughout her mandate as Chair of the ESP and the unwavering support she had received from the Steering Committee, especially from Marc van Liedekerke who runs the secretariat. She informed the Plenary Assembly of her intention to co-chair the ESP Pillar 1 Working Group.

Mr Ronald Vargas, GSP Secretariat, congratulated Mr Rainer Baritz on his election as Chair of the ESP. He acknowledged the considerable efforts of Ms Elena Havlicek to consolidate the ESP and saluted the many achievements of the ESP during her mandate. Mr Vargas highlighted the fruitful discussions that took place during the meeting, although it was a virtual meeting. He stressed the importance of the ESP in guiding other regional soil partnerships, which may not have as much experience in this field, to reflect and replicate the successes of the ESP.

Mr. Rainer Baritz, newly elected Chair of the ESP, closed the meeting by summarizing the results of the meeting.

ANNEX I - Agenda

Note that this agenda was supplemented by INPUT DOCUMENTS that are available from [here](#).

Thursday 10 September 2020 (Zoom Meeting)

Chair : Elena Havlicek, FOEN Switzerland

09:00 – 11:00

Opening of the session and adoption of the Agenda (15')

Overall ESP report (15')

ESP sub-regional SP reports (EASP, AlpSP) (30')

Overall GSP report (30')

ITPS report (15')

11:30 – 14:00

European activities: short reports from DG ENV and EEA (30')

ESP Pillars (current achievements, future programme) (60')

NFP/Partner information (if needed) (20')

15:00 – 17:30

ESP Implementation Plan (2017-2020; future IP) (60')

ESP steering committee (renewal of the chair, vice-chair, secretariat positions) (30')

ESP steering committee members (proposal: NFP representative) (30')

Conclusions (30')

ANNEX II - List of Participants

Affiliation	Full name
Aarhus University (Denmark)	Mogens H. GREVE
Academy of Georgofili, Florence; National Academy of Agriculture, Bologna. (Italy)	Edoardo Antonio COSTANTINI
AFRD Georgia (Georgia)	Kakha NADIRADZE
AGES (Austria)	Andreas BAUMGARTEN
Agriculture Institute of Slovenia (Slovenia)	Borut VRŠČAJ
Agricultural Research Centre (Hungary)	Gergely TÓTH
British Society of Soil Science (United Kingdom)	Sarah GARRY
Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe (Germany)	Elke FRIES
Bundesverband Boden (Germany)	Berndt-Michael WILKE
CIHEAM Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (Italy)	Pandi ZDRULI
CISDL (United Kingdom)	Cairo ROBB
CNR-IBE/ITPS (Italy)	Costanza CALZOLARI
COMMON FORUM on Contaminated Land in Europe (Austria)	Dietmar MÜLLER-GRABHERR
CREA (Italy)	Maria FANTAPPIÈ
	Filiberto ALTOBELLI
Department of Soil Science of Athens / Institute of Soil and Water Resources / Hellenic Agricultural Organization "DEMETER" (Greece)	Dimitris TRIANTAKONSTANTIS
Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development (Portugal)	Maria CENTENO
ESP & UNIPA (Italy)	Carmelo DAZZI
Estonian University of Life Sciences (Estonia)	Alar ASTOVER
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