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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Guidance on EU funding opportunities for healthy soils**

***Accompanying the proposal for a***

**Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council**

**on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law)**

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**Disclaimer:** The presentation of some of the EU funding opportunities included in this guidance builds on the text included in the fiches of these funding opportunities in a separately developed guide 'Find your EU funding programme for the environment. Supporting the environment under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and NextGenerationEU. The relevant text was adapted and amended to ensure its focus on soil policy. Furthermore, information included in the funding fiches builds on official sites and documentation of the European Commission which are referenced in the specific sections below.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **AAP** | Annual Action Plan |
| **CAP** | Common Agricultural Policy |
| **CINEA** | European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency |
| **DG AGRI** | Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development |
| **DG NEAR** | Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations |
| **DG REFORM** | Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support |
| **DG REGIO** | Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy for cross-border cooperation programmes |
| **DN** | Doctoral Networks |
| **DNSH** | Do No Significant Harm |
| **EACEA** | European Education and Culture Executive Agency |
| **EAFRD** | European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development |
| **EAGF** | European Agricultural Guarantee Fund |
| **EBRD** | European Bank for Reconstruction and Development |
| **EC** | European Commission |
| **EFSD+** | European Fund for Sustainable Development |
| **EIB** | European Investment Bank |
| **EIC** | European Innovation Council |
| **EIE** | European Innovation Ecosystems |
| **EIP-AGRI** | European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability |
| **EIR PEER 2 PEER** | Environmental Implementation Review Peer to Peer Tool |
| **EISMEA** | European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency |
| **EIT** | European Institute of Innovation and Technology |
| **ERC** | European Research Council |
| **ERDF** | European Regional and Development Fund |
| **ESF+** | European Social Fund Plus |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **GAEC** | Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions |
| **GHG** | Greenhouse gases |
| **IEEP** | Institute for European Environmental Policy |
| **IPA** | Instrument for Pre-Accession |
| **IPARD** | Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development |
| **JTF** | Just Transition Fund |
| **JTM** | Just Transition Mechanism |
| **KIC** | Knowledge and Innovation Communities |
| **KPI** | Key Performance Indicator |
| **LIFE** | Programme For Environment and Climate Action |
| **MA** | Managing authority |

| | |
|---|---|
| **MAES** | Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services |
| **MAWP** | Multiannual Work Programme |
| **MFF** | Multiannual Financial Framework |
| **MIP** | Multi-annual Indicative Programme |
| **MSCA** | The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions |
| **NDICI** | Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument |
| **NGO** | Non-governmental organisation |
| **OID** | Organisation ID |
| **PF** | Postdoctoral fellowships |
| **POs** | Policy objectives |
| **PPP** | Public–private partnership |
| **R&I** | Research and Innovation |
| **REA** | European Research Executive Agency |
| **RIS** | Research Infrastructures |
| **RRF** | Recovery and Resilience Facility |
| **RRP** | Recovery and Resilience Plan |
| **SDGs** | Sustainable Development Goals |
| **SE** | Staff exchanges |
| **SGA** | Specific grant agreement |
| **SIP** | Strategic Integrated Project |
| **SLM** | Sustainable land management |
| **SME** | Small and medium enterprise |
| **SMR** | Statutory Management Requirements |
| **SNAP** | Strategic Nature Project |
| **SOC** | Soil organic carbon |
| **SPVs** | Special-purpose vehicles |
| **TEN-T** | Trans-European networks in the area of transport infrastructure |
| **TSI** | Technical Support Instrument |
| **TAIEX** | Technical Assistance and Information Exchange |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 What is this guidance?

Soils are an important part of the European Union's (EU's) natural capital, supporting a wide range of ecosystem services such as clean water, production of food and fibre, climate regulation, cycling nutrients providing habitats and acting as a platform and cultural service for human activity. However, a series of pressures, including unsustainable agricultural practices, poor soil management, development and urbanisation, poor water treatment and sewerage practices, often in combination with climate change, have contributed to the degradation of Union's soils.

Seeking to improve the condition of EU soils, the European Commission (EC) has adopted the Communication on the EU Soil Strategy for 2030: 'Reaping the benefits of healthy soils for people, food, nature and climate' – commonly known as the '**EU Soil Strategy**[1] (November 2021), see Box 1-1. At its core, it seeks to ensure that by 2050 all EU soil ecosystems are in healthy condition and thus more resilient, and that protection, sustainable use and restoration of soils have become the norm. Therefore, the Strategy includes key measures for sustainable soil use, the avoidance of land sealing, a target to halve the drainage of peatlands, restoration of contaminated sites, and tighter monitoring and reporting obligations for EU countries. It also sets several qualitative medium-term and long-term targets, building on synergies and common goals in other environmental areas.

*Box 1-1 Communication on the EU Soil Strategy for 2030: 'Reaping the benefits of healthy soils for people, food, nature and climate' – EU Soil Health Strategy*

The new EU Soil Strategy for 2030 is a key deliverable of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, which aims to put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, climate and the planet. It also contributes to the objectives of the European Green Deal.

The vision and objectives of the EU Soil Strategy are to achieve good soil health by 2050, setting up a framework and concrete measures to protect and restore soils by 2030, and ensure that they are used sustainably. It also announces a new Soil Health Law by 2023 to ensure a level playing field and a high level of environmental and health protection.

The EU Soil Strategy aims to ensure that, by 2050:

- All EU soil ecosystems are healthy and more resilient and can therefore continue to provide their crucial services.
- There is no net land take, and soil pollution is reduced to levels that are no longer harmful to people's health or ecosystems.
- Protecting soils, managing them sustainably and restoring degraded soils.

In order to achieve its objectives, the EU Soil Strategy recognises that funding is vital to enable a transition to healthy soils. This guidance document contributes to this goal by **presenting an overview of the 2021-2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) funding opportunities available for the protection, sustainable management, and restoration of soils**, as well as information on other practical considerations such as funding conditions and outlines the process for accessing the funding. Furthermore, it also contributes to the Strategy's aim of **increasing soil literacy, engagement and awareness** among a wide range of stakeholders,

[1] More information on the EU Soil Strategy is available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/soil-and-land/soil-strategy_en

including not only practitioners - farmers, foresters, developers, landowners - but also public authorities, academia and many others.

The EU Soil Strategy is closely linked – and works in line with – many other EU policies and objectives stemming from the European Green Deal[2], including climate neutrality, biodiversity restoration, zero pollution, human health, sustainable food systems, and a resilient environment. This guidance document **focuses on soil health** aspects, however, many funding opportunities support and contribute to **wider ecosystem services co-benefits**, which are also briefly identified herein. For further information on more EU funding opportunities for the environment, a separate complementary guide – Find your EU funding programme for the environment. Supporting the environment under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and NextGenerationEU – has been developed by the EC, meant for a wider audience, that you may decide to review while searching for the funding opportunity that best matches your needs (see Box 1-2).

*Box 1-2 Guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment. Supporting the environment under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and NextGenerationEU*

The guide[3] contributes to promoting the uptake and efficient use of EU funding for the environment by presenting an overview of the EU funding and financing opportunities under the 2021-2027 MFF and NextGenerationEU, as well as technical assistance, for projects contributing to the environmental objectives of the European Green Deal. This guide provides an overview of EU funding opportunities for projects that benefit the environment directly (e.g., projects to protect water or air from pollution) or indirectly by integrating environmental aspects in a cross-cutting manner into non-environmental projects (e.g. increasing resource efficiency in enterprises, promoting the use of renewable energy in construction projects or accounting for the protection of biodiversity in infrastructure projects).

This guidance is divided into four chapters:

- The first introduces you to the purpose and scope of the guidance within the 'EU Soil Strategy' and the European Green Deal context, highlighting its complementarity with the Guide 'Find your EU funding programme for the environment. Supporting the environment under the 2021-2027 MFF and NextGenerationEU' and sets out its targeted audience.
- The second chapter includes elements that might influence your choice of funding opportunity based on your specific project objectives/activity requirements. It presents instructions on how to best take advantage of this guidance, giving a clear overview of its structure and including shortcuts for accessing information by EU funding opportunities, by type of beneficiary and by type of activity.
- The third chapter provides you with a comprehensive description of the key EU funding opportunities and other key instruments for healthy soils in the form of informative fiches. The focus of each of these is on their relevance to soil and soil health aspects, with brief descriptions of other environmental concerns and opportunities for wider ecosystem services.

[2] More information on the European Green Deal is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[3] Find your EU funding programme for the environment is available in English, French and German. You can download each translation at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/33b54f0d-0251-11ed-acce-01aa75ed71a1

- Following the same principles, the fourth and final chapter provides an overview of additional, broader EU funding opportunities that have larger objectives but may have relevance to soil health as well.

### 1.2 Who is this guidance for?

- Are you a landowner working on improving sustainable land management practices on your land?
- Are you a small and medium enterprise (SME) looking for funding to start a project on soil health issues?
- Are you carrying out research on innovative soil management practices?

In that case, you probably have many things to consider and decisions to make. This guidance provides you with a starting point and sets out what you should take into account when seeking funding for healthy soils. It is designed to be a concise and practical reference for stakeholders seeking EU funding in relation to various aspects of soil health (i.e. soil protection, restoration) including implementation and support activities.

It is particularly intended for:

- **Practitioners and/or landholders** seeking support to implement sustainable soil management practices;
- **Competent authorities** seeking support for implementation at national level (including regional and local implementation);
- **Researchers and academia** seeking support to develop new or improved techniques or technology to protect or restore soils; and
- **Businesses and NGOs/civil society** organisations both interested and/or working in fields related to soil health.

EU funding is mobilised by a suite of budget programmes and funds which are managed differently with varying eligibility criteria (or conditions to be fulfilled) to access funding and different application processes (i.e. application calls, procedures to be followed). The information this guidance provides of the 2021-2027 MFF funding opportunities could support your land management project or research but will also make you aware of the potential array of wider ecosystem services co-benefits which these EU funding opportunities support.

## 2 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE?

To facilitate access to EU funding for soil health-related projects/activities, this guidance provides key information on the EU funding programmes and instruments, that is of practical use to practitioners and/or researchers, competent authorities, NGOs, businesses (including both large enterprises and SMEs) and other interested stakeholders. For the specific purposes of this guidance the focus is on funding opportunities relevant or contributing to soil health. For each of these EU funding opportunities and instruments, information on the objectives and scope, components, volume of funding, type of management, eligible beneficiaries, and projects is provided. The guidance sets out the eligibility criteria and basic steps of the application process. It also provides brief mention of other ecosystem services co-benefits.

All this information will help you judge the relevance of each funding opportunity considering your specific objectives. Moreover, it will also allow you to gain or expand your knowledge of the

funding programmes that not only target soil and soil health aspects but also contribute to objectives of wider ecosystem services such as water, air, biodiversity, climate, food security, nutrient cycling, etc. This can also provide you with further ideas of how your own project, activity or research can also have wider environmental impacts beyond those related to soil.

For some funding programmes, the guidance also presents examples of types of projects that have been implemented with the financial support of the fund in question or possible projects which can be funded. These examples are intended to illustrate for you what can be achieved with the funding and what the main elements of a successful application might be. Finally, the guidance provides links to additional sources of information, such as the EC's web pages where you can find announcements for specific calls as they are issued and any other information that is not contained in this guidance, as well as specific options for technical assistance related to each funding programme.

## 2.1 Overview of the EU funding opportunities covered in this guidance

In order to aid interested stakeholders in their search for EU funding opportunities that target different aspects of soil health, this guidance has identified and separated into two different categories:

- Key EU funding opportunities – those that have specific components that target soil health related themes, such as research and innovation, knowledge sharing and demonstration, implementation of improved Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices, infrastructure and/or equipment investment
- Additional EU funding opportunities that might be related to soil although this is not their focused priority. These are either broader in scope or are considered of less relevance to soil health, however can provide capacity building, training, education, expertise and technical assistance. These include Erasmus+, The European Solidarity Corps, Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) - Environmental Implementation Review Peer to Peer Tool (EIR PEER 2 PEER).[4]

Table 2-1 below presents an overview of the key EU funding opportunities covered within the guidance with reference to their relevance to soil health, and its location within the document (Chapter 3). It is worth noting that, in terms of the available volume of funding, the majority of the listed funds do not earmark or provide specific figures for soil relevant activities and practices.

Any EU funding aiming at remediating environmental pollution (including soil restoration/remediation activities) are only to be awarded where it has first been confirmed that this does not contradict the 'Polluter Pays Principle' (PPP), and wherever possible Member State authorities should ensure that polluters bear the cost of their pollution. The PPP underlies the EU's environmental policy and requires that polluters should bear the costs of their pollution including

[4] This guidance is focused on EU funding opportunities and so does not cover private funding; however, users may want to be aware that there are additional sources of funding available that can provide support for healthy soils. This includes the 'Test your soil for free' initiative, under which the EU provides guidance to Member States to set up activities under which their farmers and other actors could get to know more about soil health; and, the ' EU Carbon farming' initiative which can increase private investment into carbon capture in soils, and improve soil health.

the cost of measures taken to prevent, control, and remedy pollution, and the costs it imposes on society. There are many cases where PPP may not be fully implemented.[5] These include:

- Cases of "orphan" pollution (pollution that took place in the past and where the PPP cannot be applied because the polluter is either unknown, no longer exists, or cannot be made liable),
- Cases of contamination from before 2007, and
- Cases of land damage that does not constitute a risk to human health (it would only require remediation in case and to the extent the pollution constitutes a risk to human health).

The most significant sources of orphan pollution are former industrial activities, that contaminated soils with metals, tars, and other dangerous substances.

Public funding is also available in certain cases including[6]:

- Where the investment is intended to exceed EU standards,
- Increasing environmental protection in the absence of any such standard, and
- Preparation to comply with future EU standards.

**Table 2-1 Outline for overview of the key funding opportunities covered within the guidance with reference to their relevance to soil health and location within the document**

| Funding Programme | Relevance to soil health | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| **EU Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe"** (supported by Horizon Europe)[7] | Between 60-70% of EU soils are classified as unhealthy. As the foundation of the food system and vital support of biodiversity, clean water and our cultural heritage and landscapes, soil must be carefully managed and protected to build resilience and protect ecosystems. Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' funds projects to protect and restore soil health by 2030 by:<br>• Funding an ambitious research and innovation programme<br>• Develop a network of 100 living labs and lighthouses<br>• Developing a harmonised framework for soil monitoring in Europe<br>• Raising awareness on the vital | 18 |

[5] European Court of Auditors (2021) Special Report on The Polluter Pays Principle: Inconsistent application across EU environmental policies and actions

[6] Ibid.

[7] This Mission is supported by Horizon Europe, but for the purpose of this guidance the EU Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe" is analysed and presented separately as it is a flagship initiative for soil.

| Funding Programme | Relevance to soil health | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| | importance of soils. | |
| **Horizon Europe** | Research and innovation are critical in finding solutions to soil health challenges. It is crucial to develop the creation and diffusion of high-quality new knowledge and innovation in Europe to ensure the uptake of innovative solutions, reinforce the impact of research and innovation in addressing EU's priorities and strengthen the European research area. This programme provides a number of opportunities to fund soil health research, innovation and knowledge dissemination activities. Horizon Europe is made up of three pillars:<br>• Pillar I – Excellent Science (page 24)<br>• Pillar II – Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness (page 31)<br>• Pillar III – Innovative Europe (page 34) | 22 |
| **The Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)** | The new CAP (2023-2027) has higher environmental ambitions and will contribute to the EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork strategy and Biodiversity Strategy. Basic standards of soil management, support for farming activities beneficial for soil health and investment in soil health are important elements of the CAP. Climate targets related to carbon sequestration are also relevant to soil. | 42 |
| **Cohesion Policy Funds** | The European Regional Development Fund's and Interreg's second policy objective relates to green investments and can cover funding for projects enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution. Projects promoting the sustainable management of soils can apply for funding under these objectives. Also, through these funds there are opportunities to fund projects with a focus on urban regeneration of green spaces.<br>The European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund support investments | 50 |

| Funding Programme | Relevance to soil health | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| | promoting climate change adaption, risk prevention and disaster resilience, as well as access to water and sustainable water management. These objectives can be addressed through improved climate resilience through healthy soils and better water quality through better soil management.<br>The Just Transition Fund was established to alleviate the negative impacts of the climate transition in the most affected regions and its investments in environmental rehabilitation include soil regeneration, land restoration (including former peatlands) and repurposing, and decontamination of brownfield sites. Member States have allocated around EUR 1.6 billion to these priorities.[8]<br>The European Social Fund+, which predominantly focuses on social issues, is not included as it has minimal relevance to soil health. | |
| **Programme For Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)** | LIFE contributes towards the restoration and improvement of the quality of the environment, including soil.<br>The nature and biodiversity sub-programme can support investments in soils, as the basis for a good functioning ecosystem and improving soil health will enable it to better support ecosystems including the inherent soil biodiversity.<br>The circular economy and quality of life subprogramme covers soil quality and soil health projects. This sub-programme is specifically related to facilitating the transition towards a sustainable and toxic-free circular economy and protecting and restoring the quality of the environment. This includes supporting the restoration, remediation, protection and improvement of | 65 |

[8] JTF: Leaving no region behind in the climate transition | Data | European Structural and Investment Funds (europa.eu)

| Funding Programme | Relevance to soil health | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| | soil health, within natural or managed ecosystem boundaries, to provide ecosystem services, in particular to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and support human health and habitats and to prevent soil loss.<br>The climate change mitigation and adaptation sub-programme supports projects in the areas of farming, land use and peatland management, and the areas of land-use planning. Soil health in the EU and globally is impacted by unsustainable practices in agriculture, where intensive farming can degrade soil health and its ability to function correctly. | |
| **Technical Support Instrument (TSI)** | The TSI provides technical support to Member States' authorities in a wide range of policy areas, notably the green transition (including the environment, the circular economy, climate action and the energy transition). The TSI also contributes to the implementation of the European Green Deal and supports Member States' efforts to implement measures to protect and restore soils to facilitate green transitions. | 70 |
| **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** | There is a major focus of RRF expenditures on climate transition. Improvements to soil health may fall under this as soils have to both adapt to become more climate resilient, while also playing a part in preventing climate change.<br>Activities that contribute to soil health may fall mainly under Pillar 1 Green Transition and Pillar 3 Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth | 73 |
| **InvestEU** | Key policy areas of InvestEU include:<br>• Transition to the circular economy: Sustainable and efficient use of the resources including land and excavated soil contribute to the transition to the circular economy, | 76 |

| Funding Programme | Relevance to soil health | Page number |
|---|---|---|
| | which is supported by the fund.<br>• Water resources and pollution prevention control: Healthy soil is important for effective filtration and storage of water, and improvements to soil health may be supported under InvestEU where it can improve water resources and pollution prevention control.<br>• Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems: Soils form the basis of many ecosystems, and healthy soils will mean greater biodiversity and improved ecosystems, and support of biodiversity and ecosystems will also improve soil health.<br>• Sustainable forests and agricultural practices: Support from InvestEU to improve sustainability of these practices due to their impact on soil status will mean sustainable use of soils, and therefore healthy soils. | |

## 2.2 Identifying the appropriate funding opportunities by Theme, type of beneficiary and type of activity

There is a large amount of information available on EU funding programmes under the 2021–2027 MFF as well as other instruments that could support your projects/activities. Sometimes making sense of the funding information provided may present a difficult task.

In view of this, **Table 2-2** provides a simple cross-referenced overview of the appropriate funding opportunities per types of beneficiaries, types of activities and soil health related themes (relevant to the EU Soil Health Strategy) with hyperlinked access shortcuts. **Table 2-2** includes the EU funding opportunities that were found to have the highest relevance to soil health, i.e., EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe', Horizon Europe, Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), Cohesion Policy Funds (CPF), Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) and Technical Support Instrument (TSI).

This information should assist in quickly reviewing according to the **beneficiary** category, the **soil related theme** of interest, and which of the EU funding programmes listed on this guidance that are most relevant. Under each theme there is also a **list of activities**, to further guide the user. Once a funding opportunity has been identified the user may refer to the full fiche section, which contains the relevant information and may be quickly navigated to using the hyperlinks.

For further information on what each soil health theme entails refer to **Table 2-3**. Similarly, for further information on what each activity from the list can encompass and what each type of beneficiary can include, please check *Box 2-1* and Box 2-2, respectively.

**Table 2-2 EU funding opportunities identified to be relevant for specific activity types and beneficiaries**

| Soil Health Theme | Activity type | Beneficiary type | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Individuals / Practitioners | Businesses | Public authorities | Research / Academia | NGOs / Civil Society |
| Soil damage prevention | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CPF | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | CAP, Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices | CAP, Mission | Mission, LIFE, CAP, CPF | Mission, LIFE, CPF | | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | CAP, Mission | Mission, CPF | | Mission, Horizon, CPF | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | CAP, Mission | Mission, Horizon, CPF | | | |
| Urban soils | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CPF | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission | Mission, LIFE, CPF | | | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission | Mission, CPF | | | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission | Mission, Horizon, CPF | | | |
| Soil monitoring | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | | | LIFE |
| | Knowledge sharing and | CAP, Mission | Mission, Horizon, | Mission, Horizon, | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |

| Soil Health The | Activity type | Beneficiary type | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | demonstration | | LIFE, CAP | LIFE, TSI, CAP | | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE | | | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission, CAP | | Mission | Mission, Horizon | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission | Mission, Horizon | | | |
| Soil improvement, enhancement and sustainable practices | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CPF | | | Mission, Horizon, LIFE |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | CAP, Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP, CPF | Mission, LIFE, CPF | | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | CAP, Mission | Mission, CPF, CAP | Mission, CPF | Mission, Horizon, CPF | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission | Mission, Horizon, CPF | | | |
| Land management | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CPF | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP, CPF, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CPF | | |

| Soil Health The | Activity type | Beneficiary type | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission, CAP | Mission, CPF, CAP | Mission, CPF | Mission, Horizon, CPF | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon, CPF | | | |
| Agro-forestry and woodland management | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP | Mission, LIFE | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission, CAP | | Mission | Mission, Horizon | Mission |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon | | | |
| Water | Research and innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, CPF | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and demonstration | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | Mission, Horizon, LIFE, TSI, CAP | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP, CPF | Mission, LIFE, CPF, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CPF | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission, CAP | Mission,, CPF | Mission,, CPF | Mission, Horizon, CPF | Mission, CPF |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission | Mission, Horizon | | | |
| , wetland and high organic | Research and Innovation | Mission | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | | | |
| | Knowledge sharing and | Mission, CAP | Mission, Horizon, | Mission, Horizon, | Mission, Horizon, LIFE | |

| Soil Health Theme | Activity type | Beneficiary type | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | demonstration | | LIFE, CAP | LIFE, TSI, CAP | | |
| | Implementation of improved SLM practices | Mission, CAP | Mission, LIFE, CAP | Mission, LIFE | Mission, LIFE | |
| | Infrastructure / equipment investment | Mission, CAP | Mission, CAP, CPF | Mission, CPF | Mission, Horizon, CPF | Mission, CPF |
| | Social & cultural dimension | Mission | Mission, Horizon | | | |

**Table 2-3 Detailed overview of the soil health themes[9]**

| Soil health theme | Sub themes |
|---|---|
| Soil damage prevention | Soil protection - reducing/preventing degradation (e.g., erosion, desertification, salinisation, compaction) |
| | Soil management plan implementation |
| | Continuous soil cover (e.g., cover crops, intercropping, nurse cropping, grass leys) |
| Urban soils | Soils reuse |
| | Reduced soil sealing |
| | Soils in sustainable urban planning |
| | Continuous soil cover (e.g., grass establishment, diverse vegetative cover) |
| Soil monitoring | Monitoring framework development |
| | Soil monitoring techniques or tools |
| | Soil testing to monitor and promote soil health |
| | Local, regional and national scale activities to monitor soil health |
| | Improved soil management planning - tools, tests and advice/guidance |
| Soil improvement, enhancement and sustainable practices | Soil restoration |
| | Soil organic carbon |
| | Soil amendments |
| | Soil biodiversity |
| | Soil health improvement |
| | Soil use change |
| | Soil and land remediation and restoration |

[9] Due to the multidisciplinary approach that is often taken to addressing soil health issues, there exist some overlap between themes, therefore some themes could require the same activities to contribute to the restoration, protection and enhancement of soil health.

| Soil health theme | Sub themes |
|---|---|
| | Remediation practices for capped or sealed soils |
| Land management | Machinery selection and usage strategies for reduced soil damage |
| | Reduced soil disturbance |
| | Sustainable livestock management |
| | Land use change |
| | Sustainable grassland management |
| | Sustainable nutrient/fertiliser management |
| | Sustainable pest control |
| Agro-forestry and woodland[10] specific management | Selective felling, avoidance of clear-felling |
| | Woodland restoration |
| | Agro-forestry |
| | Low soil impact forestry harvesting techniques |
| Water | Drainage maintenance |
| | Water supply, including irrigation |
| | Water quality protection and improvement |
| | Water retention, soil water availability and soil water movement/filtration |
| Peatland, wetland and high organic matter soils | Restoration and management |
| | Protection/conservation and management |

*Box 2-1 Further information on type of activities*

This Box provides a non-exclusive overview of the activities that might fall within each of the categories found in the typology of funding matrix in **Table 2-2**.

**Research and innovation:** includes all types of soil health related research - basic and applied research, industry-based and in-field research, experimental development and feasibility studies. Innovation refers to the creation and implementation of new processes,

[10] The term woodland has multiple application and user-specific definitions. In this guidance, woodland refers to land on which trees are grown, whether as an amenity or commercially, and includes any such trees and any vegetation planted or growing naturally among such trees on that land.

products, services and methods for improving soil health. Furthermore, it encompasses funding opportunities available for testing developing innovation outputs, as well as developing and upscaling existing research as a means of working towards increasing the technology readiness level (TRL) to allow the implementation of the innovation outputs. It also includes academic/doctoral and post-doctoral training programmes and fellowships, dedicated to support the work and research around soil health.

**Knowledge sharing and demonstration:** includes all types of funding related to networking, cooperation, the exchange of experiences, dissemination of knowledge and best practices, soil literacy, awareness building, and engagement including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities and individuals. It also refers to other more intangible actions such as capacity building for the preparation, development and structuring of projects/activities related to soil heath.

**Implementation of sustainable land management practices:** this encompasses all funding dedicated to implementation activities and projects related to promoting soil health – including soil management practices, land-use planning, nature-based solutions, among others. It also includes the implementation of practices and the support to the implementation plans or strategies that are required through legislation or policy.

**Infrastructure or equipment investment:** this encompasses all type of funding dedicated to investments in infrastructure, for example, buildings and facilities and equipment to enable sustainable soil management practices in the agriculture sector, developing green infrastructure in urban areas, coastal infrastructure and other water related green infrastructure.

**Social & cultural dimension:** includes all type of funding that while focusing on soil management practices, it also equally aims to support wider social/cultural issues. For example, productive investments in SMEs and investments aiming to safeguard existing jobs and create new employment in rural communities with a focus on soil management practices, investments to enhance the role of culture and sustainable tourism

*Box 2-2 Further information on type of beneficiaries*

This Box provides a non-exclusive overview of the detailed beneficiaries that might fall within each of the categories of the typology of funding matrix found in **Table 2-2**.

**Individuals/ Practitioners:** direct recipients of funding opportunities not organised in companies or associations. This includes farmers and land managers, foresters etc.

**Businesses:** this includes SMEs and large enterprises. It encompasses all types of business related to sustainable land management practices and soil health -i.e., agri-food sector, developers, infrastructure planners and construction, utilities, researchers/demonstrations (advisory organisations). It is worth noting that most funding opportunities target SMEs among any other business type.

**Public authorities:** this includes national, regional and local bodies, as well as public-private partnerships (PPPS).

**Research/Academia:** includes universities, colleges, research dedicated centres.

**NGOs/Civil society:** this encompasses non-profit, charities and third sector organisations, as well as the broader non-organised 'civil society'.

# 3 OVERVIEW OF KEY EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes eight funds and funding opportunities from the MFF for 2021–2027 as well as their respective specific components and subcomponents which can fund or finance projects that support the soil health related themes and activities of the EU, in the form of concise fiches. **Table 3-1** summarises the type of information given for each funding programme in the following sections. It should be noted that the focus for each funding programme included in this guidance is on the most significant information for soil health. More detail on each funding opportunity can be found through the various links provided in the individual descriptions that follow.

**Table 3-1 Summary of information given for each funding opportunity**

| Type of information | Description |
|---|---|
| Overview | Provides a brief introduction to the funding opportunity |
| Objectives | Provides a brief description of the overall objective of the funding opportunity |
| Components | Provides a brief description of the key areas supported through the funding opportunity |
| Relevance to soil health | Provides explanation of how the funding opportunity is relevant to supporting soil health, including the mentioning of relevant components of the funding opportunity, where relevant |
| Volume of funding | Provides the amount of funding available under the funding opportunity in total. Where available, amount of funds available for specific component related to soil health are indicated |
| Type of management | Indicates the type of management applicable to each funding opportunity. The funding programmes can be managed by the Commission (direct management), jointly with the Member States (shared management) or via implementing partners (indirect management) |
| Types of funding | Indicates the type of funds, such as grants, loans, equity or guarantees or the combination thereof |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Indicates the beneficiaries relevant to soil health who are targeted by the funding opportunity |
| Types of projects/ activities | Provides a high-level overview of potential soil health related activities and projects that can be funded by the funding opportunity |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Brief description of how and in which areas the funding opportunity and any project financed via the funding opportunity has the potential to directly contribute to objectives of wider ecosystem services including water, air, biodiversity, climate, |

| Type of information | Description |
|---|---|
| | food security, nutrient cycling, etc. |
| Eligibility criteria | Provides a brief overview of the type of beneficiary and activities eligible for funding and any award criteria, where relevant |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Provides a brief overview of the application process and reporting requirements if funding is awarded with links to relevant guidance, where available |
| Useful links and resources | Provides any additional online resources (e.g. legal basis, information on the Commission's website, link to National Contact Points) for those users that seek more in-depth information |

In the following sections, each funding opportunity is presented in a separate fiche. For the most complex funding opportunities (Horizon Europe, CAP and CPF), first an overview is provided with information on objectives, components and relevance to soil health, while details are presented separately for each of the main components in subsequent fiches.

### 3.2 Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe"[11]

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| Overview | The Mission 'A soil deal for Europe' is an instrument under Horizon Europe however, as it is a flagship initiative for soil it is presented in a separate fiche.<br>Horizon Europe has introduced five EU missions for 2021-2027 and each operates as a portfolio of actions to raise awareness and support policy measures to deliver tangible results by 2030.<br>'A Soil Deal for Europe' is one of the five EU missions in Horizon Europe and aims to lead the transition to healthy soils by 2030 by establishing a network of one hundred living labs and lighthouses in rural and urban areas, advancing the development of a harmonized soil monitoring framework and increasing the awareness of the importance of soil.<br>This mission will support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Green Deal notably the climate |

[11] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- Soil health and food (2022)
- European Mission, Soil Deal for Europe, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (2022)
- European Missions A Soil Deal for Europe Implementation Plan
- Funding & tenders
- Horizon Europe (HORIZON) programme Guide (2022)

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| | initiatives, the EU biodiversity for 2030, the farm to fork strategy and the EU zero-pollution action plan, whilst also being a flagship initiative of the long-term vision for rural areas. |
| Objectives | • Decrease desertification<br>• Conserve soil organic carbon stocks<br>• Prevent soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils<br>• Decrease soil pollution and increase restoration<br>• Prevent erosion<br>• Improve soil structure to enhance soil biodiversity<br>• Decrease the EU global footprint on soils<br>• Improve soil literacy in society |
| Components | • Funding an ambitious research and innovation programme<br>• Arranging a network of 100 living labs and lighthouses<br>• Developing a harmonised framework for soil monitoring in Europe<br>• Raising awareness on the vital importance of soils |
| Relevance to soil health | Between 60-70% of EU soils are classified as unhealthy. As the foundation of the food system and vital support of biodiversity, clean water and our cultural heritage and landscapes, soil must be carefully managed and protected to build resilience and protect ecosystems. Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' funds projects to protect and restore soil health by 2030. |
| Volume of funding | Indicative budget for the mission "A Soil Deal for Europe":<br>• Research and innovation (R&I) programme: EUR 33 million (2021), budget share 2021-2027: 32%;<br>• Living labs and lighthouses: EUR 2 million (2021), budget share 2021-2027: 40%;<br>• Monitoring and indicators: EUR 12 million (2021), budget share 2021-2027: 14%;<br>• Soil literacy, communication and citizen engagement: EUR 15 million (2021), budget share 2021-2027: 7.5%;<br>• Support structures and governance: EUR 5 million (2021), budget share 2021- 2027: 1.5% ;<br>• Scaling out: InvestEU: budget share 2021- 2027: 5%.<br>TOTAL: EUR 67 million (2021), EUR 95 million (2022), EUR 126 million (2023). |
| Type of management | Direct management: 'EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe' is implemented as a 'cross-commission' undertaking. The Mission Manager and Deputy Mission Manager organise the implementation of the mission activities and the mission secretariat at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural |

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| | Development (DG AGRI) and oversee the missions' day-to-day management. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided mostly in the form of grants. Calls for proposals are open periodically. Applications for the 2023 funding opportunities have opened on 17 January 2023 and close on 20 September 2023. The plan for the 2024 call of the Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' is to fund actions such as soil decontamination, citizen engagement', biodiversity, citizen science and promoting skills for sustainable soil and land management. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' does not place restrictions on the type of organisations that may apply for funds. |
| Types of projects/activities | • Research and innovation (knowledge, infrastructure and technology to support the work and research on soil health).<br>• Living labs and lighthouses (network of sites to co-create, demonstrate and upscale soil health solutions).<br>• Soil monitoring and reporting (harmonisation to supplement the European Soil Observatory).<br>• Soil literacy, communication, and training (engagement to a variety of target groups; 'specialised soil advisors').<br><br>Based on the above-mentioned fields specific topics are published on an annual basis. In 2023 call for proposal includes the following 9 topics available (see link below):<br>• 'Discovering the subsoil';<br>• 'Soil pollution processes-modelling and inclusion in advanced digital decision-support tools';<br>• 'Onsite digital technologies to monitor nutrients and chemical or biological stressors in soil and plants with relevance for food safety and nutrition';<br>• 'Innovations to prevent and combat desertification';<br>• 'Soil-friendly practices in horticulture, including alternative growing media';<br>• 'Soils in spatial planning';<br>• 'Back to earth: bringing communities and citizens closer to soil';<br>• 'Co-creating solutions for soil health in Living Labs';<br>• 'Carbon farming in Living Labs'; |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Funding opportunities for research, experiments and demonstrations into soil health has the potential to directly contribute towards developing the knowledge of other ecosystems such as the effect of soil health on water, |

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| | biodiversity, climate and food safety and security. |
| Eligibility criteria | Generally, any organisation can apply for funding under Horizon Europe however, they must demonstrate their operational and financial capacity. Moreover, for many calls for proposals applicants should apply as part of a team consisting of a minimum of three partner organisations from three different EU or associated countries, with at least one partner being from an EU country. Further information can be found in the 'Horizon Europe Programme guide' (see link below).<br><br>Living labs will consist of public-private-people partnerships between multiple actors (preferably involving science, policy, practice and citizen groups). Examples of users include soil managers such as farmers, foresters, advisors and industries with impacts on soil as well as researchers. The target audience for living lab demonstrations include the public, soil managers and networks such as the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI).<br><br>The criteria for lighthouses are based on exemplary performance in terms of soil health. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | • Funding and tenders can be found on the 'search Funding & Tenders' page (see link below). Open calls for proposals are presented through 'information days' organised by the European Research Executive Agency (REA).<br>• Create a profile in the 'Funding and Tenders Portal' (see link below) and using the online form, submit your proposal. Some calls may require you to submit a concept note beforehand, and only once this is successful can you then submit a full project proposal.<br>• Your proposal is then evaluated by a panel of experts, and you will be informed by the REA if you have been successful.<br>• A grant agreement is drawn up with the project partners and will detail the budget, duration, activity and EU contribution. |
| Useful links and resources | EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe and relevant funding<br>Horizon Europe programme guide<br>Horizon Europe Info Days<br>Soil Mission 2023 calls for proposal<br>Funding and Tender Portal<br>Work Programme 2023-2024 |

## 3.3 Horizon Europe[12]

In this chapter the guidance introduces the Horizon Europe programme and subsequently presents in separate fiches the three pillars of Horizon Europe and the relevant specific funding opportunities encompassed in these pillars:

- Horizon Europe Pillar I (Section 3.3.1): The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) (Section3.3.1.1), the European Research Council (ERC) (Section 3.3.1.2), Research Infrastructures (RIS) (Section 3.3.1.3)
- Horizon Europe Pillar II (Section 3.3.2)
- Horizon Europe Pillar III (Section 3.3.3): European Innovation Council (Section 3.3.3.1), The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) (Section 3.3.3.2) and European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE) (Section 3.3.3.3).

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|---|---|
| Overview | Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding and largest transnational programme supporting research and innovation through work programmes which set out funding opportunities.<br>Horizon Europe tackles climate change helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhances the EU's competitiveness and growth. The new elements of Horizon Europe include:<br>• European Innovation Council;<br>• Five Missions to address the world's biggest challenges. The soil relevant mission is described above. See section 3.2;<br>• Open science policy: open access to publications and open science principles;<br>• New partnership approach: objective-driven and more ambitious partnerships with industry in support of EU policy objectives. |
| Objectives | Horizon Europe aims to encourage excellence-based participation from Member States and facilitate collaborative links in research and innovation across Europe. |

[12] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Horizon Europe, budget: Horizon Europe - the most ambitious EU research & innovation programme ever, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Publications Office of the European Union,( 2021)
Horizon Europe (2022)
Horizon Europe, funding opportunities
Funding tenders & opportunities portal
A guide to funding opportunities under Horizon Europe – calls 2023 (2022).
Online Manual - Funding Tenders Opportunities
Admissibility and eligibility check - Online Manual

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|---|---|
| Components | Horizon Europe is made up of three pillars and one Part (Participation):<br>• Pillar I: Excellent Science;<br>• Pillar II: Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness;<br>• Pillar III: Innovative Europe;<br>• Partnerships: Widening participation and strengthening the European research area; |
| Relevance to soil health | Research and innovation are critical in finding solutions to soil health challenges. It is crucial to develop the creation and diffusion of high-quality new knowledge and innovation in Europe to ensure the uptake of innovative solutions, reinforce the impact of research and innovation in addressing EU's priorities and strengthen the European research area. This programme provides a number of opportunities to fund soil health research, innovation and dissemination activities. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 95.51 billion for the period 2021-2027.<br>• Pillar I: EUR 25 billion<br>• Pillar II: EUR 53.5 billion<br>• Pillar III: EUR 13.6 billion<br>• Partnerships: EUR 3.4 billion |
| Eligibility criteria | Most EU programmes require applicants to be:<br>• Legal entities;<br>• Either established in an eligible country (EU Member State), non-EU eligible countries (European Economic Area countries) or associated countries (associated by paying into a funding programme). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Grants process steps:<br>• Search funding opportunities (find a call);<br>• Search for partners;<br>• Register the organisation (receive a 9-digit participant identification code);<br>• Proposal submission (Topic page on the Portal> Start Submission)<br>• Eligibility and admissibility check;<br>• Proposal evaluation (by the evaluation committee which is made up of EU staff from the Granting Authority and other services);<br>• Grant preparation and agreement through the Grant Management System (administrative and financial information, description of the action, estimated budget, |

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| | project variables & legal documents needed for grant signature);<br>• Grant signature through the Grant Management System.<br>As an expert: process steps:<br>• Register as an expert;<br>• Sign the contract, submit your proof of identity, and make payment requests through 'my expert area';<br>• The EU service will make contact to let you know if you have been selected. |
| Useful links and resources | Horizon Europe Budget<br>Horizon Europe Work Programme<br>Participation in Horizon Europe<br>Horizon funding opportunities<br>Funding and tender portal<br>Partner search<br>Organisation registration<br>Submission guide<br>Register as an expert<br>Model contract for experts<br>My expert area<br>Expert roles<br>A guide to funding opportunities under Horizon Europe – calls 2023 |

### *3.3.1 Horizon Europe Pillar I 'Excellent Science'*[13]

| | |
|---|---|
| Overview | Horizon Europe Pillar I, titled 'Excellent Science', provides grants for projects to enhance and develop the EU's research, innovation and scientific competitiveness. |
| Objectives | • Research projects<br>• Staff exchanges<br>• Research infrastructure development |
| Components | Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. See section 3.3.1.1 |

[13] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- Horizon Europe Pillar 1 – excellence in science - Overview
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, pillar I - Excellent science: Driving scientific excellence and supporting the EU's position as a world leader in science, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

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|---|---|
| | European Research Council. See section 3.3.1.2<br>Research infrastructures. See section 3.3.1.3 |
| Relevance to soil health | Available funding facilitates research and innovation which can be extended to soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | Total: EUR 25 billion<br>Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions: EUR 6.6 billion<br>European Research Council: EUR 16 billion<br>Research infrastructures: EUR 2.4 billion |
| Type of management | Direct management: Projects are overseen by the EU Granting Authority who will review projects, complete financial audits on participants, monitor project implementation and check compliance with the grant agreement obligations. However, the specific management approach is dependent on each project. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Specific eligibility criteria vary between specific funding opportunities. Examples of the types of organisations that may be eligible include:<br>• SME;<br>• Large enterprises;<br>• Research organisations;<br>• Public authorities;<br>• NGOs;<br>• Civil society organisations. |
| Types of projects / activities | • Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA): bottom-up research and innovation programme for doctoral and postdoctoral training and worldwide collaborative research projects.<br>• European Research Council (ERC): research to advance the frontier of science.<br>• Research Infrastructures (RIS): provide facilities, services, and resources for research and innovation. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Projects funded under Horizon Pillar I develop research and innovation across a range of environmental topics such as biodiversity, climate, and water. Projects which focus on soil health may provide an indirect benefit by adding to the knowledge and understanding surrounding other environmental compartments and challenges. |
| Eligibility criteria | See section 3.3 |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | See section 3.3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Useful links and resources | Funding and tender opportunities pillar I |

#### 3.3.1.1 The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)[14]

| | |
|---|---|
| Overview | The MSCA are part of Horizon Europe's Pillar I (Excellent Science). They are the EU's flagship funding programme for the mobility and training of excellent researchers, as well as the development of doctoral and postdoctoral training programmes and worldwide collaborative research projects. |
| Objectives | The objective of the MSCA is to build on Europe's capacity for research and innovation by investing in the long-term careers of excellent researchers, and to foster lasting international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations with a strong structuring effect on participating institutions. |
| Components | • Doctoral Networks (DN)<br>• Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)<br>• Staff Exchanges (SE)<br>• COFUND (Co-funding)<br>• MSCA and Citizens |
| Relevance to soil health | The MSCA are a "bottom-up" programme, where topics are chosen freely by the applicants and the main drivers are scientific excellence and innovation. They can therefore support research and innovation in the area of soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | Budget for the MSCA under Horizon Europe is EUR 6.6 billion. |
| Type of management | Direct management– The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions are managed by DG Education, Sport, Youth, and Culture of the EC and the European Research Executive Agency (REA). |
| Types of funding | • Doctoral networks (DN): Supporting the development of doctoral programmes through Standard Doctorates, Industrial Doctorates and Joint Doctorates.<br>• Postdoctoral fellowships (PF): Supporting the careers of individual researchers through European Postdoctoral Fellowships and Global Postdoctoral Fellowships.<br>• Staff Exchanges (SE): Supporting collaborative R&I |

[14] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – About the MSCA programme
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Funding opportunities

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| | projects through the short-term mobility of staff between participating organisations.<br>• COFUND: Co-funding for regional, national and international programmes for doctoral and post-doctoral training and career development.<br>• MSCA and Citizens: Bringing science closer to the public with the European Researchers' NIGHT. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | The MSCA are available to academic and non-academic organisations worldwide. These include:<br>• Universities<br>• Research institutions<br>• Government entities<br>• Businesses<br>• SMEs<br>• Other non-academic organisations<br><br>Individual researchers at all levels of their careers can find hosting positions on the EURAXESS Job Portal. |
| Types of projects / activities | The MSCA include multi-beneficiary and mono-beneficiary actions. Participation rules vary across actions. For more details, please read the relevant Work Programme parts. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Funding through training programmes and global collaborative projects enables research into other ecosystem services such a climate, water quality, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | Eligibility criteria vary across actions. Please read the relevant Work Programme parts. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Individual applicants and organisations can apply to open calls for Doctoral Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges, COFUND or MSCA and Citizens.<br>MSCA calls are published on an annual basis. Open funding and forthcoming opportunities can be found on the 'Funding and Tenders Opportunities' portal (see link below). |
| Useful links and resources | MSCA website<br>- Doctoral Networks<br>- Postdoctoral Fellowships<br>- Staff Exchanges<br>- COFUND<br>- MSCA & Citizens<br>To attract researchers post hosting offers on EURAXESS |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Funding opportunities<br>Funding and Tender Opportunities portal<br>Frequently Asked Questions on the Funding & Tender Opportunities portal |

#### 3.3.1.2 European Research Council (ERC) [15]

| | |
|---|---|
| Overview | The European Research Council (ERC) provides flexible funding for frontier, early-stage research across Europe. |
| Objectives | The ERC, led by the Scientific Council, offer 4 main grant schemes with additional funds available to support commercial or societal potential of ERC research grants (ERC Proof of Concept). ERC grants support quality research across all scientific fields through a 'bottom-up' approach with the objective to bring about new scientific and technological discoveries to make the European research base more prepared to respond to global challenges. |
| Components | • ERC Starting Grant<br>• ERC Consolidator Grant<br>• ERC Advanced Grant<br>• ERC Synergy Grant<br>• ERC Proof of Concept |
| Relevance to soil health | Funding available facilitates early-stage research through a 'bottom-up' approach which can be extended to soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 16 billion<br>• ERC Starting Grant: EUR 1.5 million<br>• ERC Consolidator Grant: EUR 2 million<br>• ERC Advanced Grant: EUR 2.5 million<br>• ERC Synergy Grant: EUR 10 million (an additional EUR 4 million can be requested)<br>• ERC Proof of Concept Grant: EUR 150,000 |
| Type of management | Direct management: Projects are overseen by the EU Granting Authority who will review projects, complete financial audits on participants, monitor project implementation and check |

[15] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- ERC funding programme homepage
- ERC grant application details

| | |
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| | compliance with the grant agreement obligations. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants ranging from EUR 1.5-10 million. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | These grants are aimed at researchers based at universities and research institutions (private and public). |
| Types of projects / activities | The ERC funding aims to promote projects and activities at the frontier of research in any scientific domain, including social sciences, humanities and interdisciplinary studies. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Multiple grants are available for early-stage research which can include environmental/climate topics which can impact ecosystem services such a climate, water quality, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | View specific grants and tenders for specific eligibility details (see link below). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | The following ERC grant applications are to be submitted in response to a yearly call for Proposals found on the 'Funding and Tenders portal' (see link below). Applications can be made in any field of research and must be conducted in a public or private research organisation:<br>• ERC Starting Grant;<br>• ERC Consolidator Grant;<br>• ERC Advanced Grant;<br>• ERC Synergy Grant.<br>For the ERC Starting Grant, ERC Consolidator Grant, and ERC Advanced Grant:<br>• Identify and contact the host institution on the online research partner search services;<br>• Proposal writing (you can receive support from your 'National Contact Point' (see link below));<br>• Submit on the 'EU submission service' (see link below);<br>For the Synergy Grant:<br>• Each Principal Investigator must identify a host organisation;<br>• Build upon the research idea and write a proposal (you can receive support from your 'National Contact Point' (see link below));<br>• Submit on the 'EU submission service' (see link below).<br>For the ERC Proof of Concept:<br>• Apply to open calls on the 'Funding and Tenders portal' (see link below) with an administrative form, the proposal and supplementary documents. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Useful links and resources | ERC Starting Grant<br>ERC Consolidator Grant<br>ERC Advanced Grant<br>ERC Proof of Concept<br>ERC Synergy Grant<br>Non-EU researchers<br>Funding and Tenders Portal<br>Online research partner search services<br>National Contact Point<br>EU submission service |

#### 3.3.1.3 Research infrastructures (RIS)[16]

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| Overview | Research Infrastructures (RIS) are facilities providing services and resources to conduct research which are accessible to researchers to reinforce and supplement scientific innovation. |
| Objectives | • Decrease the fragmentation of research and innovation ecosystem<br>• Synchronise the use and development of RIS.<br>• Global collaboration to operate large infrastructures to respond to complex challenges.<br>• Increase awareness of RIS to enhance the innovation potential of products and technology.<br>• Develop global partnerships and address common problems through science and RIS (science diplomacy). |
| Components | • Major equipment or instrument sets.<br>• Knowledge-related facilities (e.g., collections).<br>• Archives or scientific data infrastructures.<br>• Computing systems.<br>• Communication networks. |
| Relevance to soil health | Research Infrastructures enable actors to conduct world-class research which can be extended to soil health and science. Food and agriculture research facilities such as 'EMPHASIS-PREP' has been included in the Horizon 2020 RIS landscape (see link below). |

[16] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
European Research Infrastructures (RIS) funding programme

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| Volume of funding | EUR 2.4 billion |
| Type of management | Direct management: The EC collaborate with European countries to implement strategies to provide Europe with RIS. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants and tenders |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Research communities. |
| Types of projects / activities | Provision of research infrastructure and facilities that provide services for research communities to conduct and foster innovation. These may be single-sited, distributed or virtual.<br>These may include:<br>• Major scientific equipment or sets of instruments;<br>• Collections, archives, or scientific data;<br>• Computing systems and communication networks;<br>• Any other research and innovation infrastructure of a unique nature. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | The funding available for research infrastructure can help facilitate and enhance the research and innovation in interconnected systems and related ecosystem services such as climate, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | View specific grant and tenders for eligibility details (see link below). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | All funding information and details on how to apply are found on the 'Funding and Tenders portal' (see link below). |
| Useful links and resources | Research Infrastructures work programme<br>Funding and Tender opportunities for research infrastructure<br>RIS Landscape (list of Horizon 2020 RIS in Europe)<br>Funding and Tenders portal |

### *3.3.2 Horizon Europe Pillar II 'Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness'*[17]

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| Overview | Horizon Pillar II 'Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness' supports research and innovation to address |

[17] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment (no date)

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe, pillar II - Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

Funding & tender opportunities portal

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| | societal challenges and strengthens industrial and technological capabilities through six clusters. |
| Objectives | The main objective of Horizon pillar II is to incentivise cross-disciplinary, cross sectoral, cross border and cross-policy collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). |
| Components | Horizon pillar II is organised into 6 clusters:<br>• Health<br>• Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society<br>• Civil Security for Society<br>• Digital, Industry and Space<br>• Climate, Energy and Mobility<br>• Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment |
| Relevance to soil health | 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' is the most soil relevant cluster. This cluster will contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal related to the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, the Farm to Fork strategy, the European Climate Pact and initiatives under sustainable industry and eliminating pollution, as well as the long-term vision for rural areas, and the Sustainable Development Goals. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 53.5 billion |
| Type of management | Direct management– Projects are overseen by the EU Granting Authority who will review projects, complete financial audits on participants, monitor project implementation and check compliance with the grant agreement obligations. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants and Tenders– found through the 'Funding and Tender opportunities' page (see link below). |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • SMEs<br>• Start-ups<br>• Research organisations<br>• Private companies<br>• Public authorities<br>• Non-governmental organisations<br>• Civil society |
| Types of projects / activities | Horizon Pillar II covers research and innovation activities from a full range of Technology Readiness Levels. Projects are supported after an evaluation of proposals through an independent evaluation process, Topics proposed under the calls for proposals define the policy context, expected outcomes and |

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| | the scope. consist of topics and each topic defines a r, including scope and expected outcomes. Previous soil-related projects under cluster Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment included:<br>• 'Next generation soil advisors';<br>• 'Citizen science for soil health';<br>• 'Innovations for soil improvement from bio-waste';<br>• 'Linking soil health to nutritional and safe food';<br>• 'Soil biodiversity and its contribution to ecosystem services';<br>• 'Monitoring, reporting and verification of soil carbon and greenhouse gases balance'.<br>Interventions areas under this cluster are:<br>• Environmental observation;<br>• Biodiversity and natural resources;<br>• Agriculture, forestry and rural areas (includes soil as a key research area to "understand, monitor and measure the specific effects of agricultural and forestry activities on soils");<br>• Seas, oceans and inland waters;<br>• Food systems;<br>• Bio-based innovation systems in the EU's bioeconomy;<br>Circular systems; |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | This cluster has a wider approach which benefits ecosystem services by:<br>• Limiting environmental degradation;<br>• Preventing and reversing biodiversity loss;<br>• Improving natural resources management;<br>• Transitioning to low carbon, resource efficient circular economy and sustainable bioeconomy;<br>• Supporting resource efficient circular economy and sustainable bioeconomy. |
| Eligibility criteria | See section 3.3 |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | See section 3.3 |
| Useful links and resources | Funding and tender opportunities pillar II<br>Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment<br>Horizon Europe Work programme (2023-24) - Cluster 6 (draft)<br>Funding and tender opportunities |

### *3.3.3 Horizon Europe Pillar III 'Innovative Europe'*[18]

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| Overview | Horizon Pillar III 'Innovative Europe' supports innovation creation, performance, transfer and scale-up in Europe by reinforcing collaboration between multiple actors. |
| Objectives | • Support innovations with breakthrough and market creation potential.<br>• Create connections with national and regional innovation actors.<br>• Assemble key players from research, education and business to foster innovation. |
| Components | • European Innovation Council (EIC). See section 3.3.3.1<br>• European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). See section 3.3.3.2<br>• European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE). See section 3.3.3.3 |
| Relevance to soil health | Funding available facilitates research and encourages innovation which can be extended to soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 13.6 billion<br>• EIC: EUR 10.1 billion<br>• EIT: EUR 3 billion<br>• EIE: EUR 527 million |
| Type of management | Direct management: Projects are overseen by the EU Granting Authority who will review projects, complete financial audits on participants, monitor project implementation and check compliance with the grant agreement obligations. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants and Tenders: There are currently no grants or tenders open (see link below). |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Specific eligibility criteria vary between specific funding opportunities. Examples of the types of organisations that may be eligible include:<br>• Research/academia<br>• Entrepreneurs<br>• Start ups |

[18] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe, pillar III - Innovative Europe: supporting and connecting innovators across Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

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| | • SMEs<br>• Universities<br>• Public/national and/or local authorities<br>• Organisations<br>• Public-owned enterprises<br>• Industrial stakeholders<br>• Social innovators<br>• Technology transfer centres<br>• Civil society<br>• Accelerators<br>• Investors |
| Types of projects / activities | Programmes, grants, services and resources depending on project (see sections below). |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Projects funded under Horizon Pillar III support innovation which has the potential to cover multiple topics related to different ecosystem services such as water quality, biodiversity and food production. Soil health related projects may also indirectly address other environmental challenges. |
| Eligibility criteria | See section 3.3 |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | See section 3.3 |
| Useful links and resources | Funding and Tender opportunities pillar III |

#### 3.3.3.1 European Innovation Council (EIC) [19]

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| Overview | The EIC is a flagship innovation programme within Pillar III of Horizon Europe to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and game changing innovations. |
| Objectives | The EIC encourages innovation that has scale-up potential with a particular focus on breakthrough, market-creating innovation that is too risky for private investors. The EIC works alongside the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to |

[19] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
European Innovation Council, EISMEA
European Innovation Council, Research and Innovation (2022)
EIC 2023 work programme

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| | support the collaboration of European Entrepreneurs. |
| Components | Research and development collaboration<br>Development and scaling-up of research results<br>Innovation scale-up |
| Relevance to soil health | Funding available facilitates high-risk, market-creating innovation which can be extended to soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 10.1 billion (70% of the budget earmarked for SMEs)<br>• Pathfinder funding: Grants of up to EUR 3 million (can receive additional funding for testing the innovation potential of their research outputs).<br>• Transition funding: Grant funding up to EUR 2.5 million.<br>• Accelerator funding: Grant funding up to EUR 2.5 million and/or<br>Investment support of up to EUR 15 million managed by the EIC Fund. (Investments of more than EUR 15 million can be provided to those working on technologies of strategic European interest) |
| Type of management | Direct management: European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) is responsible for developing and implementing the European Innovation Council. |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants and investments. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • Universities<br>• Research organisation<br>• Start-up<br>• Spin-offs<br>• High-tech SMEs<br>• Industrial stakeholders |
| Types of projects / activities | The EIC provides funding to support research teams, build on research results, develop business plans and supports individual start-ups and small companies. In 2023, the following projects were distinguished for project proposals to be submitted:<br>• Pathfinder funding: Involving a collaboration of researchers and partners from a minimum of 3 different countries, the pathfinder funding supports high-risk, early-stage development and research of radical, market-creating technologies.<br>• Transition funding: Supports the development and scaling-up of research results to innovation potential. EIC transition funds the 'maturation and validation of novel technology in the laboratory and application environment and the development of business models towards the innovation's future commercialisation. |

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| | • Accelerator funding: Supports the scaling up of innovations by start-ups and SMEs to develop ground-breaking innovations through grant funding, investment, coaching, mentoring and access to investors. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Grants supporting the scale-up of high-risk research and development can support other environmental/climate topics which can, in turn, impact ecosystem services such a climate, water quality, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | • Pathfinder funding supports those interested in technological research and innovation which usually includes scientists and entrepreneurial researchers.<br>• Transition funding is for small consortium (which consist of a maximum of 5 partners) or single applicants.<br>• Accelerator funding supports innovators and applications from all Member States and associated countries are eligible. Applications from start-ups and SMEs with female CEOs are particularly welcomed. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | • Pathfinder and transition calls are found through the 'Funding and Tender opportunities' page (see link below).<br>• Accelerator: You will need to prepare a video pitch, slide deck, answers to questions regarding your innovation and team, and if successful, you will then complete a full application (apply through the EIC platform). |
| Useful links and resources | EIC Pathfinder<br>EIC Transition<br>EIC Accelerator<br>EIC 2023 work programme (europa.eu)<br>Funding and Tender opportunities<br>EIC Platform<br>EIC FAQs |

#### 3.3.3.2 The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) [20]

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| Overview | The EIT is an independent EU body which brings 2900 key |

[20] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- European Institute of Innovation & Technology- EIT Food
- EIT Food

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| | actors together (KIC) around the common goal to reinforce Europe's ability to innovate.<br>EIT primarily operates through KICs (which are thematic partnerships amongst education, research and business organisations. KICs support the company start-ups, entrepreneur training and the development of new products/services. To date, there are nine Innovation Communities to address different societal challenges, the one most relevant to soil is EIT Food which has 168 partners and leads a global initiative in food innovation and production. |
| Objectives | EIT Food support the creation and advancement of agri-food start-up companies, launching new products and engaging the public alongside 6 key objectives:<br>• Overcome low consumer trust;<br>• Create consumer-valued food for healthier nutrition;<br>• Develop a consumer-centric connected food system;<br>• Enhance sustainability through resource stewardship;<br>• Educate to engage, innovate and advance;<br>• Catalyse food entrepreneurship and innovation; |
| Components | • Innovation (protein diversification, circular food systems, digital traceability, sustainable agriculture, sustainable aquaculture and targeted nutrition).<br>• Education (online & in person learning such as short courses, summer schools and PhD programmes).<br>• Entrepreneurship (three programmes: Launch-seedbed incubator, accelerate – EIT food accelerator network & Scale-RisingFoodStars).<br>• Public engagement (dialogue and engagement, via events, offering guidance and school programmes). |
| Relevance to soil health | EIT Food recognises the importance of healthy soils and has previously supported by:<br>• Connecting start-ups with farmers to trial and test new innovations in test farms programme;<br>• Supporting regenerative agriculture by providing training through the Regenerative Agriculture Revolution Programme;<br>• Providing educational workshops on emerging technologies ('Grow Workshops'). |
| Volume of funding | EIT funding: circa EUR 3 billion.<br>EIT Food financial allocation of over EUR 150 million direct financial support in the form of grants and investments for the period of 2023-2025<br>EIT Test farms financial support for RIS start-ups: EUR 3000. |

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| Type of management | Direct management: EIT Food is a pan-European organisation forming an institutional partnership (Co-funded by the EU). |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants and procurements. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • Businesses<br>• Entrepreneurs<br>• Public Authorities<br>• Researchers<br>• Students<br>• Universities |
| Types of projects / activities | • Grants and procurements<br>• Courses<br>• Events<br>• Start-ups<br>An example of a previous programme:<br>Regenerative Agriculture Revolution programme (see link below)–_As an agri-food company, EIT Food offers services to train your suppliers in the movement towards regenerative agriculture practices through:<br>• Farmer training and technical assistance;<br>• Procurement strategy consulting;<br>• Ecosystem measurement services;<br>• Knowledge and innovation communities of regenerative farmers (development of a regenerative farmers forum to share knowledge and experience). |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | EIT Food supports research and innovation into other ecosystem services by providing grants, events, and courses for their key innovation areas:<br>• Circular Food Systems<br>• Digital Traceability<br>• Protein Diversification<br>• Sustainable Aquaculture<br>• Sustainable Agriculture<br>• Targeted Nutrition |
| Eligibility criteria | View specific grant and tenders for specific eligibility detail (see link below). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | • Grants & procurements: View all open calls through the 'EIT Food Grants & Procurements' page which details the eligibility and the application process for each call (see link below)<br>• Courses: View all upcoming courses through the 'EIT |

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| | Food Courses' page which will provide further information on each course and where to register (see link below)<br>• Events: View all upcoming events through the 'EIT Food Events' page which provides information on each event and where to register (see link below) |
| Useful links and resources | EIT Food<br>Test farms 2022<br>The Regenerative Agriculture Revolution<br>EIT Food Grants & Procurements<br>EIT Food Courses<br>EIT Food Events<br>EIT Food Start-ups<br>EIT Opportunities |

#### 3.3.3.3 European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE)[21]

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| Overview | The EIE focuses on building an interconnected and efficient innovation ecosystem to encourage company scale up and support innovation by acting alongside the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). |
| Objectives | • Encourages the assembly of key actors whose common goal is innovation.<br>• Supports and includes the affiliation of resources, organisations, investors and policymakers. |
| Components | • Development of innovation ecosystems<br>• Building network connectivity between ecosystems<br>• Funding research & development projects |
| Relevance to soil health | Funding available encourages innovation which can be extended to soil health and science. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 527 million |
| Type of management | Direct management: EIE programme is run by European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA). |

[21] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
European Innovation Ecosystems (2022)

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| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of funds and tenders. Calls are found on the 'Funding and Tenders portal' page (see link below). |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • Public national, regional and/or local authorities<br>• Public-owned enterprises<br>• SMEs and start-ups<br>• Incubators<br>• Accelerators<br>• Research institutions<br>• Technological organisations<br>• Investors<br>• Civil society<br>• Social innovators<br>• Technology transfer centres |
| Types of projects / activities | • CONNECT: Connect consists of actions which develop and expand innovation ecosystems across Europe by assembling new actors and territories to collaborate with existing local, regional and national ecosystems to address global challenges which includes the green transition. *('networking').*<br>• SCALEUP: Scaleup actions is centred around building local, national and European network connectivity in and between ecosystems to develop business and put companies in a better position capture and create ecosystem opportunities. *('business growth').*<br>• INNOVSMES: Dedicated to funding research and development projects run by innovative SMEs and partners (companies, universities and research organisations). ('Increase R&I capacity towards global value chains & new markets'). |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | The funding available to create more connected and efficient ecosystems by supporting the scaling up of companies can spur innovation of multiple ecosystem services to address challenges such as water quality, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including those from non-associated third countries or international organisations is eligible to participate. Full details of eligibility can be found in Horizon Europe -Work Programme 2021-2022 General Annex B. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | All funding information and details on how to apply are on the Funding and Tenders portal, see link below. |

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| Useful links and resources | European Innovation Ecosystems work programme<br>Funding and Tenders portal |

### 3.4 The Common Agriculture Policy[22]

In this chapter the guidance introduces in brief the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and provides, in a separate fiche targeted information on both funds which together form the funding basis for the CAP these are: the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (Section 3.4.1). The CAP has recently undergone a significant reform, providing greater focus on alignment with other EU initiatives and objectives including increased environmental and climate ambition and a revised approach giving Member States increased flexibility. The new CAP is implemented through the CAP Strategic Plans and started from 1 January 2023. Each Member State has designed and implemented their own CAP Strategic Plan which provides interventions and actions that specifically address the needs of that country. Each Strategic Plan is based around the ten objectives of the new CAP and will contribute to the European Green Deal objectives. Member States have increased flexibility in the development of these integrated plans with far greater alignment and interaction between the EAGF and the EAFRD than in previous programmes. Below please find more bespoke Fiche, designed to reflect better the operation of the CAP funding overall rather than focusing on individual funds and therefore it differs in structure from the other funding opportunities provided in this guidance.

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| Overview | The CAP has existed since 1962, to support farmers and ensure Europe's food security. It is a common policy across the EU and funded by EU and Member States budgets. The new CAP (2023-27) provides support for green practices and is an important tool for meeting the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies of the EU Green Deal. It allows EU Member States the flexibility to adapt measures to local conditions. Each of the CAP Strategic Plans for 2023-27 are designed with the dual purpose of addressing the specific needs of the agriculture sector in that country and meeting the CAP and Green Deal objectives. |
| Objectives | The New CAP seeks to ensure a sustainable future for European farmers, provide more targeted support to local conditions and different farms size, and allow greater flexibility for EU countries to adapt measures to local conditions. |

[22] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Key Reforms in the New CAP (2022)
Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 (2021), European Commission.
Key policy objectives of the new CAP (2022)
The Common Agricultural Policy at a Glance (2022)

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| | There are ten strategic objectives to the new CAP around which the Member States have designed their CAP Strategic Plans.<br>• To ensure a fair income for farmers;<br>• To increase competitiveness;<br>• To improve the position of farmers in the food chain;<br>• Climate change action;<br>• Environmental care, focusing on the benefits of soil, soil health and soil protection;<br>• To preserve landscapes and biodiversity;<br>• To support generational renewal;<br>• Vibrant rural areas;<br>• To protect food and health quality;<br>• Fostering knowledge and innovation. |
| Components | The new CAP has a complex structure including a large number of components (described in more detail in section 3.4.1 below) with significant flexibility in Member States on how their unique CAP Strategic Plans and funds are distributed. However, at a higher level, the CAP provides funding opportunities aligned with the below components:<br>• income support through direct payments ensures income stability, linked to a set of mandatory rules for management requirements and minimum standards to ensure good agricultural and environmental conditions of agricultural land;<br>• Dedicated part of direct payment (at least 25%) to address specific need for environmental and climatic concerns (new scheme so called Eco-scheme);<br>• market measures to deal with difficult market situations such as a sudden drop in demand due to a health scare, or a fall in prices as a result of a temporary oversupply on the market;<br>• rural development measures with national and regional programmes to address the specific needs and challenges facing rural areas, including environmental aspects. |
| Relevance to soil health | The new CAP has higher environmental ambitions and will contribute to the EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork strategy and Biodiversity strategy. Climate targets related to soil sequestration and adaption are also relevant to soil. Many elements of the CAP are directly relevant to protection, enhancement and restoration of soil health. The CAP provides a very important mechanism to drive action to protect soils and, to a limited extent, restore them. More detail on the funding opportunities relating to soils are |

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| | provided in section 3.4.1 below. |

### *3.4.1 Funding the CAP: the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)*[23]

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| Overview | The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is funded by two funds: the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The new CAP seeks to simplify and harmonise the objectives of the CAP and make the dual funding sources less distinct than previously. The EAGF will generally be used for direct payments and eco-schemes, while the EAFRD supports rural development interventions such as environmental, climate and other management commitments, conversion to and maintenance of organic farming, Natura 2000 and forestry measures and investments in equipment and infrastructure. The increased environmental ambition driven by the new CAP will be funded by the EAGF through a requirement to support allocate at least 25% of Member State funding to environmental delivery. The increased environmental ambition is evident in the enhanced conditionality requirements. These requirements include meeting Statutory Management Conditions (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs). SMRs include existing rules EU rules on public, animal and plant health, animal welfare and the environment, while GAEC basic requirements have been set out for all Member States, with options to adapt them to respond to national situations. New GAECs e.g. GAEC 2 on protecting peatlands and wetland, have been added to those in the previous period, while existing GAECs have been enhanced to ensure that the CAP will deliver increased support for more sustainable practices. |
| Objectives | The objectives of CAP funding are to support the 10 objectives as described in section 3.4, supporting European farmers to transition to a sustainable and resilient future, in vibrant and diverse rural areas. Since the announcement of the European Green Deal, CAP Strategic Plans have also contributed to the Green Deal Farm to Fork Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy. |
| Components | The funding opportunities align with the different types of interventions in CAP Strategic Plans. The interventions are briefly described below.. |

[23] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 (2021), European Commission.
New Common Agricultural Policy (2022)
Common Agricultural Policy Funds (2022)

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| | As funded by EAGF<br>• **Basic income support** for sustainability, which is conditional on meeting Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) and is paid as an annual decoupled payment per eligible hectare.<br>• **Coupled income support** for nineteen specific sectors or specific types of farming where they are important for environmental or socio-economic reasons. Examples include protein crops, olive oil fruit and vegetables and silkworms.<br>• **Eco-schemes:** new voluntary schemes to support climate, environment and animal welfare activities that go beyond conditionality.<br>• **Sectoral interventions** for 17 specific sectors, including aid schemes to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of certain sectors, such as fruit and vegetables, wine and olive oil.<br>• **Operational programmes** for the fruit and vegetable sector will allocate 15% of their spending on environmentally beneficial activities.<br>As funded by EAFRD<br>• **Agri-environment-climate and other management commitments.** These are usually 5-7 year commitments for soil related commitments. These commitments also include organic farming conversion and maintenance, which may have shorter commitment periods (eg. for conversion).<br>• **Cooperation,** where farmers come together to deal with issues, for example relating to soil. This needs to be a new form of cooperation or a new activity. Funding can support EIP operational groups, LEADER projects, the promotion and support of quality schemes, producer groups and organisations or the creation of 'smart-village strategies.<br>• **Investments in tangible or intangible assets** to help achieve one or more of the 10 objectives.<br>• Payments to compensate for **natural or area specific** constraints.<br>• **Area specific disadvantages** due to requirements under the Water Framework Directive or Birds and Habitats Directive.<br>• **Specific support for young farmers** through generational renewal payments for 377 000 new young farmers. This includes efforts to improve gender equality and bolster women in farming.<br>• **Knowledge exchange and innovation** are also key with training, advice and knowledge exchange as key elements |

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| | across all Strategic Plans.<br>In addition to the components above there are some additional targeting of funding opportunities based on Member State specific priorities:<br>• In 25 Member States small and medium sized farms will receive a larger proportion of direct payments than in previous periods, known as the complementary redistributive income support for sustainability.<br>• 15% of farms in the EU are able to receive support to access risk management tools such as funding insurance premiums or using mutual funds. |
| Relevance to soil health | The CAP includes many areas which both directly and indirectly support investments in the protection of soils. The funding opportunities are relevant to farmers (for both direct payment and rural development interventions;); land managers, foresters, advisers, and public administrations under rural development measures to various extents. Despite each Member State developing their own Strategic Plan, there are some common soil relevant practices they can support. These include (but are not exhaustive):<br>• organic farming,<br>• agro-ecology practices such as crop rotation and use of cover crops,<br>• precision farming,<br>• carbon farming<br>• erosion prevention strips and wind breaks and<br>• high nature value farming.<br>Member States are encouraged to support these farm practices through a single funding stream or through a mix, highlighting the complementarity of the instruments. What is key is that each intervention will build on the one before. For example, you will start with soil management practices under GAECs, these can be improved upon under Eco-schemes and then further expanded under agri-environment-climate and other management commitments. They are never however the same. Examples of the soil relevant aspects of conditionality schemes and Agri-Environment-Climate and other management commitments are outlined below. The design of all interventions depends on the identified needs of each Member State as stated in their Strategic Plan.<br><br><u>Conditionality</u><br>All payments are conditional on meeting SMRs and GAEC requirements, also known as conditionality. GAECs with direct relevance to soil include:<br>• GAEC 2: Protection of wetland and peatland, to protect |

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| | carbon-rich soils. Each Member State has specified how they will monitor and comply with this GAEC.<br>• GAEC 3: Ban on burning arable stubble except for plant health reasons, to maintain soil organic matter. Some Member States have extended this prohibition on burning to other crop residues or and types such as woody prunings or all agricultural land.<br>• GAEC 5: Tillage management, reducing the risk of soil degradation and erosion, to limit soil erosion<br>• GAEC 6: Minimum soil cover to avoid bare soil in periods that are most sensitive<br>• GAEC 7: Crop rotation on arable land, except for crops growing under water, to preserve the soil potential<br><u>Eco-schemes</u><br>Once the land manager has met the conditionality requirements as outlined in the SMRs and GAECs, all farmers will have the opportunity to volunteer to go beyond these requirements. Each Member State has created Eco-schemes, which are open to all farmers to support increased environment, climate and animal welfare action. Each Member State is required to spend at least 25% of their direct payments (pillar 1) budget on Eco-schemes.<br>Eco-schemes are required to cover two areas of action. Those directly relevant to soil include:<br>• climate change mitigation, including reduction of GHG emissions from agricultural practices, as well as maintenance and increasing carbon removals;<br>• climate change adaptation, including actions to improve the resilience of food production systems;<br>• protection or improvement of water quality and reduction of pressure on water resources;<br>• the prevention of soil degradation, soil restoration, improvement of soil fertility and of nutrient management and soil biota;<br>• protection of biodiversity, conservation or restoration of habitats or species, including maintenance and creation of landscape features or non-productive areas.<br><br><u>Sectoral/market Interventions</u><br>An example of market measures that support soil is article 58, which provides investments in intangible assets to enhance the sustainable production of wine, including contributing to soil conservation and soil carbon sequestration. At least 5% of the funding in the wine sector will have to be spent on environment and climate-related objectives, which is a new requirement. |

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| | Rural Development Interventions (Pillar 2)<br>At least 35% of rural development funds are expected to be allocated to measures to support climate, biodiversity, environment and animal welfare.<br>**Organic farming** is one example of a farm practice that encourages the enhancement of soil fertility that many Member States are supporting under Pillar 2. The Green Deal has a target of land under organic farming to be equivalent to a quarter of total agricultural area. This follows on from annual increases of 5.5% between 2021-2019. Member States are currently aiming for their target area under organic farming to be between 5-30%. It is anticipated that by 2027, agricultural area under organics will be nearly 10%, doubled than in 2020.<br>**Training, advice and knowledge exchange** have a central role to play in this period of the CAP. It is likely that the information relative to soil from the climate and environmental strands of the CAP will play a key role in helping farmers transition to a more resource efficient, resilient and sustainable agricultural system. More than 200 000 independent advisers will be supported in their work to help transfer knowledge to and increase innovation among farmers. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 264 billion of EU funding will be available for the 2023-2027 period. This will be further topped up by co-financing and complementary national financing to a total of EUR 307 billion. 32% or nearly EUR 98 billion of total funding will support efforts to benefit soil, water, climate, air, biodiversity and animal welfare. The breakdown between these thematic areas is different per MS depending on their identified needs. |
| Type of management | Both funds are under a shared management between the EC and the national authorities in each Member State. Member States are responsible for the implementation and primary control of payments. There are integrated administration and control systems in place in each Member State that are used to receive and process applications for CAP payments to farmers and the associated data. |
| Types of funding | • Direct payments to farmers under Pillar I<br>• Payment or support under Pillar II (Rural Development)<br>• Loans<br>• Microcredit<br>• Guarantees<br>• Equity<br>• Quasi-equity<br>Each authority can tailor the style and combination of funding as they find appropriate. |

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| Targeted beneficiaries | Farmers and land managers and others involved in rural development, land management and forestry are eligible. Specific details of funding opportunities are presented within Member States Strategic Plans. The majority of funding is targeted on farming and agriculture, however, opportunities maybe available for others involved in rural development, knowledge sharing, administration of Member States programmes. |
| Types of projects / activities | Activities listed in SMRs stemming from EU environmental legislation can include some prescriptions on soil, but there is no specific legislation at EU level on soil. Some **GAEC**s, which are further elaborated by individual Member States require specific focus on soil restoration and protection and provide a basic level of support for minimum good soil management. Interventions beyond SMRs and GAECs include:<br>**Eco-schemes**, which can include specific sustainable soil management practices, cover cropping etc. Eco-schemes are voluntary within CAP so will vary between Member States. Examples include nutrient management planning, reduced cultivation practices, support for high nature value farming systems, conversion and maintenance to organic farming, extensive grazing and many more.<br>**Rural Development interventions**<br>Rural development support continues to cover environment- and climate-friendly land management (on farmland and forest land), animal welfare, and compensation for natural and other disadvantages. Funding is available for investments (for example into infrastructure or equipment which can support soil health, AECM), knowledge-building, innovation and co-operation and in many cases targeted at environment- and climate-related needs, although it will also serve other CAP objectives. These actions will in many cases benefit soil management. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | There is a requirement to protect permanent pasture under GAEC 1 and a ban on conversion of ploughing of permanent pasture in Natura 2000 sites under GAEC 9, while GAEC 8 stipulates a need for preservation of area valuable for biodiversity at parcel level.<br>Farmers will increase their contribution on ecosystem service by devoting at least 4% of their arable land (and in some Member States all agricultural land) to non-productive features and areas. Some farmers will choose to top this up to 7% through an applicable Eco-scheme.<br>The 'Cooperation' intervention supports among others, cooperation on environmental issues between farmers, increasing the potential for a wider range of water quality, biodiversity, air quality, climate and environmental benefits. Some CAP Strategic Plans developed by Member States have elected to include support for Natura 2000 areas. The eco-schemes and biodiversity relevant interventions that |

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| | go beyond the GAECs are different in each Member State. |
| Eligibility criteria | Payments and funding are dependent upon a range of eligibility criteria and conditions. Direct payments have eligibility condition to define minimum agricultural activity and the land use type funds under both the EAGF and EARDF will have criteria and conditions specific to each Member States Strategic Plans. These will be available within the Member States specific guidance. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Applications are submitted through each Member State's agricultural authority, who will inspect farms on a regular basis to ensure compliance with GAECs and SMRs. |
| Useful links and resources | Common Agricultural Policy Funds explained.<br>New Common Agricultural Policy: set for 1 January 2023 (europa.eu)<br>New CAP: 2023-27 (europa.eu)<br>CAP Strategic Plans by Country |

### 3.5 Cohesion Policy Funds (CPF)[24]

This chapter provides an overview of the Cohesion policy funds and then delivered targeted presentation in separate fiches for each fund:

- European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) (Section 3.5.1)
- European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) – Interreg (Section 3.5.2)
- Cohesion Fund (Section 3.5.3)
- Just Transition Fund (JTF) (Section 3.5.4)

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| Overview | The EU's Cohesion Policy aims to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU with the objective of correcting imbalances between the supported states and regions. |
| Objectives | EU's Cohesion Policy objectives (PO):<br>• PO1: a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity;<br>• PO2: a greener, low-carbon transition towards a net-zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting a clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change |

[24] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
New Cohesion Policy (2021)

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| | mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility;<br>• PO3: a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility;<br>• PO4: a more social and inclusive Europe;<br>• PO5: a Europe that is closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories.<br>PO2 is the policy objective that has most relevance to funding for soil projects. |
| Components | Cohesion Policy funds in the 2021-2027 programming period comprise of the following funds:<br>• European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – including the Interreg<br>• Cohesion Fund (CF)<br>• European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)<br>• Just Transition Fund (JTF). |
| Relevance to soil health | The ERDF and Interreg's second policy objective relate to green investments and can cover funding for projects enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution. Projects promoting the sustainable management of soils can apply for funding under these objectives. Also, through these funds there are opportunities to fund projects with a focus on regeneration of urban green spaces.<br>The ERDF and the Cohesion Fund support investments promoting climate change adaption, risk prevention and resilience to disaster risk which could encompass soil health obligations, as well as access to water and sustainable water management. These objectives can be addressed through improved climate resilience through healthy soils, better water quality and through better soil management.<br>The JTF, established to alleviate the negative impacts of the climate transition in the most affected regions, and its investments in environmental restoration include soil regeneration, land restoration (including former peatlands) and repurposing, and decontamination of brownfield sites. Member States have allocated around EUR 1.6 billion to these priorities.[25]<br>The ESF+, which predominantly focuses on social issues, is not included as it has minimal relevance to soil health. |

[25] information from DG REGIO.

### 3.5.1 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)[26]

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| Overview | The ERDF provides funding to public and private bodies in all EU regions to reduce economic, social and territorial disparities, investing in areas to make the EU more competitive, greener, more connected, social and closer to its citizens. It is one of the funds that makes up the Cohesion Policy and targets areas relating to soil health including climate change mitigation and adaptation, access to water, circular economy, nature protection and biodiversity. |
| Objectives and scope | The overall objective is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU, by correcting imbalances between regions.<br>It aims to improve the EU under the following policy objectives (PO):<br>• PO1: Be more competitive and smarter – through innovation, the development of an inclusive digital society and support for SMEs<br>• PO2: Be greener – through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improved water and waste management, protection of the environment, preserving biodiversity and reducing pollution<br>• PO3: Be more connected – through enhanced mobility<br>• PO4: Be more social – via support for effective and inclusive employment, enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism<br>• PO5: Be closer to citizens – by fostering sustainable urban development |
| Components | The objectives listed above, being more competitive and smarter, greener, more connected, social and closer to citizens, make up the components of the ERDF.<br>The ERDF supports investment in innovation, demonstration, piloting and commercialisation activities that enhance the deployment of new technologies that are necessary for the transition to a greener economy.<br>Projects and programmes within these objectives, and of funding must contribute towards the specific policy objectives. In the current programming period, all regions and Member States should concentrate at least 30% of their allocation to PO2. Additionally, more developed regions or Member States will dedicate at least 85% of their allocation to PO1 and PO2, transition regions or Member States |

[26] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
European Regional Development Fund (2022)

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| | at least 40% to PO1, and less developed regions or Member States at least 25% to PO1. |
| Relevance to soil health | The ERDF funds projects relate to soil health via climate change mitigation and adaptation, access to water, circular economy, nature protection and biodiversity. Indirectly, it can also have an impact on soil via its focus on employment, education, skills, social inclusion, culture, sustainable tourism. There is an emphasis on reducing economic, environmental and social inequality in urban and rural areas, thus projects relating to soil in urban and rural areas are appropriate for this fund.<br>Through PO2, the ERDF may directly target environmentally beneficial projects related to soil management or benefitting soil health, for example through funding projects enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban and rural areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.<br>The ERDF notably finances sustainable land use projects including innovative planning and land-management instruments re-naturalisation of contaminated land and the transformation of misused and abandoned built areas into productive spaces, both of which are relevant to project proposals related to soil management.<br>At least 30% of all Member State allocations will go to PO2 and 85% of funds from more developed regions or Member States will go to PO1 and PO2. This means a large proportion of the fund will be available for projects that contribute towards a greener Europe and associated goals, and which can include soil related activities. |
| Volume of funding | For the programming period 2021-2027, EUR 300 billion (EUR 206 billion from the EU and EUR 94 billion from Member States). There is EUR 10.6 billion allocated to investments aiming at climate change adaptation and disaster risk management and EUR 5.8 billion to investments in enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, and reducing all forms of pollution. |
| Type of management | Shared management- the ERDF management is shared between the EC, national and regional authorities in each Member State, and it operates according to the co-financing principle. This means when a project receives funding from the ERDF, the Member State authority must provide funding from its budget as well. Co-financing rates vary depending on the development level of the region.<br>Member State authorities administrating the ERDF choose which projects will be supported. Partnership Agreements are the national strategic documents outlining the framework for the management of EU structural and investment funds in a specific Member State. It |

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| | usually covers what support is made available from different funds, including ERDF. Partnership Agreement can identify different strategic mutually reinforcing priorities through which the country will implement the EU Cohesion Policy in line with the EU's strategy for inclusive, smart and sustainable growth. |
| Types of funding | Member States can use the contribution from the ERDF to provide support to beneficiaries in the form of:<br>• Grants<br>• Financial instruments, for example:<br>- Loans<br>- Guarantees<br>- Equity<br>- Quasi-equity<br>• A combination thereof<br>Managing Authorities (MA) can tailor financial products according to their needs and capabilities or structure the financial instrument based on terms and conditions provided by the EC for 'off-the-shelf' instruments. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Member States or regional MA decide which project promoters are eligible to receive ERDF funding. Examples of the types of organisations that may be eligible include:<br>• SME<br>• Research organisations<br>• Public authorities<br>• NGOs<br>• Civil society organisations |
| Types of projects / activities | MA in individual countries or regions decide the type of project eligible for funding. Examples of potential projects include:<br>• Investments in infrastructure, for example, equipment to enable sustainable soil management practices;<br>• Activities for applied research and innovation, including industrial research, experimental development and feasibility studies;<br>• Productive investments in SMEs and investments aiming to safeguard existing jobs and create new jobs, for example, jobs in rural communities with a focus on soil management practices;<br>• Investments in equipment, software and intangible assets that would improve soil management practices; |

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| | • Investments in networking, cooperation, the exchange of experiences, and activities involving innovation clusters, including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities;<br>• Investments in information, communication and studies, for example, improved education on soil management practices in agricultural training institutions.<br>Managing Authorities must ensure that programme interventions respect the do no significant harm (DNSH) principle. The type of projects, the assessment and the selection criteria also all depend on the individual programme. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Projects funded through ERDF under PO2 (greener, low carbon transition) will enable a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improved water and waste management, the protection of the environment, and the preservation of biodiversity and reduction of pollution. Projects that support these activities play a vital role in supporting the improvement of soil function and the provision of soil ecosystem services.<br>Those funded under PO5 ('closer to citizens') will support the fostering of sustainable urban development. Many urban soils are contaminated, degraded and of poor quality, meaning that they cannot function. Projects that support the improvement of soil health and function through sustainable urban development with enhance ecosystem services within urban and rural spaces. Further, practices undertaken as part of sustainable urban development can support better rainwater management, flooding reduction, reduction of the urban heat island effect, GHG emissions reduction and carbon storage, increase in biodiversity levels, as well as other functions that support the wider environment and climate. |
| Eligibility criteria | As funding is allocated on a region-by-region basis, eligibility rules set by national and regional MAs apply along with EU regulations. These cover:<br>• Time period: there are limits on the period during which operations and expenditure can take place;<br>• Scope of intervention: there are restrictions on the types of activities that can be co-financed;<br>• Cost categories: certain cost categories are excluded;<br>• Geographical location of operations: only certain locations are eligible;<br>• Durability of operations: investments may have to be maintained for a minimum period after the operation is completed; |

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| | • Types of beneficiaries: only certain enterprises, bodies or economic actors are eligible for support. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Each MA will have a different application procedure; some may have ongoing applications, and some may only accept applications at certain times. Currently, the new 2021-2027 programmes are being drawn up. When these are finalised by each Member State, there will be an opportunity to start applying for new project calls.<br>See the link below to the MAs websites. |
| Useful links and resources | Further information on the ERDF<br>Accessing regional funds<br>Contact information for the ERDF MAs |

### *3.5.2 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – Interreg programmes*[27]

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| Overview | Interreg programmes are financed by the ERDF and are designed to encourage cooperation across regions and countries on a range of issues, one of which is environmental protection. Geographical areas covered include EU Member States, Member State regions, EU enlargement countries and neighbourhood countries. The cooperation with enlargement and neighbourhood countries is financed also by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). |
| Objectives | Interreg / European territorial cooperation programmes directly contribute to the achievement of EU Cohesion policy objectives. Owing to their special nature, these programmes are implemented differently from mainstream ERDF programmes.<br>The aim of Interreg programmes is to promote cooperation between regions and countries to support their economic and social development and tackle the obstacles of borders.<br>Interreg comprises the 5 EU cohesion policy objectives (PO) and 2 Interreg Specific Objectives (ISO). The final two are new additions to the 2021-2027 programming period:<br>• PO1: A more competitive and smarter Europe<br>• PO2: A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe<br>• PO3: A more connected Europe |

[27] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- About Interreg (2022)

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| | • PO4: A more social and inclusive Europe<br>• PO5: A Europe closer to citizens<br>• (ISO) 1: A better Cooperation governance<br>• (ISO) 2: A safer and more secure Europe<br>Interreg programmes must focus their support (this is referred as thematic concentration) on a given number of policy objectives, and PO2 must always be included. |
| Components | There are four types (or strands) of Interreg programmes:<br>• Cross-border cooperation (Interreg A), which focuses on promoting integrated regional development between neighbouring land and maritime border regions in the territory of the European Union;<br>• Transnational cooperation (Interreg B) promotes cooperation between national, regional and local partners in transnational programme areas in order to increase the territorial integration of these areas;<br>• Interregional cooperation (Interreg C) focuses on the reinforcement of the effectiveness of the cohesion policy on a pan-European level and does not only involve the 27 EU Member States but also neighbouring countries; it promotes networking, innovative approaches and capacity building with the aim of identifying and transferring good practices and strengthening the exchange of experiences in the field of regional and urban development, as well as analysing development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion;<br>• Outermost regions' cooperation (Interreg D) supports cooperation among the outermost regions themselves and with their neighbouring countries, overseas countries and territories, and regional integration and cooperation organisations to facilitate regional integration and development in their neighbourhood. |
| Relevance to soil health | Ambitions under PO2, a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe are most relevant to soil. It aims to promote, among others:<br>• A net-zero carbon economy<br>• Clean and fair energy transition<br>• Circular economy<br>• Climate change mitigation<br>It will also fund projects that invest in biodiversity. |
| Volume of funding | For the programming period 2021-2027, EUR 10 billion |
| Type of management | Shared management - management of the Interreg fund is shared between the EC and the Managing Authority (MA) located in |

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| | participating Member States. The MA is a body that supervises the overall implementation of an Interreg programme. It is assisted by a joint secretariat, which supports the MA in the day-to-day management of a programme. The joint secretariat is also the main contact point for applicants and project partners.<br>Interreg operates according to the co-financing principle. This means when a project receives funding from the ERDF, the Member State authority must provide funding from the Member State budget as well. The co-financing rate for Interreg programmes is generally a maximum of 80%, although with possibilities for higher co-financing rates for Interreg D programmes (outermost regions) and for external cross-border cooperation programmes. |
| Types of funding | Interreg programmes can provide support to beneficiaries in the form of:<br>• Grants<br>• Financial instruments<br>• A combination thereof |
| Targeted beneficiaries | The type of beneficiaries eligible to receive support is decided by the programme's MA, meaning this varies across regions. Examples of organisations that may be eligible include:<br>• SMEs<br>• Research organisations<br>• Public authorities<br>• NGOs<br>• Civil society organisations |
| Types of projects / activities | Interreg A, B and D programmes support cooperation through project funding to jointly tackle common challenges and to find shared solutions in different fields. One such field is the environment, which means these programmes are appropriate to support soil health projects with environmental benefits. Examples of projects include developing and integrating green infrastructure and encouraging SMEs to assess and address resource use issues. Interreg C programmes often support more intangible actions such as capacity building and the exchange of experiences, mostly among public authorities. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | As per the PO2, the ERDF may directly target the environment, for example by funding projects enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution. Projects funded under Interreg often address issues such as pollution problems, loss of biodiversity, as these are issues that extend beyond national borders. Projects relating to soil health that fall into these areas are likely to have positive co-benefits for biodiversity, preservation of nature and the improvements of green spaces. |

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| Eligibility criteria | The eligibility criteria depend on the type (strand) of Interreg programme and the content set out in each specific programme. General criteria include the type of organisation, for example public and non-profit organisations, and a minimum size of the consortium. In addition, applicants may be eligible if they are located in the area that is covered by the specific programme. Likewise, as cooperation between several countries is required, the partnership/consortium must include partners from other countries/regions addressed by the specific programme.<br>Information on the eligibility criteria for each project can be found on the Interreg website, see link below. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Calls for new projects can be found on the Interreg website see the links below. |
| Useful links and resources | • Calls for projects<br>• EC website<br>• Interreg website<br>• Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for EU candidate countries<br>• Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument<br>• Interreg project database<br>• The legal basis<br>• From transforming food system in the Baltic to inspiring the world Interreg.eu |

### *3.5.3 Cohesion Fund*[28]

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| Overview | The Cohesion Fund was established for the purpose of strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU in the interests of promoting sustainable development. It supports Member States with a GNI per capita below 90% of the EU-27 average. In the 2021-2027 programming periods it provides support to:<br>• Investment in the environment, including areas related to sustainable development and energy which present environmental benefits; |

[28] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

- Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 (2021), European Commission.

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| | • Trans-European networks in the area of transport infrastructure (TEN-T);<br>• Technical assistance.<br>The fund mainly contributes to investments in the field of environment and trans-European networks in the area of transport infrastructure and can also be used to promote projects that benefit soil health. |
| Objectives | This fund aims at meeting two of the five objectives of the Cohesion Policy Fund in the 2021-2027 period, which are PO2 (a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe) and PO3 (more connected Europe). PO2 is most relevant to soil health. |
| Components | The Cohesion Fund focus on the following components:<br>• Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;<br>• Promoting renewable energy and developing smart energy systems, grids and storage;<br>• Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience;<br>• Promoting access to water and sustainable water management;<br>• Promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy;<br>• Enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas,<br>• And reducing all forms of pollution;<br>• Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net-zero carbon economy;<br>• Developing a climate-resilient, intelligent, secure, sustainable and intermodal trans-European transport network;<br>• Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate-resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to the trans-European transport network and cross-border mobility. |
| Relevance to soil health | Projects that aim to promote climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience can support soil carbon sequestration or soil health projects that increase resilience to climate change, which is especially important under PO2.<br>Projects funded through the Cohesion Fund that seek to promote access to water and sustainable water management can indirectly support soil health; improving water management specifically can support improvements in soil health by reducing erosion and |

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| | other soil pressures.<br>Projects that aim to promote the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy can have major impacts on improving soil health, particularly where they support the restoration, remediation, protection and improvement of soil health, and support the sustainable use of soil to improve resource efficiency.<br>Projects that are focused on reducing all forms of pollution could enable the protection of soil by reducing diffuse pollution and emissions to soil from (for example) agriculture, industry, and construction.<br>Finally, projects that aim to enhance the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, will also have similar impacts on soil health and the use of soil. |
| Volume of funding | For the programming period 2021-2027, EUR 48.03 billion, of which EUR 11.29 billion transferred to the Connecting Europe Facility (the latter budget is allocated to transport infrastructure only and hence not directly allocated to soil health projects). Member States have allocated EUR 1.97 billion to investments aiming at climate change adaptation and disaster risk management and EUR 1.56 billion to investments in enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, and reducing all forms of pollution. |
| Type of management | Shared management- the Cohesion Fund operates under the shared management principle, between the EC and individual Member States. |
| Types of funding | The options below are available, including any combination thereof.<br>• Grants<br>• Financial instruments<br>• Prizes |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Research and academia, NGOs and civil society, large enterprises, SMEs, public authorities (specific Member State only, which is detailed in the 'Eligibility section' below). |
| Types of projects / activities | Investments in the environment, most of which are related to climate and low carbon transportation between Member States. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Promoting soil management practices that increase climate resilience and sustainable water management will have a positive impact on water quality and biodiversity. The enhanced protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure through the fund will benefit forestry and biodiversity. Cohesion Fund projects have also benefited forest fire protection measures. |

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| | Projects funded under the Cohesion Fund that seek to promote climate change adaption and disaster risk prevention and resilience related to soil may have co-benefits in carbon capture and storage, which supports climate mitigation.<br>Promoting access to water and sustainable water management, which can be enabled through good soil management practices, can support a wider range of other ecosystem services, such the better functioning of soil and improvement of soil health as well as encouraging increases in soil organic carbon (SOC). Further, other ecosystem services related to regulating and supporting services, such as climate change mitigation, water runoff, and water cycling can be achieved.<br>Projects that aim to enhance the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas will also have similar impacts on soil health; soil is the basis for a good functioning ecosystem and improving soil health will enable it to better support the wider ecosystem. Further, healthy soil contains an extensive array of biodiversity that support its correct functioning. Finally, projects that are focused on reducing all forms of pollution could enable the protection of soil by reducing diffuse pollution and emissions to soil and can have positive impacts on other parts of the environment, such as air and water, and support biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | The Cohesion Fund is only for EU Member States with a GNI per capita below 90% of the EU-27 average. This currently includes (2023): Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Applications are submitted through the Managing Authorities (MA) for specific regions or countries. See the link below containing information for relevant MAs. |
| Useful links and resources | Inforegio - Managing authorities (europa.eu) |

### *3.5.4 Just Transition Fund (JTF)* [29]

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| Overview | The JTF is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) which is meant to alleviate the negative impacts of the transition towards climate neutrality, focusing on the most |

[29] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Just Transition Fund (2022)
InvestEU

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| | affected regions. |
| Objectives | The aim of JTF is to help the most affected regions to alleviate the negative impacts of the transition and to carry out transition necessary to achieve at least a 55% reduction in emissions by 2030, and climate neutrality by 2050.<br>The JTF supports the economic diversification and reconversion of the territories concerned. This means<br>• Investments in SMEs<br>• Creation of new firms<br>• Research and innovation<br>• Environmental rehabilitation<br>• Clean energy<br>• Up- and reskilling of workers<br>• Job-search assistance<br>• Transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations |
| Components | There are no distinct components or pillars within the JTF itself.<br>The JTF is the first pillar of the JTM. The InvestEU Just Transition scheme, and a new Public Sector Loan Facility are the two other pillars of the JTM. |
| Relevance to soil health | The JTF is relevant to soil health as it can support projects directly related to soil health, such as:<br>• Soil regeneration<br>• Land restoration and repurposing<br>• Decontamination of brownfield sites<br>There are also key areas supported by the JTF, that can indirectly be relevant to soil health. These include:<br>• Research and Innovation: this could cover research into soil health and new methods and technologies for improving it.<br>• Circular economy: efficient and sustainable use and management of resources including land and nutrients, can has the potential to improve soil health. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 19.32 billion, of which EUR 10.87 billion under Next Generation EU. Out of this total amount, Member States have allocated around EUR 1.6 billion to priorities relating to soil health. |
| Type of management | Shared management – national and regional authorities in charge of the administration of the JTF choose which projects are to be supported. |
| Types of funding | • Grants are the primary modality for financing under the JTF |

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| | • Financial instruments |
| Targeted beneficiaries | The JTF will focus on the territories/regions most negatively affected based on the economic and social impacts resulting from the transition. These being the regions that rely, or until recently have relied on fossil fuels or greenhouse gas intensive industries.<br>Large enterprises (enterprises other than SMEs) can only receive support from JTF in very limited cases if meeting specified conditions. |
| Types of projects / activities | Eligible investments under the JTF may include:<br>• Conversion of abandoned mine land, oil shale extraction sites or land of former peatlands and greenhouse-gas intensive industries into new uses;<br>• Repurposing projects where it is directly linked to the JTF specific objective and contributes to the implementation of the territorial just transition plan;<br>• Soil decontamination and remediation;<br>• Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land;<br>• Transitioning away from peat as a fuel source;<br>• Rewetting and restoring peatlands, marshland, and swamps. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | The JTF makes a direct contribution to the environment by supporting projects that aim to enhance the circular economy, develop green infrastructure and clean energy, or perform environmental rehabilitation, including land restoration. |
| Eligibility criteria | Eligibility criteria specific to the projects is identified by each Member State. Member States and the Commission will together agree on regions that are eligible for funding under the JTF (those most vulnerable to the transition to climate neutrality). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | The application for funding will depend on each Member State. Projects to be funded are decided by the authorities within each Member State who are responsible for the administration of the JTF. More information can be found on the Q&A about accessing the fund (see link below). |
| Useful links and resources | Inforegio - Managing Authorities (europa.eu)<br>Inforegio - Accessing the funds (europa.eu)<br>Just Transition Platform Website |

### 3.6 Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)[30]

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| Overview | LIFE is the EU funding instrument for environmental and climate related action. It has co-financed more than 5,500 projects since its inception in 1992, including many soil-related projects. LIFE is the EU's only dedicated fund to support environmental and climate objectives. Given its size, its aim is to catalyse far reaching impacts rather than providing substantial and comprehensive funding. |
| Objectives | Through various financing flows, LIFE aims to enable a shift in the EU and globally towards a sustainable, circular, climate-neutral and resilient economy, with the aim of protecting, restoring, and improving the quality of the environment, including soil, and to tackle ecosystem degradation. |
| Components | There are four subprogrammes that LIFE focuses on:<br>• Nature and biodiversity<br>• Circular economy and quality of life<br>• Climate change mitigation and adaptation<br>• Clean energy transition |
| Relevance to soil health | Within the LIFE Regulation, it is stated that the programme should contribute towards the restoration and improvement of the quality of the environment, which includes soil. The programme is designed to support the demonstration of techniques, best practices, and innovative solutions that can support the development of sustainable farming practices, which can support soil health improvements.<br>Under the current Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP) period for 2021-2024, the LIFE programme seeks to focus specifically on encouraging changes needed to deal with societal challenges by combining efforts with Horizon Europe, in particular its Missions in support of the European Green Deal (Climate adaptation, Climate neutral cities, Oceans and Soils), among several other areas.<br>The **nature and biodiversity subprogramme** is relevant to soil health, because for instance healthy soil contains an extensive array of biodiversity that support its correct functioning. Further, soil is the basis for a functioning ecosystem and improving soil |

[30] References used for the development of this section, include the following:

Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

LIFE (europa.eu)

Regulation (EU) 2021/ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 (europa.eu)

Commission Implementing Decision on the adoption of the multiannual work programme for the years 2021-2024 for the LIFE programme

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| | health will enable it to better support wider ecosystems.<br>Under this subprogramme and during the current MAWP period, LIFE will support technical assistance projects specifically related to governance actions to facilitate behavioural change and/or changes in practices related to soil management and the conservation of natural resources.<br>The **circular economy and quality of life subprogramme** covers soil quality and soil health projects. This subprogramme is specifically related to facilitating the transition towards a sustainable and toxic-free circular economy and protecting and restoring the quality of the environment. This includes supporting the restoration, remediation, protection and improvement of soil health, within natural or managed ecosystem boundaries, to provide ecosystem services, in particular to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and support human health and habitats and to prevent soil loss.<br>Under this subprogramme and during the current MAWP period, LIFE is focused on supporting relevant EU priorities by protecting the quality of EU soil, preventing soil degradation and increasing resilience of soils to climate threats and combat desertification through sustainable practices of soil and land management, remediating from soil pollution and enhancing the capacity to improve water quality through reduced nitrate leakage and to reduce emissions through carbon storage and preventing and mitigating soil sealing.<br>The **climate change mitigation and adaptation subprogramme** supports projects in the areas of farming, land use and peatland management, and the areas of land-use planning.<br>Under this subprogramme and during the current MAWP period, LIFE will support projects related to climate change mitigation that provide support to sustainable land, forest and soil management practices, which reduce emissions or remove $CO_2$ from the atmosphere.<br>The clean energy transition subprogramme is not relevant for soil health. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 5.43 billion is set aside in total for the LIFE programme. For the subprogrammes, the budget split is as follows (for 2021-2027 period):<br>• Nature and biodiversity: EUR 2.14 billion;<br>• Circular economy and quality of life: EUR 1.34 billion;<br>• Climate change mitigation and adaptation: EUR 947 |

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| | million;<br>• Clean energy transition: EUR 997 million. |
| Type of management | Direct management- LIFE is directly managed through call for proposals and tenders by the EC. The LIFE Programme is part of CINEA (European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency) |
| Types of funding | Funding is provided in the form of grants, loans, and equity.<br>The LIFE Regulation states that there are certain co-finance rates to be aware of with relevance to soil health related projects, which are as follows:<br>• For Strategic Nature Projects (SNAPs) and Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs), and standard action projects, the co-finance rate is 60% maximum,<br>• For standard action projects under the nature and biodiversity sub-programme, the co-financing rate is 60% maximum. It is possible to apply for a higher funding rate if the project targets priority habitats/species: if exclusively, 75%; if both priority and non-priority habitats/species, 67%,<br>• For non-profit entities, the co-finance rate is 70% maximum. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Targeted beneficiaries include business, public authorities, research/academia, and NGOs/civil society.<br>Beneficiaries eligible under LIFE should be one of the following:<br>• A public or private legal entity registered in the EU, or an overseas country or territory linked to it;<br>• A third country associated to the LIFE programme; or<br>• A legal entity created under Union law or any international organisation.<br>Natural persons are not eligible to apply. |
| Types of projects / activities | The LIFE programme funds environment projects and projects that provide technical assistance for actions in the areas of:<br>research and innovation;<br>knowledge sharing and demonstration, and<br>implementation of improved sustainable land management practices.<br>LIFE enables funding for projects that aim to assist the preparation of SNAPs or SIPs. SNAPs and SIPs support the implementation of plans or strategies that are required through legislation or policy. |

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| | There are a wide range of projects funded through LIFE, with many of them being soil related. For example research and innovation projects on soil management, such as: LIFE+ Crops, LIFE HelpSoil, LIFE OrgBalt, Soil4Life, LIFE MySOIL, and SoilPro.<br>More examples of projects funded through LIFE can be found at: LIFE 3.0 - LIFE Project Public Page (europa.eu). |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Projects under the **nature and biodiversity subprogramme** could contribute towards the better management of the Natura 2000 network and work towards achieving the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the EU Soil Strategy for 2030. Soil biodiversity is the basis for many ecosystem services: biodiversity supports correct soil functioning, and therefore affords ecosystem services such as supporting, regulating, and provisional services. Projects within this subprogramme would also support wider biodiversity protections and improvements beyond soil.<br>Projects under the **circular economy and quality of life subprogramme** can work towards facilitating the transition to sustainable and toxic-free economies and protecting and restoring the quality of the environment. As projects funded under this programme are funded specifically to support the recovery of soil resources, there will be various improvements to soil health and the good functioning of soil ecosystem services as a result, similarly to project outcomes under the other subprogrammes. Projects under this subprogramme would also support wider ecosystem services, such as nutrient cycling.<br>Projects under the **climate change mitigation and adaptation subprogramme** can have positive impacts on soil health through research and innovation, technical work, and policy or plan implementation in the areas of farming, land use and peatland management, and land-use planning. Projects under this subprogramme can seek to develop and improve farming and land-use practices, such as soil conservation measures, which can support the better functioning of soil and improve soil health as well as encouraging increases in soil organic carbon (SOC). Projects that are focused on restoring and maintaining peatland areas (which contain organic soils) similarly aim to increase SOC levels and support the better functioning of soil ecosystem services, specifically related to regulating and supporting services, such as climate change mitigation, water runoff, and water cycling. |
| Eligibility criteria | There are various eligibility requirements for the LIFE programme. See 'Targeted beneficiaries' section for more details on what projects or entities are eligible to submit a proposal |

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| | under the LIFE Programme.<br>Co-financing criteria can be found in the 'Types of funding' section. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Applications are available through the EC funding and tender opportunities portal (see link below)<br>At the end of the project, from 5 to 10 page, report should be made which summarises the work and the results of the project, as well as highlighting the long-term environmental and climate benefits.<br>Projects must also report on Key Performance Indicators at the project level (KPIs), indicating at the proposal stage what the expected environmental results and also socio-economic benefits are. Following project completion, the beneficiary must report on the realised KPIs at a point during the project (First Snapshot), and again at the end of the project's lifetime in the final report (Final Snapshot). |
| Useful links and resources | LIFE programme website<br>Funding & tenders (europa.eu)<br>LIFE reporting<br>KPIs for Life reporting<br>Further support for applicants<br>List of national contact points (NCPs) for the LIFE programme, who provide application support and facilitate networking events and proposal writing workshops |

### 3.7 Technical Support Instrument (TSI)[31]

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| Overview | The TSI provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. The TSI support covers the entire reform process, from preparation and design to implementation of the reforms. |
| Objectives | To promote the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion by helping Member States implement reforms, the instrument aims to assist national authorities in improving their capacity to:<br>• Design, develop and implement reforms;<br>• Prepare, amend, implement and revise recovery and |

[31] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Technical Support Instrument (TSI), EC (2022)
Questions and Answers on the 2022 Technical Support Instrument, EU Monitor (2022)
Commission supports reform projects in Member States for more jobs and sustainable growth (2021)
Technical Support Instrument 2022 call (2022)

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| | resilience plans pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2021/241 which sets out the Recovery and Resilience Facility. |
| Components | The TSI offers Member States a service to help them tackle reform challenges. To achieve the regulation's objectives, the instrument will finance a number of types of actions including but not limited to:<br>• Providing expertise related to policy advice, policy change, formulation of strategies and reform roadmaps, as well as to legislative, institutional, structural and administrative reforms;<br>• Providing experts on a short-term or long-term basis, including resident experts, to perform tasks in specific domains or to carry out operational activities;<br>• Institutional, administrative or sectoral capacity building and related supporting actions at all governance levels, also contributing to the empowerment of civil society organisations;<br>• Organising local operational support in areas such as asylum, migration and border control;<br>• Carrying out studies, including feasibility studies, research, analyses and surveys, evaluations and impact assessments. |
| Relevance to soil health | The TSI provides technical support to Member States' authorities in a wide range of policy areas, notably the green transition (including the environment, the circular economy, climate action and the energy transition). The TSI also contributes to the implementation of the European Green Deal and supports Member States' efforts to implement measures to protect and restore soils to facilitate green transitions. |
| Volume of funding | The budget for the instrument for the period 2021-2027 is EUR 864 million. Member States can transfer additional resources to the budget of the instrument to finance actions eligible for technical support which would be used exclusively for the benefit of the Member State concerned. |
| Type of management | Direct management- the ECs Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) manages the TSI. |
| Types of funding | The EC does not provide direct funding to Member States. Rather, it provides expertise to Member States with the design and implementation of reforms. Member States are responsible to carry out the reforms. The TSI is demand driven and does not require co-financing from EU Member States. In many cases, the support is given as a mix of external support, combined with the Commission's own expertise which is deployed specifically for each case in a tailor-made fashion.<br>These can be funded by national means or other EU funds. |

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| Targeted beneficiaries | Member State public authorities designing and implementing reforms that help to address environmental degradation. |
| Types of projects / activities | Member States are engaging reforms to address environmental degradation by further developing their environmental policies and strategies. Soil protection and restoration related activities and projects that can be funded include:<br>• Analyse the current situation as regards soil management practices;<br>• Raise awareness and provide training schemes on soil health<br>• Analyse investment needs and innovative financing instrument for soil management technologies;<br>• Integrate international best practices through the organisation of study visit to other EU member states and analysis of further cases;<br>• Identify legal, technical and financial barriers to improving soil health;<br>• Raise industry awareness on the benefits of soil regulation and of a robust information framework;<br>• Support to improve the quality of data on soil health;<br>• Contributing to soil management, clarifying specific regulatory issues and enhancing the framework conditions for managing specific land categories. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | The development of soil protection and restoration policies may provide a whole host of ecosystem services, including food production, water purification, retention of moisture, breakdown of pollutants, and greenhouse gas regulation.<br>Technical support on climate adaptation will aim to support building capacity of climate change adaptions at both national and regional level in the Member States. This may result in the implementation of the following nature-based solutions:<br>• Support the implementation and scale-up of nature-based solutions, including the implementation of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction approaches;<br>• Assess the vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change, perform ecological assessment, and integrate climate pressures in the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services (MAES);<br>• Support the biophysical and economic assessment of forest and water ecosystem services to support informed decision-making for policymakers and ecosystem managers. |
| Eligibility criteria | Commission shall analyse the request from Member States for support based on the urgency, breadth and depth of the challenges identified, support needs in respect of the policy areas concerned, analysis of socioeconomic indicators and institutional |

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| | and general administrative capacity of the Member States concerned. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | An EU Member State wishing to receive technical support submits a request to the Commission, via a national Coordinating Authority. This request must be submitted by 31 October of each year. The Commission analyses the requests received and enters into dialogue with the national Coordinating Authorities to assess the country' specific needs and the options to support the design and implementation of the reforms.<br>Support may be provided directly through the Commission's in-house expertise or with other providers of technical support:<br><br>• Experts from EU Member States' national administrations (TAIEX);<br>• International organisations;<br>• Private firms and consultancies;<br>• Individual experts from the private sector. |
| Useful links and resources | For more information on the technical support to Member States:<br>Reform Support website<br>Summary of legislation<br>Detailed legislation<br>Questions and Answers on the 2022 Technical Support Instrument |

### 3.8 Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)[32]

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| Overview | The RRF is a temporary recovery instrument that finances reforms and investments in Member States from the start of the pandemic in February 2020 until 31 December 2026. It is the centrepiece of Europe's recovery plan, NextGenerationEU. |
| Objectives | The primary objective of the RRF is mitigation of the social and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.<br>It also aims to make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. RRF |

[32] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Recovery and Resilience Facility (europa.eu)
Ireland's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Austria's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Belgium's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Croatia's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Lithuania's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Greece's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)
Denmark's recovery and resilience plan (europa.eu)

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| | regulations stipulate minimum expenditure targets for climate transition and digital transition investments of 37% and 20%, respectively.<br>The RRF is for EU countries to invest, create jobs and build a green and digital future for all. |
| Components | The RRF is structured around 6 pillars:<br>• Green transition<br>• Digital transformation<br>• Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, productivity and competitiveness<br>• Social and territorial cohesion<br>• Health, economic, social and institutional resilience<br>• Policies for the next generation |
| Relevance to soil health | There is a major focus of RRF expenditures on climate transition. Improvements to soil health may fall under this as soils have to both adapt to become more climate resilient, while also playing a part in preventing climate change.<br>Activities that contribute to soil health may fall mainly under the "Green transition" and "Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, productivity and competitiveness" pillars, listed in the components section above.<br>Pillar 1 Green Transition<br>• RRF contributes to the mainstreaming of climate action and environmental sustainability;<br>• Measures supported by the RRF should contribute to the green transitions, including biodiversity;<br>• Green skills and jobs, transition to a circular economy, climate change adaption, other climate change mitigation, among others.<br>Pillar 3 Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<br>• Funds from the RRF will be used to make Member States economies more resilient and competitive and enable a sustainable recovery;<br>• The RRF supports measures to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, foster research, development and innovation, and support SMEs;<br>• Improvements to soil health can contribute to increasing resiliency through ensuring a sustainable supply of ecosystem services provided by soil.<br>In their RRPs, several Member States have included projects which are aiming to improve the digitisation of industry within their countries, including the agricultural sectors. As an indirect |

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| | effect of this process, soil health may be improved. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 723.8 billion in loans (EUR 385.8 billion) and grants (EUR 338 billion).<br>Each Member State will be supported by loan and grant amounts specific to them, based on factors such as their population, the inverse of their GDP per capita, and the average unemployment rate. |
| Type of management | The RRF is performance-based.<br>Member States are responsible for preparing and implementing RRPs which are approved by the EC and contain milestones and targets for achieving reforms. These can also delegate the implementation of specific elements of the plans to intermediaries.<br>Funds are then unlocked, and disbursement made to Member States as and when these agreed milestones and targets are met. |
| Types of funding | The RRF regulation specifies grants and loans as the forms of funding. However, Member States may disburse funds under different modalities and through financial intermediaries to which the final beneficiaries then apply. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | The final beneficiaries are often public bodies, though in some cases these public bodies act as intermediaries. SMEs, large enterprises, research organisations or universities, NGOs, civil society organisations, or citizens may be potential beneficiaries of funds from the RRF. This will depend on the RRP of each Member State.<br>Specifically for soils, any of these bodies that are involved in soil activities may be eligible beneficiaries. |
| Types of projects / activities | Types of projects supported by the RRF are not defined in the RRF regulation, therefore there are no specifics on the soil related activities that can be funded. There are intervention fields for the purpose of climate tracking listed in the RRF Regulation, some of which pertain to soil:<br>• Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land;<br>• Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land compliant with efficiency criteria (If the objective of the measure is to turn industrial sites and contaminated land into a natural carbon sink)<br>• Support to environmentally friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs<br>Within approved RRPs, Member States have included suggested goals or activities that will be funded under their share of the RRF, many of which are directly or indirectly related to soil activities.<br>These include: |

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| | • Restoration of degraded peatlands<br>• Promotion of carbon rich-soils<br>• Developing and implementing soil protection or management plans<br>• Improving carbon capture<br>• Improving biofuel production<br>• Sustainable forestry management<br>• Reforestation and/or afforestation<br>• Enhancement of protected forests<br>• Promoting biodiversity<br>• Protecting and enhancing natural landscapes<br>• Increasing resiliency and sustainability of food supply chains |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Projects that improve soil health can have indirect benefits to improved biodiversity, water supply, and aesthetic value of the landscape. Many of the activities that may improve soil health are targeting other environmental areas, including biodiversity and forestry management. |
| Eligibility criteria | Eligibility criteria for RRF funds will depend on the RRPs of each Member State, the actions and targets and milestones included, and the decisions of any intermediaries. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Member States prepare and submit a Recovery and Resilience Plan to the EC for approval.<br>Final beneficiaries will apply to the financial intermediaries that are managing the designated funds within their Member State. |
| Useful links and resources | Recovery and Resilience Facility \| European Commission (europa.eu) |

### 3.9 InvestEU[33]

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| Overview | InvestEU promotes investment for recovery, green growth, employment and well-being across Europe. |
| Objectives | The InvestEU programme aims to boost green growth, innovation, and job creation in Europe by leveraging substantial |

[33] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
About the InvestEU Fund (europa.eu)
Regulation (EU) 2021/1078 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 April 2021 (2021), European Commission
InvestEU (eib.org)

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| | private and public funds and mobilising private investment. |
| Components | The InvestEU programme is comprised of three pillars:<br>• The **InvestEU Fund** that aims to mobilise more than EUR 372 billion of public and private investment through an EU budgetary guarantee of EUR 26.2 billion that backs the investment of implementing partners such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group and other financial institutions.<br>• The **InvestEU Advisory Hub** that provides technical support and assistance including capacity building to project developers and entities – private and public - helping with the preparation, development, structuring and implementation of investment projects.<br>• The **InvestEU Portal** that brings together investors and project promoters on a single EU-wide platform, by providing an easily accessible and user-friendly database of investment opportunities available within the EU. |
| Relevance to soil health | Key policy areas of InvestEU include:<br>Water resources and pollution prevention control<br>• Healthy soil is important for effective filtration and storage of water<br>• Improvements to soil health may be supported under InvestEU where it can improve water resources and pollution prevention control<br>Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems<br>• Soils form the basis of many ecosystems, and healthy soils will mean greater biodiversity and improved ecosystems<br>• Support of biodiversity and ecosystems will also improve soil health<br>Sustainable forests and agricultural practices<br>• Forestry and agricultural practices significantly impact soil health. Support from InvestEU to improve sustainability of these practices will mean sustainable use of soils, and therefore healthy soils<br>Transition to the circular economy<br>• Sustainable and efficient use of the resources including land and excavated soil contribute to the transition to the circular economy, which is supported by the fund |
| Volume of funding | The EU budgetary guarantee under the InvestEU programme is EUR 26.2 billion. This guarantee is expected to mobilise more than EUR 372 billion in investments, both public and private |

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| | (2021-2027).<br>The guarantee will be structured around four policy windows, (each with a specific budget):<br>• Sustainable infrastructure window (EUR 9.9 billion)<br>• Research, innovation and digitisation window (EUR 6.6 billion)<br>• SMEs window (EUR 6.9 billion)<br>• Social investment and skills window (EUR 2.8 billion) |
| Type of management | Indirect and direct management. The InvestEU Fund is being implemented through financial partners who invest in projects using the EU guarantee. The main partner is the European Investment Bank Group (EIB Group). In addition to the EIB Group, International Financial Institutions active in Europe – such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Developments (EBRD) – and National Promotional Banks do have direct access to the EU guarantee. |
| Types of funding | InvestEU is leveraging substantial private and public funds that are protected through an EU budget guarantee that builds on the successful implementation of the European fund for strategic investments.<br>Implementing partners provide financing directly to final recipients or indirectly through private or public financial intermediaries.<br>The European Investment Fund (part of the EIB Group) offers:<br>• Guarantee products<br>• Equity products<br>• Climate and Infrastructure Funds<br>• Capacity Building Instrument |
| Targeted beneficiaries | The InvestEU Fund provides support to final recipients that are natural or legal persons deemed economically viable according to internationally accepted standards, including:<br>• Private entities such as special-purpose vehicles (SPV) or project companies, large corporates, midcap companies, including small midcap companies, and SMEs;<br>• Public sector entities (territorial or not) and public-sector type entities;<br>• Mixed entities, such as public–private partnership (PPPs) and private companies with a public purpose;<br>• NGOs. |
| Types of projects / activities | All projects supported by InvestEU have to fall under one of the key policy areas listed in Volume of Funding above. |

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| | An extensive list of projects/activities can be found in Find Your EU Funding Programme for the Environment.<br>Some soil specific activities may include:<br>• The environment and resources (e.g. water, waste management, the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity, and the decarbonisation of energy production);<br>• Sustainable agriculture, forestry, fishery, aquaculture and other elements of the wider sustainable bioeconomy;<br>• Research, development and innovation projects;<br>• Rehabilitation of industrial sites (including contaminated sites) and restoration of such sites for sustainable use;<br>• Management and enhancement of natural capital for biodiversity<br>• Sustainable production of crops/residues for bioenergy that does not damage soil health;<br>• Improvements to food production and supply chains;<br>• Sustainable production of other services including fibre, timber, and other residues that protects soil health;<br>• Improvements to water related infrastructure including sanitation and storage; |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | InvestEU will support ecosystem services through funding projects that aim to develop a circular economy, expand the sustainable production and use of biofuels, and enhance natural capital. These aims that are beneficial to ecosystem services, can also involve activities that are beneficial to soil health. An improvement in soil health will then also be a benefit to broader ecosystem services through storage and filtration of water, nutrient cycling, and GHG emission mitigation. |
| Eligibility criteria | In order to benefit from InvestEU support, potential projects must:<br>• Address market failures or investment gaps and be economically-viable;<br>• Need EU backing in order to get off the ground;<br>• Achieve a multiplier effect and where possible crowd-in private investment;<br>• Help meet EU policy objectives.<br>The policy areas eligible for financing and investment operations are presented in annex II to the InvestEU Regulation. The eligibility criteria are further defined in the Investment Guidelines which lay down the requirements that financial products and financing and investment operations shall satisfy. |

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| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | The main implementing partner for InvestEU is the European Investment Bank, responsible for 75% of the EU guarantee. InvestEU implementing partners provide direct and intermediated financing solutions for both private and public 'projects promoters' ('final recipient').<br>Financial Intermediaries should consult the offering of implementing partners active in their regions proposing relevant products: it is up to the implementing partners to select financial intermediaries through open and transparent procedures such as calls for expressions of interest.<br>Project promoters may apply directly to implementing partners who will offer tailor-made financing solutions based on the financial products supported by the EU guarantee. Project promoters may also apply for intermediated products.<br>SMEs and small mid-caps, microfinance and social enterprises may apply through financial intermediaries of the implementing partners. These entities should apply to their local commercial or public banks whose financial products are covered by the EU guarantee in their country or region. The local intermediary will inform them if a particular financing programme is covered by the InvestEU Fund. |
| Useful links and resources | Practical guide to doing business in Europe - Your Europe (europa.eu)<br>InvestEU Portal (europa.eu)<br>Questions and answers: InvestEU Programme (europa.eu)<br>InvestEU (eib.org) |

# 4 Overview of additional EU funding opportunities that might target soil health

## 4.1 Introduction

This final chapter describes five additional EU funding opportunities that might target soil health, although this is not their focused priority, nor do they have specific components or subcomponents related to soil themes clearly defined. They have wider objectives which can be related to social inclusion, green and digital transitions, providing support, foster dialogue and cooperation with non-EU Member States, among others. These funding opportunities include the following:

- ERASMUS+;
- The European Solidarity Corps;
- Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI);
- Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), and

- TAIEX - Environmental Implementation Review Peer to Peer Tool (EIR PEER 2 PEER).

Nevertheless, as the focus of this guidance is to provide an overview of the potential funding opportunities available for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of soils, for each funding opportunity included below the information presented attempts to refer to soil health related issues. More detail on each funding programme can be found through the various links provided in the individual descriptions that follow.

### 4.2 Erasmus+[34]

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| Overview | Erasmus+ is the EU programme supporting sport, youth, training, and education in Europe. The programme is open to organisations from all sectors of lifelong learning. |
| Objectives | Social inclusion, green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life is the focal point of the 2021– 2027 programme.<br>Specific programme objectives are contained on Erasmus+ website. These are not of any particular relevance to soil health. |
| Components | • Learning mobility projects (key action 1)<br>• Organisation and institution cooperation (key action 2)<br>• Policy development and cooperation (key action 3)<br>• Education and training (Jean Monnet) |
| Relevance to soil health | Currently 183 soil related Erasmus+ projects classified as 'ongoing' can be found on the Erasmus+ project search page (see link below). Promoting training, learning, education, and organisation cooperation can support soil related projects. |
| Volume of funding | Estimated budget of EUR 26.2 billion |
| Type of management | Direct management– The EC oversees the general management of the programme. The European Education and Culture Executive Agency manages the "centralised" elements of the programme. National Agencies manage the "decentralised" elements in programme countries (see link below). |
| Types of funding | As an individual, Erasmus supports (see links below):<br>• Students, staff teaching, staff training, pupil mobility, traineeships, adult learners, volunteering or youth exchange, training and networking periods abroad<br>As an organisation (see links below):<br>• Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals |

[34] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
Erasmus+ (2022)
EU funding programme Erasmus+

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| | • Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions<br>• Key Action 3: Support for policy reform<br>• Jean Monnet Actions: Stimulating teaching & research on the European Union |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • Students, staff, adult learners, young people, youth workers, organisations |
| Types of projects / activities | **Key Action 1:** Learning mobility of individuals<br>• Mobility projects for – school education pupils and staff; VET (vocational education and training) learners and staff; higher education students and staff; adult education learners and staff; and those in the field of youth (youth exchanges & youth workers)<br>• Youth Participation Activities<br>• DiscoverEU Inclusion Action (short-term travelling across Europe)<br>**Key Action 2:** Cooperation among organisations and institutions<br>• Cooperation Partnerships in the fields of Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, School Education, Adult Education and Youth<br>• Small Scale Partnerships in the fields of Vocational Education and Training, School Education, Adult Education and Youth<br>Apply via European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for:<br>• Cooperation Partnerships in the fields of Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, School Education, Adult Education and Youth submitted by European NGOs<br>• Centres of Vocational Excellence<br>• Erasmus+ Teacher Academies<br>• Erasmus Mundus Action<br>• Innovation Alliances<br>• Capacity building in the field of youth<br>**Key Action 3:** Support for policy reform<br>• European Youth Together<br>**Jean Monnet**<br>• Jean Monnet in the field of higher education: Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence<br>• Jean Monnet in other fields of education and training: Teacher Training and Networks |
| Potential co-benefits for | The training supported though Erasmus+ develops the |

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| ecosystem services | knowledge and expertise of future environmental scientists and this future knowledge and research has the potential to contribute to the climate, soil and overall environmental sector and therefore address the key challenges to different ecosystem services. |
| Eligibility criteria | Participants in the Erasmus+ projects must be in an EU state, or third country associated with the programme, some actions are also open to those from third countries not associated with the programme.<br>View specific grant calls for specific eligibility details (see link below)<br>In general, the programme is open to any organisation which is active in education, training, youth or sport. However, specific conditions for projects depend on the type of Key Action is being delivered. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Applicants submitting a project proposal to receive funding support must:<br>• Register (which will require an EU login)<br>• Check compliance with programme criteria<br>• Check financial conditions<br>• Submit an application form<br>Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals – apply via the National Agencies.<br>Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions– apply via the National Agencies.<br>Key Action 3: Support for policy reform– apply via EACEA.<br>Jean Monnet: apply via EACEA.<br>For calls managed by EACEA– visit the 'European Education and Culture Executive Agency website' (see link below).<br>For calls managed by National Agencies– visit the 'Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps platform' page (see link below). |
| Useful links and resources | Erasmus+ project search<br>Management and Register<br>Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps platform<br>European Education and Culture Executive Agency website<br>Opportunities for individuals<br>Opportunities for organisations<br>List of Erasmus+ programme countries<br>Staff teaching<br>Staff training<br>Pupil mobility, Students, Traineeships and Adult learners<br>Youth exchange |

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| | Training and networking<br>DiscoverEU<br>Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals<br>Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions<br>Key Action 3: Support for policy reform<br>Jean Monnet Actions |

### 4.3 The European Solidarity Corps[35]

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| Overview | The European Solidarity Corps is an EU funding programme for young people aged 18-30 interested in solidary activities, which includes contributing to environmental actions for the period 2021–2027. The European Solidarity Corps funds opportunities to train, work or volunteer abroad or in one's home country whilst also supporting young people to start-up their own solidarity projects to engage young people activities addressing societal challenges. |
| Objectives | • Build inclusivity into society by bringing young people together<br>• Support vulnerable people<br>• Responding to societal challenges<br>• Inspire and develop young people who want to learn |
| Components | Volunteering and solidarity projects |
| Relevance to soil health | Funding available for volunteering or solidarity projects which can focus on soil health through projects contributing to the environment. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 1.01 billion |
| Type of management | The EC is responsible for European Solidarity Corps policies and oversees the overall programme implementation. Therefore, The European Solidarity Crops is run through direct management. The actions are managed at the national level (National Agencies) (90%) and at the European level (European Education and Culture Executive Agency) (EACEA) (10%). |
| Types of funding | Funding is available in the form of grants to organisations |

[35] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment – Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
European Solidarity Corps, features
Funding & tenders, European Commission
European Youth Portal

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| | through call for proposals. Calls for proposals can be found through the 'Funding and tender opportunities' page (see link below). |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Young people aged 18-30. |
| Types of projects / activities | Volunteering projects:<br>• Individual volunteering: up to 12 months<br>• Team volunteering: between 2-8 weeks<br>Solidarity projects:<br>• Bottom-up activities initiated and run by young people to address challenges and make positive changes in their local communities.<br>• The project can be between 2-12 months |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | The European Solidarity Corps funds projects and activities which address societal challenges and has the potential to include projects which impact upon ecosystem services such as water quality, food production and biodiversity. |
| Eligibility criteria | Volunteering – open to 18–30-year-old people who live in programme and partner countries (see link below).<br>Solidarity projects – open to a group of no less than 5 people (18-30 years old) who are legally living in the same country (this must be one of the programme countries (see link below)). |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Volunteering:<br>• Young people need to register on the European Solidarity Corps portal to search for opportunities and access online training. This portal also allows organisations to seek participants for their projects.<br>• Use the application form ESC50 to apply for a Quality Label (this is processed by National Agencies)<br>Solidarity Projects:<br>• Form a group and register for an organisation ID (OID)<br>• Assemble project goals, Budget, and activities.<br>• Apply (You can contact your National Agency to help you with your application (see link below).) |
| Useful links and resources | Funding and tender opportunities<br>The European Solidarity Corps<br>Project platform<br>Quality Label<br>Search for supporting organisations – accredited/Quality-Labelled organisation database<br>Programme and partner countries |

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| | Support services<br>Volunteering<br>Solidarity Projects<br>Register for IOD<br>European Solidarity Corps Guide<br>National Agencies contact information |

## 4.4 Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) [36]

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| Overview | The NDICI is meant to uphold and promote the EU's values, principles and fundamental interests worldwide in order to pursue the objectives and principles of its external action. The NDICI thus contributes to the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty, consolidating, supporting and promoting democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, sustainable development and the fight against climate change and addressing irregular migration and forced displacement, including their root causes. |
| Objectives | The specific relevant objectives of the NDICI 2021-2027 programme include:<br>• To support and foster dialogue and cooperation with third countries and regions in the Neighbourhood at global level, among others to address global challenges such as, climate change, protection of biodiversity and the environment, as well as migration and mobility;<br>• To respond rapidly to: situations of crisis, instability and conflict including those which may result from migratory flows and forced displacement and hybrid threats; resilience challenges, including natural and man-made disasters, and linking of humanitarian aid and development action; as well as the Union's foreign policy needs and priorities. |
| Components | • **Geographic** programmes; supporting multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) for Neighbourhood countries with some funding available to Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the |

[36] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
NDICI Factsheet
Geographic multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) for neighbourhood countries
EFSD+ and the External Action guarantee

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| | Caribbean. This pillar will also finance Erasmus+.<br>• **Thematic programmes** such as Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; and Global Challenges.<br>• **Rapid response mechanism** that will allow the EU to swiftly respond to crises, contribute to peace, stability and conflict prevention, strengthen the resilience of states, societies, communities and individuals, linking humanitarian aid and development action. It will also ensure early action to address Union foreign policy needs and priorities.<br>• **A** '**cushion**' of unallocated funds could top-up any of the above-mentioned programmes and rapid response mechanism, to address unforeseen circumstances, new needs or emerging challenges and promote new priorities.<br>• The new instrument will furthermore contain an investment framework for external action financed from the geographic pillar to raise additional financial resources for sustainable development from the public and private sector. It will consist of the **European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+)** and the **External Action Guarantee** |
| Relevance to soil health | An opportunity that could be relevant to soil health would be within the investment framework for external action to raise additional financial resources for sustainable development from the private sector, with the aim to foster renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. Opportunities could be found in ensuring soil health is maintained in order to secure sustainable agriculture. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 79.5 billion, the NDICI - Global Europe instrument will cover the EU cooperation with all third countries, except for the pre-accession beneficiaries and the overseas countries and territories from the geographic programmes |
| Type of management | Direct management by the EC and/or through the Union Delegations and under indirect management by entities, such as the EU Member States agencies or international organisations, that ensure a level of protection of the EU's financial interests equivalent to that under direct management. Indirect management may also be entrusted to partner countries or the bodies they designate. Innovative financial instruments including in partnership with the European Investment Bank, Member States' financial institutions and other international financial institutions will be used for blending activities. |
| Types of funding | It is a broad financial instrument including various types of funding which will be available within each country's |

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| | Multiannual Indicative Programmes documentation. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | **Eastern Neighbourhood**: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Regional East, Moldova,<br>**Southern Neighbourhood**: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Regional South |
| Types of projects / activities | The entry into force of the NDICI Global Europe paved the way for the adoption, of most of the relevant MIPs and Annual Actions Plans (AAPs) as well as individual and special measures for countries, regions, ERASMUS+ and thematic programmes by the end of 2021. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | All these programmes will significantly contribute to climate actions, social inclusion and human development, including education, migration and forced displacement and to achieve gender equality and biodiversity targets. The MIPs include the identification of "Team Europe Initiatives" together with Member States, their agencies and European financial institutions, with the aim of achieving a maximum transformative impact in partner countries. |
| Eligibility criteria | The EU assistance is based on the European Neighbourhood objectives and priorities outlined in the regional strategies, such as the renewed Eastern Partnership and the new Agenda for the Mediterranean. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Each neighbourhood country targeted by this fund has existing agreements in place with the EU. This information can be found within the counties MIPs here. The EU identifies the countries it wants to target with specific objectives in mind. The investment framework of this fund consists of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) and the External Action Guarantee. |
| Useful links and resources | NDICI Factsheet<br>Geographic MIPs for neighbourhood countries<br>EFSD+ and the External Action guarantee |

### 4.5 Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)[37]

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| Overview | The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means |

[37] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
Some of the text for this fund is adapted from the EU guide: Find your EU funding programme for the environment - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
IPA III Planning & Programming
IPA Programme Summary
IPARD Summary

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| | by which the EU has been supporting reforms in the enlargement region with financial and technical assistance since 2007. IPA funds the build-up of capacities of the beneficiaries throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region .The general objective of IPA III is to support the beneficiaries in adopting and implementing: political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms. These reforms are required in order to comply with EU's values and to progressively align to Union rules. This compliance with the EU's standards, policies and practice provides beneficiaries with a view to Union membership, whilst also contributing to their stability, security and prosperity. IPA III runs in the period 2021-2027. |
| Objectives | IPA III has the following relevant specific objectives:<br>• To reinforce the effectiveness of public administration and to support transparency, structural reforms and good governance at all levels, including in the areas of public procurement and State aid;<br>• To shape the rules, standards, policies and practices of the IPA III beneficiaries in alignment with those of the EU;<br>• To strengthen economic and social development and cohesion, with particular attention to youth;<br>• To reinforce environmental protection, increase resilience to climate change, accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon economy, develop the digital economy and society and strengthen sustainable connectivity in all its dimensions;<br>• To support territorial cohesion and cross-border cooperation across land and maritime borders, including transnational and interregional cooperation. |
| Components | Specific objectives of the IPA III regulation are focused on the priorities of the enlargement process, articulated through five thematic windows:<br>• Window 1: rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy;<br>• Window 2: good governance, EU acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication;<br>• Window 3: the green agenda and sustainable connectivity;<br>• Window 4: competitiveness and inclusive growth;<br>• Window 5: territorial and cross-border cooperation.<br>Actions are deployed, to beneficiaries, through annual or multiannual action plans at national or regional level, or through horizontal initiatives targeting specific types of partners (e.g., |

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| | civil society) or cross-cutting issues. In addition, a number of cross-cutting themes, such as climate change, environmental protection, civil society, gender equality, rights-based approach, is mainstreamed and therefore can be implemented under the five windows. |
| Relevance to soil health | Part of IPA, the instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development (IPARD) focuses on rural areas and the agri-food sectors of countries in the process of joining the EU.<br>Through this tool, the EU provides the beneficiaries with financial and technical help with the aim of:<br>• Making their agricultural sector and rural areas more sustainable;<br>• Aligning them with the EU's common agricultural policy.<br>The current candidate countries and beneficiaries are: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.<br>IPARD programmes are based around measures set at European level. Within them is Measure 4 - "Agri-environment-climate and organic farming"; This could be explored by those candidate and potential candidate countries on improving soil health. Interest countries can apply for IPARD support. To get funding under IPARD, an application needs to be sent to the national IPARD agency. Once approved, they are managed by national institutions and IPARD agencies. Turkey has a current measure available looking at a pilot on soil erosion. |
| Volume of funding | EUR 14.78 billion<br>Each country also contributes to the budget through national public funding. |
| Type of management | IPA III is implemented through direct, indirect and shared management. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) is the leading service. The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) is responsible for rural development programmes and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy for cross-border cooperation programmes (DG REGIO) between IPA beneficiaries and EU Member States. |
| Types of funding | Actions are based on the IPA III programming framework. Actions are deployed, to the benefit of beneficiaries, through annual or multiannual action plans at national or regional level, or through horizontal initiatives targeting specific types of partners (e.g. civil society) or cross-cutting issues. In addition, a number of cross-cutting themes, such as climate change, environmental protection, civil society, gender equality, rights-based approach, is mainstreamed and therefore can be implemented under the five windows. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | • EU candidate countries (Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, |

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| | Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia) are eligible for all five components of IPA;<br>• Potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99) are eligible only for the first two components. |
| Types of projects / activities | There are a number of relevant National IPARD programmes, please see below for specific examples:<br>• Measure 1: "Investments in physical assets of agricultural holdings" (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).<br>• Measure 3: "Investments in physical assets concerning processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products" (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey)<br>• Measure 4: "Agri-environment, climate and organic farming (pilot on soil erosion)" (Turkey)<br>• Measure 5: "Implementation of local development strategies–LEADER approach" (Turkey)<br>• Measure 7: "Farm diversification and business development" (Albania, North Macedonia, and Turkey)<br>• Measure 9: "Technical assistance" (North Macedonia, and Turkey) |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | Many of the listed measure above could be used to provide benefits across ecosystems as part of measures for improving agricultural conditions and soil health. |
| Eligibility criteria | EU potential and candidate counties. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Apply for IPARD – each eligible country provides their own application webpage. |
| Useful links and resources | IPA Programme Summary<br>IPA III Planning & Programming<br>IPARD Summary |

## 4.6 TAIEX-Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) Peer TO Peer[38]

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| Overview | TAIEX EIR peer to peer is an EU technical assistance and policy support instrument. The TAIEX EIR peer to peer tool supports public administrations with the application and enforcement of EU environmental legislation as well as the sharing of best practices between regions. Offering tailored expertise to those requesting it, TAIEX organises workshops, expert missions, and study visits to allow participants to learn from one another. |
| Objectives | EIR peer to peer is designed to provide short-term support to public administrations in a unique peer-to-peer fashion. Activities are short in duration (1-5 days). Experts come as volunteers from the public administrations of EU Member States to share their experience with their peers on how to apply EU law. The instrument is complemented by longer-term institution-building support, Twinning, which offers long-term, on-the-ground cooperation. |
| Components | The TAIEX EIR peer to peer tool is largely needs-driven and delivers appropriate tailor-made expertise to address issues at short notice in three ways: workshops, expert missions and study visits.<br>Implementation gaps, as well as access to justice, environmental liability, compliance assurance and other aspects of environmental governance are also tackled through this tool. |
| Relevance to soil health | Facilitates peer to peer learning between Member State environmental authorities in order to address challenges in the implementation of EU soil protection policy and legislation. |
| Volume of funding | Driven by demand and covers all policy areas. |
| Type of management | Direct management: EU institution-building instrument managed by the EC's Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). |
| Types of funding | For experts, the instrument provides logistics (travel, accommodation, interpretation, daily allowances, etc.) and compensation to EU Member State experts involved as speakers. Depending on the type of the activity and involved stakeholders, the tool can also support public officials involved as participants from applicant EU Member States. |
| Targeted beneficiaries | Public authorities involved in the implementation of EU environmental policy and law in the EU Member States can apply for EIR peer to peer assistance. |

[38] References used for the development of this section, include the following:
TAIEX-EIR PEER 2 PEER tool (2022), European Commission.
TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) (2022), EUR-Lex

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| Types of projects / activities | The expert exchanges can deal with common root causes of implementation gaps, such as administrative capacity, skills, governance and coordination mechanisms or similar issues. |
| Potential co-benefits for ecosystem services | TAIEX-EIR peer to peer expert exchanges can address all issues covered by the EIR country reports: for example, nature protection, biodiversity, green infrastructure, improvement of air quality, water quality and management, and sustainable urban development. |
| Eligibility criteria | The assistance is provided at request of public institutions involved in the implementation of EU environmental policy and law in the EU Member States, such as:<br>• National, regional and local departments and agencies;<br>• Coordinating authorities and mandated bodies;<br>• Inspection and audit authorities;<br>• Permitting authorities;<br>• Regional or local environmental implementation businesses entrusted with a public task, and with the application supported by an authority;<br>• Representatives of social partners, trade unions and employers' associations;<br>• Networks of public experts involved in environmental implementation and enforcement. |
| Application process and reporting requirements if funding awarded | Applicants have to provide short information about the objective of the event, the field of expertise concerned, participants and target group, approximate timing and contact person. The request is subject to approval by the EC. If eligible and justified, the EC will approve your application, look for suitable public experts in other EU Member States, agree on the practical details and organise logistics via an external service provider. |
| Useful links and resources | For more information on the tool:<br>Online application<br>Application template<br>TAIEX Expert Database<br>Upcoming TAIEX events |