



The Association of Geological Surveys of the European Union  
(EuroGeoSurveys)  
in their position as  
custodians to their national natural resources  
and  
guardians of their terrestrial environment  
present their contribution  
to Stake Holders Consultation Meeting on Soil Protection Policy

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EuroGeoSurveys would like to point out that:

- The protection of soil, and making a soil policy is a very complicated task to the inherent complexity of soils where many stakeholders are involved. As a result, it will be very difficult to find common ground for a sound and at the same time well supported directive.
- The soil Protection Communication has a very strong agricultural and soil scientific approach. It concentrates on issues important in soil science, food production, and soil as living media with large biodiversity.
- The communication does not take into account that soil is also an important source of raw materials (e.g. groundwater, gravel, peat, ect...)
- Therefore, the description of soil as a very thin uppermost layer of the earth can be considered too limited. Soil is also a geological deposit providing society with all kinds of land use. As such, planning for future land use is considered one of the major issues taking into account that land use is also about soils as basement for building, housing and infrastructure.
- A number of issues mentioned as threats in the communication are partly natural process, e.g:
  - Erosion as landscape building process.
  - Increased salinity and desertification as a function of natural climate change.
  - High heavy metal concentrations as result of specific mineralogy of the bedrock.

The communication should clearly differentiate between natural and anthropogenic “threats”.

- One of the main threats to soils is building of roads, houses and industrial complexes. These do not only destroy the biodiversity of soil, but also the possibility to use raw materials such as gravel and groundwater. The Communication stresses soil contamination much more than this soil sealing.
- Legislation and Actions at the level of the member states is developed much further than what is included in the Communication. In fact, although heterogeneous, the Member States activities and legislations could form the perfect building stones for Soil Protection Communication.
- Already, a number of geological networks are available and can contribute to the Soil Data Networks. In the past, the European Geological Surveys have taken the initiative to construct a Geological Information Exchange System (GEIXS) and a Geochemical Baseline Mapping.
- Soil Data Networks should be structured along these lines or build on this expertise and experience.
- As providing data and knowledge on soil can be considered a service of general interest and an asset to government decisions implementing sustainable development, long term (10 to 30 years) secured funding should be considered.