

Memorandum of Understanding of the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP)

1. Starting point and driving forces

The unique and heterogeneous landscapes of the Alpine region, ranging from the valleys up to the summits, feature a high diversity and small-scale pattern of soils whose numerous properties and functions – including healthy food production, flood regulation, climate regulation, and protection from natural hazards – have to be guaranteed, preserved, or restored in order to ensure both ecosystem health and human well-being. Moreover, Alpine soils are intrinsically vulnerable due to their limited rate of formation, which makes them a practically non-renewable resource.

Soil is a challenging, cross-cutting topic for our current levels of governance, the numerous impactful sectors, and the scientific community.

Therefore, soil knowledge and awareness must be continuously adapted to the needs and working procedures of the relevant sectors, such as “administration” (ministries, agencies, municipalities), “science and education” (universities, institutes, schools), “practitioners and end users” (landowners, farmers, foresters, civil engineers, architects, consultancies), as well as “NGOs and private persons”. This makes development towards sustainable soil management especially challenging, which is intensified by considerable threats such as land use and climate change.

Considering the current situation in the field of soil management and the existing networks and strategies, the AlpSP initiators identified the need for the integration of good practices and process-oriented expertise in order to contribute to better implementation of the existing legal frameworks, in particular the Soil Conservation Protocol of the Alpine Convention. As sustainable soil management is also embedded in different global, EU, and national strategies, the AlpSP proposes a voluntary network that complements the existing networks and activities.

The AlpSP encourages all actors/stakeholders of soil-related sectors within the Alpine region to join and benefit from its network and the information pool it provides.

2. Objectives of the Alpine Soil Partnership

The AlpSP is a permanent transnational soil cooperation network whose objective is to pool and process in a practical manner knowledge, experience, awareness, engagement, and interest in the soils in the Alpine region. The AlpSP aims at promoting and contributing to sustainable soil management and protection in the Alpine region. Therefore, one of its supporting actions is the further implementation of the Soil Protection Protocol of the Alpine Convention. At the same time, the AlpSP activities substantially contribute to the goals of the European Soil Partnership, but are adapted to the specific Alpine situation, the needs and nature of the Alpine environment, and the Alpine soils and soil threats.

The AlpSP encourages and enhances the exchange of knowledge, know-how, data, best practices, and ideas amongst different stakeholders, including landowners, administrations, experts, decision-makers, environmentalists, and non-government organisations.

These objectives are connected to the activities of the CIPRA¹ and the ESP², a regional initiative of the GSP³ organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome. The ESP is assisted by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission.

3. Activities of the Alpine Soil Partnership

The AlpSP members agree on activities and methods to protect and sustainably manage Alpine soils in all fields of the practical generation, implementation, and adaptation of sustainable soil knowledge, thereby exploiting the resources of all members from different sectors and levels. The work is geared towards the thematic context of the five pillars of the European Soil Partnership, and is hence open to emerging topics. The concrete activities will be subject to regular review, but the following areas of activity are considered especially relevant:

- raising soil awareness at the local and regional levels, including through contributions to and benefitting from the work of the European Soil Partnership and Global Soil Partnership (ESP, GSP) and other relevant networks;
- soil protection improvement through concrete and practice-oriented assistance provided to different, soil-related actors/stakeholders in the relevant sectors;
- the enhancement of political commitment and the development of sectoral governance systems towards stronger implementation of sustainable Alpine soil management;
- knowledge exchange in the field of applied and fundamental research embedded in concrete and implementation contexts;
- soil management and best practices, which are to be pooled and processed following the open data principle.

4. Members of the Alpine Soil Partnership

The AlpSP is open to all institutions and stakeholders willing to actively contribute to sustainable soil management and soil protection in the Alpine region. All interested public and private institutions, as well as individuals, can declare their accession to the AlpSP.

The AlpSP unites politics and administration (national and regional governments, municipalities, agencies, etc.), science and education (universities, institutes, schools, etc.), practitioners (landowners, decision-makers in all soil-related sectors, such as farming, forestry, industry,

¹ <http://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international>

² <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/regional-partnerships/europe/en/>

³ GSP – Why GSP? : <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/about/why-the-partnership/en/>

commercial enterprises, land-use planning, construction, mining, tourism, nature conservation, landscape, and cultural heritage), as well as NGOs and private persons.

5. Tasks of the Members of the Alpine Soil Partnership

The AlpSP is based on the voluntary commitment of all members of the AlpSP.

AlpSP members promote and carry out various activities that contribute to better soil management and protection in the Alpine Region.

AlpSP members endeavour to integrate soil protection and sustainable soil management practices in their regular activities.

AlpSP members are encouraged to cooperate across borders, to exchange knowledge and expertise, to present and disseminate good soil management and protection practices, to raise awareness of soil issues, and to actively participate in the annual AlpSP meetings.

Many AlpSP members have specific expertise regarding implementation processes and their work is practice oriented.

AlpSP members shall orient their activities to the Five Pillars of the European Soil Partnership (see Table 1). At the same time, the members of the AlpSP shall adapt their activities to local needs and their specific skills.

6. Governance of the Alpine Soil Partnership

The AlpSP is governed by the AlpSP Steering Committee (AlpSP SC), which comprises representatives of the AlpSP members, ideally one member from each Contracting State of the Alpine Convention (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, and Switzerland), which are elected by the members of the AlpSP. The AlpSP SC has a mandate to develop and decide on the organisational structure and statutes of the AlpSP, the work programme thereof, as well as to harmonise AlpSP activities with the activities of the European Soil Partnership, of the Alpine Convention, and of other similar organisations, such as the European Land and Soil Alliance. The initial AlpSP SC shall be composed of representatives of up to eight Links4Soils⁴ project partners and/or observers.

The AlpSP SC shall be chaired by a representative of the AlpSP Presidency (AlpSP P), which shall rotate annually among the Alp SC member countries and represents the AlpSP. The AlpSP P shall be an AlpSP member institution that agrees to host and organise the annual meeting of the AlpSP and

⁴ EU Alpine Space Interreg Programme project - <http://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/links4soils/en/home> and <https://alpinesoils.eu/soil-partnership/alpine-soil-partnership/>.

possibly other events. The nomination of the AlpSP P and the election process shall be organised by the AlpSP SC.

The AlpSP SC and AlpSP P shall be supported by a permanent secretariat, which is to be established. Its mandate shall also include the administration of membership and its function as the main contact point.

7. Financial implications

The AlpSP shall be organised as a non-profit organisation; in-kind contributions from members or other interested institutions or individuals for the financing of meetings and activities are welcome.

Declaration of Accession to the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP)

_____, the undersigned, hereby declare that I/we will contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Alpine Soil Partnership and will carry out corresponding activities to the best of my/our ability.

_____, commit myself/ourselves to promoting, strengthening, and supporting soil protection and sustainable soil management to the best of my/our ability.

Date and place

Name and/or position

Signature

Contact Information

Member name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____