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## **Soil Thematic Strategy: an important contribution to policy support, research, data development and raising the awareness.**

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### Abstract

There has been the recognition that trans-national binding legal agreements related to soils are very difficult to achieve, given the sensitivities related to national sovereignty in relation to land and soils. However, the Soil Thematic Strategy played an important role to raise the awareness of soil importance, integrate soils in different policy areas (agriculture, climate change, SDGs), develop research findings and finally increase our know how on European Soils. The Soil Thematic Strategy continue to be the main policy instrument dedicated to foster soil protection in the European Union (EU). The EU consider the importance of soils and land degradation taking into account global challenges such as the sustainable production intensification, food security, climate change and escalating population growth. During the last decade both the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research (FP7) and the HORIZON2020 financed research and innovation projects for advancing soil protection and better understanding of soil management in EU.

### Introduction and some historical aspects

European environment policy has evolved significantly since the 1970s. The European Commission paid attention in having cleaner air, best-quality water and a better understanding of our dependence on a healthy environment. In late 90's, the European Commission tried to integrate the needs of the environment into the development and implementation of other policies, particularly in five key sectors -agriculture, energy, industry, transport and tourism [1]. European Union citizens recognized that environmental problems go beyond national and regional borders and can only be resolved through concerted action at EU and international level [2].

In response to concerns about the degradation of soils in the European Union, the Commission published in April 2002 a Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection" [3]. This was the first occasion on which the Commission has addressed soil protection for its own sake and therefore the Communication is both broad and descriptive in approach as well as charting the way forward. The Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection was adopted by the European Commission in September 2006 and consist of a Communication from the

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