



International Call

„Managing and mapping agricultural soils for enhancing soil functions and services “

Guidelines for Applicants

Deadline pre- registration: 20th July 2022, 14:00 CEST (Berlin, Germany)

Deadline proposal submission: 14th Sep 2022, 14: 00 CEST (Berlin, Germany)

Online submission tool: <https://ejp-soil.ptj.de/>

History of Changes

Version	Changes
V1.0 28th Apr 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Original version
V1.1 02nd May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">NRF (Kenya) joined as funder
V1.2 10th May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 7.1: paragraph about confidentiality was double within this section and duplicate is deleted now.
V2 20th June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deadline pre-registration: Modification of the deadline of the preregistration to the 20th of July instead of the 20th of June.5.4 Funders: Removal of AAFC (CA) and Climate KIC which will not join the call.

Call announcement Version 2: Modification of the deadline of the preregistration to the 20th of July instead of the 20th of June 2022.
Removal of the funders AAFC (CA) and Climate KIC.



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Definitions and Tasks

Call office	The call office is responsible for administrative support regarding the Call, Call documents and procedures, submission tool and webinar.
External Call Board of Funders (EXCBF)	The EXCBF is the decision-making body of this call and consists of representatives of all Funders giving funding to the EJP SOIL International Call. The EXCBF will have the final decision on the selection of projects based on the ranking list provided by the IEP and availability of funds.
Funders	Funders are organisations who give funding to the call.
Independent observer	An independent observer will overlook the entire Call process from launch to evaluation and selection of the research projects.
International Expert Panel (IEP)	The IEP consist of international experts in the fields of the topics of the EJP SOIL International Call. Members of the IEP will evaluate each proposal according to the evaluation guidelines (see also chapter 7 of this document). During the IEP meeting, the IEP will generate a ranked list of proposals recommended for funding which will be provided to the EXCBF.
Call	EJP SOIL International Call

1 Introduction

The European Joint Programme (EJP) SOIL started in February 2020, to create an integrated framework for agricultural soil research in Europe to enhance capacity, capability and knowledge in the area of soil research. Thus allowing all participant countries equal opportunities to contribute to policy and societal targets for soil. It aims to overcome current fragmentation in research and to unleash the potential of agricultural soils to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation of GHG emission released by agriculture to contribute to carbon neutral production. In parallel, research will be conducted to preserve or even enhance soils performance in relation to these and other agricultural (plant productivity and health) and environmental functions (potable water, air, biodiversity). Furthermore, EJP SOIL works towards a sustainable European integrated research system on agricultural soils to develop and deploy a reference framework on climate smart sustainable agricultural soil management (see also section 2 for expected impacts).

One task in the EJP SOIL programme is the development of a roadmap, which functions as a strategic research agenda and describes the targeted vision of EJP SOIL. Six main objectives have been identified in order to address the targeted vision of EJP SOIL: i) Sustainable agricultural production, ii) Carbon sequestration, iii) Healthy Soils, iv) Land and Soil restoration, v) Biodiversity and vi) Ecosystem services including to enhance understanding of their linkages. With the help of the roadmap, an implementation plan has been created which engages and commits Member States and stakeholders across Europe to join forces in the relevant research areas.

Within the roadmap, research activities have been identified and outlined which would benefit and enhance the impact of EJP SOIL activities by widening the research and hence participation to funder organisations outside the EJP SOIL consortium. This will be realized by opening external calls to European and international participation.

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2 Expected impact of the EJP SOIL programme

Proposals shall address expected impacts described within each topic as well as to at least one of the expected impacts defined within the EJP SOIL programme:

- 1) Fostering understanding of soil management and its influence on climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable agricultural production and environment.
- 2) Understanding how soil-carbon sequestration can contribute to climate change mitigation at the regional level and accounting for carbon.
- 3) Strengthening scientific capacities and cooperation across Europe including training young soil scientists.
- 4) Supporting harmonized European soil information, including for international reporting.
- 5) Fostering the uptake of soil management practices conducive to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- 6) Develop and demonstrate region- and context-specific fertilization practices (soil, water and pedoclimatic conditions).

3 Scope of the EJP SOIL International call

The overall objective of this call is to foster farm management practices, which contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. To achieve this aim, three main directions shall be taken into consideration and are subject to this call: A) Soil restoration practices and management, B) Managing soils in the context of climate change and C) Research and development of innovative methods and sensing technologies to provide an integrated monitoring and mapping of farm management practices.

Most of the land surface has been dedicated to very few crops (cereals), with the consequence of the current loss of biodiversity land degradation and loss of inherent soil fertility and organic matter. The main goal for this call is search for solutions to harmonize conservation and restoration with production by assessing the synergistic and contrasted effects that restoration practices can have on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.

This includes the appropriate monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) platforms for soil organic carbon (SOC) to enhance preparedness and commitment of farmers to take farm level actions on climate change mitigation. To be effective, such farm scale monitoring of carbon sequestration and SOC management should be linked to and based on decisions and tools that allow farmers to calculate and monitor impacts of farm management not only on C but also on N and P cycling.

Furthermore, reliable and integrated information on farm management practices, vegetation characteristics and soil physical attributes is critical for a range of uses, including compliance with public policy, environmental monitoring, providing input variables for greenhouse gas emissions reporting, soil carbon modelling, amongst others.

At scale, however, high degrees of spatial and/or temporal variability implies that collecting this information through field monitoring and field measurements is often cost-

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and time-prohibitive. Because of these constraints on data availability and available data may not be truly representative.

Within this call three topics have been identified which will help to solve the challenges and to fulfil the aims and objectives of this call (see section 4).

4 Call topics and its expected impacts

Researchers can apply for one of the three topics described here. All proposals shall address the topic specific impacts as well as at least one of the expected impacts of EJP SOIL as described in section 2.

Topic A:

Soil restoration practices and management for alleviating land degradation, supporting agro-ecosystem function and maintaining soil organic carbon stocks.

Description

The research proposals should focus on restoring degraded soils in agricultural and forest lands as well as assessing the potential of available solutions such as: long-term reduced soil physical disturbance, deep rooting crops, agroforestry systems, high density grazing systems and diversified landscapes. New technical knowledge in close cooperation with farmers and relevant stakeholders in line with the new greening practices are needed. In addition, to assess restoration efforts using the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3 target "land degradation neutrality", common tools suitable for the European context and beyond needs to be developed. This restoration approach should at the same time contribute to mitigate greenhouse-gases (GHG) emissions and, when possible, optimize soil carbon sequestration.

Soil restoration research might take into consideration the potential of nature-based solutions (NBS)¹, more technological options and their combinations for restoring degraded land and soil. This includes the qualitative and quantitative assessment of the multiple benefits of NBS in addition to novel advanced agronomic practices for diversified cropping (strip cropping, intercropping and cover crops) and site-specific soil management with the overall aim of improving soil health, productivity, sustainability and maintaining soil organic carbon sequestration. Indeed, the synergistic effect of soil practices on soil conservation and mitigation of GHG emissions should be ensured when defining the more appropriate soil management options.

Expected impacts

- The promotion of proven and cost-effective solutions to land and agro-ecosystem degradation scaling-out of sustainable management options supported by an appropriate enabling environment to combat land degradation, enhance productivity and livelihoods.
- Collect and synthesize knowledge on the successful and unsuccessful use of novel advanced technologies in relation to diversified cropping (e.g. strip cropping and pixel

¹ Solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions, following description as defined here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/environment/nature-based-solutions_en



farming) and site-specific soil management (tillage and traffic, fertilization, weed and pest control, irrigation).

- Evaluate the potentials and limitations of using novel advanced technologies for sustainable soil management for different pedo-climatic zones and cropping systems.

In the long-term, the successful proposals should contribute to the restoration of degraded landscapes including improving the functionality of agro-ecosystems pastures, and natural agro-ecosystems landscapes as well as contributing to more carbon neutral farming activities.

Topic B:

Managing soils in the context of climate change: understanding impacts on C, N and P cycling and greenhouse gas emissions and removals, using data derived from LTEs and benchmark farms.

Description

Research proposals should consider how climate change impacts (including, *inter alia*, temperature and rainfall intensity and patterns) may impact C, N and P cycling and options to manage greenhouse gas emissions and removals, without compromising yield and other environmental goals. Proposals should provide practical solutions to adjust management to achieve a positive impact on production and contribute to national and regional agricultural climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives.

For this purpose, research proposals should be informed by empirical evidence drawn from a combination of relevant and representative LTEs and benchmark farms² with documented information on relevant parameters over the last decade, or at least be able to calculate and document changes in parameters going back at least 10 years. These sites should represent the main pedo-climatic and agricultural production systems as well as soil, crop livestock combinations.

Expected Impact

Parameterization and validation of models that form the core of farmer advisory systems, e.g., Cool Farm Tool, CAP2R and many more. This can help to demonstrate the effect and impact of (sequential or additive) management practices and measures in different farming systems across all relevant climate regions.

Development and of more accurate and reliable Tier 2 and Tier 3 methods for greenhouse gas emissions and removals reporting at different scales and assessing farm-level greenhouse gas balances to enhance implementation of climate action at the farm level and farmers' commitment to climate mitigation targets across the world.

Informing and improving implementation and execution of specific on farm practices and measures and/or farm level strategies to simultaneously address climate change impacts and mitigate greenhouse gases.

² experimental or commercial farms that engage and execute a pre-defined and agreed long-term (10-20 year) strategy using practices and measures in full farm management targeting, *inter alia*, enhanced soil carbon sequestration and reduced CO₂ and non-CO₂ emissions of greenhouse gases



Topic C:

Research and development of innovative methods and sensing technologies to provide an integrated monitoring and mapping of farm management practices taking also into account physical attributes and vegetation characteristics relevant to SOC sequestration, soil health and degradation.

Description

Research proposals should focus on developing, testing and validating these new remote and / or proximal sensing approaches to provide mapping and monitoring of farm management practices (e.g. including cropping systems, tillage systems, irrigation management, nutrient / fertiliser management, pasture management and land restoration practices), as well as physical attributes relevant to SOC sequestration, soil health and degradation, etc. Such approaches should be validated in different land uses, soil types and climatic zones and should be transparent with regards to their accuracy and precision.

Expected impact

Publicly available, broadly applicable, low-cost and reliable approaches to map and monitor farm management, vegetation characteristics and soil physical attributes will facilitate improved public policy, improved measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for agricultural greenhouse gases, removals and other ecosystem services, development and provision of tools to support decision making of land managers, farmers, and other actors of the food system (monitoring as a base for the development of the carbon markets) and assist with monitoring compliance with regulations.

5 Funding modalities and who can apply

Funders from the following countries will provide funds for this Call: Argentina, Brazil, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lithuania, Norway, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and Uruguay. Furthermore, the Funder GRA³ will provide funds to organisations from the following countries⁴: Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A list of all Funders can be found in Table 1.

The funding for projects will be based on a virtual common pot instrument. This means that applicants of projects that have been selected for funding will receive the grant directly from Funder from which they sought funds, according to their terms and conditions.

5.1 Who can apply

Universities and other higher education institutions, public research institutions, private non-profit organisations, and private companies as well as employees of these organisations can apply for funding, subject to individual Funders' regulations and respective individual eligibility criteria (see separate document "Funders' regulations").

³ GRA: Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases

⁴ Please check the GRA regulations for more details on countries and type of organisations.



Research consortia should consist of a minimum of three eligible partners from three different countries seeking funding from at least three different Funders who contribute funds to the Call. The Funder from which they sought funding, according to their legal terms and conditions for project funding, will provide funding of the participating research partners. Investigators ineligible to receive funding from any of the Funders listed in Table 1 can be part of research consortia as self-funded partners if they bring in their own funding and submit an appropriate “letter of financial commitment” (see Annex E).

5.2 Eligibility criteria

The call is conducted as a one-step-procedure but proposals are only eligible if

Pre-registered until the 20th July 2022, 14:00 CEST (Berlin, Germany) via the online-submission tool.

Projects that have not been pre-registered within this time will not be considered for submission of proposals.

Proposals have to be submitted until the 14th of September 2022, 14:00 CEST (Berlin, Germany) via online-submission tool.

Proposals that have not been submitted within this time will not be considered for evaluation.

Applicants are strongly advised to check carefully the respective individual regulations (see separate document “Funders’ regulations”) and where necessary contact the respective Funder before submitting a proposal (see Annex A).

All proposals must fulfil the general criteria, as well as the applicable eligibility criteria of the Funder partners of the consortia seeking funds from. If the Funder criteria differ from the general eligibility criteria, the Funder specific criteria have to be respected. General eligibility criteria are:

- Proposals must be written in English
- Proposals must be complete and in accordance with the procedure and must be submitted via the online submission tool
- **Proposals must be pre-registered by 20th July 2022 14:00 CEST via the online submission tool (see section 6.3 for details)**
- **Complete proposals must be submitted 14th September 2022 14:00 CEST via the online submission tool (see section 6.4 for details)**
- The minimum project duration is 24 months and the maximum is 36 months
- Consortia must include at least three eligible partners from three different countries requesting funding from at least three different Funders (EXCBF member) who contribute funds to the Call. Thus, each proposal must involve at least three partners, each based at an eligible institution in a different country participating in the call.

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- Among the eligible partners, one will assume the role of coordinator
- **The same person** cannot act as a coordinator for more than one proposal in this Call.
- Partners ineligible to receive funding from any of the Funders of the call are welcome to contribute to project consortia if they can secure their own expenses and hence have to submit a “letter of financial commitment” (see Annex E). However, these self-funded partners cannot be coordinator and their contribution should not be essential for the project’s successful implementation (achieving of milestones) and they will not count towards the minimum number of partners. Same applies for partners eligible to receive funding but do not request funding from one of the Funders listed in Table 1.
- The involvement of self-funded partners who do not seek funding from any of the Funders listed in Table 1 is additional to the 3 minimum entities.
- All partners including the self-funded partners must complete an ethics self-assessment as part of the application.

In addition, the Funder’s eligibility criteria and financial request must be respected. Further, the proposed research project must be consistent with the thematic priorities set by the Funders from which financial support is requested by the full partners of the consortium. Eligibility and financial requirements are described in the respective document “**Funder regulations**”, which is available as separate document on the submission website and in some cases can be stricter than the general eligibility criteria (<https://ejp-soil.ptj.de/call2>). The Funders may require additional documents according to their regulations. If additional documents are required, these must be submitted according to the requirements and by the deadlines stated in the document “Funder regulations”.

Failure of one partner to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the Funder's specific eligibility criteria will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.

Each partner is therefore strongly recommended to consult, well in advance of submission, the (National) Contact Point (CP) of the Funder to which the funding request is addressed (see Annex A). Please check the individual Funders’ regulation to ensure eligibility; in cases when different Funders of one country participate in the call, they may have different regulations.

After the closing date, the call office will carry out a General Call Eligibility Check of the proposals with respect to the criteria listed in this section. Proposals not meeting the minimum requirements will be rejected by the call office, following consultation with the External Call Board of Funders (EXCBF).

The members of the EXCBF will then check the proposals against their specific eligibility criteria as described in the Funders’ regulations. Proposals complying with both sets of criteria (General Call Eligibility Criteria and Funders’ regulations) will undergo the evaluation procedure.

The results of the General Eligibility check, the Funder specific Eligibility check will be communicated by the call office to the coordinators before the evaluation phase of the proposals.

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5.3 Coordinator of the research project consortium

Each research project consortium needs to appoint a project coordinator. The project coordinator has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Check the individual Funders' regulations and funding modalities of all involved partners who will request funds from one of the Funders to ensure the eligibility of the project,
- Lead the consortium throughout the application procedure and be responsible for the correct Pre-registration of the proposal. The coordinator should be the one who creates an account for the proposal in the online submission tool,
- Be responsible for the overall project coordination and act as the central contact point for the consortium during the full lifespan of the research project,
- Inform the call office about any event that might affect the implementation of the project,
- Ensure that all work is carried to a high standard and meets contractually bound deliverables and milestones presented in the proposal and approved by the Funders,
- Be responsible for sharing all information provided by the call office with consortium partners,
- Be responsible for monitoring data and timely delivery of project reports,
- Ensure that the project fulfils its obligations of funded project,
- Be the central contact point for general proposal issues (outcome of pre-registration, evaluation and selection)

The project coordinator will not be responsible for the financial management of project funding, which will be handled directly between the consortium members and their corresponding Funders.

Note that the inclusion of a non-eligible partner without a letter of commitment in a proposal will result in the rejection of the entire proposal. The same applies to project partners that participate at their own expense (self-funded partners).

5.4 Funders

All Funders of this call build up the External Call Board of Funders (EXCBF) that is the decision-making body of this call. Table 1 lists all those Funders and their respective country, where applicable.

Table 1: List of Funders of the EJP SOIL International Call.

Country	Funder
/	Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA)
AR	National Institute of Agriculture Technology (INTA)
BR	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa)

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Country	Funder
CH	Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)
EE	Ministry of Rural Affairs (MEM)
ES	Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI)
FI	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MMM)
FR	French National Research Agency (ANR)
HU	National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)
IE	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
IT	Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MIPAAF)
KE	National Research Fund (NRF)
LT	The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (ZUM)
NO	The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
NZ	Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)
PL	The National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR)
UY	Instituto Nacional de Investigacion Agropecuaria (INIA-UY)

5.5 Submission tool

The Call will be implemented using an online submission tool. It consists of a platform, where applicants can find all information necessary for the preparation and submission of proposals. The submission tool is available following this link: <https://ejp-soil.ptj.de/>

A webinar will be organised on May 24th from 10:00 CEST (Berlin time, Germany) for all interested applicants. A link for registration will be published on the submission website within due time. Content of the webinar will be an overview about all relevant aspects for the Call and will give a short introduction for the submission tool. The Webinar will be recorded and the presentation as well as asked questions during the Webinar will be available as download in the submission website.

5.6 Partnering tool

In addition, a partnering tool is attached to the submission platform, where project partnerships can be offered or searched for (<https://ejp-soil.ptj.de/index.php?index=65>).

6 Call procedure

6.1 Management of the call

The call office will be operated by Project Management Jülich (Germany).



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6.2 Time schedule

The EJP SOIL International Call will follow a one-step-procedure, but a pre-registration of the proposal is mandatory for submission of proposals (see section 6.3). A time schedule is provided below (tentative).

Table 2: Timeline for the call.

Step	Date/Timeline
Pre-Announcement	March 25 th 2022
Launch of the Call	April 28 th 2022
Webinar	May 24 th 2022
Deadline Pre-registration of project	July 20 th 2022
Submission deadline	Sep 14 th 2022
Evaluation and selection	Sep-Nov 2022
Letters to applicants	Dec 2022
Start of research projects	Between Jan - May 2023

6.3 Pre-Registration of proposals

All proposals must be pre-registered beforehand of proposal submission. The pre-registration comprises the following information:

- Project data (incl. title, acronym, duration, topic),
- Project summary,
- Contact data of all partners incl. CV and a very brief tentative description of tasks
- Financial plan (sum of total requested funding incl. estimation of each cost item)

All relevant data for pre-registration are clearly marked within the submission tool and will be also explained during the Webinar. Incomplete pre-registrations will be rejected by the submission system. This step is mandatory to apply for this call and hence to submit the proposal.

**The deadline for pre-registration is
20th of July 2022 14:00 CEST (Berlin, Germany).**



Applicants who miss to pre-register cannot submit their proposals in September.

The total sum of requested funding per partner shall not change, however the distribution between the single type of costs can be adapted after the pre-registration. The consortium partners of a proposal shall be determined at pre-registration. Thus, the partners shall not change after pre-registration, unless serious and justified reasons will occur. A replacement of single partner(s) or addition of partner(s) is only possible upon request to the Call Office. The final decision will be taken by the EXCBF.

The pre-registration will support the call office in the preparation of the evaluation phase (contacting and selecting required experts). The project summary will not undergo an expert evaluation. However, the consortium partners will undergo a general check against their eligibility to seek funding from one of the Funders listed in Table 1. The coordinator of the proposal will be informed by the call office about the outcome of the consortia check.

6.4 Submission of proposals

The EJP SOIL International Call follows a one-step procedure with a deadline for submission of proposals being the 14th of September 2022 at 14:00 CEST (Berlin, Germany).

Only proposals that have to been pre-registered beforehand (see section 6.3) can be submitted. Proposals, which have not been pre-registered will be rejected.

It will be possible to update and resubmit the application as many times as required until the submission deadline (14th September 2022, 14:00 CEST), but not after that. Applicants should note that the online submission system may experience high traffic volumes in the last hours before the submission deadline. It is therefore highly recommended to submit the final version of the proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical problems. Requests for extensions of the deadline due to last-minute technical problems may not be considered.

Before the submission of a proposal, the coordinator should ensure that all consortium partners requesting funding from this Call are eligible for support from their respective Funder.

For additional partners who are not eligible for funding from any of the Funders, the coordinator has to ensure that each of them possesses the required financial security to fulfil their tasks within the project and confirmed by a Letter of Financial Commitment (see Annex E).

The consortium coordinator is responsible for the timely submission of the proposal via the online submission system.

Note: the inclusion of a non-eligible partner without a letter of financial commitment in a proposal will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.



7 Expert evaluation procedure

7.1 General

The EXCBF will establish an International Evaluation Panel (IEP) that has the following mandate:

- provides the peer review evaluation of proposals, on the basis of the Evaluation criteria published in the chapter 7.2.1 of the EJP SOIL,
- provides a written summary of each proposal to explain the decisions to the EXCBF (The summary will be provided to the applicant by the call office) and
- provides a ranking list of project proposals based on the evaluation score.

A Chair will coordinate the work of the IEP and an Independent observer will oversee the whole evaluation process. Each IEP member will be independent from any Funder and applicant involved in this Call. The call office will ensure that no conflict of interest exists concerning the expert and the proposals evaluated. For this purpose, the IEP members will be required to sign a Conflict of interest and a Declaration of Confidentiality form. The online evaluation tool will include a feature that will prevent access to a proposal in case a Conflict of Interest is declared for certain proposal(s) by an expert.

During the entire procedure, strict confidentiality will be ensured with respect to the identities of the applicants and the content of the proposals. The proposals will be only read by the call office, the EXCBF members and by the IEP members involved, and be handled by the call office. All IEP members will have signed a confidentiality and Code of Conduct agreement before they get access to the proposals. Furthermore, all collected data will be handled in accordance with the GDPR (see section 8).

Eligible proposals will be evaluated online by a minimum of three international experts per proposal. The experts will then meet and agree on consensus scores for each proposal and a ranking list of all proposals. This IEP meeting will be chaired by a chairperson and overseen by the Independent observer.

7.2 Evaluation and selection of proposals

7.2.1 Evaluation criteria

The reviewers will evaluate the proposals in accordance with the scope and expected impact described in this call announcement (see section 2, 3 and 4), and using the three equally-weighted evaluation criteria (including sub-criteria) described below.

The three equally-weighted evaluation criteria are:

1. Scientific excellence

The excellence of the proposal will be assessed by evaluators considering the following points:

- **Clarity** and pertinence of the objectives
- **Soundness** of the concept
- **Credibility** of the proposed methodology

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- **Quality and expertise** of the consortium as a whole (Project Coordinator's and Project Partners' information)
- **Degree of novelty** and innovation of the proposed approach and extent to which the proposed work is beyond the state of the art and demonstrates innovation potential (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models)
- **Appropriate application** of system thinking, interdisciplinary approaches and where relevant use of stakeholder knowledge/involvement and gender dimension in research and innovation content

2. Relevance and potential impact

This evaluation criterion will focus on the call scope looking at the relevance to the Call and the potential impact of the project.

The relevance to the Call will be done by checking each proposal against

- **topics** outlined in section 3 and
- **overall objective of EJP SOIL** (<https://ejpsoil.eu/>)

The impact assessment will focus on specific impacts underlined in the call scope and addressed topic.

In addition, the evaluator will consider the extent to which the outputs of the project will contribute to at least one expected impact outlined in the call scope (see section 3 and 4) and the overall objective of EJP SOIL.

The evaluator will also consider the quality of the proposed measures to:

- Exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of Intellectual Property Rights)
- Communicate the project activities to different target audiences

3. Quality and efficiency of the Implementation

This criterion will focus on the Implementation of the described project and planned research by also considering balanced and appropriate task allocation as well as reasonable estimated budget.

- **Quality and effectiveness** of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables
- **Appropriateness of the management structures** and procedures, including risk, ethical issues and data management
- **Complementarity of the participants** and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise
- **Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks**, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role
- **Appropriateness of the project budget** to the planned work and the achievement of the project goals

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- **Appropriateness of the consortia**, size of consortia, allocation of tasks and work packages is adequate and reasonable to fulfil the project goals

7.2.2 Scoring

For proposal evaluation, scores will be awarded for each of the three main criteria mentioned above. Each criterion will be scored out of 5 (half scores are not allowed) and equally weighted.

The 0-5 scoring system for each criterion indicates the following assessment:

- **0: The proposal fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- **1: Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed**, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- **2: Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion**, but there are significant weaknesses.
- **3: Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well**, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- **4: Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well**, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- **5: Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion**. Any shortcomings are minor.

An average score of each criterion is calculated out of the scores given by a minimum of 3 experts who evaluated the proposal. Two thresholds will be applied with respect to the scores. **A threshold of 3/5** will be applied for each criterion, i.e. proposals with a mean score < 3.0 in any main criterion will not be recommended for funding. **A threshold of 10** will be applied with respect to the total score, i.e. proposals with a total score under 10 will not be proposed for funding. All proposals will be ranked according to the final consensus scores the experts agreed on during the IEP meeting.

The outcome of the evaluation is irrevocable.

7.3 Proposal selection (Funding decision)

The call office will prepare a list of recommended projects taking into account the ranking list as provided by the IEP and available funding. The EXCBF will meet to take the final decision on selecting transnational projects recommended for funding, based on the ranking list provided by the IEP to ensure to fund as many high-quality projects as possible with the available funds from the Funders.

The outcome of the evaluation process, including the individual evaluation summary and funding recommendation will be communicated by the call office to the project coordinators only. **It is the responsibility of the project coordinator to communicate the results to each partner.**

Upon the final decision by the EXCBF, a list of funded projects will be published on the EJP SOIL website (<https://ejpsoil.eu/>) containing the following information from the proposals:

- Project title and project acronym



- Duration of the project
- Project Summary
- Total requested funding of the project
- Name and contact information of the project coordinator
- Country, organisation and participant name of each partner.

Founders may also publish this information (or part of it) on their respective websites.

8 General Data Protection Regulations Issues

All personal data offered for project applications, reviewers and expert assessments, mailing lists, tracking websites, registration for activities and events will be collected, stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation EU 679/2016). A data protection officer (DPO) is appointed to ensure compliance with the GDPR rules. For more information, please consult the privacy policy on the submission website.

9 Funding procedure and monitoring

9.1 Project funding

Once the notification letter from the call office to the coordinators with the communication of the funding decision has been received, the project partners of proposals recommended for funding will be contacted by the Funders or will need to contact the Funders they requested funds from, according to the respective Funders' regulation in order to start the grant negotiation and accomplish the remaining steps until the research project can start.

Each Funder will fund their respective applicant(s) within the research project. Formal funding decisions are made by the participating Funders and funding will be provided according to applicable Funders' regulation and specific ethical issues raised by the evaluators.

For some Funders, a signed consortium agreement might be required for release of the funds. **It is strongly recommended that successful consortia should therefore negotiate and sign a Consortium Agreement before commencement of the project as required per Funders' regulations.**

This should address at least the following topics:

- Internal organisation and management of the consortium
- Intellectual property arrangements
- Settlement of internal disputes
- Common start date of the project

Support for the preparation of a Consortium Agreement can be found on the DESCAs webpage (<http://www.desca-2020.eu>): the form was developed for H2020 projects and will have to be adjusted to this Call.

After each contract issued for each partner by the relevant funder, any need raising for

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the project (e.g.: activity variation, no-cost extension ecc.) must be requested to and accepted by the funder of the project.

9.2 Dissemination and Communication

A list of the funded projects will be published at the end of the EJP SOIL International Call. Therefore, applicants should be aware that the information from the proposals as listed under section 7.3 will be published for promotional purposes.

9.3 Project monitoring and meetings

In addition to the reporting required by the individual Funders, reporting will be required at mid-term (M12 or M18, depending on the project duration and start) at the end of each project (M24 or 36 by dates, depending on the project duration and start). This will consist of a project status report and in-depth monitoring survey to measure project progress and contribution to the overall aims of the EJP SOIL International Call. All project partners will have to deliver input for these reports.

In order to enhance dissemination of the project results a mid-term and end-term meeting will be planned by the EJP SOIL consortium where all projects shall be presented. Project coordinators should calculate costs for attendance of those two mandatory joint network meetings (mid-term and end-term meeting) in their project plan.

The report due to this Call for the monitoring process can include also some budgetary indications but the binding information about the budget are due to the Funder, following its own regulations.

Detailed information on the reporting and monitoring procedures as well as templates will be provided to the coordinators of the funded projects in due course.

Other than the EJP Soil monitoring, please check the national regulations or contact the NCP about the obligation about financial and technical report at national/regional level

9.4 Data Management Issues

As relevant, applicants must include information on how the project partners will manage the research data generated and/or collected during the project. Each proposal must include a maximum one-page Data Management Plan (DMP). Advice for preparing the Data Management Plan is provided in Annex D of this document.

In addition, applicants must include an updated Data Management Plan as a distinct deliverable within the first six months of the project. A template for such a plan is given in the guidelines on data management in the H2020 Online Manual. This deliverable will evolve during the lifetime of the project in order to present the status of the project's reflections on data management.

9.5 Ethics assessment

Work involving the use of animals or humans should be carried out under the appropriate authorization taking into account the European Union and national ethical requirements. Any proposal, which seems to contravene fundamental ethical principles, shall not be selected, and may be excluded from the evaluation and selection procedure. Judgement of the significance of ethical issues will be made by using the criteria published by the

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European Commission in its guidelines for the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme.

To prove absence of potential misuse of research results, other ethics issues above listed, the applicant is required to complete the ethics self-assessment and provide a support documentation referred to in the ethics issues checklist. Please consult Horizon 2020 Programme Guidance How to complete your ethics self-assessment (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf).

These guidelines address, in more detail, the following ethical issues: human embryos & fetuses, human beings, human cells or tissues, personal data, animals, non-EU countries, environment, health & safety, dual use, exclusive focus on civil applications. Applicants can also consult on the European Commission website the Guidance Note – Ethics and Food- Related Research on core issues of ethical concern in the field of food-related research including appendix that addresses broader concerns in the field of food ethics.

This self-assessment, as well as any additional ethical issues that are raised by the evaluation committee will be shared with the respective Funder and may stipulate specific ethical requirements which must be met by successful applicants as part of the individual funding contract with the respective Funder.

In case activities undertaken in non-EU countries raise ethics issues, the applicants must ensure that the research conducted outside the EU is legal in at least one EU Member State



Annex A (National) Contact Points (CP) of each Funder and indicative call budget

Table 3: List of (National) Contact Points, indicative call budget and topics that will be supported. We highly recommend to also carefully read the respective funder regulation which topics will be supported and to contact your (N)CP in case of questions.

Country	Funder	(N)CP	E-mail	phone	Budget (k€)	Topic		
						A	B	C
/	GRA	Hayden Montgomery Nilusha Ubeynarayana	research.calls@globalresearchalliance.org	none	900	X	X	X
AR	INTA	Alejandro Valeiro	valeiro.alejandra@inta.gob.ar	+54 113 4214156	100	X	X	X
BR	Embrapa	Vinicius Guimaraes	vinicius.guimaraes@embrapa.br	+33 0467 04 37 43	600	**		
CH	SNSF	Claudia Ellenrieder	claudia.ellenrieder@snf.ch	+41 31 308 2273	CHF 600'000 (approx. k€ 580)	X		
EE	MEM	Epp Eisler	epp.eisler@agri.ee	+372 625 6236	100	X	X	X
ES	AEI	Juan Climent	era-agro@aei.gob.es juan.climent@aei.gob.es	+34 916037242	400	X	X	X
FI	MMM	Marjaana Suorsa	marjaana.suorsa@mmm.fi	+358 29 516 2228	200	X	X	X
FR	ANR	Clémence Bonnot	ejpsoil@agencerecherche.fr	None	1,000	X	X	X
HU	NKFIH	Orsolya Toth	orsolya.toth2@nkfi.gov.hu	+36 1 896 3744	300	X	X	X
IE	DAFM	Willie Ryan	willie.ryan@agriculture.gov.ie	+353 1 607 2327	1,500	X	X	X
IT	MIPAAF	Serenella Puliga Silvia Baralla	s.puliga@politicheagricole.it s.baralla@politicheagricole.it	+39 055 2492220 +39 3402267588	400	x		
KE	NRF	Dr. Jemimah Onsare Jacob Kamwaria Njagih	ceo@researchfund.go.ke kamwariajacob@gmail.com	+25 444 033 86 +25 472 1281207	120	X	X	X

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Country	Funder	(N)CP	E-mail	phone	Budget (k€)	Topic		
						A	B	C
LT	ZUM	Martynas Navickas	martynas.navickas@zum.lt	+37052391084	200	X	X	X
NO	RCN	Nina Elisabeth Solheim	nsf@forskningsradet.no	+47 45225496	1,000	X	X	X
NZ	MPI	William Aitkenhead	William.Aitkenhead@mpi.govt.nz	+64 4 830 1729	900	X	X	X
PL	NCBR	Kinga Szymanska-Rzeznik	Kinga.Szymanska@ncbr.gov.pl	+48 519 684 066	600	X	X	X
UY	INIA-UY	Verónica Musselli Zanotta	vmusselli@inia.org.uy	+598 997 570 61	100	X	X	X
*Not formally confirmed yet. If confirmed funding will be provided to AAFC researchers only. **Funder regulation will be available in due time, please get in contact with the respective contact person					9 Mio €			

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Annex B Checklist proposal documents to be uploaded

The proposal has to be submitted via online submission tool. Beside the data that have to be filled into the submission tool directly the following documents have to be uploaded as separate files (see also Annex C). If not described differently, all documents shall have the font and size Arial 11pt with a line pitch of 1.15 and have to be uploaded as pdf. Beside the documents, 6 images can also be uploaded.

Document	Comment	Done
Coordinator CV	Max.1 page (incl. personal details, brief description of your profile incl. relevant qualification and international expertise, expertise in project management and international collaboration, list of academic and non-academic degrees and year awarded, list of current and past positions)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partner CVs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Work plan	Max. 15 pages, please use the template provided in Annex F and as download on the submission website	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data management plan	Max. 1 page, see Annex D	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter of commitment(s)	Please compile on pdf file for all commitment letters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dissemination and communication plan	Max. 1 page, see Annex G	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter of commitment(s), if applicable	Please compile on pdf file for all commitment letters; a template is also provided in Annex E and as download on submission website	<input type="checkbox"/>
Literature References (optional)	Max. 2 pages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (optional)	Max. 6 figures as jpg/png/gif, max. 2MB and resolution 600x600 px	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Annex C Template proposal

This template shows all menus within the submission tool which have to be either filled in within the tool as free text or either uploaded as pdf file in order to submit a complete full proposal. All underlined menus are the ones mandatory for pre-registration. Please, be aware that the coordinator is responsible to fill in and upload all information for complete proposal submission. Only the menu *partners* has to be filled out by each partner itself.

COORDINATOR/PARTNER

- Contact details
- Team members (optional): name up to 5 team members, incl. their function
- Tasks within the project (for pre-registration only a very brief and tentative description is needed)

Max. 2,500 characters incl. spaces

- CV of coordinator/partner

Upload pdf file max. 1 page and 2 MB

- 5 references/publications (use menu LITERATURE REFERENCES if more needed)
- Declaration, please do not forget to declare that you
 - (i) have read and understood your: confirmation about awareness of applicable Funder Regulation and
 - (ii) have read and accept our regulation and privacy notes of the Call

- Description of team members (optional)

Max. 2,000 characters

PROJECT DATA

- Project title
- Acronym
- Expected project start date and end date
- Topic

KEYWORDS

- Supplementary keywords related to your project

Max. 5 keywords

PROJECT SUMMARY

Please, provide a short summary of your project. This summary may be used for communication and dissemination activities in case your project is recommended for funding. Please, make sure that it is publishable + figures!!!

Max. 3,500 characters incl. spaces

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

The description of work consists of the three parts described below. Please, stick to the structure outlined below.

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Scientific Excellence

- Objectives
- State of the art
- Concept and approach
- Ambition
- Added value for transnational research and innovations

Max. 12,000 characters incl. spaces

Relevance and Impact

- Relevance to the call scope and main objectives of EJP SOIL
- Relevance to respective national funding program of each partner (brief paragraph each)
- Expected impacts
- Measure to maximise impact
- Dissemination and Communication activities and exploitation of results

Max. 12,000 characters incl. spaces

Implementation

- This part shall reflect the implementation of the project. Please, describe the work flow and management structure within the consortium (organigram is recommended)
- The related work plan shall be uploaded as separate file
- Please, do not copy the work plan but reference the work plan if appropriate

Max. 12,000 characters incl. spaces

WORK PLAN

The work plan is part of the implementation and hence part of the description of work. Upload your detailed work plan, including detailed description of work packages, tasks, deliverables and milestones as well as a Gantt-Chart. A template is provided in Annex F and on the submission website and shall be used. The size of the pdf file is limited to 15 pages. Uploading of more than 15 pages will be blocked by the system.

Upload pdf file, max. 15 pages and 5 MB

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Please, consider recommendations and checklist of questions provided in Annex D.

Upload pdf file, max. 1 page and 1 MB

SOCIETAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

- Are there any aspects of the proposal that could possibly raise societal concerns or ethical issues? Yes/no

If yes, please address these concerns/issues. Proposals may be rejected from funding on ethical grounds if they do not comply with European and/or National/Regional Legislation. Furthermore, the full implementation of the 3R (reduction, replacement, refinement) principles in any research project using animals is required. Please also consider https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics_en.htm for ethical self-assessment

Max. 2,000 characters

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FINANCIAL PLAN

Please, insert the requested budget as well as overheads, where applicable, **for all partners** within the consortium into the appropriate columns within the submission tool. Also add your own contribution where applicable. This table can be only filled out by the coordinator within the submission tool. Hence, each partner has to provide the financial plan within due time to the coordinator.

Requested Funding is divided into the cost items Personnel, Travel, Consumables/equipment and subcontracts. Name of the partners, total requested funding, total own contribution and total project costs will be automatically filled in by the submission tool

Partner	Personnel	Travel	Consumables /equipment	Subcontracts	Requested funding	Total own contribution	Total costs
coordinator	200	5	20	0	248	22	270
Overhead	20	1	2	0			
Partner 1	300	2	50	5	357	0	357
Overhead	0	0	0	0			
Partner 2	200	5	0	0	245	5	250
Overhead	40	0	0	0			

Own contribution is divided into the cost items Personnel, Travel, Consumables/equipment and subcontracts. Name of the partners and total own contribution will be automatically filled in by the submission tool

Partner	Personnel	Travel	Consumables /equipment	Subcontracts	Total own contribution
coordinator					
Partner 1					
Partner 2					

FINANCIAL COMMENTS

Please, briefly describe each cost item for each partner (e.g. Personnel: 36 PM for a PhD student). Please, do also consider the respective Funder regulation if additional explanations are needed. Financial comments can be only filled out by the coordinator within the submission tool. Hence, each partner has to provide respective description to each cost item within due time to the coordinator.

DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION PLAN

Please, consider recommendations and explanations provided in Annex G.

Upload pdf file, max. 1 page and 1 MB



LETTER OF COMMITMENT(S)

Partners who are not eligible for funding from the Funders listed in table 1 and partners who are able to fully work on their own financial resources, may join the project at their own expense or funded by another agency, if their contribution is important to achieve the project goals.

You have to upload for each of these partners a letter of financial commitment via the Upload Field of the submission tool. Please use the template provided under Annex E and compile all letter of financial commitments into one pdf file.

Upload one pdf file

LITERATURE REFERENCES (OPTIONAL)

Upload pdf file, max 2 pages and 1 MB

EVALUATORS (OPTIONAL)

Applicants can name experts who shall be excluded for reviewing their proposal because of Conflict of Interest. Please enter full name, affiliation and reason for refusal of the expert.

Max 2,000 characters

FIGURES (OPTIONAL)

You can upload up to 6 figures. Please, make sure to use the correct format (jpg, png or gif) and maximum size that is supported by the online submission system (max. 2 MB and 600px x 600px). Please, check well in advance of the deadline if your figure is accepted by the submission system and implemented in your proposal in correct scale and sufficient resolution.

Upload max. 6 figures as jpg/png/gif, max. 2MB and resolution 600x600 px



Annex D Data Management Plan

Data management is an essential component to the success of projects using systems/synthetic biology approaches and/or tools in bioinformatics. Representatives from academia, industry, funding agencies, and scholarly publishers designed and jointly endorsed a concise and measurable set of principles referred to as FAIR Data Principles with the intention to provide a guideline for reusability of data holdings. Four foundational principles – **F**indability, **A**ccessibility, **I**nteroperability and **R**eusability– are a necessity of data management. The EC published Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020.

All applicants must include a maximum one page Data Management Plan. This plan should mainly detail how the project partners will manage the research data generated and/or collected during the project, in particular addressing the following issues:

- What types of data will the project generate/collect?
- What standards will be used?
- How will this data be exploited and/or shared/made accessible for verification and reuse?

If data cannot be made available, explain why.

- How will this data be curated and preserved?
- How will the costs for data curation and preservation be covered?

Additional guidance on data management, including a template for a Data Management Plan, is given in the guidelines on data management in the Horizon 2020 Online Manual, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/open-access-data-management/data-management_en.htm



Annex E Template financial commitments

This template should be used as evidence of the availability of funds ONLY by applicants who are:

- ineligible to receive funding from any of the Funders of this Call or
- Potentially eligible, to receive funding from a Funder of this Call, but not seeking funding.

Organisations are allowed to use their own templates, however the content of the letter as described hereunder should be regarded as the minimum requirement.

**This document must be signed by
an authorised representative of the organisation.**

This letter should be submitted electronically with the proposal through the Online Submission Tool.

In case of failure to provide such a commitment in a proposal submission, an applicant could be regarded as ineligible and so will be the whole consortium.

Name and address of organisation Name and address of contact person

EJP SOIL International Call

Letter of financial commitment

City, Date:

We hereby confirm that (Organisation Name) has sufficient resources and is committed to participating in the project (project title)

.....

In accordance with the proposal which is submitted by (coordinator name)



Annex F Work plan

Template for description of work packages and Gantt Chart. Text in blue shall be adapted. The template can be also downloaded at the website of the online submission tool.

WP 1	<i>Name of WP</i>					
WP leader	<i>P1</i>	Start month	<i>M1</i>	End month	<i>M6</i>	
Partners involved	<i>P1</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>P3</i>	<i>P4</i>		
Person months	<i>1</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>0.5</i>		<i>1</i>	
Deliverables	<i>D1.1 (M3) D1.2 (M6)</i>		Milestones		<i>M1.1 (M3)</i>	
Aim of WP						
<i>Brief description of objectives and interrelations with other WPs</i>						
Description of Tasks						
<u>Task 1.1: <i>Title (Duration in month)</i></u>						
Task leader and partners involved: Leader , <i>partner1</i> , <i>partner2</i> , ...						
<i>Description of task</i>						
<u>Task 1.2:</u>						
....						
Risks and mitigation of risks						
<i>Brief description of main risks and their mitigation and plans how to adapt work plan</i>						

The Gantt chart shall contain time span of each WP and corresponding tasks as well as deliverables and milestones. An example for a Gantt chart is given below:

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M...	M36
WP 1									
Task 1.1			M1.1						
Task 1.2						D1.2			
WP 2									
...									

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Annex G Dissemination and Communication Plan

Plans for communication and dissemination of the project and its results have to be described and will be taken into account in the evaluation with the aim to increase the quality of the implementation and to reach higher impact (see chapter 7.2.1). This should be organised in the form of various communication routes (both national and international) such as scientific papers, posters, presentations, a course or training material, web based tools, workshops as well as stakeholder involvement or direct intervention directed towards end users.

Appropriate resources should be dedicated for the communication and dissemination activities. To enhance dissemination of the project results, additionally or in parallel to the own project meetings, all project coordinators should calculate costs for the attendance of two mandatory joint network meetings (mid-term- and end-term meeting) in their project plan.

Please consider that all project partners must give proper reference to the EJP SOIL in any document that is published (in written, oral or electronic form) within the research project.

There are possibilities to get support and advice for your plan for communication, dissemination and capacity building, please consider: The EC guidelines on "Communication EU research and innovation guidance for project participants" (https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/gm/h2020-guide-comm_en.pdf)

