



CARING FOR SOILS IS CARING FOR LIFE

**ensure 75% of soils are healthy by 2030
for healthy food, people, nature and
climate**

What are EU Missions?

Partly inspired by the Apollo 11 mission to put a man on the moon, EU missions are a commitment to solve major societal challenges like:

- Fighting cancer;
- Adapting to climate change;
- Living in greener cities;
- Ensuring soil health for healthy food, people, nature and climate;
- Protecting our oceans.

Each EU mission will have a specific timeframe and budget depending on how difficult their challenge is. They will go beyond research and innovation, and will spark innovation across sectors to deliver effective solutions. Moreover, missions will play a crucial role in achieving EU priorities such as the European Green Deal and Europe's Beating Cancer Action Plan.

Your participation counts

We need you to make missions happen. So far, Mission Boards, a broad mix of experts from innovation, research, policy making, civil society and practitioner organisations, have been helping the European Commission to specify possible missions. Now is the time to engage with Europeans like you to make sure missions are relevant and make a real difference. By working together we can achieve much more.

Caring for soil is caring for life

When we asked our group of experts what our mission should be for healthy soil and food, here's what they came back with:

The mission: Caring for soils is caring for life

By 2030, at least 75% of all soils in each EU country are healthy and are able to provide essential services that we depend on

Why is it important? **Life on Earth depends on healthy soils.** The soil under our feet is a living system – home to many fascinating plants and animals, whose invisible interactions ensure our well-being and that of the planet. There are more organisms (around 10 billion) in a handful of soils than humans on the planet. Soils provide us with nutritious food and other products as well as with clean water and flourishing habitats for biodiversity. At the same time, soils can help slow the onset of climate change and make us more resilient to extreme climate events such as droughts and floods. Soils preserve our cultural heritage and are a key part of the landscapes that we all cherish. **Simply put, healthy living soils keep us, and the world around us, alive.**

However, we tend to take these benefits for granted and as a result have neglected the health of our soils. The increasing demand for land for urban development and infrastructures is consuming our most fertile soils. At the same time, inappropriate or unsustainable use of soil and how we deal with our waste is affecting soil health, which in turn, disrupts the capacity of soils to carry out the vital services that they perform. **Climate change is putting further pressure on soil health.**

Why do we need to act now? Soils are fragile and they can take thousands of years to form but can be destroyed in hours! This means that we need to take care of soils now so that they can be regenerated and safeguarded for future generations.

Soil degradation is largely driven by how we live. Left unchecked, it will aggravate many challenges facing the EU. It is no surprise that **soil condition is at the heart of the new Green Deal for Europe and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, both of which aim to reduce biodiversity loss and pollution, reverse climate change while striving for a healthy environment and sustainable land use. The mission will also have a **major role in responding to risks from the coronavirus and other emerging infectious diseases.** Some of the microbes which live in the soil are one of our most promising sources of new therapeutic drugs.

The mission “Caring for Soils is Caring for Life” will raise society’s awareness of soils and put Europe on a path towards sustainable land and soil management. The mission will be a joint endeavour, bringing in people from all walks of life, be they farmers, scientists, businesses, politicians or everyday people including the consumers we all are.

Together, all of us will help to design and apply solutions to achieve the main goal of the mission which is: **By 2030, at least 75% of all soils in each EU country are healthy and are able to provide essential services that we depend on.** Mission activities will combine research and innovation, training and advice as well as demonstration of good practices for soil management using “Living labs” (experiments and innovation in a laboratory on the ground) and “Lighthouses” (places to showcase good practices). Together with other supporting actions this will ensure widespread uptake of solutions. In addition, the mission will develop improved ways for monitoring the status of soils, mobilise

investments, encourage changes in policies and behaviour and ensure we do **not export our soil degradation problems to other countries around the world.**

Through actions that restore degraded land, empower land managers to sustainably use the soil and create the conditions to reward soil health, **the mission will have wide-reaching impacts on food, people, planet and the climate.**

While previous missions brought us to the moon, **Caring for soils is a mission that will keep us safely on earth with healthy soils!**

Find out more: visit <http://ec.europa.eu/mission-soil> or follow **#MissionSoil #EUmissions #HorizonEU** on social media.