**NORMAN WG 7**

**Contaminants of concern in soil and the terrestrial environment**

**Minutes**

**Meeting 06 September 2024**

Participants:

Laetitia Six

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**Recap of last meeting**

For the recap of the meeting (4July 2024), reference is made to the NORMAN website, WG7 private area.

**Feedback JRC workshop “Soil Pollution and Remediation: Data and Knowledge Structuring, Harmonizing and Sharing” July 2024, ISPRA**

Xenia presented what was discussed at the workshop organised by the JRC in ISPRA (slides available in the WG7 private area).

Invited to the meeting were: project coordinators of EU funded soil projects (Aragorn, Edaphos, Islandr, Soilwise), IPCHEM, CEN and obviously also EU COM (DG ENV, and DG AGRI).

Feedback from the meeting:

* The timeline of the Soil Monitoring Law (SML) was presented (see slides)
* The original version was mainly focussed on metals and a very limited number of organic contaminants such as PCBs. The Council and the Parliament emphasized the need for more ambitious goals, including the consideration of natural and anthropogenic background levels and the implementation of a wider list of organic contaminants to be monitored, including plant protection products and PFAS, …
* To determine which contaminants should be monitored and where, we are likely to move towards a **watch list mechanism**.
* What’s next?
	+ This is now up for negotiations in the trialogues (EU COM, EU Parliament, EU Council)
	+ The final approval of the mechanism principles is expected in 2025. This means that it should be decided whether a list of substances to monitor should be included in the SML or not, and if so, whether this list, or parts of it, should be mandatory for the Member States.
	+ Mid 2026, the SML could enter into force with/without a watch list.
	+ Clearly: this is right time to decide whether we want to get our views into the SML and come with a proposal regarding the principles for a list of priority substances and the watch list mechanism.
* At the meeting, also knowledge gaps were discussed too (see slides)
	+ Harmonisation of limit values
	+ Background values
	+ Screening values
	+ Harmonisation of soil data storage
	+ Watch list of emerging contaminants
	+ …

Xenia also informed us that Aragorn decided to lead another round of intercalibration on PFAS total (soil) based on the EOF method.

**Defining the project Joint Programme of Activities 2025**

* **Project aims:**
	+ The discussions showed that there is a general agreement that we should work on the "low hanging fruit" in this project. This means that within a year time a **list of contaminants** to monitor within EU should be established. This list will consist of compounds already monitored in soils for which sufficiently established analytical techniques exist, and for which there is a general agreement of their risks to humans and the environment. This list would result in a sort of "minimum" list for which acceptance by the Member States can reasonably be expected. It is acknowledged that this part of the project has a very pragmatic approach.

* Albeit agreed that this could be the first and most urgent part of the project, there is also interest to work on other related topics (see below)
* Can we develop a general framework and process for **prioritising soil contaminants** for future monitoring? As such we start from the information already available now, but make something future proof for increasing knowledge and scientific evidence (e.g. new info on toxicity, analytical techniques,…)
	+ Why? We need to ensure that there is a mechanism in the SML to introduce new substances in the future
* Once the framework is established (for example in Y1 (2025)), the list of prioritised contaminants can be developed (e.g. in Y2(2026)).

Proposals how to go further:

* Terrachem: can contribute with monitoring strategy / methods and thresholds
* Celia could contribute on the analytical part – e.g. on harmonized methods
* Aragorn: proposals for lists of substances to be monitored are available and could be shared
* Sandrine: volunteers for the development of a proposal regarding the protection goals

Questions/comments:

* Which **protection levels or goals** should we use in the prioritisation? We need to ensure that the protection of the ecosystem receives as much attention as the protection of human health. Is it possible to define a single protection threshold? Or should we consider different objectives depending on the land use? Or a common protection threshold and then apply a tiered approach to adapt to different types of soil. Jean-Mathieu proposed that we could also develop a framework for the protection goals, giving policy makers the opportunity to prioritise and provide options.
* Regarding the **monitoring principles**, participants agreed that the goal would be to develop a watch list mechanism allowing the priority list to be regularly updated (faster than for the WFD) based on scientific evidence.
* Alignment of different regulations: lists of substances of concern regulated under the Groundwater Directive, air deposition, the Sewage Sludge Directive, etc. should also be considered for monitoring in soil.
* All these proposals could be drafted in the form of a **policy paper or opinion paper**.

Collaboration with other EU projects: during the meeting several EU projects were mentioned. It is useful to share information about the soil projects in which NORMAN members are involved. Such exchange can be organised at the start of the project year. This collaboration can also strengthen the NORMAN position.

* Participants proposed to include a **physical meeting** as part of the NORMAN Joint Programme of Activities for 2025.

Other items discussed:

* **European soil mission week in Brussel:** 12-13 November + exclusive side event 14 November open to Soil Mission Funded projects only. [European Mission Soil Week 2024 | Mission Soil Platform (europa.eu)](https://mission-soil-platform.ec.europa.eu/news-events/european-mission-soil-week-2024)
	+ To increase the visibility of our activities towards the EU COM, Xenia will investigate whether NORMAN could join on the 14th and present the envisaged project + present how we could contribute to the SML.
* **Budget**: the work within the project will be on a voluntary basis. However budget for organising meetings will be included in the project proposal (a.o. travel expenses to be covered).

**Next steps**

1. Appoint the project Drafting Group
2. Draft proposal approved within the WG7 group
3. The draft proposal must be ready and presented at the General Assembly (GA) meeting on 3-4 December
4. GA meeting in Rome 3-4 December: a discussion topic on soil monitoring law and the WG7 proposal could be included on the agenda of the GA meeting, e.g. in a World Café format
5. Finalisation of project proposal based on feedback of the GA meeting by end of December
6. Project approval – January 2025
7. Project can start upon approval --> Kick-off meeting beginning 2025