

**COMMON FORUM on
Contaminated Land in Europe
October 14 - 16, 2020
Web Conference**

MEETING REPORT



The CF 2020 Web Conference was attended by:

Vanja	Alling	Norway
Ana Isabel	Alzola Echazarra	Spain
Rainer	Baritz	European Environment Agency (EEA; Copenhagen, DK)
Nuria	Boget	Spain
Johan	Bouma	The Netherlands
Lucia	Buvé	NICOLE (Umicore; BE)
Johan	Ceenaeme	Flanders – Belgium
Octavian	Coltoi	Romania
Marco	Falconi	Italy
Gaëtan	Fourvel	Luxembourg
Joerg	Frauenstein	Germany
Esther	Goidts	Wallonia – Belgium
Dorien	Gorteman	ARCADIS (consultant; BE)
Valérie	Guerin	France
Nicola	Harries	Contaminated Land: Applications in Real Environments (CL:AIRE ; London UK)
Karen Marie	Haug	Norway
Karianne Slåtta	Haugen	Norway
Vlasta	Janova	Slovakia
Sami	Kaabouch	France
Eduard	Márquez	Spain
Co	Molenaar	The Netherlands
Dietmar	Müller-Grabherr	Austria
Paul	Nathanail	CABERNET (Nottingham; UK)
Yvonne	Ohlsson	Sweden
Olav	Ojala	Estonia
Bavo	Peeters	European Commission (EC; Brussels, BE)
Rasa	Radiene	Lithuania
Jussi	Reinikainen	Finland
Natalia	Rodríguez Eugenio	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO; Rome, IT)
Monika	Schwab-Wyssner	Switzerland
Pedro	Sifuentes Amez	Red Latinoamericana de prevención y gestión de Sitios Contaminados (ReLASC; PE)
Nanna	Thomsen	Denmark
Pol	Tock	Luxembourg
Eisaku	Toda	UNEP – Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Geneva, CH)
Åsa	Valley	Sweden
Griet	Van Gestel	Flanders - Belgium
Kris	Van Looy	Flanders - Belgium
Antonella	Vecchio	Italy
Martha	Wepner-Banko	Austria
Christiane	Wermeille	Switzerland

Note: Handouts of presentations from this meeting are available for download at www.commonforum.eu

November 11, 2020

Dietmar Müller-Grabherr, Martha Wepner-Banko

Session 1 – WELCOME ADDRESS

The COMMON FORUM Web Conference 2020 was opened by Dietmar Müller-Grabherr in form of a virtual meeting.

For getting acquainted participants introduced themselves briefly, in particular to mention new country representatives:

- France: Sami Kaabouch (Ministry for an ecological transition)
- Italy: Marco Falconi (ISPRA)

and colleagues representing new COMMON FORUM partner organisations:

- CL:AIRE: Nicola Harries
- UNEP, Secretariat of the Minamata Convention: Eisaku Toda
- FAO: Natalia Rodríguez Eugenio

Session 2 – WHAT’S ON – COUNTRIES, REGIONS, NETWORKS & INITIATIVES

Session 2A – IMPEL Project “Water and Land Remediation” – Marco FALCONI

The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) has five thematic areas, among others “water and land remediation”. Currently a new project is starting, which envisages to develop guidance documents for several remediation technologies. During the period of 2020/21, two technologies will be under focus: ‘in-situ chemical oxidation (ISCO)’ and ‘soil vapour extraction (SVE)’, which will finally result in two separate reference documents. As a first activity until end 2020 a survey including [two questionnaires](#) are circulated and are open for providing case studies. COMMON FORUM is invited and will support the new IMPEL project, which is intended to result in two publications by end of March 2021.

Session 2B – An EU wide coordinated effort to tackle the challenges of risk based land management – Pol TOCK

If you are looking for scientific publication on risk based land management and threshold values you may find publications that oversimplify the subject and appear to give easy answers to complex questions. It is obvious to experts in risk based land management working in policy making that those publications should not be referenced or used as scientific foundation for policy decisions. However, this might not be obvious to none-experts. Therefore the question arises, if attempts should be undertaken to provide clear statements concerning the challenges that experts working on the intersection of risk based land management and soil policy are facing on a daily basis and how these challenges could be tackled more efficiently by an mutual and EU coordinated approach. Should COMMON FORUM work on a possible concept of how to coordinate the efforts to tackle Risk Based Land Management in regards to screening values on an EU level?

Session 2C – SOILveR network – Esther GOIDTS, Yvonne OHLSSON

The Soil and Land Research Funding Platform in Europe – SOILveR – serves as a knowledge exchange and knowledge development platform. SOILveR acknowledge the added value of coordinating, co-funding and disseminating cross-border soil and land management research. The platform is a self-financed platform with members that have an interest in sharing and implementing integrated multidisciplinary research. We build on our experiences from other funding networks such as SNOWMAN, and address knowledge needs identified by e.g. the Horizon 2020 project INSPIRATION

and other initiatives as well as those proposed by the members of SOILVeR. COMMON FORUM could contribute by inputs of knowledge and providing connections to interested parties. Organizations interested in becoming members can contact info@soilver.eu for more information.

Knowledge Exchange

SOILVeR is arranging a Pilot dissemination activity on Risk assessment of PFAS on 9 November 2020, in the form of a web based workshop.

Knowledge Development

SOILVeR has performed a Pilot Research Call in 2019 on the topic covered “recognizing and caring for soil and land” and led to 3 projects (see www.soilver.eu):

- MISSOURI: microplastics in soil and groundwater
- PREMISS: prioritization of emerging chemical compounds in soil
- SOILval: recognizing soil values in land use planning systems

For upcoming projects, a SOILVeR Kick-off meeting is planned for 17 November 2020. The full scale call for proposals for 2021 till 2022 projects will be on

- Emerging contaminants
- Policy decision support for a more integrated management of soil and land
- Risk assessment: diffuse pollution and high background levels
- Risk assessment: methodologies
- Circular economy

Session 3 – WHAT’S ON – EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

Session 3A – Caring for soil is caring for life – an introduction on the Mission Soil Health & Food (Horizon Europe) – Johan BOUMA

‘Caring for Soil is Caring for Life’ is the title of the mission proposed by the Soil Health and Food Mission Board. The mission’s goal is to “ensure that 75% of soils are healthy by 2030 and are able to provide essential ecosystem services”, such as the provision of food and other biomass, supporting biodiversity, storing and regulating the flow of water, or mitigating the effects of climate change.

Soil health is the actual capacity of a particular soil to function, contributing to ecosystem services (that, in turn, contribute to the goals of the Green Deal and the UN SDGs).

It is difficult to define a single soil health value on the bases of a large number of separate soil physical, -chemical and -biological indicators, even though such indicators allow assessment of particular soil health problems and management measures for improvement. An additional method, based on a systems analysis of the soil-water-atmosphere-plant system, was proposed that results in a single soil health indicator looking at soil structure, water and air regimes as well as organic matter contents allowing also to compare soils in regions and all over the world. This indicator will be further tested in the [H2020 LANDSUPPORT](#) program.

Final conclusion: the mission on soil health and food represents the exciting beginning of a process, involving land users, researchers, politicians and the public at large in an ever continuing open and joint learning process.

Session 3B – Recent developments at EU level – Bavo PEETERS

Several initiatives within the European Green Deal are currently ongoing:

- New Circular Economy Action Plan adopted on 11 March 2020 initiated the
 - o Revision of the Strategy for a Sustainable Built Environment foreseen for 2021

- Review of the Industrial Emissions Directive: open public consultation will start end of 2020
- Evaluation of the Sewage Sludge Directive (public consultation will start end 2020) and revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (open public consultation beginning 2021)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 adopted on 20 May 2020
 - Update of the EU Soil Thematic Strategy: roadmap to be published soon with a 4 weeks feedback period, public consultation: end 2020, adoption: second quarter 2021
 - Proposal for legally binding EU nature restoration targets: inception impact assessment to be published soon
 - Horizon Europe mission on soil health and food: [report](#) of the Mission Board “Caring for soil is caring for life”
- Chemicals Strategy for sustainability: [communication](#) adopted on 14 October 2020
- Zero pollution action plan for air, water and soil: roadmap published and open for feedback until 29 October 2020, public consultation will start end of 2020

Miscellaneous:

- Lindane pilot project: under consultation
- [EU Soil Observatory](#) will be launched on 4 December 2020
- ELD guidelines on environmental damage: January 2021

Session 3C – EU Soil Expert Group – debriefing (meeting Sept. 23, 2020)

Following a brief discussion, this topic was addressed on day 3 during the closing session.

Session 4 – PFAS – UPDATES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Session 4A – CF-PFAS Team, results of the CF-questionnaire, draft CF position paper – Jörg FRAUENSTEIN

Jörg Frauenstein gave an overview on the Common Forum PFAS Group, its mission and products.

- A draft CF position paper/CF statement/CF memorandum has been elaborated. The five key messages within this paper were agreed on unanimously.
- A questionnaire on PFAS was sent out to CF members and results were presented.
- A CF PFAS side paper to communicate the effort within member states towards EC including the results of the questionnaire was handed out.

Any comments to the draft CF position paper and the draft side paper as well as further questionnaire inputs are welcome until 23 October 2020. The refinement of those 2 papers will be done within the next 4 weeks.

Coming events:

- SOILveR organises a PFAS contaminated sites risk assessment Workshop held as a Zoom Meeting on 9 November 2020.
- The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) together with Federal Environment Agency (UBA) will hold an international Online-Conference on '[PFAS – Dealing with contaminants of emerging concern](#)' on 30 November – 1 December 2020 under the German EU presidency, where the COMMON FORUM position paper/statement will be presented.

Session 5 – DIFFUSE POLLUTION – POLICY REVIEW AND OUTLOOK

Session 5A – Policies on diffuse soil contamination in Europe – synthesis of the surveys – Johan CEENAEME

Several questionnaires and initiatives were undertaken to find out more about the policy on diffuse soil contamination in European States and regions (2018: Questionnaires + case studies initiated by FOEN and SPW within CF, 2019: additional interviews initiated by OVAM; 2018: JRC report “status of local soil contamination”, 2016: Questionnaire emerging contaminants). Results were summarised in chapters on terminology, specific legislations, investigation, inventories, remediation and management as well as obligations and liability. The following conclusions were extracted:

- Common definition?
- No distinction in legislation between point-source and diffuse pollution
- Not actively investigated or inventoried
- Compounds of concern differ – except heavy metals
- Soil management versus active remediation
- Responsibility and liability hard to determine
 - o Policy tools designed for point-source with clear polluter
 - o Often cost will be carried by public authorities

Session 5B – Designing new legislation on diffuse soil contamination in Flanders – Griet VAN GESTEL

Since Flanders intends to include diffuse soil contamination into Flemish legislation a study was undertaken between November 2018 and September 2020 with the objectives to inventory all available data, to assess the potential impact and extent of the problem and to make a proposal for policy in Flanders. The study resulted in 3 pillars for improvement:

- Gain more insight in sources & substances causing diffuse soil pollution (data exchange & monitoring)
- Fill gaps in instruments of the existing policy
- Raise awareness on prevention and better soil care

The new policy should ensure availability of information to owner/user/buyers etc. to verify that a site is fit for the intended use and provide tools/solutions to deal with diffuse pollution. A proposal for legislative amendment will be made in terms of diffuse soil contamination.

The results of the study are summarized in a report, which will be translated into English and made publically available soon.

Session 5C – Switzerland – state of the project of new legislation for the treatment of diffuse pollution – Christiane WERMEILLE

At the moment point source pollution and diffuse pollution are treated in the different ways in Switzerland. This poses many implementation problems. An amendment to the legislation providing for the identical treatment of all soil pollution has been under discussion for many years. The proposition implies to the modelling of surfaces and indicative map of soils with risks of pollution, the investigation and the remediation.

The planned legislation on treatment of diffuse soil pollution will focus only on soil in areas where children play, it will not include agricultural soil or gardens.

The next steps towards a new legislation will include further discussions with the cantons, legal amendment processes with political discussions (parliament) and end in an implementation the earliest in 2023.

Session 5D – Health and soil pollution: results from a biomonitoring in Wallonia – Esther GOIDTS

The problem with polluted soil connected with increasing interest for urban agriculture and auto-consumption resulted in the SANISOL project, a pilot tool for recommendations to vegetable and fruit producers on potentially contaminated soil in Wallonia (Belgium), which started in 2018.

Within the project, a study was undertaken in a collective garden in Liège (Bressoux). Measurements within the gardens (soil, water, dust, fruits & vegetables), human biomonitoring of gardeners in summer and in winter as well as of neighbours (= witness biomonitoring) on several heavy metals were undertaken. It was seen that diffuse soil pollution can become a health issue (especially As, Cd, Pb) if exposure pathways are not kept under control. Results have been presented to local authorities and site owners as well as to gardeners and recommendations have been provided: [link](#) (in French).

As a next step, the SANSISOL web tool will be published for urban gardeners to pay attention to their soil by doing soil analysis and adapting their practice accordingly.

Session 6 – RBLM – managing risks and how to deal with trade-offs

Session 6A – Residual contamination: a challenge for soil management? – Johan CEENAEME

In terms of risk based land management and a remediation on the ‘fit for use’ bases, the question arises on how much soil/groundwater contamination can be left behind?

In Flanders (Belgium) a document, the so called ‘Soil Certificate’, is requested on transfer of land which can be extracted from the land information register, a database containing all parcels with relevant information on soil and groundwater quality.

A preliminary soil investigation is needed on land with risk activities when transferring of land or periodically, e.g. every 10 or 20 years by the operator or owner.

In order to make the soil certificate more understandable, 13 standardized advices, concerning the use of the site were elaborated which include risks and impacts as well as measures to avoid these risks.

Besides the soil certificate, policy values for remediation based on a pragmatic approach (versus remediation values), a tool for sustainability assessment of residual pollution and legislation & guidelines are available. A new study of residual contamination in the Flemish land information register (database) is undertaken.

In terms of residual contamination, it can be concluded that

- residual contamination poses several challenges for policymakers:
 - o limiting the amount of residual pollution - limiting the burden in the long term
 - o well informing the users / owners of land
 - o offering guidelines for dealing with residual contamination
- adding more information on the soil certificate as a tool for awareness raising on soil quality and can work as an incentive to remediate in order to solve some problems with residual contamination
- different tools can be used to reach the goals.

Session 6B – Residual contamination- approaches and practices in Austria – Dietmar MÜLLER-GRABHERR

The legal background for risk assessment and management of contaminated sites in Austria lies in Water Act (launched 1959; ‘zero-contamination’ policy on groundwater), the Waste Management Act (launched 1990: addressing contaminated soil) and the Contaminated sites Remediation Act (ALSAG 1989, financing instrument for historically contaminated sites – the revision of this legislation is pending).

Regarding historically contaminated sites (before July 1989; see ALSAG) it is common practice that a final risk assessment as well provides for recommendations and/or restrictions for taking account of the residual contamination ‘tolerated’ site-specifically.

To derive the site-specific “tolerance” of residual contamination (which equals to “minimum remediation levels”) two basic criteria exist:

- no (more) serious risks (environmental or human health)
- no (more) serious contamination [to be characterised by the (i) *intensity* and (ii) *extent of contamination*, like e.g. trigger values for oilspills TPH 500 – 1.000 mg/kg (here depending on the solubility of the specific product) and extent > 5.000 m³]

Exemptions: proportionality (feasibility, balancing cost & wider environmental and socio-economic effects).

Regarding any “tolerance” of residual contamination, the following situations may occur in practice:

	3 typical situations		
Historical contamination	Minor contamination sites (neither serious risk nor contamination)	site- & use-specific remediation objectives and subsequent remediation target levels	remediation target levels not achievable within 1 or 2 generations
Prerequisites	- minor contamination sites? - dealt more stringent?	- Information: local authorities, land owners -> use restrictions - change of land use issues – no new risks or trade offs	- see above + - new remediation approaches check - monitoring - contracts on long-term liability

Session 7 – AOB, WRAP-UP + FOCUSING 2021 – Dietmar MÜLLER-GRABHERR

- European Soil Partnership - ESP: 7th plenary meeting September 2020 - meeting documents for [download](#)
- REMTECH EUROPE / EXPO 2020 – all sessions online now!
- Global Assessment Soil Pollution (GASP): under final review, publishing envisaged for in 2021
- European Soil Condition Assessment 2020/21: EEA, supported by EIONET WG Contamination and COMMON FORUM, 1st draft December 2020, Final Report: World Soil Day 2021
- IMPEL project “Soil and land remediation” (see Session 2A): call for volunteers - contact: CF-Secretariat
- IMAGINE (see session 2B) – joining forces for creating a concept note? - to be discussed further; also in relation to the EU Agenda
- PFAS-team:
 - o key messages are agreed unanimously
 - o mandated to finalise the “position paper/CF-statement”
 - o to be presented at International online PFAS-Conference (30.11/1.12.2020)
- DIFFUSE POLLUTION INITIATIVE meets 30 October 2020
- Break-out group “Lead – managing contaminated top-soils”: Web meeting to be organised by CF Secretariat for November 2020
- “EU Green Deal” and its CLM-relevant elements
 - o Brainstorming necessary
 - o Chairs of WG “Soil as a Resource”
 - point out that the revision of the Soil Thematic Strategy touches upon a wider scope than contamination
 - offer to take initiative regarding the revision

Upcoming events:

- Lindane and HCH legacies in the EU – 26 November or 1 December 2020, [Webinar](#)
- International PFAS Conference – Dealing with Contaminants of Emerging Concern – 30 November – 1 December 2020, [Online](#)
- World Soil Day Celebration: keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity – 4 December 2020, [Zoom](#)

Next CF meetings:

2020

- Spring 2021 – If possible: Neuchâtel (Switzerland)
- Autumn 2021 – candidates are welcome

Tasks List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
Finalising CF position paper/statement on PFAS	Working Group, Jörg, Dietmar	November 2020
Web-meeting “Lead – managing contaminated top-soils”	Dietmar, Break-out group	November 2020
IMPEL – collection of case studies: Link	Dietmar, Marco	End of December 2020
IMAGINE – concept note for a better risk based land management	Dietmar, Pol	December 2020
EU Green Deal : STS	WG Soil as a Resource, Dietmar	Starting November 2020