

**COMMON FORUM on
Contaminated Land in Europe
June 23 - 24, 2021
Web Conference**

MEETING REPORT



The CF 2021 Web Conference was attended by:

Christian	Andersen	Denmark
Ana Isabel	Alzola Echazarra	Spain
Nuria	Boget	Spain
Eva	Castillo Esteban	Spain
Margot	De Cleen	The Netherlands
Marco	Falconi	Italy
Esther	Goidts	Wallonia – Belgium
Valérie	Guerin	France
Arwyn	Jones	JRC Ispra
Sami	Kaabouch	France
Co	Molenaar	The Netherlands
Luca	Montanarella	JRC Ispra
Dietmar	Müller-Grabherr	Austria
Paul	Nathanail	CABERNET (Nottingham; UK)
Sabine	Neulen	Germany
Jussi	Reinikainen	Finland
Natalia	Rodríguez Eugenio	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO; Rome, IT)
Åsa	Valley	Sweden
Kris	Van Looy	Flanders - Belgium
Regina	Vilão	Portugal
Bente	Villumsen	Denmark
Antonella	Vecchio	Italy
Martha	Wepner-Banko	Austria
Christiane	Wermeille	Switzerland

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

July 7, 2021

Dietmar Müller-Grabherr, Martha Wepner-Banko

Session 1 – WELCOME ADDRESS

The COMMON FORUM Web Conference 2021 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:

- Germany: Sabine Neulen (Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety)
- Spain: Eva Castillo Esteban (Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico)

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

Session 2A – The new mega-site program – Christian ANDERSEN

In Denmark between 1996 and 2017 around € 1 billion were spent on orphan sites. It is estimated that around 4.300 orphan sites still need remediation, expected to amount for € 4 billion during the coming years, including several mega-sites.

Mega-sites are defined as sites where remediation costs more than € 7 million and the legal basis for public remediation are drinking water reserve, human health or targets following the WFD. Generally, the main remediation target is surface water quality.

10 out of the 4.300 orphan sites are mega-sites with estimated remediation costs of € 360 million in total (or 10 % of the total orphan sites programme). These enormous costs should not affect the regular public programme and the extent of remediation should be manageable. Thus, a separate financing mechanism was allocated for these 10 mega-sites. This new funding was possible by making the problem public, introducing solution proposals, showing the added value and creating a new wording “generational contamination”.

Furthermore, a 3 phased approach was introduced with budgeted funding between € 100 and 150 million per phase. In the first phase (2021-2027, € 100 million, politically accepted end of 2020), sites were classified according to investigation, remediation and preliminary remediation.

Session 2B – SANISOL Webtool for gardeners – Esther GOIDTS

Since urban gardening in Wallonia has become popular but also raised the issue of potential discovery of historical soil pollution, the need to know the soil quality of gardens as well as potential associated risks was rising.

Within the 2018 initiated project SANISOL a platform was established in order to enhance the knowledge on risks associated with possible heavy metal contamination, to provide access to popularized information and to create an informative webtool delivering users specific recommendations (<http://sanisol.wallonie.be>).

For the wider public, 3 brochures have been elaborated and made available under: <http://environnement.sante.wallonie.be/home/au-quotidien/environnement-exterieur/potage> .

A specific model for gardening was developed and issued as a webtool in April 2021. The webtool consists of two parts: the risk assessment from gardening and the quality of fruits and vegetables. In order to enter the webtool at least one soil heavy metal analysis together with the level of organic matter, pH and Cu, are needed.

Session 2C – EC, Networks & Initiatives – Dietmar MÜLLER-GRABHERR et al.

EU Soil Expert Group

The meeting intended before summer 2021 is delayed due to work on STS and nature restoration targets, it might be held in September/October 2021.

EIONET NRC Soil meeting, 18 June 2021

A strong reorganization of EIONET is foreseen moving to a knowledge centric approach. EIONET will be organized within 12 topic areas. Soil will fall under the NRC “land system” (soil, land use, land cover) probably with a specific soil WG. The European Topic Centers will also be restructured – soil might go to the ETC on data. The WG Soil Contamination will be continued but maybe relabeled.

The report “Thresholds and Indicators” is in the review process and might be published late autumn 2021. WG Land Take within NRC Soil was proposed as a possible topic at the next CF autumn meeting 2021.

European Soil Condition Assessment 2020/21

For this EEA report, supported by EIONET/WG Contamination (and COMMON FORUM), a 1st draft 2021 has been established. The Final Report will probably be published end of 2022.

FAO Global Assessment of Soil Pollution Report

The launch of the FAO Global Assessment of Soil Pollution Report was on 4 June 2021. The European chapter is still under revision and will be published on a later date.

IMPEL Project “Water and Land Remediation”

4 years period with 2 projects per year with the establishment of guidance documents in cooperation with EIONET, NICOLE and COMMON FORUM. Projects 2020: SVE soil vapor extraction and ISCO in-situ chemical oxidation. The draft SVE report is circulated for comments and feedback. Final Documents October 2021.

Projects 2021: soil washing and multi-phase extraction – **call for co-workers is open.**

WFD-CIS WG Groundwater

EU Member States, Norway and the European Commission have jointly developed a common strategy for supporting the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD-CIS).

A technical Working Group on Groundwater was established with the aim to implement the Groundwater Directive and the groundwater elements of the WFD, in particular the monitoring and preparation of the first River Basin Management Plans. Already several guidance documents and technical reports were published.

The WG Groundwater is working on a voluntary Groundwater Watchlist. This activity was introduced due to the GWD revision (2014) in order to increase the availability of monitoring data on substances posing a risk to groundwater bodies and thereby facilitate the identification of substances including emerging pollutants for which groundwater quality standards or threshold values should be set. The watchlist does not establish thresholds but rather serves as a guidance document on background values for the nationwide establishment of (site specific) threshold values.

Recently a watchlist was established for pharmaceuticals and PFAS, at the moment for solvents and chelating agents (around 40 substances).

COMMON FORUM will circulate this **list of 40 substances to invite for feedback** (on data availability, relevance for groundwater pollution, existing thresholds for groundwater).

Sustainable finance taxonomy – EU Regulation (2020/852)

The EU Taxonomy, adopted on 4 June 2021, is a classification system, establishing a list of environmentally sustainable economic activities. It is an important enabler to scale up sustainable investment and to implement the EU Green Deal by

- providing appropriate definitions to companies, investors and policymakers on
 - which economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable,
 - create security for investors,
 - protect private investors from greenwashing, etc.

It establishes 6 environmental objectives:

- ✓ Climate change mitigation (already explained)
- ✓ Climate change adaptation (already explained)
- Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- Transition to a circular economy
- Pollution prevention and control
- Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems

Activities have to imply a substantial contribution to at least 1 objective and DNSH (“do no significant harm”) to other objectives.

The EU Taxonomy addresses “remediation activities” within the draft technical screening criteria:

- Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources (WATER)
- Transition to a circular economy (CE)
- Pollution prevention and control (PPC)
- Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems (BIODIV)

The EU Platform on Sustainable Finance (expert group established by EC) is the main advisory body of the EU Taxonomy. Since the EU Taxonomy is a living document that is constantly evolving, the next review started in June 2021.

SOILveR (Esther GOIDTS)

The Soil and land research funding Platform in Europe - SOILveR – consists of 2 pillars: funding and exchange of knowledge.

At the moment 3 projects are ongoing: [PREMISS](#) (Priorisation of emerging chemical compounds in soils), [MISSOURI](#) (microplastics in soil and groundwater) and [SOILval](#) (Recognising Soil values in land use planning systems).

For the exchange of knowledge several initiatives are undertaken (workshops, “coffee break meeting” concept, regular newsletter, Lead interest Group – see below).

The first workshop was held on PFAS on 9 November 2020, and the first coffee break meeting on 31 May 2021 on “Simplified method for oral bioaccessibility for metal(loids) in soils”: [link](#).

For the next call open to anybody who is interested in funding potential projects (e.g. on diffuse pollution, emerging contaminants) and for receiving the newsletter contact SOILveR [here](#).

ISO/CD 24212

Committee draft CD 24212 on “Remediation techniques applied at contaminated sites” (Technical Committee: ISO/TC 190/SC 7 Impact assessment) provides an overview of principles and characteristics on most commonly used remediation techniques.

Session 3 – EU GREEN DEAL & CONTAMINATED LAND MANAGEMENT

Session 3A – COMMON FORUM Statements

COMMON FORUM inputs were given to the

- Soil Thematic Strategy: Roadmap (10 December 2020); public consultation (WG SaR, 27 April 2021)
- Zero Pollution Action Plan: Roadmap (29 October 2020); public consultation (10 February 2021); published 12 May 2021

Soil Thematic Strategy

The discussion process regarding the new Soil Thematic Strategy was mandated to the CF WG Soil as a Resource. Two dedicated online meetings were held (23 March and 15 April 2021) delivering a statement to the public consultation (“The importance of soil and land”) pointing out at the most important issues and key questions.

Zero Pollution Action Plan

Within the Roadmap several gaps and CLM challenges were addressed (distinction between point source and diffuse contamination, adaptive land management, contaminants of emerging concern, monitoring of any pollution should focus on severe problems).

For the public consultation it was pointed out that a stronger recognition of soil is crucial, as well as sediments as transmitter to water and concise quality management is needed for representative and comparable data.

Session 3B – Upcoming Strategies, legislative and non-legislative issues

Several issues regarding the EU Green Deal were discussed, among others

- the European Parliament resolution on soil protection initiated by the Environment Committee,
- the final report of the Mission Board Soil, Health and Food “Caring for soil is caring for life” (September 2020),
- the Zero Pollution Action Plan and its EU Priority watch list for soil contaminants,
- the European Biodiversity Strategy with the EU Nature Restoration Plan(s),
- the Strategy “Sustainable Build Environment” (4Q/2021) and
- the Environmental Liability Directive.

The HORIZON Europe Work Programme 2021/22 has started. The research part is about preparing the ground for healthy soils. The opening of the call was on 22 June 2021, the deadline is 20 October 2021 with an indicative budget of € 5 million.

The **open question** is if COMMON FORUM holds a particular interest and should involve in any of the matters regarding the EU Green Deal.

Session 4 – LIABILITY ON POLLUTION

Session 4A – Liability on pollution - France – Sami KAABOUCH

The French Government invests around € 17 million per year for taking care of ancient industrial sites. Only around 30 industrial sites are taken care of per year. This only includes securisation of the site and minimum remediation.

Generally, the remediation must be carried out by the polluter. The operator is most likely liable, followed by the land owner (“negligent” or “not foreign” to the contamination) and the parent companies. In case of a bankruptcy of a waste disposal site, each waste producer must take care of their waste which is a complicated process to track all the producers.

Since France might have an opportunity to change their liability law they would like to find out more about the system in other countries.

It was decided to draft a questionnaire that will be disseminated to COMMON FORUM members by middle of July 2021 with answers until end of August 2021.

Session 5 – NETWORKING INITIATIVES – UPDATES & DISCUSSION

Session 5A – Working Group Soil as a Resource – Activities ongoing and in future – Co MOLENAAR

Recent activities under the WG Soil as a Resource (SaR) were focused on connecting soil with the SDGs, Land Stewardship and the consultation process within the EU Soil Thematic Strategy. A draft work programme for 2021-2022 was introduced with proposals in the various current topics (e.g. STS, Soil Protection Resolution, EU Mission Soil Health and Food, Land Stewardship, Carbon credits etc.).

A summary with the intensions and proposals for a possible future work programme will be circulated among the CF members for feedback to find out particular interest in further topics for supporting/involving/co-working within the WG SaR or bring up new topics.

Session 5B – COMMON FORUM Lead Interest Group – Esther GOIDTS

The interest in the lead issue came up due to the fact that the 2009 EFSA values for lead are very low (BMDL₁₀ of 15 µg/l, unsustainable soil concentration, below background concentrations). As no common discussion on this issue was specifically addressed since then, COMMON FORUM together with SOILveR decided to establish a Lead interest group with interested countries comprising of Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium (Fl/Wall), Italy, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Spain.

The 1st meeting on 31 March, 2021 was dedicated to risk assessment and corresponding screening values including the following issues:

- exposure
- acceptable exposure
- background exposure
- boundary conditions/ policy implementations
- risk management

As a result of the meeting it was concluded that further in-depth technical discussion is generally found useful as well as on practical application and risk management approaches to limit exposure and control contaminant releases. Two complementary issues came up regarding lead in mining areas and arsenic.

A matrix of common points of interest was established and distributed.

End of summer 2021 technical meetings in small groups with selected topics are foreseen.

A webinar / workshop with the purpose to disseminate results and knowledge exchange is envisaged by the end of 2021.

Interested members or experts are still welcome to join the Lead interest group.

COMMON FORUM PFAS -team

The CF PFAS-team will continue for information exchange at least till the end of 2021.

COMMON FORUM Diffuse Pollution Initiative

The ARCADIS report 'Policies on diffuse soil contamination in Europe' with inputs from CF has been finished but is not publicly available yet. The report can be received by CF members on request.

At [EUROSOIL 2021](#) (23-27 August 2021) a session will be dedicated to diffuse pollution.

It is considered to establish a questionnaire on diffuse pollution for the next ICCL meeting.

Contaminants of Emerging Concern & EmConSoil

In all the existing Strategies the question is missing regarding how to deal with the problem when new substances arise. Thus, OVAM has introduced [EmConSoil](#) as an open stakeholder forum to deal with this question.

Whether and how can COMMON FORUM support this forum and contribute to possible Strategies regarding new substances?

A separate session on substances of emerging concern is planned for the next COMMON FORUM meeting in autumn 2021 including the toxic part as well as the communication issue.

AquaConSoil 2021

The outcomes of the last AquaConSoil in June 2021 have been summarized in a 10 points action plan. The document will be shared within the CF members for feedback. The feedback and results will be collected and could be discussed during the next CF autumn meeting.

Session 6 – AOB, WRAP-UP – Dietmar MÜLLER-GRABHERR

- **COMMON FORUM autumn meeting 2021:** Neuchâtel, possible dates: 29 September – 1 October 2021 or 13 – 15 October 2021 including an excursion; final decision on date: 9 July 2021. 6 weeks before the meeting it will be decided if a back-to-back meeting is possible according to the pandemic situation.
Proposed topics/sessions: NRC Soil WG on Land Take, LUCAS soil pollution component, emerging contaminants (incl. CF contribution in possible projects/calls/initiatives)
- **ICCL Meeting 2021** will be held online in autumn 2021, probably in half days or days spread over a one month period to cover several parts of the world.
- **Liability:** elaboration and dissemination of a CF questionnaire on liability (France) beginning of July 2021, answers by end of August 2021.
- **WG SaR:** proposals with future topics will be circulated among CF members for feedback on particular interest, new ideas and possible co-work till September 2021.
- **Lead interest group:** a common workspace was developed and an invitation to join will be distributed to CF members.
- **Diffuse soil pollution:** possible questionnaire within the next ICCL meeting.
- **AquaConSoil 2021:** summary will be distributed to CF members for feedback

Upcoming events:

- Eurosoil 2021 – 23-27 August 2021, [Virtual Congress](#)
- REMTECH Europe – 20-24 September 2021, [digital and hybrid](#)

Next CF meetings:

2021/2022

- Autumn 2021 – If possible: Neuchâtel (Switzerland)
- Spring 2022 – candidates are welcomed

Tasks List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
Finalizing date of CF autumn meeting	Dietmar, Christiane	9 July 2021
Liability questionnaire	Sami, Dietmar	July 2021
WG SaR questionnaire on future directions	Margot, Co	July 2021
Lead interest group work space	Dietmar	July 2021
Diffuse soil pollution ICCL questionnaire	Christiane, Esther	Summer 2021
AquaConSoil 2021 summary	Margot	Summer 2021