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100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030

Missions NCPs & SPC Soil WG training on LLs
6 June 2025

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REA - Research Executive Agency

#EUmissions #HorizonEU #MissionSoil





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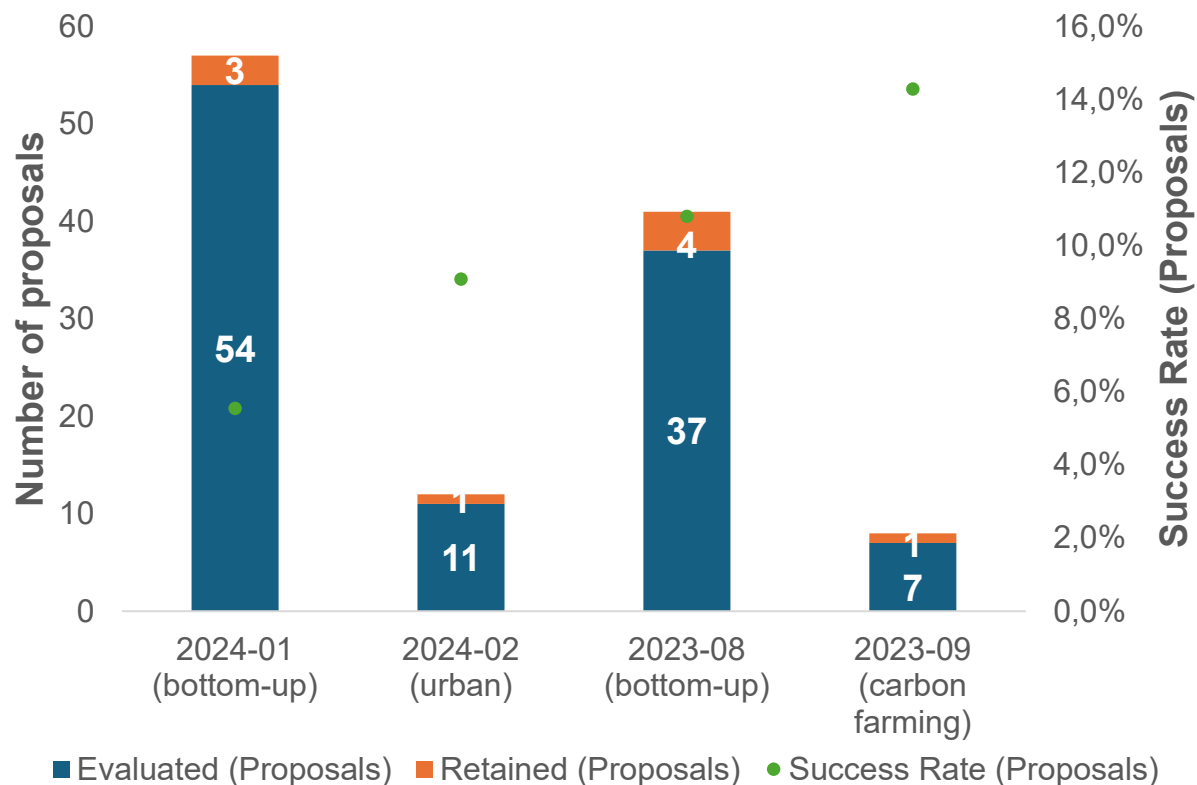
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Living labs proposals overview



Living Labs proposals (2023 – 2024 WP)



72 proposals submitted (2024)

63.5% increase

65 eligible and admissible

4 retained for funding

	below threshold
bottom-up topic	57%
urban topic	27%

average score 9.96 (min 3.5 – max 14.5)

28% declared resubmissions



Applications

1734 applications (all EU countries)

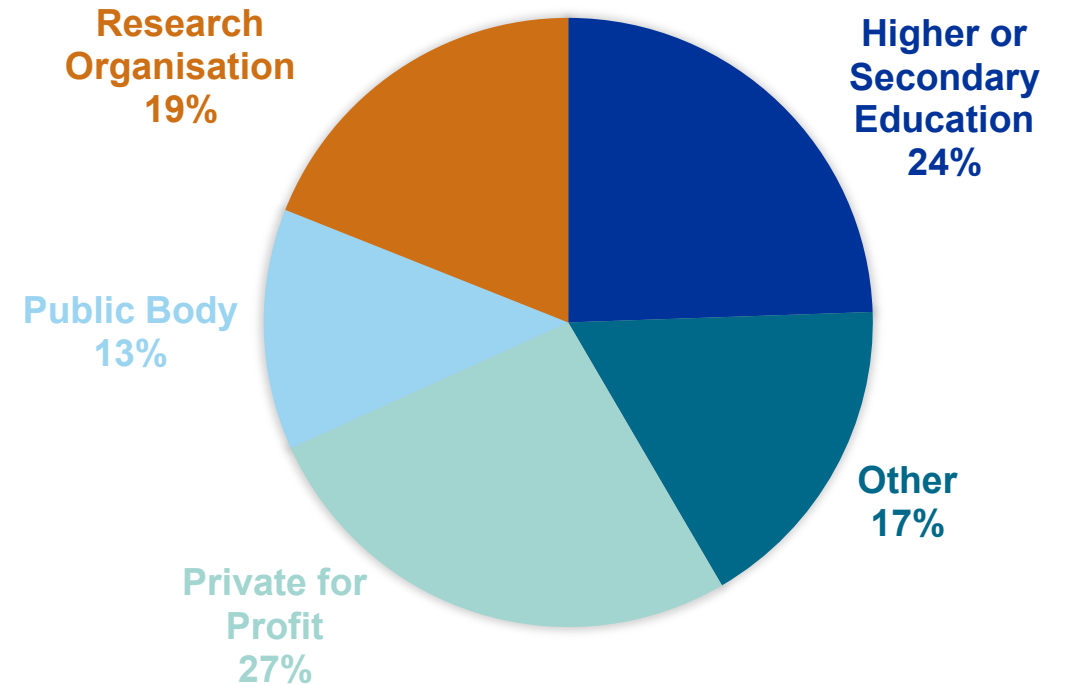
65% increase

balanced representation

increase in PUB (compared to 2023)

lower success rates for PUB and PRC

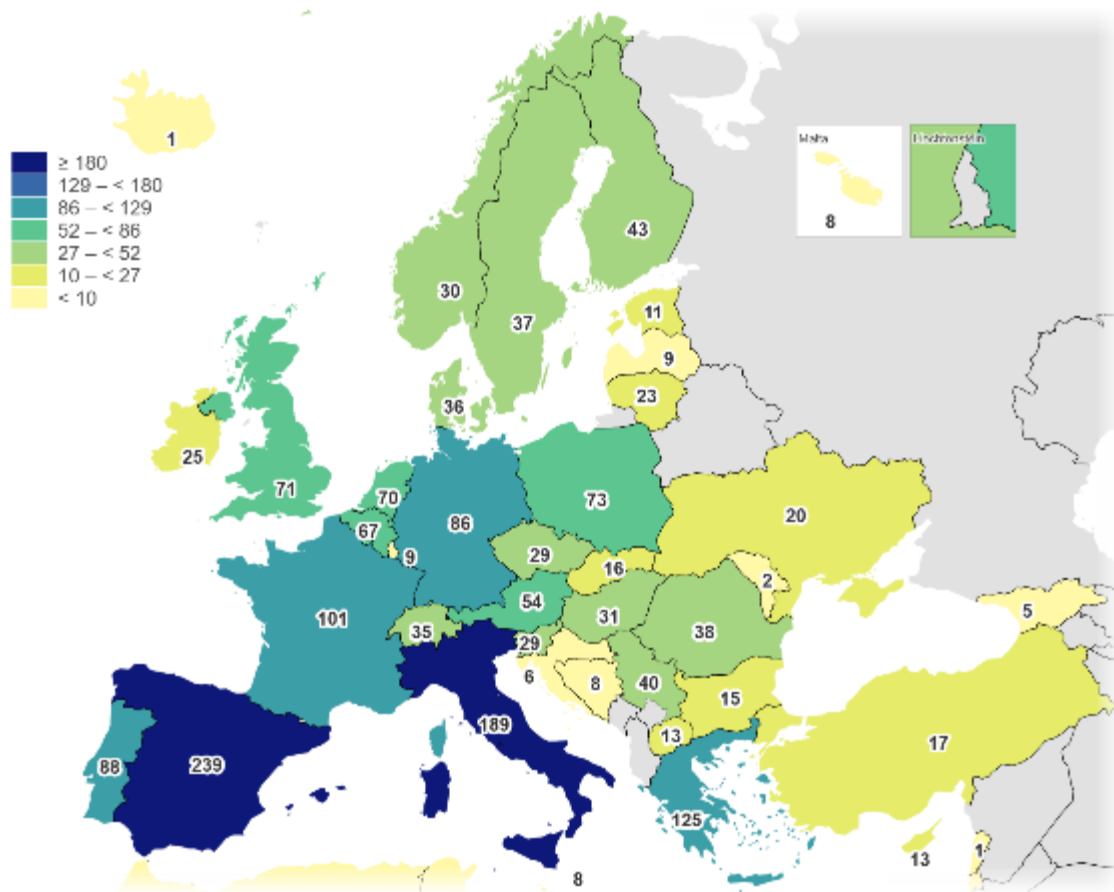
Topic	Applications	Avg/proposal	Min	Max	Avg/proposal (Above threshold)
bottom-up topic	1421	26	5	49	29.6
urban topic	313	28.5	20	45	29.4



Beneficiaries, Affiliated Entities, Associated Partners



Applications



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 05/2025

1734 applications

1398 unique organisations

59% increase

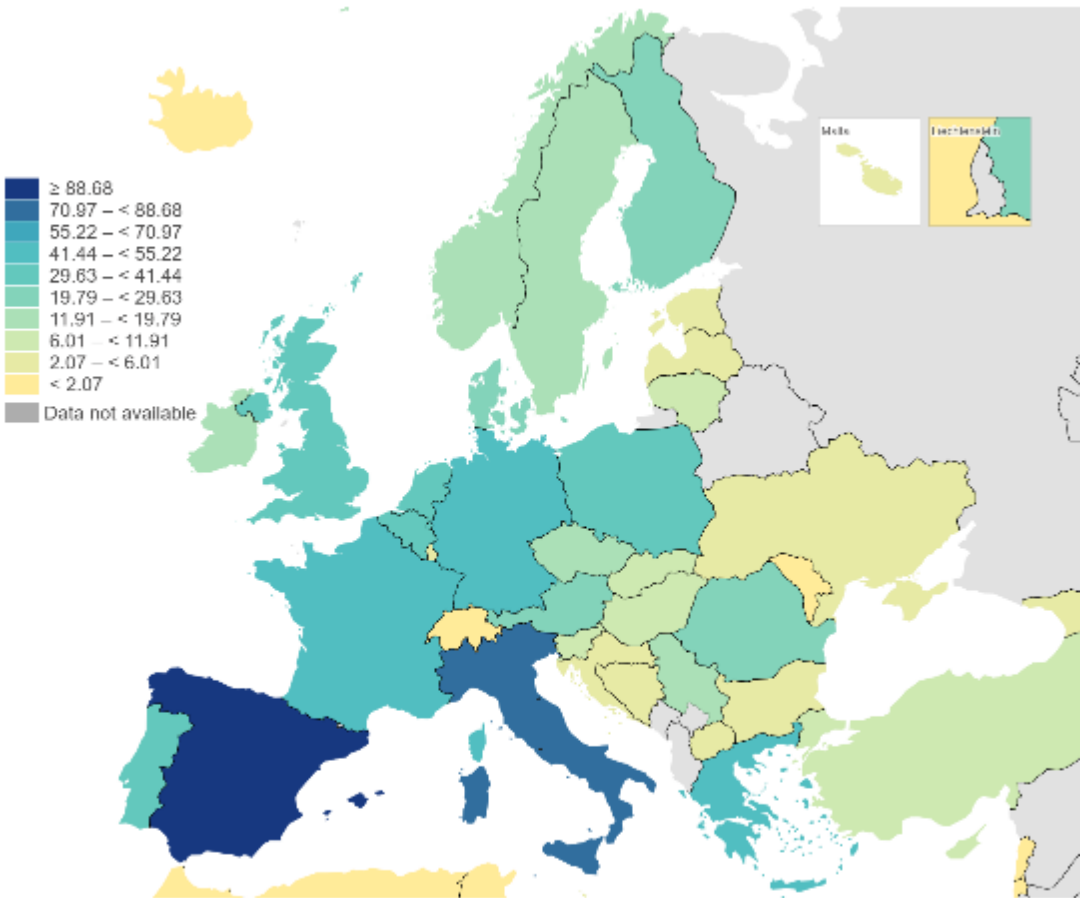
23 involved in at least 5
proposals

coordinators from HES or
REC (followed by PRC)

122 retained applications



Requested Budget (EUR million)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 05/2023

Country Group	Requested Grant
EU	EUR 657,442,184
AC	EUR 100,932,529
TC	EUR 5,689,243
Total	EUR 764,063,955

Country	Number Coordinators			
	2023	2023-R	2024	2024-R
AT	1		1	
BE	2		3	
CY	1		2	2
CZ	1		2	
DE			3	
DK	3		4	
EL	4		6	
ES	11	2	14	1
FI	1		1	
FR	1		2	
HU			2	
IE	1		1	
IT	1		2	
LT	1		1	
LV	1			
NL	3	1	3	
NO	1		2	
PL	3		3	
PT	4	1	3	
RO	1		2	
SE	1	1	1	1
TR	2		2	
UK			5	



Proposed LLs

	LLs (Proposed)	LLs (Retained)	LLs Cross- border (Retained)
01-01 (bottom-up topic)	277	15	4
01-02 (urban topic)	66	5	0
Total	343	20	4

LLs proposed in all MS

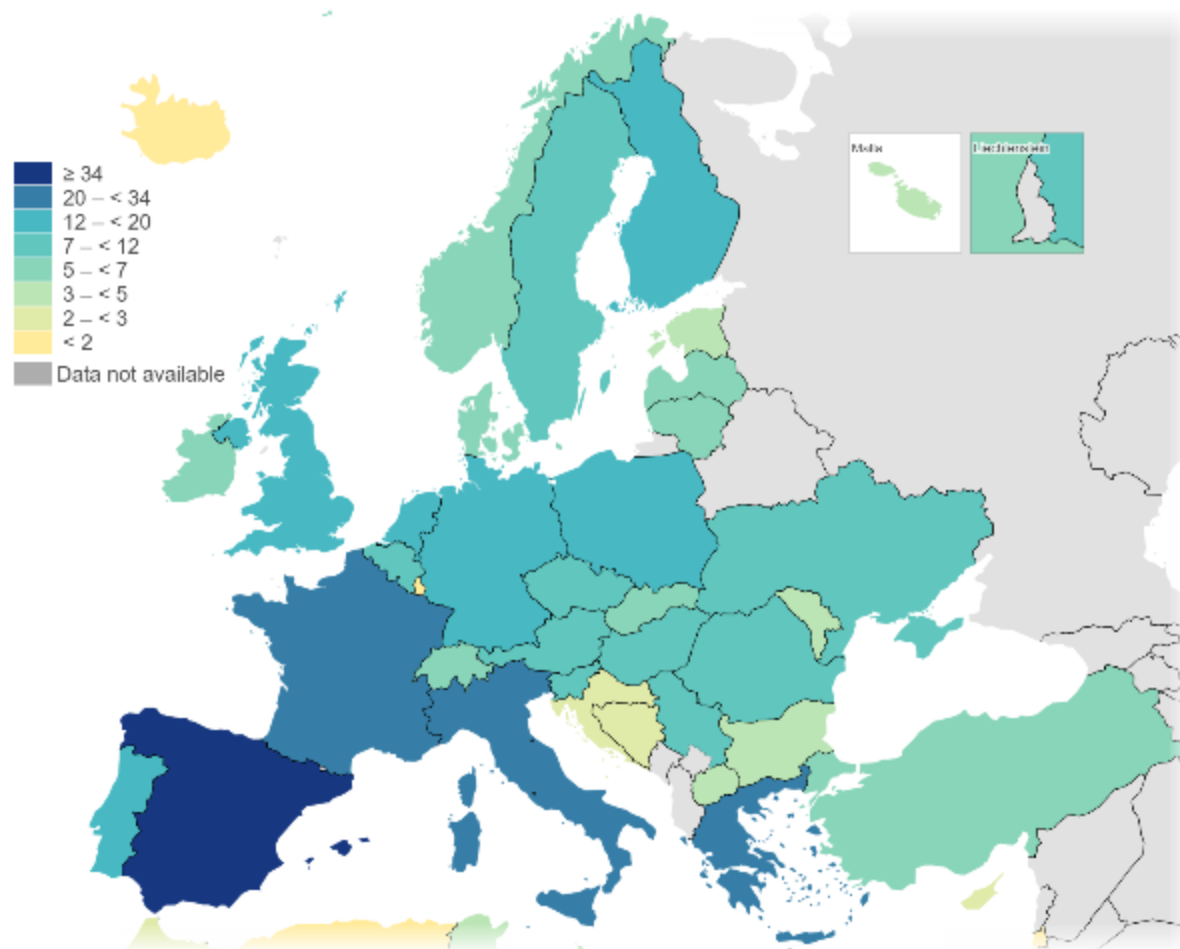
▼ LU – CY – HR - BG

▲ ES – IT – EL - FR

18 cross-border (2 – 4 countries)

52 LLs in 11 AC (UK, RS, UA, NO)

12 LLs in 6 TC





Duration and land use

Proposal duration	Min	Max	Average	Median	Average (<10 score)	Average (>12 score)	Retained
Months	24	60	52.2	48	50.3	57.2	55.5

55% focused on a single land use

82% planned LLs in agricultural lands

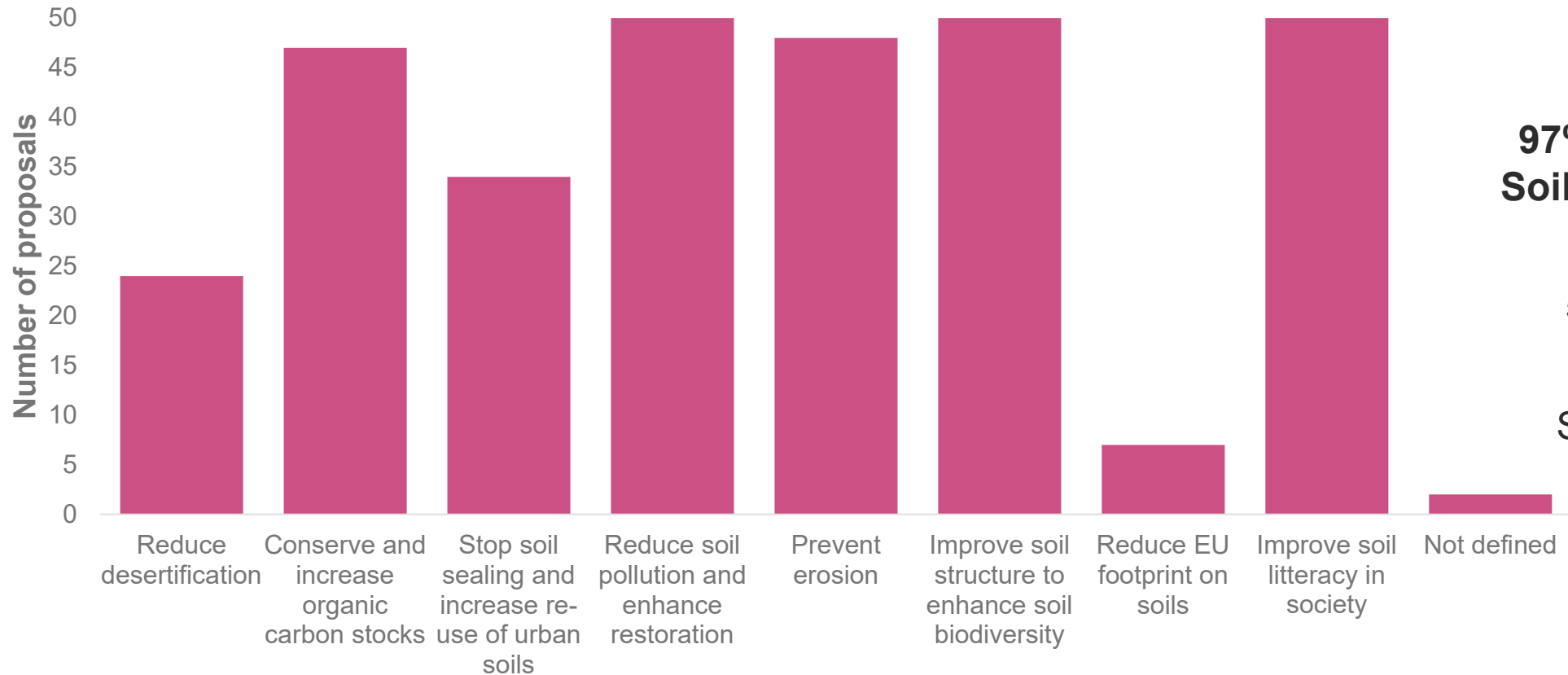
35% planned LLs in forestry lands

56% of proposals focusing on a single land were above threshold compared to 40% or 42% of those addressing 2 or 3 land uses

Land Use addressed	Number of Proposals	Number of proposals (single focus)	Number of proposals (retained)
Agricultural	53	26	3
Forestry	23	0	1
Industrial	6	2	
Natural and semi-natural	14	0	
Urban	19	8	1



Mission Soil specific objectives



97% identified Mission Soil specific objective(s) addressed

50% address 4 – 6 objectives

SO4, SO6 and SO8



Living labs to be set up (2023 – 2024)

Land use	LLs (2023)	LLs (2024)	LLs (total)
Agricultural	21	14	35 (78%)
Agricultural, Forestry	1	1	2 (4%)
Agricultural, Forestry, Urban	1		1 (2%)
Industrial	1		1 (2%)
Forestry, Semi-natural and natural, Urban	1		1 (2%)
Urban		5	5 (11%)

- “differentiated” **41 soil health challenges** with some very closely related or interdependent, most prevalent those dominant in agricultural lands:
 - erosion and land degradation (including desertification)
 - nutrient management
 - soil organic matter and soil organic carbon management
 - soil structure and biodiversity improvement
 - pollution and contamination



Living labs to be set up (2023 – 2024)

Mission Soil specific objectives	LLs (2023)	LLs (2024)	LLs total (total)	LLs (% total)
Reduce desertification (SO1)	4	7	11	24%
Conserve and increase organic carbon stocks (SO2)	17	15	32	71%
Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils (SO3)	0	5	5	11%
Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration (SO4)	13	12	25	56%
Prevent erosion (SO5)	15	14	29	64%
Improve soil structure to enhance soil biodiversity (SO6)	17	14	31	69%
Reduce EU footprint on soils (SO7)	0	1	1	2%
Improve soil literacy in society (SO8)	13	16	29	64%



Living labs to be set up (2023 – 2024)

Country	LLs (*cross-border)
AT	1*
BE	1
BG	1
CY	1
DE	2
EL	5
ES	11 (4*)
FR	6 (1*)
IE	1
IT	5
LU	1
NL	1
PL	1
PT	4 (3*)
RO	1*
SE	3
SI	1

No LLs yet in :
CZ, DK, EE, FI, HR
HU, LT, LV, MT, SK



Evaluation lessons learned (incl. expert feedback)

- *Proposals should present a realistic combination of a limited selection of variables (e.g., number of soil health challenges addressed, pedo-climatic conditions, land uses, Mission objectives addressed).*
- Further focus needed in the topic on interdisciplinarity, stakeholder engagement, upscaling and transferability to boost adoption of soil health solutions on-the-ground (also in regard to innovation expectations)
- EC to improve proposal template and ensure direct or indirect support to applicants (e.g. example contributions to Expected Outcomes)
- **Applicants to make better use of available capacity building material** and improve proposal structure:
 - link better objectives with implementation
 - provide more clear information on resources and roles of the different partners in the LLs which is critical for the quality of the co-creation processes and multi-actor approach
- Evaluation process to consider better high proposal complexity which is not conducive with very short evaluation periods. Request for more time to revisit and check elements for the top proposals – **two stage evaluation procedure**
- Find a better process to deal/reduce the “no effort” resubmissions



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Evaluation and proposal template



Evaluation modalities for 2025 WP LLs topics

HORIZON-MISS-2025-05-SOIL-01

- Single stage
- full proposal
 - Detailed budget table
 - 45-page proposal
 - FSTP Annex (if relevant)
- evaluation of Excellence, Impact and Implementation
- evaluation results expected mid-Jan

HORIZON-MISS-2025-05-SOIL-01-two-stage

- Two stages – Stage 1 & Stage 2
- Stage 1: short proposal (10 pages, no detailed budget table)
- Stage 1: evaluation of Excellence and part of Impact
- Stage 1: evaluation results expected early-Dec (no ESR, overall feedback)
- Stage 2: invited proposals submit full proposal
- Stage 2: evaluation of Excellence, Impact and Implementation
- Stage 2: evaluation results expected end-May



Evaluation modalities for 2025 WP LLs topics

Criteria	Stage 1	Single stage / Stage 2
Excellence	4/5	4/5
Impact	4/5	3/5
Implementation	-	3/5
Overall threshold	As close as possible to 2x available topic budget	12/15*

HORIZON-MISS-2025-05-SOIL-01-two-stage

grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but also to at least one project focusing on each of the mentioned biogeographical regions, provided that proposals attain all thresholds



Proposal template - Stage 2 & Single stage

- Provide a summary of the Living Labs (LL) to be created by filling in the table below with the key elements; [e.g. 1 page]

Table 1.0 Key Elements of the proposed Living Labs

	LL 1	LL 2	LL 3	LL 4	...
Q1. In which country(ies) and administrative region(s) is the Living Lab (LL) located? (Country, NUTS2 ¹)					
Q2. In which biogeographical region ² is the LL located? (Text)					
Q3. What is the main land use in the experimental sites of the LL? (List ³)					
Q4. Which Mission Soil specific objective(s) will be mainly addressed in the LL? (List ⁴)					
Q5. Which soil health challenge(s) ⁵ will be tackled in the LL? (Text)					
Q6. How many experimental sites ⁶ will the LL have? (Number or range)					
Q7. Which project partner is in the lead of the LL? (Partner number)					
Q8. Are you kick-starting participatory processes or are you building on existing ones? (Text)					
Q9. Indicate the approximate proposal budget that will be dedicated for the establishment and implementation of activities in the LL? (EUR ⁷)					



Proposal template - Stage 2 & Single stage

Section 1 - Excellence

- Explain how expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together and integrated in pursuit of your objectives. Describe how social sciences and humanities will foster social innovation and socio cultural and behavioural change. Detail how the proposed Living Labs governance structure(s) will facilitate transdisciplinarity.
[e.g. 2/4 pages]

Section 3 - Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- a description of the budget distribution between the proposed Living Labs and participants for the establishment and implementation of activities in each Living Lab. Substantial differences of budget between Living Labs should be explained;
- In what way does each of them contribute to the project and activities in each proposed Living Lab? Show that each has a valid role, and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role.



Proposal template for applicants - Stage 1

- Provide a summary of the Living Labs (LL) to be created by filling in the table below with the key elements; [e.g. 1 page]

Table 1.0 Key elements of the proposed Living Labs

	LL 1	LL 2	LL 3	LL 4	...
Q1. In which country(ies) and administrative region(s) is the Living Lab (LL) located? (Country, NUTS2 ¹)					
Q2. In which biogeographical region ² is the LL located? (Text)					
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Q7. Which project partner is in the lead of the LL? (Partner number)					
Q8. Are you kick-starting participatory processes or are you building on existing ones? (Text)					

Section 1 - Excellence

- Explain how expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together and integrated in pursuit of your objectives. Describe how social sciences and humanities will foster social innovation and socio cultural and behavioural change. Detail how the proposed Living Labs governance structure(s) will facilitate transdisciplinarity.



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Use of FSTP for smaller actors' engagement



FSTP in the LLs topics/proposals

- **Financial Support to Third Parties is not mandatory!**
- **Why:** To facilitate **active involvement of smaller actors** in the Living Labs which are crucial to achieve the objectives of the project and **could not be easily engaged as beneficiaries or other type of partners**
- **Whom:** land managers and owners such as farmers, SMEs or civil society
- **How:** In the form of **grants with or without a call** for proposals
- **82% proposals** (in 2024) planned to make use of FSTP, **no call option used when smaller actors were already identified**
- **Good acceptance** but still **varied understanding** on the rationale and its correct implementation

Average FSTP Budget	Min FSTP Budget	Average FSTP % of Budget	Max FSTP % of Budget	Min FSTP % of Budget	Max FSTP Budget
EUR 1,275,698	EUR 100,000	10.74%	21.50%	0.83%	EUR 2,580,000

- 50% of proposals the FSTP budget to be distributed by the coordinator



Problems found (2024 very good proposals)

- Lack of clear alignment between project level objectives and the proposed recipients/activities
- No tasks in the work-plan (or only vaguely defined activities) to implement the FSTP or with many inconsistencies with the details provided in the FSTP Annex
- Lack of specificity in targeted recipients with unclear selection and/or evaluation or criteria to identify and award recipients
- Intended recipients or the roles they were to play (activities) not clearly identified, leading to ambiguity in how the actors would be engaged in the co-implementation and co-testing of soil health solutions
- Calls for activities not fully linked with the LLs activities and more focused on dissemination/outreach or specific support services
- Inadequate planning of calls and their timing
 - Too late for actual engagement in the LL activities
 - Too many calls, too little budget for the calls or too small budget available for each third party
 - Too burdensome application process or too complex reporting (like the beneficiaries of the project)



Where to include FSTP in the proposal application (Single Stage & Stage 2)

- In the **budget table** – Category D.1
- In **Part B - Section 3 - Work-plan** – one or more tasks to organise/manage the FSTP
- In the **FSTP Annex** explain:
 - The objectives and the expected results
 - A closed list of the type of activities that qualify for support
 - Type of persons (natural/legal) or categories of persons that will be financed
 - The maximum budget per party necessary to meet the objectives
 - How information on the grants will become publicly available
 - How the conditions specified in Annex B of the General Annexes will be ensured (e.g. transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality)
- Costs will be ‘actual costs’ incurred and should comply with the eligibility conditions described on the AGA (Article 6.2.D.X > Financial support to third parties)

Indicated project description											
Estimated eligible costs											
D. Other cost categories											
No.	Participant name	Country	D.1 Financial support to third parties (Actual costs) (€)	D.2 Indirectly incurred goods and services (Actual costs - Value added tax (excluded)) (€)	D.3 Transportation in access to research infrastructure (Actual costs) (€)	D.4 Virtual services research infrastructure (Actual costs) (€)	D.5 Purchases consumables (Actual costs) (€)	D.6 Current infrastructure (Actual costs) (€)	D.7 Public building (Actual costs) (€)	D.8 Other eligible funding (Actual costs) (€)	
1	Participant 1	NL									
2	Participant 2	LR									
	Associated Body	LR									
3	Participant 3	DE									
	Associated Partner	AT									
Total											



FSTP Annex

The objectives and the expected results

Call (smaller actors to be identified) **or no call** (smaller actors pre-identified)

Purpose: additional sites to co-create and co-implement solutions with land managers/owners; new actors for the co-creation processes

Timing: to allow early involvement in LL activities

A closed list of the type of activities that qualify for support

For example: site management/implementation of soil health solutions costs (equipment, hourly rate, compensation for lost production); time spent of project activities for sampling and monitoring, data collection, knowledge exchange, capacity building, demonstration and awareness activities, participation in workshops/events

Timeline: number of years of expected involvement

Type of persons (natural/legal) or categories of persons that will be financed

Yes: land managers and owners such as farmers, SMEs or civil society

No: researchers, big actors

For example: farm typologies, hectare



FSTP Annex

The maximum budget per party necessary to meet the objectives

Calculated to pay all costs incurred by third parties for the duration of their participation

How information on the grants will become publicly available

For example: website, news articles

How the conditions specified in Annex B of the General Annexes will be ensured (e.g. transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality)

Call: call organisation including awarding criteria, evaluation process, reporting and payment process

No call: demonstrate alignment between the types of activities and persons and those pre-selected, reporting and payment process



Other ways to ‘include’ smaller actors

Purchasing costs

Sub-contracting costs

Non-monetary

- Payment of their expenses related with the project activities
- Payment of their time in the project activities including for collection of samples or data, expert advice
- Payment for their time in the project communication and dissemination activities as site visits, peer to peer exchanges, participation in events as experts or time spent for demonstration activities
- Build a long-term relationship of trust and provide individual follow up and advice (e.g. farm specific recommendations)
- Capacity building activities such as training (e.g. site visits), technical support materials and decision support tools
- Provide access to free data collection and analyses (e.g. soil -parameters, silage/forage analyses, slurry nutrient analyses)
- Make available machinery to try or use in specific moments



FSTP Questions & Answers



What are the key considerations when planning the budget for a proposal for the Living Labs topics (HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-01 or HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-02)?

The budget allocation within proposals under these topics should prioritize the establishment and operation of the soil health living labs and lighthouses within the funded project. ...



If a consortium applying to HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-01 or HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-02 topics considers using Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), which aspects should it pay attention to?

FSTP(Financial Support to Third Parties), also called cascade funding, allows project beneficiaries to award grants to third-party recipients i.e. entities or persons that are not pa...



If a consortium applying to HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-01 or HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-02 topics considers using Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), why and how would it establish the mechanism without a call?

FinancialSupport to Third Parties (FSTP) is usually awarded via a call for proposals. Exceptionally and when duly justified, FSTP can be awarded without a call for proposals. Applica...



Topics HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-01 and HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-02 allow the use of Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). When should applicants consider using this option?

Applicantscan use Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) in proposals under topics HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-01 and HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01-02 as one of the options available un...

The questions are under revision and will be republished for 2025 topics!