



Professor Carmelo Dazzi, President

## **ESSC STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EU SOIL PROTECTION POLICY**

*At the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Society for Soil Conservation (ESSC) held in Tirana from 26-29 September 2019, the following statement was adopted by the Executive Committee and Council of the ESSC.*

The European Society for Soil Conservation (ESSC) is a Pan-European research network which was founded in 1988 and has been continuously active since then. The ESSC includes representatives from all European countries and includes the prominent individuals and institutions actively involved in soil conservation. The ESSC is very concerned about the current uncertain and unclear status of EU soil protection policy.

After withdrawing the Soil Framework Directive in May 2014, the European Commission does not have any comprehensive legal framework for soil protection and there are several countries without national legislative regulations on threats to soil systems and their management. However, soil issues are increasingly included in the global agenda and are receiving more attention than ever before. Examples include the Objectives of the Millennium, SDG, GSP and GSB. Initiatives are also evident in the UN Environmental Convention, including UNCFCC, UNCB, UNCCC, IPCC, GSB and IPBES.

Without doubt, climate change is the main social and environmental challenge of the XXI Century. Furthermore, there are other significant crises directly or indirectly related to climate change. These include the Demographic explosion; Food insecurity; the Scarcity of arable-land; Land degradation and desertification; Environmental security and related forced migrations and conflicts; Water scarcity and water quality; Land use changes (urban expansion, soil sealing, and soil consumption); Land contamination, residues and waste; Loss of biodiversity and landscape quality; Alternative sources of energy and the issue of biofuels, and natural disasters (e.g. flooding and landslides).

Much of the answers to these threats are connected to soil systems and soil conservation. Many of these soil-related issues require urgent action. This is the case in terms of the formidable challenges of increasing agricultural production, maintaining soil environmental requirements and restoring soil ecological functions and services. These all require the wise husbandry of soil as a decreasing and irreplaceable resource. In a wider context, from an ecosystem services perspective, soil conservation now has the potential to positively influence many of the main global issues. These issues include: 1) Increase food production and improve food quality through more ecologically-focused agricultural systems, 2) Enabling soil conservation and soil ecological functions to conserve land resources and

Dipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari e Forestali - Università di Palermo  
Viale delle Scienze, 90128 Palermo (I)  
Tel: +39 09123862211; Fax: +39 09123862239; Email: carmelo.dazzi@unipa.it

---

### **ESSC Executive Committee**

**President**  
**Past-President**  
**Vice-Presidents**

Prof. Dr. Carmelo Dazzi, Palermo, ITALY  
Prof. Dr. José Luis Rubio, Valencia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Michael A. Fullen, Wolverhampton, GB  
Prof. Dr. Ádám Kertész, Budapest, HUNGARY  
Dr. Peter Strauss, Petzenkirchen, AUSTRIA  
Prof. Dr. Edoardo Costantini, Firenze, ITALY  
Prof. Dr. Wim Cornelis, Ghent, BELGIUM  
Prof. Dr. Donald Gabriels, Ghent, BELGIUM

**Editor in Chief**  
**Co-Editor**  
**Members**

Prof. Dr. Michael A. Fullen, Wolverhampton, GB  
Prof. Dr. Antonio Rodriguez, Murcia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Lilian Oygarden, Aas, NORWAY  
Prof. Dr. José Luis Rubio, Valencia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Ivan Vasenev, Moscow, RUSSIA  
Prof. Dr. Ildefonso Pla Sentis, Lleida, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Mihail Dumitru, Bucharest, ROMANIA  
Prof. Dr. Thomas Scholten, Tübingen, GERMANY  
Dr. Endla Reintam, Tartu, ESTONIA

**Secretary**  
**Treasurer**  
**Co-Treasurer**



Professor Carmelo Dazzi, President

biodiversity, 3) Assuring water supply in terms of both quantity and quality, and 4) Reinforcing the soil regulation capacity for climate change mitigation and thus improving the quality of human life.

Based on these previous considerations, the ESSC wish to transmit to the EU Commission the imperative need to adopt measures to protect soil resources within a new EU Soil Policy. In our opinion, a new policy should consider the following three strategic aims:

- 1) Achieve the comprehensive appraisal of soil as a crucial and essentially non-renewable natural resource and as a natural system, which provides many socio-economic benefits and important ecological functions. This should be achieved under a common EU legislative framework.
- 2) Activate the needed mechanisms for EU involvement and support of the actions required to fulfill the aims of the UN SDG, especially aims related to soil and land as integral components of terrestrial ecosystems.
- 3) Support the needed careful consideration of soil aspects in the forthcoming EU Green Deal, 8<sup>th</sup> EAP and Agenda 2030, which should signify an enabling and positive future for the EU environment.

The ESSC, through this document, wishes to transmit both its desire to collaborate with the EU Commission and support for the vision and commitment to protect European soil as a common asset and valuable social, economic and ecological resource. The ESSC has the conviction that enhancing and protecting soil resources is the cornerstone for the future of the Earth and is crucial in terms of enabling soil systems to provide food and water and thus a stable platform for the peaceful and sustainable development of humanity.

***Tirana 25 September 2019***

***The ESSC Executive Committee and Council.***

Dipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari e Forestali - Università di Palermo  
Viale delle Scienze, 90128 Palermo (I)  
Tel: +39 09123862211; Fax: +39 09123862239; Email: carmelo.dazzi@unipa.it

---

**ESSC Executive Committee**

***President***  
***Past-President***  
***Vice-Presidents***

Prof. Dr. Carmelo Dazzi, Palermo, ITALY  
Prof. Dr. José Luis Rubio, Valencia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Michael A. Fullen, Wolverhampton, GB  
Prof. Dr. Ádám Kertész, Budapest, HUNGARY  
Dr. Peter Strauss, Petzenkirchen, AUSTRIA  
Prof. Dr. Edoardo Costantini, Firenze, ITALY  
Prof. Dr. Wim Cornelis, Ghent, BELGIUM  
Prof. Dr. Donald Gabriels, Ghent, BELGIUM

***Editor in Chief***  
***Co-Editor***  
***Members***

Prof. Dr. Michael A. Fullen, Wolverhampton, GB  
Prof. Dr. Antonio Rodriguez, Murcia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Lilian Oygarden, Aas, NORWAY  
Prof. Dr. José Luis Rubio, Valencia, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Ivan Vasenev, Moscow, RUSSIA  
Prof. Dr. Ildefonso Pla Sentis, Lleida, SPAIN  
Prof. Dr. Mihail Dumitru, Bucharest, ROMANIA  
Prof. Dr. Thomas Scholten, Tübingen, GERMANY  
Dr. Endla Reintam, Tartu, ESTONIA

***Secretary***  
***Treasurer***  
***Co-Treasurer***