Open Call for Pilot Proposals

Annex G. Description of the HuMUS participatory soil health governance methodology

HuMUS main aim is to facilitate the deployment of the Soil Mission across European regions and municipalities, through:

(i) the creation and experimentation of spaces for social dialogue on soil health among public and private actors in Europe;

(ii) the promotion of a shared understanding and co-assessment exercises of soil challenges (biophysical and socio-economic dimensions);

(iii) the enhancement of knowledge sharing among municipalities and regions, including on the needed transformations in current S4 (Sustainable Smart Specialisation) strategies and the use of available EU funds to support the transition.

During its first year of work, the HuMUS consortium and particularly the University of Granada have designed a participatory framework, including a number of methods and tools, to help the implementation of the Soil Mission at local and regional levels.

This framework, named the HuMUS methodology, is presented here as a possibility for the co-applicants to this Call to ensure the needed level of cooperation between public and private actors from the Quadruple Helix, such as civil servants, public managers and elected officials, as well as private entrepreneurs, academics, NGOs and citizens.

There is no obligation to adopt this approach or use an alternative one, proposed by the co-applicants, including an adaptation of the HuMUS methodology to the specific pilot scenarios.

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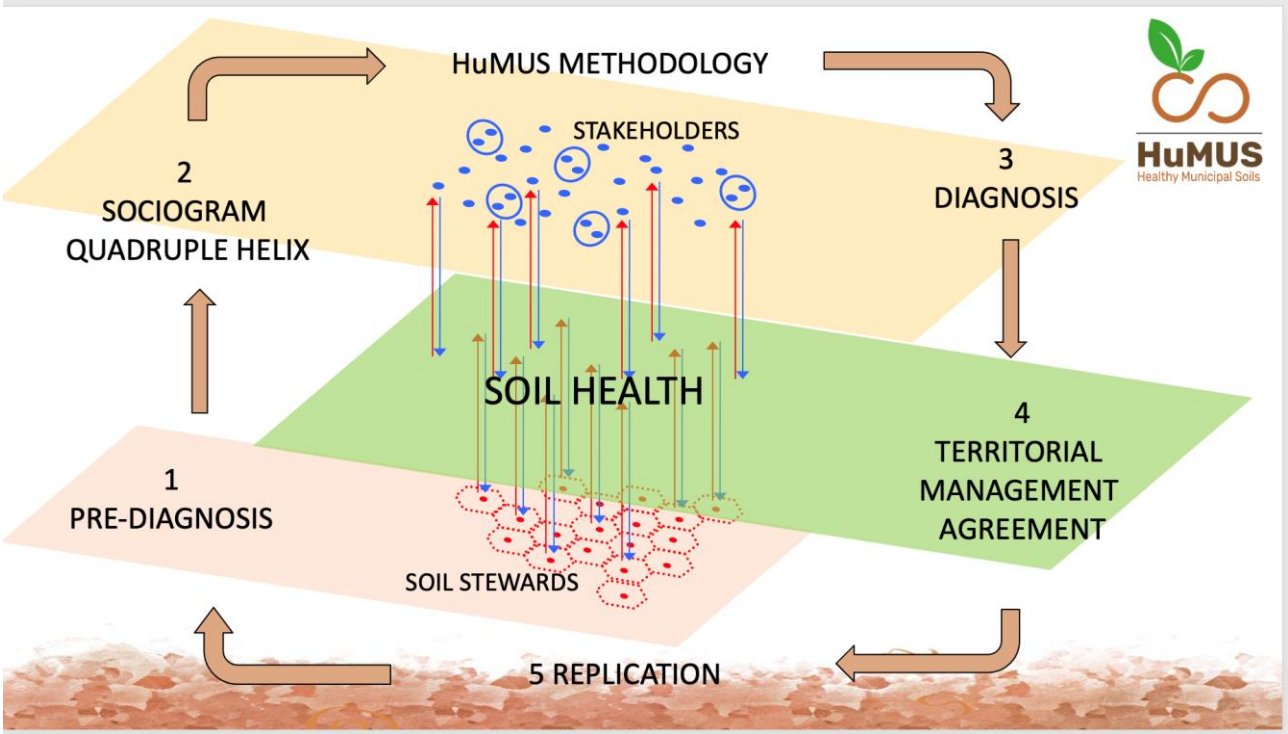
The proposed participatory framework is based on 5 (+1) steps (see Figure):



Step 0 (not shown in the picture) is the signature of the Soil Manifesto [which can be done online, at https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/mission-soil-manifesto] by all the relevant stakeholders of a certain territory. The Soil Manifesto, launched by the European Commission in early 2023, highlights the urgent need for action to protect soil health across the EU. It aims at mobilising and engaging regions, municipalities, not for profit associations, private businesses, schools and universities, as well as the citizens. All of them are called to become part of a community that cares for and acts on soil health.

Step 1 (Pre-Diagnosis) is a state of the art analysis that is developed as a basis for involving the relevant stakeholders from the very beginning. Activities can be initiated with a collection of information from existing sources (including public institutions) to describe one or more soil issues that affect a certain territory (urban or rural). The idea is to start gathering the attention of an initial set of public and private actors, who can be interested in approaching the issues and finding possible solutions. The preliminary diagnosis will generate a technical report presenting the existing urban and/or rural infrastructures, the natural and cultural heritage assets, the demographic trends, the state of the economy and society (including any previous experience in participation), the effects of climate change etc.

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Step 2 (Sociogram) is the identification and mapping of the main and most relevant actors across different land uses in the local community, complementing the initial list of actors described in the pre-diagnosis. The result is a sort of photograph of all the actors, differentiated by their characteristics (institutional, social, economic, etc.) and their relations, affinities and degrees of involvement with the project. The Sociogram is a chart with two axes: the horizontal one is the degree of consensus for the purposes of the project (the improvement of soil quality or the overcoming of a soil challenge or threat); the vertical axis is the power or importance of those actors within the context. After the mapping, the relations between different actors are described including the possible alliances that can be activated in the near future.

Step 3 (Diagnosis) is structured across one or more local public workshops seeing an active participation of previously identified stakeholders. The workshops complement the Pre-Diagnosis results with additional reflections on the current and future state of soil issues and challenges. The so-called SWOT analysis (highlighting a territory's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is the chosen tool for carrying out this self-assessment. It is recommended that very diverse actors take part in the public workshops, contributing with their different visions, powers and influences in accordance with the Sociogram previously developed. It is also recommended that the results of the Diagnosis are shared with all individuals and groups that have developed it. This step should lead to a diffused recognition of the situation and values of the territory, while at the same time increasing the participants' awareness of the place.

Step 4 (Territorial Management Agreement) crystallises the conclusions of the public workshop(s) into a pact for soil health, a protocol of intent or a memorandum of understanding, which becomes binding for all signatories. The Territorial Management Agreement will contain a set of local actions, which may be implemented at least in part during the lifetime of the Pilot Project.

Step 5 (Replication) consists of generating reflections and recommendations on the replication potential of the followed approach, within the same or in other territorial contexts.

Indicatively, the duration of the first 4 steps should not exceed 9 months while the last one should be allowed 3 months maximum.

To receive a more detailed description of the HuMUS methodology please contact: humus@ugr.es

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Technical tools to support the implementation of the Methodology

On a voluntary basis, the participants in each Pilot Project may take benefit from the technical and scientific support offered by the network of experts of the HuMUS consortium, who will provide specific on-demand assistance, filtered by an assigned Mentor (see § 7.4 of the Call Text).

Additionally, some of the people involved in the execution of the Pilot Project may be part of the so-called **soil steward training programme**, which will be based on the contents of the following HuMUS deliverables (released at the end of the year 2023):

- Factsheets with quick and easy methods to carry soil health assessments
- Visual demonstration tool of the relationship between soil health and other ecosystem functions
- Overview of best practices in citizen and stakeholder engagement on the implementation of soil health at municipal and regional levels
- Compendium of soil health policies in selected partner countries
- Overview of best practices in sustainable soil management and soil health promotion
- Policy brief on S4 provisions and ESIF funding opportunities
- HuMUS partner territory factsheets
- Guidelines for applying to EU funding sources at regional and municipal levels

Furthermore, as HuMUS belongs to the EU Soil Mission community the participants in each Pilot Project may also take benefit from relevant results produced by the sister projects funded by the Mission (e.g. Prepsoil, Nati00ns, Benchmarks, Soilguard, etc.) with regard to the possibility of using specific soil health indicators, economic models or other tools developed by them.