

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE EEA EFTA STATES

Ref. 23-2566

7 December 2023

25th MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE EEA EFTA STATES

Brussels

6 and 7 December 2023

Opinion on the Proposal for a Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law)

Rapporteur: Jóhanna Ösp Einarsdóttir

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities:

- A. Having regard to the European Commission's proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law);
- B. Recognising the EU's Soil Strategy for 2030: Reaping the benefits of healthy soils for people, food, nature and climate;
- C. Noting the role of the EEA EFTA Forum as a body in the EFTA structure as stipulated in the Decision of the Standing Committee of the EFTA States No 10/2009/SC establishing a Forum of Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities of the EEA EFTA States;
 1. Supports the EU's objective of delivering healthy soils by 2050 as set in the EU Soil Strategy and being acted on in the proposed legal framework on soil monitoring. It is important to understand the conditions for healthy soil and have clear rules on sustainable soil use and restoration to avoid the various negative impacts of degraded soil.
 2. Notes that soil policies have a strong local and territorial dimension, and that throughout the adoption and implementation of the proposed directive the EU legislators should take good note of views from local and regional authorities. The autonomy of local and regional authorities as decision makers should be respected.

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3. Underlines that through the EEA Agreement the EEA EFTA States have adopted a great deal of the EU's legislative framework on the environment, and Iceland and Norway have already adopted EU climate legislation on Land Use and Effort Sharing – among other climate-related acquis. The soil monitoring proposal will therefore be carefully reviewed by experts in the EEA EFTA States.
4. Stresses the importance of taking the diversity of all relevant countries into account when finalising the legislation, since it may be applicable not only in EU countries, but also EEA EFTA countries, if found to be EEA relevant by the EU and EEA EFTA States.
5. Welcomes the inclusion of the “polluter pays” principle in the draft text. Costs related to negative externalities should be borne by those responsible for the contamination.
6. Underlines that it is especially relevant to consult with local and regional authorities when it comes to the creation of soil districts.
7. Highlights that it is important to find a good balance with both the administrative and financial burdens that might be created by the new legislative proposal.
8. Finds that soil management is not a widely discussed or understood topic in society. Given the importance of avoiding the further degradation of soils, it is of crucial interest that all relevant actors work towards raising awareness of soil health. The EEA EFTA Forum will do its utmost to play its part in this regard. This will, however, require both technical and financial support.
9. Notes that the proposed Soil Monitoring Directive is not marked as EEA relevant by the European Commission, and encourages the EU institutions to closely coordinate work with the EEA EFTA States. The EEA EFTA experts should study the proposal carefully and in doing so consult with relevant local and regional authorities.