

## **TOPIC**

SOIL PROTECTION AS CARBON SINK AND PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT IN FORESTRY, AGRICULTURE AND URBAN AREAS

## **CALL**

INTERREG EUROPE

POLICY OBJECTIVE 2: A GREENER EUROPE

## **SHORT SUMMARY**

The Environmental Studies Centre (Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council) is interested in the development of sectoral regulations for soil protection (soil health) addressing its role as a carbon sink and promoting appropriate management in forestry, agriculture and urban areas. Ideal potential partners should be regions and/or municipalities that are interested in the development of policies, strategies or plans related to soil health and land use practices.

## **FULL DESCRIPTION**

The European Climate Law (EU Regulation 2021/1119 of 30 June) sets a binding target for all EU Member States to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In addition, it imposes a binding intermediate target of a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The Law assigns an essential role to carbon sinks in achieving climate neutrality, in particular the role of agriculture, forestry and land use sectors. Ecosystem restoration is also recognised as a fundamental pillar for carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.

Vitoria-Gasteiz is one of the cities selected to participate in the European Mission Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities whose objective is to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. To achieve this, the Mission considers that up to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions can be neutralised by carbon capture mechanisms through natural sinks (green infrastructure, blue infrastructure, fertile soil).

In addition to the role that European legislation and the different strategies give to carbon sinks, fertile soil is being strongly targeted on the basis of a whole new legislative package resulting from the consolidation of the European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final).

The EU Soil Strategy 2030 sets out a framework and concrete measures to protect and restore soils and ensure they are used sustainably. Derived from this strategy, the Soil Health Law will be published in 2023, which will make the 2030 targets of the EU Soil Strategy binding. Moreover, the Farm to Fork Strategy promotes the redesign of the EU's food systems. Derived from the Strategy, the Sustainable Food Systems initiative will be adopted in 2023, which will accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems.

Today and over the coming years, a range of legislative proposals, economic incentives and public strategies will be deployed to promote and strengthen soil health and its capacity as a carbon sink. This is why regions and municipalities must also deploy their corresponding regulations to achieve the proposed objectives on soil protection and to promote its role as a carbon sink, focusing on sustainable management in forestry, agriculture and urban areas.

### **EXPECTED ROLE OF THE PARTNERS**

Potential partners are regions or municipalities interested in developing sectoral regulations regarding soil protection, improving soil health and enhancing its role as a carbon sink, with an emphasis on sustainable practices in forestry, agriculture and urban areas. Partners are sought for the exchange of experiences and the codesign of the regulations.

A lead partner is also needed to take on the coordination of the consortium as well as partners in charge of managing the communication and dissemination of the project.

### **KEY WORDS**

Climate Change, Carbon Sinks, Soil, Soil Health, Agriculture, Forest, Land Use.

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