

# [***Parliament committee seeks timeline for EU countries to improve soil health***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJ0-D2T1-F03F-K0CV-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

**The European Parliament's Environment Committee (ENVI) on Monday evening (11 March) adopted a draft report on the EU's first *soil* law, taking the first step towards healthy *soils* by 2050 by requiring countries to improve the ecological status of their *soils* within six to ten years.**

"We are finally close to achieving a common European framework to protect our ***soils*** from degradation," said liberal MEP Martin Hojsík, rapporteur on the file, after the vote.

MEPs backed the Commission's ambition to have healthy EU ***soils*** by 2050 and agreed that EU countries must monitor the ***health*** of all ***soils*** on their territory and take action to improve their ecological status.

The committee went one step further than the EU executive, calling on member states to make ***soil health*** improvements within six to ten years.

The ***Soil*** Monitoring Law was [*proposed*](https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/commission-tables-first-eu-soil-law-slammed-for-lacking-ambition/) by the Commission last July as part of the EU's ***soil*** strategy [*presented*](https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/soils-to-receive-same-legal-status-as-air-water-in-first-eu-wide-soil-health-law/) in 2021, which aimed to give ***soil*** a protected status similar to that of air or water, both of which are covered by specific legislation.

Giving ***soil*** further protection has been a long-standing [*demand*](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/ENVI/RE/2021/02-24/1222634EN.pdf) of MEPs and environmental campaigners.

It is [*estimated*](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/new-tool-maps-state-soil-health-across-europe-2023-03-13_en) that around 60-70% of European ***soils*** are in an unhealthy state, with the most common types of ***soil*** degradation being the loss of ***soil*** organic carbon (53%), the loss of ***soil*** biodiversity (37%), and the risk of peatland degradation (30%).

**A timeline**

The ENVI committee's draft requires EU countries to upgrade "critically degraded ***soils***" to "degraded ***soils***" within ten years. Meanwhile, "degraded ***soils***" must improve to "moderate" ecological status within six years, and those with "moderate" status must achieve "good" ecological status within the same period.

MEPs also agreed to give EU countries more flexibility by creating three different levels of ***soil*** monitoring design, with different descriptions and ***health*** criteria.

This would allow member states willing to implement more comprehensive monitoring systems to be more ambitious than others.

While celebrating the committee's first step towards the EU's first ***soil*** law, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) regretted "shortcomings" in the proposal.

Caroline Heinzel, EEB's associate policy officer, said the compromise contained only "weak" provisions, such as the enforcement of a timeline for improvement rather than specific intermediate targets to ensure ***soil health*** by 2050.

The text will be voted on at the next plenary session on 11 April, but it is unlikely that a compromise can be reached with member states in time for the EU elections in June.

[*Edited by Angelo Di Mambro/Nathalie Weatherald]*

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