


# SoilTribes: Glocal ecosystems restoring soil values, roles and connectivity

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Emily Warrender

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**This analysis explores how creativity, knowledge-sharing, and the empowerment of local communities can transform our understanding of soil value and protection, focusing on global and local ecosystems that restore soil's values, roles, and connectivity**

## Addressing a critical soil crisis

Soils are the living foundation of life on Earth. They sustain food production, regulate climate, harbour biodiversity, and provide vital ecosystem services. Yet, across Europe, a crisis is unfolding beneath our feet. Between 60% and 70% of soils in the European Union (EU) are degraded and unhealthy, affected by intensive agriculture, deforestation, urbanisation, pollution, and climate change. This degradation threatens the resilience and well-being of current and future generations at enormous environmental, social, and economic costs.

SoilTribes, an initiative funded by the EU's Horizon Europe Mission Soil Deal for Europe, addresses this urgent challenge with an ambitious, holistic approach. It recognises that reversing soil degradation demands more than scientific interventions; it requires a cultural and social transformation. The project calls for a renewed connection with the soil, fostering soil literacy and stewardship that are deeply rooted in society, by combining creativity, science, and public engagement.

## Inspiring “back to Earth” narratives

SoilTribes promotes “back to Earth” narratives, shifting soil from an abstract scientific concept to a living, meaningful presence in daily life and decision-making. Rather than simply knowing about soil, the project encourages a sense of feeling and caring for it, thereby building emotional and cognitive bonds.

This vision is realised through a transdisciplinary, multi-actor approach, bringing together science, technology, arts, culture, business, governance, and civil society. SoilTribes fosters inclusive soil literacy, encompassing knowledge and motivation that resonate across communities, sectors, and generations.

By connecting diverse expertise, SoilTribes opens new paths for soil care beyond traditional environmental messages. It frames soil as a shared heritage that must be actively protected through collective action and innovation.

## Creating soil tribes

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At its core, SoilTribes builds a dynamic network of over a thousand members. This network includes several interconnected groups, each playing a distinct role in promoting soil health. The Community of Practice is a transnational hub where experts, scientists, artists, educators, policymakers, and citizens converge. Organised around four pillars – Academy, Business, Government, and Society – this community co-designs innovative tools, communication strategies, and policy recommendations to enhance soil literacy across Europe and beyond.

At regional and local levels, SoilTribes empowers seven Soil Lab Activators who catalyse innovation by designing and implementing diverse activities and campaigns. From workshops and soilathons to creative exhibitions and soilblitz campaigns, they bring soil issues directly to communities, schools, and cultural institutions.

Alongside these, seven Stewardship Assemblies, led by municipalities, serve as participatory forums to identify and collaboratively address local soil challenges. They facilitate peer learning, twinning visits, training, and co-creation of local soil action plans, fostering community ownership of soil stewardship.

## **Empowering innovation through support and scale-up**

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SoilTribes offers a comprehensive financial and scale-up support scheme, with a budget exceeding €1.75 million, designed to support innovative, multi-actor initiatives that promote soil literacy, raise public awareness, and engage diverse communities in the protection and restoration of soil. These grants form a part of a wider Financial Support to Third Parties mechanism, designed to trigger behavioural change and galvanise innovation at the intersection of science, arts, and society.

Emphasising a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach, the scheme encourages the formation of consortia that bring together cultural and creative practitioners, soil scientists and technologists, public institutions, educators, citizen groups, and other key stakeholders.

Funded initiatives may include educational programmes, digital storytelling, citizen science projects, and inventive communication campaigns. The support scheme offers three tiers of grants – (small (€25,000 for six months), medium (€50,000 for nine months), and large (€100,000 for 12 months) – complemented by tailored mentoring and scale-up assistance, ensuring a lasting impact and the potential for future replication.

## **Crafting resources and tools for lasting impact**

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To support ongoing soil literacy, SoilTribes develops innovative resources such as educational toolkits for formal and informal learning, guides for local assemblies, business transformation packages, and thematic collections for policymakers.

These materials prioritise accessibility and cultural relevance, are translated into multiple European languages, and are tested in diverse contexts. They equip educators, public institutions, businesses, and civil society with practical tools to deepen their knowledge of

soil and mobilise action.

By providing adaptable methodologies and clear guidance, SoilTribes enables long-term capacity building beyond the project's lifetime.

## **Engaging society through events and communication**

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Public engagement is central to SoilTribes. The project organises nearly 2,000 events – including interactive workshops, soilathons (intensive citizen science events), and soilblitz campaigns – where communities observe, document, and celebrate soil.

Flagship international festivals gather partners, innovators, and the public to showcase achievements and celebrate soil stewardship, blending scientific dialogue with artistic and cultural expression. This reflects SoilTribes' belief that creativity enriches scientific communication and engagement.

Complementary communication efforts include podcasts, vidcasts, comics, and social media posts, fostering dialogue and spreading soil literacy across digital and physical spaces.

## **Aligning with European and global ambitions**

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SoilTribes is fully aligned with the EU's Soil Strategy for 2030, the European Green Deal, and the Farm to Fork Strategy. It contributes directly to the mission of achieving healthy soils by 2050, underpinning climate action, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and societal resilience. Through its comprehensive and collaborative approach, SoilTribes transforms soil protection from a policy imperative into a shared cultural movement.

## **A lasting legacy of soil stewardship**

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More than a project, SoilTribes is a movement embedding soil stewardship in communities. Empowering over a thousand members –including scientists, artists, educators, and citizens – it fosters enduring connections to the soil through creative, educational, and policy-driven actions.

With nearly 2,000 events and wide-reaching communications, SoilTribes reaches millions across Europe, encouraging a collective journey back to Earth that ensures soil protection and restoration for generations.

In a world facing rapid environmental change, SoilTribes stands as a beacon of hope, inspiring global action to heal and safeguard the soils sustaining life on Earth.

## **Join the SoilTribes Community of Practice**

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Become part of this transformative movement. The SoilTribes Community of Practice is a vibrant, transnational network uniting experts, innovators, and enthusiasts from academia, business, government, and society. Members collaborate to co-create tools,

share knowledge, influence policy, and advance soil literacy.

Membership offers networking, design-thinking bootcamps, workshops, policy discussions, and access to funding for soil innovation projects.

To join, fill out the Expression of Interest form here:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/SoilTribes\\_eoi](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/SoilTribes_eoi)

For more information, contact:  
[hello@soiltribes.eu](mailto:hello@soiltribes.eu)



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#### Primary Contributor

Sara Brandão  
SoilTribes

#### Additional Contributor(s)

Nuno Camarneiro  
SoilTribes  
**ORCID:** [0000-0003-2584-1562](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2584-1562)

Patrícia Vieira  
SoilTribes  
**ORCID:** [0000-0002-3471-1025](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3471-1025)

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