

**Begrüßung der Projektpartner des EU Projektes INSPIRATION
(UBA Koordination)**

(INtegrated Spatial Planning, land use and soil management
Research AcTION)

Rede

von

Maria Krautzberger,
Präsidentin des Umweltbundesamtes,
auf der Veranstaltung
„INSPIRATION kick off meeting“
am 01. April 2014
in Berlin, Bundespresseamt

– Es gilt das gesprochene Wort –

Dear partners of the INSPIRATION project,

Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

I am very pleased to welcome you in Berlin to the kick-off meeting of the new EU Horizon 2020 project INSPIRATION.

“INSPIRATION!” - “what a nice acronym” was my immediate thought, when we developed our joint project on integrated spatial planning, land use and soil management. Inspiration has an important role to play for the work of the German Environment Agency.

Our overarching mission is the early detection of environmental risks and threats. We assess them and find viable solutions. This would certainly be impossible without inspiration - for instance on how to scope the underlying research that we conduct .

We are an independent scientific institution that provides scientific and policy advice to the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety. That means we are located right at the interface of science and policy.

Like probably in most countries, the German Ministry highly appreciates recommendations that are on one hand scientifically verified and environmentally effective. On the other hand however, solutions are even more appreciated if they are politically compliant and acceptable to the private and public stakeholder communities.

Frequently, we therefore need inspiration on how to design and consolidate our activities with all relevant stakeholders at the earliest stage.

It is an outstanding strength of the work plan of the INSPIRATION project to adopt a highly inclusive approach. An approach that involves the relevant stakeholders right at the project beginning and finally verifies the results by individual matchmaking processes. This approach will certainly support both the quality and the acceptability of the results.

INSPIRATION stands in our project for “Integrated spatial planning, land use and soil management research Action”. Spatial planning and land use on one hand; and soil protection issues on the other hand!

We know that both fields haven't always worked well together in the past.

Spatial planning and land use authorities are often still following a conventional planning tradition of economic growth - based on an apparently unlimited availability of land for urban expansion.

However land use always has an effect on the quality of the underlying soil. This fact is widely underestimated or simply unknown.

In Germany, day by day about 70 hectares of valuable - mostly agricultural – greenfield land are converted into land for traffic and settlement. Our national land take reduction target of 30 hectares per day by the year 2020 is about to be missed.

Across the European Union, almost one hundred thousand hectares of agriculture or natural land disappears every year.

Europe wide, an area of the size of Berlin is yearly converted into artificial areas. Urban sprawl, land and soil sealing, more traffic, land segregation and the loss of natural land are obvious consequences.

However, the effects are even more manifold: More than 80 per cent of our food comes directly from soil or from animal products.

Soil is the largest pool of organic carbon, which is essential for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Soils are also fundamental for the storage and distribution of water.

Therefore, we also lose important ecosystem services of the soil if we continue business as usual.

Land degradation means further that we lose land that could be used for food and biomass production or other important and environmentally sound purposes. It could be used for example to protect biodiversity, produce renewable energy or to provide flooding areas which will be increasingly needed in the future to adequately adapt to climate change.

Dear ladies and gentleman,

soil and land are finite and shrinking resources. They are subject to competing pressures – not only in Europe but worldwide.

Across the globe, we can observe an increasing demand for land. Urbanization, intensification of global farming and the installation of new infrastructures are globally progressing.

At the same time, social conflicts related to land use are also increasing. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations more than 805 million people are facing hunger and malnutrition. About 80 % of these people are landless and smallholders in remote areas without access to fertile land.

Arable land is worldwide in great demand. Mainly due to soil erosion the amount of usable land is decreasing by 10 million hectares per year worldwide.

We expect that arable land per capita will decrease by about 50 % until 2050. At the same time, population growth would require an approximately increase of 60 per cent in food production.

All in all, about 33 per cent of our global soil resources are under degradation. Human pressures on soils are reaching critical limits, reducing and sometimes eliminating essential soil functions.

We must all take an active role in promoting the cause of soils and pave the road towards real sustainable development for all and by all – and worldwide!

The German Environment Agency is actively supporting international efforts concerning the protection and the conservation of soil and land.

We are aware about our own responsibility and released a position paper in 2013 that identifies possible action of the German government in the field of land- and biomass use.

We appreciate the Rio+20 pledge to achieve a “land-degradation neutral” world and are convinced that „Land Degradation Neutrality” must be an essential target of the “Sustainable Development Goals”.

Soil and land are under pressure and need our protection. However, we must be aware that everything we can do is protecting our soil, influencing the use of soil and land and controlling the quality of soil - but we cannot create new soil.

Once soil has been destroyed it is almost lost forever. We know that it will take thousands of years to regenerate soil in a natural state.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

various policy actions on soil and land are already on its way so far:

- The European Commission is taking action on soil and land issues within the “2011 Road Map for a Resource-Efficient Europe”, the “Europe 2020 Strategy” and “7th Environment Action Programme for the EU”.
- A global and a European Soil Partnership are established.
- The negotiations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are ongoing.
- A Global Soil Forum was established at IASS Potsdam - working along the principles for a sustainable soil policy.
- These activities will be complemented by the third Global Soil Week which will take place in Berlin from 19 to 23 April 2015 involving once more stakeholders in government, industry, science and society in this dialogue.

The United Nations have proclaimed the year 2015 as the International Year of the Soils. On 5 December 2014 Germany hosted the official launch of the International Year of the Soil in Berlin.

For us, this was a starting point to use this year as a platform for raising awareness on the importance of sustainable soil and land management. The INSPIRATION project is one milestone in this process.

As raising awareness lies in the nature of a Coordination and Support Action – this is what the project in fact is – it will be rather hard for the project to fail.

Nevertheless, the idea behind the project is more than just raising awareness. The title of the call of the European Commission was “Structuring research on soil, land-use and land management in Europe”.

It also includes the creation of synergies and networks among the different and sometimes opposing stakeholder groups, who are working and researching in this complex and fragmented field of soil and land issues.

I very much appreciate that the European Commission has taken the initiative to tackle this important task. It is a

great pleasure and honour for the German Environment Agency to coordinate this project.

I now wish you all the best for kicking off this project today, inspiration for the implementation of the project, and am already looking forward to the project results.

I thank you very much for your attention!