

Public summary of D1.2

Yearly Management Reports

March 2015 – April 2016

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Document information

Project acronym: INSPIRATION
Project full title: INtegrated Spatial Planning, land use and soil management Research ActTION
Project type: Coordination and Support Action (CSA)
EC Grant agreement no.: 642372
Project starting / end date: 1st March 2015 (month 1) / 28th February 2018 (month 36)
Website: www.inspiration-h2020.eu

Document status / date: 01/04/2016
Deliverable No.: D1.2 (Public Summary)
Responsible participant: UBA (participant number 1)
Due date of deliverable: 01/05/2016
Actual submission date: 29/04/2016
Dissemination level: X PU - Public
PP - Restricted to other programme participants*
RE - Restricted to a group specified by the consortium*
CO - Confidential, only for members of the consortium*
(* = including the Commission Services)

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To be cited as:

Bartke S, Grimski D, Brils J, Maring L, Makeschin F, Nathanail P, Darmendrail D, Guérin V (2016): Yearly Management Reports – months 1-14. Public summary as of 29.04.2016 of deliverable D1.2 of the HORIZON 2020 project INSPIRATION. EC Grant agreement no: 642372, UBA: Dessau-Roßlau, Germany.

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1 Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project

The way we steward soil resources and manage our land use activities is central to ensuring Europe's transition to a sustainable future for its citizens and its global partners. Research and knowledge dissemination are fundamental to securing soils and land for next generations, for competitive economies and healthy landscapes. Clever use of the services provided by the soil-sediment-water system (SSW-system) provides solutions for meeting societal needs and for overcoming societal challenges.

The aim of the Coordination and Support Action INSPIRATION is to establish and promote the adoption of a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) for land use, land use changes and soil management in the light of current and future societal challenges. Main objectives are:

- Formulate, consult on and revise an end-user oriented SRA
- Scope out models for implementing the SRA
- Prepare a network of private and public funding institutions willing to fund the SRA.

Horizon 2020 calls for research and innovation that helps Europeans achieve meaningful, harmonious and lasting existence in the face of significant driving forces. The INSPIRATION work programme is to derive a SRA to directly address these **challenges** through understanding the SSW-system and identifying land use and land management practises that:

- Contribute to food security and food safety
- Ensure secure supplies of safe drinking water
- Secure energy supply and distribution
- Reduce raw material and resource consumption
- Ensure efficient use of natural resources
- Contribute to climate change mitigation and societal adaptation.

INSPIRATION stands for INtegrated Spatial Planning, land use and soil management Research ActiON. The consortium comprises 22 European partners from 17 countries. The network's actions to achieve its objectives are based on **a multi-stakeholder, multi-national and interdisciplinary, demand-driven approach** that covers the diversity of stakeholders (public bodies, business, science, citizens and society) and the variety of relevant public and private funders.

The vehicle to engage with all relevant stakeholders across Europe is a National Focal Point (NFP) in 17 countries. Between March 2015 and March 2016, the NFPs interviewed National Key Stakeholders (NKS), performed a desk study and organized workshops – engaging with about 500 stakeholders of funders, end-users and researchers across the various soil and land management disciplines. The goal of these exercises was to gather information and support the main objectives as stated above. Moreover, at the European level networks, e.g. from industry, policy-making and regulation, are invited to share their experiences, research demands and funding interests.



The outcomes of the collation of demands for research from industry, end-users and funders are taken up and reviewed under **four integrative themes**:

- Resources demand and efficiency
- Natural capital
- Land management
- Net impact on global, EU and local scale.

This is done in order to structure information into **thematic knowledge needs** to satisfy the as yet unmet societal challenges and to ensure that research and knowledge dissemination will contribute primarily to enable meeting these challenges.

Based on these results, a cross-country and cross-discipline dialogue will subsequently be organized among the relevant user groups, private and public funding institutions and scientific communities in Europe in order to reach **a trans-national, prioritized SRA and a model for execution of this SRA**. Thus a framework for future research calls will be produced which will give private and public funders confidence that for each Euro they spend, they will get multiple Euros worth of knowledge in return.

INSPIRATION is coordinated by the German Environment Agency (UBA) and structured in five work packages (WPs) to achieve an efficient realisation of the project's objectives:

Project Management is handled in WP1. It is to ensure an appropriate general management and organisational platform for the network to safeguard that all aspects of the project are well integrated and coordinated, including:

- Liaison between the consortium and the European Commission
- Handling contracting, financial administration and progress (periodic) reporting
- Submission of deliverables in a timely manner
- Support of the Core Group as key decision body in the consortium.

Towards the final phase of the project, WP1 will organize INSPIRATION's final conference.

In the first year of the project, the main objective of **WP2 "Demands of research from industry, end-users and funders (State-of- the-art at national levels)"** was to collate, review and synthesize for each country participating in INSPIRATION the following information:

- Demand-driven suggestions for the SRA, i.e. suggestions from the perspective of industry, end-users and funders
- Experiences regarding the exploitation of scientific knowledge to improve business opportunities and/or tackle other societal challenges
- Predominantly used as well as promising alternative funding schemes, mechanisms, programs for knowledge production and dissemination
- Experiences regarding the use of any trans-national, common budget for scientific knowledge production related to the scope of INSPIRATION.

This was done keeping the tackling of the societal challenges in mind. National key stakeholders (consisting of the most relevant funders, end-users and researchers in soil, land use and land management) had a central role in WP2 as they were consulted in interviews and national workshops. The national reports resulting from WP2 are used in WP3 and WP4.



The objectives of **WP3 “Transnational commons aggregated under integrated themes”** are to:

- Achieve an overview of the transnational shared demands and experiences grouped under the four integrated themes based on the national reports
- Prioritise and elaborate the topics that could be included in the SRA (to be developed by WP4) under specific themes:
- Elucidate the opportunity to match (to be done under WP4) individual stakeholders (as funders) to specific SRA topics that could be shared transnationally.

The objectives of **WP4 “Developing, delivering and match-making of a strategic research agenda”** are to:

- Develop the SRA for activities on soil, land-use and land management
- Explore and where feasible establish a match between the SRA and national funders potentially willing to fund collaboratively a specific part of the SRA
- Map out funding models for delivering the SRA.

WP5 **“International dissemination and communication”** is to facilitate effective communication within the INSPIRATION project with all stakeholder communities willing to contribute to the development and ultimate delivery of the SRA. WP5 objectives are to:

- Disseminate project results to the relevant societal and policy stakeholder groups and scientific communities in Europe and beyond
- Support quality assurance for INSPIRATION by appointing and engaging with an International Advisory Board composed of key representatives of international initiatives dealing with land and soil management challenges
- Organise policy review and gap analysis workshops
- Ensure also that needs of stakeholders are met who are not directly participating in INSPIRATION, especially policy related parties and funding institutions
- Motivate different stakeholder communities in Europe to take up INSPIRATION’s key deliverables (developed in WP4).



2 Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far

INSPIRATION is structured in five work packages (WPs). The Coordination and Support Action started in March 2015. As of April 2016 the following work has been conducted and main results achieved:

WP1 – Project management

Task 1.1: Project management

A kick-off meeting took place in Berlin, 1-2 April 2015. The project managing Core Group met face to face on 31 March 2015, 2 December 2015 and 10-11 March 2016 and has monthly online meetings.

A Consortium Agreement between all INSPIRATION partners was established. During the reporting phase, issues demanding an amendment of the Grant Agreement have been identified (e.g. accession interest of new beneficiaries) and are being negotiated within the consortium, concerned third parties and with the European Commission's services. The EC's scientific project officer has been informed regularly on the progress of the project.

Semi-annual activity reports facilitate a regular and iterative evaluation of the project's progress. Including this report (D1.2), 12 deliverables and 5 milestones due so far were submitted or achieved on time.

Task 1.2: Final conference

Lessons learned from participation in events so far, will be considered in organizing INSPIRATION's final conference, which is scheduled to take place by end 2017.

WP2 – Demands of research from industry, end-users and funders (State-of-the-art at national levels)

Task 2.1: Kick off with National Focal Points (NFPs)

With NFP input at the INSPIRATION kick-off meeting, deliverable D2.1 "Memorandum of Understanding on how the National Focal Points should execute their tasks" was achieved.

Task 2.2: Registry of National Key Stakeholders (NKS)

For each country, NKS were approached and an overview of a balanced group was established (with funders, end-users, researchers and different organisations) as documented in deliverable D2.2 "Registry of National Key Stakeholders cooperating in INSPIRATION".

Task 2.3: Prepare a harmonized template for information collation

A template for interviews of the NKS by the NFPs was prepared and discussed with WP5 (for coherence with a policy workshop) and the coordinator. Thereafter this template was discussed in depth in a full-day NFP training session (22-23 June 2015, Vienna). Comments of the International Advisory Board were included, leading to deliverable D2.3 "Template for national information collation".



Task 2.4: Collate information at national levels

By autumn, information collation by the NFPs was conducted in all countries, by desk study and interviews with 374 NKS, about 20 NKS per country.

Task 2.5: Review and synthesise the collated information

The NFPs organized and conducted nationally workshops, where the collated information was reviewed, synthesized and prioritized with the national NKS and additional experts (in total 468 involved persons). A draft of the “National reports on collated information following the template” (D2.4) was prepared and consulted with the Core Group. Considering further review by the NKS and IAB – and achieving milestone MS4 – deliverable D2.5 “National reports with a review and synthesis of the collated information” concluded the WP2 activities in February 2016 (month 12).

WP3 “Transnational commons aggregated under integrated themes”

Task 3.1: Initial meeting of WP3 and core group

WP3 officially started in month 13. Building up on preparatory meetings (Berlin, 26 May 2015; Scheyern 6-7 October 2015), the team met with the Core Group on 10 March 2016 in Berlin leading to an “Agreement on detailed approach for evaluation & synthesis of the WP2 reports” (D3.1), which was also reviewed by IAB members.

Task 3.2: Desk study

This task started with Theme Leaders assessing the relevance of national research topics for common themes based on the conceptual model of INSPIRATION. A first set of cross-sectoral research issues was identified (e.g. soil quality, conflicts of land use, development impact assessment methodology), which is to be presented to NFPs during a WP3 workshop end of April to reassure relevance of the thematic themes from national representatives’ points of view. The analysis is further supported by a text-content analysis. Further content assessment and iterative revisions with stakeholders will be conducted, e.g. in a next workshop to take place with NKS in Faro, Portugal in June 2016.

Task 3.3: Transnational multi-stakeholder workshop

Preparation of this workshop, which is to review and quality check the identified cross-national and cross-sectoral research issues, has been initiated.

Task 3.4: Conclusive review and synthesis of collated results

This task will conclude WP3. In a meeting with the Core Group, results will be evaluated in order to agree upon the topics, priorities, potential coalitions that will enter the matchmaking process in WP 4.

WP4 “Developing, delivering and match-making of a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA)” will start in month 20. The WP-Leader has participated next to Core Group meetings in a WP meeting with WP1, WP2 and WP5 (Paris, 18 May 2015) in order to prepare and link WP4 activities.



WP5 – International Dissemination and Communication

Task 5.1 International Advisory Board (IAB)

For providing expert review and support an IAB was set up, which is composed of experts representing international initiatives dealing with land and soil management challenges. In line with achieving milestone MS1, a “First International Advisory Board meeting” took place back-to-back with the kick-off meeting in Berlin. IAB recommendations have been reflected in deliverable D5.2 “Results policy workshops and IAB recommendations”. Activities of the IAB during the first year are tracked in deliverable D5.4 “IAB annual report”.

Task 5.2: Policy-oriented workshop with policy makers and impacted stakeholders at an early stage

The SRA will cover numerous thematic policies implemented at European or regional scales. Complementing the WP2 collation of inputs, visions and needs at the European scale were to be collected through a policy-oriented workshop (Brussels, 30 June - 1 July 2015). Results (available online – achieving milestone MS13 “Policy oriented workshops”) and IAB recommendations are presented in deliverable D5.2.

Task 5.3: Setting up policy oriented workshop towards the end for contribution to the SRA will be in a later project stage.

Task 5.4: Dissemination of SRA and the proposed implementation models

As a key means, the website www.inspiration-h2020.eu was launched on 28 June 2015 and is update regularly (fulfilling the deliverable D5.1 “Website and internet operational”). Subpages for each INSPIRATION country are available in respective national languages to allow a maximum of stakeholders to have access to information. Contributing to milestone MS2 “INSPIRATIONs website and intranet operational”, also a collaborative intranet was created.

A project communication plan has been developed and is detailed in deliverable D5.3 “communication plan and its update”. To facilitate stakeholder engagement, contacts have been established with networks in Europe, including NICOLE, SedNet, ICCL, but also beyond Europe, e.g. ALGA. Information about INSPIRATION was disseminated through articles, websites, a newsletter, via social media (in particular twitter® and LinkedIn®) and participation in workshops and conferences, e.g. with special sessions at Global Soil Week, AquaConSoil, AESOP and Sednet conferences.



3 Progress beyond the state of the art and expected potential impact (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

Soil and land use management needs to focus on sustainable use of natural capital and resources. It needs to understand the potentials, functioning and limits of the Soil-Sediment-Water-system. The underlying premise of INSPIRATION is that land and soil services are fundamental for meeting societal needs (food, drinking water, energy production, shelter, infrastructure) and overcoming societal challenges (climate change mitigation and adaptation, increasing demands on non-renewable natural resources, environmental justice).

The main aim of INSPIRATION is to develop a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) to inform environmentally friendly, socially acceptable and economically affordable soil and land use management that meets societal needs and challenges. Thereby, INSPIRATION strives to make a difference through both i) the legitimacy of the demand driven basis of the SRA for land and the SSW-system, land-use changes and soil management in Europe and ii) a strongly independent promotion of the mutual benefit of cooperation by funders in its delivery through various fit-for-purpose funding models.

Agreed vision and SRA

INSPIRATION will help achieve integrated and interdisciplinary action in the next decade by implementing the SRA through agreed common initiatives which reflect societal challenges along with the individual demands of funding agencies and private partners. The bottom up process of INSPIRATION will identify synergies between existing institutions and programs. "Knowledge requirements" and INSPIRATION's dissemination and communication actions are designed to establish a long term "reform process" at the institutional and programme level. A key success indicator will be the declarations of interest of cooperation for the developed SRA.

Connecting/network of national funding agencies: synergies

INSPIRATION contributes to matching Europe's funding agencies by developing shared research and innovation (R&I) programs at different implementation levels to deliver better value for money knowledge creation and transfer. Via the bottom-up approach at national level (interviews, national workshops and NKS-WP3 workshop) and European level (via policy-oriented workshops) a match-making process is initiated: individual funders are matched to, for them, recognizable, specific, transnational SRA topics. Thus INSPIRATION will propose R&I themes and topics at different levels of cooperation and motivate active participation during the final consultation process. The process will improve coordination of EU and Member State/associated country R&I programmes on a short, medium and long term basis. It will also include opportunities for initiatives on policy related programmes, like INTERREG, LIFE or URBACT. The nature and volume of engagement by stakeholders in the opportunity provided for a final checking the project outcomes and in the number of 'funder-SRA-topic' matches established will indicate INSPIRATION's success.



Enhanced impact of research and innovation activities

Impact will be enhanced by public sector, businesses, industry and general society providing evidence-based policy and R&I priorities. Their involvement as National Key Stakeholders (NKS) all along the INSPIRATION project – from the identification of R&I needs to the consultations for matchmaking the SRA and the funding options – will increase the impact. By mobilizing the relevant actors (NKS) from the early start of INSPIRATION, the awareness for opportunities of the Soil-Sediment-Water-system, land use and soil management to tackle societal challenges and the support, engagement and willingness to contribute to the SRA (on a longer term) are increased and the network and collaboration possibilities are strengthened. This all contributes to the willingness and commitment to implement the SRA after the funding of INSPIRATION as a Coordination and Support Action.

By having interviewed 374 NKS and engaged with more than 450 experts in national workshops in 17 countries simultaneously, a unique overview of national societal challenges and related research questions has been generated. Also the information and experiences on science-policy-interface (SPI) and suggestions for funding possibilities offer great potential for the European research-end-user and funding community to improve current land management practices and exploit opportunities to address related societal challenges.

The success of INSPIRATION in achieving this objective has been indicated already by the actual number of stakeholders from different communities (e.g. funder, end-users, researchers) that have engaged in national interviews and workshops so far. The number of stakeholders participating in the elaboration of the integrated topics and the final verification of the SRA will be a further indicator.

Effective Communication

Effective internal communication is supported by an intranet and ensured by the open character of the INSPIRATION process and the deep mutual respect among project partners. Effective external communication will be through regular updates of the project website linked with existing high traffic portals and networks in this field, on-going communication with national key stakeholders involved in the national and thematic workshops, an INSPIRATION e-newsletter, webinars and EU info-days promoting the SRA and its implementation. The successfulness of achieving effective communication is indicated by the number of publications, special sessions and key-note speeches by INSPIRATION partners, number of visits on the project website, number of subscribers to the newsletter and attendees at workshops.

Evidence-based policy making, in particular a land-degradation neutral world

INSPIRATION will formulate the SRA through an open process completed in phases which challenges stakeholders (acting on the numerous sectorial policies – such as spatial planning, agriculture, resource efficiency, biodiversity and green infrastructure or EU cohesion) to work towards achieving a land-degradation neutral world. The relevance and needs of policy will be reflected in the operational work of INSPIRATION through annual meetings and two policy-oriented workshops to take place in the first and third project year. Success will be indicated by the number of countries taking into account the SRA and new funding schemes as well as by the extent of European and international organisations referring to INSPIRATION products in their agenda setting.



i Inspiration

INSPIRATION acknowledges the received funding from the European Community's HORIZON2020 Framework Programme under grant agreement no 642372

