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SOILPRO: a LIFE+ project implementing soil monitoring and protection together with regional stakeholders of Sicily and Peloponnese

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According to the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection, the LIFE+ ENV/IT/00428 SOILPRO project (<http://www.soilpro.eu>) has the overall objective of slowing down the progress of soil degradation in EU Member States, and supporting local and regional authorities (LRAs) in the identification and monitoring of risk areas. The monitoring of the on-going soil degradation processes and the evaluation of different protection measures are realized through a web-based application (SMS – Soil Monitoring System), developed according to data and knowledge obtained from the different project partners.

The SMS was initially applied on the whole Sicily (Italy) and Peloponnese (Greece) regions and then tested on two pilot areas: the south-western part of Sicily and the Prefecture of Corinth. Although the two study areas belong to the same Mediterranean region, they are very different in terms of political and administrative organization. The employment of SMS in such different contexts, will encourage its implementation in other EU Member States and Regions.

The knowledge of intensity and localization of degradation processes permits a better definition and application of the protection measures aimed at maintaining the soils in good agronomical and environmental condition. Moreover, it also supports the development and implementation of future soil and environmental policy, and the training of LRAs' technical staff, farmers and other potential stakeholders. Finally, the effectiveness of the applied soil conservation measures is evaluated, and a campaign to stimulate public awareness on soil degradation processes has been launched.