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New EU Research Project Nemesis

A large international consortium launches the Nemesis project to combat desertification in the Mediterranean

Limassol, 7th of October 2025 - Healthy soils are the foundation of many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, across Europe, many soils are under pressure from pollution, erosion, and unsustainable land use, leading to various forms of soil degradation, including desertification. The EU Soil Mission, 'A Soil Deal for Europe', underpins the transition towards healthy soils by 2030 through the establishment of 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses. The new European research project Nemesis ("Soil Health Living Lab Network for Combating Desertification in the Mediterranean") aims to significantly contribute to this objective by establishing five Living Labs with 60 currently associated mature experimental sites across the Mediterranean region, while overseeing the co-creation and co-governance of solutions to combat desertification and reverse soil degradation in this diverse and particularly vulnerable ecosystem.

The consortium comprises 37 partners and two associated partners from 13 countries across Europe, North Africa, and beyond, and is led by the Eratosthenes Centre of Excellence in Cyprus. Funded under the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research & Innovation, the project team will receive a total funding of nearly 12 million € over the next four years.

Tackling the urgent threat of desertification in the Mediterranean

According to the European Commission, more than 25% of soils in the EU are at high or very high risk of desertification, with Mediterranean countries being among the most vulnerable. Desertification undermines food security, intensifies water scarcity, threatens biodiversity, and fuels economic and social instability. Nemesis addresses these challenges by "co-establishing" five interconnected Living Labs, each one tackling a unique challenge for soil health.

- **Cyprus:** soil-water management,
- **France:** soil-biodiversity,
- **Italy:** soil-crop systems,
- **Spain:** soil-pasture,
- **Tunisia & Algeria:** cross-border soil management.

These Living Labs are community-driven platforms for co-creation and scaling solutions to combat desertification and soil degradation. The sites will be co-governed by local communities, farmers, policymakers, researchers, NGOs, and industry representatives, and linked to establish an autonomous network that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and maximizes knowledge uptake and outreach. As real-life environments for co-creation and co-ownership, the Living Labs will implement, evaluate, and enhance

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soil management practices, facilitating the transition towards healthy soils and potentially evolving into Lighthouses.

From Living Labs to Lighthouses: leading the transition towards sustainable soil management practices

“The challenge is to combat desertification while embedding data-informed, needs-based soil health decisions as a cornerstone of European and Mediterranean policies,” says Ioannis Varvaris from the Eratosthenes Centre of Excellence in Cyprus. “Nemesis co-develops solutions through long-term real-life environments of co-creation, co-ownership, and co-governance that drive an ecological, soil-based innovation cycle. These autonomous and inclusive environments will foster trust, facilitate knowledge sharing, strengthen soil literacy, and deliver solutions that are environmentally responsible and socio-economically viable, grounded in real-life conditions. Supported by a comprehensive multi-dimensional monitoring framework, Nemesis will contribute to reversing soil degradation and regenerating the value of soil health, while remaining committed to advancing the efforts of the European Commission and the EU Soil Observatory towards making healthy soils the norm across Europe and beyond.”

Nemesis prioritises the foundations of a credible Living Lab network, equipped with a suite of tools designed to ensure long-term impact, including training materials and an e-learning platform to support capacity-building and vocational training; an open, interoperable data ecosystem that underpins the monitoring of the Living Labs and enables the upscaling of co-created solutions across the Mediterranean; inclusive governance and viable business models that facilitate the transformation of validated results into practical opportunities; dynamic stakeholder mapping; data harmonisation and baselining; co-designed intervention strategies tested and validated under real conditions; and continuous policy innovation through dialogue, targeted recommendations, and policy bootcamps. Building on this core, a robust strategy combined with dedicated mechanisms for social innovation, awareness-raising, and knowledge transfer serves as an enabler to scale solutions and to secure the long-term sustainability and impact of the Living Labs beyond the project.

On the 26th till 28th of November 2025, the project team will come together for the official kick-off meeting in Limassol, Cyprus.

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Project Key Facts

Full Name: Nemesis - Soil Health Living Lab Network for Combating Desertification in the Mediterranean

Grant Agreement: 101219087

Start Date: 1st of October 2025

Duration: 48 months (until 30th of September 2029)

Budget: € 11,999,402.47

Coordinator: Eratosthenes Centre of Excellence, Cyprus

Website: www.nemesis-soil.eu

LinkedIn: nemesis-soil

Project Partners

Algeria

- UoG – Université 8 Mai 1945 Guelma
- BNEDER – Bureau national d'études pour le development rural
- TMB – Maza Tahar

Cyprus

- ECoE – Eratosthenes Centre of Excellence
- MARDE – Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
- CUT – Cyprus University of Technology
- DPS – Depi Spectrum (Computing & Telecommunication) Ltd
- Cyl – The Cyprus Institute

France

- INRAE – l'Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement
- CIRAD – Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement
- AGROOF
- Arvalis Institut du Végétal

Germany

- Adelphi Research GmbH
- European Research and Project Office GmbH

Greece

- IBEC – Diabalkaniko Kentro Periballontos
- CIBOS

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- EGA – Ellinogermaniki Agogi Scholi Panagea Savva AE

Italy

- Politecnico di Milano
- CREA – Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria
- LML – Legambiente Lombardia onlus
- UNIMI – Università degli studi di Milano
- ERSAF – Ente regionale per i servizi all'agricoltura e alle foreste
- IRIS – Social agricultural production and work cooperative
- Maggiorioli Group SpA

Kenya

- ICRAF – International Centre for Research on Agroforestry

Poland

- ERDN – European rural development network

Spain

- UMU – Universidad de Murcia
- AVA – Asociacion Valenciana de agricultores
- EJS – El Junquero SA
- FECOAM – Federacion de cooperativas agrarias de Murcia
- OdinS – Odin solutions Sociedad limitada

Switzerland

- HSG - Universität St. Gallen
- Université de Genève

Tunisia

- INAT – Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie
- AVFA – Agence de vulgarisation et de la formation agricole
- EZS – Ezzayra Solutions

United Kingdom

- University of Dundee

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