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EU Research Project ProPollSoil Just Launched: Understanding the Relationship Between Soil Health and Soil-dependent Pollinators

An international team of 23 interdisciplinary partners is joining forces with citizen scientists to pioneer cutting-edge, sustainable soil practices to protect ground-nesting pollinators—driving bold efforts in soil and pollinator conservation and restoration.

Munich, 23rd of October 2025 – Pollinators are the unsung heroes of our ecosystems, playing a vital role in plant reproduction and boosting crop yields by transferring pollen between flowers or different flower parts. But there is a hidden part of their story: many pollinators spend critical parts of their lives on or beneath the soil—nesting, resting, or overwintering underground.

Despite this, the role of soils in pollinator health remains largely overlooked and we know little of what these soil-dwelling pollinators need to thrive or how modern soil management practices may be putting both pollinators and the essential ecosystem services they provide at risk. That is where ProPollSoil comes in.

This new forward-thinking EU research project aims to dig deep into the relationship between pollinators and soil health. Backed by €7.7 million in funding over the next four years through the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, ProPollSoil brings together an international team of experts led by the Technical University of Munich, Germany.

With the project officially launching October 1st, the ProPollSoil consortium of 23 partners is set to explore how we can better protect pollinators—starting from the ground up.

“The research undertaken in ProPollSoil will ultimately protect and restore soils and the pollinators that depend on them. To make this happen, we will identify the last remaining ‘hotspots’ of ‘healthy’ soil supporting diverse pollinators, improve habitats for pollinators across farmed and managed lands and take direct action to stop biodiversity loss,” explains Sara Leonhardt, Professor in Plant-Insect Interactions at the School of Life Sciences at the Technical University of Munich and Coordinator of the project.

To reach this goal, ProPollSoil will follow five clear pathways:

1. **Open new knowledge** – Gather and share the first comprehensive data on the hidden links between soil and pollinators.

2. **Work together with people on the ground** – Build long-term hubs that bring farmers, researchers, policymakers and communities together to create and apply real-world solutions.
3. **Connect the dots** – Strengthen collaboration across existing and new EU projects focused on soils and pollinators.
4. **Boost understanding** – Raise awareness and knowledge of soils and pollinators among all stakeholders, from citizens to decision-makers.
5. **Inform better policies** – Improve how science and policy interact to create smarter, more coordinated environmental strategies.

Prof. Leonhardt adds: “Together, these pathways aim to create a future where healthy soils and thriving pollinators go hand-in-hand—with benefits for biodiversity, food systems, and climate resilience.”

People are at the heart of ProPollSoil’s research. In nine case study regions across Europe, the project will bring together farmers, scientists, land managers and other local actors to co-design hands-on experiments that tackle real-world challenges. Citizens will also play a key role in helping monitor biodiversity and sparking greater awareness and appreciation for nature in their own communities.

Project Key Facts

Full Name: ProPollSoil – Understanding and managing soil health impacts to protect soil-dependent pollinators

Start Date: 1st October 2025

Duration: 48 months

Budget: €7,719,159.32

Coordinator: Technische Universitaet Muenchen, Germany

Website: www.propollsoil.eu

LinkedIn: [propollsoil](https://www.linkedin.com/company/propollsoil)

Project Partners

Belgium

- University Gent

Canada

- University of Guelph

Denmark

- Aarhus Universitet

France

- Institut de recherche pour le développement

Germany

- EURICE - European Research and Project Office GmbH
- Helmholtz-Zentrum Muenchen
- Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet Muenchen
- Philipps Universitaet Marburg
- Rifcon GmbH
- Technische Universitaet Muenchen

Greece

- Panepistimio Thessalias - University of Thessaly

Hungary

- Discovery Center Nonprofit Korlatolt Felelossegu

Italy

- Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria
- Università degli Studi di Milano
- Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

Ireland

- University College Dublin

Norway

- Stiftelsen Norsk Institutt for Naturforskning NINA

Poland

- Instytut Ogronictwa – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy
- Uniwersytet Jagielloński

Serbia

- University of Belgrade

Spain

- Universidad De Murcia

United Kingdom

- University of Aberdeen
- The University of Sussex

Contact**Project Coordinator**

Technische Universitaet Muenchen, Germany

Name: Prof. Sara Diana Leonhardt

Mail : sara.leonhardt@tum.de

Project Management

EURICE GmbH

Renita Danabalan

Mail : r.danabalan@eurice.eu



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