SoilTrEC is funded by the European Commission. It will support scientific research in the EU and China, with additional support provided by existing research projects. The new funds also include support for EU and Chinese teams to link with researchers of the 6 sites funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation’s Critical Zone Observatory Program. The project aims to provide scientific evidence that will be used as a basis for a new European policy for protecting its soils, the services soils provide to ecosystems, and the value of these services ($50 billion annually) to the European economy. Global soil threats include erosion, which washes soil from the land surface into rivers; loss of organic matter, which is a store of nutrients and an essential glue for keeping soil in place; and loss of biodiversity and key soil organisms. Another major threat is loss of soil fertility due to pollution, compaction during intense farming, sealing over by expanding cities and deposition of salt from evaporating irrigation water in dry regions.

The project develops 4 major field research stations in the EU. The aim is to understand and predict how soil provides ecosystem services, and the value of these services to the European economy. This research builds on a major new approach to terrestrial geoscience research by establishing field sites as Critical Zone Observatories. These act as international focal points to concentrate scientific effort. Researchers will assemble scientific evidence on land-use practice that will protect the central role of soil in the Earth’s Critical Zone.


INTERESTED IN ORGANIZING A SHORT COURSE SPONSORED BY THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF GEOCHEMISTRY?

Short courses for PhD students and postdocs are expected to be 3–5 days in length with at least 10 participants; they focus on special topics or techniques from the broad field of geochemistry. The EAG can provide a total amount of up to 5000 euros to EAG members participating in or presenting at the short course.

If you are thinking of developing an EAG short course for the year 2011, your proposal should be submitted to the Chair of the EAG Program Committee by 31 October 2010 via the EAG business office (office@eag.eu.com). This will give time for the committee to consider your proposal and make a recommendation to the EAG Council. If all goes well, your proposal will be approved before 1 December.

In your submission, briefly describe the goals of the short course and provide a proposed short course schedule, a list of suggested presenters, and information regarding the location and infrastructure required. Online information is available at www.eag.eu.com/.