



Minutes of the 26th and 27th ECPGR Executive Committee meeting

28 April 2023 (h 10:00-12:00)
and 11 May 2023 (h 9:00-10:00)
Online (Teams)

Present:

Marianne Lefort (Chair)
Birgitte Lund (Denmark)
Petra Engel (Italy)
Pavol Hauptvogel (Slovakia)
Beate Schierscher (Switzerland)
Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat)

1. Proposed table of country contribution for Phase XI and preparation of draft budget (discussed on 28 April)

L. Maggioni presented to the Executive Committee (ExCo) a draft table of contributions for the payment of country fees during ECPGR Phase XI. He explained the mechanism to establish the ranking of the countries, based on the latest available United Nations Scale of Assessment. The thresholds of the different categories of payments, ranging from A (lowest level of contribution) to K (highest level) were maintained the same as those of Phase X. The draft table included an inflationary increase of 10% of each category's contribution value. This translates into an increase of 10% of each country's contribution, except those that have shifted category as a consequence of the new scale of assessment adopted. The latter countries would have a lower or higher percentage of increase, or even decrease of the contribution, depending on whether they shifted to a lower or higher category. In practice, only Ireland would be requested a higher than 10% increase of the contribution. Overall, the budget increase of Phase XI, compared to the starting level of Phase X, would increase by 8%, based on the list of countries that are expected to join Phase XI. The total would be ca. € 3 million.

L. Maggioni also presented a draft budget for Phase XI, with a 5-year total matching the expected contributions of € 3 million. The estimated costs of the hosting arrangement with Bioversity were not yet finalized, but clear indications had been received that the costs for facilities (mainly renting of space in the new building in Aventino) and IT services would be significantly higher than in the past, even though the overheads were expected to be lower (15%), at least initially. L. Maggioni explained that the arrangement proposed by Bioversity would cover the cost of only two permanent desks, to be used on a rotational basis by the Secretariat staff. This is certainly not an ideal situation, but it is affordable, considering that all the Secretariat staff have opted for a working-from-home arrangement, either full time or part time. Renting more than two permanent desks would raise the costs even more and the Secretary thought that this would not be affordable.

The draft budget was prepared under the assumption that all the current staff positions at the Secretariat would be maintained, including Secretary, Administrative Assistant, EVA Coordinator and Communication Specialist. A regular 5-year budget fixed at € 3 million would not be sufficient to cover all the fixed costs and maintain a reasonable amount for Working Group activities. However, there is the expectation of a substantial carry-over from Phase X to Phase XI, due to lower spending in several budget lines, also thanks to the matching funds received from EC projects and German project during the last five years. It was proposed to present to the Steering Committee a draft budget in which a few items (some staff cost related to the years 2027 and 2028) would remain uncovered – to be partly covered with carry-over funds, once the actual figure will be defined to the beginning of next year. Additional fundraising

would be necessary for the first three years of Phase XI, to secure all the necessary funds to run the Secretariat in the last two years.

The ExCo expressed their concern for the situation as presented by the Secretary, and decided that a different table of contributions should be prepared, raising the percentage increase of the total 5-year budget to 10% (rather than 8%). This would be possible by raising the percentage increase of each category of contribution by 13% (rather than 10%) and the total proposed budget would become €3.1 million. The Secretary was requested to implement this change in the table of contributions and the corresponding draft budget for Phase XI.

2. Discussion on ECPGR's potential support for European endangered collections (discussed on 11 May)

M. Lefort presented a draft paper describing the context for a potential responsibility and role of ECPGR in support of European endangered collections, which was also previously circulated to the ExCo and discussed via email. This initiative was triggered by a request for specific support received from the Bulgarian genebank and related to the regeneration of old soybean varieties. The existing FAO/Crop Trust 'Emergency Reserve' provision to offer rapid, short-term and urgent support was used as a baseline in terms of eligibility criteria, should the Steering Committee decide that there is a role of ECPGR for this type of intervention.

The ExCo discussed the paper and suggested a few small changes, specifically reducing the emphasis of the paper on the specific Bulgarian case and making it more general. The document should be finalized by M. Lefort and the Secretariat, and included among the background documents for the upcoming Steering Committee meeting.