



Minutes of the 28th ECPGR Executive Committee meeting

22 September (h 13:00-16:00) and 19 October 2023 (h 09:00-10:00)

Online (Teams)

Present:

Marianne Lefort (Chair)
Birgitte Lund (Denmark)
Petra Engel (Italy)
Pavol Hauptvogel (Slovakia) (absent on 19 October)
Beate Schierscher (Switzerland)
Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat)

1. Planning for the use of the budget line 'WG activities' in 2024

The ExCo discussed the need to define mechanisms to use the funds earmarked for 'WG activities' during Phase XI. The budget available for the year 2024 amounts to no less than €102,000, with the possibility to increase this figure, depending on the carryover funds that will be transferred from Phase X to Phase XI. The latter figure will be available at the closure of the ECPGR financial report for 2023, at the beginning of next year.

There was agreement to continue with the two mechanisms in operation during the current Phase, i.e. the Grant Scheme and occasional requests submitted by the Working Groups for the organization of meetings.

Criteria for assignment of funds under the Grant Scheme will be linked to the recommended priority actions at each given call for proposals (see discussion under next point).

Regarding meetings, justified requests will continue to be taken into consideration on a first-come first-served basis. The justification for the meeting should indicate which specific achievements it is expected to reach, in terms of facilitating the implementation of ECPGR priorities. Cost-effectiveness and synergies with other initiatives could increase the chances of approval. Specific, but not exhaustive, examples of good justifications would be meetings in preparation for an EC project, planning of new EVA Networks, training of genebank information system officers, etc.

The ExCo thought that, in 2024, approximately €60k could be dedicated to the Grant Scheme (with a maximum limit of €30k per Activity) and ca. An amount of €45k could be dedicated to meetings, with a maximum of €15k per meeting. This ratio and figures can be revised, depending on the evolving situation (i.e. feedback from the Working Groups and budget availability).

2. Criteria for the first Grant Scheme Call for proposals in 2024

An annotated Table of ECPGR priorities was discussed to agree on the priorities that could be the subject of Activity proposals under the Grant Scheme in 2024.

- Priority level 3 was excluded, while levels 1 and 2 were discussed section by section.
- Activities that will be covered by the EC project PRO-GRACE or by the EURISCO budget were excluded from eligibility, together with those that are expected to be mainly achieved through national funds.
- Some other Activities were expected to become eligible in 2025 or later, since they would benefit from progress made by PRO-GRACE or are considered less urgent, depending on the limited budget available.

Based on these considerations, a Table was prepared [available [here](#)], only highlighting those Activities that will be eligible under the First Call of proposals in 2024 (last column of the

annotated table of ECPGR priorities), which is expected to be launched towards the end of November 2023, with a deadline by the end of February 2024.

3. Appointment of Working Group Chairs for Phase XI

The new Terms of Reference of ECPGR foresee that the ExCo should re-appoint the Working Chairs that are available to continue for the new Phase or proceed to appoint new Chairs where necessary.

It was suggested to organize an online briefing for the Working Group Chairs, possibly at the end of October 2023, where the Secretariat will inform them about the main outcomes of the Steering Committee meeting held in June 2023. The briefing should mainly be related to the mode of operation of the Working Groups and explain the possibility of accessing funds as well as the criteria for eligibility. On this occasion, the Chairs will also be invited to express their availability to continue in their role. For all Working Groups requiring a replacement of the Chair, the Secretariat will initiate the procedure to identify potential candidates, involving Working Group members (See the new [ECPGR Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference for Operational Bodies and Mechanisms](#), agreed by the SC in June 2023).

4. Request for a Cryopreservation Working Group training workshop

The Cryopreservation Working Group contacted the Secretariat with an informal request, asking whether the organization of a training workshop on dormant bud techniques could be eligible for funding by ECPGR under the meetings budget line. This training had been included by the Working Group in its work plan as a capacity-building effort.

The ExCo wished to encourage the Working Group to proceed with the submission of this request, advising that the justification for the meeting should explain its importance in the development of a common cryopreservation strategy for Europe and define the criteria for selecting participants.

5. New funds from Germany for the EVA Network

A budget revision of the EVA project was recently submitted by the ECPGR Secretariat to the German donor with a request for additional ca. €50k to be used in 2023 and dedicated, *inter alia*, to fund the Grain Legumes Working Group 'ForEVA' Activity meeting. ForEVA was awarded under the recent Sixth Call of the Grant Scheme, and is entirely dedicated to organizing a workshop in October 2023, as a preparatory step towards the potential creation of an EVA Legumes component. As the German funds will likely cover the cost of the meeting, the ECPGR budget that was allocated to the same purpose can be saved and reallocated. The Secretary suggested that ForEVA be allowed to submit a budget revision of their Activity after their workshop, so that the available ECPGR funds can be earmarked for activities enabling the immediate implementation of an EVA Legumes project. Funds would likely be sufficient for activities such as seed multiplication, data analysis, lab experiments, etc. This opportunity would empower the organizers of the ForEva workshop to make realistic rather than hypothetical plans for the establishment of a new EVA Legumes Network.

The ExCo agreed to make itself ready to evaluate a budget revision of ForEVA, should Germany accept to cover the cost of the ForEVA workshop¹.

6. Participation of Azerbaijan and Ukraine in ECPGR

Azerbaijan and Ukraine have expressed a clear intention to join Phase XI of ECPGR.

Azerbaijan is standing ready to pay its regular contributions in Phase XI. Regarding Ukraine, a FAO/Crop Trust meeting recently acknowledged the importance of this country joining ECPGR and FAO may cover the related fees.

¹ During the time of writing this report, Germany confirmed the coverage of the ForEVA meeting cost and also invited the Secretariat to submit a new project proposal dedicated to implementing EVA Legumes activities.

However, both countries have accumulated outstanding contributions in the past, when they joined Phase VIII (2009–2013) (Ukraine) and Phase IX (2014–2018) (Azerbaijan), generating a debt of respectively €28,000 and €13,750. The two countries consequently lost their right to vote and receive ECPGR funds. As a matter of principle, the two countries could be re-admitted to ECPGR under the condition that they either pay their past debt or that the Steering Committee agree to write this off for justified reasons.

The ExCo agreed on a draft letter that the Secretariat will circulate among the Steering Committee, suggesting to write off the debt of these two countries, based on the consideration that they made very limited use of ECPGR funds during their past participation.

7. Replacement of ExCo member for the West Subregion

The ExCO discussed the replacement of Beate Schierscher, representing the West Subregion, who will conclude her term at the end of the year. Various potential candidates were listed and the ExCo drew up a short list.