

***In situ* and On-farm Network Response**

1. Could you list the three most important values [activities] of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- a. Coordinate people, discussion and motivation of Europe-wide activities and their relationship to individual country programmes in the field of European *in situ* and on-farm PGR conservation,
- b. Initiate and promote project funding proposals and other nationally funded initiatives for European *in situ* and on-farm PGR conservation,
- c. Help motivate, develop and implement the science of *in situ* conservation (from theory to practice), so that European CWR and LR diversity is valued, maintained and used for the benefit of humankind.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (between 2009 and now)?

The scientific conference on *in situ* conservation of CWR and LR, with the output of the published CABI book on agrobiodiversity conservation, and the two WG meeting in University of Madeira, Portugal provided an excellent opportunity for face to face discussion, as well as the associated successful AEGRO and PGR Secure projects.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

It is very important in terms of sharing information, developing projects, planning new activities, establishing new contacts and maintaining the cohesion of the group, as well as providing fresh motivation for the members. The mere fact of holding a physical meeting means that delegates are forced to rethink their work in preparation for the meeting, we do not feel e-meeting would have the same impact and they would be easily dominated by a small number of delegates. Physical meetings enable discussion that contributes to the developing of common position and suggestions for strategies and proposals to the EU and international policy makers.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

Membership of the WG is mainly open for people dealing with national germplasm conservation and associated research but should be open to all those interested and capable of contributing to the group and not necessarily linked to country quotas, specifically in the case of the *In situ* and On-farm Network the membership could be expanded to include other professionals, such as breeders, farmers, protected area managers and botanists.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

Expenses for wealthier country representatives could be reduced while maintaining full reimbursement for poorer countries. Allow country partners to bid to host meetings and agree to the most economical overall option bearing in mind travel,

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accommodation and host institute charges. Organise meetings in cheaper places, request economic transportation and in conjunction with other non-ECPGR meetings, as the *In Situ* and On-farm Network has regularly done.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

In our case I think it is necessary to keep both the network and the working groups. The working groups are the operational units, while the network is needed to coordinate and complement the activities of the working groups. Also there are so many linkages between the CWR and LR WG it would not make sense to artificially divide them. It would be beneficial to advertise the working program of the meetings prior to the meeting, so that each potential attendee can decide whether the topics for discussion are relevant to his/her work and if they can contribute to the discussions.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

The ECPGR Secretariat should devote a significant proportion of its time in lobbying and finding funding for the Networks to implement PGR conservation and use activities. ECPGR should realise it does not have sufficient funding itself to implement PGR conservation and use activities but act more strategically within Europe. ECPGR as a whole has a competitive advantage over any single member and so ECPGR should use this advantage for the benefit of the Networks.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

The current ECPGR operational structure reflects the existing diversity of plant genetic resources and should be maintained in the future. It uses a complex approach - crop specific and thematic networks. However, as noted above the ECPGR Secretariat should devote a significant proportion of its time in lobbying and finding funding for the Networks to implement PGR conservation and use activities.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

The structure of ECPGR networks and WG has evolved over time according to needs of problem solving, it does not need to be analogical to EUFORGEN or ERFP. It is difficult to make a direct comparison between these structures and that of ECPGR, but the implication of the question is that ECPGR might be reorganised to make fewer Networks, perhaps on a conservation technique basis into three Networks *Ex Situ*, *In Situ* and Informatics. If this were to be favoured by the ECPGR Steering Committee then it would be important that the current crop network structure is retained within the *Ex Situ* Network at WG level. This would seem a sound simple structure from the outside, the question is whether it would be operationally beneficial. If this structure is favoured then the *In situ* network should be expanded to cover medicinal and aromatic plants.

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In general, the *in situ* conservation of PGR is a strongly interdisciplinary field of research and activities require substantial knowledge of not only biology, botany and conservation techniques, but also biogeography, agriculture, natural resource management, land management, anthropology, sociology, etc. Therefore a case could be made for the enhanced Network having responsibility for all wild plants and landraces, along with traditional agriculture and the interface between agrobiodiversity and biodiversity conservation within Europe.

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

It is a collaborative platform for

- motivating people to tackle wider and more effective actions on in situ (i.e. on farm and in garden) conservation of landraces/other populations,
- exchanging information on different ways to in situ conservation,
- working out new ideas, methods, projects and cooperation actions with relevant stakeholders (both of the formal and informal sectors) aimed to promote an effective in situ conservation.

Within this platform EU funded projects like AEGRO, SOLIBAM and PGRsecure were born that have given/are giving consistent outcomes to the in situ conservation activities in a scenario where food security must be increased. Providing examples of how continuously selected (by man and environment) crop populations develop into new populations that are useful not only for farmers but also for the seed company breeders (e.g. VASO project), the platform gives a long term awareness of genetic resource utility. To be noted in this context that it is possibly the only group where the coevolution process and climatic changes are being tackled. All this reveals the need to continue.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Agreements on and coordination of the work to be carried out in for in situ conservation of landraces/other variable populations in the next future at European level.

(for example, see:

Maxted et al. 2012 Current and future threats and opportunities facing European crop wild relative and landrace diversity. In: Maxted, N., Dulloo, M.E., Ford-Lloyd, B.V., Frese, L., Iriondo, J.M. and Pinheiro de Carvalho, M.A.A. (eds). *Agrobiodiversity Conservation: Securing the Diversity of Crop Wild Relatives and Landraces*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK. Pp 333-353.

And visit:

http://www.pgrsecure.bham.ac.uk/sites/default/files/meetings/palanga/CWR_and_LR_Workshop_Report_FINAL.pdf

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

I should say it is fundamental for discussing, agreeing on, planning and organizing future activities in favour of in situ conservation.

Only personal, not mediated by available communication tools (e.g. e-mail, skype, and other internet tools) interactions can give the best outcomes in a group aimed to establish cooperative actions.

They make it possible to establish/increase the needed reciprocal trust and collaborative spirit. Different cultures, ways of thinking, experiences cannot be fully understood and taken advantage of for the benefit of the entire future work of the group, without this personal exchange.

In addition, the genesis of ideas (that can be transformed in projects) occurs more easily with direct contact.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

By giving wider visibility to the ECPGR activities (the program is not so widely known in some countries)

Offering wider opportunities to publish/facilitating the publication of ECPGR member contributes at meetings.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

It is questionable issue, we do not see the opportunity to economize on working group activities, indeed, they should be enhanced in our opinion.

We can eventually offer a few suggestions on how to reduce the *costs* of the activities, for example:

a) find low cost hosting and invitations from secondary groups or institutions (this may be particularly important for the On farm WG where we are aiming to have the largest participation of stakeholders like breeders, farmer groups or farmer associations),

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b) combine meetings with other events (congresses) or other ECPGR group meetings at best (i.e. better that has been done up to now).

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Working groups reflect specific conservation needs/ are asked to answer specific questions related to conservation. In that they have an 'operational' function while the Network has a coordination function as well as the function of connecting different Networks, in our opinion. To change this structure would undermine the roots of an efficient ECPGR program overall, we are satisfied with the actual status.

ECPGR was born under the auspices of the EUCARPIA and could tighten its link with this society, maybe involving the President/Section Presidents to a wider extent.

All the same a greater involvement of relevant European Bodies for the conservation of biological diversity (e.g. EAE, EC_CHM) and integration of ECPGR activities with the above mentioned European Bodies activities is desirable.

To construct tighter relationship with the EC (AGRI, SANCO, ENV) will also be opportune.

What mentioned above could also improve fund raising for a better conservation of genetic resources and integration of related activities at European level through ECPGR itself.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

In relationship with what reported above.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

In relationship with what reported above.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERF Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

Doc & Info NW Response

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

A- The Doc & Info network functions as a point of reference for PGR documentation related issues, and can be used to bounce and discuss ideas, or get actors for collaborative proposals.

B- It has the capacity to organise activities, such as a training meeting

C- Beside this knowledge (A) and capacity (B), the NW can function as a platform for exchanging experiences and views.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

The continuous supervision of EURISCO.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

A meeting once in a while is the basis for any collaboration, personal contact facilitates communication and thus collaboration.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

The current allocation system causes the wrong people to participate. Chairs of the WGs should have more say in who to invite, people who do not speak English, or who do not know about the topics discussed should not be welcome. The chair could invite the relevant active people irrespective of their home country or institute. Capacity building activities (courses, trainings) could be organised to 'keep everyone aboard', we should not abuse WG meetings for that, and get rid of dead weight.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

The costs of participating (and thus active) members should be reimbursed, irrespective of their home country. This should also be the case for networks such as the Doc & Info network. WG meetings could be made smaller, organised at cheap locations, and possibly combined with other meetings where the people who should attend go anyway (but that might already be the case).

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

I think restructuring might improve the situation, stirring up is usually good. But the true problem is not in the structure, but in the willingness of the members to be active. Any restructuring should be aimed at reducing pointless meetings and endless discussions, and stimulate activity. Possibly ECPGR has to concentrate on creating funds to get AEGIS going (GCDT, EU?), or make it possible to start the most urgent elements of Plant Gene Access. As part of that, or in parallel, a targeted capacity building programme should be started. If we need meetings for the sake of meeting, combine it with the e.g. EUCARPIA PGR meeting, once every few years.

Doc & Info NW Response

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

Don't have a good answer, except less talking, more activity. Leaving Bioversity might help.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

See 7

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

Do not know enough to comment.

Allium WG Response

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

1) The Working Group unifies people that are interested in the same crop group. Therefore, it is the only forum for exchanging specific knowledge.

2) The working Group allows to explore activities or non-activities of some countries which are formally members but do not respond on initiatives. After having got the possibility to explore their intentions we can act (through the secretary directly or using his help). The status as Chairman/Vice Chairman gives us more "authority" to act than when we would be only members of a larger entity (e.g. a network).

3) The Working Group is potentially also the entity which could make subject-specific connections with other groups (though this happened too rarely in the past). Thus, e.g., a subgroup working on vegetatively propagated Allium could start an initiative to collaborate with the potato or some fruit groups on specific aspects of vegetative maintenance (field conditions, in vitro storage, cryopreservation), which are irrelevant for, e.g., cereals. The fact that it happened too rarely in the past is mainly due to the limited power of people in regard to the many other tasks everybody has. But, as a potential benefit it should be really taken into account.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Doubtlessly, this is the preparation and success of two projects (EURALLIVEG and the small AEGIS project). All preparations to the projects, mainly of EURALLIVEG were ONLY possible by having used the initial discussions and a physical meeting of the Working Group. Vice versa – the continuation of the joint activities after the end of the project will only be possible due to the existence of the Allium Working Group.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

Physical meetings of the Working Groups are the only real way to exchange information, starting initiatives and creating commitment to the members. It would be a complete illusion when somebody would think that this would be possible through pure email contacts, questionnaire exchanges, circulars or whatever. We never should underestimate the human factor. If I see only names on a computer screen, I never will develop enough feeling of responsibility to any of the actions intended. It is also easier to approach to people that become interesting for me. Physical meetings help also to overcome language barriers through the mutual attempts to understand each other. This is especially important for new members of Europe that not always are able to understand or speak English, which creates the need to help them understanding the discussion.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

This is a difficult question. Since most (or all?) members do their work as input in kind, sometimes they are simply not able to participate because their employers do not give them enough attention. One step into better support would be the status as associated AEGIS member of a given institution. Then, the responsibility scale of such an institution should, *expressis verbis*, contain also the direct support of Working Group members (at least morally if not financially).

What concerns professional background: Members should be agriculturists, botanists, horticulturists or have a similar profession. It would not be useful, when some country would send a member of an institutional administration for formal reasons only.

Allium WG Response

(However it could be useful to establish or strengthen already existing links to lawyers on the level of the ECPGR secretariat).

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

I think this is a dangerous question. In my opinion we approached already to the bottom of the bucket. If we reduce the funds more, we can then close ECPGR. Economization can only be through more engagement of the "sleeping" members. In the Allium Working Group, only less than 50 % sent me a Reading Confirmation message on my circulars, I have sent. The responses are very low. The conclusion should not be to reduce the support even more. Rather the conclusion should be to activate the members (through the National Coordinators or through increasing funds, but not to decrease them).

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups?

In my opinion Working Groups are more important than networks (see points 1-3 of question 1). Working Groups are more flexible than Networks are. However, this will only function when Working Groups will not be prioritized. Prioritisation caused a severe damage to some working groups in past, whereas I do not see that the "favoured" working groups would have developed better because of that.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

The operational structure should be permanent and always present. Thus, the first decisions to create permanently working structures were already on a good way. This should be continued. ECPGR should be closer linked to the financing bodies of EU. My impression from the working as a coordinator of EURALLIVEG was that both instances did not know of each other in the beginning. Insofar, the overlap of my ECPGR and EURALLIVEG activities was really a good situation.

Efforts should be focussed to create more commitment for plant genetic resources in countries that do not have a National Coordinator or not an active one. Especially such large countries like France and Italy are now obstacles for further progress.

The Steering Committee Meetings are, at least for me, too much a formal forum for high authorities. Their meetings should be "reduced" to regular "smaller" meetings once a year. The Steering Committee should not behave like a cloud over the organization, the members of SC should take part in ordinary meetings and should there appear as active persons with own actual engagement.

ECPGR should encourage National Coordinators to give the members of the Working Groups higher acknowledgement.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

Most important is not to reduce the financial funds any more. Reduction of ECPGR to discussing bodies of upper-level people (National Coordinators only, or so) would surely be of highest economical impact but of lowest benefit. In discussion with regular genebank staff, I hear often the opinion that the discussions within the Working Groups are of low impact, because there is no possibility to implement any practical actions because of lack of funds.

Allium WG Response

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

Both models are directed to simplify the structure. Insofar, this would be the same as reducing ECPGR on Networks. The three working groups of EUFORGEN are not species-directed but problem-directed. This is understandable, because forests are totally different entities than agricultural systems. In a forest, there is always a complex system of many various plant species. Insofar forests are comparable with our in situ conservation strategy only. It would not make sense to create working groups on trees and on herbs in a forest. It also would not be sensible to create working groups on deciduous trees and on conifers etc. Insofar the lower structuring seems sensible in forest genetic resources.

The opposite is in agri-/horticulture, where the systems are really driven by the requirements of the various crops. Therefore, I do not think we should adopt the model of EUFORGEN to ECPGR.

I do not have much insight into ERFP, but here also I see a simpler situation than in plants because the diversity of the animals is much lower than that of plants.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure:

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- a. The WG has a specialised area of interest on *Avena* genetic resources, a crop that is of Pan-European interest (to the north because of the acreage that is been cultivated and to the south because of the presence of the wild relatives of the cultivated species).
- b. Most of the WG members have participated in at least one of the three GENRES funded projects. Thus this WG is active and successful in developing project proposals, through which also maintain an up-to-date CCDB.
- c. Through the projects (either GENRES or ECPGR funded) WG members are actively participating in developing conservation policies at National and European level (all members show a high legislation awarness).

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2007 until now)?

ECPGR and mainly RESGEN funded projects brought together most of the *Avena* WG members, leading to collaborative efforts in evaluating, describing *Avena* genetic resources and sharing knowledge among them and identify genotypes potentially useful for breeding.

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3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

Physical meetings are extremely important because they give to all WG members (even to people not previously involved in projects) the opportunity to be informed about the current and future research trend activities about the crop, and maybe find a possible collaborative position for their own activities within the group.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

Interest for the crop should be the main criterion and more important than country quotas and other political criteria. The goal should be to good mix of conservationists (genebank people) and users (crop scientists and breeders).

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

The main activity of the WG is bringing together its members during meetings, exchange ideas, develop collaborative projects, set priorities etc. Smaller membership will exclude people that could contribute towards the WG goals; less reimbursements might prohibit people with smaller budgets to join if they are not able to supplement their expenses. The only possible way might be to organize WG meeting during conferences etc. However, we feel that this should be the very last choice and we'd rather see economizing at other activities of ECPGR. It would be rather awkward to see increasing budgets for activities not related to genetic resources and cut-backs on WG meetings.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Probably this cannot be generalized – it is much depending on the scientific activity in a crop or field. For fields or crops with low activity the Network level is more appropriate while for those with high activity the Working Group level. These things should be kept flexible to facilitate communication on all levels. Scientific activity could related to the acreage size, crop cash value, crop importance and other parameters.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

ECPGR should act as the central focal point and administrative office in bringing together people working with genetic resources, and providing legal advice and facilitating in central policy development among its members.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

ECPGR should avoid to evolve in a centralized organization implementing actions and decisions not developed and agreed by its members but from policy makers.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

We don't really understand the value of this question. EUFORGEN was established in 1994 and has 3 WGs (WG1:gene conservation strategies, WG2:genetic monitoring networks, and WG3:forest reproductive material) dealing with specific tasks each. ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources, that was initiated in 1998 and became operational in 2001, has 2 WGs (WG1:ex situ conservation, and WG2:documentation and information), mainly deals with livestock breeds of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. It is evident that both are structured with Thematic Networks, probably due to the limited number of species involved and/or scientific community working with the species. On the other hand ECPGR was founded in 1980. It contains Thematic Networks but also Crop Networks and within each Crop Network has Working Groups. This breakdown is a necessity due to the diversity of the crops involved, the specialization needed and the number of people working with each crop. In conclusion, we don't see the parallelism attempted between these organizations.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure:

Working group on Beta

Answers were elaborated by the Beta WG chair on the basis of those prepared by the Avena WG. The partly identical text is therefore a modification of the Avena WG group answers. Beta WG members have not been involved, only informed.

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- a. The WG has a specialised area of interest on Beta genetic resources, a crop that is of European and international interest as sugar, fodder and vegetable crop. In addition, Europe the CWR are native to Europe and adjacent areas.
- b. WG members have participated in at least one of the two GENRES funded projects coordinated by the chairman. Thus this WG is active and successful in developing project proposals, through which also the CCDB has been developed further.
- c. Through the projects WG members are actively participating in developing conservation policies at National and European level.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2007 until now)?

Within the framework of the WP 6 of the GENRES project "AEGRO" a Beta case study aiming at the testing and implementation of the genetic reserve conservation technique, for the first time a detailed description of the distribution and conservation status of *B. patula*, and an analysis of the genetic structure of Beta patula has been performed. Between the Beta working group and the ECPGR in situ and on farm conservation network close working relationships exist which resulted in the development of CWRIS AEGRO PLIS and its Beta module.

Very recently on the initiative of a WG member a national, french research project has started aiming at the broadening of the genetic base of the sugar beet breeding. The ECPGR working group together with the international Beta expert community provides advice to that project.

Beta experts perform many more projects. These institutions and persons do not actively support the WG but rather use the ECPGR WG as communication platform.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

Physical meetings are extremely important because they give to all WG members and in particular to non-working group members the opportunity to be informed about the current and future research trend activities about the crop, and maybe find a possible collaborative position for their own activities within the group.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

Interest for the crop should be the main criterion and more important than country quotas and other political criteria. The goal should be to good mix of conservationists (genebank people) and users (crop scientists and breeders).

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

The main activity of the WG is bringing together its members during meetings, exchange ideas, develop collaborative projects, set priorities etc. Smaller membership will exclude people that could contribute towards the WG goals; less reimbursement might prohibit people with smaller budgets to join if they are not able to supplement their expenses. The only possibility to produce more output might be to organize WG meeting back-to-back to IIRB meetings. This will not reduce the amount of funds required for the WG. We rather see economizing at other activities of ECPGR. It would be rather awkward to see increasing budgets for activities not related to genetic resources and cut-backs on WG meetings.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Probably this cannot be generalized – it is much depending on the scientific activity in a crop or field. For fields or crops with low activity the Network level is more appropriate while for those with high activity the Working Group level. These things should be kept flexible to facilitate communication on all levels. Scientific activity could related to the acreage size, crop cash value, crop importance and other parameters.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

ECPGR should act as the central focal point and administrative office in bringing together people working with genetic resources, and providing legal advice and facilitating in central policy development among its members.

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ECPGR should avoid to evolve in a centralized organization implementing actions and decisions not developed and agreed by its members but from policy makers.

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Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- European network of experts, which also has proven to be a good basis for submitting project proposals;
- several GENRES project
- A good wide source of knowledge and experience with Brassica crops their utilization and conservation
- BrasEDB with possibility to disseminate results of projects in which the group discussed and agreed (as far as possible) on minimum standards in collection management and minimum descriptors

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Participation in the AEGIS development as an exemplar crop for Outcrossing species

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

They are the backbone of the network. Members come and go new people and ideas are introduced. In their daily work the members generally do not have the time to dedicate themselves to this work. It is important to be able to meet and discuss face to face; this way communication in between meetings is easier

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

A higher dedication from the member countries and time for the members to be active in the WG. As in this phase the emphasis is on AEGIS, members (or at least participants) should be working in a genebank. However I strongly feel that researchers and breeders not working in a genebank should be able to participate, depending on the subject of the meeting.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

The money comes from the member countries in all cases, I think that it will be easier for them to supply one sum of money and don't bother about the administration rather than paying each time. Such ideas originate from the desire to national rights to decision and micromanagement, which is definitely not efficient.

Smaller meetings: participation in a meeting is only possible if a member is giving input in the preparation of the meeting.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

The network group is just an executive group, and the WGs are the cores around which the activities should spin. However, cut downs have reduced this drastically.

Fibre Crops WG Response

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- a) to meet other colleagues with interests similar to mine
- b) cooperate to realize project and works that should be impossible to do isolated
- c) to share experiences and to improve the knowledge about my work

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

The tentative to organize a common Data-base, (but with limited success)

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

To contact directly many people and when we talk together the problem and the solution could be easily resolved

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

I think that should be necessary to find and to help the people that at first has time and second have feeling (passion) for the argument that the Working group would like to improve.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

Should be possible to save money using more often communication methods like Skype and organizing teleconferences for free with all the members.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

I don't know

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

I don't know so much about these structure to be able to suggest how to change them, sorry.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?
 - Improvement of the overall conservation quality of the forage germplasm in Europe.
 - Improved access to the material (through all documentation efforts)
 - Close interaction between maintainers and the users of the forage genetic resources e.g. through common projects.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?
 - The process that has led to the identification of a considerable number of candidates to the European Forage collection (AEGIS) – report on the way.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?
 - For conservation: The less developed gene banks receive technical advice and knowledge for the improvement of their local gene banks. Common standards can be discussed and agreed.
 - For AEGIS: Database managers and collection holders have been able to work together and hand-in-hand advice has been given for example on how to identify most important accessions for AEGIS.
 - Project development

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?
 - This is a crucial question. The ideal situation would be that the working group members are motivated and mandated to work towards the agreed WG goals and prepared themselves well for the meetings. It is also important that the WG members represent gene bank curators, PGR researchers and plant breeders. One idea to secure the before mentioned goals is that prior to the WG meetings motivation and mandate is checked with a simple “application letter”.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?
 - The above mentioned application process might be used to restrict the number of WG members.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?
 - Network structure is an unnecessary umbrella and contributes less towards to the ECPGR goals than WGs do. Also some issues could be handled commonly amongst all WGs in ad hoc type meetings.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?
 - A clear and effective decision-making structure for the SC (already improved by the establishment of EC).

Forage WG Response

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

- It is important that the expertise in the WGs is not disappearing. Note that the present AEGIS relies on WGs.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

- If these WGs are thematic, ECPGR might consider also looking at this alternative. For example WG:s for documentation, conservation (with sub-groups) and utilization (in broad sense). I have still some doubts to have only thematic WGs since crop expertise might be lost and broad WGs might not be so attractive.

ECPGR structure review

Response from Chair of the Grain Legume Working Group (Mike Ambrose)

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?
 - i. Enables the existence of a focused 'Community of shared interest' in grain legumes for developing shared discussion and joint actions. Grain legume PGR in Europe is very heterogenous in their resources (infrastructure and staffing), scope and mission. I see this as a strength as this enables us to learn from each other and includes good examples of practical assistance and capacity building i.e. joint collecting missions, black box storage and regeneration. It also provides opportunities for new initiatives to be developed from within the group that would not occur if it were more uniform in its composition. Examples include;
 - a. Questionnaire, talks and publication; Suso, MJ., Vishnyakova, M., Ramos, A, G. Duc, D., Ambrose, M. (2011) An international survey on State of the art of Grain Legume Management in Gene Banks. *J. Agricultural Science and Technology B* 1: 975-981).
 - b. Jing R., Ambrose M.A., Knox M.R., Smykal P., Hybl M., Ramos A., Caminero C., Burstin J., Duc G., van Soest L.J.M., Swiecicki W.K., Pereira M.G., Vishnyakova M., Davenport G.F., Flavell A.J., Ellis, T.H.N. (2012) Genetic Diversity in European *Pisum* Germplasm Collections. TAG. <http://www.springerlink.com/openurl.asp?genre=article&id=doi:10.1007/s00122-012-1839-1>
 - ii. Important in the global PGR overview in providing a single group within the European Region that can be contacted and mobilised to respond to calls for information or views e.g. Collation of unique landrace resources in European Genebanks in urgent need of regeneration (GCDT).
 - iii. Awareness raising across Europe of Grain legume Genetic Resources through;
 - a. the membership and their media and publications
 - b. referrals between members of the WG
 - c. provides good contacts for grant applications for other projects
2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Maintaining 10 European Central Crop Databases
3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?
 - a. Provide a sense of cohesion which is important for bridge building within Europe. Difficult to generate effectively as just a virtual network.
 - b. Opportunity to focus on progress made and review forward objectives realistically.
 - c. Time away from other responsibilities to re-establish contacts and make new ones, catch up on the reality of collections across Europe. To listen and learn from others as to what is going on at an operational level.

Grain Legumes WG Response

- d. Fostering of multilateral co-operation
4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?
 - a. Difficult. I hesitate to be prescriptive here because I feel that accountability for what a country gets out of its attending members is up to them. It is also up to them as to which working groups they allocate their places. Different countries clearly want different things, objectives are not uniform. This does create difficulties in the size of the WG and that not everyone contributes but who is to say what each delegate gets out of it and passes on to others.
 5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?
 - a. Less reimbursement should not be considered. There is significant in kind contributions that are generated from within the working groups that would be lost if members were required to find/use alternative resources of funding to attend.
 - b. There is an optimum size to a working group meeting to be effective but I am unclear in how this can be regulated democratically. In my view groups up to 15 are fine, 20 can work but less so especially when the meeting is a short on. Above 20 become virtually unmanageable. As a Chair I try to ensure all participants take part and contribute but this become very much harder with this number of people.
 6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?
 - a. The WG are the work horses of the programme. Co-ordination of the networks might be achievable via email or video conferencing as they are smaller groups which are, in the main, enriched in more proactive and focused individuals who rise to the top of each WG. I see less need for these to physically meet than for WG's.
 - b. I think option c. has merits. Fewer networks and ad hoc working groups.
 7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?
 - a. The TOP priority is to start by tightly defining the scope and objectives for the programme. I support the establishment of an Executive Committee tasked with this role and its oversight. The questions which I am responding to are on the past outputs and broader objectives of ECPGR. We are now in a very different economic climate which will make funding of ECPGR in the future even tighter than in this current phase. This also has consequences for individual members as they are having to increasingly account for their in kind contributions of time and resources. This requires a very tight focus of resources and delivery. From a political perspective I get the clear view that setting the focus on AEGIS as the prime short term objective as suggested is the only way in which progress is likely to be made. The failure of the recent FPVII grant brings this point into stark focus. Generally there is a call for PGR institutions to be far more outward looking than that are with respect to the communities they serve but the reality is that, if Europe wants a single PGR

Grain Legumes WG Response

information system it needs to commit resources and focus to it as it is a long way from reality at the present time. A critical question for AEGIS at this moment is whether its time as already gone and are other initiatives more likely to success which are more timely and hit the right notes with funding agencies and the wider community which is where the 'expert reviewers' for the EU are drawn.

- b. Try to maintain as flat an operational structure as possible. The introduction of an EC should be balanced with a reduction in network committees as suggested in option c. which should possibly not meet in person but conduct their activities via electronic media.
 - c. Recognise and empower working group to do their work within clear objectives and framework.
8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?
- a. Dissolution of Working Groups. Their mandates are already under more regular review so the issue of them being self-perpetuating should not arise.
9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?
- a. No views of this as I am not sufficiently familiar with the work of the programme to comment.

Leafy Vegetables WG Response

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

Networking; exchange of experiences, views and thoughts.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Finalization of the EU GENRES project on Leafy Vegetables, albeit that only part of the WG was involved in this project that also consisted of non-WG members. Through this project a number of WG-related outputs could be realized, including the update of the ILDB and the creation of 3 new databases (spinach, chicory, minor LVs) in which also C&E data were made accessible.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?"

Networking; exchange of experiences, views and thoughts; opportunity to have plenary discussions (workplan, progress, etc.) instead of bilateral communication.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

Candidates should only be nominated as WG member if they have something to contribute to a WG. Criteria that should be used:

- Sufficient ability to communicate in the English language
- Affiliation with the crop(s) involved
- Genebank affiliation, or at least be in a position to represent the genebank from the country in question (this is currently of particular interest since the implementation of AEGIS is the key element of the WG workplan)
- Willingness to actively contribute to the WG workplan (by developing as well as carrying out the WG workplan), instead of only being a name on a list, or only wasting ECPGR budget

Candidates could be nominated in consultation with the chair/vice chair as they are familiar with the main players in the field.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

By organizing ad hoc meetings with a clear focus and targeted outputs. Such meetings do not necessarily be attended by the entire WG, depending on the agenda and depending on the necessary input delivered by WG members prior to the meeting.

By no longer subsidizing extensive excursion programs during meetings and unnecessary extra overnight arrangements. This may also prevent WG members attending meetings for the wrong reasons.

By organizing meetings at cost-efficient meeting venues (traveling costs, accommodation, meals).

By exploring the possibilities of video-conferencing. These should perhaps not completely replace physical meetings, but at least lower its frequency.

Leafy Vegetables WG Response

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Network meetings are of little added value and are rather inefficient when organized for all members of all WGs. If networks are to be maintained, then smaller meetings attended only by WG chairs (and vice-chairs?) would be sufficient to streamline activities of the WGs. I do not see how a huge network as the Vegetables would function in practice without the WGs. In addition to smaller network meetings, see also the response to the previous question for further economization.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

Better communication/coordination between the steering committee and the network/WGs. These are often experienced as two separate worlds, one consisting of policy makers and the other one of technical people. Also the communication between the AEGIS project and the WGs needs improvement in order to better coordinate the practical implementation. Small network meetings (see response to previous question) attended also by an SC and AEGIS representative may provide opportunities.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

The functioning of the secretariat as a facilitating and organizing instrument.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

I 'am not familiar with this construction and it's efficiency.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values [activities] of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- Coordinate Europe wide the activities and the persons working in Medicinal and Aromatic Plants PGR conservation
- Promote project proposals in the MAPWG
- Implement research in MAP PGR conservation, for now and future generations
- Exchange of information and experience in a range of plant conservation aspects; multiplication, characterisation, evaluations, molecular and other analysis methods etc.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (between 2009 and now)?

The oregano project “**Conservation and characterization of oregano (*Origanum vulgare* L.) wild populations in Europe**” where samples from 51 populations from 19 WG member countries were analysed by the Institute of Applied Botany, University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, Austria.

As well as, the setting up of the Descriptors, for the priority species. These are an important help to uniform the information on MAP between countries and is a fundamentally condition to set up a database with more than Passport descriptors.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

The WG physical meetings are important to share information, reach targets more efficiently and also validate some results. A way to develop common projects, as it was the last one, maintaining the cohesion and motivation of WG.

In addition, personal acquaintance and friendship between WG members is essential for bilateral contact and cooperation between WG meetings

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

Membership of the WG should be according to a certain profile of knowledge in MAP Genetic Resources (*in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, evaluation, use...). So countries should be aware of the importance of the knowledge of their representatives for that specific Working Group. Those representatives also should be the in country, the person that detains the information over this subject.

The Membership, should also be open to different professionals related to the WG, “environment people”

MAP WG Response

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

We don't see that WG meetings could be organized cheaper than now. When the countries membership fee is paid we think that the costs should be covered as now. Some countries will probably not participate if the costs were not covered.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

In our case it is more important to keep the MAP Working Group. In reality the Network is not so important. The Network where the MAPWG is included has not the same interests.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

ECPGR as a whole has a greater advantage over any of the individual countries by itself in regard to PGR conservation and use activities. So because of that advantage ECPGR Secretariat should use that advantage to find more funding to PGR conservation activities.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

The current operational structure reflects the diversity of PGR in Europe and should be maintained for the future, however it is a complex approach.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

It is difficult to make a direct comparison between these structures and ECPGR, as PGR species conservation is more ample, than for animals and even trees.

If the objective is to reduce Networks and Working Groups, it makes sense to have three large Networks: ex situ, in situ and documentation. However, we think it is more important to have WG than Networks. If needed ad hoc meetings can be organized.

Solanaceae WG Response

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- Networking: meeting people working in the same fields
- Interaction: during meetings and through email people can express their ideas related to PGR which leads to better understanding of each other's position, problems and solutions.
- Cooperation: Through contacts in the working group, collection holders work together in topics related to ECPGR but also bi-lateral

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

- The decision made during last meeting in February 2012, not to put effort in the Solanaceae Central Crop Databases anymore but to propose to make DB managers responsible for data in EURISCO. This will avoid double work, improve EURISCO and improve decisions based on data in EURISCO (MAA's, AEGIS).

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

- Direct interaction with people which cannot be reached by email.
- Getting acquainted with colleagues from other countries which improves collaboration.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

- Only people who have collections and are responsible for collection management can attend (genebank managers, curators) but no scientists who only use collections.
- People must speak English in a certain high level that they can participate in discussions.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

- Change the type of meeting to always ad-hoc meetings.
- Select before a meeting a limited number of topics (e.g. 3) to be prepared and discussed by members. Only members who perform the preparatory work requested, will participate in the meeting.
- Touristic excursions out of the program. Can be organised after the meeting but must be self-funded including and extra night when needed.
- Maybe it is cost efficient to organise all meetings at ECPGR. A lot of preparation is already done by the secretariat. When all meetings will be held in one place they are arranged quicker and certain agreements can be made with hotels and catering. On the other hand it will decrease the interaction of countries and members. To my opinion this is valuable and cannot be skipped only for cost saving.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

- All networks will be transformed in one committee of chairs, vice-chairs and data base managers who meet once or twice during a phase to discuss common topics.
- No more network meetings of all members and no network chair and vice-chairs anymore. The networks will be cancelled.

Solanaceae WG Response

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

-More support from EU with a fixed budget. Input in kind prevents many partners in doing work which is needed.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

-Keep the secretariat

-Keep the working groups structure but the way of organising WG work/meetings can be improved (see 5)

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

-PGR holds many players, maybe only 3 thematic working groups is too small. I think in this structure there will be less participation and progress.

extra10. -The input of chairs/vice chairs is unbalanced compared to work done by members. Often the output of a WG is because often the input of the chair/vice chair. This must be solved.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

UMBELLIFER WG (C. Allender & E. Geoffriau)

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- task and experience sharing on PGR
- securing of umbellifer
- PGR reasearch networking in Europe

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Aegis implementation plan and list for Umbellifer crops (besides recurrent work on PGR)

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

The main role is for people to meet each other in order to build trust, share experience and agree on plans or principles in order to achieve sustainable collaboration for PGR. The physical meetings are also critical in order to keep projects and collaborative work going. Without face-to-face meetings, the progress on projects is much slower and having these meetings encourages participation from a range of countries. Email contribution is no substitute.

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

The membership could be optimized in several ways :

- the corresponding crop should represent an important part of the member's activity
- the WG could be open to private stakeholders (seed companies)
- funding (even limited) for projects, and projects based activity are essential for an active membership

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

Working group activities are currently funded at a minimum level, economies would mean closing activities. The question is more about how to better use the existing funding and how to increase funding with in regards clear funded projects. The relative costs of reimbursing exact costs to participants compared to using a 'per diem' system could be investigated. Meetings must continue to be fully funded however otherwise participation from WG members in less financially secure institutions could be compromised. Meetings could be co-ordinated between WGs so that representatives who are members of several do not have to travel to separate meetings.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Both levels are useful. Networks are more about general exchanges, and working groups more about specific projects. However, a possibility could be to have less WG, based on reproductive biology aspects (vegetative, allogamous, autogamous...), but this would translate on more orphan species (which is already the case in the current system). The WG structure provides an opportunity for more people to be involved in areas in which they have direct expertise. The utmost care needs to be taken that any structural changes do not result in ECPGR being carried out by only the larger, better funded institutions with other institutions (who are helped the most by the relatively small monies available) effectively being sidelined.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

Review the country quota system which translates sometimes in inadequate participation to meetings. More funding project oriented.

Review of the organisation where there is no contact or connection between the steering committee and networks/WGs.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

We need to avoid the disparition of WG (but they can have another format), level where the real activities and collaborations exist. The activities being carried out by the WGs are the outputs of ECPGR and these should not be compromised but enhanced. It should be recognised that increasing 'in kind' contributions will not deliver extra outputs – WG members quite often have to catch up on other work and projects after contributing their time to ECPGR activities and meetings and their own workload is not reduced due to ECPGR activities – it is effectively an additional burden often not recognised by SC members.

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

The structure in thematic working groups is interesting. This could be studied for ECPGR with several scenarii.

However, it needs to be verified, but a group of experts can give orientations, but how it is implemented in the diversity of genebanks and how genebanks really cooperate? This is really the added value of the ECPGR ambition, but there are difficulties. Also, it seems that the diversity of cultivated species is higher than forest or animal species, which makes wonder if we can apply the same system. In EUFORGEN, the WGs consist of a small number of experts and a larger group of email contributors. This is an interesting option, but how the two groups are defined (ie who is an expert and who may only have input via email) needs to be carefully thought through.

CONCLUSION

We support the review of the system for a more efficient system with real activities supported by project oriented funding for the WG activities. The focus should be on generating outputs.

Wheat WG Response

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

helpful to the members recently involved in PGR activities at national and international level

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

Awareness and discussion on the loss of precise genetic stocks.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

Regular update on ongoing problems, discussions, progress etc. ; topics discussed in physical meeting remain better in memory than a written report sent out by e-mail and stored somewhere on the PC. Sharing knowledge and experience and for establishing further collaboration within and outside ECPGR framework

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

The constitution of the working groups should be as continuous as possible. Moreover, the working groups should represent an expert opinion in various fields, e.g. legislation, seed science, breeding research and practical breeding. Certain standards have to be set up for the Working Groups membership. Member directly responsible for the national collection (curator), preferably skilled in PGR, or plant breeding.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

An European cooperative should give all European countries the possibility to participate. Less reimbursement can be discussed, e.g. participants could be asked if their institution can cover a part of the costs. Another possibility is to discuss a permanent location for meetings which offers a good and cheap travel connection for almost all participants

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups ?

Keeping only the working groups would be more efficient in regard to an exchange of scientific opinions and progress, keeping only the networks would most probably be more efficient in regard to costs and matters related to legislation, ex situ storage, etc.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFPA Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

The structure of EUFORGEN in working groups related to "methodologies" rather than plant species has for sure the advantage that the respective WG members have the same expertise, however, this is probably only suitable if the respective collaborative programme covers only a few plant species. That such a structure works for ECPGR where a much broader variability in species is covered by the networks could be hardly imagined.

Cereals Network and Barley Working Group - Responses

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

Responses from the Cereals Network and the Barley Working Group

Compiled by Helmut Knüpffer (Coordinator Cereals Network, Chairman Barley Working Group) from the responses by individual members

May 3, 2012

Below please find the responses from the Cereals Network and the Barley Working Group. Some responses received were merged with the views of the coordinator/chairman. Some contrasting views remaining, illustrating different opinions within the group.

Questions related to the ECPGR operational structure

1. Could you list the three most important values of the ECPGR Working Group that you are chairing?

- (1) The opportunity for colleagues from different European countries dealing with barley genetic resources to meet & discuss problems of common interest
- (2) To discuss possible collaboration and to initiate joint projects on topics of common interest (funded & non-funded)
- (3) The community itself, and the equality between the participating countries
- (4) The access to the European database.

2. Could you mention the single most important output of your ECPGR Working Group over this five-year phase (2009 until now)?

The barley pre-breeding seminar in Malmö (with some participation from wheat).

A promising research project outline was discussed during the recent WG meeting (2011), but follow-up activities were missing due to the inability of the group to find a coordinator for such a project.

3. What is the role of physical meetings of the Working Group to you?

It is important, since it is the only forum for discussions and where some progress can be made.

- to know European colleagues in person
- to renew contacts (activities are drastically declining in periods without meetings)
- to discuss & initiate bilateral & multilateral collaborations
- to discuss issues that need to be addressed by the WG (or the broader research community of the crop)
- to obtain and exchange the information on the progress of the barley genetic resources from the other countries involved in ECPGR.

It is much easier to gather information from countries during the meeting by question-answer than by e-mail between meetings.

Physical meetings have several roles:

- a social one as new members get to know other people attending the Barley WG.
- a practical one because it is a good opportunity to exchange experience about the way other European countries manage their collections or work with them, about their position or involvement in a European project or the European database. This part is really important, e.g. for the AEGIS project because it is easier to share tasks such as collection management when you know your partners.
- a prospective one as it could be the place where new collaboration emerges.

Cereals Network and Barley Working Group - Responses

4. How can we optimize the membership of the Working Groups (professional background, participation)?

It is essential to get members really working with the crop, who know the overall situation in the country and who have the possibilities to affect the matters related to the subject in their respective home country.

Presently, WG members are nominated by ECPGR member countries

- some members show little activity
- some members say that they do not represent, and thus cannot speak on behalf of their country / national programme / national genebank
- WG members are from different kinds of organisations: genebanks, research institutes, breeding institutes & companies. This leads to a situation in which not all members are able to make decisions about technical collaboration of genebanks (such as in the AEGIS process). From the other side, it is beneficial to the group that not only genebank staff, but also users of the material (researchers, breeders) are involved in the group.

The Steering Committee needs to define a few criteria to be followed by member countries in nominating their representatives in crop WGs:

- each WG member should have the mandate from the country to represent the country / national programme / national genebank
- WG members should receive support from their countries to actively participate in ECPGR activities (part of their time to be allowed to spend on ECPGR)

Some present problems of large crop WGs with a number of quite inactive members could be overcome by focussing on particular tasks and by establishing smaller task forces (with some financial support for necessary travel) – but the whole WG would need to meet anyway, in order to describe the tasks for the TFs and to guide their activity. In the case of barley (and other large crop WGs), the present funding does not allow to carry out separate tasks when the budget of the WG is almost completely exhausted by one regular WG meeting per ECPGR phase.

5. How can we economize on working group activities (e.g. smaller membership, less reimbursements)?

- Crop WG has no influence on its size, since member countries are nominating WG members according to country quota and importance of the crop for the particular country.
- Lower frequency of meetings would lead to decreased WG activities, which would be counter-productive

Short, efficient meetings – not necessarily with the whole group every time – kind of 'board'?

Video contacts and other novel techniques

- Merge the working groups, to organize the meeting together for cereals - one meeting for more groups (but the need for crop-specific sub-meetings would remain).
- Reduce the costs for WG meetings, through cheaper accommodation for participants.

6. Which alternative operational structures for ECPGR would you regard as potentially effective and cost-efficient, in particular suggested options during the last Steering Committee meeting to only keep the Networks or only keep the Working Groups?

If a choice has to be made between continuation of crop WGs and networks, it would be in favour of crop WGs. However, in this case we would lose the benefits of networks providing synergies between WGs of “similar” crops, and all single crop WG activities would have to be

Cereals Network and Barley Working Group - Responses

coordinated by a central ECPGR body if the intermediate layer of networks would be removed. In any case, the thematic Networks should continue their existence.

Suggestion: that the barley group is kind of a subgroup under the cereals network, with a specific, focused project plan that is chosen among the participants. We just cannot do everything but if we focus we may get much – even without extra financing, simply with cooperation.

Alternatives (from the group):

- I suggest Networks and really put efforts on that.
- Keeping of the networks and working groups is very important for the protection of PGR.

7. Which change in ECPGR operational structure is most needed?

To involve in the project also poorer countries which do not have the capacity for realizing many of the requirements and objectives of ECPGR.

8. Which change in ECPGR operational structure should be avoided by all means?

Difficult to judge

9. What are your views on the EUFORGEN structure (3 working groups) and ERFP Animal Genetic Resources structure (2 working groups and 3 task forces)?

Not enough knowledge about these structures