



European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

2006 Progress Report

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SUMMARY

Two milestone meetings were held in 2006, i.e. the First meeting of the Network Coordinating Groups (NCGs) in Bonn, Germany, in March and the Tenth (Mid-term) meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) in Riga, Latvia, in September.

The NCGs had the opportunity to meet all members together for the first time and to discuss cross-cutting issues, review their progress, revise their budgets and workplans and make preliminary plans for Phase VIII (2009-2013). A number of recommendations and conclusions were published to inform the SC before its meeting.

The SC was pleased about the progress of the Networks, in accordance with the established priorities for Phase VII and appreciated the results of the two-year feasibility study for "A European Genebank Integrated System" (AEGIS). The need to further develop and prepare the implementation of AEGIS were substantiated with the reallocation of 150 000 euro from the existing ECPGR budget of the current Phase. The importance to better liaise with the European Union in the future was stressed and the Secretariat was invited to prepare a strategy in this direction.

The developments of the International Treaty (IT) on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and the outcome of the first session of the Governing Body of the IT held in Madrid in June 2006 were welcomed and the SC acknowledged the complementarity of the objectives of the IT and those of ECPGR.

Priorities for a new Phase (VIII) were drafted and the need to introduce measurable outputs for the Networks was agreed.

Activities carried out within the Crop Networks consisted in the organization of several Working Group (WG) and *ad hoc* meetings: *Ad hoc* meeting on Triticale and Rye, Third meeting of the WG on *Malus/Pyrus*, *Ad hoc* workshop on fingerprinting of fruit varieties, Third meeting of the WG on *Beta*, *Ad hoc* meeting of the WG on Potato, and First meeting of the WG on Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp). Within the Thematic Networks, the Second meeting of the Task Force on On-farm Conservation and Management was organized and among the cross-cutting activities a workshop was held on "Genetic resources of northern Europe in relation to climate change".

Several projects were prepared for the second call of EC Regulation 870/2004 (Programme AGRIGEN RES) with the involvement of the ECPGR Networks. Although the result in many cases was less satisfactory than expected, five projects with linkages to the ECPGR were approved for funding altogether (first and second call).

The EURISCO catalogue reached nearly one million accession data and the downloading option was implemented, allowing easier retrieval of data by the users.

Three reports of past ECPGR Working Group meetings were published and several electronic documents were made available on the Internet with the outcome of the various meetings. Plans for activities and publications to be carried out in 2007 are also detailed in the present report.

Following a decision of the Steering Committee in September 2006, the name and acronym of ECP/GR was simplified to European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR).

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the third progress report of Phase VII (2004-2008), covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006, with information updated until March 2007. The aim of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of activities and progress of ECPGR, mainly for the benefit of the ECPGR Steering Committee and the implementing agencies of the ECPGR member countries. In the course of 2006, the Steering Committee has received more punctual information through the dedicated "steering committee listserver", kindly managed by the Nordic Gene Bank.

A meeting of all the Network Coordinating Groups was held on 29-31 March 2006 in Bonn, Germany, to review progress, adjust the Networks' plans and budgets for Phase VII and to start looking into plans for Phase VIII (2009–2013). The report of this meeting is available on-line at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/NCG_March06/NCG_Bonn_March06.pdf

The Steering Committee also held its Mid-term meeting in September 2006 in Riga, Latvia. On this occasion, background documents reporting progress of all Networks, as well as a mid-term report on the implementation of Phase VII, were provided. These documents are all available on-line at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC10/SC10_backdocs.htm

It should be noted that the Steering Committee decided in Riga that the name and acronym of ECP/GR should be changed as follows: *European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)*. The main argument for this change was the need for simplification and elimination of unnecessary words and symbols. Reference to "plants" versus "crops" was not meant to modify the scope of the Programme, which will continue to focus on agricultural crops. However, reference to "plants" was considered to be more in line with the titles of the Global Plan of Action and of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Furthermore, it was felt that the reference to "Networks" in the title was confusing and thus could be deleted without any problem. However, the logo would be retained with the deletion of the words "Crop" and "Networks".

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE VII OF ECPGR

As of the end of March 2007, a total of 32 countries had formalized their membership to Phase VII of ECPGR. Six other countries had not signed the Letter of Agreement but had, nonetheless, started to pay annual contributions for Phase VII. The list of member countries is kept updated on-line at:

<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/AboutECPGR.htm/>

Other relevant documents related to the implementation of Phase VII are available from the ECPGR Web pages. These are:

- **ECPGR Terms of reference (version 2 – February 2007)**

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/ToRs_PhaseVIIv2.pdf

This document was revised upon request of the Steering Committee, considering the increasing complexity of the Programme. Its scope was broadened to include further elements of clarification regarding the role of "Working Group Chair", "Database Manager of an ECPGR Central Crop Database" and "Network Coordinator". The procedures for the election of the Working Group Chair and of the Network Coordinator and the duration of these positions were also clarified in the document.

- **Networks' budget allocation for Phase VII (revised)**

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Budget_PhaseVII.pdf

This document was revised following the changes decided by the Network Coordinating Groups in Bonn, March 2006 and by the Steering Committee meeting in Riga, September 2006.

- **Country quota for Phase VII (explanation)**

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Country_quota_PVII_New.pdf

3. THE 10TH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The Tenth meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee (SC), held in Riga, Latvia, on 5-8 September 2006 was the occasion to evaluate progress of the Networks since the onset of Phase VII (2004–2008) and to make plans for the future. The fruitful collaboration between the hosting institutions, the University of Latvia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Latvia, enabled a successful event, which was the first ECPGR meeting ever to take place in Latvia. Representatives from 34 member countries were present, together with observers from 5 non-member countries and representatives of Bioversity International, the European Seed Association (ESA), EUCARPIA, FAO, NGB and of the NGOs.

The importance of involving the European Union as a member of ECPGR was reiterated. The SC decided that a short strategy paper should be formulated, to be addressed to the European Commission, in its capacity as a Party to the International Treaty.

Informative reviews of progress made by the Networks were welcomed by the SC members. The SC concluded that the Networks had given appropriate attention to the priority issues defined for Phase VII (Characterization and evaluation; Documentation and information; *In situ* and on-farm conservation and management; and Task sharing). The priority issues defined for Phase VII were considered to be still valid for the next Phase, with “task sharing” being the top priority, but also adding the element of “capacity building”, considering the additional need to devote part of the existing collaboration to enhancing the capacity of the less developed areas of the European plant genetic resources community. Network Coordinators will be requested to provide a list of proposed actions for Phase VIII, including clearly measurable outputs. The SC also decided to assign a Task Force to define the appropriate division between WG meetings, actions and *ad hoc* meetings and to look at criteria that would enable evaluating the relevance of the proposed actions and outputs, as well as the ratio of distribution of ECPGR funds over the Networks.

The evaluation of the ECPGR-funded feasibility study on the establishment of “A European Genebank Integrated System” (AEGIS) concluded with the proposal that this work required further consideration of the practical aspects of implementation of the AEGIS project (see below, section 7). In-depth consideration of the future of AEGIS will need to be taken at the next, 11th meeting of the SC.

The recent developments of the International Treaty (IT) on PGRFA were thoroughly discussed. The SC welcomed the outcome of the first session of the Governing Body of the IT held in Madrid in June 2006. Conscious of the complementarity of the objectives of the IT and those of ECPGR, the SC encouraged those ECPGR member countries that had not yet ratified the IT to do so. For those ECPGR member countries which had ratified the IT, the SC wished to encourage full implementation at the national level as rapidly as possible, taking into account the specific conditions of the individual country. A checklist of steps that might be taken from a technical and operational point of view to achieve the implementation of the Treaty was agreed upon and was included in the report of the meeting.

An invitation was made by the Director of the Nordic Gene Bank, Bent Skovmand¹ to hold the next SC meeting in 2008 at Longyearbyen, Svalbard Islands, following construction of the facilities of the Svalbard International Seed Depository.

The report of the meeting is available from the ECPGR Web site at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC10/SC10_outcomes.htm

¹ It is with deep sorrow that we were informed that Dr Bent Skovmand passed away peacefully on 5 February 2007, after a short period of illness.

4. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE NETWORKS

4.1. Cereals Network

Priority WGs: *Avena* and Wheat

Lower priority WG: Barley

The **Cereals Network Coordinating Group (NCG)** consists of seven members: Helmut Knüpfper, Gatersleben, Germany (Network Coordinator); Iva Faberová, Prague, Czech Republic; Christoph Germeier, Quedlinburg, Germany; Marja Jalli, Jokioinen, Finland; Andreas Katsiotis, Athens, Greece; Gert Kleijer, Nyon, Switzerland; and Marcin Zaczynski, Radzików, Poland.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups' meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress within the Working Groups was reported and workplans updated.

Since Anna Michalova left the Czech genebank, it was decided to involve her successor, Dagmar Janovska, as the member of the Cereals Network in order to continue activities on minor cereals.

The following cross-cutting items for the Network were identified: safety-duplication; cooperation of the ECCDBs with EURISCO, GBIF and other international databases; quality of data and updates; harmonization of database structures; use of molecular markers; initiating EU and other international projects; and *in situ* and on-farm related topics such as designation of protected areas. Implementation of AEGIS was considered a priority task for Phase VIII.

Collecting missions: a mission to collect *Aegilops sharonensis* threatened by urbanization and road constructions was organized with ECPGR funding support in April-May 2006 within the framework of a Letter of Agreement signed between Bioversity International and the Institute for Cereal Crops Improvement, Tel-Aviv University, Israel. Sharon goat grass (*Aegilops sharonensis*) is a wild relative of wheat, endemic to the Coastal Plain of Israel. Five endangered populations were identified in the central part of the Coastal Plain, namely two in Even-Yehuda and one each in Kefar-Ganim, Ein-Hakore Junction and Ashdod. Data were recorded on each population including soil type, size of the population and accompanying plants. The extent and type of risk exerted on each population were assessed. Single spikes were collected from different plants within each population. The full report is available at: <http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Cereals/cereals.htm>.

The **First Ad hoc meeting on Triticale and Rye** took place at Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil in Nyon, Switzerland, on 28 September 2006. Both crops have their highest importance in Europe: two-thirds of triticale germplasm and 90% of rye germplasm is maintained in European genebanks. The Rye (IHAR, Radzików, Poland) and Triticale (Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil, Switzerland) ECCDBs were presented by their DB managers, M. Zaczynski and G. Kleijer, respectively. The Rye Database is accessible on Internet and contains 13 707 accessions conserved in 18 countries. The Triticale Database contains 11 721 accessions from 23 genebanks in 18 countries and will be accessible on Internet as soon as possible. There are considerable gaps in both databases for passport data. The addition of several descriptors to the ECCDBs was discussed and the lists will be finalized via email.

There is confusion about the correct scientific name of triticale. The Group recommended using *×Triticosecale* Wittm. for the time being, and as common name: triticale (E and F), Triticale (D).

It was agreed that the ECCDBs should strive to make progress, providing standard data, identifying gaps in the collections and making proposals for European core collections. Moreover, several characterization and evaluation (C&E) descriptors should be added to the present minimum descriptors in the Triticale and Rye CCDBs. It was recommended that the ECPGR Documentation and Information Network develop a software solution to convert data from C&E trials into a standardized system. The CCDB managers will encourage the genebank managers to identify the most important and original accessions in their respective collections to prepare the implementation of AEGIS. The implementation of AEGIS recommendations on triticale and rye will, however, depend on the completion of the work by the four AEGIS model crop groups. The participants will need to meet again in two years' time to review progress and to start implementation of AEGIS. The full report of this *ad hoc* meeting will be published on-line in 2007.

With involvement of the **Avena Working Group**, a project proposal called “*Avena* genetic resources for quality in human consumption” was prepared under the coordination of BAZ, Quedlinburg, Germany. This was successfully submitted to the second call of the EC Programme AGRI GEN RES and the project will start in 2007.

Collecting missions of wild *Avena* species are in preparation for 2007 in Spain and Morocco, with Network’s funds.

The **Cereals Network**, including the members of all three Working Groups, is expected to meet in 2008 in Izmir, Turkey.

4.2. Forages Network

Priority WG: Forages

The **Forages Network Coordinating Group** consists of seven members: Beat Boller, Zürich, Switzerland (Network Coordinator); Lajos Horváth, Tápiószele, Hungary; Chris Kik, Wageningen, The Netherlands; Petter Marum, Ilseng, Norway; Valeria Negri, Perugia, Italy; Magdalena Ševčíková, Zubří, Czech Republic; and Evelin Willner, Malchow/Poel, Germany.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups’ meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress within the Working Group was reported and workplans updated. Database Managers were working on the identification of “primary holders” for the forages accessions, in an effort to advance the implementation of sharing of responsibilities concepts. Difficulties are encountered because data for some databases are still missing and some of the Database Managers find it difficult to do the job without extra funding.

A project on “Tailoring *Medicago* genetic resources for the 21st century”, coordinated by the Research Institute for Fodder Crops Ltd. (RIFC), Troubsko, Czech Republic, was submitted to the second call for proposals of EC Regulation 870/2004 (AGRI GEN RES) and it was included in the reserve list, but it was not approved for funding.

The **Forages Working Group** is expected to meet for its ninth meeting in October 2007 in Slovakia.

4.3. Fruit Network

Priority WGs: *Malus/Pyrus* and *Prunus*

Lower priority WG: *Vitis*

The **Fruit Network Coordinating Group** consists of seven members: Ken Tobutt, East Malling, United Kingdom (Network Coordinator); Emilie Balsemin, Bordeaux, France; Stein Harald Hjeltnes, Leikanger, Norway; Emma-Jane Allen, Faversham, United Kingdom; Marc Lateur, Gembloux, Belgium; Erika Maul, Siebeldingen, Germany; and Jesus Ortiz, Madrid, Spain.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups’ meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress within the Working Groups was reported and the workplan updated. It was agreed that the four Fruit Databases would be harmonized as much as possible and other documentation issues of common interest were raised and discussed (problems with synonyms, pedigree information, use of standardized photographs, flow of information, etc.).

The **Working Group on *Malus/Pyrus*** held its Third meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia on 25-27 October 2006. The meeting, organized at the Institute of Horticulture, Viticulture and Oenology, in collaboration with the Georgian Academy of Sciences, with a contribution from the Georgia

Agricultural Research, Extension and Training Project of the World Bank, was attended by representatives from 21 countries.

The meeting made firm commitments to improve the existing European *Malus* and *Pyrus* Databases, currently managed respectively by the Imperial College, Faversham, UK and by the Centre de Recherches Agronomique (CRA), Gembloux, Belgium. The accession data will also be complemented by photographs. The Group encouraged each country to develop the concept of “a national collection” and then to select sets of accessions that could be identified as part of a European collection. These would then be considered by the *Malus/Pyrus* Working Group as “Most Appropriate Accessions” candidates, to be maintained in the long term by the holding institutions, in agreement with the criteria and standards to be established by the *Malus/Pyrus* Working Group. The Group acknowledged the need to reach agreements at the international level on a standard list of markers to be used to compare fingerprinting studies. Plans were made to start Simple Sequence Repeat (SSR) fingerprinting of the European collections of *Malus* and *Pyrus* on a wide scale. Among its plans for the near future, the Group is planning an *ad hoc* meeting to resolve problems of fruit cultivar synonymy (Gembloux, Belgium, in 2007) and a second *ad hoc* meeting on *in situ* and on-farm conservation of *Malus*, *Pyrus*, *Prunus* and *Vitis* (Dresden, Germany, in 2008). In order to initiate activities on the study of traditional knowledge and on wild relatives of cultivated species, the Group set up two task forces dedicated to these topics. Marc Lateur, Belgium, was reconfirmed as Chair of the Group. The draft report of this meeting is available at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/malus_pyrus/malus_pyrus.htm

An ***Ad hoc* workshop on fingerprinting of fruit varieties** was held at East Malling, United Kingdom, in December 2006, with nearly 20 experts from 11 European countries. The aims were to reach consensus and make recommendations relating to: 1) choosing reference accessions; 2) standardizing microsatellite sets; 3) harmonizing allele labelling; and 4) standardizing record sheets, so that microsatellite fingerprints can be used effectively to characterize accessions in ECPGR *Prunus*, *Malus* and *Pyrus* collections and, in particular, to facilitate comparison of datasets between laboratories to detect duplicates and synonyms. The participants agreed that a set of eight diverse accessions, five from the crop in question and three from related species, should be sufficient as reference cultivars and that each item should be distributed from a unique source. In the case of cherry and pear, the lists were nearly finalized at the meeting. The lists of the other crops are being completed early in 2007, in some cases with inputs from other European experts. The participants nearly finalized lists of microsatellites for cherry and pear and the other lists were being completed. Opportunities for dissemination were discussed and the Group agreed that the forthcoming EUCARPIA Symposium (September 2007) would be a good opportunity to present the recommendations of the workshop to a wider audience. There could also be scope for a refereed paper. Shortly after the meeting, groups in New Zealand and America have expressed interest in using the same microsatellite sets – paving the way for comparing accessions worldwide – and it has been suggested that similar sets should be proposed for raspberry and strawberry.

The reports of the Sixth (Budapest, Hungary, 2003) and Seventh (Larnaca, Cyprus, 2005) meetings of the *Prunus* Working Group were published at the end of 2006.

The ***Prunus* Working Group** will have an opportunity to organize a meeting in 2007 or early 2008, with focus on the AEGIS activities.

A meeting of the four Fruit Database managers (*Malus*, *Prunus*, *Pyrus* and *Vitis*) is envisaged in 2007, with the objective of harmonizing the databases and exchanging experiences.

4.4. Oil and Protein Crops Network

Priority WG: Grain Legumes

The **Oil and Protein Crops Network Coordinating Group** consists of four members: Mike Ambrose, Norwich, UK (Network Coordinator); Siyka Angelova, Sadovo, Bulgaria; Gérard Duc, Dijon, France; and Wojciech Święcicki, Poznan, Poland.

The **Network Coordinating Group** met in Paris in May 2006, and discussed the operation, workplan, budget and future workplan for the Working Group on Grain Legumes. The NCG decided that a review of the current status of the Grain Legumes Central Crop Databases was urgently needed.

It was noted that the Group successfully collaborated with several international initiatives, such as the EU Grain Legume Integrated Project (provision of 1900 *Pisum* accessions from seven European collections for DNA marker analysis to address questions of the structure of diversity held in European collections – results are expected in 2007); project on *Vicia faba* molecular characterization (project coordinated by ICARDA, Syria to score maximum diversity from the collections held in Spain, France and ICARDA, with the objective to form a core collection for *Vicia*); *Pisum* germplasm resources international consortium (coordinating inputs into grain legume research projects internationally and with one of the main priorities being the development of an international core collection for *Pisum*).

The **Working Group on Grain Legumes** is planning to meet for its fourth meeting in November 2007 in Lisbon, Portugal, in the days immediately prior to the AEP Grain Legumes conference.

4.5 Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network

Priority WGs: *Beta* and Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp); Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

Lower priority WG: Potato

Following the decision made by the Steering Committee to include the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants WG in this Network, the membership of the **Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network Coordinating Group** was revised and it currently consists of four members: Lothar Frese, Quedlinburg, Germany (Network Coordinator); Dea Baričević, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Roel Hoekstra, Wageningen, The Netherlands; and Martin Pavelek, Šumperk, Czech Republic.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups' meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress within the Working Groups was reported and workplans updated.

The **Third joint meeting of the *Beta* Working Group and World *Beta* Network** took place in the Jardín de Aclimatación de La Orotava, Puerto de la Cruz, Spain, thanks to the hospitality of the Instituto Canario de Investigaciones Agrarias. The meeting focused on scientific and technical aspects of *in situ* management. A presentation by B. Ford-Lloyd, UK confirmed that, on the basis of objective criteria for prioritizing conservation efforts, priority is justified for most wild species of *Beta*, considering their limited occurrence and the importance of the related food, fodder and industrial crops. Ongoing research on wild *Beta* species was the highlight of the meeting with several scientific presentations. In particular, a recent survey of *Beta nana* populations growing in Greece was described by L. Panella, USA, reconfirming the survival of this species believed to be extinct.

The Group took stock of progress made in recent years, such as the development of new features (pictures and interactive maps) in the International Database for *Beta* (<http://idbb.bafz.de>), maintained at the Federal Centre for Breeding Research on Cultivated Plants (BAZ), Quedlinburg, Germany.

New lines of collaboration and plans for further joint research were made at the meeting, including improving the identification of target populations for *in situ* conservation, focusing on Greece, Morocco, Spain and the Caucasus, and developing a model for collection of data for *in situ*

management. The Group considered it desirable to ensure commitment from breeding companies for genetic resources collaboration and for funding, especially for pre-breeding competitive research.

On the last day the Group, including 17 participants from 12 countries, visited important sites with populations of wild *Beta* species along the coasts of the Island of Tenerife. It was reassuring to ascertain that most populations were well preserved, often within protected areas. The monitoring methodology was put into practice through this exercise and several observations were made that are likely to contribute to the improvement of the theory of wild population assessment. L. Frese, Germany was reconfirmed as Chair of the ECPGR Working Group and G. Aleksidze, Georgia, was elected as Vice-Chair. B. Ford-Lloyd and E. Ober, UK, were reconfirmed as sub-working group moderators for “genetic diversity” and “evaluation and breeding”, respectively. E. Ober will serve the Group as editor of the recently launched WBN Newsletter and represent the interests of the *Beta* germplasm user community. D. Grogan, Ireland was elected as member of the *Beta* Coordinating Committee of the WBN. The draft report of this meeting was uploaded on the ECPGR Web pages at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/beta/BetaandWBN3_PartI_revdraft_080606.pdf

A one-day **Ad hoc meeting of the WG on Potato** was held in Edinburgh, UK in December 2006. The European *Beta* Database manager also attended the meeting. No report was received by the Secretariat on the outcome of this meeting.

The **First meeting of the Working Group on Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp)** was held in Wageningen, The Netherlands, on 14-16 June 2006, with 15 participants from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Romania. The meeting discussed flax and hemp national collection status reports as well as flax and hemp international databases development. It was decided to rebuild the current International Flax Database (IFDB) and to create an International Hemp Database (IHDB) including passport and characterization/evaluation data. A project to establish a model for database implementation using open source Internet technology to manage passport, characterization and evaluation data was endorsed by the Group members and submitted to the attention of the Steering Committee. However, this project was subsequently not approved for funding at the Tenth SC meeting in September in Riga, Latvia (September 2006). Martin Pavelek (Czech Republic) and Giuseppe Mandolino (Italy) were respectively elected Chair and Vice-Chair of the Flax and Hemp Working Group. The draft report of this meeting was uploaded on the ECPGR Web pages at:

http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Flax_Hemp/Fibre crops_reportrevdraft_120207.pdf

In April 2007, an *ad hoc* meeting on wild beet *in situ* management was expected to be convened, at the occasion of the congress of the International Institute of Beet Research at Marrakech, Morocco, but this event was eventually postponed to a later date.

In June 2007, the **Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP)** is expected to meet for the third time in Olomouc, Czech Republic. At this meeting, countries are expected to report on their survey of national populations of the selected priority species (*Achillea millefolium*, *Artemisia absinthium*, *Carum carvi*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Melissa officinalis*, *Mentha piperita*, *Mentha spicata*, *Origanum* spp., *Salvia officinalis*, *Thymus vulgaris* and *Thymus serpyllum*).

4.6 Vegetables Network

Priority WGs: Cucurbits, Leafy Vegetables and Umbellifer Crops

Lower priority WGs: *Allium*, *Brassica* and Solanaceae

Following changes in membership in 2006 and the decision to move the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Working Group out of this Network, the former Vegetables, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network returned to its original name of Vegetables Network. The composition of the **Vegetables Network Coordinating Group** was revised and it now consists of six members: Dave Astley, Wellesbourne, United Kingdom (Network Coordinator); Ferdinando Branca, Catania, Italy; Marie-

Christine Daunay, Montfavet, France; Maria José Díez, Valencia, Spain; Willem van Dooijeweert, Wageningen, The Netherlands; and Joachim Keller, Gatersleben, Germany.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups' meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress within the Working Groups was reported and workplans updated. Network-specific issues of relevance were identified, such as the problem of insufficient safety-duplication, the need to resolve inaccuracies in taxonomic names in the databases, the very good progress of the Cucurbits, Leafy Vegetables and Solanaceae WGs, as opposed to the signs of saturations reached by the *Allium* and *Brassica* WGs, due to lack of financial inputs.

In January 2006, the *Allium* and *Brassica Working Groups* used their lower priority WG funds for a joint *ad hoc* meeting, which took place in Prague, Czech Republic. The main objective of these meetings was to inform the Groups about the progress and perspectives of the AEGIS project, which uses these crops as a model. These Groups also had the opportunity to give their inputs with comments and recommendations during the final stages of the AEGIS feasibility study.

With involvement of the *Allium Working Group* a project proposal called "Vegetative *Allium*, Europe's Core Collection, safe and sound", was developed under the coordination of IPK, Gatersleben, Germany. This was successfully submitted to the second call of the EC Programme AGRI GEN RES and it will start in April 2007.

Following resignations of Grégoire Thomas and Eduardo Rosa as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the *Brassica Working Group*, the Secretariat provided for the selection of "*interim*" positions following a consultation via email correspondence. Ferdinando Branca, Italy and Noortje Bas, The Netherlands, were respectively selected as *interim* Chair and Vice-Chair.

Within the framework of the *Solanaceae Working Group*, Gerard van der Weerden of the Botanical and Experimental Garden of the Radboud University, Nijmegen, and Willem van Dooijeweert of CGN, Wageningen, The Netherlands (also Vice-Chair of the Solanaceae WG), visited the Aegean Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) in Izmir, Turkey, from 7–10 June 2006. The objective of this visit was to provide AARI with the software related to the structure of the Eggplant Database, to be used for creating the Pepper Database. The necessary software was installed and data requested by the Pepper Database manager, Lerzan Aykas, from ECPGR members, were checked, corrected and put in the required format for uploading. Once all the data have been checked and additional software installed, the data will be uploaded. From then on the Pepper Database will be hosted and managed by AARI at:

<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Databases/Crops/Pepper.htm>

Within the context of the *Leafy Vegetables Working Group*, two collecting missions were organized by the Plant Genetic Resources Laboratory of the Research Institute of Vegetable Crops, Skierniewice, Poland, in collaboration with the National Centre for PGR of Ukraine, Kharkiv. The expeditions were carried out respectively in September-October (Western Ukraine) and in November-December (Central and Southwestern Ukraine). The missions were organized due to the presence in the areas of valuable landraces of many horticultural and agricultural crops that were never collected and that could be lost within a short time. Germplasm was collected in farms, local markets and natural habitats. In total, over 1200 accessions from more than 100 genera of vegetable crops, medicinal plants and their wild relatives were collected from about 150 localities. All collected materials were shared between Ukrainian and Polish partners and the data will be entered in the EURISCO database.

The Chair of the Leafy Vegetables Working Group, Ietje Boukema, Wageningen, The Netherlands, retired at the end of 2006. The Working Group agreed on Robert van Treuren, from the same institute, as an *interim* Chair.

The report of an **Ad hoc meeting of a Working Group on Solanaceae**, held jointly with the Fifth meeting of the EGGNET (EU-funded) Project in Bari, Italy, 2004, was published with updated information at the end of 2006 and is available at:

<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/solanaceae/solanaceae.htm>

Activities of the Solanaceae Working Group were publicized in an article published in the SOL Newsletter in November 2006 (see below, publications).

The **Vegetables Network** will meet in June 2007 in Olomouc, Czech Republic, holding a joint meeting of its six Working Groups, organized in plenary and separate sessions.

4.7 Documentation and Information Network

The **Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group** composition suffered from the sad passing away of Dražen Jelovac in March 2006. Dražen will be missed by his numerous friends in ECPGR.

The composition of the NCG was revised to include seven people: Frank Begemann, Bonn, Germany (Network Coordinator); Iva Faberová, Prague, Czech Republic, Theo van Hintum, Wageningen, The Netherlands; Véronique Jamilloux, Paris, France, Helmut Knüpfper, Gatersleben, Germany; Ahmet Semsettin Tan, Menemen, Turkey; and Ian Thomas, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups' meeting** in Bonn, Germany, 29-31 March 2006, activities were planned for the second half of Phase VII (see report of the Bonn meeting). The following activities were implemented in 2006:

- Request by the ECPGR Secretariat to the National Coordinators for **nomination of *In situ/on-farm* National Inventory Focal Points**. Nominations are being received by the Secretariat in early 2007 and the list is available at:
http://www.biodiversityinternational.org/networks/ecpgr/Contacts/ecpgr_PGR_NI_insonfarm_FP.asp
- A **Crop Wild Relative descriptor list** has been developed within the UNEP-GEF Crop Wild Relatives project. The development and consultation process has involved all project partners, i.e. the five countries (Armenia, Bolivia, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan), BLE, BGCI, IUCN, FAO and UNEP-WCMC, the project's technical advisory committee members, in particular Arthur Chapman and Vernon Heywood, as well as Biodiversity scientists. The lists have been approved within the project and the information management tool that Biodiversity is developing for the five partner countries (to set up their national information systems) is based on the descriptors. Through the use of this tool the descriptors will be tested and a revision of the descriptors is likely to take place in 2007.
- **EURISCO development**: download functions have been introduced as of March 2006, allowing downloading data by national inventory and by genus. The number of accessions data stored in EURISCO has passed the threshold of one million in March 2007, with an increase of nearly 30 000 accession data during 2006. Data quality checks were performed and providers contacted for refreshing their data. The upload mechanism was fully upgraded. The use of EURISCO and the status of National Inventories were assessed in May 2006. Two EURISCO e-bulletins were produced and circulated in May and December 2006. Two dissemination articles were published in the Newsletter for Europe and three oral presentations were made in scientific meetings. Two fact sheets were produced and distributed in scientific and technical meetings in Europe. These public awareness materials, originally in English, are being translated into other European languages. The effort of translation has been kindly undertaken by the National Focal Points as an input in kind. The electronic version of these materials will be made available through the EURISCO Web site. Following the recent signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), Biodiversity International became an "Associate Participant Organization" in the GBIF network. As a result of this MoU, EURISCO was mapped to the Darwin Core and ABCD standards, which means that the data are indexed by, and now accessible via, the

GBIF data portal, i.e. EURISCO has become a GBIF data provider, helping to disseminate data and information on conserved germplasm and also promoting the European collections.

- The **EPGRIS-2 project proposal** on the “Establishment of a European Plant Genetic Resources Information InfraStructure-2”, which was submitted for funding under the first and second call of EC Regulation 870/2004 (AGRI GEN RES), under the coordination of IGER, Aberystwyth, UK, was not successful in either case.
- The **EGRISI project proposal** for the development of a “European Genetic Resources *in situ* Inventory” (EGRISI) was also submitted to the second call of proposals of EC Regulation 870/2004 under the coordination of the University of Birmingham, UK, but it was not approved for funding either.

In 2007, the main efforts for EURISCO development will be dedicated to improving the EURISCO Web site interface, the user-friendliness of the search options and to expand the downloading options. It is also planned to introduce taxonomy check and GIS check tools in order to offer to the National Focal Points the possibility to identify problems in the taxonomic and geographic quality of their national data.

An initiative for the further development of the European Plant Genetic Resources Information Infrastructure will be explored in order to overcome the unsuccessful submission of the above-mentioned project proposals to the EU. This initiative, coordinated by Th. van Hintum, CGN, Wageningen, The Netherlands, will address data quality improvement, better access, information exchange, capacity building, etc. This collaborative action, based on inputs in kind, was initiated and proposed to take place within the framework of the Documentation and Information Network.

The **ECPGR Web site** was continuously amended, in order to provide updated information on future events, meeting reports, workplans, and other relevant news.

4.8. *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network

The ***In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network Coordinating Group** is composed of six members: Nigel Maxted, Birmingham, UK (Network Coordinator); Lothar Frese, Braunschweig, Germany; Paul Freudenthaler, Linz, Austria; José Iriondo, Madrid, Spain; Valeria Negri, Perugia, Italy; and Zdeněk Stehno, Prague, Czech Republic.

At the **Network Coordinating Groups’ meeting** in Bonn (March 2006), progress was reported and workplans updated. Among the cross-cutting issues under discussion, the need was recognized to meet the requirements of the Crops Networks and to encourage the participation of *In situ* Network members in Crop Network meetings and vice-versa. The intention to involve end-users, such as plant breeders, in conservation activities was also stressed, in order to promote “*in situ* utilization”.

Following the conclusion of the **PGR Forum project** in 2005, the project’s Web site (www.pgrforum.org) has continued to host its products, namely the PGR Forum Catalogue of the Crop Wild Relatives of Europe and the Mediterranean (which can be downloaded as National CWR data sets), the Crop Wild Relatives Information System (CWRIS) which is being transferred to Bioversity in 2007 and a rich collection of publications (newsletters, case study handouts, workshop reports and posters). The proceedings of PGR Forum Workshop 5, Genetic Erosion and Pollution Assessment Methodologies, Terceira Island, Autonomous Region of the Azores, Portugal, 8-11 September 2004, were also published in 2006 as a Bioversity publication. The proceedings of PGR Forum Workshop 4, Genetic Reserve Management Guidelines, will be published by Bioversity in 2007. The proceedings of the First International Conference on Crop Wild Relative Conservation and Use held in Agrigento, Sicily, Italy in September 2005 will be published by CAB International in 2007. All National Coordinators have also been sent copies of their national CWR inventory for checking, validation and use.

Various projects were developed by the Network members for the second call of proposals of EC Regulation 870/2004. The **AEGRO project proposal** for the development of “An integrated European *In Situ* Management Workplan: Implementing Genetic Reserves and On Farm Concepts” through CWR and landrace conservation case studies was successful but the **EGRISI project proposal** for the development of a “European Genetic Resources *in situ* Inventory” and the **ONFARMSAFE project proposal** for the “On-farm safeguard of plant genetic resources” were not approved for funding.

The **Second meeting of the Task Force on On-farm Conservation and Management** was held on 19-20 June 2006 in Stegelitz, Germany, hosted by the Landesumweltamt des Landes Brandenburg (Eberswalde). Members from 16 European countries attended the meeting. Delegates discussed the concept and definition of landraces, the main on-farm conservation issues in Europe, the legislation status of conservation variety seed trading, and the possibility of developing methodologies for creating inventories and of recording information about on-farm conservation. The Task Force reiterated that landraces were probably the most threatened and neglected PGR of all and that very little attention is drawn to the importance of on-farm conservation as a dynamic strategy to allow populations to evolve with time and be in tune with the environment. The Task Force recognized the pressing need to improve public awareness about on-farm conservation issues at all levels, with each Task Force member committing to improve communication among stakeholders, also making use of the resources of the ECPGR Secretariat. The development of renewed and enriched Web pages was agreed with the Secretariat, in order to provide quick access to more information and contacts. The need to strengthen links with farmers, farmer organizations, NGOs and amateur growers respectively, was also highlighted. Creating closer links with Crop Networks was also considered important. The workplan for 2007 foresees, *inter alia*, the finalization of a minimum descriptor list for the documentation of on-farm conservation and management activities, the production of a paper on how to establish landrace historical inventories, the provision of information on on-farm country activities and on methodologies, a report of information on seed legislation for genetic resources and the drafting of possible project proposals.

The **report of the Second meeting of the Task Force on On-farm Conservation and Management** is being produced in electronic format and will be soon available from the new Web pages currently under development.

A questionnaire on *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network Activities was distributed by the Network Coordinator to all the Network members and the results will be compiled early 2007. The objective behind this collection of information is to try to stimulate more consistent action and therefore better address individual countries requirements.

The **Third meeting of the Task Force on On-farm Conservation and Management** is planned for 2-5 October 2007 in Slovenia, including one day dedicated to home gardens in Europe. Preparations are ongoing, facilitated by an internship carried out by Gea Galluzzi, who will prepare a background document summarizing the state of the art of home gardens research in Europe.

4.9 Inter-regional Cooperation Network

The **Inter-regional Cooperation Network Coordinating Group** is composed of five members: Eva Thörn, Alnarp, Sweden (Network Coordinator); Tiberio Chiari, Florence, Italy; Ladislav Dotlačil, Prague, Czech Republic; Vladimir Meglič, Ljubljana, Slovenia; and Bert Visser, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

The **Network Coordinating Group** had the occasion to meet in Bonn, Germany, on 29-31 March 2006. In this meeting, it was pointed out that the Inter-regional Cooperation NCG, due to the very limited financial resources for network activities, could only have a facilitating function, through which other ECPGR Networks and Working Groups could be informed about interests and needs for collaboration from other regions. The regional network coordinators were considered the key persons

in this context and establishing regular information channels was thought to be a first step towards an increased collaboration and stronger partnership.

It was proposed that the available funds could be used in a meeting with regional network coordinators, to be co-organized with Bioversity and that it should include in its agenda the following topics: information on exchange mechanisms, sharing of conservation responsibilities, capacity-building strategies and policies. Expected results are specific action plans for the identified areas, distribution of tasks and responsibilities amongst committed partners. The meeting, planned for the end of 2007, will offer the opportunity to discuss the training of trainers in documentation and in genebank techniques and management.

The EU project "Diverseeds" on "Networking on conservation and use of plant genetic resources in Europe and Asia", funded under the Sixth Framework Programme, has established contact with ECPGR, following a visit to Rome of its Coordinator, Markus Schmidt, International Dialogue and Conflict Management (IDC), Austria. Eva Thörn, Inter-regional Network Coordinator, was invited to be a member of the project's External Advisory Board, as well as Valeria Negri, Chair of the On-farm Conservation and Management Task Force. Diverseeds is planning to organize its first European meeting jointly with ECPGR Networks meetings, such as the Third On-farm Task Force meeting and the inter-regional meeting of regional networks coordinators.

The Network provided funds for the participation of Frederick Atieno, from the Bioversity Sub-Saharan Africa office, in the Second European Workshop on "National Plant Genetic Resources Programmes: from research to policy making", held in Luxembourg in November 2006. Frederick presented the case of GRENEWCA (Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa).

5. THEMATIC CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

A workshop entitled "**Genetic resources in the northern parts of Europe: current status and the future in relation to major environmental changes**" was hosted by the Finnish national programme for PGR and was organized as an ECPGR cross-cutting activity in Rovaniemi on 17-19 September 2006, with a contribution from MTT Agrifood Research Finland. The workshop was attended by participants from Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation (by correspondence), Sweden and USA (Alaska).

The current status of the most northern germplasm collections was reviewed, as well as climate change scenarios for the area and knowledge on genetic diversity and adaptive capacity of the most northern plant populations. The key conclusions from the discussions were, in summary: 1) many of the ecological effects of global warming are closely related, working "cooperatively"; 2) the potential to adapt depends on the availability of genetic variation; 3) the most vulnerable areas to climate change are high-elevation and coastal sites; 4) climate change will bring many challenges regarding the quality or nutritional aspects of germplasm or crops grown; 5) the current collections lack material from the most northern areas and attempts should be made to fill in the geographic and genetic gaps in order to serve plant breeding with material adapted to the northern conditions.

Workshop participants agreed on a list of activities to be carried out after the meeting as related to the conservation of genetic resource in northern areas. These activities and recommendations can be adapted to any other geographical area as well, as relevant: 1) compile national lists of germplasm originating from above 64°N including germplasm in genebanks and botanic gardens; 2) establish which species are relevant/important including target sites (vulnerable areas; transition zones); 3) identify gaps in collections; 4) fill the gaps by collecting (or acquiring) material and geo-referenced information; 5) document existing and new material (passport data minimum) that is being collected; 6) make the germplasm available for others to use and, if possible, generate some relevant characterization and evaluation data.

At a later stage, other activities may follow:

1. Conservation/regeneration – development of new protocols, especially as related to reproductive strategies.
2. Identification and selection of sites for regeneration.
3. Analysis of genetic and phenotypic variation.
4. Physiological studies in the field and lab will need to be initiated (e.g. abiotic stresses).

It was recommended to establish a more formalized network or working group, preferably within the frame of ECPGR and in connection with groups from other geographical areas that focus on PGR and climate change. The full workshop report will be published on the ECPGR Web site.

Following a decision of the Steering Committee in Riga, September 2006, other remaining funds originally allocated to cross-cutting issues were re-directed to fund AEGIS actions, including 2000 euro for the publication of the **AEGIS Strategy Framework Discussion Paper**.

6. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Main changes in the ECPGR Web site were implemented according to the decisions made by the Steering Committee and following the branding exercise of Bioversity International.

A β-version of the ECPGR brochure for the wider public was printed and distributed to the Steering Committee on the occasion of its Tenth meeting, which made suggestions and recommendations for improvement. The brochure will be finalized in 2007 in collaboration with Pro Specie Rara, Swiss NGO. The objective of this tool is to enhance PGR visibility, encourage the public to request increased availability of PGR and inform the public about the threats of genetic erosion.

7. AEGIS INITIATIVE FOR “A EUROPEAN GENE BANK INTEGRATED SYSTEM”

The AEGIS feasibility study continued in 2006 with a combined meeting of the *Allium* and *Brassica* subgroups (Prague, Czech Republic, 20-21 January 2006).

Activities devoted to fundraising consisted of the preparation of an expression of interest for a call of proposals under the COST scheme, which was submitted by 30 May 2006. A targeted action project application, including Bioversity as coordinator and 11 other partners was also submitted by 30 June to the second call for proposals under Regulation 870/2004 (AGRI GEN RES). Unfortunately, none of these initiatives were successful.

Final reports of the outcome of the feasibility study of the four crop subgroups were prepared and provided the basis for the final technical and financial project report and for an update of the draft Strategy Framework Discussion Paper prepared by Bioversity. These documents were submitted to the ECPGR Steering Committee at its meeting in Riga (September 2006) and are available from the ECPGR Web site (http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC10/SC10_backdocs.htm).

The ECPGR Steering Committee recognized the relevance of the reports resulting from the feasibility study and made positive comments about the concept of AEGIS. It was felt that the AEGIS project had made substantial progress since its initiation. It was also agreed that further considerations of the practical aspects of implementation of the AEGIS projects were needed and it was decided to re-allocate part of the funds (ca. 150 000 euro) from the existing ECPGR budget, to be dedicated to appointing a 50% Coordinator for 2 years and other supporting measures (see the Report of the Tenth meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee).

In December 2006, Jan Engels was appointed by Bioversity as AEGIS Coordinator as of 1 January 2007. His first initiatives consisted in the establishment of Terms of Reference and composition of a new AEGIS Advisory Committee and a Local (Bioversity) Task Force. The Strategy Framework paper is being finalized by the Bioversity Local Task Force, based on the findings of the four model crop groups, in close consultation with the AEGIS Advisory Committee, and is being prepared for endorsement by the ECPGR Steering Committee and subsequent publication.

The next steps of the AEGIS initiative, undertaken within the framework of ECPGR, will need to be carried out with inputs from the ECPGR Steering Committee members and Bioversity staff. These include the following:

- Development of a Collective Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), containing details on responsibilities that each country agrees to assume for accessions included as part of the European Collection;
- Development of model institutional contracts, containing details on responsibilities that collaborating institutes agree to assume for the conservation/distribution of accessions of a given crop of the European Collection;
- Development of a Quality Management System for long-term conservation of the AEGIS Collection;
- Surveying (potential) capacities and availability amongst European institutes to develop European task-sharing in the context of AEGIS;
- Assessing economic implications of AEGIS implementation (i.e. operational costs prior and after the introduction of AEGIS);
- Work closely with four model crops in implementing European collections;
- Influence and seek funding in order to carry out the implementation process through national commitments, regional commitments (i.e. EU), global opportunities and project proposals.

The **Web pages on AEGIS** will be revised and kept up to date in the course of 2007.

8. ECPGR AND THE EU PROGRAMME ON GENETIC RESOURCES IN AGRICULTURE

The second call for proposals under Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004 (AGRI GEN RES) was launched in April 2006 with a deadline for submission on 30 June 2006.

The ECPGR Secretariat was directly involved in the preparation of four proposals submitted for targeted actions:

1. AEGIS (Towards A European Genebank Integrated System), coordinated by Bioversity. This project, including 12 partners, was meant to establish legal agreements among European countries for the creation of a coordinated genebank system in Europe, including the definition of European collections and of a shared system to monitor the quality of the collections.
2. EPGRIS-2 (Further development of the European Plant Genetic Resources Information Infrastructure). This project, coordinated by the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), Aberystwyth, United Kingdom, was a follow-up of the project that led to the creation of the EURISCO catalogue, with the objective to improve data flow, quantity and quality of data in the European PGR on-line Search catalogue.
3. EGRISI (European Genetic Resources *In Situ* Inventory). This project, coordinated by the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, was prepared within the context of the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network and the Documentation and Information Network. The main objective was the creation of a European information system and data flow for the creation of an inventory of *in situ* PGR data, to be integrated with the EURISCO catalogue.
4. ONFARMSAFE (On-farm safeguard of plant genetic resources), coordinated by the University of Perugia, Italy, aimed to sustain and promote on-farm conservation of landraces through use, where their current and potential value is greatest in Europe. This project was prepared within the context of the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network.

Unfortunately none of the above-mentioned projects were approved for funding. However, among the projects prepared with involvement of the ECPGR Working Groups members, the following were successful:

1. Management and Conservation of Grapevine Genetic Resources, coordinated by Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), Paris, France - (First call);
2. Leafy vegetables germplasm, stimulating use, coordinated by Stichting Dienst Landbouwkundig Onderzoek, Wageningen, The Netherlands - (First call);
3. *Avena* genetic resources for quality in human consumption, coordinated by the Federal Centre for Breeding Research on Cultivated Plants (BAZ), Quedlinburg, Germany – (Second call);
4. An integrated European *In Situ* Management workplan: Implementing genetic reserves and On Farm concepts (AEGRO), coordinated by the Federal Centre for Breeding Research on Cultivated Plants (BAZ), Quedlinburg, Germany – (Second call);
5. Vegetative *Allium*, Europe's Core Collection, safe and sound, coordinated by the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben, Germany – (Second call).

Additionally, projects on *Medicago* and on cucurbit genetic resources were submitted by the members of the Forages and Cucurbits WGs respectively, but these were not successful.

9. LINK WITH OTHER NETWORKS AND INITIATIVES

The following interactions between ECPGR and other Networks and initiatives took place during 2006:

- **SEEDNet.** The ECPGR Coordinator attended the fifth meeting of the Sida-funded South East Europe Development Network on Plant Genetic Resources (SEEDNet) Regional Steering Committee (RSC), in representation of the ECPGR Secretariat, which is *ex officio* member of the RSC. The meeting was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 2006. Closer integration between ECPGR and SEEDNet activities, in order to take advantage of synergies was encouraged. A positive response came from the RSC, with the decision to include in the Terms of Reference of the SEEDNet Working Groups the harmonization of activities with the ECPGR workplans.
- Collaboration with SEEDNet also involved the participation of the AEGIS Project Manager, B. Lund, in the first meeting of the SEEDNet Working Groups on Fodder and on Vegetables (February 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina). This was an opportunity to introduce ECPGR and to present the AEGIS project and the AEGIS strategy during the joint meeting of the two Working Groups.
- **Global Crop Diversity Trust.** Close interaction with the Trust initiative and staff is being maintained and developed, especially in the context of the AEGIS project. The AEGIS approach is considered the European strategy towards a more rational conservation system. The AEGIS experience and process can offer useful elements to inform and influence the Trust approach, such as the definition of a regional quality system and of regional germplasm collections. The AEGIS coordinator was invited to attend the Oats Global Conservation Strategy Meeting in March 2007 (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). Members of several Working Groups take part actively in the development of global crop conservation strategies coordinated by the Trust.
- **EC Sixth Framework Programme.** The project **Diverseeds** for “Networking on conservation and use of plant genetic resources in Europe and Asia” started in December 2006. The project, coordinated by International Dialogue and Conflict Management (IDC), Austria, involves countries from Europe and South-East Asia. The project is aimed to open European networks to Asian research colleagues working in centres of origin, to establish a communication platform, and to promote knowledge exchange on genetic resources. ECPGR was invited to host some of the European project meetings within the context of ECPGR regular meetings, in order to facilitate synergies and offer inputs to Diverseeds (see above, section 4.9).
- **Planta Europa.** ECPGR is considered a lead institution for some of the targets of the European Plant Conservation Strategy (EPCS). The effective role to be played by ECPGR was, however, not well defined and the link with Planta Europa was rather loose. Contact with the Planta Europa coordinator, Meike Kretschmar, was established in 2006 and it was agreed that the ECPGR Secretariat will contribute to the ongoing process of revision of the EPCS and will participate in the Planta Europa Conference in Romania, September 2007, with the aim to explore opportunities for

mutual benefit by combining efforts and creating synergies towards the conservation of crop wild relatives and their ecosystems.

- **Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)**. During 2006 a note of information on BGCI was provided by Suzanne Sharrock, Director of Global Programmes. Areas of possible collaboration between BGCI and ECPGR were identified, specifically the opportunity to link the BGCI Plant Search database and the ECPGR databases. It was also acknowledged that many of the activities of ECPGR contribute to the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and that ECPGR could consider joining the partnership.
- **European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)**. This programme is starting the establishment of a European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (EUFGIS), in line with the experience of EURISCO. The EUFGIS project will start on 1 April 2007 and it is one of the actions supported by the European Commission under the Regulation EC 870/2004 on genetic resources in agriculture.

10. PUBLICATIONS

Publications produced in 2006

The following **ECPGR publications** were produced in 2006 and can be obtained free of charge from the Secretariat. These publications are also available in electronic format through the ECPGR Web site (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Publications/Publications.htm).

- **ECPGR reports**
 - Report of a Working Group on Solanaceae. First Meeting, September 2004, Bari, Italy.
 - Report of a Working Group on *Prunus*. Sixth meeting, June 2003, Budapest, Hungary / Seventh Meeting, December 2005, Larnaca, Cyprus.
- **Electronic documents**
 - Report of a Working Group on Leafy Vegetables, First meeting, October 2005, Olomouc, Czech Republic (Part I - Revised draft).
 - Report of a Working Group on *Beta* and World *Beta* Network. Third Joint Meeting, March 2006, Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Spain. (Part I – Revised draft).
 - Report of the ECPGR Network Coordinating Groups. First Meeting, March 2006, Bonn, Germany.
 - Report of a Working Group on Potato. Second meeting, July 2002, Hamburg, Germany.
 - Report of the Tenth ECPGR Steering Committee Meeting, September 2006, Riga, Latvia.
 - Report of a Working Group on *Malus/Pyrus*. Third Meeting, 25-27 October 2006, Tbilisi, Georgia. (Part I – Revised draft);
 - Report of a Working Group on Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp). First Meeting, 14-16 June 2006, Wageningen, The Netherlands. (Part I – Revised draft).
- Issues 32 and 33 of the **IPGRI Newsletter for Europe** were also published in 2006 with contributions and partial financial support from ECPGR.
- **Other publications**
 - Daunay, M.C., W. van Dooijeweert and L. Maggioni. 2006. Solanaceae genetic resources in Europe. SOL Newsletter, issue 12.
 - Maggioni, L. and A. Del Greco. 2006. Il programma cooperativo europeo per la salvaguardia dell'agrobiodiversità. Italus Hortus 13(2):17-21.
 - Suso, M.J., M. Vishnyakova, A. Ramos, M. Ambrose, G. Duc and L. Maggioni. 2006. Conservation, management and regeneration of grain legumes genetic resources. Grain Legumes 45:6.

Publications in preparation in 2007

- **Printed publications**

- Report of a Working Group on *Vitis*. First Meeting, 12-14 June 2003, Palič, Serbia and Montenegro;
- Report of a Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. Second Meeting, 16-18 December 2004, Strumica, Macedonia FYR;
- Report of a Working Group on Cucurbits. First Meeting, 1-2 September 2005, Plovdiv, Bulgaria ;
- Report of a Working Group on Leafy Vegetables. First Meeting, 13-14 October 2005, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

- **Electronic documents (Web publishing)**

- Report of a Task Force on On-farm Conservation and Management. Second Meeting, 19-20 June 2006, Stegelitz, Germany;
- Genetic resources in the northern parts of Europe: current status and the future in relation to major environmental changes. Report of a Workshop, 18-19 September 2006, Rovaniemi, Finland;
- Report of a Triticale and Rye *Ad hoc* Meeting, 27 September 2006, Nyon, Switzerland;
- Report of a Vegetables Network. Second Meeting, 26-28 June 2007, Olomouc, Czech Republic;
- Report of a Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. Third Meeting, 26-28 June 2007, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

11. FORTHCOMING ECPGR MEETINGS

Meetings planned for 2007

- ECPGR Documentation and Information Network - *Ad hoc* planning meeting for the continuation of the coordinated activities on the European PGR Information Infrastructure (EPGRIS), 2-3 April 2007, Maccarese, Rome, Italy.
- Third meeting of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Working Group, 26-28 June 2007, Olomouc, Czech Republic.
- Second meeting of the Vegetables Network. 26-28 June 2007, Olomouc, Czech Republic.
- Third meeting of the On-farm Conservation and Management Task Force and Home gardens Workshop, 2-5 October 2007, Slovenia.
- Ninth meeting of the Forages Working Group, 23-25 October 2007, Piešťany, Slovakia.
- Fourth meeting of the Grain Legumes Working Group, 9-10 November 2007, Lisbon, Portugal.
- *Ad hoc* meeting of the four Fruit Database Managers (*Malus*, *Prunus*, *Pyrus* and *Vitis*) (to be confirmed).
- *Ad hoc* meeting on synonymy of *Prunus*, *Malus* / *Pyrus* and *Vitis* cultivars, Gembloux, Belgium, (to be confirmed).
- Inter-regional Cooperation Network - *ad hoc* meeting among Regional Network Coordinators (to be confirmed).
- Second meeting of the Inter-regional Cooperation Network Coordinating Group (to be confirmed).

12. COORDINATING SECRETARIAT AND BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

The following staff members have worked as part of the ECPGR Secretariat at Bioversity (ECPGR personnel budget): Lidwina Koop (as half-time ECPGR Programme Assistant); Elinor Lipman (as half-time Scientific Assistant, based in Montpellier, France, involved in the compilation and layout of ECPGR publications and general support to the Secretariat activities); Aixa Del Greco (as half-time Scientific Assistant involved (*inter alia*) in the support to the Networks, revision of descriptors, Web development/implementation, public awareness); and Birgitte Lund (as Project Manager for AEGIS until April 2006).

The scientific and technical contributions of other Bioversity colleagues to the work of ECPGR should also be gratefully acknowledged. In particular, Sónia Dias dedicated 50% of her time to EURISCO and documentation-related activities in Europe; Samy Gajji, Dag Terje Endresen and Milko Skofic dedicated part of their time to the maintenance and development of EURISCO; Ehsan Dulloo, Jan Engels and Jozef Turok actively contributed as members of the local AEGIS Task Force; and Adriana Alercia offered invaluable support and advice for the development of ECPGR and Bioversity descriptors.

★★★

Lorenzo Maggioni
ECPGR Coordinator

Rome, 31 March 2007

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