

German Position on the outcomes and recommendations of the ECPGR Review Panel Report

(22 November 2010)

I) Introduction

The ECPGR Steering Committee decided at its 11th meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in September 2008, to commission an Independent External Review to be carried out during 2010. The Review Panel comprised three members: Thomas Gass (Chair), Marianne Lefort and Orlando de Ponti.

The Panel based the review on visits, face meetings, teleconferences and interviews, amongst others with the ECPGR Secretariat Team and its coordinator Lorenzo Maggioni; with members of ECPGR Working Groups and with National Coordinators; with various Bioversity staff; the AGP office at FAO; the Global Crop Diversity Trust; and the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. It also analyzed numerous documents including a stakeholders survey and a synthesis document prepared by the ECPGR Secretariat.

The review took into consideration the evolution and impact of ECPGR over the whole duration of the program since 1980, while the analysis regarding approach, modus operandi, efficiency and management arrangement focused mainly on the recent past (2004 – 2010). The report includes main findings and recommendations on objectives, effectiveness and impact, priority setting mechanisms, modus operandi and governance as well as on funding and financial sustainability and efficiency.

Main outcomes / recommendations of the review report are

1. Raising the independence of ECPGR with legal persona and empowering ECPGR as a self standing institution
2. Establish a clear hierarchy of ECPGR objectives
3. Develop a stronger form of institutionalization and independence
4. Enhancement of its fund mobilization activities

II) German Position

Germany would like to thank the Review Panel for its comprehensive work and the excellent analysis of the evolution of ECPGR since 1980. We also would like to acknowledge and thank the ECPGR Secretariat for its extensive support and the preparation of the different background documents as well as all the other individuals, who have contributed.

In general, we fully support the overall direction of the recommendations of the Review Panel aiming at a further strengthening of ECPGR, but we do have doubts, that this could be achieved by the proposed institutionalization of ECPGR, which seems to us the core of the recommendations.

We believe, that raising the independence of ECPGR with legal persona and empowering ECPGR as a self standing institution should not be considered now, especially as long as we are not aware of the legal and financial consequences this might have for the ECPGR members.

The last decade brought some important changes. At international level, the most important framework regarding plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty) came into force in 2004. Member States of the European Union have ratified the Treaty and its implementation is now well underway, with a growing role and responsibility for ECPGR as the regional network for PGRFA for Europe.

First steps have already been taken, e.g. the European Search Catalog for Plant Genetic Resources EURISCO (<http://eurisco.ecpgr.org>) is already used by many European contracting parties to the Treaty as reporting instrument for their contribution to the Multilateral System of the Treaty. But the role of ECPGR as European contribution to the Treaty needs to be further developed and strengthened, especially with regards to capacity building and / or collaboration with other regions. An essential element in this context will be AEGIS.

On the European level, a major component for European PGRFA activities is the EU Council Regulation 870/2004 of 24 April 2004 establishing a community program on the conservation, characterization, collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1467/94. The program will come to an end by the end of 2010. There will be a review process in 2011, where the European Commission will assess the success of this program as a basis for deliberations for a possible continuation of such a program.

We strongly believe, that ECPGR should play an important role in that process. One option could be that ECPGR in future could function as an executing agency for PGRFA projects for the European Commission (e.g. complemented by EUFORGEN and ERFP for forest and animal genetic resources respectively). In such a situation, decisions on developing ECPGR into a funding agency (raising new/own funds), as recommended in the Review Report, would be premature.

In summary our general comments to the major recommendations are that we fully support a strengthening of the role of ECPGR. This has to take into account the above mentioned changes in the PGRFA landscape. In the light of this, the very first step has to be the revision of the ECPGR objectives and the establishment of a clear hierarchy for the mid-term objectives. In a second step, the organizational structure of ECPGR needs to be streamlined and adapted to the revised objectives. One option could be the merging of working groups in the networks, which could even lead to a situation where in some networks the working group layer could be dissolved. Another option could be a streamlined structure for the networks (e.g. only three networks for ex situ, in situ and information management) with ad-hoc working groups working on a project base dealing with specific tasks such as the implementation of the conservation strategies developed by the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Each of the options could lead to a more efficient organization of work.

Only after this it will become clear, which funds will be necessary to achieve the objectives and if either additional fund raising activities and/or a change in the legal persona of ECPGR or a stronger form of institutionalization will be necessary to achieve this.