



Minutes of the 21st ECPGR Executive Committee meeting

17 August 2022 (h11:00-13:00)
Online (Teams)

Present:

Marianne Lefort (Chair)
Birgitte Lund (Denmark)
Benvindo Martins Maçãs (Portugal)
Pavol Hauptvogel (Slovakia)
Beate Schierscher (Switzerland)
Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat)

1. Introduction

Marianne Lefort opened the meeting by welcoming the new member Pavol Hauptvogel, Slovakia, representing the East subregion in broad terms.

2. Possible launch of a new (Sixth) Call for proposals of the Grant Scheme

The ExCo discussed the appropriateness of launching a Sixth Call for proposals of the Grant Scheme during Phase X. The ECPGR Secretary confirmed the overall availability of funds in the range of € 600,000. The ExCo was in favour of encouraging the Working Groups to use part of these funds for new activities, while it would also be wise to conserve another part of these funds as a reserve to carry over to Phase XI. It was considered that Phase X is still ongoing with its defined objectives, but at the same time, the Steering Committee (SC) preliminarily identified new priorities for Phase XI. Therefore, it was agreed that the Working Groups could be encouraged to submit proposals for activities, either addressing Phase X objectives, or the priorities identified for Phase XI ([Annex 3 of the 16th Steering Committee meeting report](#)).

A budget of maximum € 30,000 per Working Group will be made available through the Sixth Call, which is expected to be launched as soon as possible and with the deadline of 15 November 2022. The ExCo will make sure that proposals are evaluated and awarded in time for the start of funded activities in January 2023. Terms and conditions and eligibility criteria for the Sixth Call will remain the same as adopted for the previous (Fifth) Call.

3. Brainstorming on Terms of References for the three new ECPGR Task Forces and genebank curators network (see Annex I)

During its 16th meeting, the SC recognized the importance of work done by Task Forces (TFs) in addition to others ECPGR bodies' work. The draft Terms of References prepared by the Secretariat for the three first Task Forces (TF) proposed by the Steering Committee at its 16th meeting, were discussed (see Annex I). The ExCo agreed with the proposed TF mode of operation, i.e. to start as temporary TFs that should provide their inputs for the next SC meeting in June 2023, including through more elaborated ToRs, potential activities and associated planning and funding. The ExCo suggests that participation in TFs is open to ECPGR participants and partners¹, interacting principally by email or video conference, and that the coordination is ensured by a Chair selected among the TF members. It also reiterated the possibility to submit requests for a budget that, up to the amount of € 5,000, could be granted directly by the ExCo.

¹ This rule may have some exceptions as it is suggested in the next paragraph

The ExCo thought that the TF dedicated to the revision of the ECPGR Terms of Reference should be composed exclusively of SC members with the Secretariat, while the other two TFs (on 'Capacity development' and 'Communication and dissemination') could include also other experts. The draft ToRs of the TFs were agreed with minor changes, with the understanding that the TFs will be welcome to discuss and re-adjust their own ToRs and objectives. The ExCo suggested a few names for possible members of the various TFs, and agreed that the SC members should be invited to comment on the ToRs and to suggest names for TF members. The need to continue the operation of these TFs beyond June 2023 on a more permanent basis will be evaluated by the SC at its 17th meeting while new ones could be set up.

The ExCo also discussed the opportunity to establish a 'network of genebank managers' as proposed during the 16th SC meeting. There was agreement to seek the SC's opinion about the preparation of an ad hoc meeting of genebank curators, organized by an ad hoc Chair with the support of the Secretariat. This group might then possibly evolve into a more stable entity.

A message should be sent to the SC with a deadline of 15 September 2022 for comments on the proposed TFs and the meeting of genebank curators. SC members will also be questioned on their voluntary participation in the different TFs, in addition to those mentioned in the annexed document who expressed their interest during the last meeting.

4. Selection of the next SC location

The ECPGR Secretary reminded the ExCo that two offers were made (by Georgia and Portugal) for hosting the 17th meeting of the SC. To help in the selection of the location, the Secretariat made a simulation of the likely costs of a meeting either in Lisbon or Tbilisi, based on current flight and other costs. While the travel expenditures would be higher for Georgia, these costs would be more than compensated by the lower cost of life in Georgia compared to Portugal. However, the overall difference was estimated not to be very high, in the range of 10% higher costs in Portugal.

Apart from the economic element, additional factors were considered important for the ExCo, such as the length of the travel to reach Georgia from most locations in Europe and especially the uncertainty of the geopolitical situation. Some members expressed uneasiness to travel to the Caucasus area given the current instability and conflicts in the surrounding region.

Overall, the ExCo was in full agreement that the next meeting of the SC should be organized in Oeiras, Portugal, hosted by INIAV, but keeping Georgia in mind for a future occasion. The dates of the meeting (to be selected in the first part of June 2023), will be communicated soon to the SC, based on the availability of the local organizers.

5. Chairing of the Cryopreservation WG

The ExCo was asked to express their views about the Expression of Interest to become Chair of the Cryopreservation WG, very recently submitted by Milos Faltus, Czech Republic. There was full agreement that Milos would be a good candidate to be appointed as co-Chair, together with Bart Panis, whose position had been discussed during the 16th SC meeting. The ExCo consequently decided to proceed with the implementation of the recommendation made by the SC to appoint two co-Chairs that would jointly operate in the interest of the European region. The Letter of appointment (see Annex II) should be sent soon by the Secretariat, specifying the terms recommended by the SC (see SC decision in Part II. Decision 5, page 17 of the [16th SC meeting report](#)). CVs of the two co-Chairs will be uploaded on the ECPGR website.

6. Any other business

The ExCo Chair invited the ExCo members to select a date for another short meeting before the end of August, to discuss two other important items, which are:

1) How to progress on the 'ECPGR priorities for Phase XI' discussion (Annex 3 of the [16th SC meeting report](#), page 26), to be in capacity to draft a budgeted work plan for Phase XI, shared with the SC and the WG Chairs as a draft document, and then finalized for approval at the 17th SC meeting in June 2023.

2) Proposals for the selection of a new ExCo member representing the South subregion in broad terms, replacing Benvindo Maças at the end of his term in December 2022.

The ExCo decided to meet again on Teams on 29 August 2022.

Annex I: Draft terms of Reference of the ECPGR Task Forces and proposal for a meeting of genebank curators

Annex II: Letter of appointment of co-Chairs of the Cryopreservation Working Group

Annex I

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCES OF THE ECPGR TASK FORCES AND PROPOSAL FOR A MEETING OF GENE BANK CURATORS

A) Terms of Reference of ECPGR ad hoc Task Forces

Ad hoc Task Forces (TF) could be initially established as temporary (6 months – 1 year), aimed to finalize documents for SC discussion and adoption. Some of them could then be proposed as thematic WG (for example Communication and development).

The TF on the revision of the ECPGR ToRs should be composed exclusively of Steering Committee members with the Secretariat, while the other two TFs (on 'Capacity development' and on 'Communication and dissemination') could include also other experts.

The TF will be coordinated by a Chair appointed by the TF members. They will produce documents for discussion and formal approval by SC members in June 2023. Preliminary ToRs are suggested by ExCo but could be modified as needed by the members of each TF after their implementation/launching.

The TF will prominently operate through emails and video-conferences – in case funding is identified as needed to sustain the activities of a TF, a budget request can be submitted to the ExCo for consideration (up to Euro 5,000, decisions can be taken by the ExCo without consulting the SC; higher contributions will be submitted to SC decisions).

Where possible, preliminary lists of participants have been mentioned – submitted to their agreement – based on their expression of interest during the last SC meeting.

1) TF on revision of ECPGR ToRs for Phase XI

Members: Linn Borgen, Imke Thormann, Lorenzo Maggioni,

- revise/update the role, function and mode of operation of all the ECPGR existing bodies, in particular the WGs (this will include the WG objectives, guidelines for the mode of operation, appointment of Chairs and members and their expected commitment, expected number of virtual and physical meetings, communication across WGs, reporting duties, relationship with EVA, etc.).
- The document ECPGR GOAL, RULES OF PROCEDURES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE OPERATIONAL BODIES (second edition, February 2018) will be revised – including new ToRs for TF - and submitted to the Steering Committee for approval, latest at the 17th Steering Committee meeting of June 2023.

2) TF on capacity development

Members: Theo van Hintum, ...

- identify or create opportunities for capacity development of the ECPGR community, in particular young people, for example via study exchanges, webinars and courses.
- Identify the main target areas for capacity development on 'PGR conservation and utilization' (such as young people specializing in genebank management, PGR documentation, CWR in situ conservation, on-farm conservation, use of PGR)
- Collect from NCs or other sources information about existing opportunities to train in the areas identified above, specifically offers for internships, study exchanges, courses, including through public/private collaboration
- Analyze the current situation and propose measures to fill gaps, such as:
 - Propose standard terms for a study or working exchange on PGR at a genebank, documentation center, in situ/on-farm conservation site, breeding company
 - Identify sources of funds to promote study/working exchanges, including the possibility to establish a ECPGR fund
 - Promote the organization of a series of open access webinars to train on the state of the art of key aspects of PGR conservation and use

3) TF on communication and dissemination

Members: Nora Capozio, ...

- Identify the main type of results and achievements of ECPGR that would deserve to be amplified with better communication and dissemination
- Identify target stakeholders who could better benefit from receiving information on ECPGR results
- Identify ways of communication/dissemination that could be better utilized
- Propose a standard road-map to be followed to improve communication and dissemination of results and achievements of ECPGR
- Implement exemplary communication and dissemination of a few recent ECPGR achievements

B) Network of genebank's managers

A proposal to establish a network of genebank managers was made during the SC meeting, with the aim to better connect people with this function and focus on their specific area of work. No decision was taken at this regard, but the ExCo would like to verify with the SC whether there is support for the establishment of this network. A starting point could be an ad hoc meeting of genebank curators, organized by an ad hoc Chair (*Lise Lykke Steffensen*), based on a proposed agenda, and with the support of the Secretariat. This body could then possibly evolve into a more stable entity (either a *sui generis* 'network of genebank managers', with ToRs to be defined, or a WG on genebank management, following the same format and rules of the other thematic WGs).

Annex II

19 August 2022

Bart Panis
The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, c/o KU Leuven
Willem de Croylaan 42 bus 2455
3001 Leuven
Belgium

Milos Faltus
Crop Research Institute (VÚRV)
161 06 Prague, Ruzyně 507
Czech Republic

cc:

Marc Lateur
Centre Wallon de Recherches Agronomiques (CRA-W)
Department of Life Sciences, Breeding & Biodiversity Unit
Bâtiment Emile Marchal, Rue de Liroux 4
5030 Gembloux
Belgium

Vojtech Holubec
Crop Research Institute (VURV), Gene Bank
Drnovská 507
16106 Praha 6 - Ruzyně
Czech Republic

**Ref: European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic
Resources - ECPGR**
Subject: Nomination of Working Group co-Chairs

Letter of Appointment

Dear Bart and Milos,

Based on your Expressions of Interest, it is a great pleasure to inform you that the ECPGR Executive Committee nominated you both as co-Chairs of the ECPGR Cryopreservation Working Group (WG).

The Steering Committee (SC) has deliberately selected this special arrangement, wishing to ensure that you together guide the WG according to the interests of the European region. In this respect, we recommend that you keep your respective National Coordinators (in copy) informed about the progress of your work.

Please note that the SC expects the WG to develop a concept for the most rational and efficient way to collaboratively conserve under cryopreservation the relevant European material. Among others: a suitable number of European facilities that

Annex II

could share the tasks could be defined; genebanks that are currently working on cryopreservation should be able to share and further develop their knowledge, also expanding it to other crops or European genebanks, as appropriate. Please note that the transfer of material for secondary duplication to the Belgian cryo-facility would not be a priority for the time being and ECPGR will not contribute financially to it.

The SC will review the work done by the WG on cryopreservation at the next SC meeting in June 2023 to monitor the appropriateness of its continuation as part of the ECPGR permanent structure.

Please note that you will be included in the ECPGR Chairs listserver (ecpgr_chairs@listserv.dfn.de), whereby you can receive and send messages forwarded to all the Chairs.

Should you need further advice and clarification, please don't hesitate to contact the Secretariat.

I wish to congratulate you with your nomination and look forward to a continued fruitful collaboration with you in the Programme.

Best wishes,



Marianne Lefort
Chair of the ECPGR Executive Committee