



# European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

## Minutes of the 7th ECPGR Executive Committee meeting

28-30 October 2015, Maccarese, Italy

Present:

Eva Thörn, Chair of the ExCo

Zofia Bulińska-Radomska, Poland

Flavio Roberto De Salvador, Italy

Gordana Đjurić, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Jens Weibull, Sweden

Lorenzo Maggioni and Jan Engels, ECPGR Secretariat

The Agenda for this meeting and other background documents are available online ([here](#)).

### 1. Opening

Eva Thörn welcomed everyone to the meeting. This meeting was considered necessary to thoroughly evaluate the Activity proposals submitted under the Second Call of the ECPGR Grant Scheme, and also to take the opportunity to start preparing the agenda for the Mid-Term Steering Committee meeting, which is scheduled for spring 2016.

### 2. Approval of agenda

The agenda for the ExCo meeting was presented and approved.

### 3. Recap of decisions of previous meeting and progress with implementation of Phase IX

Lorenzo Maggioni summarized the progress made with the implementation of decisions 1-12 of the 6th ExCo meeting in December 2014. Nearly all the decisions were implemented, with the following specifications:

- Decision 1: The presence of “new funds” for ECPGR, increasing Phase IX net budget by ca. € 127 000, was documented through the financial report for 2014. However, the uncertain ability of a few member countries to pay Phase IX contributions (see below) suggested a prudent use of these funds. The ad hoc on-farm concept meeting was held as planned in March 2015 (costing ca. € 4200). On the other hand, the use of ‘new funds’ for the Activity Grant Scheme and the build-up of a reserve fund remained pending and dependent on receipt of all the country contributions. Following a consultation with the Doc&Info WG, the organization of a meeting on “crop portals” was considered premature.
- Decision 2: All the approved Activity Grant Scheme proposals were started, following signature of Letters of Agreement between the Activity Coordinators and Bioversity.
- Decision 3: A letter with feedback was sent by the ExCo Chair to the Activity Coordinators of proposals that were not approved for funding. The list of approved

proposals was sent to the SC to allow for comments or objections regarding the proposed partnership in each Activity. As a result, a couple of partners from Turkey joined in approved activities.

- Decision 4: a Second Call for proposals was launched on 15 April 2015, with deadline on 15 July 2015, later extended to 3 August 2015. All the decisions taken by the ExCo were implemented.
- Decisions 5 and 6: Chairs were appointed for all the Working Groups, in some cases after extensive search by the Secretariat and the former Chairs for suitable and available candidates, and in consultation with the ExCo.
- Decision 7: the evaluation of the WG Chairs' performance will be completed during the Mid-Term SC meeting.
- Decision 8: the SC approved the budget for the "crop portals" meeting. However, this meeting was not considered urgent by the Doc&Info WG (see above).
- Decision 9: The composition of the EURISCO Advisory Group has been proposed by the Doc&Info WG Chair, to be validated by the ExCo during this meeting (see below).
- Decision 10: the Secretariat prepared a paper highlighting with clear evidence what the benefits of AEGIS would be for the member countries and the document was approved by the SC. The Secretariat remained open to offer targeted help and information to countries in the process of implementing AEGIS. Eight new countries designated AEGIS accessions during the last year. A presentation on AEGIS was offered during the 110th congress of the Italian Botanical Society, organized as part of the Expo Milano 2015 events.
- Decision 11: a proposal on the development of an ECPGR long-term strategy was sent by the Secretariat to the SC. Six responses were received, all in favour of developing a strategy but with some differences related to: 1) its precise scope (i.e. a strategy for ECPGR or for Europe); 2) its ultimate purpose (i.e. a strategy on outreach and mainstreaming ECPGR in the outer world or a comprehensive strategy for the daily management of PGRFA conservation and use in Europe); 3) how to develop the strategy (i.e. forming a special Task Force or requesting the Secretariat to absorb this responsibility). Before taking a decision it was agreed to follow up the status of ongoing related initiatives, i.e. the "Preparatory action on EU plant and animal genetic resources in agriculture" and the PGRGOLD proposal submitted to the SFS7B Horizon 2020 Call. A specific agenda item for the next Mid-term Steering Committee on the ECPGR Strategy development process should be planned, in particular vis-à-vis the European Commission.
- Decision 12: Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was selected as the location for the Mid-Term SC meeting in spring 2016.

The ECPGR Secretary then presented the progress made by ECPGR during the last year, including regarding AEGIS and EURISCO (PPT available [here](#)).

Regarding the financial situation, it was noted that Phase IX contributions were received from 33 countries, totalling € 859 250. Owing to the receipt of contributions not budgeted at the start of Phase IX, the budget increased from an initial value of € 2 796 868 to the current € 2 944 418. The availability of cash at the Secretariat was positive, with an estimate of € 209 700 by the end of 2015. Outstanding contributions amounted to € 186 000. Based on advice (or lack of) from the respective National Coordinators, the receipt of Phase IX contributions was considered at risk from three countries (Azerbaijan, Greece and Poland), amounting to a value of € 136 250.

A few items were raised for discussion by the ExCo and dealt with as follows:

### **3.1. AEGIS matters (scope and advisory role)**

Feedback received from the meetings held as part of the ECPGR Activities, in particular from the Wheat WG, revealed that the Working Groups do not always have a clear idea of the

expected scope of the European Collection, particularly regarding the inclusion of material that is not held in the country of origin and the inclusion of breeding lines, mutants and genetic stocks.

The ExCo, acting in its capacity of AEGIS Advisory Group, made the following considerations:

- The scope of AEGIS has been defined to be very broad in its Policy Guide. AEGIS is expected to include PGRFA as defined in the International Treaty as well as medicinal and ornamental species. This material should be of European origin or introduced germplasm that is of actual or potential importance for Europe (for breeding, research, education or for historical reasons).
- The *Revised simplified procedure for the selection and flagging of accessions for the European Collection* (final version of 30 December 2013) clarifies that National Coordinators are encouraged to include material collected in a different country, whenever this material is very likely to be unique and/or unavailable elsewhere.
- Material that has been accepted for conservation by the genebanks (including breeding lines and genetic stocks) can be assumed to be valuable and it is better to welcome its inclusion into AEGIS, based on the judgement of the National Coordinators regarding its value and uniqueness.
- It should be trusted that National Programmes will be wise enough not to include, as part of AEGIS, a large number of breeding lines, if they have similar genetic composition.

#### **Decision 1**

*Keeping in mind that AEGIS has a broad scope and inclusion of material in the European Collection should be encouraged rather than discouraged, there should be more guidance provided to NCs and genebanks about what should be included. Especially with breeding lines, attention should be paid to what the nature is of the material, especially with regard to the genetic relationship of the accessions, and therefore what is valuable. However, the final decisions of the NCs should be trusted. In order to obviate to the uncertainties that have emerged among the WGs, the Secretariat is encouraged to participate in relevant Activity meetings where possible and useful, to offer advice.*

#### **Decision 2**

*The ExCo agreed to regularly include 'AEGIS' as a point of its meetings' agenda, in order to bring into effect the advisory role of the ExCo.*

### **3.2. Composition of EURISCO Advisory Group**

Following up from Decision 9 of the previous ExCo meeting, the Chair of the Doc&Info WG provided a list of proposed names for the EURISCO Advisory Group, including experts and National Focal Points in representation of various angles of PGRFA documentation in Europe. The ExCo discussed and appreciated the proposed list, but also requested a few adjustments as indicated below:

#### **Decision 3**

*The list of EURISCO Advisory Group members proposed by the Doc&Info WG Chair should be slightly adjusted, in order to reduce the over-representation of technical experts and include a better representation of data providers and users of data. The ECPGR Secretary*

will inform the Doc&Info WG Chair about the ExCo suggestions. A revised composition of the Group will then be submitted to the entire SC for approval.

### 3.3. Procedure to follow regarding the on-farm concept

A revised draft of the *ECPGR Concept for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA diversity in Europe* had been submitted at the beginning of October 2015 by the appointed Task Force. The ExCo was in agreement that the document was not suitable for circulation to the SC for approval, owing to its length and structure. The concept was however welcomed as a background paper that the Secretariat could use to develop a more concise document with better focus on the ECPGR potential activities.

#### **Decision 4**

*On the basis of the draft concept for on-farm conservation and management received from the Task Force, the Secretariat will write a shortened concept of maximum 10 pages, to be submitted to the SC as soon as possible, but not later than the Mid-Term SC meeting.*

## 4. Selection of Grant Scheme proposals

A total of 11 proposals were submitted as a result of the Second Call of the ECPGR Activity Grant Scheme. Following an evaluation of these proposals, based on the established criteria, the ExCo selected for funding 3 proposals. Three other proposals were considered questionable in some respects and requiring a partial re-elaboration. Five proposals were not accepted for funding.

#### **Decision 5**

*The approved proposals, listed in the table below, will be sent to the SC to allow for comments or objections regarding the proposed partnership in each Activity. The Activity Coordinators will then receive a letter from the ExCo Chair, informing them to proceed with implementation, in consultation with the Secretariat.*

<b>Title of approved proposal</b>	<b>Working Groups</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1. EURISCO National Focal Point regional training workshop 2016	Doc&Info	Stephan Weise, EURISCO Coordinator	€ 14 500
2. InWiGrape	Vitis	Goran Zdunic, Croatia	€ 15 000
3. CWR Conservation Strategies	Wild species conservation in genetic reserves	Juozas Labokas, Lithuania	€ 15 000
<b>Total Budget</b>			<b>€ 44 500</b>

#### **Decision 6**

*The ExCo Chair will send a letter to the Coordinators of the proposals submitted by the Barley, Forages and Prunus Working Groups, requesting specific changes and or clarifications either about content or budget and reserving the right of the ExCo to accept the revised proposals for funding. One of the issues raised with the above three proposals was related to their focus on Central Crop Databases, which are not contemplated among the ECPGR objectives.*

#### **Decision 7**

*The ExCo Chair will send a letter with feedback to the Activity Coordinators of proposals submitted by the Cucurbits, Grain Legumes, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Solanaceae and Umbellifer Crops WGs, that were not approved for funding.*

## **5. Planning for next call of Grant Scheme (budget, timing, adjustments)**

Considering the low number of approved proposals, the ExCo thought that improvements could be made by better explaining to the WGs what is expected from them. A few modifications to the template for the next call were considered necessary to this effect.

### **Decision 8**

*The text of the next call for proposals needs to explain that the proposed Activities are expected to clearly highlight the impact they can have on reaching specific ECPGR objectives and how these will be reached. The state of the art regarding the targeted objectives should be described in the proposals. Links with other non-ECPGR projects or individuals are welcome, but their objectives and complementarity with the ECPGR Activity need to be well explained. In case of a proposed Activity which is intended to be the continuation of a previous finalized project under the ECPGR Grant Scheme (either proposed by the same WG or involving other WGs which have already been working on the same issue), the new proposal should also contain an overview on how and why the new project will build on previous results/experiences. A column indicating to which ECPGR objective each result refers should also be added to the table of expected results.*

The ExCo also noted that the overall repartition between meetings and other activities was still far from the expected 75/25 ratio and wished to alert the SC that the WGs seem to privilege a lower ratio (ca. 60/40).

### **Decision 9**

*It was decided not to reduce the flexibility of choice by the WGs regarding the ratio of meetings vs. other activities, but to reconsider the issue after the results of the Third Call and eventually bring the need for more flexibility up for discussion at the Mid-Term SC meeting, if necessary.*

Considering the limited number of accepted proposals, the ExCo wished to anticipate the launch of the next call, which was defined as follows:

### **Decision 10**

*A Third Call for proposals under the ECPGR Grant Scheme should be launched by 15 January 2016, with deadline around 15 April 2016. The ExCo will meet one day prior the start of the Mid-Term SC meeting to evaluate the proposals received. The budget to be assigned will be decided at the moment of the evaluation, based on the quality of the proposals received and the financial status of ECPGR at that moment.*

## **6. Planning for the Mid-term Steering Committee meeting**

The ExCo evaluated the preparation needed for the Mid-Term SC meeting, to be held in Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016 and suggested the following:

### **Decision 11**

- a. *The meeting should be held at the best suitable time to guarantee maximum participation, to be selected through a 'doodle survey', between 15 May and 3 June 2016.*
- b. *The Secretariat should collect information on progress through appropriate online questionnaires to be sent before the end of 2015, requesting replies within one month:*
  - I. *Request the NCs and WG Chairs to provide report of progress related to the ECPGR objectives under their respective responsibility. The reports should*

- consist of a schematic ranking of the level of progress for each scrutinized item (on a scale 1 to 4) with provision of indicators of progress.*
- II. *Request all the WG members to evaluate the appropriateness of the Grant Scheme and the mode of operation of the WGs, and to send an evaluation of the respective WG Chairs. The WG members' views on the prescribed ratio meetings/activities should also be collected.*
  - c. *The following background documents should be prepared and made available to the Steering Committee one month prior the Mid-Term meeting:*
    - I. *Technical and Financial reports about progress in Phase IX (Secretariat). This will include also an evaluation of the Grant Scheme appropriateness (how many groups involved, how many activities funded, number of countries and members involved, etc.).*
    - II. *Results of the above questionnaires both as rough data and in the form of a compiled and annotated summary (Secretariat).*
  - d. *On the basis of the above documents, the ExCo will offer a presentation at the Mid-Term SC meeting, reflecting their recommendations for the rest of Phase IX, their evaluation of the WG Chairs, with a proposal for confirmation or discontinuation, and their point of view regarding priorities and budget for Phase X.*

The Mid-Term SC meeting should be the occasion to evaluate the progress made during Phase IX and to anticipate priorities and budget for Phase X. Regarding hosting arrangements, the position of Bioversity regarding the conditions for a possible continued hosting should be made clear, and the procedure to define future hosting arrangements should also be discussed. It was also thought that the Mid-Term SC meeting should give special attention to the relationship with the European Commission, exploring in particular the possibility for ECPGR to become an implementing entity of EU decisions with respect to PGRFA as well as a permanent technical consultant to the EC. The meeting could also be the occasion for a clarification on the implications of the Nagoya Protocol and the respective EU Regulation on the activities of PGRFA actors and particularly genebanks in Europe, since this seems to be an issue for several NCs. In order to fulfil the programme for the SC meeting, it was suggested to invite, in addition to the permanent observers, also suitable representatives from the EC and from the Treaty to inform the SC. A representative from Botanic Gardens Conservation International would also be invited to strengthen the relationship with ECPGR.

The suggested preliminary list of agenda items for the SC meeting was the following:

- Opening (local host and ExCo Chair)
- Results of the evaluation of the proposals submitted under the Third Call (ExCo)
- Financial and technical progress of Phase IX (Secretariat)
- Report from the ExCo on Phase IX, including evaluation of WG Chairs (ExCo Chair)
- Discussion on Phase IX
- Recommendations from the ExCo on Phase X (ExCo)
- Round the table perspective and strategy on funding for Phase X
- Procedure to define hosting arrangements (invited introduction by F. Begemann)
- Discussion on Phase X
- ECPGR on-farm concept (only to be discussed if not yet approved)
- ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe and relationship with the European Commission in view of ongoing EU-funded projects (invited introduction by B. Visser and by EC representative)
- Discussion on ECPGR Strategy and relationship with EC
- Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Europe and collaboration with ECPGR (EC invited speaker)
- Relationship between Nagoya Protocol and the Multilateral System in Europe and collaboration with ECPGR (Treaty invited speaker)

- How can ECPGR navigate in the Nagoya/MLS landscape (invited volunteer speaker from ECPGR)
- Discussion on Nagoya/MLS
- Any other business

## **7. Proposal for a new member of the ExCo**

Zofia Bulińska announced that she would leave the ExCo at the end of 2015 after having completed her term. Therefore, a representative from the West region (in a broad sense) will need to be co-opted as new member. The ExCo agreed on a few names of NCs from the West region, who will be approached to verify their availability before being officially proposed to the SC.

## **8. Any other business**

- a. An expression of interest to renew the participation of Georgia in ECPGR was discussed. With a letter sent from the Ministry of Agriculture, Georgia offered to enter the new Phase IX, but asked to write off the past debt related to outstanding contributions from Phases VII and VIII. The ExCo proposed that Georgia could pay 20% of their debt of € 17 150, to be spread over 5 years, at the same time pledging the payment of its regular contributions for the entire Phase IX (five years). A possibility to provide part of the payments as input-in-kind, by organizing the final SC meeting in Georgia, would also be offered.
- b. An enquiry has been received from the EURISCO Coordinator regarding the possibility to transfer C&E data directly to EURISCO from different data holders delegated by the National Inventory Focal Points (NIFPs). The Secretary informed the ExCo that such procedure would not be covered by the existing Data Sharing Agreement between the countries and Bioversity. Issues of intellectual property rights, warranties about licences and authorizations to data transfer, disclaimer of responsibilities for data accuracies, etc. should be covered by an extended legal mechanism, in case the data would not pass through the NIFP. The Secretariat is available to develop a suitable template agreement between NIFPs and data providers. However, before doing this, the ExCo requested the Secretariat to verify with the EURISCO maintainers whether there are serious technical reasons to recommend bypassing the NIFP.
- c. The ExCo extended warm thanks to Zofia Bulińska for her very good and appreciated contribution to the Committee in the past four years.