

Independent External Review (IER) of the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

Terms of Reference

1. Background

The European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) (formerly "European Cooperative Programme for Crop Genetic Resources Networks") was founded in 1980 on the basis of the recommendations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Genebank Committee of the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA).

ECPGR is a collaborative Programme among most European countries, aimed at facilitating the long-term conservation on a co-operative basis and the increased utilization of plant genetic resources in Europe. The Programme, which is entirely financed by the participating countries and is coordinated by a Secretariat at Bioversity International, Rome, operates through broadly focused Networks dealing with groups of crops or general themes related to plant genetic resources. Following a Steering Committee decision in 1996 the ECPGR was recognized as a vehicle to facilitate implementation of the FAO Global Plan of Action (GPA) in Europe.

The objectives of ECPGR are to:

- facilitate the long-term *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of plant genetic resources in Europe
- facilitate the increased utilization of plant genetic resources in Europe
- strengthen links between all plant genetic resources programmes in Europe and promote the integration of countries that are not members of ECPGR
- encourage cooperation between all stakeholders, including NGOs and private breeders
- increase the planning of joint activities including the development of joint project proposals to be submitted to funding agencies
- encourage the sharing of conservation responsibilities for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) in Europe
- increase awareness, at all levels, of the importance of PGRFA activities including conservation and sustainable use, and
- seek collaboration with other relevant regional and global initiatives.

During Phase VII (2004-2008), the Programme has included 40 member countries and has carried out activities and actions totalling a budget of more than 2.2 million Euro. The Programme now represents a wide structure encompassing six crop networks, 18 crop working groups and three cross-cutting networks.

In 2010, ECPGR has its 30th anniversary. The last External Reviews of Bioversity International (formerly IPGRI) that focused on activities in Europe, were carried out in 1998 and 2003, respectively. The Institute was subject to an External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) in 2009. In the relevant recommendations made by these previous reviews regarding the Regional Programme of Europe, which were relevant to ECPGR, it was suggested to promote and support national PGR programmes; consider fund-raising activities and develop a funding strategy, involving the plant breeding sector into network activities; strengthen the inter-regional contacts; strengthen links with Eastern Europe (notably with the Vavilov Institute and with Balkan countries); improve the regional information infrastructure. These reviews involve all the activities carried out within the Institute and thus also ECPGR, albeit marginally,

will be addressed with regard to its relationship with Bioversity. No Bioversity related or other independent reviews that specifically focused on ECPGR have ever been carried out.

At its 11th meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in September 2008, the ECPGR Steering Committee therefore decided to commission an Independent External Review to be carried out. Preparations started in 2009 and the review will be conducted during 2010. The commissioned Review Panel will then submit its recommendations at the Phase VIII mid-term meeting of the Steering Committee in 2011. The Steering Committee furthermore assigned a Task Force¹ with the responsibility to formulate Terms of Reference for the review. A tentative budget frame for the review, allocated for cross-cutting issues, of € 30 000 has been suggested and is shown as *Annex 1*.

2. Terms of Reference

The Review Panel will consist of three external reviewers, one of whom will serve as Panel Chair to lead the review team and focus on the process of organizing and managing the review. One Panel member, if funds permit, will be identified from outside Europe. The Review will take place during 2010. The Chair should have expertise in organizing and managing teams plus prior experience in leading evaluations. The Panel members will represent the following types of scientific expertise which form the core of the Programme's work:

- Plant genetic resources in its broad sense (conservation, utilization)
- Institutional governance and process management
- Economic and financial governance and mechanisms of follow-up
- Knowledge of the policy and agricultural development issues in geographic Europe

In addition to their technical expertise, Panel members will be selected based upon the following criteria:

- International experience
- Ability to act effectively as a member of a team
- Gender and geographic balance of the Panel
- Professional integrity

The National Coordinators and the ECPGR Secretariat will be invited to propose Panel members. Final selection of Panel members, including appointment of the Panel Chair, will be made by the Task Force. The Steering Committee will approve by consensus the selection of Panel members through a decision by electronic correspondence. The Task Force will oversee the entire review process on behalf of and in consultation with the Steering Committee.

The ECPGR Secretariat² will provide administrative and logistic support to the Panel, including approaching the invited selected members, establishing formal contractual arrangements and organizing their visit to Rome, including field visits and/or selected ECPGR meetings. Furthermore, the Secretariat will also assist with travel arrangements, in developing the actual programme as well as providing all appropriate background documents. It is understood that these activities will be undertaken in close co-ordination with the Task Force. Preparatory steps preceding the Panel's work is provided in *Annex 2*.

¹ The Task Force is composed of National Coordinators from Sweden (Chair of the Group), Macedonia (FYR), The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

² "ECPGR Secretariat" in this document refers to the ECPGR Coordinator, supported and guided by an internal task force, created for the purpose of this review.

Major activities of the Review Panel are as follows:

1. February 2010: Teleconference among the three Panel members, the Chair of the Task Force and the ECPGR Coordinator. The Panel will receive an orientation from the Task Force members on the objectives of the review and issues to be considered. The ECPGR Coordinator will be available for clarifications. Panel members will carry on the discussion among themselves.
2. March 2010. Proposed half a day face-to-face meeting of the three Panel members at a location to be agreed.

Based on the above interactions, the Panel will develop a plan for the review including:

- roles and responsibilities of Panel members
- plans for interactions with the ECPGR Secretariat and other relevant Bioversity staff, the Steering Committee Task Force and telephone or electronic interviews with other National Coordinators, as appropriate
- interactions with partners of the networks and working groups during selected ECPGR meetings
- timelines, milestones and deadlines
- presentation and discussion of recommendations with the ECPGR Secretariat and at least one member (Chair) of the Task Force

This plan will be discussed and agreed with the Steering Committee Task Force by email correspondence.

3. March-April 2010. Participation of one Panel member in the Brassica WG meeting in Catania, Italy, 2-4 March, and of another Panel member in the Grain legumes WG meeting, Antalya, Turkey, 22-23 April.
4. March 2010. A detailed suggested programme for the week 23 July to 30 July will be prepared by the ECP GR Team and sent to the Panel members.
5. Prior to the review, the Panel will review supporting documentation (largely focused on Phase VII), including impact assessments if available, network and working group reports on activities, outputs and outcomes, and other background documents related to the Programme. Key documents include reports from Steering Committee meetings and Terms of Reference for the operational bodies of ECPGR (October 2008). The ECPGR Secretariat will also provide a stakeholder analysis based on a representative survey and a Secretariat's background document.
6. July 2010. Independent External Review in Maccarese, Rome, Italy during one week (7 full working days from Friday 23 July to Friday 30 July) where the Panel will formulate its conclusions and produce the final Panel Report. The Steering Committee Task Force Chair and another member of the Task Force will also attend the last two days of the review (29-30 July).

During the July visit, the Panel will receive from the ECPGR Secretariat and other relevant Bioversity staff an orientation on the ECPGR Programme, its *modus operandi*, its hosting arrangements, on-going work and challenges and opportunities.

During the review, the Review Panel will analyse both qualitative and quantitative evidence from interviews, visits and background documentation and draw conclusions about the Programme's effectiveness in the following areas:

- Are the objectives and strategy of the Programme well defined and relevant?
- Are ECPGR objectives in line to those of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture including the Global Plan of Action? Is the Programme pursuing its objectives well?
- Does the Programme effectively set priorities and is there a clear process in place for priority setting?
- Is the underlying concept of ECPGR – a programme largely based upon National Programmes that makes use of synergies among them by funding additional costs for cooperation, information and communication at the regional level – effective?
- Is the investment in ECPGR, including AEGIS, strategically relevant, well-directed and proportional?
- How effective is the Programme at re-aligning itself with external changes (i.e. Climate change, new Members or Treaty existence) and are appropriate procedures/mechanisms in place?
- Is the Programme well managed? Are the managerial resources sufficient?
- Are the current hosting arrangements the most appropriate?
- Is the current network and working group structure optimal and effective?
- Does the Programme have a sustainable and reliable funding mechanism? Are available funds used effectively?
- Is the Steering Committee a 'steering committee' and how effective is it in its role? Does it have the proper tools for governance and evaluation?
- Are appropriate linkages and partnerships in place?
- What impact is the Programme having for PGRFA in Europe? Are the impact pathways clearly spelled out?

Based upon its analysis, the Panel will be requested to provide a clear and focused set of recommendations for future direction and action, with a particular focus on the issues raised by the Programme for Panel consideration.

The conclusions of the Panel will represent the view of the Panel as a group, not the perspectives of individual members of the Panel. The Panel's conclusions will be drawn from all available evidence (both quantitative and qualitative), ensuring that careful standards of evidence are adhered to such as:

- Sources are reliable and informed, and possible personal biases have been assessed
- Claims are verified by multiple sources of evidence
- Rival explanations and claims are tested and ruled out
- Bias is reduced by comparing and challenging the perspectives of individual Panel members and collectively drawing conclusions

The Panel will develop a comprehensive written report that documents the conclusions reached from its deliberations. The report will provide suggestions for future direction and recommendations for areas of future emphasis or action. The final report will be completed by Friday 30 July. Prior to finalizing the report, the Review Panel will present and discuss its findings and recommendations with the ECPGR Secretariat and at least one member (Chair) of the Task Force for clarification and feedback, which may be taken into consideration before completing the final report. The Secretariat will provide assistance in editing and formatting of the report and will then send the final report to the Steering Committee.

7. The Panel Chair will present an oral report of the Panel conclusions and recommendations to the ECPGR Steering Committee at the Phase VIII mid-term meeting in 2011.

Budget line	No.	@	Cost	Explanation
Panel members (3 persons –The Chair (T. Gass) pro bono, only reimbursement)				
Honorarium	18	€ 250	€ 4500	9 working days (flat honorarium)
Teleconference (Panel members, J. Weibull, L Maggioni, P. Sands)	18	€ 200	€ 2000	
Travel 1 (Chair detour to location in Europe in March 2010)	1	€1000	€ 1000	
Travel 2 (2 Panel members to location in Europe in March 2010)				
Hotels	1	€120	€ 120	Tentatively 1 night (O. De Ponti)
Per diems	3	€ 50	€ 150	1 Travel day from Netherlands plus 1 day away (O. De Ponti) – 1 day away (M. Lefort)
Travel 3 (IER in July 2010 in Rome)	2	€450	€ 900	O. De Ponti and M. Lefort
	1	€ 2000	€ 2000	T. Gass
Hotels	27	€ 120	€ 3240	Tentatively 9 nights
Per diems	30	€ 50	€ 1500	Days away + both travel days (10 days)
Travel 4 (participation to ECPGR meetings – O. De Ponti to Catania, Italy and M. Lefort to Antalya, Turkey)	2	€450	€ 900	
Hotels	8	€ 120	€ 960	Tentatively 4 nights
Per diems	10	€ 80	€ 800	Incl. local transport and meals
Travel 5 (participation of T. Gass in Mid-Term SC Meeting- tentatively Vienna . June 2011)	1	€ 2000	€ 2000	
Hotel	3	€ 120	€ 360	Tentatively 3 nights
Per diem	3	€ 100	€ 300	
Task Force (1-2 persons)				
Travel 1 (wrap-up in Rome)	2	€ 450	€ 900	
Hotels	6	€ 120	€ 720	Tentatively 3 nights
Per diems	8	€ 50	€ 400	Days away + both travel days (4 days)
Local transport and hospitality			€ 1100	
Administrative support			€ 4000	
Sub-Total			€ 26050	
Overheads 13%			3386	
TOTAL			€ 29436	

Preparatory steps and tentative time plan for the Independent External Review (IER)

Annex 2

	2009										2010									2011
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	June
Finalising of ToRs	■	■	■	■	■															
Approval of ToRs by the Steering Committee					■	■														
Nomination and selection of Panel members						■	■	■												
Contracting of Panel members by ECPGR Secretariat/Bioversity								■	■	■										
Teleconference between Panel members, TF Chair and ECPGR Secretariat. Panel members develop and finalize the plan for IER, with input from TF members											■									
All background documents provided to the Panel											■	■	■							
Panel members attend ECPGR meetings and interact with Working Group members												■	■							
The IER carried out in Rome and report finalized																■				
Distribution of edited report to Steering Committee																			■	
Presentation of IER report and recommendations at Steering Committee Phase VIII Mid-Term meeting (June 2011 - to be confirmed)																				■