

ECPGR Documentation and Information Network

Progress report for the period June 2006 – June 2008

Network Infrastructure

Information systems

The Documentation and Information Network (D&I) operates on the basis of the following infrastructure. Based upon institutional databases (i.e. genebank documentation systems) National Inventories (NIs) provide an overview of all plant genetic resources for food and agriculture maintained *in situ*, on farm and *ex situ* in the European countries. The *ex situ* National Inventories provide appropriate information through an agreed exchange format (*ex situ*) to the European Search Catalogue EURISCO (see Figure 1).

The National Inventories for *ex situ* collections exist in 35 countries while the development of such National Inventories for *in situ* conservation (6) and on farm management (6) is lacking far behind. Such inventories are under development in several countries.

Besides, European Central Crop Databases (ECCDB) have been developed and are maintained for 60 crops.

Information experts

The afore-mentioned information systems are developed and maintained by the respective information experts throughout Europe. They are responsible for the institutional information systems or are the National Focal Points of the National Inventories *in situ*/on farm (22) or *ex situ* (40).

Furthermore, numerous information specialists, mainly from genebanks offer their services to manage the ECCDBs (48) (see Figure 2).

Network Coordination

The information systems at institutional, national and European levels as well as the respective experts developing and maintaining them need a well-functioning coordination. Due to the inter-relationship of these systems and experts, which are frequently in charge of several functions, it seemed necessary to streamline the existing coordination structure in the network. The EURISCO Advisory Group (EAG) has discussed the matter and recommended to be terminated while transferring their tasks to the Network Coordinating Group (NCG).

To respond to this increasingly important role the NCG has been re-composed to reflect a geographical balance as well as a good representation of the National Inventory Focal Points and ECCDB managers. It now consists of 9 members with very diverse expertise and 4 representatives *ex officio* (EURISCO Coordinator, IT host at Bioversity, ECPGR Coordinator and *In situ* / On farm Network Coordinator).

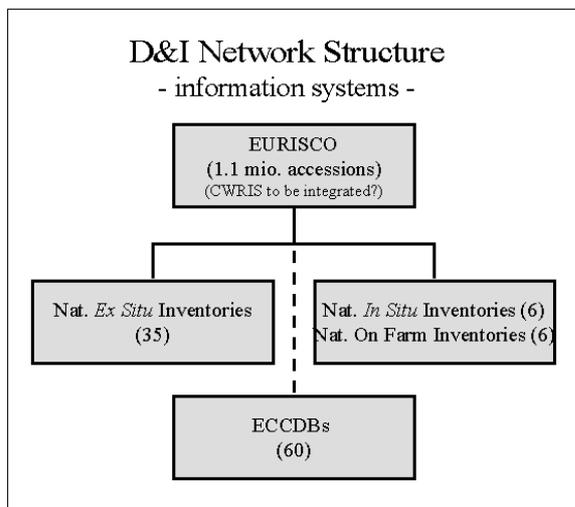


Fig.: 1 Information systems

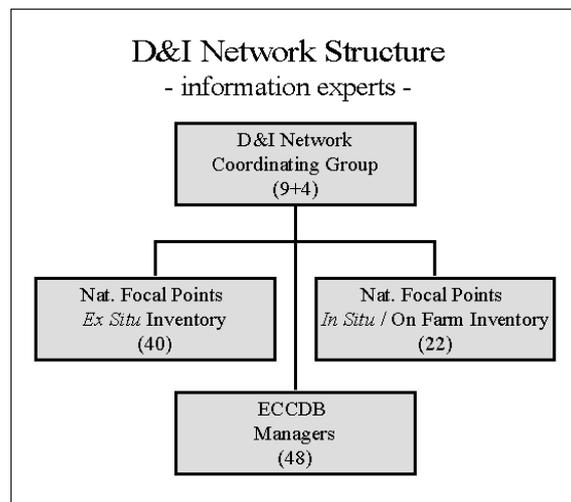


Fig.: 2 Information experts

Activities during 2nd half of phase 7 (based upon the four ECPGR priorities for Phase VII)

The four ECPGR priorities are not addressed equally in the D&I Network; the network focussed on priority number four: “documentation and information”.

1. Characterization/evaluation (including modern technologies)

This priority is relevant as far as characterization and evaluation data (C&E data) and their documentation as well as the respective information systems are addressed. In particular, some 60 ECCDBs are worth mentioning; however, only about 12 of them include C&E data so far.

The relationship between the ECCDBs and EURISCO were subject to frequent discussions. While the ECCDBs were supposed to have a specific comparative advantage due to their partial coverage of C&E data, a satisfying generic approach for their documentation at National or European scale has not been found so far.

2. Task sharing

The priority of task sharing is not easy to be translated into the activities of the D&I Network. The network does however provide information, documentation and communication activities / tools to facilitate such task sharing, i.e. in the context of AEGIS.

3. In situ/on-farm conservation and development

This priority is relevant as far as *in situ* / on farm data and their documentation are concerned. The ECPGR Secretariat contacted the National Coordinators and asked for the nomination of National Focal Points for *In situ* and for On farm National Inventories. 22 National Focal Points were identified so far.

As a result of the PGR-Forum project a first European List of Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) was drafted which could serve the National Focal Points as an additional information resource when identifying the CWR in their respective countries. Progress in the development of the National Inventories is unclear for the *In situ* Inventories as well as for the On farm Inventories. While a few countries offer such inventories via an Internet application such inventories are under development in several others. Clarification is currently sought by the ECPGR Secretariat on this issue from the National Focal Points. When uploading data from the envisaged National Inventories it is possible to also make use of data of the PGR-Forum project information system CWRIS, if appropriate.

An exchange format for on farm and *in situ* data has not yet been agreed by the ECPGR D&I Network. A draft has been developed by Bioversity and partners within a recent global Crop Wild Relatives project. This draft needs further discussion and agreement before it could be used within the D&I Network operations.

For better cooperation between the D&I Network and the *in situ* and on farm network the network coordinator of the latter is invited into the NCG of the D&I Network *ex officio*.

4. Documentation and information

Beside the activities mentioned in the previous priorities 1-3 the following activities were executed:

A joint meeting of the NCG and the EURISCO Advisory Group (EAG) was held in Rome, 2-3 April 2007 with the objective to plan for the continuation of EPGRIS. The outcome was the initiative to launch a self-funded collaborative project called EPGRIS3. EPGRIS3 aims to undertake a list of activities thought to be important to improve the existing information infrastructure and thereby better serving the PGR community in Europe. Any individual or institution can indicate if they are interested to collaborate in, or even lead specific activities. EPGRIS3 covers (1) Vision and scope discussion, (2) Data quality and quantity, (3) Uploading mechanism of EURISCO, (4) User interfaces and (5) Network National Focal Points.

The fourth meeting of the EAG was held on 12 March 2008 in Bonn, Germany, followed by a joint meeting with the EPGRIS3 partners on 13-14 March. Various aspects of EURISCO were lengthy discussed, including its recent achievements, the structure and functionalities of the new Web site, and the priorities for the future. The EAG role, as specific advisory body with the function to monitor the progress of EURISCO, and to give advice on its further development, was reviewed. Due to a large overlap of the members of the NCG and the EAG, it was decided to recommend to the SC the incorporation of all EAG-tasks in the NCG. The NCG composition should therefore be enlarged, assuming the functions and operating also as the EAG.

A review of EURISCO was made and a substantial improvement of its functionalities including a revision of the website was carried out by the EURISCO team.

A very cost-effective way has been developed for countries to register material via their National Inventories in the Multilateral System of the International Treaty for PGRFA and in AEGIS. In fact, the proposal is just a minor addition to the present EURISCO data exchange format (see Figure 3). A similar approach for reporting under the sMTA has also been discussed by the EPGRIS3 partners and a draft presented (see Figure 4); a proposal will be tabled by the NCG to the SC meeting.

A so-called “vision paper” on the European *ex situ* PGR information landscape has been compiled in order to facilitate the further operations of the D&I Network members.

Relevance (regional / international)

The activities to register material via the National Inventories and EURISCO in the Multilateral System of the ITPGRFA is highly relevant internationally and might well serve as a model to other regions. Hence, a joint initiative has been proposed to present this approach to other regions in inter-regional workshop(s). This would be in consultation with the ITPGRFA Secretariat. A similar way has been proposed to register material in AEGIS.

MLS and AEGIS registry status descriptors for EURISCO	
MLS Status	(MLSSTAT)
<p>The coded status of an accession with regard to the Multilateral System (MLS) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Provides the information, whether the accession is included in the MLS.</p> <p>0 – not part of the MLS 1 – part of the MLS If the MLS status is unknown, the field stays empty</p>	
AEGIS Status	(AEGISSTAT)
<p>The coded status of an accession with regard to the European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS). Provides the information, whether the accession is conserved for AEGIS.</p> <p>0 – not part of AEGIS 1 – part of AEGIS If the AEGIS status is unknown, the field stays empty</p>	

Figure 3: MLS and AEGIS registry status descriptors for EURISCO

SMTA reporting descriptors for EURISCO	
1. SMTA Institute Code	(SMTAINSTCODE)
<p>FAO Institute Code [or another official code] for the institute acting as Provider. Example: DEU146</p>	
2. SMTA Number	(SMTANUMB)
<p>This number serves as a unique identifier for the SMTA contract within an institute, and is assigned by the institute acting as Provider. Example: IPK00724</p>	
3. SMTA Date	(SMTADATE)
<p>Date on which the SMTA contract was concluded as YYYYMMDD. Missing data (MM or DD) should be indicated with hyphens. Leading zeros are required. Example: 1968---- Example: 20020620</p>	
4. SMTA Total Number of Accessions	(SMTANUMBACCE)
<p>Total number of accessions transferred by the SMTA. Example: 345</p>	
5. SMTA Number of Accessions per Genus	(SMTAACCEGENUS)
<p>The field is used to elaborate on the number of accession per genus transferred by the SMTA. Prefix genus name in Latin, initial uppercase letter required, and a colon followed by the number of transferred accessions for the genus without space. Separate entries referring to different genera by semicolons without space. Example: Allium:120;Beta:25;Hordeum:200</p>	
6. SMTA Category of recipient	(SMTARECIPIENT)
<p>The coded category of the Recipient of the accessions transferred by the SMTA.</p> <p>1 – genebank 2 – botanical garden 3 – public research institute 4 – private breeder 5 – private individual, non-profit association 9 – other (Elaborate in REMARKS field)</p>	

Figure 4: draft SMTA reporting descriptors for EURISCO

II. ANALYSIS	
a. Bottlenecks	
What were the experienced bottlenecks?	How do you plan to solve the bottlenecks?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear vision and IT-concept was missing, especially with regard to the characterization and evaluation data and the relationship between EURISCO and the ECCDBs 2. Adequate support of EURISCO by Bioversity acting on behalf of the ECPGR Secretariat 3. Adequate support of the National Inventory Focal Points (<i>ex situ</i>, <i>in situ</i> and on farm) 4. Adequate support of the institutional documentation and information systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A vision paper has been drafted by T. van Hintum, F. Begemann and L. Maggioni; it is being finalized and will then serve as a guide to further developments in the D&I Network 2. Recently Bioversity has re-established its internal EURISCO support structure / group 3. National Coordinators should provide adequate support; the Steering Committee would recall its commitment during the present meeting. 4. National Coordinators should help to find adequate support
b. Internal support needed (Secretariat, Steering Committee, other Working Groups, etc.)	
<p><u>Formal endorsement requested from the Steering Committee on the following:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Due to a large overlap of the members of the NCG and the EAG, it was decided to incorporate all the tasks in the NCG. The NCG composition will therefore be enlarged, assuming the functions and operating also as the EAG." 2. "The National Inventories and EURISCO should be used by the European countries, which are Contracting Parties of the ITPGR, to register material in the Multilateral System of the ITPGR. The proposal of the documentation and information network (Figure 3) is agreed. Similarly, the registration process to AEGIS is recommended." 3. "The National Inventories and EURISCO should be available for the reporting of providers of material from the Multilateral System of the ITPGR under the SMTA. The proposal of the documentation and information network (a proposal agreed by the D&I Network NCG will be tabled to the SC meeting) is recommended." 	
c. External resources needed (collaboration, external funding)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity building for experts of institutional information systems and National Inventory Focal Points in Europe and, in consultation with inter-regional network and the ITPGRFA Secretariat, in other regions. 2. Implementation of EPGRIS3 priority activities in support of the improvement of National Inventories and EURISCO (see EPGRIS3 priority activities). 	