



European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

Technical Report on ECPGR Phase VII

(Prepared for the 11th Steering Committee meeting, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
2-5 September 2008)

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1. Introduction

The present document is prepared as a background to the 11th meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee (SC), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2-5 September 2008, with the purpose of giving an account of the implementation of the agreed workplan of Phase VII (2004-2008), which is near to its conclusion (December 2008). This report follows the structure of the Mid-term report prepared for the 10th Steering Committee meeting in Jurmala, Riga, September 2006 (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC10/midtermrep.pdf>), and continues the analysis of the structure, mode of operation and management of ECPGR during Phase VII. Where constraints or opportunities for the future have been identified, proposals for change have been made.

The technical implementation, which was carried out by the Networks, is reported through the "standard reports" provided by the Network Coordinators. Reporting on the outcomes of the AEGIS activity and the progress of EURISCO is also dealt with in separate documents (see http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC11/SC11_backdocs.htm).

Detailed technical and financial reports for the years 2004-2007 were provided annually to the Steering Committee members and the technical reports are available from the ECPGR Web site (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC.htm>).

Project proposals and budgets for the Networks' operations in the next Phase are provided separately by the Network Coordinators, according to the guidelines of the SC.

In view of the preparation of the SC meeting and the need to make plans for Phase VIII, in June 2008 the Secretariat has convened, on an informal basis, a small group of SC members in Tragliata, Italy, for a brainstorming session. This exercise has been very helpful for the Secretariat, giving an indication of some of the expectations of a "test group" of SC members from Macedonia FYR, Romania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

Unfortunately, the meeting in Tragliata has coincided with the tragic death of our colleague, Martyn Ibbotson, whom we had invited to the meeting in anticipation of his highly valued inputs. A minute of silence to remember him will be proposed at the opening of the SC meeting.

2. Membership

The number of countries joining the Programme increased from 36 (end of Phase VI) to 40, due to the joining of Azerbaijan (2005), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2008), Georgia (2004) and Ukraine (2008) (see Box 1).

Five potential member countries currently remain outside the membership of ECPGR: Belarus, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro and the Russian Federation. Except for Luxembourg, interest to become members has been expressed by the above-mentioned countries. Focal points have been invited to the 11th Steering Committee meeting to familiarize with the ECPGR system and to give indications on the possible road map to become full members.

Box 1. Member countries of ECPGR as of July 2008

Albania	Denmark	Israel	Romania
Armenia	Estonia	Italy	Serbia
Austria	Finland	Latvia	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	France	Lithuania	Slovenia
Belgium	Georgia	Malta	Spain
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany	Macedonia (FYR)	Sweden
Bulgaria	Greece	The Netherlands	Switzerland
Croatia	Hungary	Norway	Turkey
Cyprus	Iceland	Poland	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Ireland	Portugal	United Kingdom

3. Mode of operation

Following the changes in the structure and mode of operation of ECPGR recommended by the SC in October 2003, a number of reference documents were prepared by the Secretariat in order to facilitate understanding and implementation of the new mode of operation.

These documents, listed below, were uploaded for convenience on the ECPGR Web site (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/AboutECPGR.htm>):

- ECPGR Structure
- Standardized reporting format to the Steering Committee
- Terms of Reference for the ECPGR operational bodies
- Country quota for Phase VII
- Guidelines for the preparation of Networks' budgets

3.1. ECPGR Structure

During the course of Phase VII, the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Working Group (MAP WG) was transferred from the Vegetables Network to the Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network, to better suit the approaches and activities of this WG. Within the Documentation and Information Network, the functions of the "Information and Communication Technology Advisory Group" and the "EURISCO Advisory Group" were merged and have been taken up by an enlarged and more representative Network Coordinating Group (NCG).

3.2. Terms of Reference for the ECPGR operational bodies

This working document, prepared in 2004, has been revised in February 2007 and expanded to define the roles of a Task Force (TF), of a Working Group Chair and Vice-Chair, Network Coordinator and manager of an ECPGR Central Crop Database.

An amendment to the section "Network Coordinating Groups" has been proposed by the Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group, with the addition of text reflecting the new role of this Group, which has taken up functions previously assigned to other smaller Network bodies, now suppressed (see Annex I for endorsement by the SC).

3.3. Country quota for Phase VII

Participation in Working Group meetings during Phase VII was based on quota of funded participants assigned to each country ("country quota"). The originally agreed country quotas were reduced by 30% in March 2005, to account for a reduced budget allocation proposed by the Networks for Working Group meetings. Table 1 shows the assigned number of country quota in 2003 (475) and the revised number (339) in 2005, against the budget assigned to WG meetings. The actual expenditure and the total number of quota used by the countries (273) are also given. In ten occasions, the Chairs have made use of the Chair's quota and extra participants have been funded. The resulting actual cost per quota was close to the estimates originally made. Part of the funds that were budgeted for WG meetings were re-allocated to AEGIS in 2006. When WGs have spent less than expected for their regular meetings, they have used part of the spare funds for ad hoc actions or travels.

Table 1. Planning and actual use of country quota for WG meetings – Phase VII

	Budget for WG meetings (€)	Cost per quota (€)	Country quota (Total Phase VII)
Original estimate 2003	498,750	1,050 (estimate)	475
Revised estimate 2005	310,700	916 (estimate)	339
Used for WG meetings	277,397	1016 (actual)	273

As shown in Table 2, total number of quota assigned to countries was automatically increased from 339 to 349, owing to the addition of the new members Georgia and Ukraine in the course of Phase VII. The table also shows that some countries have used their quota more efficiently than others. The total balance of non-used country quota (76) does not correspond to available funds that could be carried over, for the following reasons:

- Quotas from Georgia and Ukraine were not accounted for in the original plan
- Funds for the Umbellifer Crops WG meeting were re-allocated to AEGIS in 2006
- The actual average cost of each quota was higher than the estimate used in 2005
- Some Networks have re-allocated and used the savings derived from cheaper than expected WG meetings for ad hoc meetings or actions.

Table 2. Use of country quota during Phase VII, by country

Country	Updated country quota	Country quota used	Remaining country quota during Phase VII
Albania	7	7	0
Armenia	7	5	2
Austria	11	9	2
Azerbaijan	7	7	0
Belgium	11	4	7
Bulgaria	7	7	0
Croatia	8	4	4
Cyprus	8	2	6
Czech Republic	9	9	0
Denmark	11	5	6
Estonia	7	7	0
Finland	9	5	4
France	13	10	3
Germany	13	12	1
Georgia	7	7	0
Greece	9	5	4
Hungary	9	9	0
Iceland	8	2	6
Ireland	9	9	0
Israel	9	9	0
Italy	13	12	1
Latvia	7	7	0
Lithuania	7	7	0
Macedonia (FYR)	7	5	2
Malta	7	0	7
Netherlands	11	10	1
Norway	11	7	4
Poland	9	9	0
Portugal	9	8	1
Romania	8	8	0
Serbia	7	6	1
Slovakia	8	8	0
Slovenia	8	6	2
Spain	11	8	3
Sweden	11	8	3
Switzerland	11	7	4
Turkey	9	9	0
Ukraine	3	1	2
United Kingdom	13	13	0
Total	349	273	76

The country quota has been used within the limits of the actual available budget and has, therefore, served its function of prioritizing participation of country members in the meetings. However, a few countries have not fully benefited from their available quota. The Secretariat has individually encouraged countries to use their quota and provided punctual information about the quota status. However, an improvement in the transparency and efficiency of the system should be considered to be introduced in the future, by publishing Table 2 online and updating it after each WG meeting.

A few imperfections of the quota system need to be kept in mind, should the SC decide to continue with this mechanism:

Networks are requested to make plans and budget estimates for their meetings. However, the number of attending participants is beyond their control, since National Coordinators usually decide on the use of country quota at the last minute. This leads to situations where the cost of meetings can be largely over- or underestimated. A related negative effect is the poorly attended meetings of “minor crops”. This was for example the case of the *Beta*, Cucurbits, Fibre Crops, Leafy Vegetables and Umbellifer Crops WGs. Although the respective Networks believe that collaboration for conservation of these crops has been neglected so far, the country quota mechanism tended to direct the participation more towards the major crops (cereals, forages, grain legumes and fruit). There is a tendency by the WGs to counteract this problem by organizing ad hoc meetings, therefore bypassing the country quota system and taking more control of the participation in the meetings. This “mixed system” can be a partial solution to the problem. On the other hand, overspendings due to unexpected wider attendance in certain meetings should be compensated with re-allocations of funds within the Network or even among Networks.

4. Network operations

4.1. Crop and Thematic Networks’ operations

Four priority areas were identified by the SC for Phase VII and Crop and Thematic Networks were requested to dedicate their efforts to these: 1) Characterization and evaluation for conservation and use, also using modern technologies; 2) Task sharing; 3) *In situ* and on-farm conservation; 4) Documentation. The status of progress made with respect to these priority areas is documented in the standard reports provided by the Networks (see background documents) and a synthesis will be presented by the Steering Committee’s reviewers during its meeting in Sarajevo.

An estimate of the final expenditures indicates that Crop Networks at the end of Phase VII will have used about €420,000 (65% for WG and Network meetings, 20% for ad hoc meetings and 15% for actions). Ad hoc meetings were dedicated for the preparation of EU proposals, coordination among database managers, fingerprinting, synonymy, regeneration methodologies, *in situ* assessment, crops not covered by Working Groups and participation in EU projects or other related meetings. Activities included collecting missions (*Aegilops* in Israel, *Avena* in Spain, vegetables and medicinal plants in Ukraine), database development (*Vitis*), publication production and transfer of knowledge (Pepper Database from the Netherlands to Turkey).

In the case of Thematic Networks, the estimate of expenditures is around €100,000 (73% for meetings and 27% for actions). Actions included publications and training.

The revised Networks’ budget allocations and status of expenditures is included among the background documents for the SC meeting.

In the analysis of bottlenecks identified by the Working Group Chairs, a frequently reported issue is the lack of response and fulfilment of the agreed tasks by some of the members. Some members are also reported to participate in the meetings rather on a personal basis than with a country representative role. In some cases, members attending the meetings are reported to lack appropriate knowledge of the issues the Working Group is dealing with, or being unable to adequately communicate in English.

The SC is invited to reflect on the above points, since the effectiveness of the use of ECPGR funds for regular WG meetings is highly dependent on the level of commitment that the nominated members can actually dedicate to effectively communicating with their peers and to carry out agreed-on tasks.

Within the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network, two Task Forces (TFs) were created, namely the “Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves” and the “On-farm Conservation and Management” TFs. These TFs are not planning to fulfil a specific delimited task within a certain time frame, but rather making medium- to long-term plans for a number of areas of action, i.e. they are behaving like Working Groups. The composition of the TFs has also been determined by numerous nominations of country representatives sent by the National Coordinators, therefore they are large groups composed of more than 20 members each.

The SC is invited to consider whether the Task Forces within the In situ and On-farm Conservation Network should be re-defined as Working Groups.

Within the Inter-regional Cooperation Network, a Task Force has been established, following a number of nominations made by the National Coordinators. However, this TF seems not to have a clear task and it has never been very active.

The SC is invited to consider whether the Inter-regional Cooperation TF should be given a task or be terminated.

4.2. Lower priority Working Groups

Following the decision of the SC to prioritize 12 out of 18 Working Groups during Phase VII, the following WGs were considered lower priority, as a result of within-Networks deliberations: Barley, *Vitis*, Potato, *Allium*, *Brassica* and Solanaceae.

As mentioned in the Mid-term report of Phase VII, a budget line for “Lower priority WGs”, amounting to about €7,300 for each of these WGs, was dedicated to small meetings or participation of members in other Networks’ activities. More specifically, the Solanaceae WG used part of its funds to facilitate the transfer and installation of the Pepper Database software by the Dutch developer to the Database Manager’s institute in Turkey. The *Vitis* WG used its funds for the development of the *Vitis* Database.

Overall, the Networks were reluctant to establish a differential priority setting for the various WGs and this trend was confirmed for the planning of Phase VIII, since all the Networks have preferred not to prioritize among WGs.

4.3. Public awareness tools / actions

Following the indications of the SC in Riga (2006), the Secretariat did not undertake new initiatives in the second part of Phase VII, except for the usual maintenance of the Web site, and preparation of presentations and articles on ECPGR for international meetings and newsletters.

Following the recommendation of the SC in Riga, the ECPGR brochure addressed to the wider public was completed in collaboration with the NGO ProSpecieRara and it was printed in a very limited number of copies, only for display at the SC meeting. The template can be provided to all the National Coordinators, who can translate the brochure in their local language and reproduce it for national use. The brochure aims at raising awareness on the importance of agrobiodiversity conservation and conservation through use.

Following the recommendation of the SC in Riga, the collection of various public awareness products prepared by the European National Programmes was started, in order to make them available from a dedicated section of the ECPGR Web site (http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/PA_NatProg.htm).

As of July 2008, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Romania provided information and links to existing public awareness documents, including brochures, leaflets, articles and books.

A graphical representation of the average number of hits per day during the period August 2007-July 2008 is given below as an example of the impact of the ECPGR Web site (Fig. 1).

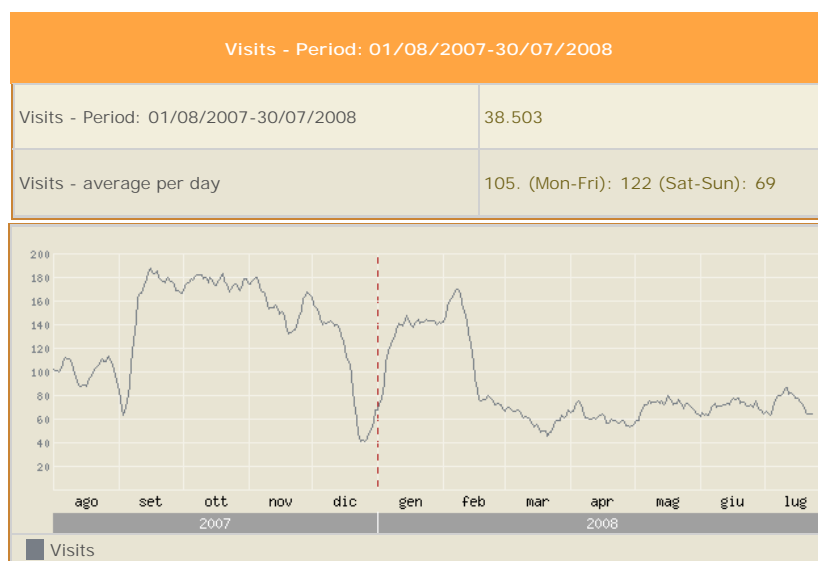


Fig. 1. Visits to the ECPGR Web site, period 1 August 2007 to 30 July 008.

4.4. Thematic cross-cutting issues

The budget line dedicated to thematic actions of cross-cutting interest for several Networks was mainly used for the organization of a workshop on genetic resources in the northern part of Europe. The meeting was organized in Finland in September 2006, with invited participants from all the European Nordic countries and from Canada and Alaska. The outcome of this meeting was published online under the title: "Climatic change and genetic resources in northern Europe. Report of a Workshop, 18-19 September 2006, Rovaniemi, Finland." (available in electronic format only, at http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Publications/Boreal_workshop.pdf). Workshop participants agreed on a list of activities to be carried out after the meeting as related to the conservation of genetic resources in northern areas, in view of the risk of climatic change. These activities and recommendations can be adapted to any other geographical area as well.

It was recommended to establish a more formalized network or working group, preferably within the framework of ECPGR and in connection with groups from other geographical areas that focus on plant genetic resources (PGR) and climate change.

Other funds for cross-cutting issues were used by the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network to provide attendance of a few genebank representatives in the Crop Wild Relatives Conference in Agrigento, Italy, September 2005.

Following a decision by the SC in Riga, 2006, other remaining funds originally allocated to cross-cutting issues were redirected to fund AEGIS actions, including funds for the publication of a Discussion Paper on "A Strategic Framework for the Implementation of a European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS)", which was printed in 2008.

4.5. EURISCO

A separate report on EURISCO is provided as background document to the SC meeting.

4.6. AEGIS project

A project on sharing of responsibilities as a possible model of "A European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS)" was approved for funding under the ECPGR budget at the 9th Steering Committee meeting in Izmir, Turkey (2003). Following the "feasibility study" that was carried out from 2004-2006, under the management of Birgitte Lund (see Mid-term report of Phase VII), a re-allocation of funds from existing budget lines (Network operations, public awareness and thematic cross-cutting issues) was decided at the 10th Steering Committee meeting in Riga (2006). An alternative solution would have been the funding by the EC of a project proposal submitted under Regulation 870/2004.

However, the AEGIS proposal submitted in June 2006 did not reach the thresholds for the established evaluation criteria, specifically the thresholds for “Relevance” and “Mobilization of resources”.

With the newly available budget from ECPGR of about €150,000, Jan Engels was appointed as AEGIS Coordinator in January 2007 and activities were carried out to prepare mechanisms and procedures for the implementation of the AEGIS concept and of draft decisions for the attention of the Steering Committee. It should be noted that additional funds were also provided throughout the Phase by Germany (€25,000) and The Netherlands (€5,000).

The results of the AEGIS activity and recommendations for the future are included and discussed in separate background documents. The financial status is presented in Table 4 in Annex III.

4.7. Publications and Newsletter

As of July 2008, 16 ISBN publications (reports of ECPGR meetings and the AEGIS Strategy document) were published online or printed during Phase VII; in addition, 26 electronic reports were uploaded on the Web (discussion and recommendations, minutes or executive summaries of ECPGR meetings).

As of July 2008, nine issues of the Bioversity Newsletter for Europe have been published during Phase VII, which is produced with a partial contribution from the ECPGR budget. Two issues of this Newsletter are produced each year and they include accounts of all ECPGR activities; there is also reserved space for news from partners from the member countries. The Newsletter is distributed to a mailing list of over 3000 addresses throughout Europe.

As mentioned in the Mid-term report of Phase VII, the status of production of publications at the ECPGR Secretariat is facing an unsustainable backlog of publications to be finalized according to the expectations of the Networks. It is estimated that by the end of 2008, at least six Phase VII meeting reports will remain in the pipeline: Fibre Crops (2006); *Malus/Pyrus* (2006); Forages (2007); On-farm Conservation (2007); Grain Legumes (2007) and Cereals (2008). The Secretariat has prepared a short analysis of the ECPGR publication strategy and would like to propose a different approach for the future, with the aim to improve the efficiency of staff time usage, as well as to benefit the Networks' operations.

The SC is invited to consider the proposal prepared by the Secretariat, enclosed as Annex II of this document, and take a decision regarding the future publication strategy.

4.8. Network Coordinating Group meetings

The Network Coordinating Groups (NCGs) have been an essential and well-functioning element during Phase VII. The meeting of all the NCGs, organized in Bonn in March 2006, has been very effective in facilitating exchange of information across Networks and creating synergies. It has been especially useful to allow direct interactions between Crop and Thematic Networks, with an opportunity to make the respective Networks' aims and needs reciprocally understandable. The *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network has since then established a channel of communication and joint planning with Crop Networks. The EC-funded project on “An Integrated European *In situ* Management Work Plan: Implementing Genetic Reserves and On-Farm Concepts” (AEGRO) is partially a result of these interactions. Also the Documentation and Information Network has become more accessible to the Crop Networks and the needs of the users have been better addressed after this meeting. Moreover, people who never met before have become aware that each Crop Network is facing similar problems and that the best approaches developed to address such problems can in many cases be transferred from one Network to the other. Similar benefits were created within each Network during the meetings of Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Database Managers of different Working Groups, and the various NCGs have found it useful to organize specific ad hoc meetings more frequently than initially planned. This meeting was also very useful to address cross-cutting approaches (like AEGIS and EURISCO) in an effective and strategic manner.

NCGs have been very effective in preparing workplans and budgets, as well as collaborating with the Secretariat for the management of Network funds and promptly reacting to opportunities, such as the need to represent the Networks in meetings, the re-allocation of saved funds or new income to other activities, and the opportunity to submit proposals, such as for the Trust regeneration and evaluation grant scheme.

In general, the NCGs have been able to effectively self-organize, including the selection of the Network Coordinator and the definition of the components of the Group. A recent exception is the

case of the Fruit Network, where the replacement of the Network Coordinator has not yet been defined after Ken Tobutt stepped down in March 2008.

In the case of large Networks, such as the Documentation and Information or the Vegetables Networks, the limit of seven people defined for the number of NCG members has appeared to be insufficient to ensure adequate representation.

The Steering Committee is invited to consider increasing the limit of seven people to ten for the number of NCG members or accepting exceptions (see also Section 3.2 above).

5. Links with other initiatives and developments in other international fora

The main interactions between ECPGR and other Networks and initiatives during the first part of Phase VII are listed below.

5.1. Global Crop Diversity Trust (The Trust)

During the preparatory phase of the Trust crop strategies, the ECPGR Secretariat has provided a point of contact for the Trust, whenever there was the need to find crop experts who could contribute.

Interaction with the Trust has intensified in the last part of Phase VII. The Trust is actively liaising with AEGIS, which is seen as the regional component leading towards an effective long-term conservation and continuing use of existing crop genetic diversity strategy in Europe. Moreover, ECPGR was approached by the Trust in 2007 as the coordinating unit to identify important collections in urgent need of regeneration in Europe. A project jointly submitted to the Trust by the Cereals Network, the Oil and Protein Crops Network and the Potato WG was approved for partial funding. The Secretariat and the relevant Networks will need to closely work with the Trust in the next three years to ensure a proper implementation of this activity. The Networks have also been mobilized to respond to the Trust germplasm evaluation grant scheme, which was launched at the end of June 2008.

Another important area where ECPGR and the Trust will have the opportunity to collaborate is in the context of the Global Information on Germplasm (GIG) Project. In this Project, funded by the Trust, Bioversity International will develop and implement a global information system in partnership with the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). ECPGR was invited to become one of the associate partners in this project. This partnership involves collaboration in project activities and includes a membership in the International Steering Committee. As part of this project, support is given for 50% time of the EURISCO coordinator and the technological developments injected in the project will also be applied to EURISCO. Moreover, training activities are planned, in which European Focal Points could benefit. A presentation on GIG is planned in the agenda of the Steering Committee meeting in Sarajevo.

During the Documentation session of the 11th SC meeting in Sarajevo, the SC is invited to consider the recommendations that will be made by the Documentation and Information Network representatives, regarding the association of ECPGR to the GIG project and the selection of one ECPGR representative in the International Steering Committee of GIG.

5.2. SEEDNet

The South East Europe Development Network on Plant Genetic Resources (SEEDNet), funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) currently involves partners from the entire territory of former Yugoslavia, plus Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. This Network has started a second 3-year Phase (2008-2010), with Sida support for partner PGR programmes, partner genebanks, Network meetings, Working Group activities, training, education and administration. The ECPGR Coordinator was invited as permanent observer in the Regional Steering Committee meetings.

Collaboration between SEEDNet and ECPGR has been very close since the start of the Network in 2003. SEEDNet representatives have been invited to participate in ECPGR bodies and initiatives (Documentation and Information NCG, AEGIS project) and the MAP meeting in Strumica, Macedonia FYR, 2004 was organized jointly. The close connection between SEEDNet and ECPGR allows for

harmonization of objectives and for synergies. Through SEEDNet, countries of the region are better equipped to also carry out activities agreed at the ECPGR level, such as the development of EURISCO and the undertaking of AEGIS. It should be noted that Eva Thörn (Swedish Biodiversity Center, Sweden) is Coordinator of SEEDNet as well as Chair of the AEGIS Advisory Committee. The close interaction with SEEDNet has facilitated the recent membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in ECPGR and it will be instrumental to hopefully ensure the membership of Moldova and Montenegro in the near future.

The Secretariat wishes to suggest that the observer status offered to the ECPGR Coordinator in the Steering Committee of SEEDNet be reciprocated by granting a permanent observer status to the SEEDNet Coordinator in the ECPGR Steering Committee.

5.3. European Commission

The Secretariat sent suggestions contributing to the text of Council Regulation (EC) No. 870/2004, a Community Programme on the conservation, characterization, collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture, which was published in April 2004 and opened two calls in September 2005 and June 2006. The eligibility of proposals related to the development of EURISCO and AEGIS was firmly recognized by the text of the Regulation. It was therefore disappointing that two proposals on AEGIS (concerted and targeted action), and two proposals on documentation and information systems in Europe were not selected for funding, i.e. EPGRIS2 on the "Establishment of a European Plant Genetic Resources Information InfraStructure-2" (submitted twice) and EGRISI on "European Genetic Resources *in situ* Inventory". On the other hand, five projects submitted by ECPGR Networks were successful (*Allium*, *Avena*, Leafy Vegetables, *Vitis* and AEGRO on *in situ* conservation). The Secretariat provided general support to the Working Groups involved in the preparation of project proposals, offering information, ideas and suggestions for partnership.

ECPGR Networks had the occasion to collaborate with the following EC-funded 6th Framework Programme projects, as previously referred in the annual reports:

- **Diverseeds** – "Networking on conservation and use of plant genetic resources in Europe and Asia"
- **SIGMEA** – "Sustainable Introduction of Genetically Modified Crops into European Agriculture"
- **CRYMCEPT** – "Establishing Cryopreservation Methods for Conserving European Plant Germplasm Collections".

The SC in Riga (2006) expressed the need to formulate a short strategy to be addressed to the EC, with the intention of setting out the relevance of ECPGR for the EU, with the ultimate aim of establishing a permanent collaboration. A related background document has been prepared for the SC meeting in Sarajevo and a presentation in this regard is included in the agenda.

During the session on "ECPGR and other international fora/institutions" of the 11th SC meeting in Sarajevo, the SC is invited to consider the proposal to establish two Steering Committee Task Forces to promote interactions with the EU, as outlined in the background document "ECPGR and the European Union: a strategy for collaboration".

5.4. The International Treaty on PGRFA

As a PGR Regional Network, ECPGR can be instrumental to the implementation of the International Treaty, either promoting practical steps to be taken for implementation of the Treaty at the national level (recommendations made at the 10th SC meeting in Riga, 2006), or promoting actions at the regional level. This is the case of the measures proposed by the Documentation and Information Network for the registration to EURISCO of the accessions that are part of the Multilateral System. The AEGIS initiative can also be considered a regional effort towards the implementation of the Treaty.

The Treaty Secretariat has been invited as an observer to the 11th meeting of the SC in Sarajevo, with the aim to strengthen the link with ECPGR.

5.5. EUCARPIA

At the last EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section meeting in Piešťany, Slovakia, May 2007, the ECPGR Secretariat presented the AEGIS concept, which received expressions of support by the audience.

The newly elected Chair of the Genetic Resources Section, Eva Thörn, encouraged proposals for revitalizing the collaboration between genebanks and breeders. The relationship between the public and the private sectors and the role of the genebanks in providing what the breeders really need were proposed to be subjects for the next EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section meeting. Closer collaboration between the EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section and ECPGR should be ensured in the near future and this collaboration could be a fertile ground to improve the links between conservation and use of PGR.

5.6. Planta Europa

Participation of ECPGR representatives in the 5th Planta Europa conference in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, September 2007, made it possible to bring the PGR community perspective to the drawing board for the preparation of the second European Plant Conservation Strategy, which was more aligned with the Global Plant Conservation Strategy. Presentations made by ECPGR representatives were aimed at raising the profile of crop wild relatives (CWR) and landraces. Various targets of the newly published Strategy (2008–2014) actually contain references to documentation and establishment of genetic reserves of CWR, as well as the sustainable conservation of CWR, landraces and medicinal plants.

5.7. EuroMAB

EuroMAB (Man and Biosphere) is the European Network of the UNESCO programme on Biosphere reserves. It currently holds permanent observer status in the Steering Committee of ECPGR. However, the contribution of EuroMAB to the Steering Committee has been negligible in the last 10 years and the Secretariat has lost contact with this partner. The specific activity of EuroMAB (being a platform for collaboration among biosphere reserve managers), is not at the core of ECPGR activities. It is suggested that this contact be re-established at the level of the “Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves” Task Force only.

The Secretariat suggests removing EuroMAB from the list of permanent observers in the ECPGR Steering Committee.

6. Financial status

The last available official figures are related to the closure of financial year 2007. These were provided to the Steering Committee members and are available as background document (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SC11/Docs/FINREP07.pdf>).

In this Section, the financial status of ECPGR is summarized, and assumptions are made about the estimated final financial result, by adding the forecast expenditures for 2008 (see Annex III).

6.1. Status of Phase VI

During Phase VII, all outstanding contributions related to Phase VI were regularly paid by the member countries, with the last outstanding contribution received in 2007. As agreed at the 9th Steering Committee meeting in Izmir, Turkey, October 2003, remaining Phase VI Network operation and publication funds were used in Phase VII.

Following the decision to convert into Euro the value of the annual contributions of Phase VI as of 2002, considerable exchange rate gains were generated, as documented by the annual financial reports.

The last official financial report of 2007 indicates a carry-over to Phase VII of nearly US\$ 57,500 and this should not be very different at the end of 2008 (see Table 1 in Annex III).

6.2. Contributions received for Phase VII

As of 15 July 2008, total contributions received for Phase VII are €1,851,588, with outstanding contributions of about €351,963 (see Table 2 in Annex III).

Outstanding cases for the attention of the Steering Committee relate to Armenia (no contributions paid), Macedonia FYR (only one year paid) and Malta (only two years paid).

Voluntary contributions were additionally received from Germany (€35,000) and The Netherlands (€5,000), with an agreement to use these funds for the AEGIS project (€30,000) and for inter-regional cooperation (€10,000).

It should be noted that the budget of Phase VII was based on the expectation of receiving contributions from 37 countries. Three additional countries have joined during the Phase and committed themselves to pay contributions. Georgia started in 2004, and paid with inputs in kind in 2005 and 2006, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine joined in 2008. On the other hand, Azerbaijan joined in 2005 and therefore its contribution for 2004 was not reclaimed.

6.3. Expenditures

Table 3 in Annex III shows the estimated balance of Phase VII at the end of December 2008, according to the estimated expenditures during 2008. Staff costs, including those for editing and compiling publications, have been in total about 14% higher than estimated back in 2003, when the budget for Phase VII was prepared, therefore generating a loss in the related staff cost budget lines. At the same time, other budget lines, specifically "Network Coordinating Group meetings" and "Network operations – Crop Networks" show a positive result, which partly compensates the staff cost deficit. This was largely due to savings in the cost of meetings and activities, since the Networks, with few exceptions, have carried out all their planned and budgeted activities. In some cases, savings have been re-allocated and used for additional activities, either within the Network, or even across Networks.

The expected total balance is therefore a deficit of about €52,000, provided that all the outstanding contributions are received.

Considering that countries joining during Phase VII are contributing non-budgeted annual payments, the final balance of Phase VII is estimated to be reduced at about €39,400. This deficit can be balanced by the carry-over from Phase VI.

7. Coordinating Secretariat

During Phase VII, the following staff members have worked as part of the ECPGR Secretariat (under the ECPGR budget):

- **Lorenzo Maggioni** (Coordinator, 100% from 2004 to 2008)
- **Lidwina Koop** (Programme Assistant, 50% from 2004 to 2008)
- **Olga Spellman** (Programme Assistant, 50% from January 2004 to March 2004)
- **Elinor Lipman** (Scientific Assistant, based in Montpellier, France, involved in the compilation and layout of publications and other support tasks to the Secretariat, 50% from January 2004 to October 2007 and 75% from November 2007 to December 2008)
- **Aixa Del Greco** (Scientific Assistant involved in the support to the Crop Networks, revision of descriptors, Web development and public awareness, 100% from January 2004 to March 2005 and 50% from April 2005 to December 2008)
- **Birgitte Lund** (AEGIS project manager, 100% from August 2004 to April 2006)
- **Jan Engels** (AEGIS Coordinator, 50% from January 2006 to December 2008).

The scientific and technical contributions, as well as management and administrative support provided by Bioversity International and its staff to the work of ECPGR, is also acknowledged. In particular, Bioversity provided funding for the half-time EURISCO Coordinator and documentation-related activities in Europe, as well as technical inputs to the maintenance and development of EURISCO. Continuous support and advice were provided for the development of (ECPGR and Bioversity) descriptors. Several colleagues participated and actively contributed as members of the Local AEGIS Task Force. The ECPGR Secretariat staff collaborated closely with Bioversity's Diversity for Livelihoods Programme in ensuring the success of the Home Gardens Workshop. Bioversity's

Policy Research and Support Unit provided regular advice on and answers to legal questions. Substantial inputs in kind were also provided in the public awareness and public relations area, including linkages with the press and production of the Regional Newsletter.

★★★

Lorenzo Maggioni
ECPGR Coordinator

Rome, 31 July 2008

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Annex I. Amendments proposed by the Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group to the Terms of Reference for the operational bodies of ECPGR (version 2 - February 2007)

Text shaded in grey is proposed as additional text

Network Coordinating Groups

The **Network Coordinating Groups (NCGs)** are groups of a maximum of 5-7 people, established within each Network (crop and thematic) and composed of the Working Group or Task Force leaders plus a number of other co-opted Network members.

In the specific case of the Documentation and Information Network, the NCG consists of 9 people, composed of National Inventory Focal Points and European Central Crop Database Managers which are appointed to reflect a geographical balance and to combine diverse expertise (including NordGen and SEEDNet representatives) and 4 ex officio representatives (EURISCO Coordinator, IT host at Bioversity International, ECPGR Coordinator and *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network representative).

Each NCG is coordinated by a *Network Coordinator*, selected by the Group among its members and with the task of delivering the NCG outputs to the ECPGR Secretariat and to the ECPGR Steering Committee. In order to ensure proper functioning of the NCGs, the Group members have to commit part of their time to this coordinating task.

The responsibilities of the Network Coordinating Groups are:

1. To formulate proposals, in consultation with WGs, or in the case of thematic networks, with other active groups, for the attention of the SC on WG priorities and activities, following the planning and prioritizing mechanism established by the SC;
2. To define the WGs to remain prioritized during the 5-year Phase, according to the planning and prioritizing mechanism established by the SC.

In addition, the NCG of the Documentation and Information Network has the responsibility to act as specific advisory body with the function to monitor progress in the development and maintenance of EURISCO, as well as to provide advice to Bioversity International acting on behalf of the ECPGR Secretariat, for the further development of EURISCO.

Before the *Mid-term Steering Committee meeting* (two months prior to the meeting), the Network Coordinating Groups will:

1. Provide the Secretariat/SC with an assessment of the progress made by the Networks. The reports, based on information received by the WGs, will be in standard format (provided by the Secretariat) and will indicate progress and constraints in reaching the planned objectives;
2. Provide the Secretariat/SC with a report reviewing the division of tasks within the Network in the current Phase and a proposal for the subsequent Phase which should include the following elements:
 - Prioritize WGs for the subsequent Phase;
 - Give a broad indication of activities to be pursued by WGs;
 - Prioritize these activities and identify funds required, either potentially deriving from ECPGR or from other sources or as inputs in kind. These activities might consist of meetings (WG, Network, ad hoc) or alternative actions (publication products, research, collecting, regeneration, etc.).

In order to deliver this information, all NCGs should hold a meeting during the first part of year 3 of each Phase (All Network Coordinating Groups Meeting).

Before the *End-of-Phase Steering Committee meeting* (two months prior to the meeting), the Network Coordinating Groups will:

1. Provide the Secretariat with an updated assessment of the progress made by the Networks during the second half of the Phase, based on the standard report previously provided (Mid-term meeting)
2. Provide, in consultation with WGs, as appropriate, the Secretariat/SC with a draft of the division of work within the Network in the subsequent Phase, including proposals containing the following elements:
 - Specific priorities and objectives
 - Clear, measurable targets, dates for completion and estimates of funding required from ECPGR, based on funds allocated by the SC to each Network/WG.

NCGs are expected to deliver the above outputs mainly working through email communication, except for one regular meeting to be held during the first half of year 3. NCG meetings are self-organized. Alternatively, several NCG meetings can be held together in one location, during the first part of the third year, in order to benefit from the technical support of the Secretariat.

Annex II. Draft ECPGR publication strategy for Phase VIII (June 2008)

The problem

- Backlog of ECPGR publication production is huge (see number of pending reports as of September 2008)
- Disproportion between expectation from the Networks and internal capacity
- Too much time used to correct poorly written papers, obtain feedback from authors, etc.; too many requests from the Networks
- Reports are published with 2-3 years delay
- Energies are spent trying to refine static quality products, therefore looking backwards rather than using the reports as working tools to facilitate implementation of the workplans.

Strategic considerations

The production of high-quality meeting reports has so far been a much appreciated service offered by the Secretariat. Demand for this service has increased, together with the number of Working Groups, and has reached a dimension that is out of control, given the available staff resources which have not increased proportionally. Although the ECPGR published reports have been among the major outputs of the WG's activities with a positive image impact, it is suggested to take the strategic decision of eliminating this type of service, in order to allow the limited resources of the Secretariat to be better focused on supporting the Networks in their action points and workplan implementation.

The proposed solution

- Give up the idea of offering the service to produce "full meeting proceedings" with country reports and other papers.
- Remove the backlog by cancelling the production of pending reports. Subject to the consent of the authors, papers submitted will be made available online, without editorial changes, as virtual appendices of the existing meetings' "Discussion and recommendations".
- Limit the future expectation only to the production of the bare essential minutes of the report including some essential appendices (agenda, list of participants, possibly others on an ad hoc basis) – to be produced only as electronic documents made available on the ECPGR Web pages.
- Possible time schedule for report writing:
 - Secretariat drafts the report at the meeting
 - Refined draft circulated for comments to be received within one month after the meeting
 - Minutes are edited for English language and Bioversity style, and published on the ECPGR Web site no later than two months after the meeting.
- Scientific assistant (full-time) could dedicate time to editing of the minutes and support to the Working Groups with follow-up of the agreed activities.
- The option to invest Network funds in the production of scientific/thematic proceedings could remain as an activity to be fully budgeted with Network funds, as opposed to relying on the regular Secretariat functions.

Annex III. ECPGR Financial status - Phase VII

Table 1. ECPGR – Phase VI Financial Status over Phase VII (in US\$)

Fund balance 31.12.03		13,126
Phase VI contributions received		
2004	Belgium 2003	12,500
2004	Slovenia 2003	5,000
2004	Israel 2003	7,500
2005	Greece 2003	7,500
2005	Iceland 1999-2003	25,000
2005	Italy 2002 (final tranche)	21,940
2005	Italy 2003	35,000
2006	Macedonia FYR 2002 and 2003	4,000
2006	Serbia and Montenegro 2003	5,000
2007	France 2003	35,000
Overall	Exchange Rate Gain	40,154
Total funds received as at 31.12.07		198,594
Total funds available		211,721
Expenses incurred		
2004	Steering Committee adjustments	(330)
2004	Phase VI publications in 2004	(18,311)
2004	Phase VI Solanaceae ad hoc, Bari, 2004	(9,859)
2004	Phase VI Network operation corrections in 2004	5,578
2004	AEGIS project spent in 2004	(45,914)
2004	Module funds Gen Res <i>Avena</i>	(960)
2005	AEGIS project spent in 2005	(6,336)
2005	Network operations - Thematic Networks - <i>In situ</i> and On-farm Conservation	(11,750)
2005	Grain legumes Network Phase VII ad hoc Meeting	(5,819)
2005	Phase VI publications	(25,121)
2006	Phase VI publications	(8,944)
2006	Adjustment to Phase VI meeting expenses	808
2007	Phase VI Publications	(1,680)
2007	<i>In situ</i> and On-farm Conservation Network expense	(5,000)
Overall	Related overhead	(17,373)
Total expenses incurred		(151,010)
Forecasted final expenses		
	Funds for remaining Phase VI publications	(2,875)
	Related overheads	(374)
	Carry-over to Phase VII	(57,461)
Total forecasted final expenses		(60,711)
Grand Total expenses		(211,721)
Actual fund balance as at 31.12.07		60,711
Final fund balance		0

Table 2. Contributions received by 15 July 2008 (in €)

A. ECPGR contributions for Phase VII received by 15 July 2008

Participating country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Outstanding
Albania	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	11,750	
Armenia							11,750
Austria	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Azerbaijan		2,350	2,164			4,514	4,886
Belgium	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500		62,000	15,500
Bosnia and Herzegovina							2,350
Bulgaria	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350		9,400	2,350
Croatia	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000		24,000	6,000
Cyprus	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000		24,000	6,000
Czech Republic	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	47,000	
Denmark	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Estonia	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	11,750	
Finland	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	47,000	
France	42,500	42,500	21,470			106,470	106,030
Georgia (*)	2,350			1,300		3,650	3,400
Germany	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500	212,500	
Greece	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	47,000	
Hungary	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400		37,600	9,400
Iceland	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000		24,000	6,000
Ireland	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	47,000	
Israel	9,400	9,400	9,400			28,200	18,800
Italy	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500		170,000	42,500
Latvia	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	11,750	
Lithuania	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350		9,400	2,350
Macedonia FYR	2,350					2,350	9,400
Malta	2,350	2,350				4,700	7,050
Netherlands	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Norway	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Poland	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400	47,000	
Portugal	9,400	9,400	9,400			28,200	18,800
Romania	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	30,000	
Serbia	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	11,750	
Slovakia	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,004		24,004	5,997
Slovenia	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000		24,000	6,000
Spain	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500		62,000	15,500
Sweden	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Switzerland	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	15,500	77,500	
Turkey	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400		37,600	9,400
Ukraine					6,000	6,000	
United Kingdom	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500		170,000	42,500
Total	435,750	433,400	409,834	368,704	203,900	1,851,588	351,963

(*) The full 2005, 2006 and part of 2007 contribution (€1,300) was provided as "in-kind" by offering the hosting of a Meeting held in Georgia.

B. ECPGR Voluntary contributions for AEGIS and other activities

Participating country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Germany - AEGIS	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	25,000
Germany - Inter-regional cooperation				10,000		10,000
Netherlands - AEGIS	5,000					5,000
Total	10,000	5,000	5,000	15,000		40,000

C. Summary of contributions

Contributions Phase VII	1,851,588
Voluntary contributions for AEGIS	30,000
Voluntary contributions for Thematic Networks	10,000
Total outstanding contributions Phase VII	351,963

Table 3. ECPGR Phase VII - 2008 - Estimated Contributions and Expenses (in €)

	Budget	Expenditure						Balance
	Total ⁽¹⁾	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Total
Coordinator at Bioversity International (100%)	472,675	84,925	92,840	101,167	100,323	117,600	496,855	(24,180)
Secretariat administrative support (50%)	109,462	28,150	22,255	22,654	23,972	27,930	124,961	(15,499)
Secretariat scientific support (50%)	146,332	46,156	32,924	27,314	30,355	36,015	172,764	(26,432)
Secretariat staff travel	39,375	6,775	7,366	12,721	7,585	8,704	43,151	(3,776)
Steering Committee meetings	78,750	0	0	41,002	0	48,950	89,952	(11,202)
Network Coordinating Group meetings	56,875	0	0	23,617	0	0	23,617	33,258
Network operations - Crop Networks ⁽²⁾	398,548	21,459	68,129	59,211	97,797	143,042	389,638	8,910
Network operations - Thematic Networks ^{(2) (3) (4)}	102,234	1,247	7,731	9,202	29,451	49,812	97,443	4,791
Fund for lower priority Working Groups	43,750	0	5,076	14,234	8,540	1,800	29,650	14,100
Public awareness tools/actions ⁽²⁾	8,593	2,560	34	2,621	0	250	5,465	3,128
Thematic cross-cutting issues ⁽²⁾	15,503	0	1,359	8,063	0	1,072	10,494	5,009
EURISCO ⁽²⁾	42,500	9,744	0	14,625	702	17,429	42,500	0
AEGIS project ^{(2) (5)}	256,090	0	74,550	24,618	50,678	87,284	237,130	18,960
Network operations - Total	924,093	35,010	156,879	156,191	187,166	300,689	835,935	88,158
Publications (compilation, layout, either Web or printed)	146,332	33,906	34,160	36,364	42,543	53,267	200,240	(53,908)
Newsletter	13,125	2,886	2,043	3,956	4,508	0	13,393	(268)
Communication and office consumables	43,750	8,161	8,913	8,513	8,786	8,750	43,123	627
Sub-total	1,973,894	245,969	357,380	409,882	405,237	601,905	2,020,373	(46,479)
Overhead (indirect support) 13% ⁽⁶⁾	256,606	31,976	46,460	53,285	52,681	78,248	262,650	(6,044)
TOTAL	2,230,500	277,945	403,840	463,167	457,918	680,153	2,283,023	(52,522)

⁽¹⁾ The original total budget of €2,190,500 was increased by €40,000 representing the additional voluntary contributions paid by Germany (€35,000) and Netherlands (€5,000).

⁽²⁾ The original budget for these lines was revised at the Steering Committee Meeting held in Jurmala (Riga, Latvia) on 5/8 September 2006, refer to page 12 of "Steering Committee Meeting report" 2006.

⁽³⁾ Voluntary contribution received from Germany (€10,000) net of 13% overhead was added to the original budget amount.

⁽⁴⁾ Voluntary contributions from ARSSA (Italy) and CRA (Italy) for €2,000 each were recorded towards the support of this budget line.

⁽⁵⁾ Voluntary contributions received from Germany (€25,000) and Netherlands (€5,000) net of 13% overhead were added to the original budget amount.

⁽⁶⁾ This includes provision of space in Bioversity International headquarters, the input and time of Bioversity International professional staff, etc.

Estimated balance of Phase VII at 30 July 2008

Total outstanding contributions as of 15 July 2008	351,963
Total regular contributions received as of 15 July 2008	1,851,588
Voluntary contributions	40,000
Total contributions for Phase VII	2,243,551
Total estimated expenditures as of 31 December 2008	(2,283,023)
Balance of Phase VII (estimate)	(39,472)

Table 4. AEGIS Phase VII funds - Estimated expenditures (in €)

	Budget	Expenditure				Total	Balance
		2005	2006	2007	2008		
Regular budget Phase VII	78,750						
Voluntary contributions Phase VII (*)	26,549						
Budget revision as per Steering Committee Meeting 2006	150,791						
Project manager/AEGIS Coordinator		60,272	24,618	50,678	50,000	185,568	
Economist support					11,172	11,172	
Meetings and staff travel		14,278			26,112	40,390	
Total	256,090	74,550	24,618	50,678	87,284	237,130	18,960

(*) Voluntary contributions provided by Germany (€25,000) and The Netherlands (€5,000) net of 13% overhead.