



FEEDBACK FROM THE EXCO MEETING WITH THE WORKING GROUP CHAIRS

L. Maggioni

Alnarp, Sweden, June 2022



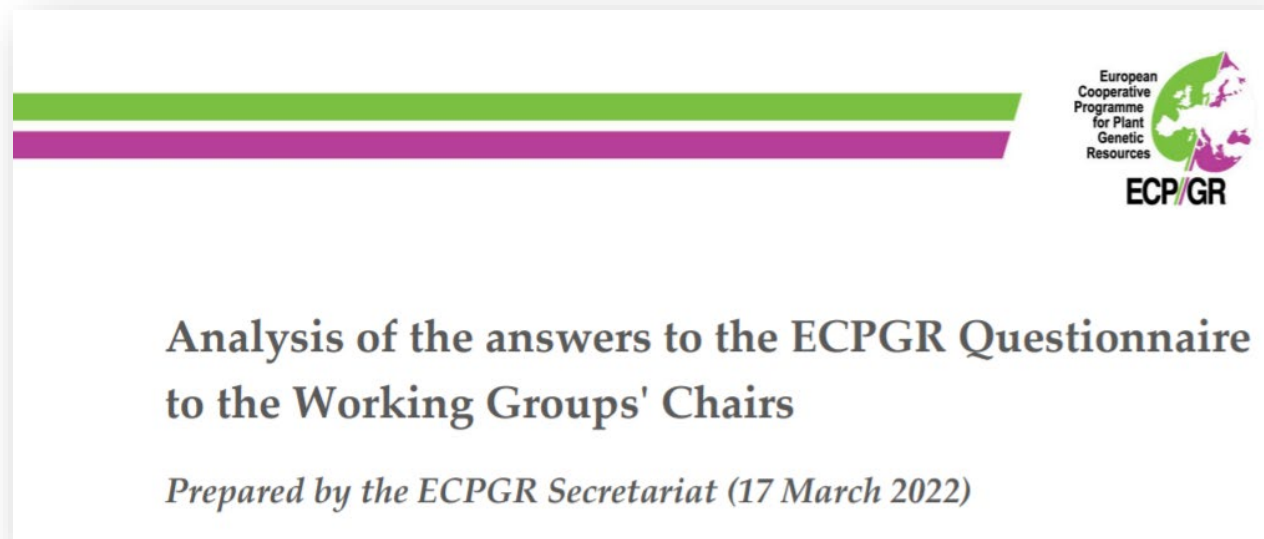
Meeting WG Chairs & ExCo

5–6 April 2022 – online

- Follow up to the previous Chairs' meeting held in October 2017 in Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Objective: reflect on the implementation of the first part of ECPGR Phase X (years 2019–2021), better coordinate WG's work and suggest improvements to the attention of the Steering Committee.
- Online questionnaire
 - Chairing experience and effectiveness of WGs
 - Chairs' expectations regarding the future implementation of the Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe

Questionnaire to Chairs

- 14 replies out of 21 WGs
- 20 WGs represented in the Chairs' meeting



Main points of discussion

For full account, see online minutes of the meeting



COVID-19 scenario during Phase X

- The pandemic situation did not allow full implementation of the measures adopted at the start of Phase X (a new mode of operation with opportunities for more meetings and more flexible arrangements).
- Therefore, an appropriate evaluation of the effectiveness of such measures was not fully possible.

Influence of WG Chairs in decision-making

- Chairs wish to better influence the decision-making process of the Steering Committee, considering that the work plans are implemented by the Working Groups
- They also wish to be informed in advance about issues under discussion by the Steering Committee so that inputs could be provided



Structure and composition of WGs

- The idea to reduce the number of WGs is often not favoured since many WGs already cover several crops (such as the WG on Leafy vegetables, Grain legumes, *Prunus*, Solanaceae, etc.) and already struggle to stay focused.
- The low responsiveness of many WG members remains a problem, and the possibility to have more committed people or a core group of committed people would be useful. At least contact persons should be designated with a clear mandate to interact with the Chair and participate.

Effectiveness of WGs in the different areas of work

- It is perceived that the WGs should not reduce their scope towards very targeted focuses, but rather maintain a wide focus on all the ECPGR objectives, with better communication between crop and thematic WGs.
- Need to increase connections between genetic resources and users, such as supporting the EVA network

WGs as appropriate bodies to support the approaches described under the “Objectives by 2030” in the new PGR Strategy

- ‘*Ex situ*’ and ‘Documentation and Information’ are the areas of work almost unanimously considered appropriate
- Other areas are also considered appropriate, even if with lower percentages.
- The least appropriate areas, according to the scores received in the questionnaire (pre-breeding, participatory breeding, crop diversification), still receive some appreciation (around 50%).

Main points of agreement

For full list, see online minutes of the meeting



Structure of Working Groups

- Strengthen integration across WGs
 - Involvement of one member of the Crop WGs in *In situ* and On-farm WGs
 - Closer communication between Documentation and Information and *In situ* WGs
- Encourage definition of a contact person
- Commitment of WG members is often unclear. Propose a way to confirm/clarify their commitment
- Not a good idea to merge WGs (too many members and too many crops).

Role of WG Chair

- Encourage identification of Vice-Chair/Co-Chair
- No need for monetary compensation, but letters of acknowledgement to the Chair's institution
 - from the Secretariat/ExCo
 - from the National Coordinator
- Period in office should not be too long, but no proposal
- Election of Chair with more input from the WG members would be ideal.

Tools

- Grant Scheme Calls could be targeted to carry out predefined tasks, but calls that are not prescriptive offer flexibility to implement WG-specific priorities
- Information on projects prepared for submission to Grant Scheme should be circulated by the Chair to all the WG members
- Face-to-face meetings remain important (at least one per Phase). Online meetings can be more frequent
- Encourage organization of meetings aimed at preparation of project proposals (EU, Grant Scheme, other)
- Organize webinars on themes of common interest (such as across WGs) (at the initiative of WG Chairs and/or Secretariat).

Areas of work

- Maintain wide scope for the area of work of WGs
(also *in situ/on-farm/use*)
- Support the EVA model and extend it to other WGs that wish to increase evaluation in cooperation with end-users with a specific budget line

Decision-making

- More frequent meetings of the Chairs
(every year online, in person before SC meetings)
- Chairs to be informed about policy decisions and other relevant issues under discussion by the SC, with the opportunity to provide advice.



OPTIONS FOR A NEW MODE OF OPERATION FOR PHASE XI

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Current ECPGR structure

Bodies/structures	Actions/Actors	Budget source
Steering Committee	2 meetings	ECPGR
ExCo Chair	Travel and managerial	ECPGR
ExCo	4 members – Travel	ECPGR
Secretariat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secretary 2. Admin assistant 3. Scientific officer 4. Editing and communications 	ECPGR + project funds (EVA, GenRes Bridge AGENT, Germany)
Genetic Resources journal	Editor = Scientific officer	GenRes Bridge funds/ ECPGR – ERFP
Working Groups – Crops	20 Crop + 4 Thematic Meetings + other actions (Grant Scheme)	ECPGR + project funds (Germany/EC)
WG Chair/Vice-Chair	Coordination	In-kind

Current ECPGR structure (continued)

Bodies/structures	Actions	Budget source
EURISCO	Database and coordination	ECPGR + project funds (German/EC)
EURISCO Advisory Committee	Meetings	None / German project
EVA	Coordination and implementation	German project + private companies in kind
AEGIS	Coordination	None
Task Forces	Communication strategy PGR Strategy drafting	In-kind

Current ECPGR mode of operation

Tools	Actions	Budget source
WG Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- At request- Country quota	Meetings budget line
Grant Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Calls for proposals to implement elements of the ECPGR objectives	Other actions budget line

Mode of operation Phase XI

– Option 1: Continuity

- Maintain same structures and similar mode of operation as in Phase X
- Small adjustments as per WG Chairs' suggestions
- Adapt budget to existing structures based on priorities defined by the SC

The Working Groups need to adapt to objectives in a competitive environment

Mode of operation Phase XI

– Option 2: Revolution

- ExCo or Task Force to revisit entire structure during the next year and create structures based on tasks/priorities mandated by the Steering Committee

Example: Only ad hoc groups or Task Forces to resolve specific tasks with a defined budget:

- Develop certification system
- Define indicators
- Analyze legislation
- Etc.

Priority tasks are accomplished by appropriate designated bodies. The Working Groups disappear and with them the skeleton of the ECPGR Community.

Mode of operation Phase XI

– Option 3: Intermediate

- SC allocates part of the budget to a few priorities within the PGR Strategy, and WGs can apply for these funds through the Grant Scheme
- SC allocates part of the budget to very specific actions directly assigned to WGs or ad hoc Task Forces

Working Groups remain free to operate within a more targeted framework, with more guidance from the Steering Committee on specific actions to be accomplished

Proposed work
in subgroups
this afternoon



Tasks of each subregional group

- 4 subregional groups
- One Chair (ExCo member) – One rapporteur
- 2 hours of discussion. Suggested schedule:
 - 0.5 hour → Comment on three mode of operation Options
 - 1 hour → Discuss priorities for Phase XI (two tables – explanation next slide)
 - 0.5 hour → Any other business
- Rapporteur presents in plenary (10 min)

Yellow and green highlights → Components that appear in both documents: Phase X and PGR Strategy for Europe

Blue highlight → components that are identified only in the PGR Strategy

Outputs in bold have been *partially* or *largely* completed during Phase X

Tables 2.1 to 2.6: Matching Objectives and Outputs of ECPGR Phase X with Objectives and targets of PGR Strategy for Europe

Table 2.1	ECPGR Phase X Outputs	PGR Strategy for Europe Objectives	PGR Strategy for Europe Targets	Responsibility (main level/responsible bodies)	Type of action that ECPGR could undertake	Potential sources of funding to cover the ECPGR action	Indicate Priority level for ECPGR: P1: high P2: medium P3: lower
In situ CWR (+ WFP) conservation	1. National CWR conservation strategies produced	By 2030, Europe has significantly increased its CWR and WFP inventories to enable a more comprehensive view of available CWR and WFP' genetic diversity, to better understand how this diversity is distributed across the region and its neighbouring countries, and to identify which are the priority populations to actively conserve. By 2030, the European countries have elaborated and approved National CWR and WFP conservation strategies , and set up and manage a network for <i>in situ</i>	1. All countries in Europe have included CWR and WFP conservation in national PGR programmes and actions	National	Support of Wild relatives WG	EC project or external donor	
	2. Regional (European) CWR conservation strategies produced		2. All countries in Europe have identified CWR priority taxa and populations including those in protected areas - forming the basis of their national and a European <i>in situ</i> network of CWR	National	Support of Wild relatives WG	EC project or external donor	
	3. Integrated European strategy for CWR conservation produced		3. Europe has a coherent, comprehensive, coordinated and centralized documentation of CWR and WFP <i>in situ</i> diversity.	EURISCO/ Doc&Info WG/Wild relatives WG	Implement extension of EURISCO	EURISCO budget	
	4. National and European MAWP network established		4. CWR priority populations within the European network of CWR are managed and monitored following agreed guidelines for the <i>in situ</i> management of CWR populations.	National and Wild relatives WG	Agree on demographic and monitoring techniques. Monitoring as proof of concept	ECPGR Grant	
	5. National and European MAWP Networks		5. <i>In situ</i> conserved CWR populations are safely backed-up in <i>ex situ</i> collections and made available to users.	National	Coordination/monitoring by Wild relatives WG	ECPGR Grant	

Proposed sub-groups

North	East	West	South
Chair: Birgitte L.	Chair: Vojtech H.	Chair: Beate S.	Chair: Benvindo M.
Denmark	Czech Republic	Austria	Albania
Estonia – Rapp.	Georgia	Belgium	Croatia
Finland	Romania	France – Rapp.	Italy – Rapp.
Latvia	Serbia	Germany	Montenegro
Norway	Slovakia	Ireland	Portugal
Sweden	Slovenia – Rapp.	Netherlands	Spain
NordGen	NGO	Switzerland	Turkey
Germany - 2		United Kingdom	FAO
		Spain - 2	

IF YOU WISH TO SWITCH GROUPS, PLEASE FIND SOMEONE WHO IS AVAILABLE TO TRADE PLACES WITH YOU