

Agenda Item 5 - D

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Future membership of ECP/GR *Introduced by Lorenzo Maggioni*

ECP/GR and non member European countries

Currently 35 countries are considered members of ECP/GR (see attached list). These belong to the European continent, including Caucasus, and/or to the Mediterranean basin.

It is an objective of ECP/GR to promote the integration of European countries which are not members of ECP/GR. Focal persons for non member European countries have been defined and Letters of Agreement to join Phase VI of the Programme were delivered to Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. Initial contacts were also established with Bosnia and Herzegovina for the definition of a focal person. While Albania and Armenia have joined the programme during Phase VI, the other countries can be expected to join in the more or less near future. Integration of non member countries is also being implemented by occasionally funding participation of their experts to WG meetings.

When all the above-mentioned countries will have joined ECP/GR, the membership will be extended to 43 nations. Some of these are also involved in other PGR networks in the respective sub-regions: Cyprus and Turkey are partners in the West Asia and North Africa Network (WANANET), while Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia take part in the Caucasus and Central Asia Network.

ECP/GR and countries from other regions – the present

Strong interest for the participation of experts from other regions in Working Group meetings was expressed by various Working Groups:

Avena WG

Due to the importance of Morocco as centre of diversity for the genus *Avena*, the Group recommended that every effort be made to encourage the participation of Morocco as observer at future WG meetings.

Grain Legumes WG

The Group expressed interest to remain in contact with the WANANET network to exchange information on activities and explore areas of working contact in relation to database activities.

Forages WG

It was recommended to explore the possibility to invite representatives from other regions like Australia/New Zealand, North Africa, North America etc., to the next meeting of the Working Group to learn more about their work on forage genetic resources and to improve cooperation with these regions.

Beta WG

The Working Group is considered an integral part of the World *Beta* Network with which meetings are jointly planned.

Participation of observers from other regions in ECP/GR meetings has mainly been limited to the presence of self-funded participants attending joint meetings (World Beta Network, Eucarpia, AEP, etc.). Occasionally, ECP/GR funds were used to facilitate the participation of resource persons recommended by the Group Chair (such as from ICARDA, India, USA). In the case of the EPGRIS project, two regional network delegates from Latin America and from Africa were funded to participate in project meetings, as recommended by the ECP/GR Inter-regional Cooperation Network Task Force and in full agreement with the EPGRIS project partners.

ECP/GR and countries from other regions – the future

Although no formal application was received from countries beyond geographical Europe, the Secretariat occasionally receives queries and expressions of interest regarding the possible participation to ECP/GR (recent examples were from India, Kazakhstan and Morocco).

Countries from other regions may be attracted to join ECP/GR for the following reasons:

- Interest in the conservation and use of the same crop gene pools covered by ECP/GR Working Groups;
- Opportunity to participate in crop and thematic meetings, where information is easily exchanged, professional contacts are strengthened, initiatives for collaborative projects take shape;
- Opportunity to benefit from the cooperative approach of ECP/GR, where less developed countries may be able to voice their needs and to obtain forms of assistance (e.g. emergency actions; *ad hoc* actions).

European countries may benefit from extending ECP/GR membership to other neighbouring regions for the following reasons:

- Interest for the conservation and use of crops and crop relatives distributed outside the European region;
- Opportunity to exchange information, strengthen professional contacts, plan for joint collaboration;
- Opportunity to extend the geographical area covered by multilateral agreements for sharing of responsibility conservation, for material transfers, etc.

Challenges of an extension of the membership to other regions:

- Too large a number of countries reduces the agility and flexibility of the system. Coordination and monitoring of the needs and expectations of all countries becomes more complex as well as the overall decision making process;
- All the meetings on average become larger and more difficult to manage;
- Expectation increases for initiatives facilitating the integration of new member countries, but no significant budget increase can be expected.

Conclusion

The Steering Committee is expected to:

- *Indicate to the Secretariat as to whether the approach towards other regions should continue as in the past or any change is recommended. (For example, an increasing involvement of ECP/GR funded observers from neighbouring regions in ECP/GR Network meetings could be planned, on the basis of recommendations from Network Coordinating Groups and Working Group Chairs, provided funds are available).*
- *Indicate the criteria to be used to accept new members in the Programme.*

Annex

List of member countries as of October 2001

- 1) Albania (as of 2001)
- 2) Armenia (as of 2000)
- 3) Austria
- 4) Belgium
- 5) Bulgaria
- 6) Croatia
- 7) Cyprus
- 8) Czech Republic
- 9) Denmark
- 10) Estonia
- 11) Finland
- 12) France
- 13) Germany
- 14) Greece
- 15) Hungary
- 16) Iceland (to be confirmed)
- 17) Ireland
- 18) Israel
- 19) Italy (to be confirmed)
- 20) Lithuania
- 21) Macedonia FYR
- 22) Malta
- 23) Netherlands
- 24) Norway
- 25) Poland
- 26) Portugal
- 27) Romania
- 28) Slovakia
- 29) Slovenia
- 30) Spain
- 31) Sweden
- 32) Switzerland
- 33) Turkey
- 34) United Kingdom
- 35) Yugoslavia F.R.